



*An Experimental
Investigation of
Past-Life Experiences*

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RESEARCH PROPOSAL

An Experimental Investigation of Past-Life Experiences

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Context of the Problem

Hypnosis has been used to investigate purported past and future lives ever since Colonel Albert de Rochas (1837-1914) published a detailed account of his mesmeric experiments in *Les Vies Successives* in 1911. One of the best-known contemporary past-life experience accounts has come to light under hypnosis (Bernstein, 1956). Skeptics have pointed to the historical inaccuracies, imaginative role-playing, confabulation, cryptomnesia, unreliability and poor efficacy of hypnotic regression techniques in the elicitation of past-life memories to mean that the data it yields are of no evidential value to the reincarnation hypothesis (Baker, 1982; Kampman, 1976; Spanos, 1988, Spanos et al., 1991; Venn, 1986; Wilson, 1981). Hypnosis may enhance recall of personally meaningful and emotionally-laden memories for therapeutic benefit in the clinical setting, but does not guarantee or assure that the recovered memory accurately reflects an actual event (Frankel, 1988; Kolb, 1988). In the laboratory setting, hypnosis does not enhance recall or recognition of nonsense syllables (Erdelyi, 1988, Council of Scientific Affairs, American Medical Association, 1985), but does enhance recollection of meaningful material while also bringing with it increased errors in recall and a heightened sense of confidence associated with the falsely recalled items (Dywan & Bowers, 1983).

Hypnosis, in other words, does not always lead to truth. It is subject to all of the "sins of memory" that plague nonhypnotic waking recall, including susceptibility to leading questions, false memory syndrome, personal motivation, and the demand characteristics of the situation (Orne, Whitehouse, Dinges, Orne, 1988; Perry, Laurence, D'eon, & Tallant, 1988; Myersburg, Bogdan, Gallo, McNally, 2009; Schacter, 2001), but it does not necessarily make a person *more* susceptible to these distorting influences (Sheehan, 1988). If the accuracy of memories for present life events in the waking state is questionable, then the accuracy of memories for past lives during hypnosis with its characteristic suggestibility, fading of generalized reality orientation, and imaginative absorption in inner-generated stimuli can never be taken for granted, but must be checked and authenticated against existing records and documents if mere subconscious play-acting and fabrication is to be ruled out and anything like scientific proof for the reincarnation hypothesis is to be obtained.

Experts differ on the nature of hypnosis and how it works. Some believe hypnosis is a special, alternate state of consciousness (Erickson, 1980c; Hilgard, 1965; Shor, 1979), while others believe hypnosis is little more than an ordinary, highly motivated waking state of consciousness (Barber, 1969; Spanos, 1996; Sutcliff, 1961). "Special" state of consciousness advocates look to the internal psychodynamics of the trance state for an understanding of how hypnosis works, acknowledging the existence of the subconscious and the state of dissociation between conscious and subconscious processes that focused concentration and elimination of distractions that formal and informal hypnotic induction procedures facilitate. "Ordinary" state of consciousness advocates focus upon the external sociocognitive demand characteristics of the situation as providing a content in which the person is able to indulge in fantasy and make-believe for an understanding of how hypnosis works, ignoring the role of the subconscious except as the source of fantasy and make-believe role-playing skills.

Arguments about whether hypnosis is a "special" state of consciousness or not highlight theoretical differences but obscure the important empirical data about the effects of "deep" hypnosis: relaxed critical judgment; increased belief in suggestions; reduced awareness of time, self, and surroundings; increased focus concentration and absorption; increased automaticity, effortlessness, and involuntariness of response; reduced reality testing; increased physical relaxation; increased openness to imaginative involvement with internally-generated images, emotions, and

sensations of a creative nature (Weitzenhoffer, 1953, 1957). Trance, as an alternate state of consciousness, builds upon the learnings, skills, and capacities of normal waking consciousness and thus can be seen as one point along a continuum of consciousness (or awareness). Formal hypnosis is simply a demonstration of the power of normal, ordinary belief in concentrated form, with the capacity to change seemingly "unchangeable" bodily processes by focused concentration and distractions eliminated (Barber, 1984).

Despite the reputation of hypnosis and the experimental technique of hypnotic regression for generating believed-in imaginary past lives drawn from cryptomnesic sources, there are the reported occasional cases in which substantial historically accurate information is obtained or language skills are displayed related to the life of a previous personality whom the hypnotized subject claims to be and

by which the individual had no opportunity to acquire by normal means (Ducasse, 1960; Ramster, 1994; Stevenson, 1977; Stevenson & Pasricha, 1980; Tarazi, 1990). Moreover, if the theory is correct that hypnosis is truly responsible for past-like reports through its "imaginative involvement" (J. R. Hilgard, 1979), "believed-in imaginings" (Sarbin & Coe, 1972), and "fantasy constructions of imaginative persons absorbed in make-believe situations and responding to regression subjects" (Spanos, 1988, p. 174), then one would predict that past-life reports would not occur with great frequency outside of that context.

Contrary to expectations of this theory, evidence fails to confirm that prediction. Not all past-life experiences emerge under hypnosis (e.g., Stevenson, 1987), hypnosis is not required for past-life experiences to be recalled (Head & Cranston, 1977; Cranston & Williams, 1984), and past-life reports occur whether the participant believes in them or not (Fiore, 1978). PLEs have been observed to appear unsolicited and unexpectedly in diverse non-hypnotic contexts including psychedelic (LSD) therapy in patients with terminal diseases, in deep experiential psychotherapy (e.g., primal therapy, rebirthing, holotropic breathing), in meditation, in sensory isolation, body work, in adults in spontaneous episodes of nonordinary consciousness (e.g., spiritual emergencies), in children in ordinary waking consciousness, in sleep during lucid dreaming, in claims of announced reincarnation, and in conventional psychotherapy sessions with therapists who neither work with past-life therapy nor believe in reincarnation and in patients whose philosophic beliefs and religious upbringing neither support nor condone such experiences. The Tibetan practice of identifying and then locating the child who is the reincarnation of a Dalai Lama (*tulku*) through clues received in dreams, meditation, and other means, such as presenting a series of similar objects to the child-candidate to see if he can identify those things that once belonged to the deceased lama is another source of non-hypnotic evidence. PLEs have been observed to appear in geographically, historically, and culturally diverse groups in both ordinary and nonordinary states of consciousness.

Although the information provided in all the above mentioned sources of past-life experience reports may appear bizarre and difficult to confirm and analyze, the information content in the best cases is high, repeatable patterns are observed to occur, and the implications of the past-life reports are important. Time and time again, hypnosis proves to be the least decisive factor in the most credible of these past-life reports. This failure of current psychological theory to account for the full range of past-life experiences of these kinds within the "fantasy/make-believe/role-playing hypnotic paradigm" leaves the fact of past-life experiences a mystery to be explained and reincarnation a viable hypothesis with important implications for the understanding of the nature of consciousness and for the theory and practice of psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy.

If reincarnation is a fact of life and not a fiction, then we should be able to recall past lives through hypnosis and such memories, if they are valid and not false, should be able to be checked against existing historical records and public documents. One notable recent example of the use of hypnotic regression to induce past-life identities in an experimental psychology context that includes a check of the historical accuracy and probative value of past-life reports by hypnotically regressed subjects are the series of studies conducted by Nicholas P. Spanos and colleagues (Spanos et al., 1991) at Carleton University in Ontario, Canada.

Statement of the Problem

The purposes of the present study are four-fold: (a) to examine the degree to which past-life identities can be elicited in normal college students using hypnotic age regression as a research method, (b) determine whether the beliefs, attitudes, and expectations that college students have about the idea of reincarnation are associated with the intensity, credibility, and frequency of appearance of past-life reports within the context of hypnotic regression, (c) study the issue of historical accuracy of information contained in the past-life reports of hypnotically regressed subjects by checking past-life reports against existing records and documents, and (d) build upon and extend selected research findings reported by Spanos et al. (1991) of "secondary identity enactments during hypnotic past-life regression" (pp. 309).

Review of the Literature

Insert Review of the Literature here

See Appendix H

Statement of the Hypotheses

The specific hypotheses to be investigated are:

- H¹: Past-life responders will demonstrate greater **hypnotizability** in terms of overt behavior, subjective experience, and involuntariness of behavior than no-past-life responders.
- H²: Past-life responders will have greater **belief** in reincarnation than no-past-life responders.
- H³: Past-life responders will express a stronger **expectation** of experiencing a past-life identity during the hypnotic session than no-past-life responders.
- H⁴: Past-life responders will report having more positive **attitudes** toward reincarnation than no-past-life responders.
- H⁵: Past-life responders will report experiencing their primary **self as fading** into the background during their past-life identity to a greater degree than no-past-life responders.
- H⁶: Past-life responders will attribute a greater **subjective intensity** to their past-life experience than no-past-life responders.
- H⁷: Past-life responders will assign greater **credibility** to their past-life experiences than no-past-life responders.
- H⁸: Highly hypnotizable past-life responders will report a greater degree of self-fading, subjective intensity, and credibility to their past-life experiences than low hypnotizable past-life responders.
- H⁹: Level of hypnotizability will be *unrelated* to belief in reincarnation, expectation of experiencing a past-life identity during the hypnotic session, or attitude toward reincarnation.
- H¹⁰: Compared to past-life responders who do not believe in reincarnation, do not expect to experience a past-life identity during the hypnotic session, and do not have a positive attitude toward reincarnation, the past-life responders who do will much more likely experience the fading of their current self into the background during the past-life regression, describe their past-life experience as extremely vivid and intense, and assign credibility to their past-life experiences as reflecting a real, actual past-life identity.
- H¹¹: Hypnotized subjects who make the requisite overt responses to suggestions will tend to voluntarily cooperate and report experiencing those responses as occurring voluntarily rather than involuntarily.

Rationale for the Hypotheses

One purpose of the present study is to replicate specific research findings reported by Spanos et al. (1991) that bear directly upon the hypotheses being tested in the present study. Spanos et al. (1991), for instance, found that hypnotized subjects who responded to past-life suggestions by displaying a past-life identity scored higher on all dimensions of the Carleton University Responsiveness to Suggestion Scale than subjects who did not respond to past-life suggestions (H¹). They also reported that past-life responders expressed greater belief in reincarnation (H²), expressed stronger expectation of experiencing a past-life during the hypnotic session (H³), reported more positive attitudes toward reincarnation (H⁴), experienced more self-fading (H⁵) and greater subjective intensity (H⁶) during their past-life experience, and assigned greater credibility to their past life experience (H⁷) than no-past-life responders. Spanos et. al (1991) likewise reported that although level of hypnotizability of past-life responders was related to degree of self-fading, subjective intensity, and credibility experienced during the past-life experience (H⁸), level of hypnotizability was unrelated to belief, expectation, or attitude toward reincarnation (H⁹). Similarly they found, irrespective of hypnotizability, that belief, expectations, and attitudes toward reincarnation of past-life responders were related to the degree to which they reported self-fading, subjectivity intensity, and credibility in their past-life experiences (H¹⁰). Spanos et al. (1983a, 1983b) report data that suggest that the assumption made by most investigators who construct scales of hypnotic susceptibility (e.g., Stanford Scale, Harvard Group Scale) that there is a strong positive relationship between overt responses to hypnotic suggestions and the experience of responding involuntarily is mistaken, and that most subjects who report responding positively to hypnotic suggestions voluntarily cooperate to make those responses occur. The present study attempts to replicate all these findings in a different population of undergraduate college students who live in a different geographical area of the country.

The present study while seeking to replicate some of the findings reported by Spanos et al. (1991), also diverges from Spanos et al. (1991) in five important respects in an attempt to put those finds to the test of experience and further development. These experimental design changes include:

1. Moving to the *posttest* position at the end of the hypnotic past-life regression session, Spanos et al's (1991) three pretest scales that assess belief in reincarnation, expectations of experiencing a past-life identity, and attitudes toward reincarnation, order to eliminate possible priming effect of pretesting,
2. Moving to the *debriefing* session at the end of the completed experiment, the preliminary discussion of reincarnation that was PRESENTED by Spanos et al. (1991) prior to the hypnotic induction in which they "informed the subjects that reincarnation

was a belief common to many cultures that scientists had begun to collect evidence in support of reincarnation" (p. 310) in order to eliminate possible demand characteristics that such information (or "suggestions") might induce,

3. Administering the three scales that assess past-life experiences to *both* past-life responders and no-past-life responders at the end of the hypnotic past-life regression session, instead of only to past-life responders as was done in Spanos et al., (1991), in order to guarantee greater constancy across conditions, and
4. Testing subjects following repeated age-regression suggestions to ages 15, 5, and 1 prior to administering the treatment past-life suggestion to examine how their report of past-life experiences change with repeated experience with simple age regression in this life alone.
5. Incorporating "state" reports (Tart, 1970) into the hypnotic past-life regression procedure permits the researcher to monitor trance depth before, during, and at the end of the regression session, in order to obtain an assessment of how "deep" into hypnosis both past-life and no-past-life responders are during the experimental session., an assessment which was not done in Spanos et al. (1991).

Operational Definition of the Variables

A *past-life responder* is operationally defined as a participant who does not give the name and age of his/her present identity in response to the questions "What is your name?" and "How old are you?" and identifies a previous year and alternate location other than the current one in response to the questions "What year is it?" and "Where are you?" following the past-life suggestion to "see scenes from a time before he/she was his/her present identity."

A *no-past-life responder* is operationally defined as a participant who gives the name and age of his/her present identity in response to the questions "What is your name?" and "How old are you?" and identifies the present year and current location in response to the questions "What year is it?" and "Where are you?" following the past-life suggestion to "see scenes from a time before he/she was his/her present identity."

Hypnotizability is operationally defined as performance on a standardized hypnotic susceptibility scale, specifically, the Carleton University Responsiveness to Suggestion Scale (CURSS), in terms of three dimensions: (a) the number of hypnotic suggestions to which participants make the requisite overt responses (O - objective score), (b) the number of hypnotic suggestions to which participants make overt responses that are rated as feeling involuntary at least to a moderate degree (OI - objective-involuntariness score), and (c) the subjective intensity with which participants respond to the hypnotic suggestions (Spanos et al., 1981, 1983a, 1983b).

Belief in reincarnation is operationally defined as the response made to the statement "I believe in reincarnation" on a 7-point subscale with alternatives that range from "not at all true of me" (0) to "very true of me" (6). (Spanos et al., 1991)

Expectation of experiencing a past life identity during the hypnotic session is operationally defined as the response made to the statement "I expect to experience a past life identity in the hypnotic session" on a 7-point subscale with alternatives that range from "not at all true of me" (0) to "very true of me" (6) (Spanos et al., 1991).

Attitude toward reincarnation is operationally defined as responses made to a 12-item checklist of adjectives that assesses one's opinion of the idea of reincarnation (e.g., interesting, impossible, foolish) on a 4-point subscale with alternatives that range from "not at all true of me" (0) to "definitely true of me" (3) (Spanos et al., 1991).

The experience of *self-fading* is operationally defined as responses made to a 4-item scale that assesses the extent to which participants experienced their present identity as fading into the background during the past-life regression on a 4-point subscale with alternatives that range from "not at all, never occurred, definitely not true" (0) to "very much, often occurred, definitely true" (3) (Spanos et al., 1991).

Subjective intensity is operationally defined as responses made to a 3-item scale that assesses the degree of vividness and subjectively felt strength, power, and force of the past-life experience on a 4-point subscale with alternatives that range from "not at all, never occurred, definitely not true" (0) to "very much, often occurred, definitely true" (3) (Spanos et al., 1991).

Credibility is operationally defined as the response given to the statement "Rate the credibility that you assign to your past-life experience" on a 5-point subscale with alternatives that range from "I feel sure it was a fantasy experience" (0) to "I feel sure that it was a real past-life experience" (4) (Spanos et al., 1991).

Voluntary cooperation is operationally defined as the number of hypnotic suggestions that are passed by objective criteria which subjects do not rate as at least moderately involuntary as measured by CURSS:VC scores

Operational Restatement of the Hypotheses (Predictions)

The specific hypotheses to be investigated are:

- H¹: Past-life responders will make the requisite overt responses (O) and rate their overt responses as feeling involuntary to at least a moderate degree (OI) on a greater number of suggestions, and indicate a greater subjective intensity (S) with which they respond to the suggestions than no-past-life responders ($p < .05$), as measured by the Carleton University Responsiveness to Suggestion Scale (CURSS) (Spanos et al., 1981).
- H²: Past-life responders will respond "definitely true of me" or "tends to be true of me" to the statement "I believe in reincarnation" to a significantly greater degree than no-past-life responders ($p < .05$).
- H³: Past-life responders will respond "definitely true of me" or "tends to be true of me" to the statement "I expect to experience a past life identity in the hypnotic session" to a significantly greater degree than no-past-life responders ($p < .05$).
- H⁴: Past-life responders will respond "definitely true of me" or "tends to be true of me" to adjectives indicative of a favorable opinion regarding the idea of reincarnation to a significantly greater degree than non-responders, as measured by a 12-item checklist ($p < .05$).
- H⁵: Past-life responders will respond "very much, often occurred, definitely true" or "somewhat, sometimes occurred, probable true" to statements on a 4-item scale that assesses the extent to which participants experienced their present identity as fading into the background during the past-life regression to a significantly greater degree than no-past-life responders ($p < .05$).
- H⁶: Past-life responders will respond "very much, occurred often, definitely true" or "somewhat, sometimes occurred, probably true" to statements on a 3-item scale that assesses the degree of vividness and subjectively felt strength, power, and force of the past-life experience to a significantly greater degree than no-past-life responders ($p < .05$).
- H⁷: Past-life responders will respond that they feel "sure" or "probably sure" it was a real past-life experience to a significantly greater degree than no-past-life responders ($p < .05$).
- H⁸: Past-life responders who obtain high scores on the O, S, and IO dimensions of CURSS will more frequently report complete self-fading, greater subjective intensity, and assign greater credibility to their past-life experience than past-life responders who obtain low scores on each CURSS dimension ($p < .05$). That is, level of hypnotizability will be positively correlated with the degree of self-fading, subjective intensity, and the credibility of past-life experiences during hypnotic regression.
- H⁹: None of the three CURSS hypnotizability dimensions (O, S, IO) will correlate significantly with belief in reincarnation, expectations of experiencing a past-life identity during the hypnotic session, or attitudes toward reincarnation ($p > .05$).
- H¹⁰: Belief in reincarnation, expectations of experiencing a past-life identity during the hypnotic session, and attitudes toward reincarnation will positively correlate with the degree to which past-life responders (a) experience the fading of their current self into the background during the past-life regression, (b) describe their past-life experience as extremely vivid and intense, and (c) assign credibility to their past-life experiences as reflecting a real, actual past-life identity ($p < .05$).
- H¹¹: A strong negative relationship exists between subjects' objective responses to suggestions as measured by CURSS:O and the experience of those responses as occurring involuntarily as measured by CURSS:OI; that is, subjects are more than twice as likely to pass hypnotic suggestions in terms of CURSS:O scores than CURSS:OI scores.

Significance of the Study

Most hypnotic susceptibility scales assume that overt performance in response to hypnotic suggestions are experienced as occurring involuntarily instead of being voluntarily performed. Spanos et al. (1983a, 1983b) found that standard hypnotic susceptibility scales confound involuntary and voluntary responses in their measurement of responsiveness to hypnotic suggestions. This study will attempt to put this important methodological question to an empirical test by employing the CURSS that distinguishes suggested responses experiences as involuntary from those experienced as voluntary.

How one is to overcome the inferential, methodological, and conceptual difficulties involved in research of the "reincarnation hypothesis" and hypnotic past-life regression is a thorny problem that has led to negative attitudes about what may be considered to be a "shady topic." This has unfortunately led to its benign neglect by most mainstream psychologists. No problem exists, however, whose solution has such far reaching and important ramifications for the field of psychology as a whole.

If it were shown that a human mind or consciousness could reincarnate into another body after death, this would have a revolutionary impact on how we understand mind-body relationships, the nature of human memory, and the ontology of consciousness, as would the studies done on near-death experiences (Parnia & Fendwick, 2002). Moreover, reincarnation would rule out reductive materialism, and give some credibility to non-physical views of consciousness in Eastern religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. (Edelmann & Bernet, 2007, p. 93)

While no conclusive proof exists for reincarnation, neither is there scientific evidence to suggest that reincarnation is not possible. We know too little about either the mind or hypnosis, scientifically speaking, to say categorically that memories of previous lives recalled under hypnosis are merely subconscious fabrications or conscious social constructions, and discount those memories or the reincarnation hypothesis as foolish or meaningless (Baker, 1982; Wilson, 1981). The theory of reincarnation provides a comprehensive coherent, intelligible, and meaningful framework in which all the quite dissimilar events of one's life and seemingly unrelated, chaotic, random, meaningless, and unjust conditions of existence make sense and are seen to have an inner structure. If life and death have a meaning and there is sense and purpose in one's life and death, then reincarnation offers the further idea that even seemingly senseless tragedies operate for a greater good and "as a part of a larger plan, as a method of teaching ourselves some important truth or as a means of developing certain abilities" (Roberts, 1970, p. 134).

Whether reincarnation is a possible theory, an improbable theory, or a fact of life is not as yet scientifically demonstrated. The present study represents but another attempt in a long line of studies to investigate this important hypothesis and address the significant challenges that confront hypnotic past-life regression research, with the aim of enhancing our understanding of how beliefs and expectation influence the occurrence of past-life experiences in the hypnotized subject, and whether we can come any closer to some kind of scientific evidence for reincarnation. The fact that PLEs are reported at all, whether interpreted within the ordinarily conventionalized framework of reincarnation or not, is theoretically important because it bears upon the experiences and observations specifically related to survival of consciousness after death. It is a part of that body of evidence that includes apparitions, deathbed visions, near-death experiences, out-of-body experiences, and extra-sensory perception (Kelly, Kelly, Crabtree, Gauld, Grosso, & Greyson, 2007).

The existence of experiences that purport to be about a past life does not, of course, prove the theory of reincarnation but is only "suggestive" of reincarnation, since there will always be alternative interpretations for the facts of any past-life experience. This is so because every interpretation depends on the perceptual apparatus that happens to be operative at the time, the field or context within which the experience is perceived, and the frame of reference of the individual interpreter. It is clear, however, that there is no plausible and coherent explanation for all of these phenomena suggestive of reincarnation considered as a whole within the conceptual framework of mainstream psychiatry and psychology. It is also clear that any systematic examination and unbiased evaluation of the evidence taken as a whole would necessarily result in an entirely new understanding of the nature of human personality and the possibility of life beyond biological death.

Method

Participants

Thirty (30) Rivier College undergraduates will volunteer to participate in a study of hypnotic susceptibility, attitudes and beliefs toward reincarnation, and past-life hypnotic regression. Volunteers will be solicited by the faculty supervisor (Dr. Paul F. Cunningham) from classes at Rivier College and by posting the following announcement on the board outside the Behavioral Sciences Laboratory (Memorial Hall 301):

"Participate in a fun and interesting study that will involve a test of your responsiveness to hypnotic suggestions, taking part in a hypnotic regression session, and an assessment of your attitudes and beliefs toward past life experiences. The experiment consists of two phases and will take a total of about 2 ½ hours of your time. Volunteers will first be tested in a small group for ability to respond to hypnotic suggestions (approximately 1 hour). Participants then return at a later time for an individual hypnotic regression and interview/assessment session (approximately 1½ hours). All subjects receive course credit for their participation."

"If you would like to be participate in this important experiment, please print your name and email address in the appropriate space below that indicates the day and time you are available to come to the Clinical Psychology Laboratory at 18 Clement Road (located across from the Career Development Center) to participate in the first phase of the study involving hypnotic suggestibility assessment." [Day/Time Schedule of Hypnotizability Assessment sessions would be attached below the announcement]

Task Instructions -- Regression Suggestions

Briefly, subjects will be administered a hypnotic procedure and suggestions to regress to age 15, age 5, and age 1 in this life and then to a time "beyond the point of their birth" (Spanos et al., 1991, p. 310). First, participants will be administered a hypnotic procedure during the first session of this experiment. Then they will be administered repeated simple age regression suggestions in which the experimenter counts backwards from ten to zero and suggests that when the count is completed the participant will be first 15 years old, then 5 years old, and then 1 year old. Specifically,

"I am going to count backwards from ten to zero. When the count is completed you will be 15 (5, 1) years old. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . .I am going to count backwards from ten to zero. When the count is completed you will be 15 (5, 1) years old. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . . I am now going to count backwards from ten to zero. When the count is completed you will be 15 years old. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . . Ten. . . Nine. . . .Eight. . . . Seven. . . . Six. . . . Five. . . . Four. . . . Three. . . . Two. . . . One.

After each regression, participants will be asked a series of questions about their experiences.

1. How old are you?
2. Where are you?
3. Who is with you?
4. What year is it?
5. What are you doing?

When the episode at 1 year old seems completed, then the above procedure will be repeated, and suggestions will be given that on repeat of the count, participants will see scenes from a time before they were their present identity. Specifically,

"I am going to count backward from ten to zero. And as odd as this might seem, when the count is finished you will see scenes from a time before you were (give present name). Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . ."I want you to go back slowly to the time before you were (give present name) and tell me, if you can, who you were and what you did before your became (give present name)". . . . When you do this, it is a very easy thing for you to slip into a deep altered state and get in tune and in touch with your own deeper all-knowing self. So feel yourself getting in touch with this, going deeper and deeper into the altered state. Feel your mind expanding, down into your subconscious, out into your superconscious, expanding like the circles in a pool when you drop in a pebble. Your mind expands and expands, bringing into the conscious self all that wonderful knowledge and information that is available to you about the rest of your lives]. Only pleasant

episodes will be remembered. . . . " I am now going to count backward from ten to zero. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered . . . Ten. . . Nine. . . Eight. . . Seven. . . Six. . . Five. . . Four. . . Three. . . Two. . . One.

The task instructions (i.e., regression suggestions) specify no content and do not tell participants what kind of response is wanted by the experimenter. Task instructions specify the *process* the person is to go through but does not specify which experiences to pick, exactly when to use those experiences, or what to use them for. Task performance is dependent totally upon the experimental subject's kind of awareness.

Independent Variables

Moderator¹ (assigned) Variable -- Responsiveness to Regression Suggestion.

On the basis of participants' verbal response to six test questions -- How old are you? Where are you? Who is with you? What year is it? What are you doing? What is your name? -- that have been asked following the administration of the treatment regression suggestion ("You will see scene from a time before you were your present identity"), the experimenter classifies subjects as displaying or not displaying a past-life identity. Spanos et al. (1991) reports this classification task is "almost always unambiguous" (p. 310). "Subjects who do not display a past life always gave their own name and stated unequivocally that they remained themselves and were not in a past life" (Spanos et al., 1991, p. 310). Participants who do not indicate a past-life identity in response to the six test questions are classified as "No-past-life responders." Participants who indicate a past-life identity in response to the six test questions are classified as "Past-life responders."

Moderator² (measured) Variable-- Hypnotizability

Hypnotizability is a measured moderator variable in this study. Research indicating that level of hypnotizability regulates or moderates the ability of individuals to respond to past-life suggestions is mixed (Kampman, 1976; Spanos et al., 1991). Spanos et al. (1991), for instance, found that past-life responders scored higher in hypnotizability than no-past-life responders; that is, "past-life reporters attained significantly higher scores on each CURSS dimension than did no-past-life subjects" (p. 315). Kampman (1976), on the other hand, found that out of the 78 subjects capable of experiencing a deep hypnotic state defined as "the successful experiencing of automatism, age-regression, and positive and negative hallucinations" (p. 218), only 32 (about 41%) were able to respond to the suggestion to "go back to an age preceding your birth," whereas 43 (about 55% of those 78 highly hypnotizable subjects) were unable to respond to the suggestion. Thus it appears that although high hypnotizability may be a *necessary* condition for responding to past-life suggestions in experimental settings, it is apparently not a *sufficient* condition that guarantees past-life responses. Experiments testing the effect of suggestions on past-life regression typically screen subjects so that high scorers (e.g., 8.00 or above) on standardized hypnotic susceptibility scales such as the Stanford Hypnotic Susceptibility Scale are overrepresented (e.g., Baker, 1982). The purpose of including level of hypnotizability as a moderator variable in this study is to clarify the relationship between level of hypnotizability and capacity to respond to past-life suggestions by testing subjects at all level of hypnotizability. All levels of hypnotizability are tested in this study to indicate the potentiality of the hypnotic "past-life" regression session because the use of subjects who are all extremely hypnotizability greatly restricts the range of hypnotizability scores and automatically reduces possible correlation coefficients that may be found in later data analyses.

Hypnotizability refers to the "depth" of hypnosis and is operationalized as (a) the number of suggestions that a subject successfully performs while in a state of trance, (b) the degree to which a subject indicates experiencing a suggested behavior or experience, and (c) the degree of involuntariness reported by the subject while performing the hypnotic suggestion. The greater the number of suggestions objectively "passed," subjectively felt, and experienced as happening automatically without a feeling of effort, the greater the depth of hypnosis is conceived to be.

Hypnotizability in this study is measured by the Carleton University Responsiveness to Suggestion Scale (CURSS). The CURSS is a pencil-and-paper test constructed by Spanos, Radtke, Hodgins, Stam, & Bertrand (1983a) that will be used to evaluate subjects' hypnotizability. The CURSS can be administered to subjects individually as well as under group-testing conditions. It contains three subscales that can be used to assess subjects' hypnotizability on three dimensions: (a) number of suggestions to which subjects overtly respond, (b) subjective intensity with which subjects respond, and (c) number of suggestions to which subject report responding in an involuntary manner. Spanos et al. (1983a) describe the CURSS and the three hypnotizability scores yielded for each subject in more detail below.

The Carleton University Responsiveness to Suggestion Scale (CURSS) is a seven-item instrument designed to assess responsiveness to the types of test suggestions traditionally associated with the topic of hypnosis. The scale assesses a broad range of such behaviors and includes two ideomotor items (arm levitation, arms moving apart), two motor-challenge items

(arm rigidity, arm mobility), and three 'cognitive' items (auditory hallucination, visual hallucination, amnesia). Unlike other hypnotic susceptibility scales currently in use, the scale yields three suggestibility scores for each subject. An objective (CURSS:O) score is similar to the scores obtained on most current scales. A CURSS:O [objective] score is obtained for each subject by summing the number of test items associated with the appropriate overt movement, i.e., the number objectively 'passed.' Subjects administered the Carleton scale [also] rate the extent to which they subjectively experienced what was suggested by each item on a 4-point subscale with alternatives ranging from "not at all" (scored 0) to "a great deal" (scored 3). Subscale scores are summed to yield a single CURSS:S (subjective) score for each subject. . . . Subjects [also] obtain a CURSS:OI (Objective-Involuntariness) score that reflects the extent to which they both (a) objectively passed suggestions *and* (b) experienced their responses to the passed suggestions as involuntary occurrences. Subjects. . . rate the extent to which each suggested response was experienced as involuntary on a 4-point subscale. If subjects objectively pass an item and also indicate on the relevant subscale that their response felt involuntary to either a moderate degree or to a great degree, they are given one point toward a CURSS:OI score. The number of such points are summed to yield a single CURSS:OI score per subject. (pp. 523-524)

Subjects receive three hypnotizability scores: CURSS:O (Objective) scores range from 0-7, CURSS:S (Subjective) scores range from 0-21, and CURSS:OI (Objective-Involuntariness) scores range from 0-7. Combined CURSS (CURSS:C) scores can thus range from a low of 0 to a high of 35. For purposes of data analysis, participants may be classified as high, medium, or low hypnotizability on the basis of their performance on the CURSS, or using median split classified in high/low groups.

- To be classified as HIGH hypnotizable, the participant has to attain high CURSS:O (5-7), CURSS:S (14-21), CURSS:OI (5-7) scores *or* obtain a combined CURSS:C score ranging from 24 to 35.
- To be classified as MEDIUM hypnotizable, the participant has to attain medium CURSS:O (3-4), CURSS:S (8-13), CURSS:OI (3-4) scores *or* obtain a combined CURSS:C score ranging from 12 to 23.
- To be classified as LOW hypnotizable, the participant has to attain low CURSS:O (0-2), CURSS:S (0-7), CURSS:OI (0-2) scores *or* obtain a combined CURSS:C score ranging from 0-11.

Score distributions. Score distributions (n = 400) on the CURSS:O (Spanos et al., 1983a, p. 527) were as follows: score 0 = 15%; score 1 = 16%, score 2 = 21%, score 3 = 20%, score 4 = 13%, score 5 = 7%, score 6 = 6%, score 7 = 3%. This means that 52% of subjects score between 0-2 and 48% of subjects score 3 and above. However, "objectively passing an item cannot be equated with experiencing response to an item as involuntary" (pp. 528-529). According to Spanos et al. (1983b), "The important dimension in hypnotic susceptibility is a subjective one." (p. 562). Score distributions on the CURSS:S (Spanos et al., 1983a, p. 528) were as follows: scores 0-3 = 28%; scores 4-6 = 25%, scores 7-10 = 27%; scores 11-21 = 20%. This means that 52% of subjects scored between 0-6 and 48% scores 7-21.

Test-retest reliability. Psychometric properties of the CURSS reported by Spanos, Radtke, Hodgins, Bertrand, Stam & Dubreuil (1983b) based on a sample of 152 Carleton University undergraduates indicate that the three suggestibility dimensions (O, S, OI) "remained relatively stable across testings," under "less than optimal testing conditions" in that "the composition of the groups differed on initial testing and retesting. . . initial testing and retesting were carried out in groups rather than individually, [and]...were conducted by a different experimenter" (pp. 555, 557, 561). Spanos et al. (1983b) reported test-retest reliability coefficients (3-month interval) of .67 for the CURSS:O, .76 for the CURSS:S, and .68 for CURSS:OI. "About three-quarters of the sample changed their susceptibility scores by only one point or less on the CURSS:O and CURSS:S, and about 85% changed by only one point or less on the CURSS:OI" (p. 561).

Content and construct validity. The CURSS scale possesses adequate content validity in that it assesses responsiveness to the response domain typically associated with traditional measures of hypnotic susceptibility and traits related to hypnotic susceptibility. Spanos et al., (1983a) reported adequate construct validity in that scores on the Carleton scale "correlate significantly with those on the HGSHS:A and SHSS:C. Field's (1965) Hypnotic Depth Inventory, . . . and Tellegan and Atkinson's (1974) absorption questionnaire" (Spanos, Radtke, Hodgins, Stam, & Bertrand, 1983a, p. 525). . Spanos et al. (1983b) reported that "mean scores on Field's 'hypnotic experiences' inventory did not change significantly from initial testing to retest" (p. 561).

Internal consistency. Spanos et al. (1983a) also report internal consistency reliability coefficients (Pearson correlations and biserial correlations) that indicate all items within each dimension (CURSS:O,S,OI) correlated significantly each other and with total dimension score after the item was removed, ranging from a low of .43 (CURSS:O, arm immobility, visual hallucination) to a high of .98 (CURSS:OI, visual hallucination). Factor analyses indicated the seven items all loaded above .40 on a common unrotated factor and Guttman scale analysis indicated that each dimension (O, S, OI) constituted a unidimensional scale.

Score distributions. Normative data reported by Spanos et al. (1983a) based on a sample of 400 undergraduate volunteers indicated that the distribution of CURSS:O scores resembled the bell-shaped distribution of scores obtained on other standardized hypnotic scales (e.g., HGSHS:A and SHSS:C). The distribution of CURSS:OI scores were not normally distributed, however, but were strongly skewed toward the high susceptibility end of this dimension; that is, most subjects obtained extremely low CURSS:OI scores and "when passing test suggestions was defined in terms of subjects' experiencing their overt responses as at least moderately involuntary, the modal susceptibility score was 0 and more than 64% of the subjects failed all, or all but one, of the test suggestions. . . . In most cases suggestions that were 'passed' in terms of the CURSS:O criteria were associated with a voluntary rather than an involuntary experience" (pp. 528, 533). This finding calls into question the validity of the widespread assumption made by most standardized hypnotizability scales that are currently in use that if a subject objectively passes a hypnotic suggestion, then the response must have been made involuntarily (Bower, 1981; Hilgard, 1965; Weitzenhoffer, 1978, 1980). This may not be the case. Spanos et al. (1983a) identify one serious implication of his finding that overt response and experienced involuntariness of behavior may in fact be unrelated and the importance of employing added ratings of involuntariness as a scoring criterion for assessing hypnotizability.

Objectively passing an item *cannot* be equated with experiencing response to the item as involuntary. . . . Our findings indicate that this assumption is most probably false and that the scores obtained with the Stanford scales may seriously confound suggested responses that are experienced as voluntary with those that are experienced as involuntary. Such confounding may well account for the bell-shaped distribution of susceptibility scores found in studies that employed those scales. . . . Many of the subjects in those studies who objectively 'passed' at least some of the test suggestions would most likely have failed those suggestions if ratings of involuntariness had been employed as a scoring criterion. (pp. 528-529, 533)

One reason why the Carleton scale is selected for use in this study is because of its ability to assess the degree to which participants' response to test suggestions are experienced as involuntary occurrences -- a dimension of hypnotic responsiveness that is not assessed on any standardized hypnotic susceptibility scale in current use today. The traditional features believed to distinguish hypnotic from nonhypnotic states of consciousness in terms of performing specific behavioral "hypnotic behaviors" -- body catalepsy, ideomotor activity, hypnotic dreaming, positive and negative hallucinations, posthypnotic suggestion, amnesia, regression, anesthesia -- as measured by standardized hypnotic scales do not reliably differentiate between hypnotized and nonhypnotized persons (Barber, 1979).

Moderator³ (measured) Variable -- Hypnotic Depth

Participants are instructed in the use of the *Long Stanford Scale* developed by Tart (1970, 1979) to assess both the effectiveness of the hypnotic regression induction and changes in hypnotic depth over time during the hypnotic "past-life" regression. The *Long Stanford Scale* is a self-report measure of hypnotic depth which requires persons to translate subjective feelings of trance into a numerical value based on an 11-point scale ranging from zero (i.e., alert, waking state) to ten (i.e., deep hypnosis) in a way somewhat equivalent to the manner in which magnitude estimations are made in psychophysics. Tart (1979, p. 598) reported that mean depth report on the *Long Stanford Scale* correlated .74 with the behavioral component and .77 with the experiential component of the *Stanford Hypnotic Susceptibility Scale: Form C* (Weitzenhoffer & Hilgard, 1962) and .66 with the Field (1965) Inventory Scale of Hypnotic Depth. These correlations suggest that *Long Stanford Scale* depth scores reflect one or more dimensions of hypnotic experience and behavior, and thus are as valid a measure of hypnotic depth as are more standard behavioral measures. In the present study, state reports are obtained immediately following the induction procedure, following every hypnotic age-regression suggestion, and at the end of the past-life interview. Participants are thus instructed to produce six (6) "state reports" during the hypnotic past-life regression session: (1) immediately after the 15-minute tape-recorded hypnotic procedure, (2) after age-regression to 15-years old, (3) after age-regression to 5-years old, (4) after age regression to 1-year-old, (5) after the past-life regression suggestion, and (6) at the conclusion of the past-life interview and before inquiry into possible normal acquisition of information is conducted. According to Tart (1979), "subjects' reports of the depth of their hypnotic state do vary significantly in the course of a hypnotic session when examined over short time intervals, but are fairly stable when subjects' ratings are averaged together over the entire session" (p. 582). Tart (1979) identifies the advantages of the self-report scale over more conventional behavioral measures:

It takes little time to teach the subject how to use the self-report scale. Second, it takes only seconds to get a report, and asking for these reports does not seem to disturb the subject. Third, ascertaining depth by behavioral measures at any given moment involves giving several suggestibility tests of varying degrees of difficulty. Judging by the present data, the subject's depth might very well change in the time taken to administer these test. (p. 598)

Dependent Variables

A. Inquiry into Possible Normal Acquisition of Information.

At the end of the past-life identity interview before awakening past-life responders from hypnosis, an inquiry is made into possible normal sources of information for the acquisition of material provided by past-life responders. Past-life responders are asked (a) to search their memory and tell the experimenter the names of all books they have read inside or outside of school relating to history, (b) recall any possible source for the information reported during their past-life experience and whether there was any place they can think of to verify the information, and (c) whether they have ever read, seen, or heard any story resembling or giving any of the facts reported during their past-life experience.

B. Belief and Attitude Toward Reincarnation Questionnaires

Participants are administered three scales to assess their stance toward reincarnation (Spanos et al., 1991).

1. The first measure is a single-item scale that assesses the participant's belief in reincarnation. This single-item is scored on a 7-point subscale (ranging from 0 to 6). The item yields a single BELIEF score per subject.
2. The second measure is a single-item scale that assesses the participant's expectation of experiencing a past life during the hypnotic session. This single-item is scored on a 7-point subscale (ranging from 0 to 6). The item yields a single EXPECTATION score per subject.
3. The third measure is a 12-item adjective checklist on which participants rate their attitudes toward reincarnation (e.g., interesting, foolish, impossible). Each item is scored on a 4-point subscale that ranges from *not at all true* (0) to *very true* (3) with the scoring of negative items reversed. Scores for each item are summed to yield a single ATTITUDE toward reincarnation score for each subject (ranging from 0 to 36).

C. Response to Past-Life Suggestion Questionnaires

Participants will be administered three measures to assess the characteristics of their responses to the past-life suggestion (Spanos et al., 1991).

1. The first measure is a four-item scale that assesses the extent to which subjects experience their primary self as fading into the background during their past-life experience; for example, "During the past-life regression my current self faded into the background." Each item is scored on a 4-point subscale that ranges from *not at all, never occurred, definitely not true* (0) to *very much, often occurred, definitely true* (3). The four subscale scores are summed to yield a single SELF-FADING score for each subject (range 0-12). Spanos et al. (1991, p. 310) report an internal consistency reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .80.
2. The second measure is a three item-scale that assesses the subjective intensity of the past life-experience; for example, "Please choose the number which best describes how vivid the experience was." Each item is scored on a 4-point subscale that ranges from *not at all, never occurred, definitely not true* (0) to *very much, often occurred, definitely true* (3). Items are summed to yield a single INTENSITY score per subject (range 0-9). Spanos et al. (1991, p. 310) report an internal consistency reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .70.
3. The third measure is a single-item scale that asks subjects to rate the credibility that they assigned to their past-life experience. This single-item is scored on a 5-point scale ranging from *I feel sure it was a fantasy experience* (0) to *I feel sure that it was a real past-life experience* (4). The item yields a single CREDIBILITY score per subject.

Procedures

Session 1: CURSS Assessment of Hypnotizability.

Pre-experimental interview. On arrival at the Clinical Psychology laboratory for the first session, participants will be briefly interviewed about (a) why have they volunteered for this research study, (b) what do they already know about the study, (c) whether anyone is under 18 years of age, (d) is anyone taking any medication or other drugs (e.g., for diet, colds, mood-altering effects), have been hospitalized or currently undergoing psychotherapy, (e) have they ever been hypnotized before, (f) what have they read, seen, or heard about hypnosis, (g) what do they believe hypnosis to be (i.e., how do they think it works), (h) if they wear contacts, are they comfortable with their eyes closed.

Participants will then be tested for hypnotizability in groups of 7-10 individuals on the Carleton University Responsiveness to Suggestion Scale (CURSS: Spanos, Radtke, Hodgins, Stam, & Bertrand, 1983a). The protocol for the CURSS session is adapted from verbatim instructions for administration of the CURSS provided by Spanos et al. (1981). Briefly, participants are politely greeted by the experimenter [the Principle Investigator] as they arrive, accompanied to the waiting area, and seated. The faculty advisor will be present in a supervisory capacity at all sessions. At the start time, two consent forms are given to all participants, who are requested to read and sign one, retain the other for their files (See **Appendix A**). The experimenter answers any questions that participants may have about the study at this time. While participants are reading the consent form, a CURSS Response Booklet is distributed to each participant (see **Appendix C**). After participants have read, signed, and returned one copy of the consent form to the experimenter, the experimenter reads the following introductory script based on verbatim instructions provided by Spanos, et al. (1981)

Preliminary Remarks by Examiner (Adopted from Shor & Orne, 1962)

"Today's session will involve a test of your ability to respond to hypnotic suggestions. This test was developed at Carleton University, and is called the Carleton University Responsiveness to Suggestion Scale. It takes about 50 minutes to complete this procedure. Most of the session will involve listening to a pre-recorded tape of a standardized hypnotic procedure followed by test suggestions. These suggestions are quite straightforward, and so the most part involve simple hand or arm movements. The tape will provide instructions as to what is requested of you throughout the session. You'll be asked to follow along in your response booklet. The tape will tell you when to open the booklet, when to go on to the next page, and so on. Please clear the tabletop in front of you except for the booklet you've been given, and a pen or pencil. I won't be watching you while you're listening and responding to the tape, and you won't be asked to do anything at all embarrassing. We determine your responsiveness by your responses in the booklet, so we don't have to observe you during testing. It's actually a very straightforward procedure."

"Let's talk awhile before we start. I want you to be quite at ease, and it may help if I answer a few of your questions first. I'm assuming that for some of you this is the first time you are experiencing hypnosis. [Note: In presenting the following remarks, the experimenter may find it useful in establishing rapport to elicit some questioning and participation from members of the group. Questions are to be answered by paraphrasing the points below.]

"People experiencing hypnosis for the first time are sometimes a little uneasy because they do not know what the experience will be like, or because they have a distorted notion of what it is like. It is very natural to be curious about a new experience. Your curiosity will be satisfied before we are through, but you can best get the answers you want by just letting yourself be a part of what goes on, and by not trying to watch the process in detail.

"Some people, however, have a tendency to allay their initial uneasiness in a new situation by laughing, giggling or whispering. We must request that you refrain from this type of response for the duration of the procedures here so as not to disrupt the concentration of the individuals around you.

"To allow you to feel more fully at ease in the situation, let me reassure you on a few points. First of all, the experience, while a little unusual, may not seem so far removed from your ordinary experience as you have been led to expect. Hypnosis is largely a question of your willingness to be receptive and responsive to ideas, and to allow these ideas to act upon you without interference. These ideas we call suggestions.

"Second, you will not be asked to do anything that will make you look silly or stupid, or that will prove embarrassing to you. We are here for serious scientific purposes.

"Third, and finally, I shall not probe into your personal affairs, so that there will be nothing personal about what you are to do or say during the hypnotic state.

"There is nothing fearful or mysterious about hypnosis. It is a perfectly normal consequence of certain psychological processes that occur in everyday life. It is a quite natural state of concentrated attention and narrowing of focus upon a particular thought or idea, with all distractions cut out. It is a quite *conscious* performance and portrays the importance of belief. Relaxation can help simply because bodily messages are also quieted, and the mind not concerned with them, thereby activating subconscious mechanisms. In a sense you are hypnotized whenever you become absorbed in anything - reading a book, watching a movie, driving your car, studying for a test, praying in church -- oblivious to your surroundings as you tune into inner realities. Do you ever daydream? It's a state of hypnosis.

"Many people report that becoming hypnotized feels at first like falling asleep, but with the difference that somehow or other they keep hearing my voice as a sort of background to whatever other experience they may have. In some ways hypnosis is like sleepwalking; however, hypnosis is also an individual experience and is not just alike for everyone. In a sense the hypnotized person is like a sleepwalker, for you can carry out various and complex activities while remaining hypnotized. All I ask of you is that you keep up your attention and interest and continue to cooperate as you have been cooperating.

"Nothing will be done that will cause you any embarrassment. Most people find this a very interesting experience.

"You may wonder why we are doing these experiments. Hypnotism is being used more and more by physicians: for example, to relieve pain, by obstetricians to make childbirth easier, by psychiatrists to reduce anxiety. If we can understand the processes involved, we will know more about the relationship between ideas and actions, more about the way in which personality operates. So in participating here you are contributing to scientific knowledge of a kind that can be used to help other human beings. We are trying here merely to understand hypnotism. Probably all people can be hypnotized, but some are much more readily hypnotized than others, even when each of them cooperates. We are studying some of these differences among people.

"Are there any questions before we get started? [Answer questions] Now, try to get as comfortable as possible in your chairs, relax, and we'll get started with the tape." "Individuals who wear glasses should keep them on. If, however, you are wearing contact lenses, it might be more comfortable to remove them. In order to keep our main procedures constant they have been put onto a tape recording. In a moment I shall turn on the tape recorder."

Lights are dimmed and the tape is started, beginning with the administration of a standardized 5-min hypnotic induction procedure, followed by seven test suggestions, then a standard "wake-up" procedure, and concluding with instructions to answer questions in the CURSS Response Booklet. Spanos et al. (1983a) summarize the hypnotic procedure in the following way:

The first part of the Carleton induction instruct[s] subjects to close their eyes and informed them that hypnosis is neither dangerous nor mysterious. It also encouraged them to cooperate with the procedures and to try their best to follow all instructions and suggestions. The remainder of the induction include[s] repeated and interrelated suggestions for drowsiness, sleep, relaxation and entering hypnosis. Following the induction, subjects [are] administered the seven test suggestions. Each suggestion [takes] 50 sec. to administer, and the suggestions [are] presented in the order specified in the scoring manual. Following the final suggestion subjects [are] administered a standard 'wake-up' procedure and self-scored their overt and subjective responses to each suggestion in a booklet provided at the beginning of the session. (pp. 525-526)

A transcript of the CURSS hypnotic induction procedure and test suggestions is provided in **Appendix B**. The voice on the tape is male (Principle Investigator).

When the tape is finished and once each person finishes his/her response booklet, the experimenter scores it (just the CURSS:O score), and puts the score on the top right corner of the front cover, and tells participants he will explain the score later. After all booklets are scored, verbal feedback is given. While giving feedback, an Information (debriefing) sheet is distributed (see **Appendix D**). After finishing feedback, the experimenter asks participants if they have any further questions, and tells them they can retain the Information

sheet. Participants then schedule with the experimenter a date and time that they can return to the Clinical Psychology Laboratory to participate in the second phase of the study involving an hour-long hypnotic regression and assessment session. Participants are then thanked for their participation and dismissed. This hypnotizability screening procedure provides participants with an initial experience with hypnosis. If they had not had such an experience with hypnosis, then the subsequent session would likely more strongly reflect transitional effects of adapting to a new situation and less the hypnotic effects of the regression session itself.

Session 2: Past-Life Experiences

Orienting instructions.

Participants will be individually tested in a single hypnotic regression session by the same male experimenter. Subjects at all level of hypnotizability will be tested. On arrival at the laboratory for the second session, the subject will be greeted politely by the experimenter, and invited into a room and with a comfortable chair and a cassette tape recorder. The subject is then informed that he/she will be administered a hypnotic procedure and suggestions to regress to age 15, age 5, and age 1 in this life and then to a time "beyond the point of their birth" (Spanos et al., 1991). Subjects listen to the following tape-recorded instructions:

"In a moment, you will be administered a standard hypnotic procedure similar to the one you experienced during the first session of this experiment. Then you will be administered repeated simple age regression suggestions in which I count backwards from ten to zero and suggest that when the count is completed you will be first 15 years old, then 5 years old, and then 1 year old. I will suggest that only pleasant episodes will be remembered and that if you experience any sense of uneasiness, you will come out of the trance whenever you choose at the count of three. When the episode at 1 year old seems completed, then the above procedure will be repeated, and suggestions will be given that on repeat of the count, you will see scenes from a time before you were (give present name). After each regression, you will be asked a series of questions about your experiences. You will then be instructed to awaken from hypnosis and administered six scales that assess your past-life experiences and attitudes about reincarnation. Do you have any questions about the procedure?"

Instructions for reporting hypnotic depth and "demand for honest reports."

Instruction for self-report measurement of hypnotic depth (Tart, 1979, p. 579) are then given:

"During your experience of hypnosis, I will be interested in knowing just how hypnotized you are. you will be able to tell me this by calling out a number from zero to ten, depending on how hypnotized you feel yourself to be. *Zero* will mean that you are awake and alert, as you normally are. *One* will mean a kind of borderline state, between sleeping and waking. *Two* will mean that you are lightly hypnotized. If you call out the number *five*, it will mean that you feel quite strongly and deeply hypnotized. If you feel really very hypnotized, you would call out an *eight* or *nine*. *Ten* will mean that you are very deeply hypnotized and you can do just about anything I suggest to you. Naturally, hypnosis can increase and decrease in depth from time to time, and that is the kind of thing I'll be interested in finding out from you."

"Let me explain *how* you will report your state of hypnosis. When I ask, "State?" you are to tell me the *first* number that pops into your mind, and this will represent your state at that time. We've found that this first impression is more accurate than if you stop to think about just what the number should be. This may seem a little hard at first, but it will get easy as you go along. Just call out the first number that pops into your mind when I ask, "State?" Remember the number zero means your normal waking state, five means quite strongly hypnotized, and ten means you are deep enough to experience just about anything I suggest. Just say the first number from zero to ten that comes into your mind when I ask, "State?" Let's try it now. State? [All subjects call out a zero at this time]. At various times during your experience I'll ask for your state, and you'll call out the first number that pops into your mind."

"The "demand for honest reports" is now given.

"I want to know about your experience and you will be able to tell me this by describing your experience and answering the question I ask when I ask you to do so. I stress that your honesty and accuracy is absolutely necessary for the value of this study and I want you to tell the truth whatever that might be. There are no right or wrong answers here. It only matters that you be truthful and accurate. Remember to say whatever's no your mind. Don't hold back. Say something, when asked to do so, even if only "I'm drawing a blank" Speak audibly and watch out for your voice dropping as you become involved in your experience. "

Hypnotic induction.

After these preliminaries and after answering any questions, a 20-minute tape-recorded hypnotic induction procedure adopted from LeCron (1971, pp. 101-105) and regression suggestions adopted from Masters & Houston (1972) and Roberts (1966/1993) are administered. [Alternative model induction talks are presented in **Appendix H**]

Preparation for trance. "Now get comfortable. Sit with your legs uncrossed and your arms at your sides or resting on the arms of the chair.

Eye closure for hypnosis. "Fix your gaze on something. While you watch it, let your eyes go out of focus if you can. Now take a deep breath. That helps you relax. The more you relax the easier it is for you to slip into hypnosis. Soon you will find you are more relaxed than you probably ever have been before. Just relax and let go.

"Soon your eyelids will begin to feel rather heavy. As you continue to look at the object you've selected, the eyelids will get heavier and heavier, heavier and heavier. Probably you will begin to blink a bit. There may be a slight watering of your eyes as the eye muscles relax more and more. The lids are getting heavier and heavier. Let them wink if they seem to want to wink. Let them close whenever they want to close. The lids are relaxing more and more, which is why they feel so heavy and want to wink. Soon they will want to close. The lids are relaxing more and more. Soon they will want to close. Let them close whenever you want to. They are so heavy. Getting still heavier. It's even hard to keep them open.

"Take another deep breath now. Let your eyes close if they are not already closed. In a moment you may find that you need to swallow. Swallow whenever you feel the need. [And give yourself permission now/ for your own learning/ for your own experience to go into trance. And periodically take the time to go deeper all by yourself. Remember that I am interested in your experience at deep levels]

Progressive relaxation of the body to quiet distractions. "Probably you are developing a listless, drowsy feeling. Drowsy and rather sleepy. Very drowsy, and you feel more and more drowsy as you relax still more. You can relax more now. Begin with your right leg. Make all the muscles taut. Wiggle the toes, stretch the muscles in your calf and upper leg by moving your foot. Then let the muscles loosen up and go limp from your toes right up to your hip. Now do the same with your left leg, tightening all the muscles, then letting them go loose. Relax the whole leg from the toes to the hip.

"Your body can relax more now. Let your stomach and abdominal muscles loosen. Then your chest and breathing muscles. The muscles of your back can loosen and be limp. Let them loosen completely. Now your shoulders and the neck muscles. Often we have a tension in that area. Feel the tension going out of those muscles as they loosen. And now make your right arm stiff and rigid, then let it go completely relaxed. Let all the muscles go slack from your shoulder right down to your fingertips. Your arm will relax completely. In the same way, relax your left arm. Even your facial muscles will relax. Notice how comfortable you feel. All tension is leaving you, draining away. You are so very comfortable and drowsy now.

"You will listen attentively to what is being said. If there are outside noises you need pay no attention to them. They go in one ear and out the other. They are unimportant. Listen only to my voice. [This is *your* experience, *your* learning, and it all belongs to you. . . and that can be anything you want].

"Often there is a flickering of the eyelids when you are in hypnosis. It is one of the signs of hypnosis. Sometimes they do not flicker even if you are in hypnosis. If your do, they will soon relax and stop fluttering as you sink deeper and deeper.

"Take still another deep breath and let yourself go completely. Enjoying the dreamy, drowsy feeling. Hypnosis is not sleep, for you are always fully aware. But you will feel so very drowsy. Such a comfortable pleasant listlessness is creeping over you more and more as you relax so completely. Perhaps your whole body feels heavy, particularly your arms and legs. Notice that your breathing has changed. You are breathing more from the bottom of your lungs, abdominal breathing, and you are breathing more slowly.

"Notice the feeling of comfort and well-being which has come over you. Give way to the listless drowsiness. Everyone enjoys being in hypnosis. It is so comfortable and pleasant. Your whole body is relaxed and tensions seem to drain away.

Deepening through visualization. "Now you can go still deeper into this pleasant state. Let go and go deeper with each breath. Deeper and deeper. The deeper you go the more comfortable and pleasant it seems. Now imagine that you are

standing at the top of an escalator such as are in some stores. See the steps moving down in front of you and see the railings. If you do not like to ride escalators, imagine a staircase instead. I will count backwards from ten to zero. If you are using the escalator step on it as I begin to count, standing with your hand on the railing. Or if you use the staircase, start walking slowly down as I count. you are all alone. It is your private escalator. When we reach zero, imagine that you have reached the bottom and step off.

"Ten -- and you step on. Each count will take you deeper and deeper. *Nine* (slowly), *eight, seven, six*. You are going deeper and deeper. *Five, four, three*, still deeper. *Two, one*, and *zero*. Now, step off the escalator or staircase. You can continue to go deeper with each breath you take.

Test of hypnotic arm levitation for self-confidence. "Your arms and legs may feel quite heavy by now. They are so completely relaxed. [You may even doubt that you are in a light trance, since sometimes there is little noticeable difference in the feel of your awareness. There is, however, a subtle change in your conscious relationship with the physical environment. Your eyes are closed. You know that the room is there. Sounds may rush up from the street. The difference is that you are no longer interested or concerned with such stimuli. If you want to prove to yourself that you are in a trance state, you may do so. In the beginning this may be good for your self-confidence. Here is a test that you can use]. Tell yourself that one of your arms is going to begin to lose any feeling of heaviness and will grow lighter and lighter. It's as if all of the weight were draining out of it. It may be your right arm, or it may be the left. Let's see which one it will be. Soon the one which is getting lighter will start to lift from its position. It's getting lighter and lighter. You may feel the fingers of the hand beginning to move a little, or the whole hand may lift. The hand will start to lift, to float up towards your face, but of its own accord, without conscious effort. It goes up by itself. The hand and arm are becoming still lighter. lighter and lighter. The hand is beginning to float up. Up toward your face. The arm starts to bend at the elbow and lift.

"It might be interesting to think of some part of your face where you want the fingers to touch when they reach your face. It could be your forehead, your ear, your chin -- any part. But your subconscious mind will see that the fingers touch some different part of your face from the one you selected. Where will it touch? It is lifting higher and higher still. It is as light as a feather. lifting. It can move a bit faster now. If it has not yet started, lift it a few inches to give it a start and it then will continue to move up of its own accord.

"Your hand is lifting higher and higher. As it goes up you can go still deeper. The higher your hand goes, the deeper you will go. The deeper you go, the higher your hand will lift. Soon the fingers will be making a contact, touching your face at some different place from the one you consciously selected. Reaching out now to touch your face. The wrist turning. The hand goes still higher. If your hand has not already touched, it will continue to rise while we speak of other things, continuing to go up until you feel it touch your face. Then the arm will go down to some comfortable position. If it has touched you may lower it.

"Let yourself go still deeper now. How comfortable you are. Drift still deeper and enjoy it. Deeper and deeper."

Turning on the inner senses. Now pretend that you are on a lighted stage, the stage being the room in which you now sit/ Pretend that the lights have gone out/ the setting has disappeared and you are alone/ Everything is dark / Be quiet/

Imagine now as vividly as you can the existence of inner senses/ For now pretend that they correspond to your physical one/ Be receptive/ Very gently listen/ not to physical sounds/ but to sounds that come to you through the inner senses/ Images may begin to appear/ Pretend that there is an inner world, and that it will be revealed to you as you learn to perceive it with these inner senses/ Pretend that you have been blind to this world all your life/ and are now slowly gaining sight within it/ You are learning to focus in a new dimension of awareness/

I want you to realize that you are indeed highly perceptive// that around you and about you in all directions/ your inner senses reach/ switching the channels of your awareness now to those events that have escaped your notice earlier. . .

"State? [STATE REPORT #1]

"Now, in a moment I am going to administer several simple age regression suggestions, and am going to suggest that only pleasant episodes be remembered. If you feel any sense of uneasiness at any time during this procedure, you may end the trance whenever you choose at the count of three, returning to your present identity and present age. But you will wish to sleep and have the experiences I shall presently describe. You are feeling comfortable and relaxed, comfortable and relaxed, and you are in a deep sound sleep -- a deep sound sleep -- fully prepared to respond to and experience what I will ask you to

do. Fully prepared to respond to each of the suggestions which I will now give you, and you will be able to speak and still stay under hypnosis.

This-life age-regression suggestions.

After putting the subject in a trance state, the hypnotic induction is then followed by a three 5-minute suggestions administered by the experimenter that informs the participant that he (she) regressing in time to age 15, age 5, and age 1 (modified from Roberts, 1966/1993, pp. 182-183). Subjects' responses are tape recorded. The aim of the age-regression component of the study is to build up participants' confidence in their ability to experience their own subconscious memories in hypnosis. The three ages 15, 5, and 1 year old were selected to provide a psychic footpath, so to speak, composed of stones laid out in some order, and not too far from one another that lead the participant away from his present identity and back to it safely.

Time Tunnel. "Now, on this occasion, we will begin to explore that potential you have for remembering those parts of you past that you decide you would like to remember. We will explore that, with your eyes closed, listening attentively to me, just the words that are spoken to you, and you may feel that you are going deeper into trance, going deeper, and you won't think about that movement down, and in, but just listen, and respond to what is being said to you.

"Letting the words just ripple over you, swirl around you, around and around you, drawn back into the past, or down, into the past. And is past down? Or back? Or is there any place that is past, or any direction leading to past? Or present? Present is no place if past is no place, for the past used to be a present and what is present is now past. Present moving back and down into past, or past moving into present, and which is past, and which is present, and what is present is past, and past is present, as you go deeper now, and just keep on going deeper, as the words keep swirling, round and round, and round, about you, and over you, leading you deeper, deeper down.

"Going deeper, and going back in time, the past becoming very accessible to you, so that you might even find yourself in a present that you thought was past. But now it is here, and you are in the midst of it, and you can remember exceedingly well, if that is the way we want to put it, because you can go back now in time, and you *are* going back.

Age 15

"I am going to count backwards from ten to zero. When the count is completed you will be 15 years old. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . I am going to count backwards from ten to zero. When the count is completed you will be 15 years old. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . I am now going to count backwards from ten to zero. When the count is completed you will be 15 years old. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . Ten. . . Nine. . . Eight. . . Seven. . . Six. . . Five. . . Four. . . Three. . . Two. . . One.

"State? [STATE REPORT #2]

The experimenter then gives the subject the following suggestion and asks the following questions:

"Tell yourself that you will be able to speak and still stay under hypnosis as you answer the following questions that I am now going to ask you. Again, tell yourself that you will be able to speak and still stay under hypnosis as you answer the following questions that I am now going to ask you."

1. How old are you?
2. Where are you?
3. Who is with you?
4. What year is it?
5. What are you doing?

When the episode at age 15 seems completed, then the above procedure will be repeated, and suggestions given that on repeat of the count, the subject will be 5 years old.

Age 5

"I am going to count backwards from ten to zero. When the count is completed you will be 5 years old. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . I am going to count backwards from ten to zero. When the count is completed you will be 5 years old. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . I am now going to count backwards from ten to zero. When the count is completed you will be 5

years old. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . . Ten. . . Nine. . . .Eight. . . Seven. . . . Six. . . . Five. . . . Four. . . . Three. . . . Two. . . . One.

"State? [STATE REPORT #3]

The experimenter then asks the subject the following questions:

1. How old are you?
2. Where are you?
3. Who is with you?
4. What year is it?
5. What are you doing?

When the episode at age 5 seems completed, then the above procedure will be repeated, and suggestions given that on repeat of the count, the subject will be 1 year old.

Age 1

"I am going to count backwards from ten to zero. When the count is completed you will be 1 year old. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . . I am going to count backwards from ten to zero. When the count is completed you will be 1 year old. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . . I am now going to count backwards from ten to zero. When the count is completed you will be 1 year old. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . . Ten. . . Nine. . . .Eight. . . Seven. . . . Six. . . . Five. . . . Four. . . . Three. . . . Two. . . . One.

"State? [STATE REPORT #4]

The experimenter then asks the subject the following questions:

1. How old are you?
2. Where are you?
3. Who is with you?
4. What year is it?
5. What are you doing?

Past-life experience suggestion

When the episode at 1 year old seems completed, then the above procedure will be repeated, and suggestions given that on repeat of the count, the subject will see scenes from a time before he/she were his/her present identity (modified from Roberts, 1966/1993, p. 177).

"I am going to count backward from ten to zero. Now as odd as this might seem, when the count is finished you will see scenes from a time before you were (give present name).. . . When you do this, it is a very easy thing for you to slip into a deep altered state and get in tune and in touch with your own deeper all-knowing self. So feel yourself getting in touch with this, going deeper and deeper into the altered state. Feel your mind expanding, down into your subconscious, out into your superconscious, expanding like the circles in a pool when you drop in a pebble. Your mind expands and expands, bringing into the conscious self all that wonderful knowledge and information that is available to you about the rest of your lives]. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . . Again, I am going to count backward from ten to zero. And as odd as this might seem, when the count is finished you will see scenes from a time before you were (give present name). Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . ."I want you to go back slowly to the time before you were (give present name) and tell me, if you can, who you were and what you did before your became (give present name)" . . . I am now going to count backward from ten to zero. As odd as this might seem, when the count is finished you will see scenes from a time before you were (give present name). Only pleasant episodes will be remembered . . . Ten. . . Nine. . . .Eight. . . Seven. . . . Six. . . . Five. . . . Four. . . . Three. . . . Two. . . . One.

"State? [STATE REPORT #5]

The experimenter then asks the subject the following questions:

1. How old are you?
2. Where are you?
3. Who is with you?
4. What year is it?
5. What are you doing?
6. What is your name?

On the basis of their verbal responses to these items, the experimenter classifies subjects as displaying or not displaying a past-life identity. Subjects do not display a past life who state (a) their present age, (b) location is the experimental room, (c) the experimenter is with them, (d) the year as 2009, (e) they are participating in an experiment, and (f) give their own name, or otherwise state unequivocally that they remained themselves and are not in a past life.

No-past-life responders

Awakening instructions.

Subjects who do not report a past-life identity will be instructed to awaken from hypnosis after the last question:

"I am going to count from one to ten. When the count is completed you will be back in the present time. You will be [insert present name] at age [insert present age].. . . You will be refreshed and relaxed at the end of the session. . . . I am now going to count from one to ten. When the count is completed you will be back in the present time. You will be [insert present name] at age [insert present age].. . . You will awaken feeling refreshed and relaxed at the end of the session. . . . One. . . . Two. . . . Three Four. . . . Five. . . . Six. . . . Seven. . . . Eight. . . . Nine. . . . Ten. . . [When the subject awakens, ask] What is your name? How old are you? "

The hypnotic past-life regression session is not be ended until [the subject] correctly gives [his/her] present age and identity.

"Very good. No I want you to focus your attention as fully as you can outward into the physical environment and the present moment as clearly as possible -- letting the sights and sounds of the physical situation come to your attention. Now stand up. Breath in and out deeply as you stretch your body. Do you feel fully awake?"

Past-life responders

Subjects who report a past-life identity will be administered an interview that takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. Throughout the interview, the experimenter uses the name of the past-life identity when such a name has been provided.

If the subject maintain he/she is a *fetus in the womb*, then suggestions are given so that with the regular counting procedure, the age of the personality is regressed "even further back beyond the point of their conception."

"I am now going to count backward from ten to zero. As odd as this might seem, when the count is finished you will see scenes from a time even further back beyond the point of your conception before you were (give present name). Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . . I am going to count backward from ten to zero. As odd as this might seem, when the count is finished you will see scenes from a time even further back beyond the point of your conception before you were (give present name). Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . . Ten. . . . Nine. . . . Eight. . . . Seven. . . . Six. . . . Five. . . . Four. . . . Three. . . . Two. . . . One.

If the subject maintains he/she is child in a past life, then suggestions are given so that with the regular counting procedure, the age of the personality is advanced to adulthood.

"I am now going to count backwards from ten to zero. When the count is completed you will be an adult. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . . I am going to count backwards from ten to zero. When the count is completed you will be

an adult. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . . I am going to count backwards from ten to zero. When the count is completed you will be an adult. Only pleasant episodes will be remembered. . . . Ten. . . Nine. . . Eight. . . Seven. . . Six. . . Five. . . Four. . . Three. . . Two. . . One. At the end of the count, the PI asks the subject the questions indicate below for an adult:

If the subject maintains that he/she is an *adult in a past life*, then the following questions will be asked:

1. Are you married?
2. What is your (husband's or wife's) name?
3. Do you have any children?
4. What is(are) your (children's) names?
5. Do you belong to any organizations? Which ones?
6. Who is the president, king, or ruler of your country?
7. Is your country at peace or war?
8. What is the name of your country?
9. What is your occupation?
10. What are your parents' names?
11. From what country did your parents come?
12. Do you read a daily newspaper? Which one?
13. Who is pictured on the coin or paper currency used in your community?
14. Where do you live?
15. What is the name of the town?
16. What is the name of the street?
17. Tell me what you see.

"State? [STATE REPORT #6]

Inquiry into possible normal acquisition of information.

At the end of the past-life identity interview, an inquiry was then made into possible normal sources of information for the acquisition of material provided by past-life responders. [Note: The inquiry is generally non-directive, and spontaneous free associations are encouraged].

"Before you awaken, I'd like to ask you a few questions into possible normal sources of information from which you acquired the material you provided me a few moments ago.

1. First, I'd like you to search your memory and tell me the names of all books you have read inside or outside of school relating to history.
2. Now I'd like you to recall any possible source for the information reported during your past-life experience and whether there was any place you can think of to verify the information.
3. Have you ever read, seen, or heard any story resembling or giving any of the facts reported during your past-life experience?"

Awakening instructions.

At the end of the inquiry into possible normal acquisition of information, subjects are then instructed to awaken from hypnosis using a procedure adapted from Baker (1982, p. 74) and Roberts (1966/1993, p. 187)

"You've worked very hard now and deserve a rest. Sit back in the chair, relax, go to sleep and dream about a place you have always wanted to visit. Even though you are asleep and dreaming you can still hear my voice. [Post-hypnotic suggestion given here]. In just a few minutes I will wake you. Before you go to sleep there is something important to remember. When you awake in a few minutes do not forget to ask me about the book I want you to read. It's very important to remember. [Three minute pause].

"I am going to count from one to ten. When the count is completed you will be back in the present time. You will be [insert present name] at age [insert present age].. . . You will be refreshed and relaxed at the end of the session. . . . I am now going to count from one to ten. When the count is completed you will be back in the present time. You will be [insert present name] at age [insert present age].. . . You will awaken feeling refreshed and relaxed at the end of the session. . . . One. . . . Two. . . .

.Three Four. . . . Five. . . . Six. . . . Seven. . . . Eight. . . . Nine. . . Ten. . . [When the subject awakens, ask] What is your name? How old are you? "

The hypnotic past-life regression session is not be ended until [the subject] correctly gives [his/her] present age and identity. Participants who provide post-hypnotic responses (indicative of a good hypnotic trance) will be duly noted.

"Very good. No I want you to focus your attention as fully as you can outward into the physical environment and the present moment as clearly as possible -- letting the sights and sounds of the physical situation come to your attention. Now stand up. Breath in and out deeply as you stretch your body. Do you feel fully awake?"

Posttests

Belief and Attitude Toward Reincarnation Questionnaires

At the end of the post-experimental interview, all participants are administered three "reincarnation" measures that requires them to answer questions on two single-item scales that assess BELIEF in reincarnation (scored 0-6), and EXPECTATION of experiencing a past life during the hypnotic session (scored 0-6). In addition, the subject will rate his/her ATTITUDES toward reincarnation on a 12-item adjective checklist (e.g., interesting, foolish, and impossible).

Response to Past-Life Suggestion Questionnaires

After responding to the three "reincarnation" scales, participants are administered three additional measures that assess their past-life experiences (Spanos et al., 1981). The first measure is a four-item scale that assesses the extent to which subjects experience their present identity and personality as *fading* into the background during their past-life experience. The second measure is a three-item scale that assesses the subjective *intensity* of the past life-experience. The third measure is a single-item scale that asks subjects to rate the *credibility* that they assigned to their past-life experience.

After subjects complete all six questionnaires, verbal feedback is given. While giving feedback, an Information (debriefing) sheet is given to the participant (see **Appendix E**). After finishing feedback, the experimenter asks the subject if he/she has any further questions. The subject is then thanked for his (her) participation and dismissed.

Steps Taken to minimize any Potential Stress

Numerous safeguard have been built into the informed consent and experimental procedure to minimize any potential stress:

1. The study involves research that poses no foreseeable long-term physical, mental, social or emotional risk to participants nor is there any use of deception.
2. The study employs benign interviews and questionnaires about participants' experiences and behaviors.
3. Hypnotizability assessment is a commonly used procedure which is felt to pose minimal risk for undergraduate students. Some people may experience anxiety or discomfort during initial experiences with hypnosis; however, this is usually temporary and diminishes with growing familiarity with trance experience.
4. The hypnotic regression procedure contains several suggestions designed to protect participants from any sense of uneasiness: (a) a suggestion that only pleasant memories will be remembered, (b) a suggestion that participants can come out of the trance whenever they choose, (c) no session is ever ended until participants correctly give their present age and identity, (d) a suggestion that participants will be refreshed and relaxed at the end of the session, (e) care is given to reassure that each participant is wide awake and alert before leaving the hypnotic session.
5. The hypnosis research project is directly supervised by faculty advisor, Paul F. Cunningham, Ph.D., who has an earned doctorate in psychology from the University of Tennessee, who received specialized training in hypnosis (i.e., supervised practice and professional workshops) and training to work with the designated population (i.e., healthy volunteers), and whose doctoral dissertation investigated "The effects of different probe procedures on the experience of imagining in hypnotic and waking states of consciousness" (Cunningham, 1986).
6. The Principle Investigator receives hypnosis training of no less than 10 hours in duration that includes: being hypnotized; hypnotizing subjects under direct, personal supervision of the faculty advisor; discussion of possible complications; discussion of the general phenomena of hypnosis; education in research ethics and education about the clear distinction between activities of a hypnosis researcher and a hypnotherapist.
7. The informed consent form provides full disclosure to participants about the details of the procedure, the confidentiality of their records, and what risks and benefits they can expect as a result of their participation in the study.
8. Participants may discontinue their participation in the experiment at any time without penalty.

9. Participants explicitly acknowledge that they have not volunteered for the experiment chiefly in the hope of self-improvement, that they have been explicitly informed that their participation in this research is for experimental, not therapeutic purposes, and that no therapeutic treatment of any kind will be undertaken. Assurances are given that, at the completion of the experiment, the individual will be exactly as he (she) was when he (she) began, and that no permanent change, either positive or negative, may be legitimately expected.
10. Participants below the age of 18 (minors) who have been hospitalized for a psychiatric disorder, or who are undergoing psychotherapy are excluded from the study.
11. In the event participants feel any discomfort, or notice aftereffects that they attribute to the hypnotic induction or to the hypnotic experience, contact information about on-campus counseling services, and faculty advising is provided in the informed consent. Dr. H. Alan Goodman, licensed clinical psychologist is also available within the research team to meet any emergency which may arise.
12. A follow-up letter will be sent to all participants who complete the study that will inquire about any aftereffects in their daily experience that they believe may have resulted from their participation in this experiment.
- 13.

Data Analysis

Demographics of past-life identities.

A descriptive analysis will be conducted identifying the frequency and percentage of participants who reported a past-life identity and participants who did not. The demographics of past-life identities of past-life responders will be described (i.e., the frequency and percentage of past-life responders who supplied a name, age, and sex for their past-life identity, a date, a specific country, and so forth).

Historical analysis.

The information obtained from past-life responders regarding their past-life identities will be evaluated for historical accuracy, on the grounds that it cannot be taken for granted that such material is valid. Every attempt will be made to check the information against existing records and documents in order to verify the validity of such data, in those instances where it is possible, and given the allotted time schedule for completion of the thesis. The accumulated data will be checked against public records, old courthouse files, etc. wherever and whenever possible. This is obviously a difficult and time-consuming procedure, but if names and dates and locations check out against historical documents, then we will be closer to some kind of validation for past-life regression therapy and scientific proof of reincarnation.

Correlations among variables.

Pearson product-moment correlations will be computed for the past-life responders between CURSS dimensions, belief/attitude/expectancy reincarnation variables, and the three past-life experience questionnaires (self-fading, subjective intensity, and credibility of past-life experiences to examine the relationship among pretest hypnotizability variables (CURSS: Carleton University Responsiveness to Suggestion Scale; O = objective, S = subjective, OI = objective-involuntariness) and the six posttest variables (BELIEFS = beliefs about reincarnation, EXPECTATION = expectancy of experiencing a past life, ATTITUDES = attitudes toward reincarnation, FADING = self-fading within past-life experience, INTENSITY = subjective intensity of past-life experience, CREDIBILITY = credibility of past life experience) ($p < .05$).

Means differences.

A Hotelling's T^2 (F-ratio) analysis comparing means of past-life responders and no-past-life responders (PAST LIFE condition vs. NO PAST LIFE condition) on the three "reincarnation" variables (BELIEFS, EXPECTATION, and ATTITUDES), the three "past-life experience" variables (FADING, INTENSITY, CREDIBILITY) and CURSS scores will be conducted to determine whether there is a significant overall difference between the two conditions ($p < .05$). Univariate t tests will be conducted to confirm whether any of the mean differences on any of the three variables approach significance ($p < .05$).

Predictors of past-life reporting.

A multiple regression analysis will be conducted to determine whether scores on the three reincarnation variables (BELIEFS, EXPECTATION, ATTITUDES) and two past-life experience variables (FADING, INTENSITY) as predictors contribute to the prediction of the credibility of the past life experience (CREDIBILITY) as the criterion variable ($p < .05$).



September 1, 2009

Dr. XXX, Chairperson
Research Review Board
Rivier College
420 S. Main Street
Nashua, NH 03060-5086

Dear Dr. XXX

I am a graduate student in the master of science Clinical Psychology program at Rivier College. As Principle Investigator (or Researcher of Record), I am the person with overall responsibility for the design and implementation of the research project and who initiates, administers, or terminates any procedures related to the research, including audiotape and videotape procedures. I am requesting a full review of my proposed research project titled "An Experimental Investigation of Past Life Experiences." I believe this proposal qualifies for a full review because the research uses hypnotic techniques to manipulate the subject's behavior or mental state. Numerous safeguards have been incorporated into the informed consent and research procedure to minimize any potential stress to participants.

- ◇ The study involves research that poses no foreseeable long-term physical, mental, social or emotional risk to participants nor is there any use of deception.
- ◇ The study employs benign interviews and questionnaires about participants' experiences and behaviors.
- ◇ Hypnotizability assessment is a commonly used procedure which is felt to pose minimal risk for undergraduate students. Some people may experience anxiety or discomfort during initial experiences with hypnosis; however, this is usually temporary and diminishes with growing familiarity with trance experience.
- ◇ The hypnotic regression procedure contains several suggestions designed to protect participants from any sense of uneasiness: (a) a suggestion that only pleasant memories will be remembered, (b) a suggestion that participants can come out of the trance whenever they choose, (c) no session is ever ended until participants correctly give their present age and identity, (d) a suggestion that participants will be refreshed and relaxed at the end of the session, (e) care is given to reassure that each participant is wide awake and alert before leaving the hypnotic session.
- ◇ The hypnosis research project is directly supervised by faculty advisor, Paul F. Cunningham, Ph.D., who has an earned doctorate in psychology from the University of Tennessee, who received specialized training in hypnosis (i.e., supervised practice and professional workshops) and training to work with the designated population (i.e., healthy volunteers), and whose doctoral dissertation investigated "The effects of different probe procedures on the experience of imagining in hypnotic and waking states of consciousness" (Cunningham, 1986).
- ◇ The Principle Investigator receives hypnosis training of no less than 10 hours in duration that includes: being hypnotized; hypnotizing subjects under direct, personal supervision of the faculty advisor; discussion of possible complications;

discussion of the general phenomena of hypnosis; education in research ethics and education about the clear distinction between activities of a hypnosis researcher and a hypnotherapist.

- ◇ The informed consent form provides full disclosure to participants about the details of the procedure, the confidentiality of their records, and what risks and benefits they can expect as a result of their participation in the study.
- ◇ Participants may discontinue their participation in the experiment at any time without penalty.
- ◇ Participants explicitly acknowledge that they have not volunteered for the experiment chiefly in the hope of self-improvement, that they have been explicitly informed that their participation in this research is for experimental, not therapeutic purposes, and that no therapeutic treatment of any kind will be undertaken. Assurances are given that, at the completion of the experiment, the individual will be exactly as he (she) was when he (she) began, and that no permanent change, either positive or negative, may be legitimately expected.
- ◇ Participants are screened to exclude those who are under 18 years, who have a history of psychiatric or psychological treatment, and who are currently undergoing psychotherapy.
- ◇ In the event participants feel any discomfort, or notice aftereffects that they attribute to the hypnotic induction or to the hypnotic experience, contact information about on-campus counseling services, and faculty advising is provided in the informed consent.
- ◇ A follow-up letter will be sent to all participants who complete the study that will inquire about any aftereffects in their daily experience that they believe may have resulted from their participation in this experiment.

Enclosed are the completed application and two copies of the proposal. An addendum is also included from the "Review of the Literature" that provides RRB committee members solid, empirical evidence for the potential for risk to human subjects involved in hypnotic procedures used in this study. I can be reached at xxx@rivier.edu and my faculty advisor can be reached atxxx @rivier.edu, if you or the Committee has any questions, concerns, or require clarifications or a personal meeting. Thank you.

Sincerely,

XXX Principle Investigator
Department of Psychology
pramos@rivier.edu,(603) XXX-XXXX

XXX, Ph.D., Faculty Advisor
Department of Psychology (x 8272)
pcunningham@rivier.edu

RIVIER COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
420 S. MAIN STREET, NASHUA, NH 03060

An Experimental Investigation of Past-Life Experiences

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

Description of the project:

I voluntarily and of my own free will consent to be a participant in the research project titled "A Study of Past-Life Reports During Hypnotic Regression" This research is being conducted by Mr. XXX, a graduate student at Rivier College, under the supervision and direction of XXX, Ph.D, who is Professor of Psychology at Rivier College. I understand that the purposes of the research are to (a) determine whether the beliefs, attitudes, and expectations that college students hold about the idea of reincarnation are associated with the intensity, credibility, and frequency of appearance of past-life reports within the context of hypnotic regression, and (b) study the issue of historical accuracy of information contained in the past-life reports of hypnotically regressed subjects.

What will be done:

I understand that if I participate in the research, I will be hypnotized in a group setting by listening to a tape-recorded hypnotic procedure, asked to respond to seven test suggestions, and self-score my behavioral and subjective responses to each suggestion in a booklet provided at the beginning of the first session that will take no more than 1 hour. During a second session that will take no more than 90 minutes, I will be individually administered a hypnotic procedure and suggestions to regress to age 15, age 5, age 1, and to a time beyond the point of my birth, and asked questions about my experiences. My responses will be tape recorded. Immediately after the hypnotic regression session, I will fill out a questionnaire about my beliefs, expectations, and attitudes toward the idea of reincarnation, and about the intensity, credibility, and degree of involvement in my experiences during hypnotic regression. The experiment is then over. The entire study will take no more than 2 ½ hours. In exchange for doing this, I will receive course credit for my participation.

Risk or discomfort:

I understand that this experiment poses no foreseeable long-term physical, mental, social or emotional risk to the participants nor is there any use of deception. I understand that hypnosis is a commonly used procedure which is felt to pose minimal risk for subjects. I understand that some people may experience anxiety or discomfort during initial experiences with hypnosis; however, this is usually temporary and diminishes with growing familiarity with trance experience. In the event I feel any discomfort, I can contact XXX, LCMHC, or XXX at Rivier College Counseling Center (xxx-xxx-xxxx). I understand that I can report back to the faculty supervisor, Dr. XXX (ext. xxx) at xxx@rivier.edu, if there are aftereffects that I notice later that I attribute to the hypnotic induction or to the hypnotic experience.

Benefits of the study:

I acknowledge that I have not volunteered for the experiment chiefly in the hope of self-improvement. I clearly understand that my participation in this research is for experimental, not therapeutic purposes, and that no therapeutic treatment of any kind will be undertaken. I understand that, at the completion of the experiment, I will be exactly as I was when I began. No permanent change, either positive or negative, may be legitimately expected. I understand that this research may help me learn more about how hypnotizability is tested in an experimental psychology context, what it feels like to be hypnotically regressed to an earlier age, and become more aware of my beliefs and attitudes about the idea of reincarnation. I understand that I retain the right to ask and have answered any questions I have about the research. I also retain the right to receive a summary of the research results after the project has been completed if I so request. A follow-up letter will be sent to me if I complete the study. This letter will inquire about any aftereffects in my daily experience that I believe may have resulted from my participation in this experiment. This letter will include results of the study.

Confidentiality:

I have also been assured that all my answers and information will be kept entirely confidential. I will be identified by a code number, which will be the sole identifying mark on my records, except for this "informed consent" form which

contains both code and participant name together. My name will never appear on any research document, and no individual question-answers will be reported. Only group findings will be reported. Audiotapes will be transcribed into printed form. Audiotapes, printed protocols and consent forms will be securely stored for 5 years after which time they will be destroyed at the discretion of the faculty supervisor. Only persons directly concerned with the research project will be permitted to examine the records.

Decision to quit at any time:

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. There will be no penalty should I choose not to participate in this research nor will my grade in any class be negatively affected if I make the decision to discontinue participation. If I decide to take part in the study, I may discontinue at any time without penalty. If I wish to quit, I will simply inform the Principle Investigator, Mr. Ramos, of my decision to discontinue my participation in the study.

Contact information:

I understand that if I have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, I may contact the Principle Investigator, XXX at xxx@rivier.edu, or faculty advisor, Dr. XXX at xxx @rivier.edu. If I feel I have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or my rights as a participant in research have not been honored during the course of this experiment, I may contact the Rivier College Research Review Board, c/o Dr. XXX at xxxt@rivier.edu.

I agree to follow all instructions to the best of my ability, give honest and accurate reports of my experiences, and not divulge any information about this study. I understand that in order to participate in this study (a) that I must be at least 18 years, (b) that I do not have a history of psychiatric or psychological treatment, and (c) that I am not currently undergoing psychotherapy.

I have read the Consent Form. Any questions I have asked have been satisfactorily answered. My signature on this form means that I understand the information, and I agree to participate in the study.

Signature of Participant

Signature of Principle Investigator

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Principle Investigator

Date

Participant code number (assigned by Principle Investigator)

Addendum

(from the "Review of the Literature")

Hypnosis and Risks to Human Subjects

"Since hypnosis may be viewed as a potentially harmful, coercive, or manipulative procedure, hypnosis research is usually scrutinized for the protection of participants" (Council, Smith, Kaster-Bundgaard, Glaude, 1997, p. 258). Current research indicates that "there is no body of acceptable, scientific evidence that hypnosis and the experience of trance is in itself harmful" (Rossi, 1987, p. 492). What is the evidence for this conclusion?

Possible detrimental effects. Hypnosis in the popular imagination may be viewed as a powerful, mysterious, and potentially harmful technique that can alter the personality, weaken the will, and generate psychopathologies in the susceptible individual. Hilgard (1968) lists the different forms that such fears of hypnosis may take:

Fear that submitting to the hypnotist will weaken the person's 'will' and make him generally weak and submissive; fear that through repeated hypnosis he may fall into a trance spontaneously and be rendered helpless; fear that his unconscious wishes may be revealed, and that these will prove unacceptable or embarrassing to him; fear that he will act in a silly or stupid manner; and so on. When hypnosis is combined with psychotherapy there is the further fear (one shared by some psychiatrists) that symptomatic treatment may remove defenses and produce more serious (even psychotic) trouble. (p. 50)

Experimental and clinical research into the possible dangers of hypnosis demonstrate that such fears are not an accurate representation of the facts. Psychiatrist Milton H. Erickson, M. D. in a paper titled "Possible detrimental effects from experimental hypnosis" (1932) concluded:

In summary, then, the literature offers little credible information concerning possible detrimental effects of experimental hypnosis, although replete with dogmatic and opinionated denunciations founded on outworn and untenable concepts of the phenomenon. Theoretical possibilities of detrimental effects that are possible include the development of hypersuggestibility, the alteration of personality, weakening of the subject's perceptual powers in regard to reality and unreality, and lastly, the development of unhealthy mental attitudes and escape mechanisms. . . . The author's own experience, based upon several thousand trances on approximately 300 individual subjects, some of whom were hypnotized at least 500 times each over a period of four to six years, reveals no evidence of such harmful effects. This clinical finding is further substantiated by the well-known difficulties encountered in the deliberate therapeutic attempts to occasion desired changes in the personality. Accordingly, marked changes from experimental hypnosis appear questionable. (quoted in Rossi, 1987, p. 497)

Most of the reports of complications arising in the use of hypnosis have involved hypnotic situations in which hypnosis is practiced by amateurs and stage hypnotists (Kost, 1965). "The various kinds of complications which have been associated with hypnosis. . . have been greatly exaggerated. . . The real dangers of hypnosis are caused by three interrelated factors: ignorance, overzealousness, and the lack of understanding of the bases of interpersonal relationships. . . and the irresponsible acts of those who would use the technique for entertainment (Kost, 1965, pp. 220-222).

Possible anti-social uses. There is also a common misconception that hypnosis is capable of manipulating or coercing individuals to do something against their will or commit immoral, illegal acts that they would not otherwise do in the waking state, as if hypnosis turns an individual into a mindless automaton fully under control of the hypnotist. In an extensive empirical study involving published in an article titled, "An experimental investigation of the possible antisocial uses of hypnosis, Erickson (1939) reports, again, that this is simply not an accurate representation of the facts. Experimental attempts of trying to get subjects during hypnosis to perform acts of an unconventional, harmful, antisocial, and even criminal nature -- physically or mentally injury themselves, damage or steal personal property, give adverse information about themselves, violate their moral or ethical codes of behavior (e.g., inducing subjects to lie, to drink liquor), participate in a physical examination, give information of a personal nature, exhibit the contents of one's purse,

physically harm others, verbally abuse and give adverse information about others, behave in a way that offended one's good taste or the privacy of others, commit thefts -- uniformly failed and demonstrated the impossibility of the misuse of hypnosis for antisocial or criminal purposes. The hypnotist can't get people to do in hypnosis something that they don't want to do in the waking state. Erickson summarizes the results of his extensive empirical study of the matter.

The findings disclosed consistently the failure of all experimental measures to induce hypnotic subjects, in response to hypnotic suggestions, to perform acts of an objectionable character, even though many of the suggested acts were acceptable to them under circumstances of waking consciousness. Instead of blind, submissive, automatic, unthinking obedience and acquiescence to the hypnotist. . . the subjects demonstrated a full capacity and ability for self-protection, ready and complete understanding with critical judgment, avoidance, evasion, or complete rejection of commands . . . In addition ,many demonstrated a full capacity to take over control of the hypnotic situation and actually did so by compelling the experimenter to make amends for his unacceptable suggestions. . . . Hence, the conclusion warranted by these experimental findings is that hypnosis cannot be misused to induce hypnotized persons to commit actual wrongful acts either against themselves or others and that the only serious risk encountered in such attempts is incurred by the hypnotist in the form of condemnation, rejection, and exposure. (quoted in Rossi, 1987, pp. 529-530).

Possible aftereffects. E. R. Hilgard (1968, chap. 3) summarizes his research into the possibility of negative aftereffects of hypnosis, based on "interviews with 220 nonpatient university students (114 males and 106 females), over two years, each of whom had at least two sessions of attempted hypnotic induction" (p. 50). His research, which found a low incidence of adverse aftereffects arising from the use of hypnosis in his laboratory is important within the context of the present study because his hypnotic research, like that proposed in the present study, involved undergraduate college students. Hilgard states:

The student sample studied at our laboratory consisted of a run-of-the-mill selection of students enrolled in the introductory psychology course at Stanford University. They served in the hypnotic experiments as a part of the course requirement that called for participation in experimentation of various kinds for a given number of hours; while the subjects were not required to participate in hypnotic experiments and thus 'volunteered,' they did so under a kind of social pressure that produced a sample quite different from that produced by those who seek out hypnotic experiences for their own novelty or who come for hypnotherapy. (p. 54)

Orne (1965) who also used "normal college students" in his hypnotic research studies at the University of Pennsylvania observes that

The low incidence of even minor complications in our laboratory cannot be ascribed only to the selection of subjects. There is every reason to believe that 'normal' student volunteers include a goodly percentage of individuals with considerable psychopathology, indeed some with borderline adjustments. The screening [used] is extremely superficial. In view of the large sample involved, we must conclude that at least some seriously disturbed individuals have been hypnotized without any untoward consequences. The absence of serious complications in our work may plausibly be attributed to the experimental setting in which it was carried out. . . . The focus is not on the subject's problems but on the phenomenon investigated, much as in studies of perception, memory, or learning. . . . Even when phenomena such as age-regression and dream induction are studied, the material is treated in an essentially neutral experimental manner. The relationship of the research staff to the subject is friendly, but relatively impersonal, when compared with a therapeutic relationship. (pp. 227-228)

Hilgard (1968) summarizes the results of his studies within a nonpatient sample of students of (a) the reputed harmful effects of hypnosis, (b) adverse sequelae (aftereffects), (c) difficulties in arousal from hypnosis and the prolongation of hypnotic effects, and (d) spontaneous reinstatement of early traumatic experiences:

- a. "The evidence is only that, with practice, a person tends to become more quickly hypnotizable, but there is no evidence that he (she) is unable to resist hypnosis if he (she) wishes to. . . . Thus repeated hypnosis does not make

a person become 'addicted' to hypnosis or make him (her) fall usually under the sway of the hypnotist. . . There is nothing generally 'weakening' as a result of hypnosis" (p. 51).

- b. "The results in this student population support the view that although a routine experience of hypnosis is generally harmless, the experimenter (or therapist) should be alert for possible aftereffects. . . Examples of comments by those whom we have classed as having disturbing sequelae include: "I was 'in a fog' for one hour." "Things were hazy and vague for hours." Another subject continued to be drowsy, felt ill the night after the first induction, and returned the next day in a state of acute anxiety over continuing the experiments. . . The 17 cases [who reported any aftereffects attributed to the hypnotic induction or the hypnotic experience] located among the 220 represent 7.7 percent of the total; of these only five (2.3 percent of the total) had sequelae that were intense for a few hours, at most for several weeks; none persisted. No reaction was of psychotic intensity. . . It is of interest that the frequency of sequelae is similar for the more susceptible subjects and for the less susceptible ones" (pp. 54-55).
- c. "We have had almost no difficulties whatever, except. . . some tendency for a prolongation of aspects of the experience after the trance has appeared to be terminated. . . This prolongation of the hypnosis, after the session is presumably ended, is one of the most important aftereffects of hypnosis. . . It is reassuring to know that the problems of dehypnotizing have been faced and techniques are readily available to the hypnotist for handling difficult cases (Williams, 1953) . . . The simplest method is to ask the subject who does not wake up why he (she) does not, and he (she) usually will tell why. . . Usually a subject left to himself (herself) will spontaneously become dehypnotized in a short time. Sometimes the subject, though partially aroused, does not seem fully in the normal state; in that case, rehypnotizing him (her) and giving appropriate suggestions for full alertness will meet the problem. . . The cases of drowsiness often reported after hypnosis may also indicate a prolongation of hypnosis. . . These are unusual cases, yet the fact that they may occur alerts the hypnotist to care in assuring that his subject is wide awake and alert before leaving the hypnotic session" (pp. 56-57, 59).

Cunningham (1986) identified other methods that may be used when a participant is "too comfortable" to come out of trance or perceives the situation as an opportunity to "act out" in ways which may create anxiety in the hypnotist include the following: (1) Wait it out. The normal waking state is the usual mode of consciousness and is a state of equilibrium for the organism. The organism will naturally try to bring the body back to that usual state. (2) Walk the person outside. In hypnosis, the person becomes hypersuggestible and willing to act on suggestions that don't conflict with one another. Suggest a biological need to go outside to hold a conversation. Taking the person outside into the fresh air and new scenery and holding a conversation creates a new "hypnotic" context that will awaken the individual, if the person is indeed in hypnosis and not "faking" or "simulating" the hypnotic state. If the person is still in trance, then you know they are faking it. (3) Have the person tell you the reason for the non-waking. Say "I don't understand why you won't awaken. Perhaps you can tell me." Listen to the response, then say, "Tell me what I should say to you to help you awaken yourself." Listen to the response, then say it by incorporating it into a suggestion.

- d. "The hypnotic situation is apparently one in which memories or habits belonging to an earlier period of life are readily activated; this feature makes possible hypermnesia and age-regression, but it also may activate unpleasant or traumatic experiences that have undergone some sort of inhibition or repression. . . These awkward cases are infrequent, but in experimenting with human beings in which personal matters may arise, those responsible must be ready for them" (pp. 59, 65).

Hilgard (1968) concludes:

The very infrequent and generally mild aftereffects of hypnosis in nonpatient populations are reassuring, and on the whole experiments can be conducted in the confidence that nothing alarming is likely to take place. While this is the general conclusion, it needs a few cautionary amendments. Hypnosis for many subjects is a highly charged personal experience that may communicate with traumatic experiences of early life and bring evidences of these earlier traumas into the hypnotic situation. Therefore the responsible investigator must be aware of the human interrelationships involved, even though his experimental topic is the experimental study of learning or the

physiological concomitants of hypnotic responses. If he himself lacks training in psychotherapy, someone with such training ought to be available within the research team to meet the occasional (if rare) emergency. (pp. 65-66)

Does hypnotic past-life regression of college students in an experimental setting cause adverse aftereffects? Few studies related to hypnotic past-life regression in an experimental setting have been published (Baker, 1982; Kampman, 1976; Spanos et al., 1991). Experimental evidence provided by Kampman (1976) and Spanos et al. (1991) indicate that undergraduate students who are capable of generating past-life identities during hypnosis are quite healthy and normal people, psychologically speaking. Spanos et al. (1991), for example, reported that "the development of a past-life identity was unrelated to indexes of psychopathology [i.e., the schizophrenia dimension from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, measures of self-esteem, measures of depressive affect, and magical thinking]" (p. 308). Kampman (1976) reported that "psychiatric interview and identity examination [indicated] that Ss capable of producing secondary personalities were clinically healthier and more adaptive than the group without secondary personalities" (p. 215). Neither Spanos et al., (1991) nor Kampman (1976) reported any adverse after-effects as a result of the hypnotic regression. Nor were detrimental effects observed in undergraduate students following hypnosis past-life regression in the experimental study conducted by Baker (1982).

Hypnotic research programs established at Stanford by Hilgard and at Carleton University by Spanos et al. (1991), upon whose work the present study is largely based, hypnosis in the present study is used as a research method and not as a form of therapy. When evaluating potential complications arising from the use of hypnosis, this distinction is important to keep in mind (Coe & Ryken, 1979, pp. 674-675). "A therapeutic situation, in which both patient and therapist expect substantial and perhaps permanent changes of behavior and personality, is very different from the more episodic uses of hypnosis in research" (Orne, 1965, p. 226). Orne (1965) notes that "particularly impressive are the fairly severe anxiety reactions which may occur in response to the induction of hypnosis as such, when carried out for therapeutic purposes. . . . It is remarkable that a simple induction procedure, which seems so free from complications at the laboratory, can evoke dramatic reactions when undertaken in a therapeutic setting" (p. 231).

The opinion of the psychiatric community is strongly divided, however, about whether complications observed to occur in therapeutic hypnosis are due to the state of hypnosis per se, the hypnotic setting, the hypnotist, or the patient (Orne, 1965, pp. 232-233). Brenman and Gill (1947) in their study of the undesirable consequences of hypnotic therapy, common referred to as adverse "sequelae," concluded: "It would appear that in general the actual dangers of employing hypnosis are slight when the fundamentals of responsible interpersonal relationships are observed by the hypnotherapist; but there is a contraindication when the patient is on the verge of a psychosis" (p. 90). The widespread use of hypnosis in dentistry to induce analgesia, on the other hand, rarely evokes such a response from patients because it is perceived to be an episodic effect and not one leading to any permanent alteration in the personality, as may occur in a therapeutic context (Orne, 1965, p. 231-232).

The contexts in which hypnosis is used matters. Martin T. Orne states that

Over the years, our laboratory has put several thousand 'normal college students' through hypnotic induction procedures [at the University of Pennsylvania]. . . . Despite the large number of subjects tested under these conditions, virtually no serious negative reactions to hypnosis have arisen. We have never encountered the anxiety reactions, symptom formations, depressions, or decompensations which have been reported in other settings. Minor complications do appear: an occasional mild transient headache, drowsiness, transient nausea, or dizziness on awakening. These difficulties, if they are encountered at all, occur typically during the first induction and are easily managed by a short discussion with the subject. Their incidence has been between two and three per cent of those tested. Our experience in this regard is closely paralleled by that of Hilgard's (1965) laboratory. . . . In summary, then, it seems that the induction of hypnosis itself does not lead to untoward consequences if it is perceived as relatively *episodic* and *nonpersonal*, viz. if the subject does not expect to be changed in any way and does not perceive the procedure as directed personally toward him. . . . Trained investigators working in an appropriate setting do not encounter difficulties. (pp. 226 - 228)

Orne (1965) also observes that it is very likely that a great number of unsupervised hypnotic inductions occur on college and university campuses by well-meaning but reckless student amateurs who are totally untrained in hypnosis and "play" with it in settings that do not have the safeguards that are present in the laboratory. The use of hypnosis by inexperienced hypnotists can likely give rise complications. Nevertheless, "instances of serious problems arising from these activities are hard to find" and "the infrequency with which clandestine hypnotic 'experiments' have resulted in demonstrable difficulties is striking" and is another indication that the incidence of serious reactions and complications arising from the use of hypnosis is relatively low even when hypnosis is used in a non-therapeutic context by amateur therapists. (p. 228). Orne (1965) concludes:

In some situations, complications seem to occur very rarely. These include the setting of the research laboratory, and the analgesic use of hypnosis in medicine and dentistry. It is characteristic of these situations that the subject's encounter with hypnosis is episodic. He does not expect any permanent change, for good or ill, to result from the hypnotic trance. Hence, except for the minor problems that have been discussed, there is little reason to expect serious or lasting complications from the experience. The chances of trouble are much greater when hypnosis is used therapeutically, and indeed it is the therapeutic context which has produced most of the reported difficulties. (p. 236)

Coe and Ryken (1979) showed empirically that hypnotizing undergraduate students at California State University (Fresno, CA) resulted in no more negative aftereffects than participating in a verbal learning experiment, and resulted in *fewer* negative effects than taking an exam or college life in general. In their study, 209 undergraduate introductory psychology students (57 males and 152 females) were randomly assigned to five groups: (a) a hypnotized sample who reported about their experiences following two administrations of a standardized hypnotizability scale, (b) a verbal learning sample who reported about their experiences in a verbal learning experiment, (c) a class sample who reported on out-of-class experiences, (d) an exam sample who reported on post-exam experiences, and (e) a college-life sample who reported about their college life experiences. All groups were administered a 24-item questionnaire that assessed the frequency, duration, and intensity of specific sequelae (i.e., negative = headache, upset stomach, stiff neck, light headedness, dizziness, vagueness, anxiety, fearfulness, depression, unhappiness; positive = feeling refreshed, rested, stimulated, happy, relaxed; sleep-related = drowsy, desire nap, took nap; dreams and unusual thoughts = day or night dream, unusual thoughts; bodily changes = changes in heart rate, breathing, temperature). Coe and Ryken (1979) summarize their results:

In no case did hypnosis have any more negative effects than at least some of the other samples, and for the more serious negative sequelae, it had fewer adverse effects than the exam, class, and college-life samples. . . Hypnosis was clearly rated overall as the most pleasant experience. . . Results show rather clearly that the administration of a standardized scale of hypnotic susceptibility in the usual experimental setting causes few or no harmful aftereffects, compared with other common experiences of college life. In fact, reactions like anxiousness, fearfulness, depression, and unhappiness are more likely to result from participation in an exam, a college class, or college life in general. Hypnosis resulted more in headaches, stiff necks, light-headedness, dizziness, drowsiness, and a desire to take a nap than did participation in a verbal learning experiment (and in some cases an exam or a class), but these sequelae were reported just as often for participation in classes and college life generally (and exams, in some cases). Subjects in hypnosis experiments similar to this one should therefore not be led to expect any more negative responses than they normally would as they go about their lives as college students. In fact, in agreement with Faw et al. (1968) the results suggest that hypnosis may be more, or at least equally, positive an experience as other normal activities. subjects are likely to feel refreshed and rested and to find the experience to be quite a pleasant one, especially if they are responsive to hypnosis. (pp. 677-678)

Faw, Sellers, and Wilcox (1968) compared 102 hypnotized undergraduates at Lewis and Clark College who received three administrations of the Stanford Hypnotic susceptibility Scale over a three-week period with a comparable group of 105 un hypnotized undergraduates who attended discussion groups during that same period. Groups were compared on pre-post test scores on the MMPI, use of student counseling services, and visits to the student infirmary. Results indicated that *none* of the negative effects hypothesized for hypnotized subjects (i.e., personality disturbances, need for medication,

suicidal tendencies, physical illness) materialized. In fact, there appeared to be a "consistent modification of psychopathic scores in favor of the experimental group" (Faw, Sellers, & Wilcox, 1968, pp. 35-36).

No detrimental effects were observed following the induction of Ss. The Ss regarded as pre-psychotic showed no detrimental effects of a psychological nature, following induction, when compared with a control group. On the contrary, certain benign effects were noted. Hypnotized groups rather consistently showed a greater than expected decrease in behavior problems. This pattern of improvement existed with normal Ss as well as with Ss disorganized to the extent that a psychotic break was imminent, or that suicidal tendencies were noted. Benign effects were noted in experimental groups, with fewer Ss needing to seek medical attention for problems such as insomnia. (Faw, Sellers, & Wilcox, 1968, p. 35)

Taken together, the Faw, Sellers, & Wilcox (1968), Coe & Ryken (1979), Orne (1965), Spanos et al. (1991), Brenman & Gill (1947), Kampman (1976), Hilgard (1968), Erickson (1932, 1939), Kost (1965), and Rossi (1987) studies support the view that experimental hypnosis involves no more than minimal risk to human subjects and does *not* involve stress to subjects. In some regards, as indicated by Faw, Sellers, & Wilcox (1968), hypnosis may even be an enjoyable and beneficial experience for some subjects. Studies by Baker (1982), Kampman (1976), and Spanos et al. (1991) support a similar conclusion for experimental investigations of hypnotic past-life regression as well.

Precautions taken in the present study. In the present study, several precautions are taken to address the possible aftereffects identified by Hilgard (1968) and Orne (1965).

1. The hypnotic regression procedure contains several suggestions designed to protect participants from any sense of uneasiness: (a) a suggestion that only pleasant memories will be remembered, (b) a suggestion that participants can come out of the trance whenever they choose, (c) no session is ever ended until participants correctly give their present age and identity, (d) a suggestion that participants will be refreshed and relaxed at the end of the session, (e) care is given to reassure that each participant is wide awake and alert before leaving the hypnotic session.
2. The hypnosis research project is directly supervised by faculty advisor, Paul F. Cunningham, Ph.D., who has an earned doctorate in psychology from the University of Tennessee, who received specialized training in hypnosis (i.e., supervised practice and professional workshops) and training to work with the designated population (i.e., healthy volunteers), and whose doctoral dissertation investigated "The effects of different probe procedures on the experience of imagining in hypnotic and waking states of consciousness" (Cunningham, 1986).
3. The Principle Investigator receives hypnosis training of no less than 10 hours in duration (PSY 510 - Hypnosis as a Research Method, Fall 2009) that includes: being hypnotized; hypnotizing subjects under direct, personal supervision of the faculty advisor; discussion of possible complications; discussion of the general phenomena of hypnosis; education in research ethics and education about the clear distinction between activities of a hypnosis researcher and a hypnotherapist.
4. The informed consent form provides full disclosure to participants about the details of the procedure, the confidentiality of their records, and what risks and benefits they can expect as a result of their participation in the study.
5. Participants may discontinue their participation in the experiment at any time without penalty.
6. Participants explicitly acknowledge that they have not volunteered for the experiment chiefly in the hope of self-improvement, that they have been explicitly informed that their participation in this research is for experimental, not therapeutic purposes, and that no therapeutic treatment of any kind will be undertaken. Assurances are given that, at the completion of the experiment, the individual will be exactly as he (she) was when he (she) began, and that no permanent change, either positive or negative, may be legitimately expected.
7. Participants below the age of 18 (minors) who have been hospitalized for a psychiatric disorder, or who are undergoing psychotherapy are excluded from the study.
8. In the event participants feel any discomfort, or notice aftereffects that they attribute to the hypnotic induction or to the hypnotic experience, contact information about on-campus counseling services, and faculty advising is

provided in the informed consent. Dr. H. Alan Goodman, licensed clinical psychologist is also available within the research team to meet any emergency which may arise.

9. A follow-up letter will be sent to all participants who complete the study that will inquire about any aftereffects in their daily experience that they believe may have resulted from their participation in this experiment.

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RIVIER COLLEGE

RESEARCH REVIEW BOARD

ASSURANCE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Principal Investigator: XXX

Department: Psychology

Title of Proposal/Project

An Experimental Investigation of Past-Life Experiences

I CERTIFY as follows concerning the above named research proposal in which I am the principal investigator:

- (1) The rights and welfare of the subjects will be adequately protected.
- (2) Risks or discomfort (if any) to subject(s) have been clearly indicated and it has been shown how they are outweighed by potential benefits to the subject or by the importance of the knowledge to be gained.
- (3) The informed consent of subjects will be obtained by appropriate methods which meet the requirements of the College's general assurance procedures.
- (4) Any proposed changes in research activity will be reported to the Research Review Board. Those changes may not be initiated without Research Review Board review and approval except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazard to the subjects.
- (5) Any unanticipated problems involving risks to human subjects or others will promptly be reported to the Research Review Board.
- (6) If the study is approved, a report on the progress of the research will be submitted to the Research Review Board after one year, and each year until completion of the project. The Status Report Form will be used for this purpose.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Principal Investigator

Acknowledged: _____ Date: _____
Department Chairperson/Research Advisor (as appropriate)

Appendix A

RIVIER COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
420 S. MAIN STREET, NASHUA, NH 03060

An Experimental Investigation of Past-Life Experiences

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

Description of the project:

I voluntarily and of my own free will consent to be a participant in the research project titled "A Study of Past-Life Reports During Hypnotic Regression" This research is being conducted by Mr. Philip Ramos, a graduate student at Rivier College, under the supervision and direction of Paul F. Cunningham, Ph.D, who is Professor of Psychology at Rivier College. I understand that the purposes of the research are to (a) determine whether the beliefs, attitudes, and expectations that college students hold about the idea of reincarnation are associated with the intensity, credibility, and frequency of appearance of past-life reports within the context of hypnotic regression, and (b) study the issue of historical accuracy of information contained in the past-life reports of hypnotically regressed subjects.

What will be done:

I understand that if I participate in the research, I will be hypnotized in a group setting by listening to a tape-recorded hypnotic procedure, asked to respond to seven test suggestions, and self-score my behavioral and subjective responses to each suggestion in a booklet provided at the beginning of the first session that will take no more than 1 hour. During a second session that will take no more than 90 minutes, I will be individually administered a hypnotic procedure and suggestions to regress to age 15, age 5, age 1, and to a time beyond the point of my birth, and asked questions about my experiences. My responses will be tape recorded. Immediately after the hypnotic regression session, I will fill out a questionnaire about my beliefs, expectations, and attitudes toward the idea of reincarnation, and about the intensity, credibility, and degree of involvement in my experiences during hypnotic regression. The experiment is then over. The entire study will take no more than 2 ½ hours. In exchange for doing this, I will receive course credit for my participation.

Risk or discomfort:

I understand that this experiment poses no foreseeable long-term physical, mental, social or emotional risk to the participants nor is there any use of deception. I understand that hypnosis is a commonly used procedure which is felt to pose minimal risk for subjects. I understand that some people may experience anxiety or discomfort during initial experiences with hypnosis; however, this is usually temporary and diminishes with growing familiarity with trance experience. In the event I feel any discomfort, I can contact Pamela L. Graesser, LCMHC, or Jessica Deleault, LCMHC, at Rivier College Counseling Center (603-897-8251). I understand that I can report back to the faculty supervisor, Dr. Paul Cunningham (ext. 8272) at pcunningham@rivier.edu, if there are aftereffects that I notice later that I attribute to the hypnotic induction or to the hypnotic experience. Dr. H. Alan Goodman, licensed clinical psychologist is also available within the research team to meet any emergency that may arise, and can be contacted at hgoodman@rivier.edu.

Benefits of the study:

I acknowledge that I have not volunteered for the experiment chiefly in the hope of self-improvement. I clearly understand that my participation in this research is for experimental, not therapeutic purposes, and that no therapeutic treatment of any kind will be undertaken. I understand that, at the completion of the experiment, I will be exactly as I was when I began. No permanent change, either positive or negative, may be legitimately expected. I understand that this research may help me learn more about how hypnotizability is tested in an experimental psychology context, what it feels like to be hypnotically regressed to an earlier age, and become more aware of my beliefs and attitudes about the idea of reincarnation. I understand that I retain the right to ask and have answered any questions I have about the research. I also retain the right to receive a summary of the research results after the project has been completed if I so request. A follow-up letter will be sent to me if I complete the study. This letter will inquire about any aftereffects in my daily experience that I believe may have resulted from my participation in this experiment. This letter will include results of the study.

Confidentiality:

I have also been assured that all my answers and information will be kept entirely confidential. I will be identified by a code number, which will be the sole identifying mark on my records, except for this "informed consent" form which contains both code and participant name together. My name will never appear on any research document, and no individual question-answers will be reported.

Only group findings will be reported. Audiotapes will be transcribed into printed form. Audiotapes, printed protocols and consent forms will be securely stored for 5 years after which time they will be destroyed at the discretion of the faculty supervisor. Only persons directly concerned with the research project will be permitted to examine the records.

Decision to quit at any time:

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. There will be no penalty should I choose not to participate in this research nor will my grade in any class be negatively affected if I make the decision to discontinue participation. If I decide to take part in the study, I may discontinue at any time without penalty. If I wish to quit, I will simply inform the Principle Investigator, Mr. Ramos, of my decision to discontinue my participation in the study.

Contact information:

I understand that if I have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, I may contact the Principle Investigator, Philip Ramos at pramos@rivier.edu, or faculty advisor, Dr. Paul Cunningham at pcunningham@rivier.edu. If I feel I have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or my rights as a participant in research have not been honored during the course of this experiment, I may contact the Rivier College Research Review Board, c/o Dr. Jerome Rekart at jrekart@rivier.edu.

I agree to follow all instructions to the best of my ability, give honest and accurate reports of my experiences, and not divulge any information about this study. I understand that in order to participate in this study (a) that I must be at least 18 years, (b) that I do not have a history of psychiatric or psychological treatment, and (c) that I am not currently undergoing psychotherapy.

I have read the Consent Form. Any questions I have asked have been satisfactorily answered. My signature on this form means that I understand the information, and I agree to participate in the study.

Signature of Participant

Signature of Principle Investigator (Philip Ramos)

Printed Name of Participant

Printed Name of Principle Investigator

Date

Date

Participant code number (assigned by Principle Investigator)

Appendix B

CARLETON UNIVERSITY RESPONSIVENESS TO SUGGESTION SCALE
HYPNOTIC INDUCTION PROCEDURE AND TEST SUGGESTIONS TRANSCRIPT

Appendix C

**THE CARLETON UNIVERSITY
RESPONSIVENESS TO SUGGESTION SCALE**

Appendix D

Debriefing - -Assessment of Hypnotic Responsiveness Session 1**Verbal Feedback**

Thank you for your participation in today's session. We hope that while taking part in this study you have learned a bit about how hypnotizability is tested in an experimental psychology context. Most people do not know very much about hypnosis other than what they see in movies or on TV, or read in books. As you have seen today, we haven't dangled any watches in front of you or gazed deeply into your eyes. We have used a "standardized" induction procedure and test suggestions played via audiotape, so that we can be more confident that everyone we test receives the same hypnotic procedures.

I've put a score on your booklet which indicates how many suggestions you responded to, out of the seven that were presented. Accordingly, these scores can range from 0-7. Most people "pass" about half of the suggestions, and get a score of 3 or 4. These people score "medium" in hypnotic susceptibility. There are a few people who fall into the category of "low susceptibles", who for one reason or another, don't respond to many of the suggestions, and get a score of 0, 1 or 2, while a few others score 5, 6, or 7 and are in the category of "high susceptibles."

Susceptibility has generally been found to be unrelated to cognitive and personality measures such as intelligence or extroversion. About the only variable that has been found to be strongly related to responsiveness is the extent to which the individual actually expects to be hypnotized. Those who don't think that they can be hypnotized almost always score low in susceptibility. Among those who want to experience hypnosis, and believe that they may be able to become hypnotized, the ones who score the highest in hypnotic responsiveness tend to be people who tend to become very absorbed and involved when they read novels or watching movies, for instance.

If you have any further questions or comments about this study, you can ask me before you go, or you can contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Paul F. Cunningham, at the phone number provided on the consent form. Thank you again for participating in today's session.

Appendix E

Debriefing -- Past-Life Experiences Session 2**Verbal Feedback**

Thank you for your participation in today's session. We hope that while participating in this part of the study you learned a little bit about how hypnotic age regression is induced in an experimental psychology context. You also experienced what it was like to be given a hypnotic induction and a suggestion for regression to a past-life. While some people respond to this suggestion, others do not. Reincarnation is a belief common to many cultures, and scientists have begun to study it. A psychiatrist named Ian Stevenson from the University of Virginia Medical School, for example, has collected and analysed many cross-cultural cases of children who report being a particular person in a previous time or life, and in some cases has actually found evidence of a person that corresponds to the child's statements concerning a past life.

These spontaneous past life experiences studied by Dr. Stevenson are somewhat different from the past life experiences that are induced during hypnosis in an experimental psychology setting as was done today. For example, the past-life identity remembered by children does not displace their present identity, although this is sometimes reported to occur during hypnotic past-life regression. Theoretically, if reincarnation is a fact, then any previous life recollection could be brought to the surface by a method that would relax the person sufficiently so that the past-life memories could make themselves known. Hypnotism is believed to be one method of uncovering such memories, in the same way that it can allow clients to remember forgotten incidents from childhood in therapy. Dreams may be another way. In any case, although you may be willing to take such previous life memories on faith, scientists cannot just take it for granted that the recovered memories are valid, but must take every effort to check the information against existing records and documents when they can. This is what we will be doing in this research study.

A follow-up letter will be sent to you after the research project has been completed. The letter will ask you about any after-effects in your daily experience that you believe may have resulted from your participation in this experiment. The letter will include results of the study. I hope you enjoy reading about what we find out.

If you have any further questions or comments about this study, you can ask me before you go, or you can contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Paul F. Cunningham, at the phone number or email address provided on the consent form. Thank you again for participating in today's session.

Appendix F

Posttest Questionnaires**Belief in Reincarnation**

Directions: For the following statement, circle the number that would be most nearly true for you. Note that the numbers always extend from one extreme feeling to its opposite kind of feeling. "Neutral" implies no judgment either way. Try to use this rating *as little* as possible.

Statement: "I believe in reincarnation" (that is, I believe in the notion that a nonphysical element of human existence not only survives death but subsequently is reborn in another human body)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all true of me	Tends not to be true of me		(neutral)		Tends to be true of me	Definitely true of me

Expectation of Experiencing a Past-Life Identity During Hypnosis

Directions: For the following statement, circle the number that would be most nearly true for you. Note that the numbers always extend from one extreme feeling to its opposite kind of feeling. "Neutral" implies no judgment either way. Try to use this rating *as little* as possible.

Statement: "I expected to experience a past-life identity during the hypnotic session."

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all true of me	Tends not to be true of me		(neutral)		Tends to be true of me	Definitely true of me

Attitude Toward Reincarnation

Directions: The following items deal with various opinions about the idea of reincarnation. We are interested in knowing your attitude toward the idea of reincarnation -- that is, the notion that a nonphysical element of human existence not only survives death but subsequently is reborn in another human body. For the following statements, circle the number that expresses your attitude toward the notion of reincarnation. I stress that your honesty is absolutely necessary for the value of this study. There are no "right" or wrong" choices.

1. I believe the idea of reincarnation is . . . interesting.

0	1	2	3
Not at all true of me	Tends not to be true of me	Tends to be true of me	Definitely true of me

2. I believe the idea of reincarnation is . . . impossible.

0	1	2	3
Not at all true of me	Tends not to be true of me	Tends to be true of me	Definitely true of me

3. I believe the idea of reincarnation is . . . important.

0	1	2	3
Not at all true of me	Tends not to be true of me	Tends to be true of me	Definitely true of me

4. I believe the idea of reincarnation is . . . foolish.

0	1	2	3
Not at all true of me	Tends not to be true of me	Tends to be true of me	Definitely true of me

5. I believe the idea of reincarnation is . . . meaningful.

0	1	2	3
Not at all true of me	Tends not to be true of me	Tends to be true of me	Definitely true of me

6. I believe the idea of reincarnation is . . . stupid.

0	1	2	3
Not at all true of me	Tends not to be true of me	Tends to be true of me	Definitely true of me

7. I believe the idea of reincarnation is . . . believable.

0	1	2	3
Not at all true of me	Tends not to be true of me	Tends to be true of me	Definitely true of me

8. I believe the idea of reincarnation is . . . irrational.

0	1	2	3
Not at all true of me	Tends not to be true of me	Tends to be true of me	Definitely true of me

9. I believe the idea of reincarnation is . . . appealing.

0	1	2	3
Not at all true of me	Tends not to be true of me	Tends to be true of me	Definitely true of me

10. I believe the idea of reincarnation is . . . silly.

0	1	2	3
Not at all true of me	Tends not to be true of me	Tends to be true of me	Definitely true of me

11. I believe the idea of reincarnation is . . . valid.

0	1	2	3
Not at all true of me	Tends not to be true of me	Tends to be true of me	Definitely true of me

12. I believe the idea of reincarnation is . . . ridiculous.

0	1	2	3
Not at all true of me	Tends not to be true of me	Tends to be true of me	Definitely true of me

Experience of Self-Fading

Directions: For the following statements, circle the number that expresses the extent of your agreement with it as an accurate description of your experience during your "past-life" experience in hypnosis. I stress that your honesty is absolutely necessary for the value of this study. There are no "right" or wrong" choices.

1. "During the past-life regression experience itself, my current self faded into the background of my experience."

0	1	2	3
Not at all	Not much	Somewhat	Very much
Never occurred	Rarely occurred	Sometimes occurred	Often occurred
Definitely not true	Probably not true	Probably true	Definitely true

2. "During the past-life regression experience, I was thinking about my behavior and knew that I was doing so."

0	1	2	3
Not at all	Not much	Somewhat	Very much
Never occurred	Rarely occurred	Sometimes occurred	Often occurred
Definitely not true	Probably not true	Probably true	Definitely true

3. "During the past-life regression experience, I was constantly inwardly watching, constantly reflecting on my own ongoing experiences, monitoring them, evaluating them, silently commenting to myself about them, critically interpreting their significance, and planning ahead."

0	1	2	3
Not at all	Not much	Somewhat	Very much
Never occurred	Rarely occurred	Sometimes occurred	Often occurred
Definitely not true	Probably not true	Probably true	Definitely true

4. "During the past-life regression experience, I was aware of a second little disembodied "psychic self" sitting off to one side in the periphery of conscious awareness watching what was going on."

0	1	2	3
Not at all	Not much	Somewhat	Very much
Never occurred	Rarely occurred	Sometimes occurred	Often occurred
Definitely not true	Probably not true	Probably true	Definitely true

Subjective Intensity of Experience

Directions: For the following statements, circle the number that expresses the extent of your agreement with it as an accurate description of your experience during your "past-life" experience in hypnosis. I stress that your honesty is absolutely necessary for the value of this study. There are no "right" or "wrong" choices.

1. My imagery was clearer and brighter than usual, such that the images I saw seemed so real I could almost touch them.

0	1	2	3
Not at all Never occurred Definitely not true	Not much Rarely occurred Probably not true	Somewhat Sometimes occurred Probably true	Very much Often occurred Definitely true

2. I became emotionally involved in the scenes that I imagined.

0	1	2	3
Not at all Never occurred Definitely not true	Not much Rarely occurred Probably not true	Somewhat Sometimes occurred Probably true	Very much Often occurred Definitely true

3. I felt so much a part of the scenes I imagined that I felt fully and bodily there.

0	1	2	3
Not at all Never occurred Definitely not true	Not much Rarely occurred Probably not true	Somewhat Sometimes occurred Probably true	Very much Often occurred Definitely true

Credibility of Experience

Directions: Rate the credibility that you assign to your "past-life" experience. I stress that your honesty is absolutely necessary for the value of this study. There are no "right" or "wrong" choices.

0	1	2	3
I feel sure it was a fantasy experience	I think it probably was a fantasy experience	I think it probably was a real past-life	I feel sure that it was a real past-life experience

Appendix G

Two Alternative Research Designs

The present research design outlined above has subjects at all levels of hypnotizability go through the entire experiment in a similar way with assignment to two groups (past-life responders vs. no-past-life responders) based upon their response to the past-life regression suggestion near the end of the experiment (nonequivalent control group design), modified from Spanos et al. (1991)

Two other designs may be proposed depending on what research question the experimenter wants to investigate: (a) If the experimenter wants to investigate whether the outcomes of the experiment are the result of level of hypnotizability, then low-high comparison groups are required (nonequivalent control group design). (b) If the experimenter wants to investigate whether the outcomes of the experiment are the result of hypnosis, then a nonhypnotic control group design is required (posttest-only control group design). Erdelyi (1988) notes:

It is easy to see that clinicians using hypnosis for recovering inaccessible memories may mistakenly assume that successful outcomes are the result of hypnosis. Without controls, however, it cannot be ascertained that hypnosis actually plays a role. . . Without controls, such attributions constitute the logical error of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. (Erdelyi, 1988, p. 83)

In this case a control group design would be used. Based on assessment of hypnotizability in Session One, two alternative procedures may be follow: (a) A median split can be made whereby those who obtain CURSS:O scores at or above the median (e.g., scores of 4-7) will be purposively assigned by the experimenter to the "trance" group and participants who score below the median will be assigned to the "waking" group (purposive sample). (b) Alternatively, all subjects, regardless of hypnotizability levels will be randomly assigned to an "awake" group or to a "trance" group.

The high hypnotizable or trance group will received a hypnotic induction procedure. The low hypnotizable or waking group will receive "task-motivating instructions" modified from Barber (1979, pp. 226-227). "Task-motivating instructions" are "aimed to produce favorable motivations, attitudes, and expectancies toward the test situation and to heighten the subject's willingness to imagine and think about those things that would be suggested" (Barber, 1979, p.226). The wording of the task-motivational instructions used in the present study would be as follows:

"In this experiment I am going to test your ability to imagine and to visualize. How well you do in this experiment depends entirely upon your willingness to try to imagine and to visualize the things I will ask you to imagine. For example, we asked people to close their eyes and to imagine that they were 15 years old, 10 years old, and 1 year old, and then to go back to a time before they were their present identity. Most people were able to do this very well; they were able to imagine very vividly that they were the age suggested and they felt as if they were actually that age. However, a few people thought that this was an awkward or silly thing to do and did not try to imagine and failed the experiment. Yet when these people later realized that it wasn't hard to imagine, they were able to visualize being the ages suggested and they felt as if being the imagined age was as vivid and as real as the actual age. What I ask is your cooperation in helping this experiment by trying to imagine vividly what I describe to you. I want you to score as high as you can because we are trying to measure the maximum ability of people to imagine. If you don't try to the best of your ability, this experiment will be worthless and I'll tend to feel silly. On the other hand, if you try to imagine to the best of your ability, you can easily imagine and do the interesting things I tell you and you will be helping this experiment and not wasting any time"

The "trance" group receive the following hypnotic induction adapted from the CURSS (Spanos, Radtke, Hodgins, Stam & Bertrand, 1982).

"Close your eyes. Your ability to be hypnotized depends entirely on your willingness to co-operate. It has nothing to do with your intelligence. As for your willpower, if you want to, you can pay no attention to me and remain awake all the time. On the other hand, if you pay close attention to what I say, and follow what I tell you, you can easily fall into a hypnotic sleep. Hypnosis is nothing fearful or mysterious. It is merely a state of strong interest in some particular thing. In a sense, you are hypnotized whenever you see a good show and forget you are part of the audience, but instead feel part of the story. Your cooperation, your interest, is what I ask for. Your ability to be hypnotized is a measure of your willingness to cooperate. Nothing will be done that will in any way cause you the least embarrassment.

"Now relax and make yourself entirely comfortable. Relax completely. Relax every muscle of your body. Relax the muscles of your legs. Relax the muscles in your arms. Make yourself perfectly comfortable. Let yourself be limp. Relax more and more, more and more. Relax completely. Relax completely. Relax completely.

"Your legs feel heavy and limp, heavy and limp. Your arms are heavy, heavy, heavy, heavy as lead. Your whole body feels heavy, heavier. You feel tired and sleepy, tired and sleepy. You feel drowsy and sleepy, drowsy and sleepy. Your breathing is slow and regular, slow and regular.

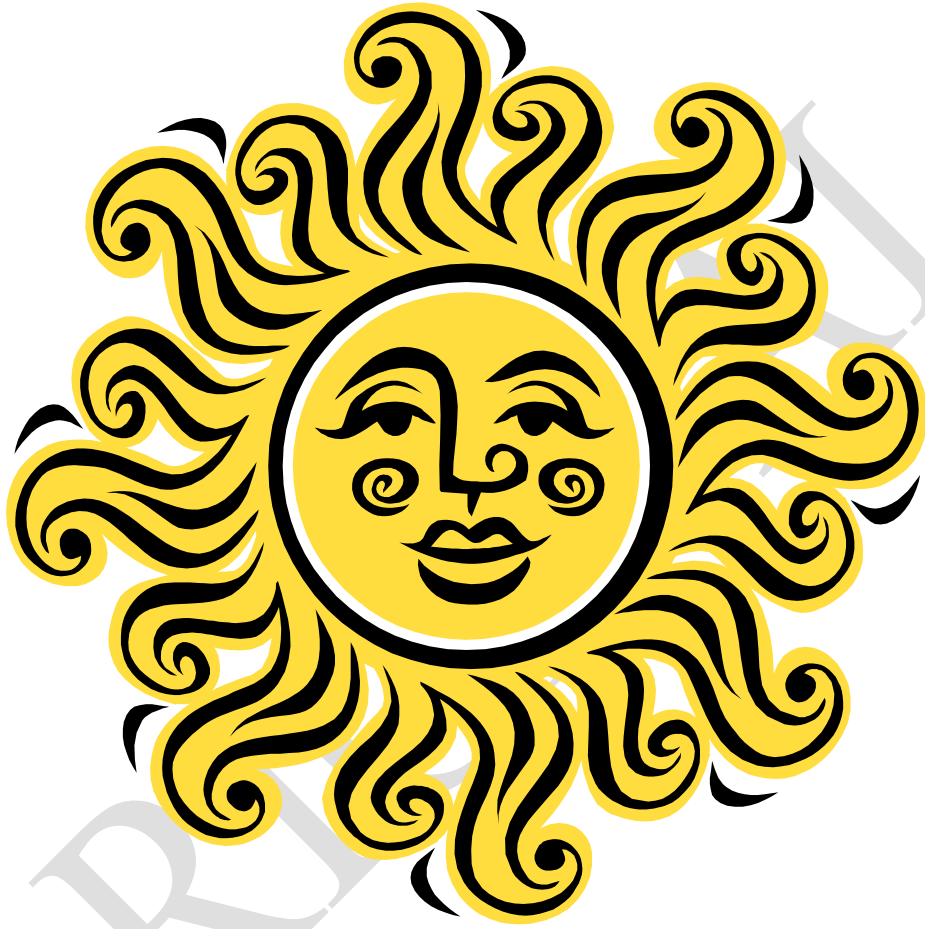
"You feel pleasantly drowsy and sleepy as you continue to listen to my voice. Just keep your thoughts on what I am saying. You are going to get much more drowsy and sleepy. Soon you will be deeply asleep but you will have no trouble hearing me. You will not wake up until I tell you to. Remember that the dangers of hypnosis are a myth. Nothing will be done that is in any way harmful to you. I shall now begin to count. At each count you will feel yourself going down, down, down, into a deep, comfortable, a deep restful sleep. A sleep in which you will be able to do all sorts of things I ask you to do. One -- you are going to go deeply asleep . . . Two -- down, down, into a deep, sound sleep . . . Three -- Four -- more and more, more and more asleep . . . Five -- Six -- Seven -- you are sinking, sinking, into a deep, deep sleep. Nothing will disturb you. Pay attention only to my voice and the things I tell you . . . Eight -- Nine -- Ten -- Deep asleep! You will not awaken until I tell you to do so. You will wish to sleep and have the experiences I shall presently describe.

"You are feeling comfortable and relaxed, comfortable and relaxed, and you are in a deep sound sleep -- a deep sound sleep -- fully prepared to respond to and experience what I will ask you to do. Fully prepared to respond to each of the suggestions which I will now give you."

Barber (1979), drawing upon his earlier work (Barber & Calverley, 1966) makes the following prediction: "When subjects who have been randomly assigned to an 'awake' group or to a 'trance' group are given suggestions to go back or to regress to an earlier chronological age, the same proportion of subjects in both groups report that they imagined, felt, or believed that they had returned to the earlier age" (p. 242).

Alternative Hypnotic "Past-Life" Regression Questions & Awakening Instructions

(from Group Induction by Helen Wambach, in Lucas, 1992, [pp. 559-564])





Appendix H

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Hypnosis and Memory

What is Hypnosis?

Hypnosis or "trance" refers to a quite normal state of consciousness in which an individual narrows the focus of his or her awareness and concentrates attention upon a particular idea or belief to the exclusion of others, thereby activating subconscious mechanisms which dutifully materialize those suggestions in physical experience (Roberts, 1974, chaps. 16 and 17). The conventionally-accepted definition of hypnosis that is popular in mainstream psychology today defines hypnosis as "a situation in which the subject is asked to set aside critical judgment without abandoning it completely, and to indulge in fantasy and make-believe" (Perry, Laurence, D'eon, & Tallant, 1988, p. 129). Spanos et al. (1991), whose investigation into hypnotic past-life regression is one of the foundation studies for the present research, emphasizes the "fantasy" and "make-believe" component of the conventionally-accepted definition of hypnosis, and follows in the tradition of other hypnotic researchers who characterize hypnotic ability as "imaginative involvement" (J. R. Hilgard, 1979), "believed-in imagining" (Sarbin & Coe, 1972), and "thinking-along-with, and experiencing, suggestion-related imaginings" (Barber, 1969).

The definition of hypnosis as it is used in the present study is not that it is a state of enhanced motivation, expectation, and desire to please the hypnotist, but instead is a state of focused concentration with the elimination of all distractions in which attention is directed away from exterior, physical stimuli and directed inward toward images, ideas, feelings, and sensations. The increased inward concentration that is trance enlarges the scope of consciousness to become aware of, not outer realities, but inner realities (i.e., just because they have no physical reality in the sense of taking up physical space and cannot be seen with physical eyes does not make them "unreal"). "The dissociation of consciousness from the physical environment is what we are concerned with, and with the increased concentration that this makes possible. Then we want to turn this concentration inward (Roberts, 1966/1993, p. 118). In these terms, the power lies less with the hypnotist, the experimental setting, demand characteristics, and so forth, and more with the individual subject who receives and accepts the suggestions that the hypnotist offers. In important ways, all hypnosis is self-hypnosis. If the subject does not believe the hypnotist's suggestion, no matter how cleverly packaged it will have no effect on either experience or behavior; but if the subject does, then he or she will even see pink elephants standing in the middle of a crowded room if requested to do so.

There is nothing magical about hypnosis. Drawing upon the extensive experimental and clinical work of Milton H. Erickson, M. D., the hypnotic trance can be understood as building upon the experiential learnings and bodily capacities of the individual that have accumulated over the course of time in the usual, ordinary wake-a-day state of consciousness (Erickson, 1980a). Hypnotic trance behaviors and experiences, in other words, derive from real-life experiences every person has had. Examples of trance-like experience in everyday life include: (a) the hallucination of hearing one's name called when no one is physically there; (b) having amnesia for information that one knows quite well; (c) simple daydreaming that evokes body catalepsy in some people. In these terms, all hypnotic phenomena derive in one way or another from learnings gained in the normal waking state. Hypnotic trance behavior is "comparable to some degree to those common spontaneous restrictions of awareness seen in states of intense concentration, abstraction, and reveries or in the failure to perceive something quite obvious because of a state of expectation of something quite different (Erickson, 1980b, p. 49). By focusing the subject's attention on thoughts, body sensations, mood, memories, images and other cognitive content, the experimenter is able to create a "state of receptivity" that allows the subject to display "experientially conditioned behaviors" upon demand (Erickson, 1980c, p. 315).

While Erickson believes that the hypnotized state is a "special" state of consciousness, T. X. Barber (1979) offers an "alternative" paradigm that argues that the so-called hypnotized subject is no more than "an awake [individual] who has positive attitudes, motivations, and expectations toward the situation and is ready and willing to think with and to imagine those things that are suggested" (p. 257). Barber (1979) reviewed experiments showing that waking-motivated subjects can simulate behavioral hypnotic phenomena easily without prior hypnotic induction. Two behaviors, or rather experiences, that simulators do not report experiencing that highly hypnotizable subjects do is (a) duality or self-fading in age regression, and the "hidden observer" effect (i.e., cold pain that is denied by the subject at a conscious level is registered at some other subconscious level of which he (she) may not be aware) (Hilgard, 1977/1986; Orne, 1859, 1979). Nicholas P. Spanos (1988), a colleague of T. X. Barber and whose experimental investigations of hypnotic past-life regression in the laboratory provide the starting point and springboard for the present study, likewise believed that there is no such thing as hypnosis as an altered state of consciousness for the following reasons:

After more than a century of research, there is no agreement concerning the fundamental characteristics of the supposed "hypnotic state" and there are no physiological or psychological indicators that reliably differentiate between people who are supposedly "hypnotized" and those who are not (Fellows, 1986). . . .Hypnotic procedures do *not* greatly augment responsiveness of suggestions. Nonhypnotic control subjects who have been encouraged to do their best respond just as well as hypnotic subjects to suggestions (Spanos, 1986a). . . . Hypnotic procedures are no more effective than nonhypnotic relaxation procedures at lowering blood pressure and muscle tension (Edmonstron, 1980). . . .Hypnotic procedures are no more effective than various nonhypnotic procedures at enhancing imagery vividness or facilitating therapeutic change for such problems as chronic pain, phobic response, cigarette smoking, and so on (Spanos, 1986a, Spanos & Barber, 1976). In short, the available scientific evidence fails to support the notion that hypnotic procedures bring about unique or highly unusual states of consciousness or that these procedures facilitate responsiveness to suggestion to any greater extent than do nonhypnotic procedures that enhance positive motivation and expectation. (p. 175).

So why use hypnosis induction procedures at all in the present study? Why not just administer a nonhypnotic relaxation procedure to participants, give them instruction to enhance positive motivation and expectation, and encourage them to "do their best?" The reason is that research conducted by the faculty advisor to this study (Cunningham, 1986) indicates that imaginative experiences elicited in hypnosis cannot be understood entirely in terms of relaxation procedures, positive motivation and expectation, or the make-believe situation implied by some hypnotic suggestions. It is extremely limiting to think that normal waking consciousness makes up the entirety of consciousness, that consciousness is what is *conscious*, and to overlook, ignore or deny either the existence or the important role that the subconscious plays in psychological life and behavior, as Spanos and Barber seem to do in their writings. It is extremely limiting, psychodynamically speaking, to regard the ego as the complete self or personality or to think that the conscious "I" makes up the entire identity. The conscious "I" is as much more the subconscious identity as it is the egotistical identity. As Stevenson (1987) once remarked: "I believe the simile of an iceberg for the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind not merely trite but absurd. Instead of the iceberg's one-ninth, I should think less than one-thousandth of a person's mind is normally accessible to his [her] consciousness" (p. 227).

Differences between waking and hypnotic states of consciousness. Cunningham (1986, pp. 71-72) reports general phenomenological (experiential) and behavioral (performance) differences between hypnotic and wake-a-day states of consciousness that research indicates vary considerably within and between individuals. It is to be noted that hypnotic responses are observed to occur *in the absence of suggestions*.

- *Stream of consciousness* -- Waking state is characterized by rapidly changing thought-content, every 5-6 seconds (Klinger, 1978; Pope, 1978) vs. Hypnotic state characterized, at deep levels, by steady, connected thought-content (Tart, 1970).
- *Reasoning* -- Waking state tendency to make reality judgments, draw practical inferences about what an experience means, wonder what caused it, or why it occurred the way it did, to evaluate experiences in terms of what is in memory before allowing experience to unfold (Hunt, 1982) vs. Hypnotic state tendency to accept the facticity of an experience at face value and abstain from doubt, skepticism or critical thinking (Barber, 1960), and to allow experiences to unfold for their own sake without checking with memory (Shor, 1959).
- *Attitude toward alternate states* -- Waking state considers alternate states of consciousness (ASCs) as unusual and bizarre (Erickson, 1980b; Johnson, 1979) vs. Hypnosis acknowledges ASCs without fear or concern; a sense of comfortableness in going into trance; dissociation is an interesting experience (Erickson & Rossi, 1977; Barber, 1975).
- *Voluntariness of response* -- Waking state characterized by regulation and voluntary control of responses (Shallice, 1972) vs. Hypnosis characterized by involuntary responses (Erickson, 1980d, p. 476)
- *Unity of consciousness* -- Waking state tendency to view self-awareness as a unitary phenomenon (Shor, 1979, p. 123) vs. Hypnotic state tendency to dissociate; self-awareness splits into multiple aspects (Hilgard, 1979).
- *Goal orientation* -- Waking state maintains desire to make and carry out one's plans (Erickson & Simon, 1984) vs. Hypnotic state loss of desire to make and carry out one's plans (Hilgard, 1968, p. 5).
- *Distinction between imagination and reality* -- Waking state awareness of distinction between what is imaginary and what is physically real vs. Hypnotic state does not recognize the need to make distinction between imagination and reality (Shor, 1979, p. 123).
- *Literalness of response* -- Waking state responses show awareness of context, and practical or logical implications of a request or question (Erickson, 1980e, p. 82) vs. Hypnotic responses are literal and show little or no awareness of context, and the practical or logical implications of a request or question (Erickson, 1980e, p. 98).
- *Responsiveness to external stimuli* -- Waking state reacts to external stimuli by turning the head toward sound, showing attentiveness to visual stimuli, responsiveness to any physical stimulus, and perception of ambient stimuli (Klinger, 1978; Neisser, 1967) vs. Hypnotic state absence of reaction to stimuli, seemingly ignoring sound, sights, and other physical stimuli, showing a restriction of visual field and apparent inability to perceive ambient stimuli (Erickson, 1967, p. 95; Erickson, 1980b).

- *Reflexive behavior* -- Waking state shows presence of ordinary startle response vs. Hypnotic response shows absence of ordinary startle response (Erickson, 1967, p. 95).
- *Eyeball behavior* -- Waking state pupillary constriction and continuous eye movement (Erickson, 1967, p. 95) vs. Hypnotic state pupillary dilation, focus of the eyes, with slower eye-movement behavior (Erickson, 1967, p. 95).
- *Control over spontaneous amnesia* -- Waking state forgetting largely depends upon processes within the person (Neisser, 1982) vs. Hypnotic state amnesia can be directed and removed by others (Erickson, 1980a, pp. 58-70).
- *Waiting* -- Waking state effortfulness of waiting; restlessness vs. Hypnotic state effortlessness of waiting (Erickson, 1967, p. 95).
- *Breadth of attentional focus* -- Waking state responses oriented to total situation (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951, pp. 30-39) vs. Hypnotic responses oriented to limited, altered percepts of total situation (Erickson, 1967).
- *Suggestibility* -- Waking state tendency to accept only suggestions which fit in with past experience and conscious beliefs (Hunt, 1982) vs. Hypnotic state tendency to accept suggestions even if contradictory of prior knowledge; increased acquiescence (Hull, 1933; Weitzenhoffer, 1953).
- *Speech* -- Waking responses show little or no lag between speech and gestures (body and head) (Hunt, 1969) vs. Hypnotic responses show a noticeable lag between speech and gestures (Erickson, 1967).

Despite their differences about the "special state of consciousness" issue, Erickson, Barber, and Spanos would agree that whatever capacities and abilities are demonstrated in the so-called "hypnotic state" build upon the capacities and abilities of the waking state.

The hypnotic state is but a variation on the usual state of consciousness. Since individuals often enter a trance state in ordinary life without even being aware of the fact, the trance is certainly a normal aspect of consciousness. . . . You have been in a light trance many time, probably without even realizing it. When you are concentrating upon one problem to the exclusion of everything else, you are most likely in a light trance state. Often you are in this state when you watch television, and all of your attention is directed toward the program you are watching. . . . Anyone who is used to focusing his energies upon one task to the exclusion of others has reached this state often. . . . For that matter, our state of everyday consciousness can also be considered a trance. We are caught up in physical reality to the exclusion of everything else. All our attention is captured. . . . We are . . . intensely concentrated in the world of everyday life. . . . We are so transfixed by physical reality that we are afraid to turn our eyes away for a moment. . . . [and] attempt to turn our awareness inward toward psychological and mental phenomena. . . . Hypnosis is merely a method of increasing the powers of concentration [and relaxing the ego and turning our attention inward instead of outward in order to enlarge the scope of awareness]. (Roberts, 1966/1993, pp. 109, 118, 128)

Neurologically speaking, the electroencephalo-graphic pattern (EEG) of a person who is in the alert, waking state with eyes closed is technically indistinguishable from that of a person when he (she) is in hypnosis (Sarbin & Slagle, 1979). Erickson and Barber also both agree that the production of hypnotic phenomena (e.g., blank stare, body immobility, eye and body catalepsy, auditory and visual hallucination, age-regression, amnesia, motor automatisms such as arm levitation, amnesia, anesthesia) involve two essential ingredients: (a) the intense concentration of attention upon a particular stimulus input (which may be an internal stimulus such as a mental image, a thought, a memory, an emotional feeling, a bodily sensation or an external stimulus such as the words and voice of the hypnotist), and (b) the exclusion of other stimuli, especially contradictory information. This is one reason why bodily relaxation is usually a part of hypnotic inductions -- it quiets the body so that it is less a distraction to the focused concentration required for a good hypnotic trance. "Hypnotic induction techniques may be best understood as approaches that provide a subject with opportunities for the intense self-absorption and inner experience called trance" (Erickson & Rossi, 1977, p. 40).

Hypnosis seems strange and esoteric only when it is set aside from ordinary life and special procedures are assigned to it. Structured, formal induction procedures of hypnosis used in the laboratory demonstrate in a dramatic and accelerated way how beliefs and expectations dictate sense experience in everyday life. By this simple act of turning attention inward in a relaxed state of focused concentration, the ordinary person may come to experience major alterations of perception, mood, and memory. Fromm, Brown, Hurt, Oberlander, Boxer, & Pfeifer (1981) state that "without this shift from an awareness of the external world to the internal and a sense of engagement with the events which take place there, the experiences of trance are indistinguishable from those of everyday waking life" (p. 209). Tellegen and Atkinson (1976) indicate that it is precisely this deep involvement and absorption in inner experience that permits "unconscious" processes to play a larger role in evoking responses experienced as involuntary, automatic, unreflected, and effortless.

Erickson (1980d) identifies the involuntary aspect of the subject's response as "a defining characteristic of trance" (p. 476). P. Bowers (1978, 1979) also views the quality of "effortless experiencing" as a defining characteristic of hypnotic-like experience. "The development of the trance state is concurrent with the development of levitation" (Erickson, 1961, p. 19). Certain stages of

dissociation resulting from this activity of the conscious mind being so focused, intensified, and narrowed to a specific area with all other stimuli cut out, allows the suggestions we are giving ourselves to go directly to the subconscious, where they are acted on. What is suggestion? "Suggestion is no more and no less than an inner willingness and consent to allow a particular action to occur; and this consent is the *trigger* which sets off the subconscious mechanisms that allow you to construct inner data into physical reality" (Roberts, 1997c, p. 215).

Hypnosis is a natural function of the conscious mind that goes on all the time and that everyone uses constantly in the alteration of beliefs. Hypnotic phenomena are not tied to any particular technique. Without any formal hypnotic procedures used at all, each of us have quite literally "hypnotized" ourselves into all the beliefs that we have through the constant inner chattering that goes on in our heads throughout the day. Shor (1960) reports that hypnotic-like experience is known to occur quite frequently and spontaneously in normal college populations (e.g., "Staring off into space, actually thinking of nothing and hardly being aware of the passage of time;" "Everything becoming blurry and strange as if in a dream"). The personality trait called "hypnotizability" as it is measured by standardized hypnotic susceptibility scales such as the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility (HGSHS; Shor & Orne, 1962) and the Stanford Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility (SSHS:A,B; Weitzenhoffer & Hilgard, 1959) is a normally-distributed, relatively stable trait in the population, with about 70-80% of individuals demonstrating moderate susceptibility to standardized hypnotic inductions and 10-15% of individuals showing either low or high responsiveness to the authoritarian, directive "hypnotic" suggestions administered on these scales (Hilgard, 1968; Perry, 1977). Hypnotic susceptibility as measured by standard hypnotizability scales does not correlate highly or consistently with any personality characteristic as measured by global test of personality, such as anxiety, social desirability, conformity, social influencibility, or attention (Hilgard, 1968). The hypnotizable person is

one who has rich subjective experiences in which he can become deeply involved; one who reaches out for new experiences and is thus friendly to hypnosis; one who accepts impulses from within and is not afraid to relinquish reality testing for a time....These free, irrational, reality-distorting characteristics may be found in flexible combination with realistic academic and social adjustment. (Hilgard, 1968, p. 268)

Deep hypnosis, also known as a "somnambulistic" state is often operationally defined by the following major criteria: eye and arm catalepsy, positive and negative hallucinations (visual, auditory, or kinesthetic), and complete post-hypnotic amnesia (Kline, 1960, p. 20; Zolik, 1962, p. 67).

In-depth: "Trance as the Fading of the Generalized Reality Orientation (GRO)" (Shor, 1979)

Ronald Shor, former professor and chairperson of the Department of Psychology at the University of New Hampshire, was an important theorist in hypnosis as well as an empirical investigator. Shor developed the concept of "generalized reality orientation" (GRO) as a useful way of understanding what occurs during the experience of hypnosis and how it differs from experience in the ordinary, usual waking state of consciousness. Shor (1979) describes the GRO on the following way:

Normal everyday life is characterized by there being in the immediate background of attention a network of cognitive understandings about reality in general which serves as a context or frame of reference within which all ongoing experiences are interpreted. If such a context of generalized understandings are lacking, ongoing experiences could not have their usual wide abstract interpretative significance. This usually context of generalized understandings may be called the generalized reality orientation (GRO). (p. 122)

Shor (1979) defines the nature of hypnotic trance in terms of a "fading" of this generalized conceptual framework through which information is selected, interpreted, and abstracted and into which it becomes integrated with all other general knowledge that is stored in memory. As long as the focus of attention is directed exclusively outward toward sensory stimuli in the physical material environment, the GRO remains in the background of awareness. This state of awareness is called the normal waking state of consciousness. When the direction of the focus of attention is changed and directed inward (e.g., through the action of closing one's eyes, for example) toward imaginal stimuli in the nonphysical psychic environment a change of reference point occurs. The GRO fades further away to the margins of consciousness and is temporarily replaced with an alternate framework of cognitive understandings (as occurs during dreams, for example). This state of awareness is called an alternate (or altered) state of consciousness. Depending on the degree to which the GRO is operative within an alternate state of awareness, the individual can be said to be in a state of trance. Shor (1979) explains.

In normal everyday life the GRO is always intact as a background context to our conscious experience, and so we take it for granted. There are times, however, when for various reasons it can be temporarily eliminated from the immediate background of consciousness, leaving the ongoing conscious experiences isolated, devoid of both perspective and wide abstract interpretative significance. The extent of such temporary elimination of the GRO from the immediate background of consciousness (temporary isolation) is called trance. (pp. 122-123)

Ordinarily, the GRO is always operative in most alternate states of consciousness to some degree forming an interpretative framework that gives meaning to ongoing experience. Dreams appear to be so chaotic, meaningless, and disorganized because what has been experienced during a dreaming state of consciousness where the dream events made perfect sense are now interpreted in light of the assumptions of normal waking consciousness. When the GRO of the normal waking state is brought into the dreaming environment, dream events can likewise appear chaotic and meaningless to the same degree. When the GRO is temporarily removed all together from the background of awareness, as occurs in states of sleep and dreams or deep trance, for instance, certain distinctive changes in the characteristics of experience occur and become noticeable (i.e., in the phenomenology of the state of consciousness).

Because in deep trance the ongoing conscious experiences are isolated from the usual interpretative framework of cognitive understands of everyday life, the deeply entranced individual is not consciousness aware of the distinction between imagination and reality; it simply could not occur to him at the time to make the distinction. It does not occur to him to doubt or to question the reality of the experience at the moment of the experience. Similarly, there is an obliviousness to abstract meanings. The subject ceases to be consciously aware of time, self, surroundings, etc. (p. 123)

One of the changes that occur in experience as a result of the fading of the GRO involves alterations in self-awareness. Spanos et al. (1991), in their experimental investigation of hypnotic past-life regression, assessed a characteristic of experience they called "self-fading," -- and which is also being assessed in the present study -- that refers to "the extent to which subjects experienced their primary self as fading into the background during their past-life identity enactment" (p. 310). Shor (1979) operationalizes this "self-fading" as it occurs as trance deepens as "a progressive temporary loss of self-reflective executive monitoring" (p. 123).

One of the major attributes of human mental processing is self-reflective executive monitoring. Not only do humans behave and think but they also think about their behavior and thinking and know that they are doing so. Not only do we humans consciously experience things but we also consciously experience that we are consciously experiencing. We are constantly inwardly watching, constantly reflecting on our own ongoing experiences, monitoring them, evaluating them, silently commenting to ourselves about them, critically interpreting their significance, and planning ahead. This superordinate awareness of self as self, and this executive monitoring of self are such constant and pervasive features of normal alert everyday life that it is often taken as a mark of altered consciousness when to some notable degree they are not so -- as, for example, in drowsiness and sleep, alcohol intoxication, strong emotion, etc. (p. 123)

One of the posttest measures in the present study assesses the degree to which "self-reflective executive monitoring" or "self-fading" occurs in participants who do and who do not report a past-life experience during hypnosis. One aim of the present study that differs from Spanos et al.'s (1991) study is not to simply identify whether or not it occurs in past-life responders, but to compare their report of self-fading with the experience as it occurs in no-past-life responders. Shor (1979) provides the following description of "self-fading" in a hypnotized subject who is only in a light trance and not in a deep trance.

Self-reflective executive monitoring is often described by hypnotized subjects as a second little disembodied "psychic self" sitting off to one side in the periphery of conscious awareness watching what is going on. Obviously a report of this sort should be diagnosed that at least at that moment in time, the trance was incomplete. This is so because evidence of self-reflective monitoring within consciousness would necessarily indicate a partially intact GRO within consciousness. (pp. 123-124)

Implicit in discussion of this point is the question of *who* it is that is experiencing the past-life, if the primary self with its contextualized generalized reality orientation has faded into the background. To the degree that "self-fading" is occurring at all, then *who* is doing the role-playing? By the accounts of individuals in deep hypnosis, it is *not* their primary identity.

Speaking during Hypnosis

Speaking in hypnosis is an effortful process that subjects may find difficult to do without awakening from trance, especially in deep trance states (Weitzenhoffer, 1957). Cunningham (1986), examined the verbal reports of eight hypnotized undergraduate subjects and six nonhypnotized subjects during acts of imagining under three counterbalanced self-report conditions (concurrent, intermittent, and

retrospective) and found that speech of the subject under hypnosis is produced at a slower rate than speech of subjects in the waking state, and that subjects in hypnosis tend to produce longer latencies and fewer words when responding than comparable subjects in the waking state. Hunt (1969) examined verbal reports of ten moderately hypnotizable college volunteers in both the waking and hypnotic state in response to general questions like "Where do you live during the term?" "Describe your journey from where you lived to the University," and "Tell me how you spent your time yesterday." Results indicated that hypnosis engendered longer pauses before responding, a slower rate of speech, and the use of fewer words.

Retrospective self-reports suggested that subjects found speaking in trance an effortful experience, accompanied by an awareness of strange and unusual body sensations. Hunt reported a disinclination to talk in hypnosis among subjects ("I didn't want to speak," "It was an effort," "Felt my lips to be growing very large"), the tone of speaking becoming typically lower in hypnosis with a monotonous delivery. Hunt hypothesized that one reason the subject in hypnosis has difficulty in concurrently verbalizing may be related to the nature of the hypnotic induction process which usually employs words like "sleepy," "drowsy," and so forth, leading to reduced arousal and decreased performance on verbal tasks. Erickson (1952) explains the difficulty as due to past conditioning and programming of speaking in the waking state, without understanding that one can speak at a subconscious level, although with practice subjects learn to remain in trance and to talk without awakening.

Demands for honest reports. The phenomenological method of gathering self-reports from subjects in hypnotic "past life" regression is based on two assumptions: "(a) that even in the deepest hypnosis the subject is conscious; and (b) that under appropriate circumstances he (she) can retrospectively [and concurrently] describe his (her) hypnotic experiences accurately" (Shor, 1979, p. 108). Shor (1979) also notes three conditions under which the "presumptive accuracy" of verbalizations about hypnotic "past life" regression experience may be obtained: (a) any potential encumbrances on the subject's memory due to residual trance effects are to be removed through proper suggestion, (b) the experimenter must communicate a demand for honesty and accuracy in verbal reports and to tell the truth no matter what one thinks the experimenter wants, and (c) eliciting the subject's trust and active cooperation by establishing "a methodological partnership. . . in which they share equal responsibility for getting at the truth" (p. 111). Censoring of experience is reduced when "demands for honesty" are made (Bowers, 1967). When demands for honesty are not given, experimental demand characteristics, the subject's desire to please the experimenter, and simple response acquiescence are more likely to distort verbal reports of experience.

Complexities in Understanding Hypnotic Memory

Pettinati (1988) summarizes many of the studies addressing the role of hypnosis in enhancing memory. Obviously, memory can be enhanced or increased without hypnosis as the existence of numerous memory improvement strategies attest (Matlin, 2005, chap. 6). While hypnosis may enhance or facilitate the retrieval of otherwise irretrievable information in the waking state under certain experimental conditions (e.g. for meaningful pictures using a free-recall format), the fact that there common factors that contribute to *both* memory enhancement and memory distortion during both hypnotic and waking state recall -- free association, fantasy, imagery, focused concentration, belief and expectation -- makes the increased recall observed during hypnosis attributed solely due to the hypnotic state per se an uncertain proposition (Orne, Whitehouse, Dinges, & Orne, 1988). Memory enhancement during hypnosis (called "hypermnnesia") when it is demonstrated in free association experiments, for example, may simply be due to the relaxed setting that the individual is in which results in a lessening of one's critical judgment, the lowering of the response criterion one uses for reporting information, or a greater willingness to guess and report information that one would otherwise be too hesitant, indecisive, and doubtful to report in the waking state, rather than the reflection of a better memory due to hypnosis per se (Erdelyi, 1988). Many people may remember the positive application of hypnotically elicited memory several decades ago that provided the small piece of evidence sufficient to solve a criminal case in Chowchilla, California in *People v. Woods et al.* (1977).

A busload of children and their driver were abducted by some men driving vans. They were herded into the vans, driven to an abandoned quarry, and sealed inside [by burying the bus]. The bus driver was subsequently able to dig his way out. He had attempted to memorize the license plate of the two vans, but was unable to supply them during police questioning. In hypnosis he reported two seven-digit license plate numbers, one of which was correct to one digit, although he had provided three of the correct digits prior to hypnosis. This information led to the arrest and conviction of three individuals who had planned to demand a ransom. (Perry, Laurence, D'eon, and Tallant, 1988, p. 149)

Although both experimental and clinical evidence indicates that the phenomenon of hypermnnesia, or the hypnotic enhancement of memory, does exist (Geiselman, Fisher, MacKinnon, & Holland, 1985; Orne, Whitehouse, Dinges, & Orne, 1988), distortions and false confidence in the accuracy of reports also occur during hypnosis. As Perry, Laurence, D'eon, and Tallant (1988) point out: "On *any* occasion than an age regression technique is used to elicit memories, what is recalled may be fact or fantasy, and is likely to be a subtle admixture of both" (p. 148). Hypnosis is not a truth serum and past life accounts obtained during hypnotic regression ought not to be unconditionally accepted at their face value as being 100% accurate. People can lie in hypnosis just as they can lie in the waking

state, but just may not know it (Sheehan, 1988). People can simulate being under hypnosis while not really being hypnotized so cleverly that even an expert in hypnosis may not be able to detect the deception (Orne, 1959).

Pettinati (1988) concludes on the basis of laboratory research and clinical case studies that "distortion of memories can occur when remembering is attempted during hypnosis" (p. 277) due to what she calls "the iatrogenic effects of hypnosis in obtaining additional recall (i.e., the increased fantasy, uncritical reporting, and false confidence that seem to accompany the hypnotic state/context)" (p. 283). Sheehan (1988), on the other hand, in his study of confidence and memory accuracy in hypnosis concludes that "there appears to be no such general biasing effect of hypnosis" (p. 123). The inaccuracy of memories is not a critical factor in clinical settings where even "false" or "inaccurate" memories can have lasting therapeutic effects (Frankel, 1988; Kolb, 1988). "All the factors that contribute unintentionally to memory distortion in hypnosis, that are problematic in the forensic setting, may be centrally important in the clinical setting and contribute in a major way to the healing process" (Pettinati, 1988, p. 287). In the experimental setting as in courts of law, however, the historical accuracy of past-life memories is a concern, especially when some sort of scientific proof of reincarnation is sought.

The difficulty of obtaining such accuracy is not a problem of hypnotic memory alone, however. Normal memory in the waking state is recognized to be reconstructive, not reproductive (Bartlett, 1932). Hypnosis apparently facilitates this normal reconstructive process of integrating fantasies, confabulations, and external influences such as leading questions into actual memories in the reconstructive process in highly hypnotizable individuals, especially when memories occur with intense visual imagery (Council on Scientific Affairs, American Medical Association, 1985). Apparently neither the vividness of imagery with which a memory is experienced, the credibility and believability assigned to the content of the memory, nor the attitude of confidence with which such memories are held to be factual are no guarantee that the memory -- whether it be of this present life or a past one -- is necessarily "objectively" accurate (Bowers & Hilgard, 1988). Perry, Laurence, D'eon, & Tallant (1988) indicate that a hypnotic past-life report, just like ordinary age-regression present-life reports, should not be taken literally because of five important "recall problems" that occur in any verbal reports obtained under hypnosis: (1) confabulation; (2) the creation of pseudomemories; (3) inadvertent cueing by the hypnotist, and the hypnotist's beliefs about hypnosis; (4) the beliefs and preconceptions of the hypnotized subject; and (5) in some cases, source amnesia (Evans & Thorne, 1966)" (p. 135).

Cryptomnesia (also called "source amnesia") is one of the more common hypotheses put forward as an alternative explanation to the reincarnation hypothesis that pertains to hypnosis and memory, although it is an interesting phenomena that occurs not only in the experimental hypnotic laboratory but in the work-a-day world of waking consciousness (e.g., see Bowers and Hilgard's (1988, pp. 3-4) account of an incident involving Helen Keller who had forgotten that fact that the ideas she used as a basis for a short story that she wrote, "The Frost King" when she was 11-years-old she had actually "heard" three years earlier). Bowers & Hilgard (1988) provide the following definition of cryptomnesia and tell why it is important:

Essentially, cryptomnesia [or source amnesia] involves remembering something without recognition of it *as* a memory. . . Remembering without awareness (Jacoby & Witherspoon, 1982) implies that people can retrieve recently acquired information from memory without experiencing the information as the recall of something recently learned. So, under the right circumstances, it seems quite possible for a person to mistake the memory of previously acquired information for an original idea. Given this mental possibility of mistaking something old for something new, unconscious plagiarism becomes a phenomenon that must be taken seriously. The incident of "The Frost king" implies that the *experience* of remembering something can be cut off or dissociated from the fact of something remembered -- that there is, in pother words, an important distinction to be made between something remembered and the experience of remembering something. Once this distinction is recognized, we are confronted with a possibility that the expeirence of remembering can occur in the absence of something remembered. And, in fact, the experience of remembering can infest fantasies, thoughts, and images that have no correspondence to actual historical events. This is the problems of "confabulation," or false memories. Since confabulation involves the unwarranted experience of memory, and cryptomnesia involves its unwarranted absence, confabulation and cryptomnesia are, so to speak, opposite sides of the same coin. Both of these mnemonic aberrations can create serious difficulties. (p. 5)

Considering the unpredictability in the accuracy of hypnotic past-life reports, it would seem a good idea to look upon hypnosis conservatively as a tool for providing leads in support of the reincarnation hypothesis that should then be corroborated by independent sources.

Does the hypnotic process itself encourage confabulation and distortion of material that is recalled? Obviously, distortion in memory occurs both outside hypnosis as well as within hypnosis. The question is: If hypnosis makes the individual more susceptible to suggestion, does the hypnotic state may memory particularly vulnerable or susceptible to distortion or falsification of memory in the same way? Can a change in a hypnotized person's beliefs translate into an inaccurate memory that is later believed in and reported as

true as Orne, Soskis, Dinges, & Orne (1984) argue? The experimental evidence supporting this "distortion hypothesis" is mixed. Research indicates that hypnotic subjects who are exposed to false information *after* they have been hypnotized tend to incorporate that misleading material into memory more readily than nonhypnotized or simulating control subjects do (Sheehan, Grigg, & McCann, 1984), but when the incorrect information is presented *before* hypnotic induction, both hypnotic and nonhypnotic controls incorporate the misinformation into memory to the same degree (Sheehan & Tilden, 1983, 1984, 1986).

Overall, the "evidence on the whole has been against, rather than in support, the hypothesis that hypnosis generally creates inherent distortion in memory reports [Griffin, 1980; Rainer, 1983]" (Sheehan, 1988, p. 99). The mixed nature of research this area can be further illustrated by the study conducted by Laurence and Perry (1983) who reported that 13 of 27 highly susceptible subjects came to believe that a pseudo-memory had really occurred but which had actually been inserted into memory during hypnosis (i.e., having been awakened during the night by a loud noise). The converse of this result is that 14 of the 27 did *not* incorporate this misinformation into memory. Not all highly hypnotizable subjects accepted this false memory, in other words, although some did. As is the case with much research into hypnosis and memory, individual differences matter, they do occur, and need to be explained in terms other than the hypnotic process.

Does hypnosis increase recall? The evidence supporting this hypothesis is also mixed, for while the phenomenon of enhanced recall (hypermnnesia) in hypnosis does occur (Crawford & Allen, 1983; DePiano & Salzberg, 1981; Erdelyi, 1988; Relinger, 1984; Shields & Knox, 1986; Stalnaker & Riddle, 1932), it overall comes at the cost of retrieving information with greater error. Research indicates that hypnosis does increase the quantity of information that is recalled, but that enhanced recall is a two-edge sword in that it brings not only the probability for increased accuracy but an increase in errors as well (Dywan & Bowers, 1983). Increased accuracy of recall, or hypermnnesia, in other words, tends to be accompanied by increased inaccuracy and greater error in retrieving information. "Hypnotic subjects' increasing response output demonstrates both increased accuracy and increased error" (Sheehan, 1988, p. 101).

Erdelyi (1988) reports that the observed enhanced effect of hypnosis on memory depends on the type of stimulus material being learned and recalled (nonsense vs. meaningful) and response format by which memory is being assessed (recall vs. recognition). "Low sense," nonsense material includes inkblots, nonsense syllables, paired-associate words, lists of names, nonsense pictorial figures. "High sense," meaningful material includes articles, picture details, biographical prose passages, auditory and visual information associated with films, emotional real-life events, pictures, filmed crime scenarios, stories, poetry, structured prose). Hypnosis enhances recall for meaningful material, but does not reliably enhance recall for nonsense material or recognition of either nonsense or meaningful material, over and above performance by waking control subjects. Erdelyi (1988) summarizes:

To summarize the situation as it now stands, the following may be concluded from the experimental literature. First, there is no evidence that hypnosis enhances recall or recognition of nonsense materials. Second, there is no evidence that hypnosis enhances recognition memory for meaningful materials, and actually some evidence that hypnosis may slightly disrupt this type of memory [by allowing the intrusion of personally-significant/task-irrelevant/incorrect information]. Finally, there is substantial evidence that hypnosis enhances correct responses in recall of meaningful material, but there is no evidence one way or the other as to whether this enhancement effect is a memory or response (productivity) phenomenon, nor as to whether hypnosis adds to -- or possibly subtracts from -- nonhypnotic hypermnnesia effects on recall. (p. 68)

Does the state of hypnosis encourage greater confidence in the information that is retrieved from memory? One would expect highly individualized individuals to demonstrate a great deal of confidence in the accuracy of their experience, even if it is misplaced, given the facts that hypnotism demonstrates the power of belief and that the deeply hypnotized person is expected to believe all sorts of things that either are not true or are not physically there, as is necessary for the successful production of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic hallucinations, both positive (seeing things that are not there) and negative (not seeing things that are there). "The very nature of the kinds of responses that tell us diagnostically that deep hypnosis has been achieved dictates that at least some degree of conviction will accompany them. . . . Hypnosis is one of those situations that, by its nature, can be expected to facilitate confident reporting" (Sheehan, 1988, pp. 95, 97). And this is exactly what research shows -- individuals who are highly susceptible to suggestion as measured by performance on standard tests of hypnotic responsiveness tend to demonstrate higher degrees of confidence in what they recall than low susceptible individuals (Sheehan, 1988). Combine this tendency toward greater confidence and belief in the accuracy that hypnotized subjects associate with their recall, with the fact that there is more evidence for the occurrence of memory inaccuracy in hypnosis than there is for the occurrence of increased accuracy, and we end up with a picture of confidence and accuracy being relatively independent of one another and more often than not there being a negative relationship between confidence and accuracy in recall with that relationship being moderated by the subject's level of hypnotizability (Sheehan, 1988, pp. 101-112).

Again results are mixed, in that the effect is not uniform or especially durable, and findings vary across different testing formats, but evidence on the whole has been in support of the hypothesis that the hypnotic state increases confidence judgments in the memories of highly hypnotizable subjects, but not low hypnotizable subjects. Interestingly, some studies show that although low susceptible

subjects tend to show greater confidence in memories that are correct and more uncertainty about the accuracy of incorrect material, nonhypnotized control subjects who simulate (play-act) being hypnotized tend to overplay their role and actually report being more confident in the accuracy of their false memories than highly hypnotizable subjects in some studies (e.g., Sheehan & Tilden, 1984). This overconfidence in the accuracy of their memories, obviously does not come from being hypnotized since that are not hypnotized and only role-playing the part. something else is operating here that is encouraging them to make greater confidence ratings. This "something else" is either the demand characteristics of the hypnotic context concerning what is wanted from the subject as conveyed through the hypnotist's suggestions or the beliefs about how a hypnotic subject is supposed to behave that the person pretending to be hypnotized brings with him (her) into the experimental setting from the outside world.

What is it that produces the enhanced recall, increased confidence, and increased error during hypnosis? Is it the narrowing of attention, the elimination of distractions, or increased depth of processing responsible for the differential recall between hypnotized, nonhypnotized, and simulating subjects? Or is it the relaxation of inhibition, a lowered response criterion, or increased willingness to respond that is responsible for the observed increase in detailed information, both accurate and inaccurate, provided by hypnotic subjects? In any event, the sociocognitive characteristics of the setting will influence the data that are collected, and while any particular experimental result may be consistent with a particular theory or explanatory framework about the nature of hypnosis and how it works and what are its effects, the experiment may not be providing a stringent test of the theory or explanatory framework when we think that it has.

In-depth: "The use of hypnosis to enhance recall" (Dywan & Bowers, 1983).

Dywan & Bowers (1983) conducted on the use of hypnosis to enhance recall using 54 subjects where randomly assigned to two experimental groups based on their hypnotizability scores obtained using the SHHS:C so that low and high hypnotizability levels were equally represented in the two groups. All groups were presented with series of 60 visually-presented line drawings of familiar objects to memorize, followed by three forced recall sessions interspersed with 3-minute rest periods, coupled with instructions to indicate their degree of confidence with which the items were recalled. During the next week, all subjects were to try to recall as many of the 60- items as they could once a day and to record their responses on take-home response sheets that were provided and mail them to the experimenters. At the end of the week, subjects returned for a second laboratory session in which half the subjects were administered a standard hypnotic induction and the other half were administered non-hypnotic task-motivating instructions, and then asked to recall as many more additional items from the original 60 line-drawings as they could. Results indicated that "subjects in the hypnosis group reported over twice as many new items (both correct and incorrect) as subjects in the task-motivating condition did" (p. 184). Dywan & Bowers (1983) suggest that either an actual increased sensitivity to memory trances, a lowering in the report criterion, or a heightened sense of recognition due to enhanced vividness of imagery (a version of the availability heuristic) due to hypnosis may have been responsible for both the increase in accurate recall and falsely recalled items. The point is that while hypnosis may increase the accuracy of recall, this increase comes at the cost of increased inaccuracy of falsely recalled items as well.

Critical Discussion

Dywan & Bowers (1983) acknowledge that experimental research into whether hypnosis can be used to enhance accurate recall has produced conflicting results. The very same factors that are said to distort memory accuracy in hypnosis (e.g., the memory enhancement effect that occurs through repeated testing, the susceptibility of memory to leading questions, and so forth) also distort memory in the waking state. Hypnosis is not a particularly vulnerable state in regard to memory distortions produced by these factors than is the waking state. The use of back-and-white line drawing as stimulus materials would not be as memorable as true "pictures" and it would be interesting to conduct the same test with more evocative and memorable stimulus materials (e.g., color photographs, emotion-eliciting, interpersonal-depiction). Results indicated that high hypnotizable subjects in the task-motivating condition during the second experimental session in which subjects were encouraged to remember even more pictures performed worse than their low hypnotizable counterparts in the task motivated group, especially in terms of accuracy of recall. Was their hypnotizability a moderating variable that caused them to perform poorly in the motivated-instruction group (whereas high hypnotizability was an apparent trait that enhanced recall in the hypnosis group)? Results also indicated that "hypnotic suggestion was no more potent than task motivating suggestion for those lower in hypnotic ability" (p. 185). Perhaps task-motivating instructions to "relax and focus all their attention on the slides they had seen the week before" (p. 222) induces a low hypnotizable state even in those subjects who do not undergo a formal induction. An analysis of the newly recalled materials that was incorrect in terms of their associative value would be a good step in any further investigations; that is, assess how associatively related the errors were to the items that were not recalled. We some errors "close" misses or "distance" misses in terms of their semantic-relatedness to the items not recalled? Semantic or emotional associations to target items may be an underlying reason why the items that were inaccurately recalled were assigned a false

sense of recognition and that may have been responsible for the confidence and certainty that subjects expressed about their hypnotically enhanced recall.

In-depth: "False memory propensity in people reporting recovered memories of past lives"
(Meyersburg, Bogdan, Gallo, & McNally, 2009).

Assuming that individuals who report past-lives tend to have a strong capacity to become absorbed in fantasy, display magical ideation by endorsing unconventional modes of thinking, and be prone to false autobiographical memories, Meyersburg, Bogdan, Gallo, & McNally (2009) conducted an experiment to assess whether individuals who reported having had a past-life experience in everyday life -- compared with individuals who reported having no such experience of a "previous" life -- are more likely to exhibit higher rate of false recall and recognition on the Deese-Roediger-McDermott (DRM) "false memory" experimental paradigm. They hypothesized that if higher false recall and recognition rates were observed inside the laboratory, then this would support their assumption that such individuals are more prone to false memory outside the laboratory as well than comparable individuals who did not report experiencing past lives (p. 400).

Participants were solicited through referrals from past-life therapists in the Boston area and an advertisement on an Internet bulletin board (Craigslist), and were screened over the telephone to determine eligibility (i.e., "Eligible individuals had to report having memories of a previous life. Mere belief that one had lived before was insufficient" (p. 400). The 15 individuals that composed the no-past-life control group "denied believing they had recollected events from a previous life. Although none of them reported memories from past lives, they varied with regard to their belief in reincarnation" (p. 401). The 15 individuals who composed the past-life treatment group "reported experiences that they interpreted as memories from one or more past lives" (p. 400). These experiences included:

déjà vu experiences, vivid 'sensory' flashbacks (e.g., of selling newspapers as a youngster in 19th century Boston), out-of-body experiences, daydreams, physical pain attributed to injury during a past life, memories surfacing during hypnosis or meditation, vivid or recurrent dreams (e.g., of being a member of a British royal family), and images recovered during a childhood near-death experience. . . Six participants had undergone hypnotic past-life regression, whereas the others had not. (p. 400)

At the beginning of the experiment, participants were individually administered three DRM tasks (one recall task and two recognition tasks). The DRM experimental paradigm is explained elsewhere (see Roediger & McDermott, 1995), and so the procedure will not be described in detail here. Briefly, lists of associated words would be read to the subject (e.g., thread, pin, sewing, sharp, thimble, haystack, knitting, etc.). On later recall or recognition tests, subjects decide whether each of several words had been read aloud earlier (e.g., sewing, door, needle, sleep, etc.). Most people correctly remember having heard "sewing" previously and correctly state that they did not hear the word "door," but interestingly, and here is where the idea of "false memory" comes in, about 50% of people exposed to this task will incorrectly remember that they had earlier heard the critical test word "needle." That's the "false memory syndrome."

Some cognitive psychologists interpret this reliable experimental finding as "a case of failure of reality monitoring leading to a failure of memory" rather than the experimental creation of a false memory (e.g., Hunt & Ellis, 1999, p. 148). "All of the presented words were associated to needle and so it is reasonable to assume that needle would have come to mind as the list was read. Thus, we appear to have trouble discriminating things we thought about from things we actually heard" (Hunt & Ellis, 1999, p. 147). After completing the first recall test, each participant completed two posttests: (a) the Tellegen Absorption Scale (TAS) that assessed "the tendency to become absorbed in fantasy and imaginative experiences," and (b) the Magical Ideation Scale (MIS) that assessed "beliefs in unusual modes of causation, such as acquiring knowledge via extrasensory perception." After completing the two questionnaires, participants were then administered the two remaining DRM recognition tasks. After the recognition tasks were completed, participants were then administered a third and final posttest: the Shipley Institute of Living Scale that is "a measure of general intelligence" (p. 401).

Results on the recall test and two recognition tests indicated that the past-life and no-past-life groups did not significantly differ in the number of items that they *correctly* recalled or recognized from the DRM lists. The two groups also did not differ on the recognition tests in terms of falsely recognizing words were not on the test lists (i.e., distractor words that were not on the original list were correctly identified as such). The past-life group, however, falsely recalled and recognized a larger proportion of associated critical "test" words (e.g., needle) than the no-past-life control group. The past-life group also falsely recalled more words that were *not* on the original list than the no-past-life control group. (p. 402). Results of the TAS, MIS, and Shipley tests indicated that the past life group

had higher scores on the absorption scale (TAS) and the magical thinking scale (MIS), but did not differ from the control group in the Shipley (intelligence) Scale.

Past-life participants who reported undergoing hypnotic past-life regression (n = 6) had higher MIS scores and "marginally higher" TAS scores than past-life participants (n = 9) who had not previously undergone hypnosis to recover past lives (p. 402). Meyersburg et al. (2009) concluded that "individuals who report memories of past lives exhibited greater false recall and false recognition rates in the DRM paradigm relative to individuals who report having lived only one life" and that "the cause of these elevated DRM false memories is unknown" (pp. 402-403). They also conclude, somewhat disingenuously, that because of their higher absorption and magical ideation scores the past-life participants are "people with *false memories of past lives* [my emphasis] [who] are less able to discriminate between imagined and real events, both inside and outside the laboratory" (p. 403). Meyersburg et al. (2009) imply that past-life participants may be suffering from undiagnosed posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and have "diminished working memory capacity" because people with PTSD also display higher false memory effects and diminishment of working memory than people without PTSD (p. 403). Meyersburg et al. (2009) conclude:

Our main question [is]: Is false memory propensity, measured by the DRM task, associated with false autobiographical memories outside the laboratories? The relevance of the DRM paradigm does not suppose equivalence between the laboratory phenomenon and false autobiographical memories in everyday life. Analogously, abnormalities detected during a cardiac stress test are not themselves heart attacks, but they predict risk for heart attack. Likewise, false memory rates in the DRM paradigm may identify individuals likely to develop false memories outside the laboratory. (p. 403)

Critical discussion

Although the link between false memory as measured by DRM tasks in the laboratory and so-called "false autobiographical memories" outside the laboratory is not established, Meyersburg et al. (2009) suggest that there is by drawing an analogical conclusion when the cases compared are not relevantly alike. Their hypothesis of a linkage has been accepted on the basis of relevant but insufficient information or evidence. They assume without proof the question, or a significant part of the question, that is at issue, or answer the question by rephrasing it as a statement.

Philosophic interlude: Memory and the Nature of Time Past

It has been said that "hypnosis, although it may make some memories more accessible than they ordinarily are, can also increase inaccuracies in memory and, in sum, does not enhance memory" (Stevenson, 1994, p. 189). But what does this statement mean? Doesn't this view of memory assume a kind of naive realism that presupposes that memories exist in some static, unchanging form, independent of and separate from the perceiver, that all one has to do is to take a really good look at the "already-out-there-now-real" memory and compare the correspondence between that so-called "objective" memory with the "subjective" representation that is recalled in order to judge and evaluate the accuracy of the "memory?" But isn't it more likely that the past does not exist statically like some mummy held perpetually petrified in the museum of time, as something done and finished with, but is a dynamic, changing thing encoded as a series of symbols and associations and memory images that exist physically as electromagnetic connections, held on the one hand in the physical brain and retained on the other hand in the nonphysical mind (Roberts, 1999a, pp. 212-215). These electromagnetic connections or "engrams" can be changed physically and mentally, by a change of attitude, a new association, and any of a host of other actions, that automatically set up new electromagnetic connections and break others. The very act of retrieval itself - whether in hypnosis or the waking state -- is known to permanently alter memories for future recall (Orne, Whitehouse, Dinges, & Orne, 1988).

If the past exists as a series of electromagnetic connections in the brain and the mind, then so does the present and the future. At times past memories and future anticipations can be reacted to so strongly in the present, that they supersede awareness of present stimuli. At such times, past and future can become, phenomenologically speaking, more real than the present, even though that future event may never occur and that past event was not what we remember it to be. When we bring those feelings of the past and worries of the future into the present, we have an instance of how the past and the future can change the present. The past and future, then, can change the present.

Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) has a therapeutic technique called "anchoring" in which the past is changed in the present by manipulating the images that are associated with the past remembered event (Bandler & Grinder, 1979). An individual, for example, may recall an incident that happened in the past that he (she) may think about from time to time that gives him (her) the same feelings that he (she) had in the past. Using one's imagination, the individual changes the outcome of that past event into one that is more satisfying and in line with the abilities and skills that the individual has learned since that time. When the individual subsequently

remembers that past event, two versions are recalled: the old memory with its bad feeling-tones and the new one with its more positive feeling tones. The individual at that moment can then choose how to feel about that past event on the basis of the original memory and the new memory that has become "anchored" in the present. The point here is that changing the present through altering pictures of the past alters the past and therefore the present.

Both behaviorist and psychoanalytic theories believe that present actions derive from the past; from our reinforcement history in the one case, from a single traumatic event in the other. "Past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior" it has been said. It is taken for granted that actions in the present can change the future, but can present actions also change the past? In certain terms it can. The past is seldom what we remember it to be, for it was already altered by the very act of encoding and storage when it initially occurred and is continually recreated by every act of retrieval. And as we grow from a child to an adult we develop abilities and skills that change us, the person who remembers and who recalls the past. Every time that changed and changing identity recalls the past or anticipates the future, that past and future is itself changed, reflecting the added understanding and emotional maturity that may not have existed originally in that past and that will be added to in the future. T

he past and future, in other words, are being continually recreated by the individual who remembers it, as attitudes and associations change. That past and future belongs to the person whose past and future it is. The past does not live independently as some concrete object existing apart from the person who remembers or recalls, for the person created his (her) own past, a past whose only reality exists as a series of electromagnetic connections within one's own physical and psychic structure. As can be seen, the apparent boundaries that we perceive separating the past, present, and future are indeed only apparent. So when it is stated that the cause of present events lie in the past, we could just as easily say that the cause of past events lie in the present. And when it is said that hypnosis increases inaccuracies in memory, we could just as easily respond that there never one true memory to begin with against which to compare.

It is generally believed and taught in mainstream developmental psychology, and assumed in most studies of hypnotic age-regression that the child exists as a psychologically intact unit within the adult and that during age-regression the adult is believed to become the child that the adult once was "once upon a time." It is questionable, however, whether the adult contains within himself (herself) the exact psychological replica of the child that he (she) was. "The child does not stay in a neat psychological package, enclosed in the past and insulated from the present or the future. It is not as simple as all that" (Roberts, 1999a, pp. 221-222). The child does exist within the adult, in a manner of speaking (the so-called "inner child"), but that child is not the *same* child that once was, because the child within the adult continually changes, as all of being itself is necessarily in a state of continual change, development, and creativity as Buddhist philosophy correctly states. The visual memories that an adult has of himself (herself) as a child and of events that happened to him (her) as a child does not *contain* a precise and fixed and unchanging picture of any particular incident that may have occurred in the past. That incident, whenever it is recalled to memory, is *re-created*, as the memory of that incident is also subtly changed with each recreation.

Neither the memories that the adult thinks of as the memories of the child nor the remembered incidents themselves frozen in time, but continually change in a very real and actual (as opposed to symbolic) way. That is, the electromagnetic connections and the energy that compose them -- that instantiate that past event and the memory of it in the present -- are not the same as they were "once upon a time." They have changed because nothing stands still, including the past and any such belief or expectation is illusory. The self that one was is gone out of the range of one's perception, just that self-same self one existed as future self that one was to soon become. Both past and future selves, even when one can not longer perceive them, influence and are influence and are influenced by the present self that exists now within the temporal flow and of which the individual is NOW aware. That particular moment that one thinks of as the past, however, remains a part of time present and time future for there is no point, really, where the child ceases and the adult begins. Such divisions are a function of perception which determines in a very sense one's experience of time (Dunne, 1927/2001).

Sequential, successive, serial temporal dimensions in which events, actions, or lives are perceived as seemingly occurring one before or after another does not exist per se -- except as a certain pattern of perception created and caused by the physical senses and body's neurological patterning of events. As Einstein once said, "time and space are modes by which we think and not conditions in which we live" (quoted in Friedman, 1994, pp. 35-36). Our experience of time is the result of our perceptive mechanisms and basically does not exist outside of three-dimensional reality. Reincarnational lives and everything else in the universe exists at one time, simultaneously. It is because the physical senses can only perceive reality a little bit at a time that events seem to exist one moment at a time. This is not the nature of action and it is only our perception, not reality, that is limited to a past, present, and future -- appearances that only exist within three-dimensional reality (Friedman, 1997).

Hypnosis and Risks to Human Subjects

"Since hypnosis may be viewed as a potentially harmful, coercive, or manipulative procedure, hypnosis research is usually scrutinized for the protection of participants" (Council, Smith, Kaster-Bundgaard, Glaude, 1997, p. 258). The fact of the matter is that current research indicates that "there is no body of acceptable, scientific evidence that hypnosis and the experience of trance is in itself harmful" (Rossi, 1987, p. 492). What is the evidence for this conclusion?

Possible detrimental effects. Hypnosis in the popular imagination may be viewed as a powerful, mysterious, and potentially harmful technique that can alter the personality, weaken the will, and generate psychopathologies in the susceptible individual. Hilgard (1968) lists the different forms that such fears of hypnosis may take:

Fear that submitting to the hypnotist will weaken the person's 'will' and make him generally weak and submissive; fear that through repeated hypnosis he may fall into a trance spontaneously and be rendered helpless; fear that his unconscious wishes may be revealed, and that these will prove unacceptable or embarrassing to him; fear that he will act in a silly or stupid manner; and so on. When hypnosis is combined with psychotherapy there is the further fear (one shared by some psychiatrists) that symptomatic treatment may remove defenses and produce more serious (even psychotic) trouble. (p. 50)

Experimental and clinical research into the possible dangers of hypnosis demonstrate that such fears are not an accurate representation of the facts. Psychiatrist Milton H. Erickson, M. D. in a paper titled "Possible detrimental effects from experimental hypnosis" (1932) concluded:

In summary, then, the literature offers little credible information concerning possible detrimental effects of experimental hypnosis, although replete with dogmatic and opinionated denunciations founded on outworn and untenable concepts of the phenomenon. Theoretical possibilities of detrimental effects that are possible include the development of hypersuggestibility, the alteration of personality, weakening of the subject's perceptual powers in regard to reality and unreality, and lastly, the development of unhealthy mental attitudes and escape mechanisms. . . . The author's own experience, based upon several thousand trances on approximately 300 individual subjects, some of whom were hypnotized at least 500 times each over a period of four to six years, reveals no evidence of such harmful effects. This clinical finding is further substantiated by the well-known difficulties encountered in the deliberate therapeutic attempts to occasion desired changes in the personality. Accordingly, marked changes from experimental hypnosis appear questionable. (quoted in Rossi, 1987, p. 497)

Most of the reports of complications arising in the use of hypnosis have involved hypnotic situations in which hypnosis is practiced by amateurs and stage hypnotists (Kost, 1965). "The various kinds of complications which have been associated with hypnosis. . . have been greatly exaggerated. . . The real dangers of hypnosis are caused by three interrelated factors: ignorance, overzealousness, and the lack of understanding of the bases of interpersonal relationships. . . and the irresponsible acts of those who would use the technique for entertainment (Kost, 1965, pp. 220-222).

Possible anti-social uses. There is also a common misconception that hypnosis is capable of manipulating or coercing individuals to do something against their will or commit immoral, illegal acts that they would not otherwise do in the waking state, as if hypnosis turns an individual into a mindless automaton fully under control of the hypnotist. In an extensive empirical study involving published in an article titled, "An experimental investigation of the possible antisocial uses of hypnosis, Erickson (1939) reports, again, that this is simply not an accurate representation of the facts. Experimental attempts of trying to get subjects during hypnosis to perform acts of an unconventional, harmful, antisocial, and even criminal nature -- physically or mentally injury themselves, damage or steal personal property, give adverse information about themselves, violate their moral or ethical codes of behavior (e.g., inducing subjects to lie, to drink liquor), participate in a physical examination, give information of a personal nature, exhibit the contents of one's purse, physically harm others, verbally abuse and give adverse information about others, behave in a way that offended one's good taste or the privacy of others, commit thefts -- uniformly failed and demonstrated the impossibility of the misuse of hypnosis for antisocial or criminal purposes. The hypnotist can't get people to do in hypnosis something that they don't want to do in the waking state. Erickson summarizes the results of his extensive empirical study of the matter.

The findings disclosed consistently the failure of all experimental measures to induce hypnotic subjects, in response to hypnotic suggestions, to perform acts of an objectionable character, even though many of the suggested acts were acceptable to them under circumstances of waking consciousness. Instead of blind, submissive, automatic, unthinking obedience and acquiescence to the hypnotist. . . the subjects demonstrated a full capacity and ability for self-protection, ready and complete understanding with critical judgment, avoidance, evasion, or complete rejection of commands . . . In addition, many demonstrated a full capacity to take over control of the hypnotic situation and actually did so by compelling the experimenter to make amends for his unacceptable suggestions. . . . Hence, the conclusion warranted by these experimental findings is that

hypnosis cannot be misused to induce hypnotized persons to commit actual wrongful acts either against themselves or others and that the only serious risk encountered in such attempts is incurred by the hypnotist in the form of condemnation, rejection, and exposure. (quoted in Rossi, 1987, pp. 529-530).

Possible aftereffects. E. R. Hilgard (1968, chap. 3) summarizes his research into the possibility of negative aftereffects of hypnosis, based on "interviews with 220 nonpatient university students (114 males and 106 females), over two years, each of whom had at least two sessions of attempted hypnotic induction" (p. 50). His research, which found a low incidence of adverse aftereffects arising from the use of hypnosis in his laboratory is important within the context of the present study because his hypnotic research, like that proposed in the present study, involved undergraduate college students. Hilgard states:

The student sample studied at our laboratory consisted of a run-of-the-mill selection of students enrolled in the introductory psychology course at Stanford University. They served in the hypnotic experiments as a part of the course requirement that called for participation in experimentation of various kinds for a given number of hours; while the subjects were not required to participate in hypnotic experiments and thus 'volunteered,' they did so under a kind of social pressure that produced a sample quite different from that produced by those who seek out hypnotic experiences for their own novelty or who come for hypnotherapy. (p. 54)

Orne (1965) who also used "normal college students" in his hypnotic research studies at the University of Pennsylvania observes that

The low incidence of even minor complications in our laboratory cannot be ascribed only to the selection of subjects. There is every reason to believe that 'normal' student volunteers include a goodly percentage of individuals with considerable psychopathology, indeed some with borderline adjustments. The screening [used] is extremely superficial. In view of the large sample involved, we must conclude that at least some seriously disturbed individuals have been hypnotized without any untoward consequences. The absence of serious complications in our work may plausibly be attributed to the experimental setting in which it was carried out. . . . The focus is not on the subject's problems but on the phenomenon investigated, much as in studies of perception, memory, or learning. . . . Even when phenomena such as age-regression and dream induction are studied, the material is treated in an essentially neutral experimental manner. The relationship of the research staff to the subject is friendly, but relatively impersonal, when compared with a therapeutic relationship. (pp. 227-228)

Hilgard (1968) summarizes the results of his studies within a nonpatient sample of students of (a) the reputed harmful effects of hypnosis, (b) adverse sequelae (aftereffects), (c) difficulties in arousal from hypnosis and the prolongation of hypnotic effects, and (d) spontaneous reinstatement of early traumatic experiences:

The evidence is only that, with practice, a person tends to become more quickly hypnotizable, but there is no evidence that he (she) is unable to resist hypnosis if he (she) wishes to. . . . Thus repeated hypnosis does not make a person become 'addicted' to hypnosis or make him (her) fall usually under the sway of the hypnotist. . . . There is nothing generally 'weakening' as a result of hypnosis. (p. 51).

The results in this student population support the view that although a routine experience of hypnosis is generally harmless, the experimenter (or therapist) should be alert for possible aftereffects. . . . Examples of comments by those whom we have classed as having disturbing sequelae include: "I was 'in a fog' for one hour." "Things were hazy and vague for hours." Another subject continued to be drowsy, felt ill the night after the first induction, and returned the next day in a state of acute anxiety over continuing the experiments. . . . The 17 cases [who reported any aftereffects attributed to the hypnotic induction or the hypnotic experience] located among the 220 represent 7.7 percent of the total; of these only five (2.3 percent of the total) had sequelae that were intense for a few hours, at most for several weeks; none persisted. No reaction was of psychotic intensity. . . . It is of interest that the frequency of sequelae is similar for the more susceptible subjects and for the less susceptible ones" (pp. 54-55).

We have had almost no difficulties whatever, except. . . some tendency for a prolongation of aspects of the experience after the trance has appeared to be terminated. . . . This prolongation of the hypnosis, after the session is presumably ended, is one of the most important aftereffects of hypnosis. . . . It is reassuring to know that the problems of dehypnotizing have been faced and techniques are readily available to the hypnotist for handling difficult cases (Williams, 1953) The simplest method is to ask the subject who does not wake up why he (she) does not, and he (she) usually will tell why. . . . Usually a subject left to himself (herself) will spontaneously become dehypnotized in a short time. Sometimes the subject, though partially aroused, does not seem fully in the normal state; in that case, rehypnotizing him (her) and giving appropriate suggestions for full alertness will meet the problem. . . . The cases of drowsiness often reported after hypnosis may also indicate a prolongation of

hypnosis. . . These are unusual cases, yet the fact that they may occur alerts the hypnotist to care in assuring that his subject is wide awake and alert before leaving the hypnotic session". (pp. 56-57, 59)

Cunningham (1986) identified other methods that may be used when a participant is "too comfortable" to come out of trance or perceives the situation as an opportunity to "act out" in ways which may create anxiety in the hypnotist include the following: (1) Wait it out. The normal waking state is the usual mode of consciousness and is a state of equilibrium for the organism. The organism will naturally try to bring the body back to that usual state. (2) Walk the person outside. In hypnosis, the person becomes hypersuggestible and willing to act on suggestions that don't conflict with one another. Suggest a biological need to go outside to hold a conversation. Taking the person outside into the fresh air and new scenery and holding a conversation creates a new "hypnotic" context that will awaken the individual, if the person is indeed in hypnosis and not "faking" or "simulating" the hypnotic state. If the person is still in trance, then you know they are faking it. (3) Have the person tell you the reason for the non-waking. Say "I don't understand why you won't awaken. Perhaps you can tell me." Listen to the response, then say, "Tell me what I should say to you to help you awaken yourself." Listen to the response, then say it by incorporating it into a suggestion.

The hypnotic situation is apparently one in which memories or habits belonging to an earlier period of life are readily activated; this feature makes possible hypermnesia and age-regression, but it also may activate unpleasant or traumatic experiences that have undergone some sort of inhibition or repression. . . . These awkward cases are infrequent, but in experimenting with human beings in which personal matters may arise, those responsible must be ready for them". (pp. 59, 65)

Hilgard (1968) concludes:

The very infrequent and generally mild aftereffects of hypnosis in nonpatient populations are reassuring, and on the whole experiments can be conducted in the confidence that nothing alarming is likely to take place. While this is the general conclusion, it needs a few cautionary amendments. Hypnosis for many subjects is a highly charged personal experience that may communicate with traumatic experiences of early life and bring evidences of these earlier traumas into the hypnotic situation. Therefore the responsible investigator must be aware of the human interrelationships involved, even though his experimental topic is the experimental study of learning or the physiological concomitants of hypnotic responses. If he himself lacks training in psychotherapy, someone with such training ought to be available within the research team to meet the occasional (if rare) emergency. (pp. 65-66)

Does hypnotic past-life regression of college students in an experimental setting cause adverse aftereffects? Few studies related to hypnotic past-life regression in an experimental setting have been published (Baker, 1982; Kampman, 1976; Spanos et al., 1991). Experimental evidence provided by Kampman (1976) and Spanos et al. (1991) indicate that undergraduate students who are capable of generating past-life identities during hypnosis are quite healthy and normal people, psychologically speaking. Spanos et al. (1991), for example, reported that "the development of a past-life identity was unrelated to indexes of psychopathology [i.e., the schizophrenia dimension from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, measures of self-esteem, measures of depressive affect, and magical thinking]" (p. 308). Kampman (1976) reported that "psychiatric interview and identity examination [indicated] that Ss capable of producing secondary personalities were clinically healthier and more adaptive than the group without secondary personalities" (p. 215). Neither Spanos et al. (1991) nor Kampman (1976) reported any adverse after-effects as a result of the hypnotic regression. Nor were detrimental effects observed in undergraduate students following hypnosis past-life regression in the experimental study conducted by Baker (1982).

Hypnotic research programs established at Stanford by Hilgard and at Carleton University by Spanos et al. (1991), upon whose work the present study is largely based, hypnosis in the present study is used as a research method and not as a form of therapy. When evaluating potential complications arising from the use of hypnosis, this distinction is important to keep in mind (Coe & Ryken, 1979, pp. 674-675). "A therapeutic situation, in which both patient and therapist expect substantial and perhaps permanent changes of behavior and personality, is very different from the more episodic uses of hypnosis in research" (Orne, 1965, p. 226). Orne (1965) notes that "particularly impressive are the fairly severe anxiety reactions which may occur in response to the induction of hypnosis as such, when carried out for therapeutic purposes. . . . It is remarkable that a simple induction procedure, which seems so free from complications at the laboratory, can evoke dramatic reactions when undertaken in a therapeutic setting" (p. 231).

The opinion of the psychiatric community is strongly divided, however, about whether complications observed to occur in therapeutic hypnosis are due to the state of hypnosis per se, the hypnotic setting, the hypnotist, or the patient (Orne, 1965, pp. 232-233). Brenman and Gill (1947) in their study of the undesirable consequences of hypnotic therapy, commonly referred to as adverse "sequelae," concluded: "It would appear that in general the actual dangers of employing hypnosis are slight when the fundamentals of responsible interpersonal relationships are observed by the hypnoterapist; but there is a contraindication when the patient is on the verge of a

psychosis" (p. 90). The widespread use of hypnosis in dentistry to induce analgesia, on the other hand, rarely evokes such a response from patients because it is perceived to be an episodic effect and not one leading to any permanent alteration in the personality, as may occur in a therapeutic context (Orne, 1965, p. 231-232).

The contexts in which hypnosis is used matters. Martin T. Orne states that

Over the years, our laboratory has put several thousand 'normal college students' through hypnotic induction procedures [at the University of Pennsylvania]. . . Despite the large number of subjects tested under these conditions, virtually no serious negative reactions to hypnosis have arisen. We have never encountered the anxiety reactions, symptom formations, depressions, or decompensations which have been reported in other settings. Minor complications do appear: an occasional mild transient headache, drowsiness, transient nausea, or dizziness on awakening. These difficulties, if they are encountered at all, occur typically during the first induction and are easily managed by a short discussion with the subject. Their incidence has been between two and three per cent of those tested. Our experience in this regard is closely paralleled by that of Hilgard's (1965) laboratory. . . . In summary, then, it seems that the induction of hypnosis itself does not lead to untoward consequences if it is perceived as relatively *episodic* and *nonpersonal*, viz. if the subject does not expect to be changed in any way and does not perceive the procedure as directed personally toward him. . . . Trained investigators working in an appropriate setting do not encounter difficulties. (pp. 226 - 228)

Orne (1965) also observes that it is very likely that a great number of unsupervised hypnotic inductions occur on college and university campuses by well-meaning but reckless student amateurs who are totally untrained in hypnosis and "play" with it in settings that do not have the safeguards that are present in the laboratory. The use of hypnosis by inexperienced hypnotists can likely give rise to complications. Nevertheless, "instances of serious problems arising from these activities are hard to find" and "the infrequency with which clandestine hypnotic 'experiments' have resulted in demonstrable difficulties is striking" and is another indication that the incidence of serious reactions and complications arising from the use of hypnosis is relatively low even when hypnosis is used in a non-therapeutic context by amateur therapists. (p. 228). Orne (1965) concludes:

In some situations, complications seem to occur very rarely. These include the setting of the research laboratory, and the analgesic use of hypnosis in medicine and dentistry. It is characteristic of these situations that the subject's encounter with hypnosis is episodic. He does not expect any permanent change, for good or ill, to result from the hypnotic trance. Hence, except for the minor problems that have been discussed, there is little reason to expect serious or lasting complications from the experience. The chances of trouble are much greater when hypnosis is used therapeutically, and indeed it is the therapeutic context which has produced most of the reported difficulties. (p. 236)

Coe and Ryken (1979) showed empirically that hypnotizing undergraduate students at California State University (Fresno, CA) resulted in no more negative aftereffects than participating in a verbal learning experiment, and resulted in *fewer* negative effects than taking an exam or college life in general. In their study, 209 undergraduate introductory psychology students (57 males and 152 females) were randomly assigned to five groups: (a) a hypnotized sample who reported about their experiences following two administrations of a standardized hypnotizability scale, (b) a verbal learning sample who reported about their experiences in a verbal learning experiment, (c) a class sample who reported on out-of-class experiences, (d) an exam sample who reported on post-exam experiences, and (e) a college-life sample who reported about their college life experiences. All groups were administered a 24-item questionnaire that assessed the frequency, duration, and intensity of specific sequelae (i.e., negative = headache, upset stomach, stiff neck, light headedness, dizziness, vagueness, anxiety, fearfulness, depression, unhappiness; positive = feeling refreshed, rested, stimulated, happy, relaxed; sleep-related = drowsy, desire nap, took nap; dreams and unusual thoughts = day or night dream, unusual thoughts; bodily changes = changes in heart rate, breathing, temperature). Coe and Ryken (1979) summarize their results:

In no case did hypnosis have any more negative effects than at least some of the other samples, and for the more serious negative sequelae, it had fewer adverse effects than the exam, class, and college-life samples. . . Hypnosis was clearly rated overall as the most pleasant experience. . . Results show rather clearly that the administration of a standardized scale of hypnotic susceptibility in the usual experimental setting causes few or no harmful aftereffects, compared with other common experiences of college life. In fact, reactions like anxiousness, fearfulness, depression, and unhappiness are more likely to result from participation in an exam, a college class, or college life in general. Hypnosis resulted more in headaches, stiff necks, light-headedness, dizziness, drowsiness, and a desire to take a nap than did participation in a verbal learning experiment (and in some cases an exam or a class), but these sequelae were reported just as often for participation in classes and college life generally (and exams, in some cases). Subjects in hypnosis experiments similar to this one should therefore not be led to expect any more negative responses than they normally would as they go about their lives as college students. In fact, in agreement with Faw et al. (1968) the results suggest that hypnosis may be more, or at least equally, positive an

experience as other normal activities. subjects are likely to feel refreshed and rested and to find the experience to be quite a pleasant one, especially if they are responsive to hypnosis. (pp. 677-678)

Faw, Sellers, and Wilcox (1968) compared 102 hypnotized undergraduates at Lewis and Clark College who received three administrations of the Stanford Hypnotic susceptibility Scale over a three-week period with a comparable group of 105 un hypnotized undergraduates who attended discussion groups during that same period. Groups were compared on pre-post test scores on the MMPI, use of student counseling services, and visits to the student infirmary. Results indicated that *none* of the negative effects hypothesized for hypnotized subjects (i.e., personality disturbances, need for medication, suicidal tendencies, physical illness) materialized. In fact, there appeared to be a "consistent modification of psychopathic scores in favor of the experimental group" (Faw, Sellers, & Wilcox, 1968, pp. 35-36).

No detrimental effects were observed following the induction of Ss. The Ss regarded as pre-psychotic showed no detrimental effects of a psychological nature, following induction, when compared with a control group. On the contrary, certain benign effects were noted. Hypnotized groups rather consistently showed a greater than expected decrease in behavior problems. This pattern of improvement existed with normal Ss as well as with Ss disorganized to the extent that a psychotic break was imminent, or that suicidal tendencies were noted. Benign effects were noted in experimental groups, with fewer Ss needing to seek medical attention for problems such as insomnia. (Faw, Sellers, & Wilcox, 1968, p. 35)

Taken together, the Faw, Sellers, & Wilcox (1968), Coe & Ryken (1979), Orne (1965), Spanos et al. (1991), Brenman & Gill (1947), Kampman (1976), Hilgard (1968), Erickson (1932, 1939), Kost (1965), and Rossi (1987) studies support the view that experimental hypnosis involves no more than minimal risk to human subjects and does *not* involve stress to subjects. In some regards, as indicated by Faw, Sellers, & Wilcox (1968), hypnosis may even be an enjoyable and beneficial experience for some subjects. Studies by Baker (1982), Kampman (1976), and Spanos et al. (1991) support a similar conclusion for experimental investigations of hypnotic past-life regression.

Precautions taken in the present study. In the present study, several precautions are taken to address the possible aftereffects identified by Hilgard (1968) and Orne (1965).

1. The hypnotic regression procedure contains several suggestions designed to protect participants from any sense of uneasiness: (a) a suggestion that only pleasant memories will be remembered, (b) a suggestion that participants can come out of the trance whenever they choose, (c) no session is ever ended until participants correctly give their present age and identity, (d) a suggestion that participants will be refreshed and relaxed at the end of the session, (e) care is given to reassure that each participant is wide awake and alert before leaving the hypnotic session.
2. The hypnosis research project is directly supervised by faculty advisor, Paul F. Cunningham, Ph.D., who has an earned doctorate in psychology from the University of Tennessee, who received specialized training in hypnosis (i.e., supervised practice and professional workshops) and training to work with the designated population (i.e., healthy volunteers), and whose doctoral dissertation investigated "The effects of different probe procedures on the experience of imagining in hypnotic and waking states of consciousness" (Cunningham, 1986).
3. The Principle Investigator receives hypnosis training of no less than 10 hours in duration (PSY 510 - Hypnosis as a Research Method, Fall 2009) that includes: being hypnotized; hypnotizing subjects under direct, personal supervision of the faculty advisor; discussion of possible complications; discussion of the general phenomena of hypnosis; education in research ethics and education about the clear distinction between activities of a hypnosis researcher and a hypnotherapist.
4. The informed consent form provides full disclosure to participants about the details of the procedure, the confidentiality of their records, and what risks and benefits they can expect as a result of their participation in the study.
5. Participants may discontinue their participation in the experiment at any time without penalty.
6. Participants explicitly acknowledge that they have not volunteered for the experiment chiefly in the hope of self-improvement, that they have been explicitly informed that their participation in this research is for experimental, not therapeutic purposes, and that no therapeutic treatment of any kind will be undertaken. Assurances are given that, at the completion of the experiment, the individual will be exactly as he (she) was when he (she) began, and that no permanent change, either positive or negative, may be legitimately expected.
7. Participants are screened to exclude those who are under 18 years, who have a history of psychiatric or psychological treatment, and who are currently undergoing psychotherapy.
8. In the event participants feel any discomfort, or notice aftereffects that they attribute to the hypnotic induction or to the hypnotic experience, contact information about on-campus counseling services, and faculty advising is provided in the informed consent. Dr. H. Alan Goodman, licensed clinical psychologist is also available within the research team to meet any emergency which may arise.

9. A follow-up letter will be sent to all participants who complete the study that will inquire about any aftereffects in their daily experience that they believe may have resulted from their participation in this experiment.

Past-Life Experiences (PLEs)

Definitions

Past-life experiences. Mills & Lynn (2000) define past-life experiences (PLEs) as "reported experiences or impressions of oneself as a particular person (other than one's current life identity) in a previous time or life" (p. 285). Mills & Lynn provide a useful summary of what is currently known about past-life experiences from the point of view of psychological science. In addition to presenting a useful definition of past-life experiences (PLEs), noting the frequency of PLEs across cultures, and describing important differences between spontaneous versus hypnotic and other PLEs, Mills & Lynn also discuss the key features of spontaneous PLEs (including its aftereffects, biological markers, individual differences, psychopathology, clinical issues and risks), the current theories proposed to explain them (reincarnation, ESP, sociocognitive), and the methodological issues that confront anyone who wishes to research spontaneous PLE cases (including the need for independent replication; interview effects; the role played by fantasy, suggestibility, and hypnosis; difficulties with probability assessments; the need for valid and reliable rating systems).

It is interesting to note the variety of names and terms used by researchers to label the past-life experience identities that emerge during hypnotic past-life regression. Kampman (1976) conceptualized the identities that he sought to create by his hypnotic regression suggestion -- "You go back to an age preceding your birth; you are somebody else, somewhere else" -- as "secondary personalities" and "multiple personalities" (pp. 218). Kampman (1976) conceived of the identities "induced by hypnosis [as] closely analogous to multiple personality appearing spontaneously as the result of a hysterical dissociative reaction" (p. 222) despite the fact that he found them "clinically healthier and more adaptive than the group without secondary personalities" (p. 215). There seems to be a contradiction here. Kampman (1976) also considers the suggestion "'You go back to an age preceding your birth' as an 'appropriate hypnotic suggestion. . . capable of creating multiple personalities'" (p. 223), which is questionable. Clinically speaking, the past-life identities elicited during hypnotic age-regression are quite different in character from the multiple personalities that generally fall within the diagnostic of hysterical neurosis in otherwise borderline or psychotic individuals displaying amnesia, somnambulism, and fugue to varying degrees (Kline, 1978). Zolik (1962) prefers to label the recall of the "previous existence" following hypnotic regressions as a "prognomantic fantasy (from the Greek verb meaning to have been born before)" (p. 67). It appears that the level of analysis matters. When description remains at the general, abstract level, then similarities become apparent across diverse phenomena such as possession, multiple personalities, hypnotic regression, and so forth. When description occurs at the specific, particular level, then differences become apparent. With regard to the limits of applicability of the multiple-personality hypothesis when applied to hypnotic past-life regression, Ducasse (1960) makes the following observation in this matter:

The emergence -- whether spontaneously or under hypnosis -- of personalities seemingly distinct from that of the individual concerned, but which actually are dissociated portions of his (her) own total personality, is today a well-known phenomena. But some cases of emergent new personalities stubbornly resist assimilation to cases of mere dissociation, either because, as in the famous one of the "Watseka Wonder," the new personality is unmistakably identified as that of a particular other individual who has died; or because the new personality demonstrates knowledge which the individual through whose body it expresses itself certainly never had or which is it exceedingly improbable it could ever have had. (p. 19)

Frequency of PLEs

Spontaneous PLEs are a relatively rare and uncommon phenomena (Mills & Lynn, 2000, p. 286). They tend to be reported most frequently in countries and cultures whose religious beliefs support the idea of reincarnation (Hindus, Buddhists, Muslim subgroups, tribal or indigenous peoples), although PLEs are also reported to occur in countries (United States) and cultures whose religions (Christianity) do not endorse such a belief. Stevenson (1983a), for example, describes several case studies of American children who claim to remember previous lives. Mills and Lynn (2000) state that "in contrast to those of children, the less frequent spontaneous adult PLEs are more often triggered by memory cues (Matlock, 1989). Such PLEs resemble unusually strong *deja vu* experiences" (p. 289). Spontaneous PLEs in adults have been observed to occur in the normal waking state, in dreams, drug-induced states, various trance states and during psychiatric treatment. Reincarnationist anthologies such as those by Head & Cranston (1977, 1999) of writings, both ancient and widespread, of adults who claim to remember their former lives represent a substantial collection of cases that, although are inconclusive as a source of evidence for proof of reincarnation, provide documentation of the persistent and prevalent nature of the phenomenon across historical time periods and across cultures.

Hypnotically-elicited PLEs, on the other hand, occur relatively often whenever it is suggested (implicitly or explicitly) that the hypnotically-regressed person does so. Many people appear to be capable of producing behavioral and psychological changes in response to hypnotic past-life regression suggestions, although results vary according to the subject's level of hypnotizability, the hypnotic regression suggestions employed, and the criteria by which past-life responders are identified. In one volunteer sample of 53 highly hypnotizable undergraduate students, 48 (or 90%) of the students produced accounts of having lives both past and future lives (Baker, 1982). On the other hand, Kampman (1976) was able to create "multiple personalities" and "secondary personalities" in only 32 (or 7%) of 450 Finnish college undergraduates unselected for hypnotizability (p. 218), and less than half (41%) of the 78 highly hypnotizable volunteers in his population of 450 subjects. Authors in the popular literature anecdotally report relatively deep hypnotic regressions occurring with thousands of people following brief and superficial contact in public workshops and seminars conducted across the United States (Sutphen, 1976, 1978; Wambach, 1978; Weisman, 1977). Fiore (1978) reports past-life regressions occurring even in skeptical individuals who do not believe in hypnosis, regression, or past lives.

In addition to a difference in frequency of occurrence, the spontaneous PLEs that are reported to occur in adults and in children between the ages of 2-5 years of age differ from hypnotically-elicited PLEs in another key aspect: the persistent and recurrent previous personality that emerges during spontaneous PLEs never replaces the primary identity of the subject, whereas such displacements of identity have been observed to occur during hypnotic past-life regressions in deeply hypnotized subjects.

Mills & Lynn (2000) imply that there is little or no relationship between the psychological and health conditions reported to occur during past-life experiences and the psychological and health conditions of the present personality; that is, there are no interconnecting dynamics between the secondary past-life personality and the primary present one, when they stated that "the spontaneous recall of memories attributed to a past life does not appear to be related to significant clinical problems, either during childhood or adulthood" (p. 297). Stevenson (1994), on the other hand, reports on a study he conducted in 1990 the finding that "36% of the group of 387 children who claimed to remember previous lives suffered from phobias, which nearly always corresponded to the mode of death in the life of the deceased person whose life the child claimed to remember" (p. 191).

What is the frequency of belief in reincarnation? In a survey conducted in the 1980's by the Gallup organization of a representative sample of the adult population in the United States, belief in reincarnation appears to be relatively rare with only 23% of those surveyed indicated they believed in reincarnation (Gallup & Proctor, 1982). Demographic information indicated that belief in reincarnation is distributed fairly evenly across levels of education, income, and race with the belief being more popular (27%) among those who do not attend churches. Belief in reincarnation of course, is subsumed within the more general belief in life after death. About 67% responded in the affirmative to the question, "Do you believe in life after death or not?" with 27% indicating disbelief, and 6% expressing no opinion on the matter. Believers in life after death are present fairly evenly across all socioeconomic levels. Approximately 20% of Americans believe that life after death will be proved scientifically one day.

A European survey called the "European Values Survey" (EVS) conducted in 1981 and 1990 indicated that approximately 20-25% of respondents in several European countries indicated belief in reincarnation (Ashford & Timms, 1992). The 1990 EVS figure for Great Britain was 24% -- a figure comparable to the Gallup & Proctor (1982) proportion for the U.S. population. Surprisingly, the EVS survey data consistently show the belief in reincarnation to be associated with conventional Christian beliefs. Walter & Waterhouse (1999) interviewed a small volunteer sample of British subjects (n = 30) who indicated a belief in reincarnation and report that the belief had little impact on the daily life of most respondents, except perhaps as way of dealing with issues of suffering that Christianity also addresses, and that their entertaining the idea of reincarnation has little to do with their affiliation with any particular church religion -- reincarnation was considered a detached and personal belief that was easily subsumed within their overall spiritual worldview and was not seen as in conflict with their membership in any church. "Our interviews confirm that it is perfectly possible both to go to church and to believe in reincarnation, and that those who entertain the idea of reincarnation need not accept large chunks of a "new Age" or "alternative package. . . Our point is that one does not have to be a New Ager to take the idea of reincarnation seriously" (pp. 195-196).

Spontaneous PLEs in Children

Matlock (199) presents a thorough overview of the key findings of past live memory case studies conducted by Ian Stevenson, the foremost investigator of children who remember past lives.

In-depth: "Children who remember past lives" (Stevenson, 1987)

In his two-volume, 2,080-page monograph titled *Reincarnation and Biology: A Contribution to the Etiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects*, Ian Stevenson (1997a), professor of psychiatry and director of the Division of Personality Studies at the Health Sciences Center at the University of Virginia, reports on 225 highly detailed case studies correlating birthmarks and other physiological manifestations (e.g., birth defect) with children's experiences of remembered past life events, particularly violent death. A concise 240-page summary (including photographs) of 112 of those cases is provided by Stevenson in his book *Where Reincarnation and Biology Intersect* (Stevenson, 1997b).

Why birthmark evidence is important to the case for reincarnation. Stevenson has collected over 2,600 reported cases of past-life memories of which 85 detailed reports have been published. Children who claim to remember a previous life have been found all over the world: many in Hindu and Buddhist countries of South Asia, Shiite peoples of Lebanon and Turkey, and indigenous tribes of West Africa and northwestern North America; fewer in Europe, the United States, and Canada. Stevenson (1997b) asserts that cases involving birthmarks (that differ noticeably from the kind of birthmark that almost everyone has) and birth defects are especially important for the following three reasons (pp. 2-3):

1. *The birthmarks and birth defects provide an objective type of evidence well above that which depends on the fallible memories of informants.* "For many of the cases, we have a medical document, usually a port-mortem report, that gives us a written confirmation of the correspondence between the birthmark (or birth defect) and the wound on the deceased person whose life the child, when it can speak, will usually claim to remember" (Stevenson, 1997b, p. 2).
2. *The birthmarks and birth defects derive importance from the evidence they provide that a deceased personality – having survived death – may influence the form of a later-born baby.*
3. *The cases with birthmarks and birth defects provide a better explanation than any other now available [e.g., genetic factors, viral infections, chemicals, chance, postnatal environment] about why some persons have birth defects when most do not and for why some persons have birth defects have theirs in a particular location instead of elsewhere.*

Key features of cases suggestive of reincarnation. Stevenson (1997b) describes how a case suggestive of reincarnation typically develops. A case may begin when a dying person expresses a wish to be reborn to a particular couple (prediction of rebirth), or when a person has a dream in which a deceased person appears and announces an intention to be reborn to particular parents (announcing dream). Shortly after the baby is born, its parents immediately notice the presence of a major birthmark. Soon after the child begins to speak, usually between the age of 2 and 4 years old, he or she speaks about a previous life, and continues to do so until he or she is about 5 to 8 years old, at which time the memories usually begin to fade away (or at least stops talking about them). Generally speaking, we have a situation in which "the children. . . claim awareness of a psychic identity binding two 'successive personal lives.' Even the habit-patterns, skills and dislikes, phobias, scars, or marks of inquiry on the skin appear sometimes to be a 'carry-over' from the 'earlier life' (Charo, 1978, p. 316). Common group characteristics of "cases of the reincarnation-type" that also show some variations according to socio-cultural patterns are briefly summarized below (Stevenson, 1997b, pp. 5-9):

- Emotional intensity of memories. "Most of the children speak about the previous life with an intensity, even with strong emotion, that surprises the adults around them. Many of them do not at first distinguish past from present, and they may use the present tense in reference to the previous life" (p. 5).
- Death recall /family recognition "The content of what the child states nearly always includes some account of the death in the previous life. This is particularly true if the death was violent, but occurs also – less frequently – when it was natural. Beyond that, the child usually speaks about the family of the previous life" (p. 5).
- Person recognition. "If the child has given sufficient and adequately specific details, especially of proper names and places, it is usually possible to identify a deceased person the facts of whose life closely matches the child's statements" (p. 6)
- Object recognition. "The child may also recognize spontaneously (or on request) various persons, objects, and places known to the previous personality" (p. 6).

- Behavioral memory. “The child displays unusual behavior... that is unusual for the child’s family, but harmonious with what can be known or conjectured about the person of whom the child speaks” (p. 7).
- Phobias. “Phobias, nearly always related to the mode of death in the previous life, occur in about 35% of the cases” (p. 7), often lasting into adulthood after the child can no longer remember memories of a prior life.
- Phobias. “Phobias take the form of a desire or demand for particular foods (not eaten in the subject’s family) or for clothes different from those customarily worn by the family members...also...cravings for addicting substances, such a tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs that the previous personality was known to have used” (p. 7), also often lasting into adulthood after memories of a previous life have faded.
- Skills. “A few subjects show skills that they have not been taught (or sufficiently watched others demonstrating, but which the previous personality was known to have had” (p. 7)
- Sex-change types. “In cases of what we call the ‘sex-change’ type, the child says it remembers a previous life as a person of the opposite sex. Such children almost invariably show traits of the sex of the claimed previous life. They cross-dress, play the games of the opposite sex, and may otherwise show attitudes characteristics of that sex” (p. 7).
- Unusual behaviors. “Particularly vivid examples of unusual behavior occur in subjects who claim to remember previous lives as natives of a country different from that of their parents” (e.g., Burmese children who claim to have been Japanese soldiers killed in Burma during World War II displaying traits typical of Japanese people but not Burmese people) (p. 8).
- Nature of the death “The deaths remembered by the children are predominantly violent. The overall percentage of violent deaths in the previous life is 51%... [This] percentage far exceeds those of violent death in the general population of the countries where the cases occur” (p. 8).
- Persons connected with the death. “The children often remember the other persons concerned in the death – usually murderers. The children often show strong animosities and attitudes of vengefulness toward these persons, especially if they happen to meet them. The animosity may generalize to other members of the same group” (p. 8).
- Play activity. “Many of the children express memories of the previous life in their play” (e.g., assuming the role during play activity of a school teacher or a garage mechanic whose life they remember)...A few children enact in their play the mode of death in the previous life” (e.g., play at drowning) (p. 8).
- Interval between death and rebirth. “The range in the median length of the interval between the previous personality’s death and the subject’s birth extends from only 4 months among the Haida of northwestern North America to 34 months among the Igbo of Nigeria” (p. 9).
- Characteristics of birthmarks. “Birthmarks differ from ordinary nevi in various ways...[especially] when we consider the cases of correspondences between two birthmarks and two wounds...Many of these (and other) birthmarks have unusual details in which they correspond to details of a relevant wound” (pp. 110-111).

How a case is investigated. When Stevenson investigates a case, he begins with an a series of interviews of the subject (i.e., the child if he or she will talk with him or who may be adult at the time of the interview), his or her parents, and other informed persons who can provide *firsthand* testimony about the subject’s statements and any unusual behavior (e.g., older siblings, grandparents, teachers). Birthmarks or birth defects are examined, sketched, and photographed. Written documents are obtained to provide exact records of dates (e.g., birth certificate, identity cards, diaries). Next the family of the claimed previous life is interviewed in a similar fashion who must be firsthand witnesses of what they describe and to ascertain any previous acquaintance between the two families or the possibility of some mutual acquaintance. In cases with birthmarks and birth defects, postmortem reports and other documents are obtained to establish the location of the wounds on the deceased person of the claimed previous life. Stevenson’s research is notable in the high standards he set for himself. “In the year 1977 [for example] the *Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases* devoted almost an entire issue to this subject and the work was reviewed in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*” (Grof, 2000, p. 237).

Some of the cases [Stevenson] eliminated because the family benefited financially, in terms of social prestige, or public attention, others because Stevenson found a connecting person who could have been the psychic link. Additional reasons were inconsistent testimony, false memories (*cryptomnesia*), witnesses of questionable character, or indication of fraud. Only the strongest cases were included in his final reports. (Grof, 2000, p. 236).

How alternative explanations are ruled out. After normal (and paranormal) explanations for the case are systematically evaluated and ruled out (e.g., mistaken identification of the deceased person, chance correspondence of wound with birthmark, presence of a similar birth mark or birth defect in the family, the two families had knowledge of or contact with each other before the case developed, the child shows ability for extrasensory perception of the magnitude necessary for obtaining their information in this way, informants’ descriptions of events are inaccurate, unusual behaviors or identity is imposed by the parents on the child to explain the birthmark, etc.), “the [indisputable] correspondence between wounds and birthmarks and the child’s correct statements about the life of the deceased person usually leave no doubt that the correct previous personality has been identified” (Stevenson, 1997b, p. 11). Chari

(1978, pp. 316-317) summarizes the reasons why Stevenson choose to study Asian children instead of adults as subjects in his pioneering research of spontaneous PLEs as a way of ruling out the more obvious alternative explanations to the reincarnation hypothesis.

[First], a three-year-old child is far to young to acquire much information about remote unknown persons and places. . . through the usual media of communication of grownups such as newspapers, the radio, and cinema, and carry such knowledge in the shape of buried and disguised 'memories.'

Second, the occurrence of delusions and true psychotic conditions is rare in children. Reincarnation fantasies in small children, who otherwise seem normal, intelligent, and cooperative cannot be ascribed to hysterical dissociation or a split of personality.

Third, a child who from early infancy talks, however haltingly, of an 'earlier life,' while retaining his normal consciousness without apparent personality shifts, and uses the present tense with respect to 'this life' and the past tense with respect to the 'other life' cannot be readily assimilated to cases of mediums mentioned in Western Spiritualist literature as 'possessed' by 'spirits.'

Fourth, these children, apart from their impressive and detailed 'memories' of 'another life,' do not seem to exhibit any evidence for psi capacities. If the capacities exist, why do they manifest themselves in a masked way in isolated episodes in the lives of the children [restricted only to past life memories and not applied to other areas of life]?

Lastly. . . these cases of children in the Middle East, Southern Asia, and the Far East fall into a distinguishable class with certain overall 'group characteristics,' but showing also some variations according to socio-cultural patterns of the subgroups.

Culture and reports of reincarnation experiences. Stevenson (1977a) does not believe that the reincarnation experience reported by children are the result of cultural influences, even though these experiences are reported most frequently in cultures whose religions support the concept of reincarnation (e.g., northern India, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, south central Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, northwest North America). Two reasons support this conjecture -- one empirical and one logical. Empirically, cases of children who remember previous lives also occur in the United States among families whose religious beliefs do not support the idea of reincarnation, and who in some cases were even familiar with the concept (Stevenson, 1983a). Logically, the relationship between cultural beliefs and the incidence of cases and the characteristics displayed by children who report previous lives could be a bi-directional relationship or correlation with "the incidence of cases swerving to sustain the beliefs ,and the strength of the beliefs encouraging the development and the communication of the experiences" (Irwin, 1989, p. 246). Stevenson (1983) states:

The case of the various cultures reflect, to some extent, the variations in the beliefs about reincarnation. We cannot yet explain these correlations. Two interpretations are obvious: first, the beliefs may influence the development of the cases; second, if reincarnation occurs, the beliefs may influence what actually happens from one life to another. But there may be other explanations also. (p. 743)

In-depth: "American Children Who Claim to Remember Previous Lives" (Stevenson, 1983)

Stevenson (1983) reports his analysis of 79 cases of the reincarnation type of American children (43 males, 36 females) who reported having lived a previous life. Examination of the background of these children indicated that 16% of families (n = 9) reported a belief in reincarnation before the child spoke of having a previous life, 37% (n=21) had a passing interest in the topic of reincarnation , 20% (n=11) had an interest in parapsychology generally, but not necessarily in reincarnation, 27% (n=15) had little or no knowledge about reincarnation, and 29% (n=23) of the cases did not provide enough information to determine one way or another belief status. The claim of the child that he (she) remembered a previous life was an baffling and unwelcomed event in many families, especially a notion not taught in schools or condoned by Protestant or Catholic religions, which was occasioned by punishment, reprimand, and scoldings by parents who did not wish to take the child's statements seriously of have neighbors or other family members know about the child's statements. As Stevenson (1983) put it: "The children's statements often conflicted seriously with the beliefs of their parents and other members of their families" (p. 744). This non-acceptance of the children's statements by family members may be one reason why the number of verifiable statements made by these American children were consequently less in number. That is, there were more "unsolved" cases in this particular American sample such that insufficient information concerning the name of the person whose life

the child remembered was provided making it impossible for the investigators to locate the alleged deceased personality that the child claimed to be -- something that could be done in only 20% (n=16) of the 79 American cases.

What is most interesting in the American cases is the fact that in 94% (n=15) of these 16 "solved" cases in which the deceased person to whom the children's statement referred could be named and specifically identified, "that person was a member of the child's family, such as an older sibling or a grandparent who had died before the subject's birth" (p. 744). This differs from the subjects of cases in India (n=266) who tend to recall the life of a non-relative, and more often a stranger whom the family has never met and who is living in a geographically remote area of the state, city, or town from their own. A high incident of violent deaths characterized the past-life identities of both Asian Indian sample (56%) and the American children sample (80%) "which far exceeds the incidence of violent deaths in the general population of India (7.2%) and the United States (8%). Like the India sample, the American children began speaking of a prior life around 3 years old, but unlike the Indian sample, the American sample stopped speaking about their prior life earlier, around 8 years old, instead of around 9 and a half years old as was true for the India children. Stevenson (1983) explains: "When adults lose interest in which the child says, or have none to begin with, the child himself may stop talking about the memories and forget them earlier than he would if he received more attention " (pp. 746).

It is unlikely that the reported past lives on the part of the American children is motivated simply by wish-fulfillment since "these lives are usually commonplace ones, sometimes lived in less comfortable circumstances than those of the child's family" (Stevenson, 1983, p. 747). What about fantasy role-playing? Stevenson writes that "it is difficult to exclude the possibility that the child learned normally about the deceased person concerned and then used that information in the elaboration of a fantasy about a previous life. It is . . . possible that only some of the American cases derive from real memories of previous lives whereas others are fantasies. . . [although] many of them have been expressed against the wishes of the child's parents and have frequently involved the child in conflict with his parents (Stevenson, 1983, p. 747). Are the past-life identities simply imaginary playmates that the children have called forth to keep them company? Stevenson (1983) does not think so and more definite conclusions must await further investigations:

In their main contents. . . they differ markedly from cases of imaginary playmates. A child with an imaginary playmate regards the playmate as living contemporaneously with himself and as being a different person. In contrast, children who claim to remember previous lives believe that they were another person -- a deceased one, not a living one -- in another life. They identify themselves with that deceased person and, to certain extent, believe themselves to be that same person, though in a new physical body. (p. 747)

In-depth: "Setting Criteria for Ideal Reincarnation Research" (Edelmann & Bernett (2007).

Edelmann and Bernet (2007) identify a set of rigorous criteria involving multiple researchers with the goal of outlining an "ideal protocol" for studying future cases of spontaneous PLEs in children that would (a) control for as many sources of internal and external invalidity as possible which might compromise interpretation of empirical evidence generated in support of the reincarnation hypothesis, and (b) address perceived weaknesses with the current methodology used by Stevenson and colleagues.

An ideal protocol would have the sort of evidence and employ the methods of research able to give substantive weight to a reincarnation hypothesis, even for those who have physicalism as a metaphysical bias and are therefore highly skeptical of reincarnation case studies. (Edelmann & Bernet, 2007, p. 94)

Although Edelman & Bernet's (2007) protocols deal solely with spontaneous PLEs in children and hypnotic past-life regression research is not directly addressed, they are perceived to have some salutary value for the present study and so will be briefly described.

According to Edelmann & Bernet (2007), the ideal research protocol into spontaneous cases of the reincarnation-type consists of four phases. In phase one, the initial interview with the child that is conducted by the first investigator who is trained interviewer (Interviewer A) is *videotaped* with "close-ups of the child and the interviewer, as well as long-shots of both. . . so that other people working on the project can determine the overall quality of the interview, both in its content and in the manner in which it was conducted" (p. 94). An adequate number of nondirective questions are presented to the child that are aimed at obtaining enough general information ("Tell me everything you can remember about the past life") and specific information ("Tell me the names of everybody who lived in the house") that can be checked against existing data sources so that information of sufficient quantity and quality has been collected from the child "to eliminate the possibility of chance and/or common knowledge that any child might have. . . [and] to make twenty discrete, independent descriptors of the former life" (p. 95) that can be generated during phase two of the protocol.

In phase two, the video-recorded interview data and the child's life-history, school records, medical and mental health records are critically examined, analyzed and evaluated by a second group of investigators that consists of a team of professionals trained in psychiatric interviewing (Group B). Group B also interviews the child's family and other relatives for additional information about the child in order to the occurrence of cryptomnesia in the child's past-life report ("the forgetting of the source of information learned normally but attributed to PLE" (Mills & Lynn, 2000, p. 287). The task of Group B is to (a) identify possible discrepancies in the child's self-reports obtained during the initial interview, (b) identify normal information sources from which the child could not or did in fact receive the alleged past-life information (e.g., from radio, TV, Internet, parents, an informant, implicit suggestions from Interview A, etc.), and (c) establish the reliability (or unreliability) of the testimony obtained from the child, the parents, and other persons who may have been involved in the child's upbringing, which may require the psychological testing of the child and family members. Group B then creates a summary report of its findings that is presented to the project directors, along with a list of 20 descriptors and definitions "of what will constitute 'a hit' when the next group of investigators, C, visit the supposed previous home or village and collect data to validate the claim of reincarnation" (Edelmann & Bernet, 2007, p. 96).

In phase three, a novel feature that is not typically employed in usual investigations of the reincarnation-type is the introduction of a "control household" into the protocol. In phase three, a third group of investigators (Group C) who are *blind* both to the child's identity and life-history and to the identity of the location of the child's supposed past life, visit two locations. One location is the location of the child's supposed previous life (referred to as the "designated location") and the other location is of a similar household or village in a nearby community (referred to as the "control household") (Edelmann & Bernet, 2007, p. 97). From both locations, Group C (a) collects videotaped data from family members, neighbors, and other informants, (b) establishes the reliability of informants' testimony, and (c) provides verbal descriptions and photographic records of relevant artifacts and the surrounding physical environment. Then using the list of 20 descriptors generated by Group B during phase 2 that was, in turn, based on the information provided by the child during the initial interview in phase 1, Group C compares the number of "hits" the child obtains in describing the designated household with the number of descriptor "hits" in the control household, in order to establish that the various statements that children express regarding the designated household exceed chance probability.

In phase four, a fourth group of investigators (Group D), the project directors, conduct a final assessment of the strength and weakness of the data in giving substantive weight to a reincarnation hypothesis.

D must determine whether the interview was conducted properly by group A; D must determine whether group B adequately addressed all possible natural sources of information; and D must determine whether group C had collected the relevant information from the alleged past life and the control site. Assuming that D finds the above satisfactory, the largest question D must answer is: Do the 20 (at least) descriptors provided by the child rule out chance as an explanation? (Edelmann & Bernet, 2007, p. 98).

Because of the difficulties involved in employing inferential statistics to analyze single case-studies ($n = 1$), significant number of these case studies of the reincarnation-type would need to be collected if statistically significant differences were to be detected by comparing the number of "hits" of the child's descriptors for the "designated" household to the number of "hits" for the "control" household for each case, using a paired t-test.

Xenoglossy

Speaking an Unlearned Language

Xenoglossy refers to the relatively rare and unusual phenomenon that is reported to occur in hypnosis (either during regression or without) and in other circumstances where the individual demonstrates knowledge of a foreign language's vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar and an ability to responsively converse in that foreign language, which he (she) had not learned during the present lifetime. Stevenson and Pasricha (1980) offer the following background information and definition of the phenomenon.

Richet (1905-1907) coined the term "xenoglossy" to refer to cases in which persons speak a real language that they do not know in their ordinary states of consciousness. There are two types of xenoglossy: recitative and responsive. Recitative xenoglossy refers to the repetition, as if by rote, of phrases and sometimes longer passages in a foreign language. . . . In responsive xenoglossy, on the other hand, subjects can converse intelligibly in the foreign language: they can reply to statements or questions spoken in the language with appropriate responses in the same language. (p. 332)

Stevenson and colleagues (1974b, 1976, 1984; Stevenson & Pasricha, 1980) have investigated several cases of "responsive" xenoglossy.

In-depth: "A Preliminary Report of a New Case of Responsive Xenoglossy: The Case of Gretchen"
(Stevenson, 1977)

One case involved a woman named Dolores Jay (D. J.) who spoke no German, never studied German in school, whose ancestry did not include any Germans, yet during a hypnotic past-life regression, displayed a personality that called itself "Gretchen" who spoke only German (Stevenson, 1976). Over a period of three years (1971-1973) more than 19 tape recording of sessions with Gretchen were made that permitted examination of Gretchen's German grammar and pronunciation, which Stevenson and two other investigators judged to demonstrate an ability to converse in an imperfect and halting way but nevertheless intelligibly and responsively (i.e., "she could give sensible answers in German to questions put to her in that language") -- a language that Dolores Jay has never studied and had no knowledge of prior to the development of the Gretchen personality (Stevenson, 1976, p. 70). Investigation of the "past-life" statements of the Gretchen personality could turn up no evidence that such a personality ever existed, and indicated some statements to have been inconsistent with historical data (pp. 69-70). Inquiries into the possibility that Dolores Jay had learned German by normal means in her childhood, unknown to both her and her family, and afterwards forgotten that she had done so (cryptomnesia hypothesis) revealed no evidence in support of this hypothesis. Stevenson (1977b) concludes:

How then did D. J. acquire the ability to speak German that she showed during the periods of Gretchen's manifestation? In reporting the Jensen case (Stevenson, 1974) I argued that the ability to speak a language is a skill, that skills cannot be acquired without practice, cannot be transmitted either normally or paranormally, and that if it can be shown that a person has not normally learned a foreign language that he can speak responsively, then we have evidence of the existence and influence on him (or her) of another personality which at some time has learned that language. In short, authentic cases of responsive xenoglossy provide for me important evidence of the survival of human personality after death. A surviving personality capable of continuing to speak a foreign language and expressing it through an entranced person may do so through processes that we call reincarnation or possession. (pp. 75-76)

Stevenson's (1977) exposition of the these two hypotheses-- the reincarnational hypothesis and the possession hypothesis -- is informative and evokes a conception of reincarnation and possession that is combines transpersonal/paranormal and sociocognitive perspectives in an original way. Stevenson's hypothesis of reincarnation is described below.

With the concept of reincarnation, we can think of a deceased personality which had once learned to speak the language in question as surviving death as an enduring personality which later becomes associated with a new physical body. Under the special circumstances provided by hypnosis, and perhaps at other times, the previous personality could come to the surface -- albeit perhaps only partially, but yet with sufficient control to speak its native language. . . . If we interpret the case as one of reincarnation, this does not bind us to believing that D. J. is a "one-to-one" reincarnation of a previously living Gretchen. It is conceivable that D. J. lives a previous life in Germany when she could speak German and that the Gretchen personality provided an appropriate dramatic vehicle for the partial expression of memories of that previous life. The Gretchen personality might then resemble an historical novel comprised partly of fact, partly of fiction. (Stevenson, 1977, p. 75)

Stevenson's (1977) hypothesis of possession is described below.

In considering the hypothesis of possession, we can imagine a deceased personality capable of speaking its native language persisting in a discarnate state until a suitably entranced living person gives it an opportunity to manifest temporarily through that person's body. In the present case this would imply that D. J. became a medium when hypnotized by C. J. [her husband, the Rev. Carroll Jay] and that at such times Gretchen became a communicator capable of controlling D. J. with sufficient power to speak her native language. . . . Nor does the interpretation of possession oblige us to believe that the manifest personality of Gretchen corresponds exactly, or even closely, with a real person who once lived a terrestrial life and is now discarnate. On this hypothesis also, the phenomenal Gretchen personality could be a mixture blended from parts of D. J.'s own personality and elements of a real discarnate Gretchen lying behind and influencing the manifest communicator (Hart, 1958). (p. 76)

Stevenson (1977) debates whether the reincarnation hypothesis or the possession hypothesis best fits the facts of the Gretchen case and concludes in favor of the possession hypothesis (p. 76).

In-depth: "A Preliminary Report on an Unusual Case of the Reincarnation Type with Xenoglossy"
(Stevenson & Paricha, 1980).

Stevenson & Paricha (1980) report the case of a 32-year-old Asian Indian woman named Uttara Huddar born in Nagpur, India in 1941 who had no memories of a past life as a child, who had never been to Bengali and had not learned its language, but who began to display memories and knowledge of foods, customs, and places in Bengal allegedly derived from a previous life lived 150 years ago when a personality that called herself "Sharada Chattopadhaya" spontaneously emerged in 1974 and continued to do so at intermittent intervals until 1979.

Sharada could not speak Marathi (Uttara's native language) but spoke fluent Bengali. Although Uttara was (and is) married, Sharada dressed and behaved like a somewhat shy, married, Bengali woman. She did not recognize Uttara's parents or friends. She gave many details about her life and mentioned the names of places in Bengali with which she was familiar. From the information she gave. . . it seems probable that a personal corresponding to Sharada's statements lived during the years between 1810 and 1830. . . When Sharada first appeared, she was completely unfamiliar with tools, instruments, and appliances developed after the industrial revolution. For example, she knew nothing about electric appliances, gas stoves, fountain pens, or modern vehicles such as automobiles and trains. . . . Her Bengali [was free of all English loan words and] had more Sanskrit words than modern Bengali has, as did Bengali in the eighteen and early nineteenth centuries. . . . The Sharada personality and Uttara in her normal state appeared, at least at first, to know nothing about each other. Uttara seemed to be completely amnesic for what happened during a Sharada phase, and Sharada regarded Uttara's family as strangers. . . The Sharada phases have lasted from one day to about six weeks. . . [Sharada] gave the correct relationship she would have had to five of the male relatives of Brajanath Chattopadhaya [Sharada's purported father] whose names appear around his on the genealogy. (pp. 332, 335, 337, 338)

Unlike ordinary cases of the reincarnation type that Stevenson and colleagues have investigated (primarily of children who remember previous lives), this case is unusual because of several factors (Stevenson & Pasricha, 1980, pp. 344-345). First, the late age at which the past life memories emerged in Uttara when she was 32 years old is unusual since in most cases of the reincarnation-type that Stevenson has investigated, children are between the ages of 2-4 when they first speak of past lives and few memories occur spontaneously after the ages of 8-10. Second, the complete displacement of memories of the primary personality (Uttara) by the past-life identity (Sharada) is unusual because most children who remember previous lives retain their primary identity and generalized reality orientation while simultaneously being aware of their past memories without their primary identity being suppressed or dominated or taken over by them, except in few exceptional cases (p. 344). Third, the relatively long duration during which the "Sharada" personality remained in control -- "the median duration was two days, but the average duration, because of two long phases lasting 41 and 43 days, was a little over eight and half days" (p. 335) -- is unusual for those few exceptional cases of children reported being "taken over" by their memories of past lives for only hours or a few days at the most (Stevenson, 1974a).

If statements of the Sharada personality indicate that she can speak Bengali fluently, whereas the primary personality cannot, then what explains Uttara's ability to speak the foreign language? Perhaps Uttara learned Bengali by cryptomnesia or is perpetuating some hoax on the investigators. Such an explanation is a bit far-fetched given the fact that "if Uttara had learned Bengali -- accidentally or fraudulently -- she would have acquired modern Bengali, not that spoken 150 years ago. . . . [Sharada's Bengali was free of English loan words and much more Sanskritized than is modern Bengali]" (Stevenson & Pasricha, 1980, p. 342). Perhaps Uttara genetically "inherited" Sharada's memories and facility with Bengali language. But "this hypothesis requires us to believe that memories of events and linguistic abilities can both be inherited. . . . [and] further requires us to discard Sharada's own statement that she had no children" (p. 343). Perhaps Sharada is a multiple personality of Uttara? Usually the secondary personality demonstrates behaviors and memories related to different time periods in the *same* life as the primary personality, but to have the secondary personality display behaviors and cognitions related to a time period of 150 years ago and express memories of events that occurred before the primary personality's birth is novel. Stevenson & Pasricha's (1980) favor the following interpretation of the facts of case: "We are therefore entitled to conjecture, at least provisionally, that Sharada was a previous incarnation of the person now identified as Uttara. If that is so, then the Sharada memories are a part of Uttara, but one that remained hidden until they began to emerge periodically when she was in her thirties" (pp. 345-346).

Hypnotic Past-Life Regression

Characteristics, Perspectives, and Forms of Suggestions

The behavioral and psychological manifestations of subjects who report PLEs under conditions of hypnotic regression is different in many ways from the features displayed in cases of spontaneous PLEs. During a past-life regression.

Subjects may show striking changes of mood, speech, and behavior. Subjects may show a convincing sense of vividness and certainty as they claim to be in other locations and other periods in history. They may exhibit foreign accents and xenoglossies. They claim to have different names and identities, and may claim to belong to the opposite sex. Often they display funds of information that are surprisingly appropriate to the personalities they claim to be. (Venn, 1986, p. 409)

"Artificial" hypnosis. With the notable exceptions of purported paranormal knowledge and xenoglossies (responsively speaking an unlearned language) (see, for example, Stevenson, 1974, 1976, 1984), hypnotic inductions can produce similar alterations of mood, speech, motor behavior, perception, and identity *without age regression* suggestions. For example, Raikov (1975, 1976, 1977) reports that subjects in deep hypnosis are able to simulate famous persons with a specific talent when called upon to do so, a phenomenon that Ostrander & Schroeder (1970) refer to as "artificial reincarnation."

When a subject has accepted the suggestion [under the condition of active hypnosis] that he is a painter (it may be Repin, for example), he loses his own individuality and is really sure that he is Repin. . Conscious and unconscious appear to be reversed; for the normal 'ego' is no longer available (hence unconscious or subconscious) while the hallucinated image of another person is now 'conscious.' . . . The hypnotized person knows nothing of his own individuality, and does not identify his relatives, friends, and even himself when he looks in a mirror. He adjusts his life experience, knowledge, and memory to the hypnotic image of himself as another person, and interprets his surroundings from the position of that image. (Raikov, 1977, pp. 216, 218)

Interestingly, Raikov (1976) reports that "there is a carry-over of the creative achievements from hypnosis to the waking state [in the high hypnotizable subjects, whereas] low hypnotic Ss and control groups did not show improvements in the tasks" (p. 258). Apparently, the hypnotic process also needs to take the post-hypnotic consequences of the hypnotic condition into account if any full understanding of the hypnotic process is to be obtained.

Points of view. Marriott (1984) identifies two types of past-life regression: (a) the active participant type where the primary identity is attached to and associated or identified with the past-life identity, experiencing what the past-life identity is experiencing, and which involves a "revivification or reliving" of the past-life experience in present time, and (b) the passive observer type in which the primary identity is detached, dis-associated and dis-identified from the past-life identity, viewing from a distance what the past-life identity is experiencing. Spanos et al. (1991) refers to this mode of involvement as "self-fading" where the primary identity fades into the background of the experience (p. 310). In the language of neuro-linguistic programming, in active participation, the primary identity is viewing the past-life experience from a the point of view that is "inside" the visual image; in passive observation, the primary identity is viewing the experience from a point of view that is "outside" the image (Bandler, 1985, chap. 3). When an experience is perceived from the point of view of outside-the-image, the kinesthetic or emotional aspect of the experience becomes dis-sociated from its visual aspects. The individual can report a past-life experience without its associated emotions. When an experience is perceived from the point of view of inside-the-image, then the kinesthetic aspects of the experience kick in and the individual feels the emotions associated with the experience.

Cunningham (1986) built upon and extended the fact that all experience requires a "point of view," "perspective," or "frame of reference" from which it can be perceived and through which it is interpreted in a study of the act of imagining in waking and self-hypnotic states of consciousness. Six degrees of involvement or points of view are distinguished that may be taken toward a hypnotic experience (Cunningham, 1986, pp. 265-270).

- In *disengaged noninvolvement* the individual is not engaged or involved in the past-life experience but instead is commenting, explaining, justifying, interpreting, hypothesizing, or making inferences about the experience.
- In *remote spectating from the third-person point of view*, the individual is reporting a passive-observer-type past life experience, uses third-person pronouns to describe the experience, but does not appear within the story at all, The person is a

"ghostly presence" observing events but takes no part in the unfolding drama, neither affecting nor being affected by the imaginal action he (she) observes and describes.

- In *remote spectating from the first-second person points of view*, the person is likewise an observer, a ghostly presence that takes no active part in the drama, and does not appear within the imaginative presentation at all, but uses first-person and second-person grammatical forms (i.e., "I," "you," "we"). This reflects passive-observer-type past-life regression (Marriott, 1984) that is a little less distant than the observer-type experience described strictly from the third-person point of view.
- In *remote participating from the first-second-third person points of view*, the individual now appears within the scene, but observes a surrogate image of himself (herself), viewing himself (herself) as if from a distance. Although the individual is not fully embodied there, he (she) does act and participate as an agent within the imagined drama by proxy. The speaker uses first-, second-, or third-person pronouns to describe the experience ("I see myself sitting around with friends") or employs auxiliaries such as "would," "could," "should," "might" to signal customary, hypothetical, or obligatory actions ("We would be talking about just different things").
- In *close spectating from the third-person point of view*, the individual is engaged and involved in the past-life experience, uses third-person grammatical form to describe the past-life experience, and appears within the scene actively involved as a participant and actor, experiencing body activity, sensations, and emotions as if he (she) were fully embodied within the drama undergoing the experience. The person is fully involved in hypnotic past-life regression in an active-participant-type way (Marriott, 1984), but as the third-person grammatical form indicates, in a remote way.
- *Close participating from the first-second points of view* occurs during an active-participant-type regression when the individual is within the scene taking an active role as a fully embodied participant experiencing the scene from within, acting directly upon events which present themselves, not through some projected surrogate self-image, but by an act of identification with the action. Instead of speaking about the experience using third-person grammatical forms, first-person and second-person grammatical forms are used ("As I walk along, I find what probably used to be a clearing; I can sit here and can even hear a creek running by and I can hear birds. I hear footsteps from behind me").

Directive vs. nondirective forms of past-life suggestions. Marriott (1984) identifies two forms that a past-life regression suggestion may take: (a) a directive form such as "You are drifting back to another time, another place. . .", and a non-directive form such as "'you are going back in time. . . to the relevant life situation. . . where the symptom was first manifested or caused" (p. 70). Spanos et al. (1991) in their experimental study of hypnotic past-life regression, for instance, employ a directive form of past-life regression suggestion: "You are regressing in time, beyond your birth and into a new dimension. . . . You are now in a different life, living in another life that you have lived before in another time. You are now reliving that other life that you lived once before in a different time" (p. 310). Roberts (1966/1993), on the other hand, employs a nondirective form of regression suggestion: "I am going to count backwards from ten to zero. Now as odd as this might seem, when the count is finished you will see scenes from a time before you were (give present name)" (pp. 185-186).

The main problem with using hypnosis as a research method to investigate the reincarnation hypothesis is that much of the data generated by "previous personalities" is unverifiable, especially when the previous personality has lived during a period of time centuries ago for which written records are scarce and of uncertain authenticity themselves. Hypnosis is understood by the professional community to encourage the free reign of imagination, facilitate the lowering of censoring ego barriers, and promote the generation of fantasies often that seem based on what Freud referred to as wish fulfillment needs of the personality. Tarazi (1990) notes:

Most of what emerges during such experiments is unverifiable and probably derives from information the subject has obtained through reading or watching movies or television. Imagination then constructs a plausible 'personality.' In a few cases, it has been possible to demonstrate close correspondences between a book the subject may have read or some aspect of his/her own life and the story unfolded by the 'previous personality' evoked during hypnotic regression. (pp. 309-310)

Even when clients benefit from hypnotic past-life regression therapy, for example, this fact by itself does not necessarily prove that the "previous personalities" are real in the same way that that physical client sitting before the therapist is real. Chari (1978) notes:

As the British parapsychologist Whately Carington once remarked, the question of whether Jones has survived death is vastly different from the question whether Johns survived a shipwreck. In the terminology of the linguistic philosopher A. G. N. Flew, a 'disembodied person' has come out of a different 'logical basket' from the 'corrupt person' or 'young person' and calls for an altogether logic and conceptual array from that we use in everyday life. (p. 314)

Past-Life Therapy

Knight (1995, p. 92) identifies 12 features of past-life regressions that tend to characterize the phenomenology of the experience of previous lives as they occur during past-life therapy:

- Past life experiences are usually visual.
- Past life regressions seem to have a life of their own.
- The imagery has an uncanny feeling of familiarity.
- The subject identifies with one character.
- Past life emotions may be (re)experienced during a regression.
- Past life events may be viewed in two distinct perspectives -- first and third person.
- The experience often mirrors present issues in the subject's life.
- Regressions may be followed by a genuine improvement in mental state.
- Regressions may affect medical conditions.
- Regressions develop according to meanings, not historical time.
- Past life regressions become easier with repetition.
- Most past lives are mundane.

Mills & Lynn (2000) present a number of severe criticisms of therapists who use hypnosis to elicit past-life memories to produce therapeutic effects. These include:

Encouraging imagination and a heightened tolerance for logical incongruity. . . [that] can facilitate the elaboration of imaginative scenarios and narrative that may have little or no relation to actual historical circumstances. . . . [Using] directive, highly leading procedures [that] have the potential to instantiate false memories [that] may also deter the patient from grappling with the true causes and factor that maintain present-day concerns. . . . There has been no systematic documentation or follow-up of these claims [of therapeutic benefit]. . . . There is no reason to believe that recall past lives has any salutary effect on present-day problems, although this issue has not been systematically investigated, In fact, it could be argued that the person's best interests are not served if he or she is treated with past-life regression therapy when there is an empirically validated treatment for that particular problem, (Mills & Lynn, 2000, p. 297)

These overstated and misleading criticisms, however, are not an accurate representation of the facts. First of all, hypnotic past-life regression is usually not the technique of first resort and tends to be used only when traditional forms of psychotherapy do not produce therapeutic results or the use of psychotropic drugs is contraindicated for health-related reasons.

Second, statements made by some critics of past-life therapy that "few of the past-life hypnotists have doctoral degrees in psychology or medicine" do not accurately represent the facts. (Venn, 1986, p. 410). There are many professional psychotherapists such as Ronald Jue, Ph.D., Hazel Denning, Ph.D., Roger Woolger, Ph.D., Edith Fiore, Ph.D., Chet Snow, Ph.D., Edward Reynolds, Ph.D., Thorwald Dethlefsen, Ph.D., and Ernest Pecci, M.D., among others who *have* provided "systematic documentation and follow-up" some of which is published in refereed scientific journals that demonstrate the therapeutic effects of past life regression in resolving or ameliorating a range of both (a) physical health-related conditions, including: temporomandibular joint pain, migraine, chronic headache, asthma, allergies, obesity, physical pain, ulcers, and arthritis, and (b) psychological difficulties, including: phobias, interpersonal problems, nightmares, night terrors, low self-esteem, fear of death, obsessions, and feelings of loneliness (see Lucas, 1992, for an extensive discussion). Doctoral dissertations (e.g., Clark, 1995; Ethridge, 1996; Freedman, 1997; Saunders, 2004) and master's theses (e.g., Mattina, 1993) have been written on the topic. Granted, not all patients benefit from past-life therapy. Like hypnosis itself, past-life therapy is not a magical panacea for what ails one. Some patients, however, respond effectively to such ministrations and these successes are not be ignored or denied simply because they cannot easily be brought into a laboratory setting to be demonstrated or replicated for the satisfaction of all. If psychotherapy were limited to what could be proven by laboratory demonstration alone, we would have a very impoverished psychology indeed.

Brian Weiss (1982), former Professor and Chair in the Department of Psychiatry at Mount Sinai Medical Center (Miami Beach, FL), has written up and published a copiously documented account of his treatment in the 1970's of a highly hypnotizable young unmarried woman who suffered from a number of psychological problems including phobias, panic attacks, depression, and recurrent nightmares. In response to the nondirective suggestion made during one hypnotic session -- "Go back to the time from which your symptoms arise" -- instead of going back to her early childhood as expected, recalled a past life 4,000 years ago in which she claimed to have lived and died and that she identified as the origin of her present difficulties. After this session, her symptoms gradually went into remission and within months showed no signs of the former problems which had plagued her for years, a cure which has

persisted. Weiss (1992) subsequently published his accounts of other patients whose regression to a previous life was sufficient enough to produce therapeutic results. Roger Woolger (1987) is a Jungian psychotherapist who has also documented and published extensive accounts of his patients for whom past-life regressions produced therapeutic effects.

Third, what is important to understand (at least for purposes of the present study) is that from the point of view of past-life therapy the issue of authenticating or validating the clients past-life reports as historically accurate (i.e., concern over whether or not the past lives really exist) is not essential for therapeutic benefits to occur (Bache, 1990; Freedman, 1997). False confabulated stories and "imaginative scenarios and narratives that may have little or no relation to actual historical circumstances" (Mills & Lynn, 2000, p. 297) are known to emerge in past-life therapy that also have healing effects. While the therapeutic effects of hypnotic past-life regression are well-documented in the some of the clinical literature (see, for example, Lucas, 1992), it is also true that very few therapists have taken the time to publish the results of any prolonged investigation into information sources that would serve to authenticate the information provided by the "previous" personalities of patients who have undergone a large number of hypnotic past-life regression sessions (but see Bernstein, 1956; Brown, 1991; Ramster, 1994; Tarazi, 1990; Venn, 1986; Wambaugh, 1979).

In the face of numerous documented instances of obvious inconsistencies and discrepancies between historical facts and the previous lives reported by individuals in clinical and experimental settings, Stevenson (1994) argues that that past-life therapists commit "the psychotherapist's fallacy" when they mistakenly attribute the relief of symptoms that a client experiences following a hypnotic past-life regression to the hypnotic technique used instead of to the nonspecific, common factors that research has found to be common to all successful therapies -- "behavior on the part of the therapist that is supportive and empathetic. . . the belief on the part of both therapist and patient that the treatment will be beneficial. . . [and] the influence of suggestion, whether explicit or implicit" (pp. 188-189, 191). Venn (1986) would add "physical relaxation, rapport with the hypnotist, the discharge of strong emotion, [and] placebo effects" as other possible causes for observed cures that are being misattributed to the technique of past-life regressions (p. 412).

Suppose one grants for the sake of argument that in most cases of hypnotic past-life regression -- either experimentally induced in the laboratory or elicited in the clinical setting -- (a) the real and actual existence of most "previous" personalities elicited in the trance state cannot be verified, (b) the past-life personality is a plausible fantasy constructed by an over-active imagination brought about by the demand characteristics of the situation, and (c) the information included in the apparent past life was derived from information the hypnotized subject obtain subconsciously from books, movies, TV or other information sources now forgotten. There still remains those few cases published in refereed scientific journals in which knowledge is displayed by the "previous" personality that the subject could not have learned through ordinary means and cannot be readily accounted for, so far as extensive research and study can reveal by the investigator (Bernstein, 1956; Ramster, 1994; Stevenson, 1974, 1976, 1983, 1984; Tarazi, 1990; Wambaugh, 1979). When such cases are discovered, it is important to take note of William James's reminder that it takes only one single white crow -- one counterexample -- to prove that not all crows are black. In the words of William James,

If you will let me use the language of the professional logic-shop, a universal proposition can be made untrue by a particular instance. If you wish to upset the law that all crows are black, you mustn't seek to show that no crows are black; it is enough if you prove one single crow to be white. (quoted in Murphy & Ballou, 1973, p. 41)

Obviously, neither the vividness nor visual clarity of a past-life experience, nor the strong emotions often aroused during the seeming reliving of a previous life, nor the credibility that an individual may assign to the experience, nor the cure that may follow if the memory is made conscious constitute strong evidence of the authenticity of the events described or that the previous life that the person remembered is a real previous life. But if these elements or conditions occur *and* the apparent previous personality reports verifiable information that the researcher can be reasonably sure was not normally learned, then we are one step further toward some kind of proof for the reincarnation hypothesis

Venn (1986, p. 417) identifies five criteria or features that would characterize the ideal case for hypnotic past-life regression research.

1. The hypnotist would obtain a wealth of data from numerous hypnotic sessions. This has two potential benefits: It provides a large pool of data for verification and allows many opportunities for the subject to make contradictory or absurd statements that would indicate confabulation.
2. The data from hypnosis would pertain to a time and place for which historical records exist for individual citizens.
3. The hypnotic sessions would be recorded on videotape or audiotape.
4. The hypnotic sessions would be conducted and documented before any archival research was undertaken, to avoid contaminating the subject with historical information.
5. All archives would be researched exhaustively, and both positive and negative data would be reported. A single case, thoroughly investigated, is more conclusive than studies based on superficial contact with a thousand subjects.

The purpose of these criteria is to provide one picture of the sort of research that might provide a basis for empirical evidence on which the reincarnation may be evaluated in a rigorous and scientific way and how such research would be conducted. Another aim of these criteria is to address the number of weaknesses with the current methodology used by psychologists to study reincarnational claims so that something substantive about reincarnation might be claimed on the basis of empirical research.

Age Regression and Past-Life Regression in Hypnosis

In ordinary hypnotic age regression (not "past life" regression) it is not uncommon for participants who have been regressed to childhood to display a curious mixture of childlike characteristics appropriate to that age reflected in such behaviors as their handwriting, speaking, and gestures, as well as adult elements of behavior not ordinarily present at earlier period of development (Orne, 1951). A high proportion of individuals (about 40-45%) respond to age regression suggestions when administered within the context of standardized hypnotic susceptibility scales (e.g., SHHS:C; Weitzenhoffer & Hilgard, 1962). "The most distinctive characteristic of age regression is that the hypnotized person's report of reliving an early event, as opposed to merely imagining or thinking about it during hypnosis" (Perry, Laurence, D'eon, & Tallant, 1988, p. 131). One of the phenomenological characteristics of "past-life" age regression studied by Spanos et al. (1991) is "self-fading" defines as "the extent to which subjects experienced their primary self as fading into the background during their past-life identity enactment" (p. 310). Perry & Walsh (1978) report that about 50% of highly hypnotizable individuals who experience reliving an earlier age (not a "past life") report self-fading in which there is no sense of duality between their child and adult identities, no sense of their adult identity at all because it fades completely into the background of awareness, but a "quasi-literal" experience of being the child at the suggested age ("I actually felt as though I was back at the suggested age, and reliving a past experience"). The other 50% of age-regressed individuals tend to report experiencing a duality of identity in which their adult identity co-occurs either simultaneously or alternately with the child identity ("I know I was really my present age, but I felt in part as though I was reliving an experience").

There is controversy about whether age regression experiences are to be taken literally or symbolically, and whether age regression techniques enhance or diminish the accuracy of memory. On the one hand, sometimes the information retrieved during past life regressions can be checked and turns out to be historically accurate (e.g., Ramster, 1997; Tarazi, 1990), while at other times the information turns out to be inaccurate (Venn, 1986). Given the definition of hypnosis as a state of mind that encourages fantasy and imaginative-believing-in that is currently popular in mainstream psychology, it is understandable why most past-life regressions are in the first instance immediately considered guilty of being false, made-up stories with no basis in reality, in which fact and fantasy are actually confused in the mind of the hypnotized person. The past-life identity is then viewed as being an enactment of a role shaped by the needs, desires, and wishes of both the hypnotist and the hypnotized within the context of a hypnotic situation that calls for such dramatizations by suggestive demand characteristics of the setting.

Hypnosis is known to facilitate the recall of both "true" and "false" memories (Dywan & Bowers, 1983; Stalnaker & Riddle, 1932) and people reporting recovered memories of past lives have been shown to exhibit "false memory effects" in laboratory paradigms to a greater degree than individuals who do not report memories of past lives (Meyersburg, Bogdan, Gallo, McNally, 2009). Orne (1951) documents the occurrence of logical inconsistencies and inaccuracies in hypnotically-induced age-regression reports -- such as when an individual could speak no English as a child but could understand requests for information that were given in English (i.e., how can you not understand, yet understand a language?), report that one's 6th birthday fell on a Saturday, when it actually occurred on a Sunday that year; or correctly define the word "hypochondriac" when one is five-years-old. By virtue of its definition and such laboratory demonstrations, hypnotic memories thus are regarded to be not "memories" in the usual sense of the term, but "fantasies." But is there an alternative explanation of the results? Actual four-year-olds do not know the day of the week on which their birthday fell, for example, and many adults age-regressed to four-years-old will report that they do not know the day of the week on which their specific birthday occurred, rather than give the wrong answer (Barber, 1970; O'Connell, Shor, & Orne, 1970).

The history of hypnotism shows that master hypnotists such as Pierre Janet and Hippolyte Bernheim were able to insert made-up memories into the subconscious minds of their highly hypnotizable patients, that the individual came to accept the pseudomemory as "veridical" or as real as the memory of the original trauma, and that the procedure had highly therapeutic and healing effects upon a wide variety of psychosomatic symptoms (Ellenberger, 1970). This memory creation technique is used in neurolinguistic programming (NLP) while individuals are in the waking state to alter both the visual (imagistic) and kinesthetic (emotional) modalities of a memory for therapeutic effect (which is called "reframing" and "anchoring") (Bandler, 1985; Bandler & Grinder, 1979). Research by Elizabeth Loftus and others who are able to create false memories in individuals in the waking state shows that the individual does not need in order to create a pseudomemory that comes to be accepted as veridical (Loftus, 1997, 2000; Roediger & McDermott, 1995). This is another example of how hypnosis builds upon abilities and capacities of normal waking consciousness -- the creation of pseudomemories included. Transpersonal writer and channel Jane Roberts (1974) offers a highly original explanation for the observed effects in the present of clinical efforts to change the memories of the past. She suggests in so doing not only the

imagistic symbol of the past is changed (i.e., the memory), but also the very past event itself is changed. How is this possible? It has to do with the nature of time.

You must understand that basically time is simultaneous. Present beliefs can indeed alter the past...A new belief in the present...can cause changes in the past on a neuronal level. In some cases of healing, in the spontaneous disappearance of cancer, for instance, or of any other disease, certain alterations are made that affect cellular memory, genetic codes, or neuronal patterns in the past. In such instances there is, as easily as I can explain it, a reaching into deep biological structures as they existed at one time; at that point the probabilities are altered, and the condition erased in the present – but also in your past. A sudden or intense belief in health can indeed “reverse” a disease, but in a very practical way *it is a reversal in terms of time*. New memories are inserted in place of the old ones, as far as cells are concerned under such conditions. This kind of therapy happens quite frequently on a spontaneous basis when people rid themselves of diseases they do not even know they possess. (pp. 325-326)

If hypnosis is a demonstration of the power of belief *par excellence*, then the beliefs and needs of the hypnotized subject obviously matter, as well as the beliefs and needs of the hypnotist that may be communicated to the patient through overt or covert behavioral cuing and, if you happen to believe that telepathy operates, through the subconscious telepathic communications of the hypnotist to the subject. Wilson (1981, chaps. 2, 3), who does not believe that telepathy operates, linked curious patterns of correspondence between the past-life reports of particular patients and the hypnotist's beliefs about the nature of reincarnation and how the reincarnational cycle operates (e.g., if a hypnotist believed the interval between rebirths was short, the patient only reported past-lives that conformed to the hypnotist's belief; if the hypnotist believed the interval was long, the converse was reported). The needs and beliefs of individuals shape and color people's reports of events in the waking state just as they do in the hypnotic state.

Every experience and behavior occurs within the context of a situation, and what that situation or context is influences the meaning of the experience or behavior and one's response to it. Squeaking shoes on a busy city street scarcely attracts one's attention; those same squeaking shoes outside one's bedroom window at night certainly will. Change the context, and the very same stimulus will have different meanings. Change the meaning, and one's response changes accordingly. A considerable volume of research in hypnosis, hypnotic age-regression, and hypnotic past-life regression has unfortunately taken this key insight of the importance of context, the needs and beliefs of the hypnotized subject, and the expectations and preconceptions of the hypnotist to an extreme and tries to understand all of hypnotic phenomena from this standpoint alone. The roles of motives, attitudes, mental sets, and environmental setting are viewed as primary determinants of the hypnotic response -- a viewpoint called the sociocognitive perspective represented by the work of T. X. Barber (1969) and his colleagues (Barber, Spanos, & Chaves, 1974). As this research study will attempt to show, however, reports of reincarnation elicited in hypnosis cannot be understood entirely in terms of demand characteristics of the situation, the cuing of subjects, the hypnotist's beliefs about reincarnation, or the subject's expectations of experience a past life during hypnosis alone.

Perry, Laurence, D'Eon, and Tallant (1988) identify one of the main problems involved in assessing the true-or-false status of reports of past-life experience: "The main problem of evaluating verbal reports of reincarnation experiences is that, in the majority of cases, the hypnotically elicited verbal reports of such phenomena are routinely taken at face value, and no attempt is made to verify independently the veracity of subjects' verbal reports" (p. 146). Three studies that have involved sustained attempts to verify the historical accuracy of individuals' past-life reports are summarized in this literature review (Ramster, 1994; Tarazi, 1990; Venn, 1986). Although it is commonly reported in the research literature that the case of Bridey Murphy (Bernstein, 1956) has been debunked (i.e., "Despite extensive investigation, it could not be established that Bridey Murphy ever existed, nor could any of the people, places, and events she described be verified" (Perry, Laurence, D'Eon & Tallant, 1988, p. 146)), subsequent investigation by Ducasse (1960) has substantiated that fact that the deeply hypnotized subject who talked about her previous life as Bridey Murphy in Ireland during the first half of the nineteenth century stated details about that life that she could not have learned through normal means.

The six cases reviewed below -- three positive cases in which verifiable details were not common knowledge or easily found in readily accessible sources, and obscure items of information were true, and three negative cases in which all the verifiable details were common knowledge, found in readily accessible sources, and obscure items were false (Venn, 1986) -- illustrate how such studies are conducted and what they may show. Venn (1986) echoes the opinion of many researchers in this field of study:

The standard for reincarnation research was set by Stevenson (1974a), who sought to verify subjects' statements against facts and who presented both negative and positive findings, but Stevenson's thoroughness has not been imitated by other authors. The best evidence for reincarnation will come from verifying subjects' statements against historical archives, and not from examining them for internal variables of hypnotic productions [e.g., psychodynamic elements, effects of suggestions]. (p. 411)

In-depth: "How the case of *The Search for Bridey Murphy* Stands Today" (Ducasse, 1960)

The Search for Bridey Murphy (Bernstein, 1956) is a book that tells about the six hypnotic past-life regression sessions that occurred between November 29, and August 29, 1953 in which a young married woman named "Ruth Mills Simmons" (a pseudonym for Virginia Burns Tighe) who was born April 27, 1923 and lived in Madison, Wisconsin for much of her life and had never visited Ireland reported about a life she lived as another personality named Bridey (Bridget) Kathleen Murphy, born in 1798 in Cork, Ireland and died in 1864 in Belfast, Ireland. The book caused a public sensation when it was first published in 1956 because of the many concrete and obscure (an uninteresting) details about peasant life in 18th century Ireland that would be verified, but that could not have become known to Virginia by normal means.

The case of Bridey Murphy is one of those "white crows" that William James referred to that are needed in order to prove that not all crows are black (i.e., not all hypnotic past-life reports are due to cryptomnesia, role-playing, dissociative multiple personalities, and so forth), despite what seems to be a common misrepresentation of the facts about the case among many psychologists and psychiatrists that may be due simply to reproducing in their writings misinformation written about others and that they unthinkingly simply passed along to others (Ducasse, 1960). Perry, Laurence, D'eon, and Tallant (1989), for example, state that

It has been reported by Gardner (1951) that Virginia Tighe, who became Bridey Murphy in hypnosis, was very devoted to Mrs. Anthony Corkell, an Irish widow who lived across the street from Ms. Tighe during the latter's childhood. It is *possible* [my emphasis] that source amnesia was implicated in this case also; Mrs. Corkell's maiden name was Bridie Murphy, according to Gardner's information. (p. 148)

First of all, it is reflective of the bias of Perry et al. (1989) toward hypnotic past-life reports that regards them as nothing more than false imaginative fantasies which are never to be taken literally that they chose Martin Gardner as an expert witness to substantiate their own beliefs of the Bridey Murphy case. Gardner's (1951, pp. 315-320) hostile account of the Bridey Murphy case is so full of inaccuracies, innuendos, and downright falsehoods that simply perpetuate the original misinformation conveyed by a series of articles published in the *Chicago American* newspaper and in *Life* magazine, that the interested reader who seeks a more balanced, rational account of the facts of the case who do well by consulting the article written by Ducasse (1960). Gardner's (1951) rendition of the Bridey Murphy case is a good illustration how there is just as much wishful thinking, prejudice, emotion, snap judgment, and intellectual dishonesty on the side of the orthodox mainstream psychologists and of close-minded skeptics, as on the side of hunger for and belief in psychic phenomena which Gardner and his ilk deplore. Now it is true that Mrs. Bridey Murphy Corkell lived across the street from one of the places that Virginia Tighe and her foster parents resided in Chicago, but nowhere in Martin Gardner's book does he report that Virginia was "very devoted" to Mrs. Corkell, although he does state that "Mrs. Corkell's Irish background had fascinated the little girl" (p. 318). Perry et al. (1989), by attributing to Virginia a devotion to Mrs. Corkell that did not in fact exist imply that Virginia knew Mr. Corkell well, probably visited her frequently being so devoted, knew that Mrs. Corkell's first name was Bridie and her maiden name was Murphy, although Perry et al. (1989) never assert any of these things, only imply them. The facts of the case are far different, according to Ducasse (1960).

[Virginia] remembers Mrs. Corkell, but although the [*Chicago American*] article states that she "was in the Corkell home many time," Virginia never spoke with Mrs. Corkell -- nor does the article assert that she ever did. Further, Virginia never know that Mrs. Corkell's first name was Birdie, and still less that her maiden name was Murphy, if indeed it was. For when the *Denver Post* tried to verify this, Mrs. Corkell was not taking telephone calls. And when its reporter Bob Byers inquired from her parish priest in Chicago, he confirmed her first name as Bridie [slang for Bridget], but was unable to verify her maiden name as Murphy (HBCL, part VI); nor could the Rev. Wally White do so. (p. 18).

If the Virginia's reports of her past life as the Bridey personality cannot be demonstrated to be simple hypnotic dramatizations of buried childhood memories in Madison and Chicago, then other explanations must be brought to bear upon the question of whether Virginia's past-life reports represent genuine memories of an earlier life in 18th century Ireland. Perry et al. (1989) make the claim that "despite extensive investigation, it could not be established that Bridey Murphy ever existed, nor could *any* [my emphasis] of the people, places, and events she described be verified" (p. 146). Here we see another instance of expert opinion in which truth and falsehood are mixed together in the same sentence in an effort to build a case for the hypothesis that Virginia's supposed memories as the Bridey personality are really subconscious memories of her childhood in Madison, Wisconsin and against the possibility that the statements made by the Bridey personality are genuine memories of 18th century Ireland. It is true that that no documents of her birth, marriage, and death could be found that would verify the existence of Bridey. Ducasse (1960) notes that this "is not surprising since, aside from some church records, vital statistics in Ireland do not go back beyond 1864" (p. 8). It is patently untrue that the people,

places, and events she described were verified (the interested reader is directed to the chapter written by William Barker titled "The Case for Bridey in Ireland" in the Pocketbook edition of Bernstein's (1956) book). Ducasse (1960) presents many examples, of which the following is a striking example of Bridey's ability to report little known and out-of-the-way facts about Ireland a century ago that Virginia could not have learned in a normal manner in the United States.

Bridey mentions the names of two Belfast grocers from whom she bought foodstuffs -- Far's and John Carrigan. After considerable search by the Belfast Chief Librarian, John Bebbington, and his staff, these two grocers were found listed in a Belfast city directory for 1865-66. Moreover, Barker reports, they were "the *only* individuals of those names engaged in the 'foodstuffs' business," there at the time. (p. 9)

From the verified facts that Bridey's husband, Sean (John) Brian McCarthy, really existed and worked as a bookkeeper listed in the 1858-9 Belfast Directory, to the fact that the existence of "The Meadows" where her house was allegedly located was verified on an 1801 map of Cork on which a number of houses were built in an areas identified as "Mardike Meadows," to the fact that Queen's College and Queen's University was found to exist at a time that Bridey said they did and "expert" opinion said that such institutions did not, we have instances where statements made by the Bridey personality are "consistent with the facts, and the allegation that it is not rests on an error concerning the facts" (Ducasse, 1960, p. 11).

Baker (1982), to take another example, of how emotionally biased conclusions can lead even intelligent people into wishful thinking, refers to psychiatrist Milton V. Kline's (1956) book, *A Scientific Report on "The Search for Bridey Murphy"* as a "corrective volume" and "scientific report" that "showed how readily such hypnotic material can be gathered and how easily human subjects will role play extreme regressions on demand. While one would have assumed that the work of Kline, Ready (1956), and other experienced investigators would have disposed of the reincarnation claims once and for all, the gullible and the true-believers are not so easily quieted" (Baker, 1982, p. 71). It is to be noted at the outset that Kline's "scientific report" was issued the very same year that Bernstein's (1956) book came out, so its analysis of the case was in many ways incomplete and reflects an obvious ignorance of many facts of the case that were subsequently published in the later Pocketbook edition of Bernstein's (1956) book that contains the additional chapter by William Barker titled "The Case for Bridey in Ireland."

This "scientific report" also reflects the viewpoint of psychiatrists trained to see pathology in every unusual instance of human psychology and to apply close-minded ideas of what hypnotism is in the therapeutic clinical situation to non-clinical settings. Kline's (1956) 'scientific report' casts Bridey as the manifestation of "self-suggested and fragmentary identifications of the subject" (p. 169) whose knowledge *necessarily* must have been obtained through normal sensory means, likely by cryptomnesia. Much of the "scientific report" is devoted to explaining to the general public what hypnotism is and how it is used in treating individuals with psychological disorders of one kind or another -- a framework that they cannot but help impose upon Virginia Tighe and Morey Burnstein view their behavior in those terms alone. According to Ducasse's (1960) report of Ian Stevenson's review of Kline's *A Scientific Report on "The Search for Bridey Murphy"* that was published in the January 1957 issue of the Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research (JASPR) "the authors. . . [are] gratuitously assuming *ab initio* [from the beginning] that memories of a past incarnation could not possibly be a valid explanation of Virginia's verified statements; [have] evident ignorance of some of the facts turned up by Barker in Ireland; and [are] resorting to the old trick of explaining away the data by "analyzing" Bernstein's motives" (p. 20).

Ducasse (1960) further comments that "whether or not that self-styled "Scientific Report" reveals hidden motivations in Bernstein and in Virginia, it affords in any case an edifying exhibit of the emotional thinking which Bernstein's book let loose in the psyches of the supposedly coldly scientific experts who authored that report" (p. 20). Neither the remarks by Perry et al. nor the comments by the authors of Kline's "Scientific Study" provide sufficient evidence for disposing of the fact that Virginia as Bridey knew numerous and obscure items of information that she did not know and could not have known through ordinary means in her waking state about peasant life in 18th century Ireland. Do the verifications provided by Bernstein and others of the statements of the Bridey Murphy personality prove that Virginia is the reincarnation of Bridey? Not necessarily, of course, though they are suggestive. "They do, on the other hand, constitute fairly strong evidence that , in the hypnotic trances, *paranormal* knowledge of one or another of several possible kinds concerning those recondite facts of nineteenth century Ireland, become manifest" (Ducasse, 1960, p. 22).

In-depth: "An unusual case of hypnotic regression with some unexplained contents" (Tarazi, 1990).

The case study reported by past-life psychotherapist Linda Tarazi (1990) is one of those "white crows" that William James talked about. Tarazi (1990) describes one of those few cases in which a "past-life" hypnotically regressed client (L. D.) who never visited

Spain, neither speaks nor reads Spanish, and was not Catholic provided a mass of information over a 3-year period and in some 36 formal hypnotic sessions about an alleged previous existence as a 16th-century Spanish Catholic woman named Antonia Ruiz de Prado (born November 1955 - died March 1588) in which "hundreds of hours of research over three years in two dozen libraries and universities, travel to Spain, North Africa, and the Caribbean, and correspondence with historians and archivists verified well over 100 facts, but uncovered no errors" (p. 309).

The "Antonia in Spain" "previous" personality provided with startling accuracy numerous recondite, detailed, and highly specialized facts not known to most Americans (or professors "who teach courses in Spanish history or the history of 16th-century Europe") that could only be verified with great difficulty in fairly obscure sources, such as old Spanish books, Inquisition records, and municipal and diocesan archives in the town of Cuenca, Spain "for which no expert could suggest an easier source, and "in which L. D.'s information correctly contradicted the authorities [e.g., the description of a building that housed the Tribunal of the Inquisition in 1583, the existence of a college in Cuenca in the mid-16th century, the number of Inquisitors at Cuenca from 1584 to 1588]" (p. 317). While some of the information provided by the Antonia in Spain personality could be found with difficulty in history books and encyclopedia and in specialized history books at large libraries, many of the detailed facts could only be found in rare books found in specialized research libraries, not published in English at all but in very old obscure Spanish books (e.g., Medina, 1887), or not published at all and found only in local Spanish town or church archives (e.g., the Inquisition records of Cuenca from 1582 to 1587).

Examples include: Date of the first publication of the Edict of Faith on the Island of Hispanola; Spanish laws governing shipping to the Indies; types of ships used in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, and details about them; dates and contents of the Spanish indexes of prohibited books and how they differed from the Roman Index; names of priests executed in England in 1581 and 1582; and the method of execution; and information about a college in Cuenca [a town in Spain that figured prominently in the 'life of Antonia']. Over a dozen facts did not seem to be published in English at all but only in Spanish. A few could only be found in the Municipal and others in the Diocesan Archives in Cuenca, Spain. (Tarazi, 1990, pp. 316-317)

Tarazi remarks that "it was the extreme accuracy of the numerous details that affected Antonia's 'life' together with relative ignorance of contemporary events unrelated to it that presented such an intriguing contrast from the very first session" (p. 320).

Tarazi (1990) does identify several "suspect details" in the story of the life of Antonia of Spain, the most notable being that while many of the persons named by Antonia could be identified as existing during the period of her apparent life (e.g., Don Alejandro Farnesio, Governor of the Netherlands; Don Fernando de Toledo, the Governor of Spain; Juan Ruiz de Prado, her uncle; Inquisitor Ulloa; Viceroy Villar; names of her friends and officials of the province of Cuenca; Inquisitor Ximines de Reynoso; Inquisitor de Arganda), there seems to be no historical record documenting that Antonia herself had ever lived.

I have found no record that Antonia Ruiz de Prado ever existed. I believed that certain records of her life were so unlikely to be found that I did not look for them. Her birth was on an isolated plantation on Hispaniola. She was baptized at a small, local church that she could not name. If recorded, those records probably would have disappeared long ago. Her marriage by an unofficial priest at her husband's home and her death by drowning off an unnamed Caribbean island are also unlikely to have been recorded. (p. 323)

Because cryptomnesia is known to operate in some cases of past-life reports whereby information that the person has subconsciously perceived but whose source is forgotten is dramatized in the form of a "previous" personality, Tarazi's three-year investigation from 1981 to 1984 included an examination into L. D.'s possible exposure to information sources that could provide a basis for the people, places, and things named and described in Antonia's 16th century life in Spain. Tarazi's inquiry into the possible normal acquisition of Antonia's information -- including (a) in-depth interviews with L. D. and her mother about L. D.'s activities, interests, talents, hobbies, and jobs and people whom L. D. has known during her first 45 years of life, (b) an hypnotically-induced search of memory for possible information sources of material reported in Antonia's life, (c) a check into her high school and college transcripts, relevant books at both the Chicago and Evanston Public libraries, Hollywood films and television specials, and indexes of 16th-century historical fiction -- confirmed that L. D. could not have learned about this information from normal sources through ordinary reading (cryptomnesia), nor did she likely obtained it through deliberate research into the historical period of the past-life described (hoax or fraud). Tarazi (1990) concludes:

After going over all this information, I am convinced that she knew no Spaniards, no one whose ancestors suffered under the Inquisition, and no one with whom she ever spoke Spanish. In short, no one could have contributed any of the facts that L.D. reported as Antonia. . . . When one considers the number and obscurity of the sources and the difficulty in extracting the pertinent information from them, it seems improbable that L. D., would have read all of them. Add to that the facts that could

only be obtained from the archives, both municipal and diocesan, in the town of Cuenca, and we approach the realm of impossibility for one who had never been to Spain and reads no Spanish. (Tarazi, 1990, pp. 327, 329)

What is the best explanation for the case of Antonia of Spain? Tarazi (1990) reviews the various possible theories offered for cases of this type and rejects all but two as highly improbable in favor of the reincarnation hypothesis as the simplest and most reasonable for the following reasons:

- *Psychodynamic factors.* "Psychodynamics could account for the emergence of the Antonia personality, but not for the great amount of obscure yet accurate factual information she reported" (p. 330).
- *Fraud.* "If L. D. wanted to perpetuate a hoax, much of the information she reported she simply could not have obtained. And why would she want to do it in the first place? What was to be gained? Fame? L. D. wants none of it. She refuses to let her real name be published. It would be an embarrassment to her for her friends, neighbors, employers, and coworkers to know of her identity in connection with this case. Money? It would be much more profitable for her to write fiction. No money is paid to . . . the subjects of journal articles. . . . It would have taken years of tedious research plus secretly learning a couple of foreign languages, and some clandestine trips abroad to gather all of the facts and weave them into such a story. And if it took me years to verify the facts. . . it would take much longer to find the hundreds of facts to create the story in the first place" (pp. 330-331).
- *Cryptomnesia.* "Considering the large number of obscure sources, most in a language unknown to L. D., it seems highly improbable that she could have read them all and subsequently forgotten them. No fictional work seems to have been the source. Nor is there evidence that she knew anyone who could have imparted the information to her" (p. 331).
- *Role playing.* "L. D., who has a very good imagination, could easily have acted upon hypnotic suggestions to create the fantasized character of Antonia. But imagination and fantasy could not produce the vast amount of correct factual material L. D. reported as Antonia. . . . Though role playing may well have been involved, it could not be the whole answer. It could only account for the character, not the facts" (p. 331).
- *Dissociation or multiple personality.* "L. D. and Antonia are essentially the same person, with the same traits, likes and dislikes, interests, skills, and talents. . . . L. D. is acutely aware of, likes, and feels comfortable with Antonia. There is no indication that Antonia is aware of L. D." (pp. 331-332).
- *Genetic memory.* "If genetic transfer of memory were possible, it would not be applicable in this case because Antonia had no surviving descendants. . . . L. D. could not even be a descendent of a close relative [of Antonia] because she is an only child, and the only siblings of both her parents were childless" (p. 332).
- *Racial memory.* "Historical events which were so influential and pervasive that they seem to have been imprinted on entire populations or cultures. . . do not seem applicable to specific facts about one individual" (p. 332).
- *Clairvoyance.* "For clairvoyance to account for L. D.'s knowledge would require that she has been able to access information from closed and even sealed books in languages she did not know, on library shelves and archives, some in foreign lands. . . . L. D. was tested for clairvoyance in various ways and showed no ability whatsoever" (p. 332).
- *Precognition and retrocognition.* "[Precognition] would require the subject to derive information from languages which she did not understand. . . . Episodes [of retrocognition] only concern a brief, specific incident, not a long series of events comprising many years in the life of one individual. Moreover, such things are usually reported by psychics and sensitives, which L. D. is not" (pp. 332-333).
- *Telepathy.* "This would mean some person must *have* the information. . . . [but] I doubt that such a living person exists. . . . There is still the possibility that a discarnate personality from 400 years ago communicated the information to L. D. . . . even though L. D. showed no other telepathy ability. . . . Combined with psychodynamic factors plus L. D.'s ability to fantasize, this could account for the Antonia personality, which could be an entirely fictionalized response to this telepathic communication, plus all of the information, ideas, and attitudes expressed" (p. 333).
- *Mediumship.* "L. D. is not a medium. . . . nor do I know of any medium who contacted only discarnate personalities from one very limited time and place only items concerned with the life of one individual" (p. 333).

- *Possession.* "To [L. D.] there is no question of being possessed by the Antonia personality. They are completely compatible, if not identical. . . She cannot conceive of possession by her any more than by herself as toddler, child, or adolescent. Where she does admit that possession may have occurred is by Antonia's lover. . . [However], this is not what would generally be considered possession. It does not follow the usual pattern. It was always at L. D.'s request, served only to help her, and was terminated at her choice" (p. 334).
- *Reincarnation.* "Reincarnation is the theory which L. D. accepts. . . It is the only one which, by itself, can account for the personality, feelings, and attitudes of Antonia, as well as for all of the obscure historical facts reported, simply and reasonably. . . If all information and all possible explanations are considered, it seems consistent with parsimony to suggest that L. D. showed knowledge of obscure details in 16th-century Europe and America that she did not learn normally. Although reincarnation appears to explain this case better than the competing theories, the simplest explanation is not always the correct one. Another plausible theory is that of telepathic communication with a discarnate personality coupled with psychodynamic factors. A third less probable theory that could apply to this case is the peculiar type of possession described above. For this case, I believe the other theories discussed can be dismissed" (pp. 334-335)

In-depth: "Past lives and hypnosis" (Ramster, 1994).

Psychotherapist Peter Ramster (1994) describes the case of G. M., a highly hypnotizable Australian woman who had no previous past-life memories, never traveled to England or outside of Australia, and did not believe in reincarnation, but who, while undergoing a series of hypnotic past-life regressions, began to recall memories of being a young woman named Rose Duncan who was born in 1765 in Somerset, England and died in 1782 of pneumonia. Under hypnosis in Sydney, G. M. provided a great many details about her "previous life" that could be checked and that proved historically accurate, including names of people she had known, descriptions of clothing she wore, places and locales where she had lived and worked, such as her house and the name of the estate it was attached to and the surrounding towns and villages, and the routine of daily life in 18th century England. Of particular interest to G. M. during that life was a nearby abbey and its surrounding countryside reported to be located in Glastonbury and seven miles from her house where she spend many hours in peaceful solitude and tranquility, and that she was able to describe in remarkable detail (e.g., arches in the building, feathers and plumes etched out of stone that adorned the sides of the arches and doors). After researching as much as he could at libraries in Sydney and over the telephone in search of evidence to either authenticate or disprove what G. M. had told him, Ramster decided to go to England to verify as much of G. M.'s story as he could, accompanied by G. M., a film crew that would film and document what was uncovered in his investigation, and Dr. Basil Cottle of Bristol University who served as an independent witness. One of the first things Ramster discovered was that

Some of the villages she [G. M.] mentioned no longer existed, and we had to search older maps to find them. One place called Blawerton, was today spelled Blotton. However, when we referred to the old maps we found that in 1790 the name of the village was Blawerton. Stone Chapel, another village she had told us of, doesn't exist today, but did in the year 1782. All the other villages she spoke of were there: East and West Penard, Bradley, Langport, Somerton, Taunton, and Croscombe. (pp. 75-76)

Details about individuals she reported knowing in her past life (e.g., a Stewart Mackenzie, Lord Panmure) were verified only by checking the archives of the New South Wales Public Library in an old manuscript printed in 1794. G. M. was able to correctly identify unmarked photographs of paintings of people (Isabella and Lord Seaforth) that she had reported seeing in her "Somerset life" hanging on the walls in the house of the Mackenzies, owners of a nearby large estate. The existence of buildings (e.g. Court Barn) that could not be verified from records in Sydney were verified in municipal records at Somerset. Other details of G. M.'s story were confirmed in local historical libraries, museums, and parish records in the Somerset area itself. For example,

In the library of Taunton in Somerset, I [Ramster] researched the word *tallet*, which G. M. had used, but for which we could find no entry in current dictionaries. In a book of obsolete west country words, we found it. *Tallet* was a word used in the west country of England, during the time of G.M.'s previous life, to refer to a room under a roof, such as a loft. It isn't used now and was never used anywhere but the west country of England. This information confirmed also that she has used the word correctly under hypnosis. (Ramster, 1994, p. 77)

One particularly interesting evidential find that Ramster made was in an old magazine publication at a historical library about the meetings of Quakers (Puritans) at a place called Alford that G. M. had talked about under hypnosis in Sydney. A check of records at the Taunton library turned up nothing, and since Alford had no historical library and a visit to the historical museum at nearby Castle

Cary proved fruitless, Ramster was about to give up, until "by chance, we came across some magazine publications printed around the time of G. M.'s past life. . . .As we read through these old publications, a reference was found to the meetings of the Puritans at Alford!" (p. 78).

It was an interesting find, because again, there seems to be no logical way (other than reincarnation) that G. M. could have known about the meetings. They were not large affairs, nor were they well publicized in England. They involved only a few people, and took place in an insignificant house. . . . There were limited meetings of Quakers, and they were widely spaced apart. It was not some thing one could guess on. In record books that did mention the Quaker meetings in England from that period, only the main groups are listed, not smaller ones like Alford. It was only a stroke of luck, really, that we were able to verify it at all. At this point one must remember that G. M. had never been outside of Australia and it was not the type of information even a historian would know, as Alford is only a tiny place even today, and was only a hamlet then. (Ramster, 1994, pp. 78-79)

During the part of the investigation in which they were attempting to locate the house she lived in during that previous life, G. M. was able to provide details about the surrounding countryside that were not on any map (e.g., small streams, gullies, the shape of hills, ruins of buildings, location of grave sites). As time went on during her time in Somerset, G. M. began to become conscious in her waking state of many of the memories uncovered in hypnosis.

Before we had come to England, G. M. had no doubts about her past life when under hypnosis, but when she was awake, she was unsure. In England, much of the life became conscious to her and was no longer vague. She was able to talk of events and places that she could remember, at least in part. She knew where she was. The whole area was completely familiar to her. Although she was in a country 12,000 miles from her home, G. M. appeared to be on familiar ground. (Ramster, 1994, p. 82)

Once G. M. was able to help Ramster identify the location of the beloved abbey about which she talked so often under hypnosis in Sydney, he brought her there and recounts what occurred.

We finally took G. M. to the place in Glastonbury that she had pointed to on the map. G. M. stood on the pavement and waited for the blindfold to be removed. We did this to prevent her from getting road sign clues whenever we took her to a new location where we might test her ability to find something. As her vision cleared, she saw herself standing outside the much loved abbey she remembered. When G. M. entered the abbey she was visibly moved, and a little shaken. She walked and she talked, she showed us the feathers on the doorway that she had previously talked of, also the buildings. . . . Consequent to this conversation, I checked G. M.'s recall of the old abbey and its surroundings from a 1790 description of the area, written in an old manuscript printed about 1794 and this verified G. M.'s description well. It was described as being surrounded by marshy ground and the other things G. M. had talked of. . . . The abbey was the same as she remembered it. . . . Even the things that were missing, such as certain paving stones in some places, the pyramids, and the evidence of the Druids, through checking, were found to have been there. (Ramster, 1994, pp. 80-81)

When Ramster consulted with a local historian (Geoffrey Ashe) about G.M.'s past-life memories of legends of the abbey, the historian reported that "[the legend] would be the sort of thing that a local storyteller might very well have put together into a yarn of his own, but it's not a thing that G. M. could have ever found in any book. . . she would never have heard any of this or read it anywhere" (p. 81). G. M. also reported memories of seeing Druids going up nearby Tor Hill in Glastonbury to conduct spring rituals. Ramster (1994) recounts that

G. M. had also described the clothes the Druids wore [around 1775 or 1780] and the way they filed up the hill in a spiral. Both these facts were confirmed by Geoffrey Ashe. I thought them amazing facts for G. M. to know. She had never been to Glastonbury, nor even to England, and as a matter of fact, had never been outside Australia. Even the university historian from Bristol was not aware of the [Druid] meetings [in Glastonbury]. (pp. 81-82).

Another episode of evidential value is her description while under hypnosis in Sydney of an inn that she would pass on her way to and from the abbey that she called "The Pilgrim's Inn" located near a hill she called "Wearyall Hill" that she described as being humpbacked in shape. While traveling on a road in Glastonbury close to the abbey, they came upon an old inn.

It was the inn that she [G. M.] had told us about in Sydney, no longer called The Pilgrim's Inn, but The George and Pilgrim. However, a quick check confirmed she had named it correctly for the 18th century. The inn stood exactly as she had described it. It was built of sandy colored stone, had two points on the roof, a bow type window on one side, and an opening in the middle through which the coaches used to pass. (p. 86)

Ramster's account of his search for the old house that G. M. lived in during her previous life as Rose Duncan is also evocative. After drawing a map of the lay of the land and traversing field and hill and winding road,

After walking along for a short way, she stopped on a bend. Suddenly, she felt that this was where a little village used to be. She pointed to a spot where she thought five houses used to stand, one of which sold cider. There was the ruin of one old house there and a couple of brand new houses nearby, but only one that may have dated back to her previous lifetime. We approached the front of the house to ask the owner [Mr. P.] if he knew of the cider house or village.

Mr. P. confirmed the existence of the five houses that had been torn down 25 years earlier. "Mr. P. also confirmed the existence of the cider house G. M. had talked about under hypnosis. It hasn't existed for over a hundred and fifty years" (p. 83).

Here was a local resident telling us that his grandfather's grandfather had talked of the existence of a cider house on the very spot where G. M. had said one existed, and pointed to on the road. The legend of the cider house had been carried down through five generations in the P.'s household, and confirmed G. M.'s recollection. Subsequent to our conversation with Mr. P. we checked the spot on the road against an old 18th century survey map and found shown there, the five houses. (p. 83)

After leaving Mr. P., they went off in search of the house in which G. M. used to live, crossing a stream that G. M. predicted would be there and a fork in the stream and waterfall that she had also described under hypnosis, identifying landmarks along their path before they got there. Approaching a house she pointed to, everyone noticed when walking around it that the house appeared to be different in some ways but identical in others ways to the house that G. M. had described under hypnosis. "G. M. had been correct in her detail, but we had to enter the inside of the building to confirm it. The floor of the building was stone as G. M. predicted. It had a tallet, and there was a drying room out back, exactly as G. M. had described [even though she had never been there in her present life]" (p. 85).

One particularly interesting piece of information of evidential value that emerged under hypnosis in Sydney was G. M.'s recollection of an episode involving a Mr. Brown who had transported stones taken from the abbey to use as a floor material for his cottage which was one of a row of five interconnected cottages located somewhere in the township of Glastonbury. One of these stones G. M. described under hypnosis in great detail as having peculiar marks that could be used to easily identify the stone from others ("a spiral on the right, and a shape like the map of Scotland on the left. . . three indents on the top left-hand corner") (Ramster, 1994, p. 85). Mr. Brown's cottage, when it was eventually located by G. M. who was directed only by her hypnotic memory, had been turned into a dilapidated chicken shed that a previous owner identified as having originally been a part of a row of five cottages. Hidden beneath the dirt and bird droppings "were exactly the same as the stones we had seen in the abbey, large and rectangular, and logically could have come from the abbey grounds" (p. 87). Re-hypnotizing G. M. at the location, Ramster asked her to re-draw the peculiar markings on the stone she described under hypnosis in Sydney. What followed next was remarkable.

We went inside the building and G. M. surveyed the stones and then pointed to one. . . Comparing the stone to G. M.'s drawing the similarity was obvious. The markings that G. M. had drawn on the left hand side of the stone were like the map lines of the top of Scotland, and the large spiral was on the right-hand side of the stone. There was enough to show that G. M.'s drawings of the markings certainly matched the markings on the old, blue-grey stone she had led us to. The most noticeable markings were the three vertical lines on the top left hand corner of the stone that G. M. had referred to as the stone mason's mark of three fingers. This was a most remarkable find. I would venture the odds against achieving that by chance are enormous. G. M. had found the very stone that she had drawn in Sydney, a feat far beyond any element of chance as it was in a place, in a country, she had never been to. (Ramster, 1994, p. 87).

In depth: "Hypnosis and the reincarnation hypothesis: A critical review and intensive case study" (Venn, 1986)

Venn (1986) described the case of a 26-year-old married man from Oklahoma named Matthew who suffered from hypochondriacal symptoms, who spoke and read no French, possessed only a high school degree, expressed little knowledge or interest in World War I history or European geography in the waking state, was highly hypnotizable, and easily responded to age-regression suggestions. At his third hypnotic session in a series of 60 sessions over a period of 18-months, Matthew dramatically manifest a past-life personality who identified itself as "Jacques Gionne Trecaultes," a French pilot who claimed to have been born in Thionville, France in 1890 and to have been killed in an aerial dogfight over Belgium in August 1914. Matthew as "Jacques" made many detailed statements about his alleged experience as a fighter pilot in World War I, including the names of ace pilots, aircraft and weapons manufacturers, how planes communicated with one another without radios, French squadron designations, and the names of relatively obscure towns in Lorraine, France, as well providing numerous details about the events of his life as a citizen in France.

From the 18 or so audiotapes made during the 20 times that Jacques appeared during hypnosis regression session, Venn (1986) created a list of 47 discrete, independent descriptive statements of Matthew's former life as "Jacques" that were in principle empirically verifiable and specific enough to eliminate the possibility of chance and/or common knowledge. Each descriptor, if verified, would constitute a "hit" when Venn conducted his subsequent research to validate the claim of reincarnation. Venn then organized the 47 descriptors of Matthew's prior life as "Jacques" into two categories -- "common" for historical information that could be found in ordinary and widespread historical records and "recondite" for historical information that could only be found in obscure, out-of-the-way, little known historical records.

Through research of "common" sources found in public libraries and published books, Venn discovered that out of the 30 descriptors that could be verified from these sources, 14 (47%) statements were found to be false and 16 (53%) true. Many of the statements that proved to be false were actually a curious mixture of half-truths as if associative connections between factual details were broken and jumbled up.

For example, Matthew [as "Jacques"] knew the name "Lt. Thom," but he said that Thom was a French pilot when, in fact, he was a German ace who downed 27 Allied aircraft. He knew that there is a French city, Thionville, but he did not report that it was called "Diedenhofen" during his alleged lifetime. He knew that Belgium was invaded in August, 1914, but he gave the wrong date. (Venn, 1986, p. 419).

Out of the remaining 17 "recondite" descriptors that Jacques provided about his life history that Venn could only verify through correspondence with the French military archives in Paris, interviews of archivists in Thionville, and personal inspection of the city and city register, birth and marriage records, and other documents (e.g., the names of Jacques' son, his father, his wife's maiden name; his wedding date; the names of buildings, streets, tributaries, churches, and airfields in and around Thionville and Paris, and military personnel under whom Jacques' reported serving as a pilot). Venn reported that every single one of them could not be confirmed. "Seventeen items were traced in this manner, all were clearly disconfirmed. . . None of the recondite items could be verified. . . Three independent records (the city register, marriage record, and military archive) did not contain Jacques' name, but should have if the man existed" (Venn, 1986, pp. 419-421).

Venn (1986) also reports that during his hypnotic past-life regression work with Matthew that "Matthew's hypochondriacal symptoms disappeared, his family relationships improved, and he joined a religious group in which he assumed a leadership role" (pp. 419-421). Venn does not attribute Matthew's symptom relief, improved relationships, and increased community involvement to his hypnotically elicited past-life "memories," however, or to the dramatic emotional releases that occurred when these memories were dramatically acted out in his clinic (p. 418). Venn eschews the psychologist fallacy described by Stevenson (1994) and does not attribute his client's cure to his technique but to the common factors that underlie all successful psychotherapy. Venn believes that

Michael improved because of the release of strong taboo emotions, and because of the quality of our relationship, which induced him to become more involved with his family and peers in healthy ways. The release of strong emotion was made possible by our rapport and by the past-life fantasy, precisely because it *was* a fantasy. It provided sufficient distance from reality for Matthew to release his tears. (p. 422).

And what of Matthew? At a five-year follow-up meeting with Matthew, Venn reported that Matthew "continued to be active in his religious group and to believe in the reality of hypnotic 'lives'" (p. 421)

In-depth: "A case of emergence of a latent memory under hypnosis" (Dickinson, 1911).

Dickinson (1911) reports the case of a young, healthy woman ("Miss C.") "daughter of a clergyman, with a good general education" who, during a series of hypnotic "experiments" conducted between April - June 1906, described conversations that she had with deceased personalities about their previous lives (p. 455). Miss C. would enter trance and at first spent a considerable amount of time describing the different "planes" she would go "up" to when she left her body that she described in terms of color. One of these places she returned to time and time again she simply called "the blue." During one of these visits to "the blue," Miss C described one particular encounter and interview with a deceased personality who called herself "Blanche Poynings" who provided to Miss C a great deal of detailed information about her life as a lady-in-waiting to one of King Richard II's (14th-century) queens. Taking the time to check the objective truth of as many of Blanche's statements as he could, Dickinson reports his findings and a growing suspicion that something odd was afoot:

I found that the main facts about the Earl and Countess of Salisbury were true. Encouraged by this, I followed up, so far as I could, all of the statements of names, relationships, and events. I looked up the chronicles and rummaged in peerages and charters, and was able in almost every case to verify the truth of Blanche's assertions. This interested and puzzled me. Miss C. assured me, and I believed her, that she has never studied the period.

And in any case some of the facts given were not such as even a student of the period would naturally come across. Blanche Poynings herself, for example, was a quite unimportant person, only referred to by name, by one or two chroniclers, as one of the ladies in attendance on the Queen. The most likely explanation was that the facts narrated were contained in a historical novel. But the only novel dealing with the period with Miss C. could remember reading was one entitled *John Standish*, and a reference to this showed that it was not the source of the information she gave us. I clung, however, to the hypothesis that a novel must be explanation, though I am bound to confess that as more and more facts came out, as these almost invariably proved to be correct, as far as I could test them, and as they were in some cases obscure genealogical data such as it seemed unlikely would be embodied in a work of fiction, I came at least to think it possible that Miss C. was really communicating with the departed Blanche Poynings.

Dickinson's (1911) account then takes a curious turn. At a subsequent visit with Miss C and friends, discussion turned to the topic of the interesting phenomena that could be generated using the "planchette" -- Ouija board-type device invented in 1853 consisting of "a triangular polished board on rollers, resting on a pencil in the socket at the apex. The medium places his [her] hand on the board. If it moves the front leg, the pencil leaves markings on the paper placed beneath. These markings may assume the form of letters and spell out connected messages" (Fodor, 1966, p. 287). Dickinson at this meeting suggests Miss C. use the planchette to contact and interview Blanche Poynings, who is found to be easily summoned using this means. Blanche begins talking about one of her former husbands ("John Wilshere") who has reincarnated as "John Andrews" in Cambridge, England. After listing the names of her former husbands, Blanche is asked "How can we confirm what you are telling us?" She identifies the will of John Wilshere, then a parchment in a museum, then a dead historian by the name of E. Holt, and then a book titled *Countess Maud* written by an Emily Holt. Dickinson (1911) then continues his count:

On the name of this novel being mentioned, Miss C. said at once that she believed there was a novel with that title, and that she had read it. This was confirmed by her aunt. But neither of them could remember anything about the book, not even the period with which it dealt, nor whether it contained any mention of Blanche Poynings. I took an early opportunity of investigating the point, discovered the book in question, and discovered in it every person and every fact (with one or two trifling exceptions) which had been referred to in the supposed interviews with Blanche Poynings. The whole thing had been an elaborate rearrangement by Miss C.'s subconsciousness of data given in a book she had completely forgotten. (pp. 462-463)

This case is described in detail because it represents one of those instances of cryptomnesia in which the alleged discarnate personality, Blanche Poynings, was a "real person" whose existence could be verified, but whose name was taken from a book that Miss C. had read when she was 12 years old and then forgotten. The names and dates of the people that Blanche gave to Miss C. were historically accurate because the author of the novel had apparently based the story upon historical facts that she uncovered during the course of her research for writing the novel. Blanche Poynings was in the novel, but little was written about her because she was a minor character in the book. The Blanche Poynings that Miss C. described and flippanter gossip") was of quite a different character from the Blanche Poynings described in the novel ("pious and discreet"). If it had not been by happening upon the use of the planchette to conduct the crucial conversation with Blanche, the matter of cryptomnesia might never have been resolved.

In-depth: "Dynamic relation of the secondary personality induced by hypnosis to the present personality" (Kampman & Hirvenoja, 1978),

Kampman & Hirvenoja (1978) present two case studies in which highly hypnotizable individuals capable of deep hypnosis were hypnotically age-regressed several times at a seven year interval and produced past-life identities, which were all different in one case and some persisting in the second. Moreover, some of the information that was given by these hypnotically-induced "multiple" or "secondary" personalities, as Kampman and Hirvenoja referred to them, could be traced back to a book or pamphlet that the subject identified as being the source of the past-life information upon being subsequently re-hypnotized. Kampman & Hirvenoja (1978) concluded on the basis of their efforts "to elucidate the connections between the reports of these secondary personalities and the present personality" that both case studies "support the idea that the experiences of the present personality were reflected in the

secondary personalities, both in the form of realistic details and as emotional experiences" and are "outstanding example(s) of how very detailed information can be stored in our brains without any idea whatever of it in the conscious mind, and how this can be retrieved in deep hypnosis" (pp. 186-187).

In the first case, a 15-year-old female was age-regressed to "a time preceding her birth" and displayed five different so-called "secondary personalities," age-regressed one month later and displayed the very same personalities again, and age-regressed a third time seven years later, but this time displayed past-life identities that were "all entirely different from the previous ones" (p. 185). One of the first of these past-life identities was of a 7-year-old girl named Milina Bostojevski living in 1780 during a time of war in an unspecified country. According to Kampman & Hirvenoja (1978), this 18th century personality "gave an accurate description of the conditions in which she lived" (p. 184). Another of her past-life identities, this time elicited seven-years-later, was of a seven-year-old boy who called himself "Aitmatov's son" who lived by a lake and accidentally drowned. During a subsequent hypnotic session in which the subject was given the suggestion "to remember the origin of the story of the little boy," Kampman & Hirvenoja concluded that the story originated from a book read by the primary identity long ago but subsequently forgotten.

The subject remembered that she had read a book called 'Valkoinen laiva' (The White Ship) recording a similar story about a boy who was drowned in the same way as the boy in her narrative. The name of the lake was the same, and the author's name was Aitmatov. It is quite evident that the subject had acquired both the details and the emotional life of the secondary personality from the book she had read. (p. 185)

In the second case, a 19-year old female displayed eight different past-life identities when hypnotized the first time, one of which was the daughter of an innkeeper in 13th century England and who "gave a very explicit account of the contemporary happenings using names of places amazingly correctly" and who sang a "summer song" in modernized medieval English of which the subject, after awakening from hypnosis, reported having "had no memory at all of having heard the words or the melody of the song before" (p. 185). After being rehypnotized seven years later, the same eight "secondary personalities" were elicited as well as four new ones, one of which was a girl of seven-years old named Karin Bergström who had died in 1939 in an air raid and who "remembered accurately the day the bomb fell, as well as her home address at the time. . . [and] the name and occupation of her parents." During a subsequent hypnotic session in which the subject was age-regressed "to the moment when she first obtained her information,"

she went back to a time when she was a little girl turning over the leaves of a patriotic book with pictures of just this address, and the pictures of a seven-year-old girl who had died with her mother on the day of the air raid. From the book she had taken the exact date of the raid and the addresses where the bombs had fallen. (p. 186).

During a later hypnotic session, the subject was also age-regressed "to a moment when her present personality had perhaps seen (or heard) the words of the song" that the subject had sung seven years ago. According to Kampman & Hirvenoja (1978),

She then went back in time to the age of 13, when she once, by chance, took a book from the shelves in the library. The name of the book was 'Musiikin vaiheet' (The Phases of Music). She did not read it but ran through the pages. In hypnosis she was able to recall the authors of the book who were Benjamin Britten and Imago Holst. Furthermore, she could remember accurately where the song had appeared in the book. Later, when the data were checked by the author, it appeared that the original song was. . . modernized medieval English, just as it was in the book. (p. 186)

In depth: "An experimental study of a hypnotically induced past-life identity" (Kampman, 1976).

Kampman (1976) conducted a study "to clarify the frequency of appearance of a hypnotically induced secondary personality and to compare Ss who were able to create secondary personalities in hypnosis to control Ss who could enter a deep hypnotic trance but were unable to produce secondary personalities" (p. 215). Out of an original volunteer sample of 450 college-aged Finnish students, 34 male and 44 female subjects (or 17% of the total sample) were identified as capable of entering a deep trance state defined as "the successful experiencing of automatism, age-regression, and positive and negative hallucination" (p. 218). Of these 78 highly hypnotizable subjects, only 32 (or about 41%) were able to respond to the following suggestion while in deep hypnosis: "You go back to an age preceding your birth; you are somebody else, somewhere else'. . . The suggestion was repeated many times and, at the same time, additional suggestions were given to the effect that everything was completely normal and that nothing miraculous was happening" (p. 220). Kampman conceptualizes this procedure as sufficient to induce what he refers to as "multiple personalities" and believes that it necessarily "leads S to believe that the hypnotist believes in the possibility of reincarnation" (p. 224), which I believe is

questionable. Kampman (1976) operationalizes his criteria for identifying past-life responders from non-responders in the following manner:

If S said he was a human being, was able to give his name as well as the name of a place where he lived, and in general could describe his own personality and the social environment in which he lived, S was classified as belonging to the group R1 (multiple personalities). If S said he was nothing and could hear nothing, he was classified as belonging to the group R2 (nonresponding group). (p. 220)

Based on the hypnotic regression suggestion to "go back to an age preceding your birth" and the operational definition of hypnotic responders and non-responders, Kampman identified only 32 (or about 41%) of the 78 highly hypnotizable subjects as being able to respond to "the suggestion to create multiple personalities" (p. 220), whereas 43 (about 55%) were unable to respond. The remaining 3 subjects (4%) were unable to be classified one way or the other.

Kampman (1976) also conducted a psychiatric interview and "identity examination" to assess the mental health of both 32 multiple personality responders and 43 nonresponders). Results indicated that "Ss capable of producing secondary personalities were clinically healthier and more adaptive than the group without secondary personalities" (p. 215). Results suggested that the highly hypnotizable subjects who were able to create so-called "multiple personalities" following Kampman's (1976) hypnotic past-life suggestion to "go back to an age preceding your birth" had (a) greater stress tolerance (i.e., "have more stamina and be more capable of mobilizing their ego energy more effectively in a stress situation") than those who could not respond (p. 221). Results also showed that "an adaptable and clinically healthy superego is present more frequently in the multiple personality group than in the responding group" (p. 221). "Contrary to previous results and also our own expectations, it was shown that Ss capable of creating experimentally-suggested multiple personalities were psychically healthier and freer in their ego autonomy than control Ss who were unable to create subidentities (p. 223).

Kampman's (1976) research study suggests that hypnotizability is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for past-life recall. The 32 subjects in Kampman's (1976) study who were able to respond to the suggestion "You go back to an age preceding your birth, you are somebody else, somewhere else" represented 41% of the 78 highly hypnotizable subjects who were able to achieve deep levels of hypnosis, and only 7% of the 450 Finnish college-age students in the study overall. Level of hypnotizability appeared to be a moderating variable in the Kampman study that influenced the ability to subjects to successfully accomplish the necessary dissociative state of consciousness to create "secondary" or "multiple personalities" (p. 218). A deep level of hypnosis by itself, however, did not guarantee past-life recall since 43 of the 78 highly hypnotizable subjects (about 55%) were unable to respond to the suggestions to create pre-birth personalities (three of the 78 highly hypnotizable subjects could not be classified as either responders or non-responders to the hypnotic suggestion).

In-depth: "The effect of suggestion on past-lives regression" (Baker, 1982).

Baker (1982) investigated the degree to which the occurrence of "previous lives" elicited during hypnosis could be manipulated with pre-hypnotically administered suggestion. A sample of sixty undergraduate students from the University of Kentucky who had been tested earlier for hypnotizability and received a score of 8.00 or above on the Stanford of Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility (Weitzenhoffer & Hilgard, 1959) volunteered to participate in a study on "Past Lives Regression and Past Lives Therapy" (p. 72). Subjects were randomly assigned to three treatment groups in which they received tape-recorded information about past-life therapy.

One group receive positive information in which past-life therapy "was presented in a factual but highly favorable light" aimed to build Ss' belief and expectations that they will experience a past life during hypnosis (i.e., "You too will be able to take a fascinating journey back in time to another lifetime. You will find the experience very very interesting. Everybody else, that is all the other students we have used, find it very easy to do and very enjoyable").

A second group received neutral information in which past-life therapy "was presented in an off-hand, matter-of-fact, and neutral manner" aimed to build Ss' uncertainty and doubt about whether or not he (she) would experience a past-life during hypnosis ("You may or may not drift back in time to another lifetime. Some of the students we've used before do come up with some interesting material but many haven't been able to see or experience anything").

A third group received negative information in which past life-therapy was presented in a "skeptical, flippant, and derogatory manner" aimed to build Ss' belief and expectation that he (she) would definitely not want experience a past-life during hypnosis ("You might

accidentally, by chance, drift back and imagine you're living in another lifetime. Some of the imaginative and far-out students have come up with some really far-fetched material but most normal individuals haven't been able to see anything") (pp. 72-73).

After listening to the pre-recorded information, subjects were administered an individual hypnotic induction procedure, followed by age-regression suggestions and an interview about the experience -- a procedure that was repeated two more times so that a total of three regressions were attempted. According to Baker (1982),

Regression was carried out by taking Ss back to six years of age, three years, one year, six months, being rocked in the mother's arms in a rocking chair, then into the mother's womb, and then onto a time machine going back down through the years. The time machine was then stopped and S was told to dismount, and look at his (her) feet and clothes, and describe what he (she) was wearing and then to raise the eyes, look around, and describe what was seen. Following a series of intensive questions about time, place, identity, people seen, etc., S was returned to the time machine for two additional journeys; that is, a second and a third attempted excursion into the past. (Baker, 1982, p. 74).

At the conclusion of the session, subjects were administered a post-hypnotic suggestion and instructed to awaken from hypnosis. "All Ss made the appropriate hand movements, sleep reactions, eye catalepsy, and post-hypnotic responses indicative of a good hypnoidal trance" (p. 74).

Results indicated that of the 20 subjects who were given "positive" information about past-life therapy, 85% (17/20) reported at least one past-life experience, 75% (15/20) reported more than one past-life, and 15% (3/20) reported no lives or refused to respond in the three regression attempts. Of the 20 subjects who were given "neutral" information, 60% (12/20) reported at least one past-life experience, 45% (9/20) reported more than one past-life, and 40% (8/20) reported no lives or refused to respond in the three regression attempts. Of the 20 subjects who were given "negative" information, 10% (2/20) reported another life, 5% (1/20) reported more than one life, and 90% (18/20) reported no lives or refused to respond in three regression attempts. Chi square analysis indicated that the subjects given "negative" information about past-life therapy were significantly less likely to report past-life identities than the other two groups ($p < .01$). There was no significant difference ($p > .05$) between the "positive" instruction group and the "neutral" instruction group, with more than half of the subjects in the "neutral" condition reporting a past-life and almost half reporting more than one past-life. Baker (1982) noted that the two subjects in the "negative" instructions condition who reported having a past-life experience, did so because "they reported they were both strong believers in the concept of reincarnation and had read widely in Eastern and occult literature" during a post-experimental interview (p. 75). Baker's (1982) primary conclusion is that "the suggestions made prior to the induction and regression attempts had a significant influence upon past-life reports. . . . If the Ss expected to have a past-life experience they did; if they expected not to have one they did not" (pp. 74-75).

Critical discussion

It is important to note in this experiment, however, that 15% (3/20) of subjects in the positive information group who expected to have a past-life experience did not, and 60% (12/20) of subjects in the neutral information group who were uncertain and doubtful whether they would have a past-life experience during hypnosis in fact did. Not all of the highly hypnotizable subjects, in other words, were "highly suggestible and easily influenced by the tone, manner, and specific attitudes shown by the hypnotist" as Baker (1982) would have us suppose (p. 75). In these cases the "demand" characteristics of the situation did *not* strongly affect the subjects' behavior in these two groups. For the two subjects in the "negative" information condition (2/20), this was even more evidently the case. The pre-hypnotic induction instructions apparently did not have a significant influence upon *all* the past-life reports. When one looks at these 18 "negative" cases that make up 30% of the total number of subjects across all three conditions of Baker's experiment, we find contrary empirical evidence that opposes his primary conclusion. We see that the "suggestions made by the hypnotist, expectations held by the subjects, and the demand characteristics of the hypnoidal relationship" are not as powerful a determining cause of past-life regressive phenomena as they would appear to be at first glance. As William James reminds us, "if you wish to upset the law that all crows are black, you mustn't seek to show that no crows are black; it is enough to prove one single crow to be white" (quoted in Murphy & Ballou, 1973, p. 41). We do not have one white crow, we have 18.

In the same article, Baker (1982p. 75) describes a previous hypnotic past regression/future progression experiment he conducted with 53 volunteer highly hypnotizable undergraduate students at the University of Kentucky in which he found -- after building up strong expectations in the students that they would experience both past and future lives during hypnosis -- that 90% (48/53) in fact did produce both past/future lives. He describes the content of the past-life recall as "fantasy material." He also notes that all subjects had a much more difficult time producing future-life material ("The details of Ss' future lives appear to be considerably dimmer or more clouded than are the details about lives they've previously led" (p. 75)). Baker then asks the further question: "Why Ss would have more difficulty fantasizing about their future than their past is someone puzzling and needs to be clarified" (p. 75). Puzzling indeed, if one sticks with the theory that past-life reports are nothing but fantasies, for why would the future be more difficult to fantasize about

than the past? If the past is over and done with and the future is open-ended, then one would expect the opposite to occur -- that the past would be more difficult to fantasize about and the future would be easier -- if wish-fulfilling fantasy is operating at all. It may be "easier to see where you have been than it is to see where you are going," but once you've been there, it should be more difficult to change what you've already seen of what has already occurred, say through wish-fulfilling fantasy, than to imaginatively explore the multitude of probable selves and probable events that await one in the future. To say that fantasy operates more readily when one regresses into the past than when one projects into the future does not fit the empirical facts of Baker's past/future experiment.

In depth: "Secondary identity enactments during hypnotic past-life regression: A sociocognitive perspective" (Spanos, Menary, Gabora, DuBreuil, & Dewhirst, 1991).

In a series of four studies, Spanos et al. (1991) investigated the degree to which the occurrence and content of "previous lives" induced during hypnosis could be manipulated with suggestion.

Nicolas Spanos and others have developed hypothesis called the "sociocognitive theory" that hypnotic past-life regression and related psychological phenomena (e.g., spirit possession, multiple personality disorder [MPD]) are neither instances of dissociative phenomena nor alternate state of consciousness but rather may be considered instead to be examples of conscious and deliberate role-playing performances involving little more than imagination, suggestion, expectation, and responsiveness to the demands characteristics of the interpersonal situation (Barber, 1969; Sarbin & Coe, 1972; Spanos, 1988, 1996).

From a sociocognitive perspective, the secondary identity enactments associated with spirit possession, MPD, and past-life hypnotic regression are viewed as rule-governed, contextually supported social constructions. These enactments are viewed as goal-directed or strategic activities, and participants are seen as actively involved in creating and managing the subjective experiences and behavioral displays that constitute self-presenting as a secondary identity. . . . Secondary identity enactments are joint constructions that are created, shaped, and maintained by the beliefs and expectations of significant others who constitute an interacting audience, as well as by the actor who displays the secondary identity enactments. (Spanos et al., 1991, p. 308)

Study 1. In the first study, 110 volunteer Carleton University undergraduates (48 males, 62 females) who had been tested for hypnotizability using the Carleton University Responsiveness to Suggestion Scale (CURSS) (Spanos et al., 1983a) and unselected for hypnotizability (i.e., all ranges of hypnotizability were included in the study) were individually administered a battery of pretests that assessed personality tendencies toward role playing, vividness of imagery, absorption, daydreaming, magical thinking, depressive affect, self-esteem, schizophrenia, in addition to belief and attitudes toward reincarnation, strength and importance of religious beliefs, and expectation of experiencing a past life during hypnosis. After answering all questionnaires, subjects were presented with the following preliminary information while in the waking state prior to the hypnotic induction:

We informed the subjects that reincarnation was a common belief to many cultures and that scientists had begun to collect evidence in support of reincarnation. In support of this view, we briefly introduced subjects to the cross-cultural case history work of Ian Stevenson (1974). Subjects were then told the following: "The other more common procedure for studying reincarnation involves hypnotic regression to past lives. As you may know. . . it is possible to regress individuals even further back, beyond the point of birth to a previous life. People can actually relive and re-experience a past life through hypnosis." Subjects were then informed that they would be administered a hypnotic procedure and a suggestion to regress beyond the point of their birth. (Spanos et al., 1991, p. 310)

Subjects were then hypnotized using a 10-minute audio-taped hypnotic induction procedure adapted from Barber (1969). When the hypnotic induction was completed, subject were given "a 5-minute suggestion that informed the subjects that they were regressing in time, beyond their birth to a new dimension," followed by the regression suggestion that "You are now in a different life, living in another life that you have lived before in another time. You are now reliving that other life that you once lived before in a different time" (p. 310). The subjects were then asked three questions/instructions on the basis of which they were classified as either "past-life responders" or "no-past-life responders": "What name can I call you?" "I want you to look down and tell me what you are wearing. Describe everything you are wearing in detail," and "Where are you?" All responses were tape-recorded. Subjects who responded in such a way as to indicate that they were not displaying a so-called past-life identity were awakened from trance, debriefed, and dismissed from the experiment. Subjects who did report an alleged past-life were asked a series of questions aimed at obtaining specific, details about their "previous" identity, such as the time and place they were living, the ruler of their country, whether the country was at peace or war, what religion they belonged to and what were its practices, the currency in use, their daily routine,

whether they were married and had children, and so forth. This "interview" with the past-life identity lasted about 40 minutes, after which subjects were awakened from trance and asked to complete three posttest questionnaires that assessed the degree to which their primary identity faded into the background during the past-life experience (self-fading), how intense and vivid the experience seemed to be (subjective intensity), and how believable the experience seemed to be to them (credibility). Subjects were then debriefed and dismissed.

Results indicated that 32% of subjects (n=35) were classified as past-life responders and 65% (n=75) of subjects were classified as no-past-life responders based on the criterion. Subjects' spontaneous postexperimental comments and experimenters' subsequent inquiry into the possible normal acquisition of past-life responders' information indicated that most of the names, dates, and places given by the past-life responders could be related to something which the subject had read, seen, or heard in school, books, and the popular media or to subject's activities, interests, hobbies, jobs, subjects studied in college, or other activities in which subjects participated. For instance, "the subject who claimed a past-life as Julius Caesar reported experimentally that he was currently studying about Caesar in a history course. A different subject who had claimed to be the daughter of a nobleman in Florence in 1600 was majoring in art history and had an interest in Florentine art, several subjects reported past-life identities from European countries they had visited during holidays" (p. 310). The historical information that subjects provided tended to be either inaccurate or common knowledge (e.g., claiming to be alive as "Julius Caesar in 55 A.D. when the historical Caesar died in 44 B. C.; claiming to live in a country or state before it historically became a country or state; knowing that in 1950 George Washington was pictured on the U.S. 1-dollar bill).

Contrary to the reincarnation hypothesis, past-life reporters frequently supplied inaccurate historical information, did not possess information that might reasonably be expected of a person who actually lived in the relevant historical period, and made historical errors that would have been impossible for a person who lived in the era in question. Our findings are consistent with the hypothesis that past-life reports are fantasies that subjects construct on the basis of their often limited and inaccurate historical information. (Spanos et al., 1991, p. 311)

Spanos et al. (1991, p. 312) also reported that past-life responders were no different from no-past-life responders in any statistically significant way on indexes of psychopathology (schizophrenia, self-esteem, depressive affect, magical thinking) or fantasy (imagery vividness, absorption, daydreaming, role-playing) (Table 1, p. 311). "Subjects with a propensity for engaging in fantasy and imaginative role playing in everyday life were particularly adept at becoming so absorbed in their past-life fantasies that their awareness of their primary identity tended to fade into the background [self-fading]. These highly imaginative subjects also tended to experience particularly intense past-life experiences [subjective intensity]" (p. 312).

Study 2. In the first study, investigators noticed that past-life responders almost always reported past-life identities of the same race and sex as the present identities of the subjects living in European or North American countries, and wondered if they could manipulate this outcome with a specific set of instructions given to subjects while they were in the waking state prior to hypnotic induction.

In Study 2, we tested the hypothesis that subjects would develop expectations about the characteristics of past-life identities from information conveyed by the hypnotist and would then incorporate this information into their past-life identities. . . In Study 2, half the subjects were given no specific information about the characteristics of past-life identities. The remaining subjects were informed that their past-life identities were likely to be of a different sex and race than themselves and likely to live in strange or exotic settings. We anticipated that subjects given such information would tend to incorporate it into their past-life fantasies. Consequently, we predicted that subjects given the information would report to a greater extent than would controls past-life identities with one or more of the target characteristics. (Spanos et al., 1991, p. 312)

In the second study, thirty-six volunteer Carleton University undergraduates who were moderately or highly hypnotizable as tested on the CURSS (score range of 3 to 7 on the Objective: O dimension) were administered the same pretest questionnaires as in Study 1 and then randomly assigned to two experimental conditions. In the "neutral" condition, subjects were given general information about reincarnation similar to Study 1. In the "instructed" condition, in addition to the general information provided in the "neutral" condition, these subjects were given the following treatment instructions:

People undergoing past-life regression are frequently surprised to discover that in their past life they were a member of the opposite sex. This is by no means unusual, in fact it is quite common. . . Past-life experiences do not follow genetic principles of inheritance. Therefore, people are very unlikely to have a past life as one of their biologically related ancestors. Instead, it is very common of one to have a past life in some faraway locality that is completely removed from any place that one's biological ancestors came from. For this reason, it is also very common for one to be a member of a different race in a past life. (Spanos et al., 1991, p. 313).

Following this preliminary information, procedures used in Study 2 were essentially the same as those used in Study 1 (i.e., hypnotic procedure; regression suggestions; three-question "responder" selection criteria; dismissal of no-past-life responders; interview with past-life identity of responders, posttest measures administered to responders that included questions about gender, eye, skin, and hair color of past-life identity). Judges who were blind to treatment conditions rated transcripts of interview responses with respect to race, sex, and locality of reported past-life identities.

Results indicated that 79% (15/19) of subjects in the instructed condition and 88% (15/17) of subjects in the neutral condition reported a past-life identity. Neither group differed in terms of their beliefs and attitudes about reincarnation, their expectation of experiencing a past life or the intensity and importance of their religious beliefs. Sixty-six percent of the 15 past-life responders (10/15) in the instructed condition incorporated a different sex, race, or exotic location into their past-life reports, whereas only 27% (4/15) of the past-life responders in the neutral condition did so. This difference was statistically significant ($p < .05$). There was no significant difference between conditions in past-life responders' experience of self-fading, intensity of past-life experience, or the credibility assigned to the experience. Spanos et al., (1991) concluded:

Subjects provided with information about the characteristics of past-life identities incorporated the target information into their past-life reports significantly more often than did subjects in the neutral condition. These findings support Wilson's (1982) contention that subjects learn to develop past-life identities that are consistent with the expectations of their therapist or hypnotist. Our findings are also consistent. . . with numerous studies indicating that subjects incorporate information acquired prehypnotically into their hypnotic enactments. (p. 313)

Study 3. Study 3 extended the results and design of Study 2 to test whether prehypnotically acquired information related to expectations that their past-life identity had experienced being "frequently and severely abused and mistreated by their parents, older siblings or other adults" would be incorporated into past-life responders reports. Results indicated that "past-life responders in the abuse-informed condition reported higher levels of abuse than past-life responders in the neutral condition ($p < .05$)" (p. 315). Spanos et al. (1991) conclude: "These findings, like those of Study 2, support the hypothesis that past-life reporters integrate contextual information acquired prehypnotically from the hypnotist into their secondary identity fantasies. . . even when the prehypnotic information is negatively toned" (p. 315)

Combined Studies 1, 2, 3. Results from studies 1, 2, 3, when combined, indicated that past-life responders (a) were more highly hypnotizable, (b) held more positive attitudes toward reincarnation, (c) had stronger expectations for experiencing a past-life, but (d) did not believe more strongly in reincarnation than no-past-life responders (Table 2, p. 315). The more hypnotizable a past-life responder, the greater self-fading and subjective intensity --but not credibility -- was assigned to the past-life experience (Table 3, p. 316). Hypnotizability and subjective intensity of reported past-life experiences were unrelated to beliefs and attitudes towards reincarnation or expectation of experiencing a past-life during regression, although the degree of credibility assigned to these experiences were related to prior beliefs, attitudes, and expectations (Table 3, p. 316).

Study 4. Study 4 was designed to assess the degree to which the credibility that past-life responders assigned to their past-life experiences could be manipulated by prehypnotically acquired information that "varied the legitimating rationale provided to subjects" (p. 317) in a way similar to the manipulations administered by Baker (1982) who provided subjects either positive, neutral, or derogatory information about past-life regression while in the waking state prior to hypnotic induction.

To this end, medium and highly hypnotizable subjects were assigned to one of three treatments that (a) defined hypnotically induced past-life experiences in terms of reincarnation [high credibility belief condition], (b) defined such experiences as creative fantasies [low credibility fantasy condition], or (c) remained neutral with respect to the definition of such experiences [neutral condition]. (Spanos et al., 1991, p. 317)

Results indicated that these prehypnotically administered instructions had no effect on whether or not a subject reported a past-life experience and no effect of the reported self-fading and subjective intensity of the past-life experience of those past-life responders who did (Table 5, p. 318). These instructions did, however, affect who assigned credibility to their experiences. "Past-life reporters in the high-credibility treatment assigned higher credibility to their past-life experiences than did those in the low-credibility group. No other differences were significant" (Table 5, p. 318).

Overall results. Spanos et al (1991) conclude that the overall results of their four studies support the sociocognitive "role playing" hypothesis.

According to this hypothesis, subjects construct these fantasies to meet the demands of the hypnotic regression situation. The suggestions employed in this situation require that subjects' fantasies be framed as autobiographical historical mini-dramas that are narrated by a first-person singular identity other than the subject (i.e., secondary personality). To meet these demands, subjects tend to choose historical times and places with which they are relatively familiar or which they have special interest. Within these constraints, they construct a life story that weaves together plot lines, details, and characters that are derived from a wider range of sources (e.g., personal experience, television shows, novels) and that are expressed as a first-person report. (p. 318)

Key findings of Studies 1, 2, 3, 4 of Spanos et al. (1991) include the following:

- "Past-life responders scored significantly higher than no-past-life subjects on attitudes toward reincarnation and expectations of experiencing a past life" (p. 315).
- "All three attitude/expectancy measures [beliefs in reincarnation, attitudes toward reincarnation, expectancy of experiencing a past life] correlated significantly with the degree to which past-life responders assigned credibility to their past-experience" (p. 316).
- "Prior beliefs, attitudes, and the expectancies concerning reincarnation have little to do with the intensity of past-life experiences" (p. 316).
- "The present findings provide no support for versions of the reincarnation hypothesis holding that past-life responders invariably provide historically accurate accounts. . . or for the hypothesis that these enactments reflect psychopathology" (p. 318).
- "Past life responders shape their past-life fantasies to correspond to the expectations transmitted by the hypnotist" (p. 318).
- "Hypnotic past-life responders scored higher in hypnotizability than no-past-life subjects" (p. 318).
- "Past life responders had more favorable attitudes toward reincarnation and stronger expectations of developing past-life experiences than did no-past-life responders" (p. 319).
- "Past life responders assigned relatively high credibility ratings to their experiences when (a) their initial beliefs, attitudes, and expectations concerning reincarnation were positive, (b) their past-life fantasies were subjectively intense, and (c) the hypnotist defined past-life experiences as real rather than imaginary" (p. 319).

Critical discussion

Suppressed (overlooked) evidence. Spanos et al. (1991) also fail to bring relevant evidence to bear when addressing the issue of historical accuracy of information contained in the past-life reports of hypnotically regressed subjects, and in some cases misrepresenting proponents' position of the reincarnation hypothesis making it easier to attack them and to tout their own sociocognitive perspective. Helen Wambaugh (1975), for example, never claimed that people who report a past-life experience "almost always" (p. 311) or "invariably" (p. 318) supply historically accurate accounts. Just as reports of past experiences in *this* life are subject to memory errors, past-life reports invariably contain errors of recall, even in those rare and exceptional cases in which something of evidential value does emerge during attempts to evoke "previous lives" during hypnosis (Ramster, 1994; Stevenson, 1974, 1984; Tarazi, 1990) -- cases that are curiously overlooked by Spanos et al. in their literature review.

Begging the question, hasty conclusions, and questionable causes. Spanos et al. (1991) also tend to assume the demonstration of a conclusion or the answer to a question that is at issue without adequate proof by such statements as "The findings of Study 2 and 3 demonstrate [my emphasis] that past-life responders shape their past-life fantasies to correspond to the expectations transmitted by the hypnotist" (p. 318). Nothing of the sort has been *demonstrated* but simply the application of a theory to interpret and explain results. Correlational evidence is taken to be causative with one correlated variables taken to be a "determinant" of the other (e.g., "As indicated earlier, among subjects who reported a past-life identity, propensity toward fantasy was an important *determinant* [my emphasis] of the vividness of their past-life experience" (p. 312)). Moreover, just because a set of experimental findings are *consistent* with a particular research hypothesis does not *prove* that hypothesis, although Spanos et al. (1991) often infer that it does, especially when the experimental findings are based on different studies that used different subjects, different procedures, and employed different experimental demands upon the subject. This hasty conclusion is reached by accepting the sociocognitive hypothesis as an accurate interpretation of the empirical facts presented in Studies 2 and 3 on the basis of insufficient evidence.

Labeling the regression suggestion used in Study 1, the sex, race, and exotic location suggestion used in Study 2, the sex abuse suggestion used in Study 3, and the credibility suggestion used in Study 4 as the *cause* of the content contained in the reports of past-life responders is based on evidence that is insufficient, given the fact that not all past-life responders incorporate this prehypnotically acquired information into their so-called hypnotic enactments (e.g., 68% in Study 1, 33% in Study 2). In Study 4, Spanos et al. (1991)

reported that "the number of subjects in each treatment who reported a past-life failed to differ significantly" (p. 317). Why not? Why did the "derogatory" fantasy instructions not decrease the number of subjects who reported a past-life if "cues" are the determining factor as reported, for example, by Baker (1982)? Perhaps the degree to which the prehypnotically administered instructions are deprecating, disparaging, critical, insulting, offensive, and belittling of the idea of reincarnation, past-life therapy, or hypnotic regression matters. But even in the case of Baker's (1982) scathing derogatory remarks given to one of the three treatment groups employed, there were still two subjects out of 20 who persisted in displaying a past-life identity. While individual subjects who score high on hypnotizability scales *both* respond and do not respond to hypnotic suggestions for so-called "secondary identity enactments," as do subjects who score low on hypnotizability scales as indicated by the results of Study 1 and others (Kampman, 1976). Hypnotizability and experimental demands to perform in the ways suggested are neither necessary nor sufficient causes -- either separately or in combination -- guaranteeing the emergence of a "previous" identity during a hypnotic past-life regression. Other factors must be involved.

Spanos et al. (1991) assumed in Study 1 that any random group of past-life reports of different individuals should show a 50/50 distribution of male/female past-life identities. A similar assumption is expressed by Venn (1986) when he states: Researchers more typically assume that anything can happen by chance. In fact, a 50:50 ratio is precisely what. . . should [be] expected, given an equal probability of obtaining either a male or female personality" (p. 413). This misconception overlooks the fact that reincarnation, if it exists, may not operate in a random fashion, that individuals may choose a series of lives as a male or as a female, of one race or another, depending upon what balance of qualities the whole identity want to develop and express. Sex and race are individual difference variables, and any theory of reincarnation which assumes a random distribution of these variables may well be mistaken. Unfortunately, it is the nature of grouped, aggregated data to obscure the fact that while no significant differences may be found between groups (e.g., past-life vs. no-past-life responders) on a set of variables (e.g., belief and attitude toward reincarnation or expectation to experience a past life during hypnotic regression), individual differences there may be that are not revealed or identified in the analysis.

Furthermore, why set up and establish demand characteristics at the beginning of an experiment to elicit a past-life report and then confound those effects with the effects of the hypnotic induction and regression suggestion that are also used to elicit the past life report? What would happen if no reincarnationally-oriented pretests or preliminary information were administered to prime or cue subjects in the waking state prior to the hypnotic induction? Would past-life reports emerge in the absence of such instructions or cues? This is one aspect of the Spanos et al. (1991) student what the present research sets out to investigate.

Methodological implications of the discrepancy between CURSS: O and CURSS:OI. The normative and reliability/validity data supporting the use of the CURSS as a measure of hypnotic susceptibility is ambiguous. On the one hand, "most subjects are likely to fail most test suggestions when a 'pass' requires that the appropriate response to each suggestion be rated as feeling involuntary. . . on both the initial test and the retest [and that] subjects frequently passed suggestions by objective criteria while rating their responses as voluntary rather than involuntary" (Spanos et al., 1983b, pp. 556, 558, 562). On the other hand, does this mean that the hypnotic induction procedure employed by the CURSS that is a modified version of the "believed-in imagining" induction of Barber (1969) does not really institute a trance state to begin with? But this conclusion is inconsistent with the fact that the CURSS scores "correlate significantly with those of the HGSHS:A and the SHSS:C. . . [and] with Field's (1965) Hypnotic Depth Inventory, subjects' expectancies of becoming hypnotized, and Tellegen and Atkinson's (1974) absorption questionnaire" which tap into dimensions of subjective experience theoretically related to hypnotizability (Spanos et al., 1983, p. 525).

If the CURSS hypnotic induction procedure institutes the sort of trance state such that most responses are experienced as being voluntary, do all the other standardized scales do as well? If observed behavior indicates a deep trance state (operationally defined as the mere performance of a suggestion), but the self-reported experience indicates a light one, it seems we have a serious inconsistency and incongruity that needs to be addressed by the clinical and experimental hypnosis community. Perhaps it is the hypnotic induction procedure and not the phenomenon of past-life regression being investigated that is suspect in all those studies that rely upon standard hypnotizability scales to identify subjects who appear to be highly hypnotizable (but actually are not) and obtain results that demonstrate little more than simulated role-playing in response to the demand characteristics of the experimental setting by subjects who confabulate pseudo-memories and provide historically inaccurate information about "previous existences." In any case, when the concordance between behavior and experience is observed to be less than perfect, measures of both need to be obtained if an accurate representation of hypnotic trance is to be obtained. The observations of Pollio (1984) made on the basis of his study of "What Students Think About and do in the College Lecture Class" are relevant here:

In ordinary terms, self-reports provide 'subjective' data and behavioral observations provide 'objective' data. Perhaps a more revealing ways in which to capture what is happening is in terms of whose point of view is being taken. It does not seem wrong to consider self-reports of personal experience as describing 'me-for-me' and to consider behavioral records as

describing 'me-for-you' or, more generally 'me for someone else.' Considering self-reports and behavioral observations in this way suggests that both behavior *and* experience present different perspectives on the same event; not two separate and independent events. . . . The researcher [thus] may take subjective (or objective) data into account to determine if their objective (or subjective) measures give a valid picture of the person. . . It seems wiser to say that what is important, methodologically, is to determine whether or not the two perspectives agree with one another. . . and not which one is correct. Only in the case in which there is almost complete agreement between the two would it seem reasonable to use only one measure, and we do not yet know how often, or even if, such circumstances occur. The tendency to use behavior as the more significant measure for research has a long and reasonable history. Unfortunately it also has the tendency of reducing the [subject] being observed to an object or thing; it is no accident that the word *object* is part of the word *objective*. . . Only if we accept the subject of our observations as a human subject and accord him or her the role of co-investigator in our research, will it be possible for us to do a type of science that could properly be called Human Science. (p. 15)

Consciousness Research

Transpersonal Psychology

Psychology's potential contribution to the task of understanding humanity's "religious sentiment" and clarifying the relationship between science and religion in the modern world cannot be denied. "Next to the deep mystery of the divine nature, the mystery of the human person is of central significance for the whole discussion, since scientific and religious concerns intersect most clearly in our embodied nature" (Polkinghorne, 1998, p. 80). Psychology is now exploring the following areas that are relevant to this topic:

- States of consciousness (Tart, 1969)
- Meditation (Murphy & Donovan, 1997)
- Lucid dreaming (Gackenback & Bosveld, 1989)
- Psi functioning (Radin, 1997; Rao, 2001)
- Near-death experiences (Ring & Valarino, 1990)
- Trance channeling (Hastings, 1991)
- Cross-cultural contemplative development (Walsh & Shapiro, 1983)
- The relation of psychosis to mysticism (Nelson, 1994)
- The relation of brain states to mind states (Austin, 1998)
- Human transformative capacities (Murphy, 1992)

These studies of the nature of consciousness (or consciousness studies) have thrown light on how spiritual practices work, confirmed some of their benefits, and led to the birth of "transpersonal psychology," a field of psychology that emerged in the late 1960's out of humanistic psychology, and that is dedicated to integrating the wisdom of the world's premodern religions, modern psychological sciences, and constructive postmodern philosophies (Wulff, 1991, Chapter 12). Transpersonal psychology is concerned with the recognition, acknowledgement, and study of creative human experiences and behaviors and human transformative capacities associated with a broad range of normal and nonordinary states, structures, functions, and developments of consciousness in which personality action extends beyond the usual boundaries of ego-directed awareness and personal identity and even transcends conventional limitations of space and time; hence the term, "transpersonal." Transpersonal psychology has as one of its tasks the scientific investigation of transpersonal experiences. What are "transpersonal experiences"?

Transpersonal experiences may be defined as experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (*trans*) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, *psyche*, and cosmos.... [Their] correlates include the nature, varieties, causes, and effects of transpersonal experiences and development, as well as the psychologies, philosophies, disciplines, arts, cultures, life-styles, reactions, and religions inspired by them, or that seek to induce, express, apply, or understand them. (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993a, pp. 3, 269)

Transpersonal phenomena include many different so-called "anomalous" experiences and behaviors, including mystical/unitive, encounter-type, psychic/paranormal, unusual death-related, exceptional normal experiences, and other evocative demonstrations of personality action (Cardena, Lynn, & Krippner, 2000). They are considered "anomalous" by mainstream psychologists because of the artificial divisions established within psychology itself that exclude activities not of statistically frequent nature, or thought to be "paranormal" because of the standardization applied within psychology itself. Past-life experiences, for example, have been reported for centuries by quite normal people and are psychological facts, representing its own kind of experiential evidence about the full

dimensions of human existence, regardless of the interpretations that might be made about them. For this reason, many transpersonal psychologists consider so-called “paranormal” phenomena simply as an extension or expansion of normal human creativity and not as paranormal or “anomalous” at all. As someone once said: “There is nothing abnormal in the world – there is only the lack of understanding the normal.” Past-life experiences, like other examples of psi functioning, are evidence for the multidimensional nature of the human psyche and for abilities that lie within each individual, that are a part of our species’ heritage, and that more clearly define how the soul’s abilities *in life* show themselves (Tart, 1997a).

What transpersonal psychology has discovered, and what ancient mystical traditions have disclosed is that there are “unexplored creative capacities, depths of psyche, states of consciousness, and stages of development undreamed of by most people” (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993a, p. 1). Transpersonal psychology has opened up new areas of comprehension and creativity for contemporary psychology by calling attention to the existence of aspects of personality action that transcend standardized, orthodox ideas about the nature of the human psyche and, by implication, the nature of the known and “unknown” realities in which we dwell.

In-depth: "Psychology of the Future: Lessons from Modern Consciousness Research" (Grof, 2000)

Stanislav Grof is one of the co-founders of the transpersonal psychology movement who was trained as a psychiatrist (Grof, 2000; Yensen & Dryer, 1996). His observations of the effects of LSD on consciousness pioneered state-of-consciousness theory and research and expanded our understanding of the unconscious dimensions of the human psyche (Grof, 1980b, 1985). More recently, he has verified the existence of these same areas or regions of the psyche that were observed during LSD therapy sessions using a nondrug experiential technique called “holotropic breathwork” (Grof & Bennet, 1993). Grof’s LSD and holotropic breathwork research has revealed a cartography or map of the psyche that includes not only the Freudian personal subconscious, but also Rankian birth memories, the Jungian collective unconscious, and deeper levels containing reincarnational and racial memories, and multidimensional encounters with nonphysical beings and entities (Grof, 1985). Rather than consider patients’ experiences in psychedelic sessions (high dose of 300-500 mcg to facilitate mystical experiences) as manifestations of toxic psychosis, Grof views LSD as an “unspecific amplifier or catalyst of mental processes that confronts the experiencer with his own unconscious” (Grof, 1980b, p. 342) that has great relevance for the understanding the levels of actuality of the human mind.

Clinical observations reveal four major types of experiences catalyzed and amplified by LSD and holotropic breathwork sessions:

1. Abstract and aesthetic experiences, involving vivid, dramatic, and intense changes in sensation and perception.
2. Psychodynamic experiences, involving “important memories, emotional problems, and unresolved conflicts from various life periods of the individual...regression into childhood and even infancy, reliving of traumatic memories, infantile sexuality, conflicts in various libidinal zones, Oedipus and Electra conflict, castration anxiety, penis envy” (Grof, 1980b, p. 345).
3. Perinatal experiences, involving “experiences related to the circumstances of the biological birth” (Grof, 1980b, pp. 448-349).
4. Transpersonal experiences, involving “spiritistic and mediumistic experiences, experiences of an encounter with superhuman spiritual entities, archetypal experiences, and experiences of an encounter with blissful and wrathful deities...the activation of different *charkas* and arousal of the Serpent Power (Kundalini), consciousness of the Universal Mind, and the Supracosmic and Metacosmic Void” (Grof, 1980b, p. 357).

After analyzing the records of over 2,600 LSD sessions, transpersonal psychiatrist Stanislav Grof (1980a, 1985) could not identify one experiential pattern that represented a single standard, invariant response to the chemical action of the drug. Drug responses varied among individuals even though they were given the same dosage levels under identical psychological sets and physical settings. Experiential patterns were strongly modified by psychological and contextual factors, including the personality and behavior of the therapist, the personality and belief system of the participant, the therapeutic relationship, the psychological set and contextual setting in which the drug is administered. These observations suggested to Grof an important idea: The transpersonal experiences observed to occur during LSD were not simply toxic effects manufactured or produced by the chemical action of the drug. Rather, the drug acted as a *non-specific catalyst* or amplifier that activated deep levels of the psyche. The psychedelic (“mind manifesting”) agent simply intensified and accelerated the emergence of material from inner realms of the human unconscious to reveal aspects of the human mind unrecognized and unacknowledged by classical psychoanalysis or any existing system of psychology other than transpersonal psychology. In his later development of a non-drug technique called “holotropic breathwork” for producing a non-ordinary state of consciousness, Grof (1988) discovered that similar transpersonal phenomena as occurred during LSD sessions were being produced, except now it was a non-drug catalyst that was activating the deep levels of the human unconscious.

Grof (1988, 2000; Grof & Bennett, 1993) eventually came to refer to the variety of states of consciousness that are elicited or evoked by the stimulus of the psychedelic drug as "holographic," drawing an analog between the hologram and the mind.

Holographic consciousness has the potential to reach all aspects of existence. This includes the postnatal biography of the individual, events in the future, biological birth, embryonal and fetal development, the moment of conception, as well as the ancestral, racial, karmic [reincarnational past-life], and phylogenetic history. (Grof, 1988, p. 41)

Reincarnational (i.e., what Grof calls "karmic") past-life experiences are categorized as *transpersonal* experiences because they involve experiences and behaviors characterized by "an expansion or extension of our consciousness far beyond the usual boundaries of both our bodies and our egos, as well as beyond the physical limits of our everyday lives" (Grof & Bennett, 1993, p. 87). Experiential extensions of identity observed in psychedelic and holotropic [fast, regulated] breathing sessions include not only the transcendence of *spatial boundaries* -- experience of dual unity, identification with other persons, group identification and group consciousness, identification with animals, identification with plants and botanical processes, oneness with life and all creation, experience of inanimate matter and inorganic processes, planetary consciousness, extraterrestrial experiences, identification with the entire physical universe, and psychic phenomena involving transcendence of space -- but also the transcendence of *temporal boundaries* -- embryonal and fetal experiences, ancestral experiences, racial and collective experiences, past incarnation experiences, phygenetic experiences, experiences of planetary evolution, cosmogenetic experiences, and psychic phenomena involving transcendence of time (Grof, 1975a, pp. 311-345).

Transcendence of linear time. . . [includes] the possibility of vivid reliving of important memories from infancy and reexperiencing of the trauma of birth. This historical regression can continue farther and involve authentic fetal and embryonal memories from different periods of intrauterine life. It is not even unusual to experience, on the even of cellular comprehension, full identification with the sperm and the ovum at the time of conception. But the process of experiential retracing of creation does not stop here. In holotropic states, we can experience episodes from the lives of our human or animal ancestors, or even those that seem to be coming from the racial and collective unconscious, as described by C. G. Jung. quite frequently, experiences that seem to be happening in other cultures and historical periods are associated with a sense of personal remembering, a convinced feeling of *déjà vu* [seen before] or *déjà vécu* [experienced before]. People then talk about reliving of memories from past lives, from previous incarnations. (Grof, 2000, p. 59)

Reincarnational memories resemble other types of temporal transpersonal phenomena, such as ancestral, species, and archetypal collective unconscious experiences except that reincarnational experiences are typically accompanied with a strong positive or negative emotional charge, personified in a dramatized form, and are tagged as a personal memory from the individual spiritual or psychic rather than biological history (Grof, 1988, p.74, 84).

Their essential experiential characteristic is a convinced sense of remembering something that happened once before to the same entity, to the same unit of consciousness. The subjects participating in these dramatic sequences maintain a sense of individuality and personal identity, but experience themselves in another form, at another place and time, in another context. . . It would be difficult to convince a person who is relating to us a memory of something that happened last week that the even did not really occur and that it is just a figment of his or her imagination. Past incarnation memories have a similar subjective quality of authenticity and reality. (Grof, 1988, p. 84)

Individuals encountering these various areas or regions of the psyche during psychotherapy often experience significant relief of addictions, physical health problems, and psychopathologies (Grof, 1988). In addition, Stanislav Grof and his wife Christina Grof have coined the term *spiritual emergency* to help professionals differentiate mystical states from mental illness and have organized a national network of therapists to assist individuals who may experience emotional or psychological crises of a spiritual or transpersonal nature (C. Grof & S. Grof, 1990; S. Grof & C. Grof, 1989).

Past-life experiences can complicate life in several different ways. Before their content emerges fully into consciousness and reveals itself, one can be haunted in everyday life by strange emotions, physical feelings, and visions without knowing where these are coming from or what they mean. Experienced out of context, these experiences naturally appear incomprehensible and irrational. . . .When the content of a karmic experience fully emerges into consciousness, it can suddenly provide an explanation for many otherwise incomprehensible aspects of one's daily life. Strange difficulties in relationships with certain people, unsubstantiated fears, and peculiar idiosyncrasies and attractions, as well as otherwise incomprehensible emotional and psychosomatic symptoms now seem to make sense as karmic carry-overs from as previous lifetime. The problems typically disappear when the karmic pattern in question is fully and consciously experienced. . . . Another kind of complication occurs when a particularly strong karmic experience starts emerging into consciousness in the middle of

everyday activities and interferes with normal functioning. One might also feel compelled to act out some of the elements of the karmic pattern before it is fully experienced and understood or completed. . . . Fundamentalist Christians and those who have a strong investment in rationality and the traditional scientific perspective can be catapulted into a period of confusion when they are confronted with convincing personal experiences that seem to challenge their belief system. (Grof, 2000, pp. 162-163)

What are the implications for psychology of Grof's pioneering consciousness research into the psyche's greater reality revealed by drug and non-drug alterations of consciousness? First, all such expansions of identity beyond usual ego boundaries should be considered valid and real experiences that hint at the multidimensional nature of the human psyche. They tell us something important about the abilities that lie within each individual. There is no *a priori* reason for supposing otherwise. The data of modern consciousness research indicate that the quality of identity is far more mysterious than we can presently comprehend within the framework of core beliefs currently operative in contemporary schools of psychology (Grof, 2000).

Second, consciousness research has the potential of overcoming conventional psychology's highly limited ideas about the nature of the self by introducing original concepts and theories into discussions regarding the nature of the human psyche's private and collective reality, and by proposing research agendas that promise to give us a greater understanding of human potential and exceptional well-being beyond the norm (Braud & Anderson, 1998). Where old, accepted ideas of selfhood fail to do justice to the multitudinous creativity of personality action, transpersonal psychology dares to conceptualize previously unknown elements of the self and to propose new ways to explore its greater reality.

Psychically Channeled Past-Life Readings

Edgar Cayce is one of the more famous channelers who would go into a trance state and proceed to give "reincarnational life readings" about individuals many of whom he did not know and never met, being given only their names and location just prior to the session (Langley, 1967). Reincarnational readings were often tied into the health problems of the individuals for which they came to Cayce to seek remedy. Cayce would give provide a diagnosis, recommend a treatment, and often trace a portion of the origins of present health problems to a past-life difficulty. Many cases of Cayce's past-life readings are documented in Gina Cerminara's (1950) book *Many Mansions*, including at least "one case in which an individual named by Cayce in a past-life reading was verified as having historically existed" (Hastings, 1991, p. 29). Cayce, himself a devote Christian who is reported to have read the Bible from cover to cover every year for much of his life, was scandalized when he learned that during one of his trance states he provide a reincarnational reading. He eventually accept this part of the information that was given during his deep trance states. Cayce's consternation at a Christian such as himself being the vehicle for channeled information on the matter of reincarnation may have been misplaced, however. As Hastings (1991) notes:

The religions of human beings have been more powerful in shaping cultures and societies than any other social institution. Channeling has played a central part in three major religions and minor parts in others. The traditions originating in the Near East [Judaism, Christianity, Judaism] can be characterized as religions of revelation in which prophecy, a form of channeling, plays a major role. (p. 185).

Although reincarnation is not a part of modern-day Christian philosophy and religion, reincarnation is a part of Buddhist and Hindu philosophic and religious teachings. The founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gatama Buddha, who became aware of his own 10,000 lives while in an altered state of consciousness as he attained enlightenment, did not regard such revelatory information, however, as a key component in the furthering of enlightenment in his disciples. Another channeled document, *A Course in Miracles* (1985), has an entire section devoted to the question, "Is Reincarnation So?" Like the Buddha, the *Course* believes that "it would not be helpful to take any definite stand" (p. 57) toward the benefits or disadvantages of knowing one's prior life because "if reincarnation is responsible for current difficulties, the person still has to deal with the issues now. If he is trying to make his future lives better, he can still do it only in the present" (Hastings, 1991, p. 111). The channeled writings of Seth/Jane Roberts, collectively known as the *Seth Material*, presents a coherent theory of the nature of reality, consciousness, and human personality that includes reincarnation as a key component of species and individual development.

Seth holds that reincarnation occurs (you will incarnate whether you believe in it or not, he says), and the larger self is engaged in living several physical lives in different time periods, which are experienced simultaneously, since the soul is outside of sequential time. He means this literally, but it can also be seen as a metaphor for our many roles. (Hastings, 1991, p. 74)

The section below describes in detail the model of human personality devised by Jane Roberts as an attempt to make sense of the ideas contained in the *Seth Material* and her own experiences as a trance channel for Seth. A detailed past-life reading provided by Seth for

an individual who attended a trance session follows the outline of Jane Roberts's theory of Aspect Psychology presented below. Aspect Psychology provides a unique theoretical framework within which the idea of reincarnation may be understood.

In-depth: Jane Roberts' Aspect Psychology

Writer, mystic, and channel Jane Roberts (b.1929- d.1984) presents a theory of human personality called Aspect Psychology that is based upon her introspective accounts and analysis of her experiences in alternate states of consciousness, especially in trance states channeling an "energy-personality-gestalt" that calls himself "Seth." Through Seth, and as a consequence of her own extraordinary native creativity and psychic ability, Jane Roberts has written an extraordinary number of books that reflect her own creative writing abilities (Roberts, 1966/1993, 1970, 1973, 1975b, 1977b, 1978, 1979b, 1979c, 1982, 1984, 2006b) and channeled information that purports to describe multidimensional reality as it exists beyond four-dimensional space-time perceived by the physical senses (Roberts, 1972, 1974, 1977a, 1979a, 1979d, 1981a, 1981b, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1995, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000, 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006a). As a result of her experiences channeling Seth for over a period of 20 years, and utilizing "different levels of awareness to examine the nature of the psyche and its reality," Jane Roberts developed a system of thought called Aspect Psychology that she offers "as a framework through which previously denied psychic elements of life can be viewed as proper, beneficial, and natural conditions of our consciousness (Roberts, 1975a, pp. v, vii). What is Aspect Psychology (Roberts, 1975a, 1976)?

Aspect Psychology begins with the idea that man's consciousness is mobile, focused in the body but not dependent upon it except for three-dimensional life. . . . It examines the basic components of personality and sees them as Aspects of a greater, largely unknown self which is the source of our physical being. . . .pointing toward still undiscovered abilities; and our psychic and creative experiences as hints of a hidden, multi-dimensional self. . . . Aspect Psychology, then, accepts as normal the existence of precognitive dreams, out-of-body experiences, revelatory information, alterations of consciousness, peak experiences, trance mediumship, and other psychological and psychic events possible in human behavior. (Roberts, 1975a, pp. vi-vii).

Focus Personality

According to Aspect Psychology, human personality consists of multiple Self-aspects or components that exist simultaneously in many different dimensions of reality. One aspect of human personality is referred to as the "focus personality." The focus personality refers to that portion of our identity which is focused in three-dimensional space and time ("time" being the fourth dimension). The focus personality is our usual, familiar, accepted ego-directed "I" consciousness that exists within the work-a-day world of physical reality and represents one focus of consciousness -- our normal, ordinary, alert, waking state of consciousness. The ego or focus personality is *not* the complete self or personality nor does it make up the entire identity of the person, and to do so as if done in all conventional theories of human personality is extremely limiting to any fuller understanding of the nature of human personhood. Our focus personality is endowed both with physically-focused sense perception that organizes awareness along certain specific lines from a much larger undifferentiated pool of available probable perceptions, and a physical body that causes us to experience events in time and space.

Each focus personality is unique, independent, 'born' into its particular dimensional area and becoming itself as fully as possible within that framework, where it takes part in the constant creation and maintenance of the system in which it has its existence. This is not a *descent* of soul, but a consciousness embarked in the creation of experienced realities, in which it then participates. (Roberts, 1975a, p. 146). The focus personality with its physical body immersed in three-dimensional life is the self that is studied by conventional mainstream psychology. It is the most surface part of the human personality, its most exterior face, that perceives a seemingly exterior, objective material world through physical senses that perceive reality in a specialized fashion, and that are themselves sum and substance a part of the world they perceive. In terms of the Johari Window, it is the part of personality that is "known" to self (and may be "open" to others or "hidden" from others). The focus personality is the outer self-conscious ego-self that we ordinarily identify as our "self," and through which we perceive, understand, and live our physical life with its usual emotional up-and-downs of daily domestic living. Jane Roberts' trance personality, Seth, clarifies the relationship between ego and personality and elaborates upon the basic nature of the focus personality (Roberts 1998a, pp. 329-330).

Because the personality is that part of the individual which is conscious of itself *as* a part of action, and therefore aware of its relation with action, the personality is that part of the individual which survives physical death. The personality is not the whole self. It is a portion of the whole self, which is activated during a particular existence. The ego. . . does not vanish. . .

.The ego is not the self-conscious self in its entirety by any means. It is simply a portion, the field of focus whereby the self attempts to objectify itself within the world of matter. [At death] it simply ceases to so objectify itself, but it retains, or the self retains, memory of that objectification. The personality necessarily continues to change after physical death. After physical death the personality simply ceases to project itself, as a rule, within the physical field, and no longer focuses within it. . . The personality is much more extensive and expansive than you realize. (Roberts, 1998a, pp. 329-330).

The "outer" ego and its intellect is a limited and surface portion of the entire personality whose focus of attention is direct "outward" toward the manipulation of physical reality. It is only one focus of consciousness among many probable ones, that arises from so-called "unconscious" dimensions of our being. The so-called 'unconscious' represents the portion of ourselves from which the focus personality springs with its 'ego.' We have many egos through though the course of a lifetime. The ego is the direct psychological confrontation point, rising out of the focus personality to deal with physical life. Since the focus personality can only handle so much data in its time system, it chooses from the field of the unconscious only those perceptions it wants to accept in line with its beliefs about the nature of its own reality. (Roberts, 1975a, p. 148). A necessary and important component of the focus personality, the ego and its intellect directs our outer senses and their physical focus and controls our behavior, assuring the survival of the human personality and its body in the physical world.

The focus personality or conscious "I" or outer ego (these terms can be used interchangeably) is the "eye" through which the focus personality views three-dimensional reality. "The ego is. . . somewhat like the light carried in front of the inner [transpersonal self] a light that gives meaning to the physical universe and to its objects. It enables the inner self to manipulate within physical reality. It translates outer data to the inner personality" (Roberts, 1999a, p. 118). In its role as executive director of three-dimensional life, the ego and its intellect govern the interaction of the focus personality with other portions of the psyche, and receive inner perceptions from these other portions of the self when it allows itself to do so and when religious and cultural fears do not inhibit it. By nature curious, receptive, flexible and resilient, the ego and its intellect is capable of going beyond (*trans*) its culturally-conditioned limited, fearful, and rigid nature. Rather than being shunted aside, shut down, overlooked, ignored, or "killed," the abilities of the psychological ego and intellect can be used in slightly modified form (passive yet poised, relaxed yet aware, dissociated yet participating, off-focus yet balanced), acting as a springboard and ally to explore alternate states of consciousness as a method of increasing its own knowledge and expand itself as it assimilates and organizes such inner experience (Roberts, 1998a, pp. 330-333).

Source Self (Entity or Oversoul)

Within the focus personality is an inner self-conscious "source self" (or entity) that is the source and origin of the focus personality, the fountainhead from which the focus personality constantly emerges and in which it is always couched and supported. That portion of the source self that specifically forms the outer focus personality is termed the inner "nuclear self." The nuclear self is "that part of the source self's sphere of identity...[that] constantly translates itself into physical form...generates our personal level of experience, ...[and] can perceive all of the focus personality's probable experience at once and help it make choices....forms and maintains the body" (Roberts, 1975a, p. 231). The source self is pure energy and exists beyond the subconscious boundaries of the known focus personality and outside of three-dimensional reality. Being "infinitely creative, and always forming new dimensions for experience and fulfillment" (Roberts, 1975a, p. 136), the source self is the multidimensional source of intuitions, creativity, precognitive information and revelatory knowledge that springs into the waking and dreaming experience of the focus personality.

This "unknown" or source self can be thought of as an entity, a personified energy gestalt -- energy that knows itself -- that creates and then perceives itself through experience, as it constantly sends 'waves' of itself into dimensional activity. These energy waves, striking our [system of three-dimensional space and time] form the individual 'particle' with its focus (of particle) personality. The energy waves bounce back and forth, to and from the source self, so that there is constant interaction. (Roberts, 1975a, p. 119). This two-way synergistic reciprocal interaction between the individual focus personality and its source self such that the experience of one replenishes, renews, refreshes, and re-energizes the other. Reality is not limited, nor is it a closed system as the physical system with its "laws" of entropy and conservation of energy appears to be as perceived through the physical senses. Human personality may appear consistent and static, but it is in fact ever-changing and never static, but constantly growing, developing, and creating as a result of these exchanges between systems of reality. Basic reality is open-ended, not dead-ended, in other words. This influx and outflow of energy (or vitality), once recognized, can be consciously harnessed and directed to "self-actualize" more of the inner source self and its Aspects by the practice of certain techniques (e.g., meditation, self-hypnosis, lucid dreaming, holotropic breathing, creative visualization, active imagination) that open up our conscious awareness to our multidimensional origin and that bring portions of our psyche that heretofore have remained latent, hidden, dormant, and unused by the focus personality into perceived living reality.

Aspect Selves

Because the source self's full abilities cannot be completely actualized or manifested in any one system of reality, it creates a multitudinous number of Aspects of itself and sends these out into a multiplicity of dimensions of basic reality which it has itself created, intersecting with and immersing itself into various frameworks of existence in order to perceive and experience different kinds of reality through its Aspects, enriching and changing itself in the process. "The source self is an ever-aware stock of consciousness, sending individual selves or focus personalities into all systems of reality" (Roberts, 1975a, p. 146).

Our individual focus personality is only one Aspect of our source self - its three-dimensional Aspect alive in corporal reality. There are many other "Aspect selves" created by our source self that simultaneously exist within our focus personality and that help form the entire human personality.

Our present personalities, then, are Aspects of a far greater consciousness of which our individual awareness is but a part, though an inviolate one. Our personalities are composed of other Aspects, each dominant in other realities. . . . These connect the physical and nonphysical portions of our being; the soul and the body; the known and unknown elements of our experience. (Roberts, 1975a, p. 130)

Aspects exist in different dimensions of reality. Unlike our focus personality, not all Aspect selves impinge upon three-dimensional reality. Some Aspect selves within our focus personality have their existence in completely different systems of reality. The entire personality system of focus personality, source self, and Aspect selves is open-ended, integrated, and interconnected. Each Aspect self is connected to its source and each contains trace elements of other Aspect selves that are a part of the same source self. Psychologically, these individual Aspect selves appear within our focus personality (or three-dimensional Aspect self) as characteristic personality traits and attributes, distinguishing temperaments and attitudes, distinctive drives and interests, native skills and abilities that are uniquely our own.

Our personalities are composed psychically from trace elements of the source self, which appear 'at our end' as our own unique characteristics. We may concentrate on only a few of these, so that they are our official interests and abilities. Others, however, unknown and unrecognized by us, are stressed by Aspect selves, in whom our primary concerns lie latent or in a probable state. . . . These Aspects [are] mobile, ever-changing, and [contribute] to our identities and uniqueness by providing a living bank of characteristics and abilities from which each of us draws. (Roberts, 1975a, pp. 123, 130)

The focus personality's relationship to each of its inner Aspect selves is not static but dynamic and constantly changing as one Aspect self or another, called up through associative processes or the power of emotional attraction, may merge with the focus personality or spontaneously surface in three-dimensional reality to meet the demands of daily life and changing physical circumstance. By virtue of inhabiting the same psyche, Aspects constantly interact with one another and with the focus personality. "Usually the Aspects slide transparently through the focus personality, merely coloring or tinting its experience with their own particular vision. The focus personality often looks through an Aspect without realizing it" (Roberts, 1975a, p. 135). When this occurs we may feel "not quite ourselves," notice a sense of "strangeness in our perception of the world," or experience the world "as different" or altered in some subtle way. Because each Aspect self is connected to every other Aspect through its common origin in the source self, this means that our focus personality

can to some degree draw on the knowledge, abilities, and perceptions of the other Aspects. . . . We can use the Aspects of this source self within us to expand our conscious knowledge and experience. . . . These basic components represent other Aspect selves, operating in different realities than ours, and each can be isolated, tuned into, and magnified; its particular abilities used to enrich the personality and throw light on the source of its being. (Roberts, 1975a, pp. 119, 124)

Operating so smoothly behind the screen of awareness that their presence and functioning may be psychologically invisible to us, these Aspect selves, acting as basic components of the source self, may emerge into the experience of the focus personality during periods of unusual psychic or creative activity to initiate expansions of consciousness and activate latent abilities. Jane Roberts believes that Aspect selves play much the same role that Jung's modern idea of archetypes and the ancient Greek notions of muses and daemons are thought to perform in the initiation of truly creative acts. In terms of Aspect Psychology, high acts of inspiration and genius can be understood as "a sudden three-dimensional breakthrough of trans-dimensional information into conscious patterning. . . . [involving] creativity at trans-dimensional levels, and communication between the known focus personality and unknown source self" (Roberts, 1975a, pp. 138-139). Jane Roberts (1975a) provides a provocative description of what may occur during mediumistic trances of certain kinds when the ego meets other Aspects of the source self during such high acts of activity (pp. 125-130).

Basic Source Aspects

Among all the Aspect selves that compose a human personality, some Aspects possess greater dimensionality than others by their existence in other fields of actuality or systems of reality and are thus relatively more important to the focus personality than other Aspect selves. They are called "basic source Aspects" and are defined as "the most prominent Aspects in any given personality, operating as huge power centers and organizing forces" (Roberts, 1975a, p. 277). Basic source aspects

represent one of the focus personality's greatest strengths, possessing strong organizational abilities and operating as a stabilizing factor. Such basic source Aspects represent the greatest concentrations of source energy, functionally serve as centers of the focus personality, and utilize multidimensional abilities, not having to focus themselves in corporal living. . . . *They are representatives in the psyche of vital Aspect selves, that do operate in other systems of reality while being held in solution or suspension here. In their own systems they are dominant focus personalities, and our characteristics lie 'latent.'* (Roberts, 1975a, p. 131)

Seth, Jane Robert's trance personality, would be considered a basic source Aspect. Basic source Aspects are true multi-dimensional, multi-reality, multi-world consciousnesses, Basic source Aspects are a deep part of the human psyche. Although independent in its own system of reality, since it is a part of the focus personality, a basic source Aspect is able to perceive three-dimensional physical reality through the focus personality's experiences, and occasionally communicate through the psyche as an "inner voice" or some personification, distorted and deflected to some degree as its is reflected through the structure of the individual psyche, and whose own greater reality would exist in far different terms.

You could say that the focus personality activates its own components, senses the Aspects within its own psyche, and isolates them, bringing them alive to itself through personification. . . . Each of these basic Aspects would be personified according to the ideas of the focus personality, in line with the dimensional level being contacted. . . . These prime Aspects have their own reality outside of us, while acting here as components in the psyche. . . .guiding indirectly rather than directly. . . .[acting] as guides or teachers at unconscious levels and in dream states. (Roberts, 1975a, pp. 134-135, 137)

Probable Selves and Probable Realities

The physically-oriented focus personality lives a very creative, rich, and varied existence within three-dimensional reality. Free will operates, and creativity is at the heart of being. Impulses move the human personality in one direction or another, urging the individual to perform this action or that, choose among alternative behaviors, alter living circumstances. Moreover, life itself seems to necessitate the intrusion of surprising events. Every physical event, every desire and idea, every behavior and impulse, every choice and decision could have been otherwise. Every action that occurs in our "living area" is merely probable, not necessary. At any time we can always choose another line of development, change direction, or alter our attitude toward circumstances from the probable actions available to us at any given moment of time.

The road not taken and other crossroads of our lives represent "probability points" where probable realities and probable selves meet at definite points in time and space. Probabilities are a source for physical experience. According to Aspect Psychology, "the existence of probable actions and events [are] a source for physical experience" (Roberts, 1975a, p. 151). The "past" simply consists of those specific events chosen from a bank of probable ones, which in turn brings about its own probable future. Choosing an alternate event in the present brings into the present living area an alternate probable future and begins a "new" probable past. The past, then, is just as open as the future, a notion best explained using the following metaphor.

Suppose one is driving a car with the usual front windshield and rearview mirror. If the driver looks forward, the future is stretched out before him. If he looks in the rearview mirror, the past stretched out behind him. But suppose he decides to make a turn. As soon as he chooses a different future, a glance at his rearview mirror tells him he has automatically changed his past (William Irwin Thompson, quoted in Friedman, 1997, p. 213)

If human personality does not exist independently of the events it experiences, then neither do those events exist independent of which human personality is a part. When human personality changes, so do the events of which it is a part, whether those events are past or future ones. Each present action, in other words, changes not only the future, but changes the past.

Human personalities have probable pasts as well as probable futures which can always change based on the choices we make, the impulses we follow, and the actions we take. What happens to the structure, dynamics, and development of human personality when a choice is made? For example, suppose an individual had been training to be a priest all his adolescent and young adult life and

established a "living area probability" as a future priest, and then decides that he does not have a vocation to the priesthood and leaves the seminary, changing the "line of probabilities." What happens to that part of the focus personality that who would have continued on in the seminary line of probabilities? According to Aspect Psychology, that part of the focus personality continues to exist in probable reality, forming latent and inactive probable patterns of actions and events adjacent to our living space, following its own path of unfolding in an alternate probable reality.

The part of the focus personality who had decided upon the living area probability as it existed *before* the decision, follows through -- but *not* on the [three-dimensional] living area. A new focus personality is created, a "probable one," projected into a different kind of reality with the same abilities and previous experience as existed up to the point when the decision was made. In other words, the probable focus personality (or probable self) has a given heritage. It, too, begins to choose from probabilities. (Roberts, 1975a, pp. 153-154)

The "physically attuned" part of the focus personality who *did* choose to leave the seminary is no longer the "same" person but has become changed by the choice with a new probable future and a new probable past in which the choice *was* made. "The initial focus personality (or physically attuned self) keeps its identity, yet having made the decision to change probabilities, it becomes different than it would have been had it not made the choice" (Roberts, 1975a, p. 154). In our choices we truly create "new" selves. There is one self, but within that self are many selves. You were once a child, but now you are an adult. Where is the child? Has he or she died? And when you were a child, where was the adult? Like the acorn contains the whole tree and the genetic material of a single stem cell contains the blueprint to grow the entire body, and the grown tree and body contains within it all that it once was, so also do you contain past selves and future selves.

It seems that one's physical personality is composed of actions that one chooses to take, and those that one chooses to deny are ignored. The road not taken seems to be a non-act. According to Aspect Psychology, however, every thought is actualized and every possibility explored whether we realize it or not by one's inner self-conscious Self. Physical reality is indeed constructed on the surface by physical acts. Beneath the surface, however, nonphysical acts that usually escape one's notice or that we think about in our imagination (e.g., as when a friend telephones you and asks if you want to go out) are as valid and effect our body and emotions and our behavior as much as those we choose to physically actualize.

Reincarnational Selves

Aspect Psychology posits the existence of reincarnational selves as a part of our personality structure. We have other selves at other times, not only figuratively but also literally. According to Aspect Psychology, reincarnation is a fact and our beliefs about the matter won't change that fact one iota. It is a part of human personality most often overlooked, ignored, and denied by conventional psychology and as a result traditional theories of personality are incomplete and inadequate representations of personhood. On this view, the source self gives rise to separate reincarnational selves with their own focus personalities who are simultaneously incarnated in their own time and space three-dimensional living area. By projecting various Aspects of itself into three-dimensional reality, the source self (or entity) is able to experience a more enriched version of earth life than would be otherwise possible through a single focus personality alone. In Aspect Psychology, each focus personality is individual and inviolate, a never-to-be-repeated identity, each with its own memory, aware of its own time and life space activity, each a part of a larger more sophisticated consciousness. Roberts (1997c, pp. 126-128) elaborates.

Like Aspect selves, all reincarnational selves are connected by virtue of all being a portion of the same source self, all sharing among one another their experiences and abilities at an "unconscious" level, with one incarnated self developing one set of abilities while another incarnation developing perhaps another, for the overall value fulfillment of the source self or entity. "[When] you draw upon your own entity's hidden abilities and knowledge. . . [you] transcend the limits of your own present personality. You are not only your present personality, you are the sum of all your personalities" (Roberts, 1997c, p. 33).

Imagine that you have had ten reincarnations. These reincarnations all represent portions of your entity [or source self]; living or experiencing sensation at various times within a physical time system. The entity has awareness of these ten portions of itself. Consciously, however, no one of the ten personalities is aware of the others, nor of the entity. Each of the ten egos travels along an egotistical time of successive moments. . . more knowledge is available, but not to the ego as a rule. (Roberts, 1999a, p. 185) . . . You are multipersons. You exist in many times and places at once. You exist as one person, simultaneously. This does not deny the independence of the persons, but your inner reality straddles their reality, while it also serves as a psychic world in which they grow (Roberts, 1977a, p. 78). . . Personalities within, that are not dominant within the ego, *are* dominant within other fields of actuality, though they appear as mere shadowy influences within your own. (Roberts, 1998a, p. 265.

All reincarnational selves exist simultaneously, according to Aspect Psychology. Within the greater scheme of basic reality all action occurs in the spacious Present or "Now" in the same way, for example, that the cells of the body exist "at once." Reincarnational lives endure in the same fashion.

The previous personalities of past lives are only available however, under certain circumstances, for each of them is coded [electrically and electromagnetically] within a specific intensity range [within electric reality]. They exist simultaneously with the present personality, but the present personality *as a rule* cannot pick them up, so to speak. Sometimes there is a bleedthrough however. Also, the chemical nature of certain emotional experiences may cause a freak electrical storm within the identity system, so that a past life may suddenly be recalled. (Roberts, 1998b, p. 324)

Example of a Past-life Reading

The following extended excerpt from Session 89 presents a discussion of reincarnation in relation to a particular individual's present personality traits, neurotic tendencies, health problems, family relationships, and abilities that were developed in the past (Roberts, 1997a, pp. 20-26). This "past-life reading" by Seth, Jane Roberts' trance personality, shows the connections that may purportedly exist between previous life experiences and the present personality. The man referred to in the session ("Louie") was an acquaintance of Jane Roberts and Rob Butts (Rob is Jane's husband who records all of Jane's trance channeled Seth sessions). Louie attended the session as a guest of two close friends of Jane and Rob, who were also in attendance. Jane as Seth directs her remarks to Louie throughout most of the session (see Roberts 1997a, pp. 20-22 for a transcript of the session).







Theories of the Past Life Experience

A variety of alternative mechanisms other than "reincarnation" have been theorized to operate in order to explain either the source of the behavioral and psychological manifestations displayed by the "previous" personality or the means by which subjects purportedly acquire historical knowledge not learned normally about the details of the "life" of a surviving personality from the past. These theories are succinctly summarized by Tarazi (1990) and include:

1. *Psychodynamic factors*. "Past-life experiences [are] fantasies motivated by the unconscious needs of the subject" (p. 330). In a variant of this theory, material in the personal subconscious that is originally disturbing and anxiety-provoking to the ego, is neutralized by being projected onto and integrated into a fabricated personality that lived a "previous life" and not the present one (Zolik, 1958).
2. *Fraud*. Past-life experiences are a hoax and ruse deceptively perpetuated upon others for personal gain (e.g., money, fame, status).
3. *Cryptomnesia*. "The subject has been exposed to the information or story through reading, movies, television, or conversations with other persons, subsequently forgets it, and many years later recalls it as a past-life experience" (p. 331).
4. *Role playing*. Through the power of belief and imagination and a desire to please the hypnotist and give him (her) what the subject feels is desired, the subject creates a dramatic personification of a fantasized character induced by the hypnotic suggestions and shaped by the expectations of the therapist or experimenter and the demand characteristics of the experimental or clinical setting, drawing upon subconscious memory for many of the details, inventing others to fill the gap.
5. *Dissociation or multiple personality*. The release through hypnosis of "alternate personalities which can then assume the role of a former life of the subject. In the typical case, the alternate personality is entirely different from that manifested by the subject normally, and is usually unaware of or antagonistic toward the other person" (p. 331).
6. *Genetic memory*. Memory of learning "transferred to another organism. . . via transferred chemicals" (e.g., DNA, RNA, related proteins) (p. 332).
7. *Racial memory*. "Knowledge, attitudes, and feelings about historical events which were so influential and pervasive that they seem to have been imprinted on entire populations or cultures, become 'folk memories,' or part of the 'collective unconscious' of Jung" (p. 332).
8. *Clairvoyance*. "The ability to sense or perceive in some way information which exists elsewhere in present time but that cannot be perceived by the ordinary senses" (p. 332).
9. *Precognition*. This theory "suggests that the subject can foresee the verification of the material reported and therefore perceive the information before it is given" (p. 332).
10. *Retrocognition*. Extrasensory awareness of person, places, and information that existed in the past.
11. *Telepathy*. "This requires the subject to read the mind, thoughts, feelings, etc. of another individual who has the reported information" (p. 333)
12. *Mediumship*. "Mediumship is allied to telepathy between a living person and a discarnate personality, but it is usually more than just communication between such a pair. The discarnate personality actually speaks through the medium" (p. 333).
13. *Possession*. "The surviving personality not only communicates through, but actually possesses and controls, the living person for varying periods of time during which the living person loses control. Most people fear this situation" (p. 333).
14. *Reincarnation*. The nonphysical element of an individual's identity survives bodily death and is subsequently reborn in another physical body.
15. *Cultural conditioning*. Cultural conditioning and socialization by agents of society influence the occurrence and content of past-life experiences.

Mills & Lynn (2000) recommend the use of the term "previous personality" to refer to all alleged identity claims at this time because "it is neutral with respect to whether the claim is accurate or not" (p. 283) and because

ultimately, we may never know whether [a] past-life narrative reflect[s] memories of a past life, a coincidental combination of stories that (largely) match actual events, . . . an unknown cause, [or] to what degree. . . any PLE [is] shaped by the culture-based expectations regarding past lives, as well as by the suggestive, subtle factors that influence the reactions of those involved in studying and documenting current and historical events. (p. 285)

Some combination of hypotheses may provide a better explanation of the empirical data. Raikov (1975) notes: "Hypnotic phenomena are sufficiently diverse and complex that [all] viewpoints may have something to offer" (p. 24). Ian Wilson (1981) does exactly this with his tri-factor model of psychological mechanisms believed to be responsible for so-called past-life phenomena that combines cryptomnesia, multiple personalities, and dissociation.

Firstly the source of the script for the past life is that of cryptomnesia (or hidden memory); secondly the acting out is produced through the multiple personality manifestation; and thirdly, the script writer or hidden director is seen in the process of divided consciousness (as described by Hilgard, 1977). . . .The memories are recalled on demand from cryptomnesic sources, the multiple personalities play the parts, while the hidden observer directs the script. (Marriott, 1984, pp. 66-68)

The Sociocognitive Hypothesis

Nicolas P. Spanos (1942-1994) was a prominent spokesperson for the sociocognitive hypothesis as an explanation of hypnotic past-life regression. Spanos (1988) theorized that "past-life reports obtained from hypnotically regressed subjects are fantasy constructions of imaginative subjects who are willing to become absorbed in the make-believe situations implied by the regression suggestions" (1988, p. 179). For Spanos, there is no such thing as a hypnotic state of consciousness that is special or different from the waking one (p. 175). Hypnotic responding is little more than a waking state condition of enhanced positive motivation and expectation, and hypnotic suggestions simply "tacit requests to become involved in make-believe or *as if* situations" (p. 175). "Good hypnotic subjects (a) understand the implications of these tacit requests, and (b) use their imaginative abilities and their acting skills to become absorbed in the make-believe scenarios contained in the suggestions. . . [Like] good method actors. . . good hypnotic subjects throw themselves into generating the experiences and enactments that are relevant to their roles as hypnotized and as responsive to suggestion (Sarbin & Coe, 1972)" (Spanos, 1988, pp. 175-176).

Based on this definition of hypnosis, all phenomena demonstrated during hypnotic are different forms of role-playing elicited by the suggestions of the hypnotic and the expectations evoked by the hypnotic setting. During age-regression, for example, hypnotized do not act as a child would but show a curious mixture of adult-like and child-like behaviors that are aligned with the individuals beliefs and expectations (Barber, Spanos, & Chaves, 1974). "Age-regressed subjects behave the way they *believe* children behave. . . [and] use whatever they know about real children, whatever they remember from their own childhood, and whatever they can glean for the experimental test situation to create and become temporarily absorbed in the fantasy situation of being a child" which typically lead to inaccurate performances" (Spanos, 1988, p. 176). Reports made during hypnotic past-life regression are subject to similar influences as reports made during simple age-regression.

As do subjects who are asked to regress to childhood, past-life reporters construct their fantasies by interweaving information given in the suggestions with information gleaned from their own life experiences and from what they have read and heard that was relevant to their performances. moreover, just as age-regressed subjects incorporate misinformation into their enactments of being children, so past-life reporters incorporate historical misinformation into their past-life enactments. (Spanos, 1988, pp. 179)

The more capable an individual is in engaging in vivid daydreaming and becoming absorbed in imaginative activities, the more likely he (she) will report vivid past-life experiences during hypnosis; the more an individual believes in the theory of reincarnation and expects to experience a past life during hypnosis, the more likely he (she) will believe the past-life identity that they do experience during hypnosis to be real, valid, and authentic as opposed to being an unreal, illegitimate, false fantasy (Spanos et al., 1991). The historical inaccuracies they report during past-life experiences are ones that a person would be unlikely to make who actually lived during the purported past life (e.g., claiming a Japanese fighter pilot "previous personality" during World War II but not being able to say who is the emperor of Japan). In summary, "past-life enactments. . . [are] interesting and imaginative contextually guided fantasy enactments" (Spanos, 1988, p. 180).

Overemphasizing similarities while ignoring significant differences. The sociocognitive perspective as represented in Spanos, Weekes, Menary, & Bertrand (1986) tends to frame so-called past life identities as non-pathological forms of "multiple personalities" or

"secondary personalities" (p. 308). This tendency seems to be grounded in the fact that multiple and diverse psychological phenomena and paradigms -- spirit possession, multiple personality disorder, hypnotic hidden-observer, UFO abductions, sexual abuse, birth-experience, satanic-cult, and hypnotic past-life regression -- are grouped together as a unity-identity whole grasped in the data based upon perceived similarities. In this way statements are made such as that expressed by Venn (1986) that "the personalities created in past-life regressions do not differ substantially from those created in dissociative disorders such as fugue (Venn, 1984) and multiple personality (Hilgard, 1977)" (p. 410). As a consequence, the significant and important differences between and among these phenomenon tend to be overlooked or ignored. While it may be parsimonious to look for the most common denominator among multifaceted and interweaving phenomena in the search for a shared underlying mechanism, the simplest explanation is not always the correct one, especially for such highly complex and intertwining phenomena as possession, MPD, and hypnotic past-life regression. Cross-cultural psychologists Shiraev & Levy (2010) remind us that whenever two phenomena are compared we are subject to committing two kinds of errors: letting differences overshadow and obscure similarities, and allowing similarities to hide and conceal differences (p. 271). In the language of statistics, by focusing upon between-group similarities, Spanos et al. (1991) inadvertently minimize both the between-group differences and the within-group variability of the phenomenon under investigation, permitting differences between phenomena to be eclipsed by their similarities.

Two cultures, for example, may be seen as either similar or different depending on the point of view from which the two phenomena are perceived, analyzed, and thought about, and the level of analysis and generalization chosen for description (Shiraev & Levy, 2010, p. 157). At high levels of abstraction, similarities tend to predominate causing us to perceive different phenomena as similar, whereas the differences become more figural when the level of description becomes more specific and concrete. By remaining at the level of generalities, differences become obscured. As cognitional theorist Bernard Lonergan (1957) observed: "Similar are similarly understood. . . .When one understands data, then one will understand similar data in exactly the same fashion" (p. 37). This means that once one understands two phenomena as being similar, then they will be thought about in the same way and perceived as being the same, even when their individuality makes them more different than alike. The point here is that both similarities and differences will inevitably be found when comparing two or more phenomena, but no matter how many similarities phenomena may share there will always be a "point of critical distinction" (PCD) after which phenomena are no longer similar but different that also needs to be identified and examined (p. 43). "To gain a full and comprehensive understanding of their relationship, we should examine the variables that appear both before and after the PCD, with particular attention to the PCD itself" (Shiraev & Levy, 2010, p. 43). Spanos et al. (1991) fail to do this in their examination of possession, MPD, and hypnotic regression. Ducasse (1960) puts the point this way:

What this opinion [of the sociocognitive perspective] actually represents, however, is only their adherence to the methodological principle that a phenomenon whose cause is not actually observed is to be presumed to arise from causes similar to those from which past phenomena more or less similar to it were observed to have arisen. This is good scientific procedures, of course; but only in so far as, in order to be able to follow it, one is not forced to ignore some patent dissimilarities between the new phenomenon and the old; or forced to postulate *ad hoc* similarities which are not in fact observed; or forced to stretch beyond the breaking point some of those which are observed. For were it not for these *limits of applicability* [my emphasis] of that methodological principle, no as yet unknown laws of nature would ever be discovered; every new fact would be trimmed, bent, or stretched to fit the Procrustean bed of the already discovered modes of explanation. (pp. 18-19)

Lack of acknowledgement of the existence of the subconscious when theorizing. Spanos et al. (1991) do not appear to recognize the existence of the subconscious or unconscious psyche, or if they do, it is not recognized as a key player in hypnotic past-life regression phenomena. The sociocognitive perspective, in other words, appears to overlook or ignore two key ideas of psychodynamic theories of "previous existence" phenomena: (a) so-called past-life identities are based on unconscious memories, and (b) a dynamic relationship exists between the present primary identity's personality and his or her "previous existence" personality (Kampman, 1976; Kampman & Hirvenoja, 1978; Zolik, 1962), even though research studies based upon these psychodynamic assumptions are cited in support of their own investigations. Past-life regression (as well as MPD and possession) is regarded to be logically "rule-governed," "contextually supported," "social constructions," a "goal-directed or strategic" activity, with participants "actively involved in creating and managing the subjective experiences and behavioral displays that constitute self-presentation as a secondary identity" (Spanos et al., 1991, p. 308). These "identity enactments" are "created, shaped, and maintained by the beliefs and expectations of significant others who constitute an interacting audience" as well as by "the actor who displays the secondary identity enactments" (p. 308). "From the sociocognitive perspective, hypnotic past-life identities are viewed as socially-constructed fantasies that are cued by the demands of the hypnotic past-life suggestions" (p. 309). The even language used by Spanos et al. to explain their results (e.g., "when *constructing* [my emphasis] past life identities" (p. 310) implies a certain *a priori* perspective and stance taken toward the phenomenon to be addressed and theoretical commitment to a particular theory. so-called secondary personalities are "induced" by the experimental procedures, not "elicited" or "evoked" as if such secondary personality are surreptitiously inserted in the primary personality to be displayed and enacted for benefit and entertainment of the hypnotist and at his/her pleasure. This perspective and theory hardly reflects the influence of the personal subconscious or of deeper psychic realms that are known to "play a supportive role" in so-called

past-life personality dramatization. Consciousness is what is conscious from the sociocognitive perspective and we are left with a psychology without a psyche. The problem with the sociocognitive perspective is not so much with what it includes, but with what it leaves out. To label hypnotic past-life regression reports as mere suggested fantasy or imaginative role-playing explains little, given our limited understanding about fantasy, imagination, and suggestion, especially about how such factors of mind are capable of changing so-called "unchangeable" bodily processes as occur in some demonstrations of hypnosis (e.g., causing the emergence of blisters on the skin as a result of suggestion whether in or out of the hypnotic state) (Barber, 1984).

Cryptomnesia Hypothesis

Wilson (1981, chap. 7) bases his claim that cryptomnesia is responsible for the source of most if not all of the information generated by a past-life identity is based on the experimental finding that cryptomnesia has been reportedly verified by questioning the subject who is under hypnosis (but not during the regression) to the effect, "Where did you first hear of . . .?" or "When did you first know of the name [give the name of the past-life identity when such a name has been provided]?" as was done by Kampman & Hirvenoja (1978).

Cryptomnesia, also known as "source amnesia," pertains to the alternative hypothesis that the source and origin of the so-called past life remembrance lies not in a past life per se, but in the present life and in some information source (e.g., a textbook, comic book, children story book, television program, and so forth) long ago forgotten. The information has been retrieved from memory, but the source of the memory is forgotten. As with all memories in the normal waking state, hypnotic memory fills in the gaps of missing information with "confabulations" or made-up imaginings of what might, could, would, or should have occurred. The entire memory reconstruction process occurs outside of conscious awareness, subconsciously as information is selected, abstracted, inferred, and associated with other items of information already stored in memory. The information may have been originally acquired while the person was in a state "of slight dissociation" (Stevenson, 1983, p. 19). Being acquired in one state of consciousness while awake and retrieved in another state of consciousness while in trance, the waking source or origin of the memory that is retrieved in hypnosis is blocked from hypnotic awareness, while the memory itself is made available to consciousness. Evans (1988) makes an interesting distinction between posthypnotic "recall amnesia" -- the content is forgotten, but the context is recalled-- and its converse "source amnesia" -- the content is recalled, but the context is forgotten.

In experimentally induced posthypnotic "recall amnesia," context is temporarily forgotten, while the context itself (the hypnosis session) is obvious. In contrast, posthypnotic "source amnesia" (Cooper, 1966; Evans & Thorn, 1966) provides an experimental paradigm in which information is retained and reproduced, but cannot be placed in the context in which it was learned. (p. 170)

Source amnesia is a common phenomenon of the waking state memory and does not occur only following hypnosis. Most general knowledge that can be retrieved from long-term memory (e.g., "Who was the first President of the United States?") is not time-tagged or place-tagged such that one cannot remember the exact time or place one first learned that item of knowledge. Amnesia for the original content in which the learning occurred, then is not unusual. "Memory for the content or information is intact, but memory for the context in which the information was acquired is lost. Although content is recalled, the context in which the experience occurred is for the moment inaccessible" (Evans, 1988, p. 171). Hypnotic amnesia has the virtue of being able to be reversed on cue only when amnesia has been specifically suggested, except for hypnotic subjects who have forgotten everything in the absence of amnesia suggestions. For those hypnotic subjects in which amnesia has been specifically suggested, disruption of normal memory processes is temporary and can be removed by lifting the amnesia through appropriately worded suggestion. What is the underlying mechanism that produces reversible posthypnotic amnesia? Evans (1988) proposes a "disrupted-retrieval hypothesis" that suggests it is the "temporary disruption of retrieval strategies that normally aid efficient recall [that] is a hallmark of posthypnotic amnesia" (Evans, 1988, p. 184). Within the context of hypnotic past-life regression, the following questions arise: What is the mechanism by which access to the source of past-life reports is blocked? Since no amnesia suggestion has been given, how might a reversibility signal be devised to restore effective retrieval of the content within which past-life information was originally obtained? If past life information is stored in isolation from the context in which it originally obtained, how did it become dissociated from the mainstream of memory processing in the first place?

Although the cryptomnesia (source amnesia) hypothesis is often regarded by many psychologists as the "most plausible alternative to paranormal hypotheses in many cases" (Venn, 1986, p. 415), it is actually the most difficult to prove, for how does one determine what information that a subject has or has not acquired in a lifetime?

How do we prove both that information exists *and* that the subject had no access to it? As Stevenson (1983) wrote, 'The same source that verifies an apparent paranormal experience may also suggest a normal explanation for it' (p. 1). The task of

arguing for reincarnation and against the cryptomnesia hypothesis is a two-fold problem of demonstrating (a) that the hypnotic productions are about real historical events, and (b) that the subject did not acquire the information through the normal means. The former is a matter of finding archival verification. The latter probably is not possible. (Venn, 1986, p. 415)

How does one show the actual steps in the occurrence of how the cryptomnesic information was obtained? How does one demonstrate whether a subject acquired so-called past life information through normal means? Even if one can prove that the information exists somewhere, how does one prove that the subject *also* had access to it? In some cases this may be demonstrated (see for example, the case of "unconscious plagiarism" by Helen Keller recounted in Bowers & Hilgard (1988, pp. 3-5), and it may be more easily proven in the case of children with little media exposure who report previous lives and in the case of skills such as languages, for example. But in most cases with adults it is practically impossible given the staggering amount of information now available to people through the Internet and other media sources today. Marriott (1984) describes what she calls "the essential dilemma" that faces any researcher who want to rule out the cryptomnesia hypothesis in favor of the reincarnation hypothesis:

If the IS an historical record which shows that the person portrayed by a regressed subject did in fact exist, and the facts given are correct, it can be then argued that the subject has somehow read about it and is using the information thus gained in the regression material. Conversely, if there is NOT a written record, there are then no means of checking details and therefore the subject must be producing fantasy. (p. 65)

Critical Discussion

The whole basis of the attempt to account for past-life reports produced during hypnotic regression that are subsequently verified to be historically accurate on the theory of cryptomnesia is the assumed ability of the subconscious to remember with almost unerring accuracy vast quantities of material somehow surreptitiously acquired. It is an unstated assumption of psychology that all knowledge must come through the physical senses and that the subconscious, if its existence is granted at all in psychology, contains nothing that has not come through the channels of waking consciousness. In other words, the subconscious has the same circumstances and environment to draw from as the conscious has. Yet in cases where past-life reports are obtained from children who claim to remember a previous life or from a subject during hypnosis that either contain information which has been verified as historically accurate in the course of detailed investigations or demonstrate skills in speaking an unlearned foreign language, and that from all of the evidence, he (she) could not have acquired by communication with others, learning through instruction and observation, or other normal means (e.g., Bernstein, 1956; Ramster, 1994; Stevenson, 1983b; 1987; Tarazi, 1990), we have a situation in which the causative factors of past history and environment which psychologists are accustomed to looking for cannot be found. The problem is how did these individuals acquire such knowledge and skill.

The task of assimilating subconsciously all the knowledge expressed or dramatized in the form role-playing would require an extraordinary richness and prolonged environment of exposure to such topics under ordinary conditions. But under the cryptomnesia hypothesis, such exposure need only occur in a fraction of a second or through a mere glance at material incidentally learned and then forgotten. It is a well-known psychological fact that a person may subconsciously hear, see or otherwise become aware of details which escape conscious awareness, and subconsciously store up these impressions. However, it has never been held (except under the cryptomnesia hypothesis) that a person to all appearances sane and normal may gather a wealth of information on certain topics such as sixteenth century Ireland by a subconscious process while the conscious awareness assimilate almost nothing on these same subjects. If such a contact with a favoring environment had ever occurred the primary identity would be able to remember it is it ever existed. Acceptance of the cryptomnesia hypothesis would also require that the individual's subconscious had been filled with such ideas, while all the while his (her) conscious mind had been unconcerned and uninformed about such issues. Bad tendencies are often repressed, whether through the restraints of religion or society, and may peep out in unexpected or disguised form. But the repression of relatively innocuous details about a past historical time period, as though they were against law or god is novel.

If cryptomnesia operates in all of us, then why is it not better utilized by the conscious mind? Why is it only said to be operating as an explanation when historically verified hypnotic past-life reports are involved? If trance builds upon waking state capacities, then why is cryptomnesia not in more evidence in everyday life? Is it the basis of what is called intuition? This fantastic ability of the subconscious mind to store information without conscious awareness has not received much experimental support in subliminal perception research nor so-called sleep learning. Why is such super-memory abilities assigned to the subconscious in explanations of empirically verifiable past-life reports, then? Why such a "special" explanation only for such odd and unusual demonstrations of personality action? Why is it not a principle of ordinary learning and memory as well? College students could surely use it. Cryptomnesia apparently could be used to explain the obtaining of inaccurate information as well, although it is only called forth as an explanation for historically accurate information obtained during hypnotic past-life reports that prove accurate and authentic. If cryptomnesia is itself an irrefutable hypothesis, in that we can never show that it does not occur, then it can always be held up as a

"possible" explanation for any historically accurate past-life report, like the fraud hypothesis has been used to explain away valid psychological findings on the mere hypothetical possibility that it *could* have occurred. Suppose the authors of those historical novels to which some past-life reports have been traced conducted their own research into the historical facts upon which their novels were to be based to give it some historical authenticity. To simply then find parallels or a correspondence between the historical facts found in the novel that were researched by the novelist and put into the novel, and the empirically verified historical facts articulated in a past life report of the hypnotically regressed individuals who did not obtain that information through normal means does not prove that the novel was the source of the information in the past life report. The novelist and the past-life identity both drew upon the same facts, one meditated through research, the other unmediated through experience. Let's at least consider this a possibility.

Multiple Personality /Hidden Observer Hypothesis

The physioplasticity demonstrated in the dissociative state of consciousness called multiple personality disorder (MPD) provides Wilson (1981, chap. 8) the source of evidence of the sorts of exceptional psychological and physiological changes observed to occur when beliefs related to self-image take over the conscious mind and become reflected in the physical organism. As noteworthy as the remarkable psychological differences that may occur between sub-personalities in name, age, memories, handwriting, sex, cultural and racial backgrounds, artistic talents, foreign language ability, and IQ, more noteworthy are the supposedly "unchangeable" biological changes that occur in the physical body as a result of switching from one ego-state to another different ego-state (Braude, 1995).

One of the hallmark research findings in MPD ego state experiments is the discovery that different states vary in regard to internal self perception (physical appearance, age, voice quality, etc.) as well as external physical characteristics, such as visual acuity, EEG patterns, allergies, drug sensitivity, skills, habits, vocabulary, taste discrimination and performance on IQ and projective tests (Greaves, 1980). In the same physical body an adult ego state who smokes, wears glasses, is right-handed, good at math, allergic to sulfur, diabetic, and possesses a normal IQ can exist alongside a child ego state who has never smoked, has 20/20 vision, is left-handed, paints, has no medication allergies, is not diabetic, and scores in the 130's on the same test. (Damgaard, 1987, p. 128)

The received wisdom of biopsychology tell us that such bodily processes -- many of which have genetic "determinants" -- are supposed to be unchangeable and uninfluenced by stimuli as intangible as the self-image or self-concept (Freberg, 2006). *Handedness* is a characteristic that does not undergo sudden shifts once established. A person who is *color-blind* remains that way. *Visual acuity* does not automatically change from nearsightedness to farsightedness at will. *Intelligence* is a stable personality trait that does not change from one moment to another. *Blood flow* and *brain wave activity* is not ordinarily subject to conscious control without biofeedback training or years of disciplined yogic training. *Allergic responses* are not simply turned on and off when one wants them to. Yet they can be and are in the provocative demonstration of personality action known as multiple personality (Bliss, 1980; Braun, 1983a; Coons, 1988; Miller, 1989; Putnam, 1984; Putnam, Zahn, & Post, 1990; Sutcliff & Jones, 1962; Taylor & Martin, 1944).

MPD clearly supports the idea of the existence of subconscious layers within the human psyche and multiple controls in human experience and behavior (Beahrs, 1982). It also clearly shows that the integration of mind with body and of body with mind is not illusory. Imagine the degree to which mind and body must interweave with one another for a change in mood and thought to produce the complex and multifaceted processes involved in restoring destroyed or injured cells, in stopping the production of specific antibodies, in reversing the inflammation of individual capillaries of the lung and the release of fluid, or in deactivating the action of particular chemicals, especially histamine, to stop an allergic reaction in its tracks. How does one change the color of the iris which is genetically determined in the same way as skin color? If it seems that biological psychology has glimpsed the complications of the human body, MPD shows that we have scarcely begun to glimpse the complicated realities of the human mind.

The alterations in physiological processes that are observed in switching from one identity state to another could not happen if our physical body did not have built-in capacities allowing them to occur. Biological psychology's understanding of the phenomena of *neuroplasticity* -- how the brain can generate new connections between brain cells; how one brain area previously devoted to one function can take over the function of another damaged area; how certain brain structures such as the hippocampus can restore lost brain cells -- would be deepened if it were to include an understanding of the physical organism's capacity to undergo rapid biological change in response to changes in psychological identity states, as demonstrated by the psychophysical plasticity of multiple personalities. In multiple personality disorder (MPD) we have evidence of mind (consciousness) creating different manifestations of biological events (matter) *at will* as different ego states emerge, shift, and change. When different personalities are in control of the body the chemical make-up may vary considerably, for example, showing significant differences over the dominant personality's usual hormonal status. It is important to recognize in phenomena of this kind, that the chemical changes are caused by the transition of beliefs that operate, and not the other way around.

Multiple personalities and hypnosis. It is important to note that the anomalous physiological phenomena observed in MPD are not unprecedented, being discovered and reproduced by the pioneers of *hypnosis* at the turn of the century (Braun, 1983b; Hilgard, 1977/1986; Kroger, 1979; Putnam, 1986a). A larger more extended conceptual framework for understanding the power of belief as it operates during the elicitation of so-called reincarnational lives, for instance, can be obtained by a brief examination of how somatic processes are influenced by hypnotic suggestion. A wide variety of so-called "unchangeable" bodily structures and functions, for example, can be altered as a result of individuals willingly suspending certain beliefs and allowing themselves to accept others for a moment, ranging from genetic conditions such as "congenital ichthyosis" or more generally, Brocq's disease, and warts that are caused by viruses to the control of such illnesses as asthma and diabetes (Barber, 1984, chap. 4; Murphy 1992, pp. 325-339; Rossi & Cheek, 1998, chaps. 4 and 9; Sarbin & Slagle, 1979, chap. 9). In their summary of published research concerning hypnotic influences on bodily processes, Sarbin and Slagle (1979) conclude that the altered physiological processes observed following a traditional hypnotic induction are not unique to the use of formal hypnotic induction procedures, or to the peculiarity of the hypnotic context established in laboratory and clinical settings. Hypnotic phenomena are able to be produced by a wide range of "stimulating conditions including symbolic stimuli and imagining" (Sarbin & Slagle, 1979, pp. 299-300).

Are observed alterations in physiological processes specific to the hypnotic "trance"? The answer is an unqualified no. ... Can symbolic processes produce changes in biological processes? The answer is an unqualified yes. That somatic processes can be influenced by symbolic stimuli is an observation that goes back at least to Aristotle. The reviews of Dunbar (1954) and the reports to be found in *Psychosomatic Medicine* make clear that the introduction of a large variety of stimulating conditions including symbolic stimuli and imaginings, can influence life processes (Sarbin & Slagle, 1979, pp. 299-300)

Explanations for hypnotic effects on bodily processes. Many possible mechanisms have been proposed by which hypnosis accomplishes somatic alterations, including subject hypnotizability, alteration of blood flow and limbic-hypothalamic system activity, electrical voltage change, and temporal reversal. The degree to which these mechanisms are involved in the hypnotic elicitation of so-called reincarnational lives remains uninvestigated at this time. It is known that individuals who score high on standardized scales of hypnotic susceptibility (e.g., Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility, Stanford Hypnotizability Scale) are most likely to exhibit the capacity to influence autonomic, endocrine, and immune system functioning following a formal hypnotic induction procedure (Hilgard, 1977/1986).

We know that hypnotizability appears to be related to the capacity to elicit "previous" personalities. Rossi (1986) proposes that trance state-dependent suggestions likely initiate and direct mind-body communication and facilitate the mind's ability to select and influence the precise processes by which it brings local effects on specific body functions by "altering the direction of blood flow" via specific neuropeptide channels and receivers (p. 109). Justice (1987) suggests that hypnosis may work by "producing changes in the electrical voltage that alter the chemical and cellular processes at the target areas of the body" (p. 317). Such physiological measurements are rarely, if ever, taken during the hypnotic elicitation of past-life reports. Wherever the explanations for how *beliefs about the body become expressed in changes in bodily functions*, so-called hypnotic phenomena have important implications for re-visioning the mind-body problem and hypnotic past-life regression.

The data presented. . . should, once and for all, topple the dualistic dichotomy between mind and body which has strongly dominated Western thought since Descartes. The meanings or ideas embedded in words which are spoken by one person and deeply accepted by another can be communicated to the cells of the body (and to the chemicals within the cells); the cells then can change their activities in order to conform to the meanings or ideas which have been transmitted to them. (Barber, 1984, pp. 115-116)

Is it any wonder, then, considering the mind-body communications displayed in MPD, that our body so often sometimes seems to be besieged with ailments that come out of the blue or that our personalities so often appear to behave in contradictory terms? Interestingly, "once a multiple has undergone therapy and in some way becomes whole again, he or she can still make these switches at will. This suggests that somewhere in our psyches we *all* have the ability to control these things" (Talbot, 1991, p. 100).

How the mind is able to concisely isolate the right part of the body and select and influence precisely the right antibody, hormone, nerve-cell activity, enzyme, neurotransmitter, cellular processes, and so forth in order to carry out a verbal suggestion made during hypnosis remains a mystery at this time. *That* it can do so in some people under certain circumstances through the use of mental imagery or carefully chosen words and communications (suggestions) in a predictable, measurable, and reproducible way is a fact. Obviously, the alterations in physiological processes that are observed in hypnosis could not happen if our physical body did not have built-in capacities allowing them to occur. What physiological processes are occurring during the hypnotic elicitation of "past-life" memories? While this study does not investigate this particular question, it remains an important one for future directions of hypnotic past-life regression research.

Hidden Observer. Hilgard's (1977/1986) review of hypnotic phenomena indicates how hypnosis as a research method can be effectively used to experimentally interfere and divide the normal attentional processes, disrupt the continuity of memory, split off aspects of the personality, temporarily confuse memories and fantasies with external reality, and maintain a sense of identity without association with the body. Hilgard suggests that in hypnosis one's sense of identity can become divided and dissociated from the physical body's usual perceptions -- hence the title of his book, *Divided Consciousness: Multiple Controls in Human Thought and Action* -- whereas in the nonhypnotic state, the illusion of the unity of consciousness prevails. Hilgard views hypnosis as a dissociative experience in which attention narrows into a concentrated focus with distractions eliminated and the usual unity of consciousness differentiates into several parts, each of which the hypnotized person may identify for a time. In psychodynamic terms, multiple ego-states become available to awareness, such that the individual may experience within one moment point a "speaker," a "listener," and an "experiencer." Sometimes a four-way split may occur that includes a "doubter" or what one subject called "the voice of resistance." Exactly *what* is split is a matter of controversy and definition of terms: ego, self, action-systems, executive functions, attention, control and input regulation mechanisms. It has been said that all hypnosis is self-hypnosis. E. R. Hilgard (1979) agrees and speaks of self-hypnosis as exemplifying

how the executive functions may be divided, as one part represents the role of the hypnotist, the other part the hypnotized. . . .dissociated controls are the very essence of what happens. . . . Usually heterohypnosis [hypnotist-directed hypnosis] may be thought of as primarily "aided self-hypnosis" with an external hypnotist present; the person accepts the aid of the hypnotist in order to hypnotize himself. . . . This is the essence of the executive function in hypnosis. There is retained a normal part that has permitted the hypnotized part to become active and that observes what happens. There is also the hypnotized part which, in its own sphere, exerts considerable strength in conflict with the residual normal executive. (p. 50)

Making verbal reports about past-life experiences requires that the psychological system stand aside from the experience and "observe itself." Cunningham (1986) found that a person who talks about an experience that is occurring concurrently with the verbalization is different from a person who is simply having an experience and is not required to talk about it. The "split" which occurs during verbalization and the act of self-observation in hypnosis also, of course, also occurs during imagining activities in the waking state of consciousness as well. William James (1890/1950, Vol. 1, Chap. 8) notes that the oddity of hypnotic dissociation that is different from what occurs in the waking state is that "the total consciousness may be split into parts which coexist but mutually ignore each other. . . . [where] the acts and movements performed by the subconscious self are withdrawn from the conscious one, and the subject will do all sorts of incongruous things of which he remains quite unaware" (pp. 206-208).

Critical Discussion

Under the multiple personality hypothesis, we are to assume that the individual possessed such knowledge or skill, but only within the subconscious region of his (her) mind, so that he (she) was not consciously aware of it. We are to assume that the abilities, acquisitions, and traits which are afterwards displayed in the form of role-playing during hypnosis formed within the individual's subconscious mind a self-conscious, secondary personality who carried on the work of building up such resources separated, isolated from the primary personality, suddenly released through the agency of hypnotic past-life regression full-blown. There should have been manifestations of that knowledge from the very first. On the theory of multiple-personality, all the abilities and role-playing capacities must be held to have existed before the past-life identity first manifests itself without any "bubbling up" to enrich the conscious life. If past-life identities are instances of multiple personalities as commonly understood in psychology, then the behaviors of individuals in question may be expected to be preceded and heralded by a group of symptoms announcing mental instability. Yet correlations between the issuance of past-life reports by individuals and their performance on measures of psychopathology and psychiatric interviews have been null and void (e.g., Kampman, 1976; Spanos et al., 1991).

Sub-Personalities and the Egos Inside Us - An Alternate Hypothesis to Multiple Personalities

MPD demonstrates in a dramatic and focused way the innate mobility and ever-changing quality of the human psyche as expressed in flesh. In regards to Wilson's (1981) use of the mechanism of multiple personality to explain the emergence of past-life identities, Marriott (1984) points out that

many professional hypnotists have regressed between them many thousands of subjects. Are all these people sufferers of the mental disorder of multiple personality? Are all these people sufferers of the mental disorder of multiple personality? Or are they just potential sufferers? Or using a mechanism which is in existence in all of us? Wilson does not make himself clear on this point. His explanation does *not* exclude past lives, for indeed it could be vice-versa, i.e., that multiple personality is due to the intrusion of past lives on the present life. (p. 68)

Transpersonal psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli (1965/1993; 1988/1991) proposes that areas of the subconscious in *normal* human personality are indeed populated by many and various subpersonalities, and made the concept an important element in his original system of transpersonal therapy called "psychosynthesis." One important goal and outcome of the process of psychosynthesis is to first identify and then integrate the various subpersonalities into the whole self. To make his clients aware of the differences and even contradictions of their own behavior at different times in different places, Assagioli would often ask them: "Have you ever noticed that you behave differently in your office, at home, in social interplay, in solitude, at church, or as a member of a political party?" (Assagioli, 1965/1976, p. 74). Once we learn to identify our various "faces", we are able to free ourselves from their control and increase our integration by allowing our subpersonalities to work together rather than against each other, as we move ever closer to discovering our underlying basic identity -- the inner Transpersonal Self.

The therapeutic process of psychosynthesis involves four consecutive stages. At first, the client learns about various elements of his or her personality that were previously hidden and accepts them on a conscious level. The next step is freeing oneself from their psychological influence and developing the ability to control them; this is what Assagioli calls 'disidentification.' After the client has gradually discovered his or her unifying psychological center, it is possible to achieve psychosynthesis, characterized by a culmination of the self-realization process and integration of various selves around a new center. (Grof & Grof, 1989, p. 29)

The construct of sub-personalities is often be confused with notions of multiple-personality disorders and secondary personalities, but is a distinct idea that refers to the notion of other ego states existing quite normally within the human personality in a non-pathological condition. *Sub-personalities are not "multiple personalities"*. The idea that sub-personalities exist within the overall personality structure is different from the idea of secondary personalities that exist in individuals afflicted with multiple personality disorder (Leister, 1996; Rowan 1990, 1993). Dissociation is not an either/or phenomenon, but exists along a continuum or spectrum of states, stages, or levels of dissociation (Behrs, 1982; Braude, 1995; Braun, 1988; Cardeña, 1997; Edge, 2001; Hilgard, 1977/1986; Krippner, 1997; White, 1997). At one end of the spectrum, there are states of mind that are organized around a particular emotion or mood state. Further along the continuum particular set of roles in particular kinds of situations call forth specific kinds of ego states and subpersonalities. States of spirit possession would lie further along the continuum, with multiple personalities and the degree of dissociation that is involved with its amnesic barrier would lie at the further end of the spectrum of dissociated states.

The multiple personality [is] just an exaggerated expression of something which [is] actually quite normal in the human personality. Different selves are elicited by different situations. . . . [We] are dealing with *multiplicity* in personality rather than the flagrant *multiple* personality. . . . Personality changes from moment to moment, depending on place, time, and our companions. There is no one 'real' ego, but rather a succession of egos, or the alternating dominance of different aspects of the ego. (Rowan, 1990, p. 17)

Personality is a gestalt of characteristics, abilities, aspects that is dominated by an ego formed by various needs and potentialities in response to demands of the physical world at any one moment in time. It is important to recognize that the ego is not a single simple static structure, but is itself a changing, dynamic, never constant, quite informal constellation of varying psychological characteristics and emotional patterns. Any number of potential egos exist within an individual's identity. Each dominant ego uses the body's sensory system and interprets its perceptions in its own characteristic and distinctive way. On occasion one potential or subordinate ego will take over control from another if the dominant ego proves ineffective in insuring the survival of the whole self (Thigpen & Cleckley, 1957). Who makes this decision? The basic inner identity. The basic identity while using the body's sensory and perceptual systems is not dependent upon them for its identity. And while the basic identity may be dependent upon an ego structure for its existence within a physical, material world, it is not dependent upon any *particular* ego structure in order to do so. Ego structures can then be changed and one ego can depose another, if necessary, so that the whole can survive if the dominating or primary ego becomes weakened, without loss of integrity of the basic identity.

The *inner* self is composed of all the *potential* egos that compose it, but it is more than the sum of these. . . . The energy that composes personality therefore consists of an inconceivable number of separate identities. These separate identities form what we call the inner self which retains its individuality even while the energy that composes it constantly changes. There are continual groupings and regroupings, but basic identities are always retained. The potential egos within any given identity therefore retain their own individuality and self-knowledge, regardless of their relative importance in the order of command. These potential egos at one time or another *will* have their chance, as dominant egos, in this existence or in another reincarnation. They represent the overall potentials of the whole identity *in respect to* physical existence. The identity has in other words latent abilities which it will not use within the physical system, but all of the latent ability ever available lies within the original identity. . . . These potential egos. . . made up of various potentials and needs and abilities, these pooled resources that belong to the inner identity, did not simply spring into existence. They are the result of psychological

experience gained in past lives. The personality structure does not make sense unless such past experience is taken into considerations. Potentials do not simply appear, they evolve. (Roberts, 1999b, pp. 125-127)

What this means and shows is that despite all appearances to the contrary, identity does not reside primarily in the ego or even in *one* ego. Social identity, the persona, the social self may possibly reside there, but the basic identity does not. Nor does this necessarily mean just because we have many egos, that we have many identities -- a self made up of a bundle of selves (Hillman, 1975). Even the various personalities that manifest themselves in the dissociative disorder called MPD represent various ego manifestations, belonging to one inner identity (Roberts, 1999b, pp. 125-126). Our present personality, on this view, is merely the result of the particular qualities and ego-images upon which an individual has chosen to focus his or her energies and intent. We can just as easily focus upon a different set of personality characteristics to form that gestalt of traits and abilities that we call our present personality. Although we have chosen to form a particular group of characteristic, traits, and qualities into a gestalt pattern of a particular personality we now call our own and upon which we focus the bulk of our energies, there are also other more shadowy, less-well constructed possibilities of personality selves that loosely exist within the psychic framework of the dominant ego-personality, and these also have their influence.

In some important aspects the outer ego is supposed to represent to some degree the subdominant personalities who still dwell in the subconscious. When the outer ego is narrow, and poorly represents these subdominant personalities then they rise up in arms, and when conditions are favorable attempt to express themselves through a momentary weakness on the part of the dominant ego. But without even doing this they may momentarily take over or express themselves through a single function, such as speech or motion, while the outer ego is blissfully unaware. (Roberts, 1998a, pp. 206-207)

The idea of having sub-personalities or "people inside of us" is not as strange as it may appear on first glance (Rowan, 1993). Many personality theorists have referred to the notion of sub-personalities, but without actually using the term itself. Carl Jung (1917/1953, 1934/1960) considered complexes and archetypes as sort of sub-personalities within the subconscious portions of the self which had a degree of autonomy within the psyche.

Jung saw the psyche made up of units or 'molecules' that he called complexes. These complexes were defined as the sum of ideas magnetically gathered about a particular feeling-toned event or experience....At times, complexes appear to behave like partial personalities, setting themselves up in opposition to or in control of the ego. An extreme example of this would be in séances where a medium brings forth spirits and other entities as 'other personalities from the dead.' These entities would be considered to be splinter psyches or complexes in projection experiences. (Groesbeck, 1985, p. 434)

Sigmund Freud (1946, 1959) talked about the personality as consisting of three relatively autonomous psychic structures called id, ego, and a superego. William James once commented that "the mind seems to embrace a confederation of psychic entities" (quoted in Taylor, 1984, p. 35) and referred to the Self as constituted by many "social selves," each of which could be called up in an appropriate situation. Kurt Lewin (1936) described personality in terms of "sub-regions" that can separate themselves from one another and develop relatively independently within the psyche. Ernest Hilgard (1977/1986) identified the existence of a "hidden observer" in his hypnotic research studies. Eric Berne (1961) talked about Child-Parent-Adult ego states in psychotherapy. Charles Tart (1975) referred to different "identity states" that occur in alternate states of consciousness. Carl Rogers (1961) distinguishes between the "real self" and the "ideal self." The personality is capable of producing numerous ego structures, depending upon the life-context of the organism.

The personality, even as you know it, is never static, always changing, and even the ego is not the same from one day to the next. The child's ego is not the adult's ego. As a rule you perceive the similarity, and overlook the differences of psychological patterns of this sort. The ego is not the most powerful or the most knowledgeable portion of the self. It is simply a well-specialized portion of the personality, well equipped to operate under certain circumstances...It is a great mistake to imagine that the human being has but one ego.... The ego represents merely any given pattern of characteristics, psychological characteristics that happen to be dominant at any given time. If any kind of a thorough investigation were to be carried on, it would become apparent that during one lifetime any given individual will display several, sometimes quite different, egos at various times, each one quite honestly seeing itself as the permanent I. (Roberts, 1999b, pp. 21-22).

The idea that the human personality may consist not of one self, but many selves, became popular in the early 19th century with the emergent notion of the "unconscious" and the experimental application of hypnosis as a research technique into the nature of human personality functioning (Ellenberger, 1970). The idea that the human personality had at least two parts -- a conscious part and unconscious part -- and that the unconscious could be as active in personality functioning as the conscious portion as well as a reservoir of emotion and forgotten or repressed experiences (e.g., that the past experiences of child could influence actions in adult

life) formed the basis of a new model of the mind as a "double ego" capable of "co-consciousness" (Beahrs, 1982) and for F. W. H. Myer's early conceptions of the "subliminal self" (Myers, 1889-1895/1976). Through the use of hypnotic suggestion, a certain stage of dissociation could be achieved in which a whole set of subpersonalities would emerge and differentiate themselves. There may be one Self, but within that Self are many. The unity of the personality is actually made up of a bundle of different egos that rise to the surface as the individual shifts from situation to situation. Indeed, the notion of sub-personalities also has a degree of common sense to it.

Most of us have had the experience of being 'taken over' by a part of ourselves which we didn't know was there. We say 'I don't know what got into me.' This is generally a negative experience, although it can be positive too. The way in which we usually recognize the presence of a subpersonality is that we find ourselves, in a particular situation, acting in ways which we do not like or which go against our interests, and unable to change this by an act of will or a conscious decision. This lasts as long as the situation last -- perhaps a few minutes, perhaps an hour, perhaps a few hours -- and then it changes by itself when we leave this situation and go into a different one. (Rowan, 1990, p. 7)

Given the widespread use of the notion of sub-personalities in academic theories of personality, and its common sense understanding in everyday life, it is surprising that "the word does not appear in any text on personality theory" used in the college classroom (Rowan, 1990, p. 7). While mainstream psychology continues to promote highly limited concepts about the nature of the self, the field cannot begin to conceive of a multidimensional personhood, or a transpersonal self in any meaningful way, or understand the role that the mind plays in the dynamics of health and illness of the human body. "If it were understood that the areas of the subconscious are indeed populated by many and various subpersonalities, then they would not wonder that the human body is sometimes so besieged with ailments, or that the dominant personality so often appears in contradictory terms" (Roberts, 1998a, p. 206).

The subconscious contains a collection of diverse, varied and vital personalities who represent the *losers* when the time arrived to send one of them to the topmost level, or to the surface of the self. The choice was made and is always made by the inner ego [or inner transpersonal self], who does this appointing according to his knowledge, or its knowledge, of the personality qualities. *Any* of these subconscious personalities could have learned in some fashion to cope with the outside world as well as the present dominant ego, but for various reasons of inner development they could not be so trusted. These subpersonalities are not unconscious to themselves. *They are conscious of themselves*, but they are not conscious of themselves in relation to other selves. They are conscious of needs and drives, and of their existence.

They are different from the inner ego or director in that the inner ego is conscious not only of itself, but of the outer ego, and is aware of the existence of the outer world, although not too much concerned with it unless the whole self becomes jeopardized through the actions of the outer ego. . . . The inner ego is concerned with maintaining the foundations *and balance*, which is very important, of the whole self. . . . In some important aspects the outer ego is supposed to represent to some degree the subdominant personalities who still dwell in the subconscious. When the outer ego is narrow, and poorly represents these subdominant personalities then they rise up in arms, and when conditions are favorable attempt to express themselves through a momentary weakness on the part of the dominant ego. But without even doing this they may momentarily take over or express themselves through a single function, such as speech or motion, while the outer ego is blissfully unaware. (Roberts, 1998a, pp. 206-207)

Psychodynamic Hypothesis

Zolik (1958) and Zolik (1962) provide an excellent example of how Freudian psychoanalytic concepts and explanatory notions are applied to a case of hypnotic past-life regression. Zolik's (1958, 1962) articles are essentially the same analysis of the same case study given different titles published 4 years apart. Using the same case study material about a 32 year old, Caucasian married male of Irish descent named "Jamie O'Toole, Zolik wishes to argue that most alternative explanations "do not fully recognize the unconscious as the primary determinant of the nature and content of the [reincarnational] fantasy" (Zolik, 1962, p. 67). According to Zolik's (1962) psychodynamic hypothesis:

The crucial elements of the "previous existence" phenomenon [are] based on unconscious memories which, when systematically investigated, would reveal a dynamic relationship between the subject's personality and his "previous existence" fantasy. It [is] further postulated that the fantasy serve[s] as a screen onto which would be projected the important motivational systems of the personality and major interpersonal relationships. (p. 67)

In this case study (n = 1), Zolik describes the case of a young man who volunteered for an experiment in hypnosis "who was not aware that it was to be an investigation of the psychodynamic implications of the hypnotic 'previous existence' fantasy" (Zolik, 1958, p. 183). During the first of two hypnotic sessions, Zolik induced the emergence of a "past-life" identity in Jamie who identified itself as "Brian O'Malley" who was born in 1850 in Cork, Ireland and who died in 1892 of a fall from a horse. Zolik made no effort to verify the historical accuracy of the statements that the "O'Malley" personality provided because he was solely concerned with establishing a relationship between the content of O'Malley's story and the life events of the client (p. 70). This is unfortunate because what Zolik (1958, p. 182) is left with following his "dynamic analyses" is the "presumptive validity of [his] inference concerning the symbolic meaning of the thematic production" and the most speculative of theories based on Freudian psychoanalytic concepts about what Jamie's alleged past life report means within that interpretative framework alone.

The Brian O'Malley personality emerged during the first hypnotic session after a classical trance induction, simple age regression to the first day of high school, third grade, first grade, and Jamie's third birthday, and then the following past-life suggestion: "I want you to go back slowly to the time before you were Jamie O'Toole and tell me, if you can, who you were and what you did before you became Jamie O'Toole" (Zolik, 1958, p. 180). When he subsequently investigated the past-life "fantasy" further during a second hypnosis without age regression, Zolik (1962) reported that "the fantasy resulted in a return of repressed unconscious traumatic material" (p. 70). The repressed material had to do with the subject's unresolved conflict with his grandfather that Zolik (1958, p. 182; 1962, pp. 70-74) characterized as "quasi-Oedipal in nature" (p. 70) and grounded in a series of identifications and interpersonal relationships involving (a) the subject's ambivalent relationship with his step-grandfather, (b) his step-grandfather's conflictual relationship with a "Timothy O'Malley" who was a fellow soldier during World War I, and (c) the subject's vicarious identification with Timothy O'Malley through the reincarnational persona of "Brian O'Malley." Similar to the caution expressed by Perry, Laurence, D'eon and Tallent (1989, p. 134) that hypnotic age regression is not to be taken literally, Zolik (1962) states that "in [no] case can the fantasies or forms in which the unconscious expressed itself be taken literally. Rather, the interpretation of the unconscious involves a conversion to the terms of consciousness" (p. 74). The psychoanalytic interpretation of the case is interesting for its own sake and is briefly summarized below by Zolik (1962):

The unconscious portrays identifications which either in toto or in part are antithetical to the conscious psyche. At the same time it is possible to abstract from the unconscious fantasies the subject's idealized image or self toward which he is tending. The strength of the identification with fantasy heroes and the amount of energy invested in maintaining the identification reveal the depth and intensity of the conflict in which the self-concept is involved. . . . These and similar studies confirm the underlying role of the unconscious in the determination of the fantasy's nature, and depict the wish-fulfilling quality inherent in the fantasy. The prognomantic fantasy was consistently related to factors in the subject's experiential background, but in no instance could it be conveniently discussed as a manifestation of a multiple personality. This prognomantic fantasy provides another avenue for the study of the unconscious, made possible by the relaxation of the counter-cathexes of repression and the consequent emergence of material unacceptable and disturbing to the conscious ego, but which, at the time of its emergence, is at least partially neutralized or decathected through projection onto the screen of the "previous" personality. (pp. 74-75).

Critical Discussion

Zolik (1958, 1962) presumptively uses the term "fantasy" to describe the statements of the O'Malley personality from the very beginning of his articles without defining the term or explaining why he chose to use that term and not some other more neutral term to describe the hypnotic reports he received. His theoretical commitment to a particular view of hypnosis was established early on and frames all other interpretations of the event. The only "research" he conducted into the statements of the O'Malley personality was an inquiry of Jamie and his mother into whether they knew any family member, friend, or business associate by the name of Brian O'Malley (Zolik, 1958, p. 183). Failing to come up with a reason why the name of the past-life Brian might be substituted for the real-life Timothy, Zolik (1958) conducts no further research and simply baldly states that "the major components of this 'previous existence' were based on stories which his grandfather had told about this friend" (p. 183) without any documentation that this is actually true. No research was conducted in the childhood background of Jamie O'Malley or his grandfather, into the historical life of Brian O'Malley or the real life of Timothy O'Malley, nor were any alternative explanations considered of the facts of the case. It is mentioned only to illustrate how a Freudian-trained psychoanalyst would apply psychoanalytic theory in an effort to relate an individual subject's personality to a past-life "fantasy" induced during hypnosis.

The Reincarnation Hypothesis

Reincarnation, as the term is used in the present study, may be defined as "the notion that a nonphysical element of human existence not only survives but subsequently is reborn in another body" (Irwin, 1989, p. 240). A different but related notion not addressed in the present study is the idea of "metempsychosis" or the transmigration of souls between different animal species. Stevenson (1977,

footnote², p. 305) provides a brief definition of reincarnation as the terms is used in his systematic studies of children who remember previous lives:

Reincarnation, briefly defined, includes the idea that men [and women] consist of physical bodies and minds. At a person's death, his [her] physical body perishes, but his [her] mind may persist and later become associated with another physical body in the process called reincarnation. Some persons find the word "mind" in this definition unclear or otherwise unattractive. They may certainly substitute another word such as "soul" or "individuality." I intend only to indicate a component of human beings not comprised in our present understanding of their physical bodies, which component may persist after physical death. (p. 305)

Stevenson (1983) in his discussion of American children who remember previous lives provides a helpful description of the varieties of different reincarnational beliefs that are held by different cultures across the world.

Most educated Westerners have some familiarity with the Hindu and Buddhist concepts of reincarnation. They are likely to know that in both systems of belief human beings are said to be reborn as nonhuman animals [a belief also called *metempsychosis*], but they may not know that Hindus believe in an enduring soul (*atman*) that reincarnates in successive bodies, whereas Buddhists do not. According to the Buddhist doctrine of no soul (*anatta*), the death of a person (or animal) initiates the birth of a new entity and has some influence on it; but no enduring soul passes from one body to the next in a series of rebirth. (pp. 742-743)

Most Western readers are even less familiar with the existence of important cultures having beliefs in reincarnation markedly different from those of Hindus and Buddhists. For example, large Islamic groups in western Asia (such as the Alevi and the Druses) believe in reincarnation, but do not believe that one can change sex from one life to another, as Hindus and Buddhists do. The Tlingit of Alaska, who have a matrilineal society, think it important to be reborn in the family of one's mother. On the other hand, the Igbo of Nigeria, who have a patrilineal society, think it important to be reborn in the family of one's father. (p. 743)

One does not have to believe in reincarnation in order to experience a "past life" during hypnotic regression. Past-life experiences occur even in skeptical individuals who do not believe in reincarnation and who do not expect to experience a past life during hypnosis (Fiore, 1978; Knight, 1975). Stevenson does not claim that his case reports of children who claim to remember previous lives provides scientific "proof" of reincarnation, only that the data he has uncovered is consistent with the reincarnation hypothesis. This is why in his writing he consistently refers to his case studies as "suggestive of reincarnation" and "of the reincarnation type." When analyzing past-life reports of children who claim to remember previous lives, Stevenson refers to the deceased person that the child claims to be as a "previous personality." Stevenson (1977) explains why: "The term can be used whether or not an actual deceased person as been found whose life corresponded to the child's statements [what Stevenson calls "unsolved cases"]; nor does its use imply any commitment to a particular explanation of how the child obtained any correct knowledge he [she] showed about the person identified" (footnote⁴, pp. 307-308).

To argue that reincarnation is a less plausible or less parsimonious hypothesis than any other hypothesis and so the burden of proof is greater for the reincarnation hypothesis than any other (see, for example, Venn, 1986, p. 415), simply begs the question of which hypothesis is really less plausible and less parsimonious. As mentioned previously, the theory of reincarnation provides a comprehensive and intelligible framework in which all the quite dissimilar, seemingly unrelated, and apparently meaningless events of one's life make sense and are seen to have an inner structure. If there is sense and purpose in one's life and death, then reincarnation offers the further idea that even seemingly senseless tragedies operate for a greater good and "as a part of a larger plan, as a method of teaching ourselves some important truth or as a means of developing certain abilities" (Roberts, 1970, p. 134). The rule of parsimony that requires only the most simple explanation be provided for a complex phenomenon encourages a simplistic view of what may be an intricate and multifaceted phenomenon.

Stevenson (1983) wrote, "If observers. . . assert that the case definitely has a normal explanation [such as that of suggestion, role-playing, loss of inhibition, dissociation, cryptomnesia, desire to please the hypnotist, subconscious projection and integration, and so forth],. . . they have the duty of showing the actual steps in the occurrence of this process. It is not enough to say how it *might* have happened" (p. 24). This latter stratagem of simply hypothesizing how an alternative series of events *might* have occurred without showing the actual steps how it *could* have occurred, was (and continues to be) a frequently used ploy by skeptics who rigorously oppose the existence of telepathy or clairvoyance, or of any philosophy that even suggests the possibility of nonphysical mind affecting physical matter (e.g., Hansel, 1966). As Edelmann & Bernet (2007) note:

One reason that parapsychological studies on reincarnation in particular may often be considered outside the pale of solid academic research is that reincarnation entails an ontology that deeply contradicts contemporary scientific (Angel, 1994, p. 295), philosophical (Edwards, 1996, p. 255), and Christian theological (Swinburne, 1986, p. 302) views of mind consciousness. . . . Is it possible to conclude anything substantive about reincarnation on the basis of empirical research? Many would dismiss the question as impossible to answer or irrelevant because neurology has shown the mind's dependence on the brain (Churchland, 1999, p. 25) (pp. 92-93)

Although it is a natural enough mistake to make, it would be unscientific to oppose requiring the same burden of proof on all other alternative hypotheses that is placed on the reincarnation hypothesis, simply because the *possibility* that a human mind or consciousness could reincarnate into another body after death disturbs one's scientific view of personality profoundly or shatters the foundations of one's Western philosophical or Christian religious stance. As Grof (2000) put it: "Denial of the possibility of reincarnation represents a rare instance of complete agreement between the Christian church and materialistic science. Therefore, in Western culture, acceptance and intellectual integration of a past life memory is a difficult task for either an atheist or a traditionally religious person" (p. 163).

It would be a mistake to define hypnosis as the generator of fantasy and then define past-life experiences fantasy because they are elicited or evoked during hypnosis. The fact of the matter is that past-life experiences do not occur only under hypnosis. PLEs have been observed to appear unsolicited and unexpectedly in diverse nonhypnotic contexts including psychedelic (LSD) therapy in patients with terminal diseases, in deep experiential psychotherapy (e.g., primal therapy, rebirthing, holotropic breathing), in meditation, in sensory isolation, body work, in adults in spontaneous episodes of nonordinary consciousness (e.g., spiritual emergencies), in children in ordinary waking consciousness, in sleep during lucid dreaming, in claims of announced reincarnation, and in conventional psychotherapy sessions with therapists who neither work with past-life therapy nor believe in reincarnation and in patients whose philosophic beliefs and religious upbringing neither support nor condone such experiences. The Tibetan practice of identifying and then locating the child who is the reincarnation of a Dalai Lama (*tulku*) through clues received in dreams, meditation, and other means, such as presenting a series of similar objects to the child-candidate to see if he can identify those things that once belonged to the deceased llama is another source of non-hypnotic evidence.

PLEs have been observed to appear in geographically, historically, and culturally diverse groups in both ordinary and nonordinary states of consciousness. Grof (1975a, 1988) -- who has published two case studies that document empirical verification of historical details of past-life memories induced in one case in 1975 during 4 consecutive LSD sessions and the other in 1988 during a month-long holotropic breath-work session -- highlights the historical and geographical universality of this theoretically important and highly controversial hypothesis.

For the Hindus and the Buddhist, as well as open-minded and knowledgeable modern consciousness researchers, reincarnation is not a matter of belief, but an empirical issue, based on very specific experiences and observations. . . . There is no doubt that experiential sequences of this kind -- vivid reliving of episodes from earlier historical periods and from different parts of the world with a sense of personal remembering -- constitute the empirical basis for the widespread belief in reincarnation. The historical and geographical universality of this belief shows that it is a very important cultural phenomena. The concepts of karma and reincarnation represents a cornerstone of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, the Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism, and Taoism. Similar ideas can be found in such geographically, historically, and culturally diverse groups as various African tribes, native Americans, pre-Columbian cultures, the Hawaiian kahunas, practitioners of the Brazilian umbanda, the Galls, and the Druids. In ancient Greece, several important schools of thought subscribed to it. Among them were the Pythagoreans, the Orphics, and the Platonists. This doctrine was adopted by the Essenes, the Pharisees, the Karaites, and other Jewish and semi-Jewish groups, and it formed an important part of the cabalistic theology of medieval Jewry. It was also held by the Neoplatonists and Gnostics. (Grof, 2000, pp. 234-235)

Reincarnation is not an official part of present-day Christianity, although this may not have always been the case. In early centuries of Christianity, leading churchmen held varying opinions about the origin of the soul. "The most famous Christian thinker speculating about the pre-existence of the soul and world cycles was Origin (186-253 C.E.), one of the greatest Church Fathers of all times. In his writings, particularly in the book *On First Principles (De Principiis)* (Origenes Adamantius, 1973), he expressed his opinion that certain scriptural passages could only be explained in the light of reincarnation" (Grof, 1988, p. 88). His teachings were condemned and declared *anathema* (cursed) by the Orthodox Eastern Church at the very beginning of the Middle Ages (400 - 1400 C.E.) at the fifth Ecumenical Council of 553 A.D., also called the Second Council of Constantinople, convened by the Emperor Justinian and the Patriarch of Constantinople, Eutychius (Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 11, p. 311). At that time all references to the pre-existence of the soul, and by implication, reincarnation were summarily excised from the Old and New Testaments for a variety of theological and political reasons.

The soul was to be understood not to have preexisted but to be born anew with each baby body out of the hands of God. The soul was immortal but it lived eternally in heaven or hell and did not become frequently re-embodied and repeatedly experience death as the doctrine of reincarnation implied. It was during this time that what was to be heretofore considered the official Gospels, Epistles, and books of the Bible were identified in order to establish orthodoxy and to bring some sort of conformity to the Faith. Those writings, epistles, and gospels (e.g., the Gnostic gospels) that contained accounts of the life and words of Jesus that were deemed inappropriate or contradicted orthodox doctrine and dogmas established by the Church Fathers were placed aside in what has been called the *Apocrypha* (from the Greek, meaning hidden) (Hone, 1820/1979; Pagels, 1979; Robinson, 1990).

For over 14 centuries, all interpretation of gospel passages in terms of reincarnation was silenced in orthodox Christendom, through political repression and by the burning of heretics who taught any doctrine that implied the pre-existence of the soul or its reincarnation, although Cranston and Williams (1984) state that "most Christian scholars today are convinced that the Council never *officially* passed this doctrine" (p. 222) because no representative from Rome was present and Pope Vigilius refused to attend. The reason why so many modern authorities are undecided can be found in Head and Cranston's (1977, pp. 144-148, 156-160) account of what transpired at the Council and what led to it.

Because of the controversial nature of events surrounding the Fifth Ecumenical Council (see Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 4, pp. 308-309), the conclusion may be drawn, "on at least technical grounds, that there is no barrier to belief in reincarnation for Catholic Christians" (Head & Cranston, 1999, p. 51). There has never been a papal encyclical against reincarnation. References to reincarnation can still be found in sections of the Old and New Testament that suggests to some a reincarnational belief on the part of Jesus and his followers (Prophet, 1997) -- Matt. 16: 13-14, Mark 6: 15, Mark 8: 27-28, Luke 9: 8, 18-19; Matt. 17: 9-13; Matt. 11:7, 10-11, 13-15; John 6: 62, John 8: 56-59, John 14:3, Matt. 24:1-8; John 9: 1-3; John 1:23; Mark 9: 11-13) -- "Whom do men say that I, the Son of God, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets" (Matt. 16:13-14); "Which did sin, this man or his parents?" (John 9:34)

Explanatory Value of the "Reincarnation Hypothesis"

Stevenson (1977a) argues that the notion of reincarnation -- which should not be used to replace present knowledge about the role of biological and environmental factors on human development -- has definite, positive, supplementary explanatory value for solving a number of unsolved problems and for understanding certain apparently unrelated anomalous observations in the fields of developmental psychology, personality psychology, social psychology, human sexuality, and the biological sciences that is better than conventional explanations, with the exception of two phenomena whose occurrence reincarnation is commonly used to explain -- child prodigies and the social vicissitudes of birth -- but for which his study of cases of the reincarnation type provide no evidence to explain them. Stevenson (1977a) put it this way:

I am not offering reincarnation as a comprehensive system capable of explaining everything we need to know about child development and human personality; nor do I think of it as replacing present knowledge derived from genetics, other branches of biology, and the study of environmental influences on the development of personality. The idea of reincarnation is offered as a supplement only, not as a substitute for knowledge in these areas. It suggests a third factor, in addition to genetic and environmental factors, for understanding the problems it touches on. . . . I am therefore not questioning any acknowledged facts; but I am questioning some assumptions. The most important of these is that human personality consists of nothing but the expression of the molecules and cells of which our physical bodies are built. The corollary of this assumption, that human personality could have no existence before or after the physical body of its current manifestation, is equally in question. (p. 307)

On Stevenson's view, the influences upon an individual's development, his or her personality, interpersonal relationships, sexuality, and physical organism begins before infancy and childhood, and even before conception and birth. Given the evidence reviewed in this review of the literature, it seems reasonable to conclude that reincarnation remains a viable working hypothesis for understanding the facts presented in some reported cases of xenoglossy, children who remember past lives, and hypnotic regression. Of the many cases of children who remember past lives that Stevenson (1987) investigated and who demonstrated unusual behavior related to the remembered previous lives (i.e., "behavioral memories"), some children had quite clear, distinct, and vivid imaged memory for the details of those lives, while other children's imaged memory was quite vague and indistinct ("imaged memories"). Whether a child had strong or weak imaged memories of a past life, in other words, was unrelated to whether that past life continued to influence the behavior of those children in this life for many years even after the imaged memories for all practical purposes had disappeared from conscious daily living. "These facts make it possible to envisage that some persons may have had previous lives of which they have no imaged memories, but from which nevertheless they may have derived important ingredients of their characters [and behaviors]" (Stevenson, 1977a, p. 311).

If reincarnation is a fact that we have yet to prove, then a large number of people alive on the earth today have lived before, and clues to its existence should be able to be found in a study of those aspects of personality functioning that known research suggests reflect possible reincarnational influence (e.g., personality traits and dispositions, health and illness).

The whole matter has quite practical significance. If we have lived other lives, then we may have abilities that were developed in the past that we are not using for various reasons. If reincarnation is a fact, then it is also possible that health tendencies have origins in past lives; that neuroses have a basis in previous life experiences; that present family relationships could be explained by other personal relationships in past lives. . . . There is an engaging economy in this concept. A small but consistent hobby in painting might result in a very real artistic talent in a next life, for example. No ability would be lost, and no action meaningless. A sense of continuity and identity would not be consciously available to us, obviously, under most circumstances, but instead would operate as the psychic framework in which our present personalities continue their existence. In much the same manner, the child you were is alive but hardly conscious in your adult self. The child that you were is not dead. What it was always changes, but that which was is always taken along. . . . In the same fashion the personality that you were in a past life may not be dead either. It may exist within you as the child does, intangible but vital, part of the psychic framework that contains and forms your present identity. (Roberts, 1966/1993, pp. 196-197, 200)

We know, for example, that people will carry out post-hypnotic suggestions while being amnesic for having received such suggestions in the past (Evans, 1988), that few of us remember the day we learned how to ride a bicycle but do so quite well without recalling when exactly such learning took place, that we walk and talk quite easily without conscious memory or understanding of the learnings or unconscious mechanisms that underlie such performance, and that very few imaged memories of one's own childhood can be deliberately recalled even though we know that such subconsciously stored memories can influence experience and behavior in the present. If we cannot remember the source or origin of many learned behaviors that belong to this life (where cryptomnesia would not be an appropriate explanation in any case) and "can have behavioral memories in the absence of any imaged memories about the origin of the behavior," why would it be surprising that memories of past lives, if they exist, would also be repressed and unavailable for conscious recall (Stevenson, 1977a, p. 311)?

Reincarnation, because it does not fit in with conventionally accepted theories of normal human development, may be regarded as a "paranormal process" in which we see "the exhibition of skills which the child had not been taught and could not have learned since birth" and in which the causative factors of genetics, past history, education, and environment which psychologists are accustomed to looking for cannot be found (Stevenson, 1977a, p. 311). Stevenson (1977a) identified nine types of behaviors that occur in childhood and may persist into adulthood for which reincarnation provides a better interpretation of the observed facts than other alternative hypotheses, including

1. strong fears or phobias that cannot be traced back to earlier trauma and that is not shared by other family members,
2. strong precocious interests in certain activities or areas of knowledge, as well as unexpected appetites and unusual desires that do not conform with family upbringing,
3. proficiency in skills not taught through instruction or learned through imitation,
4. troubled child-parent relationships, special family attachments, and other departures from expected family relationships not accounted for by infantile trauma, parental rejection, or ordinary family dynamics,
5. revengeful, prejudicial, and warlike attitudes toward certain individuals, social groups, or nations that cannot be traced to ordinary socialization processes,
6. gender identity confusions not adequately explained by faulty parenting or biological factors,
7. the location of unusual birthmarks, congenital deformities, and internal diseases in which genetic factors, family medical history, or chance factors can be ruled out,
8. observed personality, behavioral, and physiological differences between members of monozygotic twin pairs and conjoined (Siamese) twins not due to uterine or postnatal environment, parental upbringing, or genetic factors, and
9. maternal craving or aversion for particular foods during pregnancy.

Two sorts of phenomena that Stevenson (1977a) did not find reincarnational evidence for in his studies of children who remember past lives are: child prodigies and social inequities of birth. According to Stevenson (1977a), "To the best of my knowledge, no Western child prodigy has ever claimed to remember a previous life. . . . [and] there is . . . almost no evidence in the case material that I have assembled that offers an empirical basis for the concept of retributive karma (pp. 322-323). Stevenson (1977a) qualifies this statement, however, in the following way:

I am not saying that the study of cases of the reincarnation type will never explain child prodigies and the varying social situations of human beings at birth. I am only asserting that presently available data cannot help us do so. . . . Although the cases studies so far provide no significant evidence in favor of retributive karma, they do offer some for what I call

developmental karma, that is for the carry-over from one life to another of personality traits. These include not only a particular body of cognitive information, but also behavioral qualities including aptitudes in the moral sphere. Furthermore, the concept of reincarnation implies an ineluctable responsibility for one's own development and for the consequences of one's own actions. (p. 323)

Stevenson (1977a, p. 322) then leaves the door open to the possibility of reincarnation explaining the existence of child geniuses and the seemingly random social vicissitudes of birth, by acknowledging that the evidence collected to date simply does not support such a proposition. Others argue that even if we do not have scientific evidence at the present time that reincarnation does occur, the idea helps to make sense of the seemingly random and meaningless events of life.

"If people have lived before their present life, then episodes within those lives could have created problems for people in much the same way as experiences within one's present life can. . . [and] the memories of reincarnation would be forgotten in much the same way a person forgets the early parts of childhood" (Ramster, 1994, pp. 68, 70)

Why, for example, is one person born gifted and another person born dull; some born healthy and others diseased or with missing organs; some born into riches and others into poverty; some die young – particularly gifted children with devoted parents or -- and others age gracefully to old age? If we choose our illnesses and the circumstances of our birth and death, then the events of one's life are suddenly seen as more meaningful. But why would anyone *choose* to be born dull, diseased, poor, or die young? According to writer and channel Seth/Jane Roberts (1970), reincarnation represents an opportunity for the soul of the personality to address unfinished problems of development, a sort of "developmental karma" as Stevenson (1977, p. 323) put the matter.

We are not 'punished' in one life for the 'transgressions' of a past one. Nor do we choose illness per se as a given life situation, even though we may utilize such an illness as a part of larger plan, as a method of teaching ourselves some important truth or as a means of developing certain abilities. . . .Karma does not involve punishment. 'Karma presents the opportunity for development. It enables the individual to enlarge understanding through experience, to fill in gaps of ignorance, to do what should be done. Free will is always involved. . . . The problem is a challenge set up by the entity [or soul] for one of its own personalities, but the outcome is up to the personality involved'" (pp. 134, 136, 138)

What relevance do the observations of children who remember past lives have on those of us who have no such memories? Stevenson (1977a) responds to this question in the following way:

The most we can say about this is that if reincarnation seems a reasonable explanation for some instances of congenital deformities and gender confusion, it ought to be considered at least provisionally as a possible factor in other cases. I have prepared the way for this suggestion by mentioning earlier that there is little correlation between imaged memories and behavioral memories in subjects of cases of the reincarnation type and that behavioral memories may persist after imaged ones have been forgotten. The behavioral images may in fact long outlast the imaged ones and persist at least into middle adulthood. . . . Subjects who experience this differential fading of imaged memories and behavioral memories are then in the position of demonstrating some unusual behavior, apparently derived from the habits of a previous life, while at the same time remembering nothing of the actual events of that life. This being so, it is conceivable that if reincarnation occurs, many persons are born who never have any imaged memories of a previous life, but who show behavior unexpected for persons in their families that derives from previous lives. (p. 324)

Conclusion

Hypnotic regressions to "previous lives" are provocative demonstrations of personality action that have received a good deal of experimental and clinical research interest during the past 35 years (see, for example, Baker, 1982; Kampman, 1976; Kampman & Hirvenoja, 1978; Matlock, 1990; Mills & Lynn, 2000; Perry, Laurence, D'Eon, & Tallant, 1988; Tarazi, 1990; Venn, 1986). This renewed attention to the "reincarnation hypothesis" in psychology has been stimulated by at least three streams of evidence: (a) the systematic cross-cultural studies of spontaneous past life recall of children by Dr. Ian Stevenson and colleagues at the University of Virginia (Edelmann & Bernet, 2007; Haraldsson, 2003; Stevenson, 1960, 1974a, 1974b, 1977a, 1980, 1983a, 1983b, 1987, 1990a, 1994, 1997a, 1997b), (b) the research into LSD psychotherapy and study of non-drug altered states of consciousness in adults conducted by Dr. Stanislav Grof and colleagues in the field of transpersonal psychology (Grof, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1988, Grof & Bennet, 1993), and (c) the demonstrated effectiveness of "past life therapy" in resolving some psychiatric disturbances in the clinical setting (Lucas, 1992; Mariott, 1984). This substantial scholarly scientific and clinical work has gone far in legitimizing the study of hypnotic and other PLEs in an experimental psychology context within more conventional paradigms of cognitive, personality, and social psychology (see, for example, Meyersburg, Bogdan, Gallo, & McNally, 2009; Spanos, Menary, Gabora, DuBreuil, & Dewhurst, 1991).

If reincarnation is a fact, theoretically, any previous life recollection could be brought to the surface by an experimental research method that would relax the personality sufficiently so that the reincarnational data could make itself known in such a way that enough solid information would be received that could be checked against existing historical records and public documents. Hypnosis would be such a method. Unfortunately, the use of hypnosis as a research method is often plagued by a host of challenges that makes it difficult to rule out a number of possible alternative "normal" explanations for the dramatized personality enactments that are observed during hypnotic regression and to account for the purportedly veridical information obtained from the hypnotized subject. Suggestion, role-playing, loss of inhibition, dissociation, cryptomnesia, chance coincidence, desire to please the hypnotist, cultural conditioning, extrasensory perception, possession, multiple personality, deliberate fraud, and subconscious deception involving the projection and integration of subconscious material into a fabricated secondary personality are just few of the plethora of theories that been put forward as alternative explanations to the "reincarnation hypothesis."

The "reincarnation hypothesis" thus remains a controversial one in psychology. On one side of the issue, is the fact that most psychologists don't believe we survive death once, much less many times (Gallup & Proctor, 1982), so why bother to investigate the reality of a fiction? Moreover, if we have lived before, what good does it do if we can't remember those previous lives in the normal waking state or use the knowledge that such memories might convey on a daily basis? On the other side of the issue, is the argument that "things and actions are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be; why then, should we desire to be deceived?" (Samuel Butler, quoted in Broad, 1953, frontpiece). If we cannot remember the bulk of our own childhood memories in this life (never mind the episodes of our current life that happened last week or even yesterday), then why should we be surprised that memories of past lives are also forgotten. Moreover, if reincarnation is a fact, then clues or indications of previous lives should be found in aspects of our daily lives -- in our dreams, personality tendencies, and patterns of health and illness, for example -- and they are, as documented by the writings of therapists in the field of past-life regression therapy (Lucas, 1992; Moody & Perry, 1990; Wambach, 1979; Weiss, 1988; Wooler, 1987). Past-life regression therapy represents a growing field of interest in clinical psychology in which there is a specialized peer-reviewed journal, *Journal of Regression Therapy*, that provides a forum for the communication of theoretical and empirical research into past-life therapy as well as a professional association, *Association for Past-Life Research and Therapy* (APRT) to promote the field and facilitate productive interaction among people involved in past-life therapy and scientific research of "reincarnational" phenomena. Past-life therapy nevertheless remains at the periphery of mainstream psychology not only because of the philosophic and psychological implications regarding our understanding of the nature of human personality that it brings to our attention, but also because of the scientific difficulties involved in obtaining absolute proof that the past lives recalled through hypnosis are legitimate (Mills & Lynn, 2000).

How are we to explain or understand the obvious discrepancies and inconsistencies between self-reports and historical facts that arise in hypnotic past-life regression? There are four key concepts that must be clearly defined from the outset in any discussion of hypnotic past-life regression if any unambiguous understanding is to be obtained about what is happening in the elicitation of reincarnational lives during hypnotic trance. These four concepts are: (a) the nature of hypnosis, (b) the nature of human personality, (c) reincarnation, and (d) the nature of time. All too often, in most discussions of hypnotic past-life regression, understandings about the nature of hypnosis, human personality, reincarnation, and time are assumed. These assumptions need to be unpacked, and examined. The assumptions about life, mind, and consciousness that are taken for granted in most experimental investigations of last-life experiences -- that *hypnosis* is little more than "susceptibility to suggestion" or "capacity to fantasize in an imaginative way," that human *personality* is basically a blank slate upon which genetics and environment write their stories or an information processing mechanism shaped by sociocultural influences, that *reincarnation* is merely a life cycle of the Buddhist variety determined by karmic law, and that *time* is only a linear series of moment points one following the other -- may not be doing justice to complexity of the phenomenon under investigation. Irwin (1989), for example, states that "the reincarnation hypotheses itself is not homogeneous. It has a number of varieties, these differing essentially in regard to precisely what it is that is posited to survive death [e.g., the surviving spirit of a deceased person, psychic elements, a Theta factor, and so forth]" (p. 250).

The nature of hypnotic past life regression is so uncertain - appearing to be either literal on the one hand, or symbolic on the other, because science tries to examine it from the interpretive filters of rational true-or-false terms. Scientist and non-scientist alike naturally interpret hypnotic past-life regression and any symbolic meaning that it may have in light of their beliefs of good and evil, the possible and the impossible, what is normal and abnormal, real and unreal. The reasoning mind wants its truths labeled and clothed in clear-cut, black-and-white terms. Psychological science seems to think that if it can name and label the past-life report as a "reincarnational event" on the one hand, or as "cryptomnesia," "role-playing," or "imaginative fantasy" on the other, then it will be more acceptable and real. Relying solely upon traditional rational true-or-false approaches, however, can make interpretation of such highly creative and important phenomena like the hypnotic past-life regression extremely difficult.

As children of our culture and the modern scientific age, people search for certainties. We are all taught from childhood to consider so-called objective, physical facts as the only criteria of reality and that what is subjective or imaginary is not real. Eventually through

socialization and learning, people refuse to admit into existence as real, legitimate, or valid anything that they cannot see, hear, smell, taste, or touch through the physical senses. They do not trust anything unfamiliar which does not occur in the usual manner on the physical level, such as hypnotic past-life reports, unless they have personal experience of it, are consciously aware of what is happening, how it occurs, and why. They want to know where the past-life experience is coming from, if it is part of the percipients' subconscious and they want their answers given to them in a manner that the logic of their intellect and comprehending ego can understand.

It is important to recognize, psychologically speaking, that when go into trance and age regress, they are working through areas of the psyche. At some indescribable point, a certain state of dissociation is achieved, and the psyche opens up into levels of being, reality, experience, or understanding usually unavailable to ego-directed awareness. Because most people do not understand their own inner reality or have been taught to mistrust themselves, revelatory material must then erupt *as if* it came from an outside source if it is to be accepted or even perceived at all. It may personify itself in order to get its message across, dramatizing itself through the creativity of the percipient's beliefs and personality. Often this presents the percipient with an irreconcilable dilemma. He or she must prove that the outside source really exists as it is physically perceived and interpreted or else lose faith in the actuality of the phenomenon and face the fact that our perception and understanding is not infallible. However, it is possible and actually much more efficient and practical to accept this fact and also acknowledge that there is more to reality than what the physical senses can show, and that much exists in the subconscious to which we will not admit (Ellenberger, 1970; Jung, 1934/1960; Kelly, Kelly, Crabtree, Gauld, Grosso, & Greyson, 2007; Myers, 1889-1895/1976, 1903).

Humankind's understanding of its own spiritual nature is at best limited in contemporary society as a result of a duality that cuts the nature of human beings into halves and which has besieged the species now for centuries. This duality is not the duality of mind and body (or brain), nor the duality of ego and shadow, nor body and environment. It is the duality of conscious and unconscious, outer ego and inner self, conscious "I" and transpersonal Self, the physical self and the spiritual self. Hypnotism in its own way, by its inward turning and focused concentration expands consciousness to bring experience that overcomes this duality, this bounded consciousness of the ego, but only if the ego is flexible enough.

A past-life recalled under regression which historically may not have occurred, nevertheless has a reality, and more than it would have had, had it occurred in so-called historical fact. The documented healing effects that past-life recall during hypnotic regression therapy shows -- whether or not the actual past-life historically occurred -- is evidence of the psychic reality of the past life. As Jung (1934/1960) correctly understood, the world of imagination and so-called symbols and myths are in many ways more real than what is often referred to as "sensory-hard" facts or phenomenon we can see, hear, feel, smell, and touch. The characters of a favorite TV program, for example, may attain a level of reality in the mind of its viewers that is more real, tangible, and substantial than the lives of the actual actors who portray those characters. A dream, an idea, a feeling, or a value -- any psychological experience, for that matter -- even though it cannot be scientifically observed in any laboratory and does not take up three-dimensional physical space, definitely exists. And even though it may be born in time, after its conception, it is free from time and is as real as, and in some instances more real than, the chair upon which one sits because of its effect upon our behavior and our mass world.

It is not sufficiently appreciated how waking experience is directed, cultures and civilizations are formed, and religious and political structures are maintained through the use of our imaginative abilities. The world of the imagination in many ways is the closest we can presently come to the inside of so-called "facts" and the deeper realities from which facts emerge (Brann, 1991). Jung (1934/1960) recognized that humanity has always projected unassimilated portions of its own deeper psychological reality that is beyond (trans) ego outward, using at various times a variety of images. In certain terms, we can say that all past-life reports are true and not true. As representations of unconscious knowledge, they are true; as representations of physical reality, they are false. When we mistake the symbolic appearance for the reality, we inevitably misunderstand its nature. Most past-life reports can be considered in a similar light. They stand for those sensed but unknown glimpses of one's own reality that the individual is determined to explore. Past life personalities, in distorted form, reflect those greater actualities of an inner order of being. The problem is in making symbolic personifications literal (for has not science taught us that only "literal fact" is true?) and never looking behind the symbolism of the communication, beyond the inner morality play, for the greater meanings beneath.

If reincarnation is a fact and not fiction, then how do we prove it, scientifically speaking? The difficulties involved would seem to be insurmountable. As Edlemann & Bernet (2007) put the matter, "Many would dismiss the question as impossible to answer or relevant because neurology has shown the mind's dependence on the brain" (p. 93). Stevenson (1977) indicates that "friendly critics of my investigations have pointed out that reincarnation is itself an irrefutable hypothesis. We can never show that it does not occur; nor are we ever likely to obtain conclusive evidence that it does occur" (p. 324). In agreement with J.B. Rhine (1974), parapsychologist Chari (1978) state that

in the present stage of parapsychological research, the hypothesis of rebirth in its various formulations (and by implication *all* survival of human personality after death) remains untestable. . . Reincarnation, in any formulation, is not at presently scientifically testable [for two good reasons]. First, . . . we have a few limited and testable hypotheses about ESP and PK, but no theory extensive enough to carry the load of survival speculation. Second, mind-body dualisms, in all their hitherto proposed forms, are inadequate to survival research, as they would have to be totally rephrased to be compatible with the existence of psi capacities. Nobody seems to have managed the reshaping of the dualistic hypotheses in any testable fashion. (Chari, 1978, pp. 314-315)

But things are not as bleak as Chari and others propose. It is important to acknowledge the empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks that have developed since Chari made his observation of the state of affairs in 1978. The following excerpt from Roberts (1998a), for example, presents an evocative theory that proposes a mechanism through which reincarnation might operated that is "extensive enough to carry the load of survival speculation" and of a theory of mind-body dualism "compatible with the existence of psi capacities" (Chari, 1978, p. 315).

Every effect of any kind, experienced by the human being, exists as a series of electrical signals and codes that in themselves form a pattern that is an electrical pattern. They exist within the cells, or I should more properly say that the cells form about them. These electric coded signals then form electric counterparts of complete experience, as it has been felt by any given individual. The pattern is independent of the physical system, while residing within it. Each individual from birth on forms his own counterpart from built up, individual, continuous electric signals. At physical death his personality then exists in its complete form, and of course escapes the sort of ending that it would suffer if it were an integral part of the physical system. This electrical pattern is the personality with all the experiences of its earthly time. It then can join or partake of the inner self. Though the ego was adopted originally by the inner self, and was a product of physical heredity and environment, it does not die; but its existence is changed from physical reality into electrical reality. It is still individual. No individuality is lost, but it becomes a part of the inner self, and its experiences are added to the total experience of the many personalities that have composed the inner self. (Roberts, p. 235)

We can see the difficulties involved in just trying to prove the existence of any event that once occurred but is no longer present to the physical senses or available for perceptual inspection. Consider, for example, what would be required to demonstrate the historical accuracy of the following statement: "The boy who sat in the desk in front of me when I was in the 5th grade at Our Lady of Mercy School was wearing a green shirt on October 25th at 9:00 AM in the morning." First, I'd have to locate the person who sat in front of me that day at school, an adult by now if he was still living, who would likely not remember much of that day or the school, much less verify what he was wearing that morning. Even if we had a photograph of him that day, unless it was in color, we would not be able to verify the color of the shirt he was wearing. Family members and relatives would likely not be much help in confirming the statement either. Given the difficulties in establishing whether or not an event actually occurred *in this life* even with eyewitness testimony and photographic evidence, the problems involved in establishing the veracity of statements made about events that might have occurred in previous lives are enormous. Irwin (1989) remarks that

Arguments against alternative interpretations of the data are in themselves not sufficient to substantially increase the strength of the reincarnation hypothesis. . . As yet it has not been possible to design an effective test between the general reincarnation hypothesis and its conceptual rivals. Further research into the reincarnation experience's phenomenology eventually may enable such a test, but what would really be desirable here is a technique for experimentally evoking reincarnation experiences that permits their investigation under more controlled conditions. (pp. 250-251)

One would expect such a technique to be hypnosis (Levitt & Chapman, 1979, p. 186) given its advantages as a research method that is capable of repeatedly inducing, terminating, prolonging, intensifying, diminishing, and controlling relatively "pure" artificial psychological states that resemble waking ones (e.g., emotional states, dreaming states, amnesia, focused concentration,) by means of carefully formulated hypnotic suggestion using either between-subjects or within-subjects designs.

If the past events of childhood form memories that we cannot consciously recall but to which we react are stored in the subconscious mind, then there is no reason why memories of past events even further back in time (if a mechanism by which those memories are encoded and stored can be proposed) are not repressed in the same manner. If repressed childhood memories can be recovered through hypnosis, perhaps recall of past lives can be obtained through hypnosis as well. Current experimental investigations of the reincarnation hypothesis using hypnotic regression have given no proof, scientifically speaking, but there is enough evocative evidence (e.g., xenoglossy, children who remember previous lives, hypnotic past-life therapy outcomes) to lead us to conclude that the reincarnation hypothesis is worthy of further serious consideration. Ultimately, it may be as Roberts (1966/1993) suggests:

If a large percentage of the human race alive today has also lived in the past, then the evidence rests within each individual, in those areas of the personality beneath the ego. The only answer lies in self-investigation. Complicated technological paraphernalia will not help us explore the realities of the human personality. Whatever answers may be possible will be found only through exploration of the inner self. . . And we can get that data. The question will be: Is the valid data in actual terms or is it the result of subconscious fabrication? Only a checking of the apparent facts can give us the answers. (pp. 176-177, 200)



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