

Past Life Memory Case Studies

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1. Preliminaries

Although parapsychology traditionally has been concerned with the question of whether some aspect of the human being survives bodily death, research on reincarnation, as one form survival might take, is a comparatively recent development. Myers, seemingly unaware of the one important case (Hearn, 1897) that had been published at the time he wrote, concluded in 1903 that “for reincarnation there is at present no valid evidence” (v. 2, p. 134). This situation began to change only in 1960 with the appearance of Ian Stevenson’s paper, “The Evidence for Survival from Claimed Memories of Former Incarnations,” in *the Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*.

In the first part of that paper, Stevenson (1960a) reviewed cases of claimed past life memory and reported having found 44 in which the person described as the previous incarnation was traced and identified. In the second part of the paper (Stevenson, 1960b) he considered possible interpretations of the cases and made suggestions for further research, suggestions he then undertook to carry out himself. Upon receipt of a grant from the Parapsychology Foundation, Stevenson went to India and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) on his first field trip. By the time he published his first collection of case reports (Stevenson, 1966b), he had records of over 600 cases in his files. As of 1988 (see Stevenson & Samararatne, 1988), he had around 2,500.

At the time Stevenson published his 1960 literature review, past life memory cases were little known, and writers on reincarnation typically were at pains to explain why previous lives were not recalled. Since Stevenson’s review, several persons from various spheres—parapsychology, anthropology, lay paranormal research—have published cases of apparent past life memory. Pattern analyses of large numbers of unpublished cases also have been reported. Recently process-oriented studies have begun to appear. Meanwhile the research has engendered its share of criticism and attempts at interpretation along alternative lines, most of which have not been properly addressed.

1.1. Plan of the Chapter

This chapter reviews studies of spontaneous past life memory cases, most of which involve young children. Key *concepts and terms are introduced* in Section 1.2. A typical spontaneous case is summarized in Section 1.3 and other types of reincarnation cases (e.g., hypnotic age regressions and “past life readings” of sensitives) are considered in Section 1.4.

Section 2 describes methods used in investigating spontaneous past life memory cases and discusses their main features, emphasizing those that appear cross-culturally. Section 3 addresses pattern analyses and is concerned particularly with cultural variation. Section 4 takes up commentary on the research, considering especially methodological criticisms and interpretations of the case material alternative to reincarnation. Sections 2, 3, and 4 conclude with discussions of the bearing of the findings of that section on the two main lines of interpretation—reincarnation and culturally conditioned fantasy. Section 5 evaluates the current state of research with past life memory cases and makes suggestions for further research.

1.2. Concepts and Terms

Probably all readers have some understanding of what reincarnation means: It is the transfer of something (consciousness? personality? the soul?) from one physical body to another, after the death of the first body and before the birth of the second. But—philosophical difficulties aside—this seemingly general definition becomes less and less satisfactory the closer it is examined.

The definition conforms closely to Hindu belief, but Buddhists hold that the soul is a figment of the human imagination, and thus is incapable of moving from one body to another. For the Buddhist, anew personality is the result of a kindling of karmic properties. Hinduism and Buddhism share the concept of karma, but most other belief systems get along without it. Among peoples of other faiths we find the belief that reincarnation may occur *after* the birth of the new body, or the belief that it may occur in more than one body at a time. Some peoples believe that everyone reincarnates, some restrict the process to the elite, others to those who die young. Some peoples believe that human beings are reborn only in nonhuman form, others merely allow this to occur, while yet others deny its possibility (Besterman, 1968; Hall, 1956; Parrinder, 1957; Somersan, 1981).

Given the diversity of beliefs about reincarnation, it would seem best to allow our definition of the concept to be guided by empirical data rather than religious or philosophical ideas. Only a careful examination of the evidence can indicate whether reincarnation occurs; and if it occurs, how it occurs. But if we are to allow our concept to be defined by the evidence, we cannot define it

before we have examined the evidence; and therefore we cannot use the concept (in any precise sense, at least) in the course of our inquiry.

For these reasons, we would do well to choose a new term for what Stevenson and his colleagues call “cases of the reincarnation type.” By the phrase “reincarnation type,” Stevenson no doubt means to avoid assuming that the cases are the results of reincarnation; but a more neutral term, one that avoids the word “reincarnation” altogether, would probably serve the purpose better. *Past life memory case* is more descriptive and at the same time less emotionally laden.

A past life memory case involves at least two persons: the *subject*, who is speaking of the *previous life*, and the person about whom the subject is speaking. Stevenson refers to the latter as the “previous personality,” but he or she will be called the *previous person* here. Persons and personalities are not at all the same thing. The persons about whom the subjects speak are much more than personalities, and to call them personalities is certainly to diminish them and perhaps to mislead the reader into believing that only personalities may reincarnate.

In some cases subjects provide enough information to permit the previous person to be traced and identified, while in others they do not. Following Stevenson, cases in which it has been possible to identify the previous person will be called *solved* and cases in which the identification is absent *unsolved*.

Subjects of past life memory cases may be of any age, but for convenience they will be classed either as children or as adults. *Child* cases will designate those with subjects 15 years of age or under, and *adult* cases will designate those with subjects over 15. The choice of this age as the dividing line between child and adult cases is not arbitrary. Fifteen is the age by which the transition of cases from the child form to adult form, which begins at about age 4, is complete (see Section 2.4).

Stevenson has concentrated his efforts on child cases, and more specifically on *spontaneous* child cases. Spontaneous past life memory cases are those in which the memory surfaced naturally, in contrast to those cases in which the memories were induced (e.g., under hypnosis) or in which they were reported by others (e.g., psychics or mediums). The term “spontaneous” is used here as it is commonly used in parapsychology; spontaneous past life memories resemble what psychologists call involuntary memories (see Neisser, 1982; Rubin, 1986).

Although we are not using the word “reincarnation” in the name for the cases under discussion, we cannot avoid dealing with the fact that they suggest this process. Indeed, in many ways reincarnation (in the general sense of the definition given above) appears to be the most satisfactory interpretation of the cases. It is the most straightforward interpretation, and the interpretation, as we shall see, which most easily makes sense of the data. This does not necessarily mean that it is the interpretation we must end up favoring, and even if

we do end up favoring it, we will probably have to adjust the definition to fit the data. In the meantime, however, we need a working hypothesis and a label for it, and for convenience we may call this the *reincarnation hypothesis*.

The various interpretations of past life memory cases alternative to reincarnation (apart from fraud) all come down to the idea that the subject is fantasizing. In its most sophisticated form, the *fantasy hypothesis* combines ESP ability on the subject's part with source amnesia (cryptomnesia), distortions of memory (paramnesia), and cultural conditioning. The fantasy hypothesis is most closely associated with Chari (1962b, 1967, 1986), although a version of it has been well articulated by Brody (1979a, 1979b), and almost every writer critical of Stevenson's work has fallen back on it in one form or another (see Section 4).

Like the reincarnation hypothesis, the fantasy hypothesis is only a convenient label for a conceptual category. Should we decide that the fantasy hypothesis is more appropriate than the reincarnation hypothesis as an interpretation of spontaneous past life memory cases, we will have to explain more precisely what we mean by it and how we believe it to operate.

1.3. *Synopsis of a Typical Case: The Case of Ravi Shankar*

The case of Ravi Shankar is one of seven Indian cases included by Stevenson (1966b, 1974c) in his first collection of case reports, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*.

Ravi Shankar was born with a long, stippled mark across his neck. When he was between the ages of two and three he began to speak about a previous life during which he said he had died after having his throat cut. He related his birthmark to the murder he said he had suffered. Over the next few years he spoke of the previous life and death often to his family, neighbors, and a schoolteacher. He told them that he was the son of Jageshwar, a barber, who lived in the Chhipatti District of Kanauj, the town in which he also lived. He gave the names of the murderers and identified one as a washerman and the other as a barber. He said he had been lured from his home by an invitation to play a game called Geri and was taken to a riverside near the Chintamani Temple, where the murderers had cut his neck and buried him in the sand.

Ravi Shankar said he had attended the primary school of Chhipatti District and asked for toys he said he owned in his previous life. These included a wooden slate, a bag for books, an inkpot, and a toy pistol, as well as a wooden elephant, a toy Lord Krishna, a ball attached to an elastic string, a watch, and a ring given to him by his father, the last being in his desk. The boy seemed to identify himself fully with the person he claimed to have been. He repeatedly asked for "his" toys and complained that the house in which he was living was not "his" house. At least once, when rebuked, he ran out of the

house, saying he would go to his former home. When he happened to encounter one of the men whom he said had murdered him, he recognized him as such and, according to his mother, showed an extreme fear of him.

After a while Ravi Shankar's statements about the previous life came to the attention of Jageshwar Prasad of Chhipatti District. Jageshwar Prasad had lost a four-year-old son named Munna in the manner and under the circumstances described by Ravi Shankar, six months before Ravi Shankar had been born. The suspects in the case had been the two men Ravi Shankar had named. One of these men in fact had confessed to the crime, but subsequently had retracted his confession, and, there being no witnesses, the two men had been allowed to go free.

These men had been known to Munna, who often had played Geri with them. One of the suspected murderers had been a relative of Jageshwar Prasad, and the motive for the murder evidently had been the hope of clearing the way for an inheritance from him. Jageshwar Prasad visited Ravi Shankar's home in order to learn more about the case, but his father refused to speak with him. Later Jageshwar Prasad arranged through his mother to meet Ravi Shankar himself, and at this meeting the boy recognized him as "his" father. Ravi Shankar gave Jageshwar Prasad an account of the murder that tallied very closely with what he had been able to piece together about it and told him of other events in Munna's life. Jageshwar Prasad then hoped to reopen the murder investigation, but was unable to do so.

Ravi Shankar's father, meanwhile, apparently fearing that his son would be taken from him, became very opposed to his talking about the previous life. He began to beat Ravi Shankar severely to discourage him from doing so and sent him out of town for a full year. He also quarreled with his neighbors over his insistence that everyone forget about Ravi Shankar's claims. He succeeded in making his son afraid to talk about the previous life, although Ravi continued to do so occasionally, especially with his schoolteacher. The schoolteacher recorded some of the boy's statements in a letter to the Indian philosopher B. L. Atreya, thus initiating the investigation of the case.

This case is typical of spontaneous past life memory cases. It occurred in India, a country in which belief in reincarnation is widespread. The families of the subject and the previous person lived in the same town and had had some minor contact before the case developed. Ravi Shankar began to speak about the previous life between the ages of two and three. He made a number of veridical statements about this life and recognized persons and places associated with it. He exhibited a strong identification with the person he claimed to have been and he had a birthmark that closely resembled the death wound suffered by this person.

These and other common features of past life memory cases receive more detailed discussion in Section 2.3.

1.4. Other Types of Past Life Memory Case

Because almost all serious research on reincarnation has been done with spontaneous cases of the type just described, most of this chapter will be concerned with such cases. Two other major types of case—past life memories induced under hypnosis and “past life readings” of psychics or mediums—are considered in this section.

Hypnotic age regression to previous lives is doubtless the best-known type of reincarnation case today, at least outside of parapsychology, and it has gathered considerable commentary. Gauld (1982), Stevenson (1987a), and Irwin (1989) consider regression cases briefly. Lengthier discussions appear in Venn (1986) and in semipopular books by Rogo (1985) and Wilson (1982). Zusne and Jones (1982) treat the material as psychologists and de Artega (1983) tackles it as a Methodist minister. Hick (1976) and Moore (1981) approach it from the philosophical point of view, although Hick also has a Christian bias. Harris (1986a, 1986b), Hines (1988), and Edwards (1986a, 1986b, 1987a, 1987b) supply the skeptical perspective.

When it comes to an evaluation of the hypnotic material, parapsychologists and skeptics—for once—find themselves in close agreement. Not only have very few solved regression cases been reported (and all but one of these in popular sources), but they are only occasionally veridical in any way. Proponents of the regression technique often point to the highly dramatic nature of such cases as indicating reincarnation in the absence of evidential support, but they cannot reckon with the demonstrable inaccuracies in many cases (see Haynes, 1981; Hines, 1988; Venn, 1986). Nor can they have much to say when regression accounts are traced to unconscious memories (cryptomnesia) of books or other sources (Hines, 1988; Kampman & Hirvenoja, 1978; Wilson, 1982).

The age regression technique has met with some success in psychotherapy, the number of practitioners having grown to the point of forming an Association for Past Life Research and Therapy with an affiliated journal, the *Journal of Regression Therapy*. Remarkable cures are often claimed, but seldom on the basis of long-term or follow-up studies (a book published by Weiss in 1988 furnishes a rare exception), nor have there been studies with formal control groups. Even if past life therapy should be shown to be an effective clinical approach, however, it suffers from the same evidential problems as hypnotic age regression in general, and its value to past life memory case studies would be minimal.

Of hypnotic age regression cases, the most interesting from the parapsychological point of view are those that involve responsive xenoglossy, the purported ability to converse in a language not learned in the present life (for xenoglossy in spontaneous cases, see Section 2.5.2). The striking similarities in form between the two best reported cases of this type (Stevenson, 1974d,

1984b; see Stevenson, 1984b, p. 64) and between them and regression cases generally suggest that they may represent a genuine phenomenon (but cf. Thomason, 1987). Because both cases are unsolved, however, they provide more evidence for survival in general than they do for survival in the particular form of reincarnation.

The literature on hypnosis and memory (Pettinati, 1988) and on age regression (Klemperer, 1968; Reiff & Scheerer, 1959) cannot leave us sanguine about the possibility that subjects actually recall previous lives during regression, the considerations raised above aside. Nevertheless, it is possible that regression cases would repay greater scrutiny than they have received to date.

Crasilneck and Hall (1985, p. 303) note that most of the significant memories recovered in normal hypnotic age regression (to previous periods of the present life) seem to be real memories, and occasional age regressions to previous lives contain a fair amount of veridical information (see Ducasse, 1961, on the Bridey Murphy case, widely—but falsely—believed to have been successfully debunked).

Regression cases also may be in general agreement with each other and with historical sources on trivial and domestic detail (Wambach, 1978; but cf. Spanos, 1987-1988), and rare cases are solved. One of Stevenson's original 44 cases was a regression case (Stevenson, 1960b). Gauld (1982, p. 169) comments on the tendency for the background detail in regression cases to check out while the name given for the previous person does not. Conceivably some cases contain paranormally derived information, embedded in a fictional narrative (cf. Cook, Pasricha, Samararatne, U. Win Maung, & Stevenson, 1983a, in reference to spontaneous cases).

Age regression has not lived up to its early promise (see Stevenson, 1960b) to provide an experimental way of testing the reincarnation hypothesis. Stevenson has attempted to use the regression technique with some children who claim spontaneous past life memories, but has been unable to elicit any new information by this means. Nevertheless (Stevenson, 1987a), he proposes that regression experiments with young children be continued. Children's memories of a previous life may lie closer to the surface of consciousness than adults', and therefore be easier to retrieve. Moreover, since children have had fewer experiences than adults, any memories of previous lives would have less danger of becoming contaminated with memories of the present life.

Past life readings, such as those given by Edgar Cayce (Cerminara, 1950), are of even less interest to parapsychology, and there is less serious literature surrounding them. Gauld (1982) and Irwin (1989) choose not to treat this material. Stevenson (1987a) mentions it briefly, but it comes in for greater scrutiny by Rogo (1985) and Wilson (1982).

Having memories of a previous life oneself and being told by someone else that one has lived this life clearly are not the same thing. For this reason alone, past life readings are inferior to spontaneous and hypnotic regression cases. The

readings usually also are very vague, and when verifiable data are given, as so often happens with regression cases, they simply do not check out.

An interesting variation on the past life reading occurs when mediumistic communicators claim to have known their mediums in previous lives. One of these is the Rosemary responsive xenoglossy case (Hulme & Wood, 1937). Another is *Soul of Nyria* (Campbell-Praed, 1931). A more recent example occurs in the complex report of group reincarnation given to us by Guirdham (1970, 1974). These mediumistic cases are interesting, but since the mediums (with the exception of some of Guirdham's) do not claim to have recalled previous lives themselves, they will not be considered further here.

Reincarnation claims turn up occasionally in other places. Stevenson (1972) and Lawden (1979) report poltergeist cases with claimed reincarnational connections between an apparently deceased agent and a living focus person. In Stevenson's case the agent claimed to have been married to the focus person and deserted by him in his previous life. In Lawden's case the focus person was questioned after she fell into a spontaneous trance and reported the sense that she was living in France the century before, during which lifetime she had known the agent. Stevenson's case does not involve a claim by a subject to recall a previous life, and so is excluded from further discussion, but Lawden's case resembles other spontaneous adult cases (the subject was 17). We will meet this case again in Section 2.4.

Should our consideration of spontaneous cases cause us to conclude that reincarnation may indeed occur, we may wish to revise our assessment of the more evidential hypnotic regression and past life reading cases to the extent of admitting that some of the information contained in them may derive from experiences in previous lives. But we should not expect to go further than this. At their best such cases may provide examples of information remembered from a previous life compounded by extrasensory or other unconscious processes and worked over by imagination.

2. Spontaneous Case Studies

This section begins with a literature review of spontaneous past life memory case studies, with an emphasis on solved child cases. Methods of investigating the cases are addressed in Section 2.2. Major features of the typical (child) case are reviewed in Section 2.3. Features of the adult case are reviewed in Section 2.4. Some special and variant types of cases, including spurious cases, are treated in Section 2.5. The reincarnation and fantasy hypotheses in light of the case studies are discussed in Section 2.6.

2.1. Case Studies

2.1.1. Cases Reported Before 1960

Stevenson (1987a, p. 125) notes the claimed memories of previous lives of Pythagoras and Apollonius, and the Mogul Emperor Aurangzeb's investigation of a case early in the 18th century. Few details are given of the claimed memories of Pythagoras and Apollonius, but the case studied by Aurangzeb includes features (such as the young age of the subject, veridical statements, and birthmarks in places of the previous person's death wounds) that appear in later cases.

The first case known to have been reported at length is the 1823 Japanese case of Katsugoro (Hearn, 1897). Cases from late 19th-century Burma are reported by Fielding Hall (1902), and from early 20th-century India by Sunderlal (1924) and Sahay (1927; summarized by Yeats-Brown, 1937). The slight case of Anne (R., 1915) was the first case to receive wide publicity in the West when it was published in the *American Magazine*. Another famous case, that of Alexandrina Samona, was picked up from professional journals and discussed at length by Lancelin (n.d., pp. 309-363) around 1920.

Lancelin (n.d.), Delanne (1924), and Shirley (1936) were the first to publish books on reincarnation relying heavily on cases, both original to them and culled from journalistic and other sources. The celebrated case of ShantiDevi (Bose, 1952; Gupta, Sharma, & Mathur, 1936; Manas, 1941) was widely reported in the popular press in 1936 and 1937. Cases first began to appear in psychical research journals and books during the 1920s and 1930s. The first were the four cases that Sunderlal (1924) published in the *Revue Metapsychique*. Khare (1930) published another case in the *Occult Review*, and Osborne (1937) reported some English cases in *The Superphysical*.

No new cases were reported during the 1940s, but in the 1950s several more appeared. Dowding (1951) brought together five cases that had previously appeared in periodicals. Bissoondoyal (1955) contributed a case from Mauritius to the *Revue Metapsychique* and Grant (1956) described the Belgian case of Robert in *Far Memory*. Neidhart (1956) self-reported an important German case. Toward the end of the decade, Atreya (1957) and Rankawat (1959) reported Indian cases, although Rankawat's is no more than the reprinting of an uninvestigated newspaper report.

Most of these cases were included by Stevenson (1960a) in his original review; most of them involve children; and all but a few (e.g., some included by Delanne, 1924, and Shirley, 1936) are solved.

2.1.2. Cases Reported by Stevenson Since 1960

Stevenson's first volume of original case reports was his now classic *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*, first published in the *Proceedings of the*

American Society for Psychical Research 9n 1966 (Stevenson, 1966b) and re-issued, with additional material including the results of follow-up interviews, by the University Press of Virginia in 1974 (Stevenson, 1974c). This was followed by a series of volumes under the general title *Cases of the Reincarnation Type* (Stevenson, 1975b, 1977a, 1980, 1983b). Stevenson (1984b, 1977c) has published additional detailed case reports in *Unlearned Language* and in the *Handbook of Parapsychology* and extensive summaries of other cases elsewhere (Cook et al., 1983a; Pasricha & Stevenson, 1977; Stevenson, 1974c, pp. 305-308; 1987a, Chapter 4; Stevenson & Samararatne, 1988). Brief descriptions of many other cases appear in other sources (e.g., in Stevenson, 1977b and 1987a).

Stevenson's reports include cases from places from which cases had been reported before 1960—India, Burma, England, nontribal American society—and from new places as well, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Lebanon, Turkey, Brazil, Alaska, and, most recently, Finland. Most of his cases are child cases, but two of them—those of Pratomwan Inthanu (Stevenson, 1983b) and Uttara Huddar (Stevenson, 1984b)—involve adults. Almost all except those reported by Cook et al. (1983a) are solved.

2.1.3. Cases Reported by Other Authors Since 1960

2.1.3a. *Cases Reported in Professional Publications.* Child cases have been reported in refereed journals and scholarly books by several persons since Stevenson drew attention to them. Pal (1961 -1962) first reported the case of Sukla, reinvestigated by Stevenson and included by him in *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (Stevenson, 1974c). Pasricha and Barker (1981; Pasricha, 1983) report another Indian child case, that of Rakesh Gaur. Pasricha, Murthy, and Murthy (1978) report an Indian adult case with memories arising during a psychotic break. Andrade (1988) has recently published a volume containing reports of eight Brazilian cases, one of which (Andrade, 1980) is available in English in monograph form. Bayer (in Durant, 1968) reports cases from Turkey, and Story (1975; in Durant, 1968) reports cases from Sri Lanka and Burma.

Other cases, generally less well investigated and more often unsolved, are reported in summary. Krishnanand (1968) reports an Indian case involving a 10-year-old boy. De Laguna (1972, pp. 776-781) describes cases from among the Tlingit Indians of Alaska and Slobodin (1970) cases from among their Canadian neighbors, the Kutchin. Goulet (1982) describes a Dene-Tha case and Mills (1988a, 1988b) Beaver, Gitksan, and Carrier cases from the same region. Le Quang Hu'o'ng (1972) describes a Vietnamese case and Scott-Macnab (1975) a case from South Africa. Chinese adult claims are reported by Emmons (1982).

Banerjee reported several Indian cases in monographs, but because he was caught tampering with experimental data (Rao, 1964a, 1964b), he must be

considered unreliable. Although still sometimes cited by popular writers, Ban-ejee's work has been written out of serious parapsychology. It will not be considered here.

2.1.3b. Cases Reported in Popular Publications. Some reports in popular publications represent independent accounts of cases described in professional sources. Playfair (1975, 1976) describes Brazilian cases, including the Jacira case studied by Andrade (1980, 1988). Hind (1977) describes for *Fate* magazine the South African case of Vashnee Rattan reported by Scott-Macnab (1975). Wilson (1982) reports his research on the English Pollock twins case summarized by Stevenson (1987a).

Most original cases in the popular literature are unsolved. Unsolved child cases appear in Holzer (1970, 1974), Merle (1976), and Wambach (1978, pp. 5-7). Unsolved adult cases are described by Hubbard (1973), Lenz (1979), and Rogo (1985). Ryall (1974) self-reports a somewhat dubious case that began in childhood but continued through adulthood.

A few solved cases have appeared only in popular publications. The most reliable of these is that reported by Rawat (1985), who later worked with Stevenson. Two other cases, one of them a rare solved adult case, are described by Lenz (1979, pp. 172-175). We may take notice also of two of Guirdham's Cathar cases (Guirdham, 1970, 1974). In these two cases (those of Mrs. Smith and Miss Mills) memories of previous lives later shown to be veridical emerged during illness in childhood and continued into adulthood in the form of recurring dreams.

2.1.3c. Cases Reported in Unpublished Sources. Cases have been reported in some unpublished sources, most notably in Pasricha's (1978) doctoral dissertation and in master's theses by Cook (1986a) and McCracken (1982). A particularly valuable unpublished report is Akolkar's (1985) independent investigation of the Sharada (Uttara Huddar) case of responsive xenoglossy reported by Stevenson (1984b).

These documents are publicly available in one or more of the libraries of the Society for Psychical Research, the American Society for Psychical Research, or the University of Virginia Health Sciences Center's division of Personality Studies.

2.2. *Methods of Investigation*

2.2.1. *The Problem*

Spontaneous past life memory cases present many of the same problems to the investigator as do other spontaneous cases (see Morris, 1982), but they have some special requirements.

Spontaneous past life memory cases share with haunting and poltergeist

cases the fact that they generally unfold over a period of years and may therefore be open for direct observation by investigators. But as with hauntings and poltergeists, the investigation must take account of events reported by witnesses, as well as whatever occurrences the investigator notes firsthand. This means that past life memory cases confront the central difficulty of all spontaneous cases—the fallibility of human memory. For discussion of this and other points in relation to spontaneous cases in general, see West (1948) and Stevenson (1971b).

Past life memory cases, moreover, encounter some special difficulties that make them easily the most challenging area of field research in parapsychology. One is the simple fact that most of the subjects are children, often very young children. Some of these children begin to relate their memories as soon as they are able to talk. They may have difficulty articulating certain sounds, such as personal names or place names. They may correct their pronunciation later, as they grow older, but if not, they can throw investigators seriously off the track. Young children also may mix memories of the previous life with memories and fantasies of the present life, and in general have difficulty discriminating present from past, memory from imagination. The children typically cease speaking of their memories after a few years, which forces investigators who arrive on the scene late to rely on persons who were present while the case was still underway.

The cases most often develop in societies that hold beliefs about reincarnation and its manifestations, and the investigator must be careful to disentangle the facts of a case from interpretations of it imposed by informants. He or she must also be sensitive to the fact that a given case may reflect nothing more than a set of beliefs. There is no doubt that beliefs are often reflected in the cases, which caused Stevenson early on to collect the beliefs about reincarnation of a given people as well as cases suggestive of it found among them. On the other hand, beliefs do not seem to be sufficient to explain many cases. Pasricha (1988) found that persons unfamiliar with past life memory cases held ideas about such cases that were significantly at variance with what the cases themselves suggest (for instance, the respondents thought subjects would be older than they are).

A related problem derives from the location of many cases in places foreign to the investigators (such as Stevenson), who may have to work through interpreters. The language barrier is not the only barrier to be overcome. Cultural differences may be even more of an obstacle. Certain questions and answers that are clear in one cultural context may be misunderstood or make no sense in another. A particularly important difference, from the present point of view, lies in the concept of paranormality. As Cook (1986b, p. 92) has pointed out, it is easy for Westerners to forget that many peoples do not share their sense of what is paranormal and what is not. For people for whom past life memory cases are more or less a natural affair, such things as exactly what a

child said and when he said it may not have made much of an impression, and may be difficult—even impossible—to recall accurately later.

Fortunately, not all available cases depend on the accounts of foreign investigators. Natives of the societies in which the cases occur (e.g., Andrade, 1988; Bissoondoyal, 1955; Gupta, Sharma, & Mathur, 1936; Le Quong Hu'o'ng, 1972; Pal, 1961-1962; Pasricha, 1978; Rawat, 1985; Sahay, 1927; Sunderlal, 1924) have reported cases investigated by themselves in several instances. In other instances, cases have been reported by professional anthropologists (e.g., de Laguna, 1972; Emmons, 1982; Goulet, 1982; Mills, 1988a, 1988b; Slobodan, 1970) or other persons thoroughly familiar with the cultures in question (Fielding Hall, 1902; Hearn, 1897; Story, 1975).

Given the intrinsic difficulties of the material, the future would seem to belong either to native speaker parapsychologists or to trained anthropologists, if not both. Anthropologists may wish to incorporate Stevenson's methods (see Section 2.2.3) into their research techniques, as Mills (1988a, 1988b) has done, but they will probably want to move away from a strictly parapsychological focus on evidential questions to a broader concern with the cases in their cultural context, as Hess (1988) has advocated. Readers wanting an introduction to anthropological methods of field investigation may consult Bernard (1988).

2.2.2. *Investigations Before 1960*

Investigations of past life memory cases before 1960 varied greatly in quality. Some cases, like that of Anne (R., 1915) received no investigation at all. This appears to be true even of some better developed cases, including those described by Fielding Hall (1902) and Khare (1930) as well as most of those presented by Delanne (1924) and Shirley (1936).

Some early cases, however, were looked into by outside investigators. The Mogul Emperor Aurangzeb's investigation of one case has been noted. The Japanese Katsugoro case was also investigated, and Hearn (1897) includes translations of a series of signed and sealed documents attesting to it. Extensive investigations were conducted into the case of Shanti Devi (see Bose, 1959; Gupta, Sharma, & Mathur, 1936; Manas, 1941). Sunderlal (1924) and Sahay (1927) between them report 11 cases that they investigated themselves.

Not all these investigations have gone without criticism (see Chari, 1962b, 1962d), although some cases include the important feature of written records made of the subject's statements before their verification was attempted (see Section 2.5.1). The reports also vary greatly in quality. Frequently they do not tell us all we need to know in order to evaluate the cases for ourselves. Often also they do not include information we would like to have for comparison with later, more thoroughly investigated cases. Fortunately the fullest reports include those of cases that were the most carefully investigated (Gupta,

Sharma, & Mathur, 1936; Hearn, 1897; Lancelin, n.d.; Sahay, 1927; Sunderlal, 1924).

2.2.3. *Methods Introduced by Stevenson*

Stevenson introduced a new level of sophistication into the investigation and reporting of past life memory cases, and his methods have been adopted by others (e.g., by Andrade, 1988; Bayer, in Durant, 1968; Cook, 1986a; Mills, 1988a, 1988b; Pasricha, 1978; Rawat, 1985; Story, 1975; in Durant, 1968). Stevenson's methods have become the standard for the field, and for that reason deserve close scrutiny.

Faced with the difficulties described in Section 2.2.1, Stevenson has developed procedures (see Stevenson, 1975b, pp. 18-50; 1977c; 1987a, Chapter 6) that even some of his critics admire (e.g., see Brody, 1979a, 1979b; L. E. Rhine, 1966). Taking his lead from the early investigators of the Society for Psychical Research, Stevenson tries to interview the subject and all witnesses to the subject's claimed memories and behaviors. He emphasizes interviews with multiple firsthand witnesses (and a reluctance to credit secondhand witnesses), repeated interviews with each witness, the recording of who said what when, and the evaluation of a witness's credibility. Written records made before a subject's statements are verified are rare (see Section 2.5.1), but hospital records, court records, birth certificates, and horoscopes (which may provide the most accurate record of a birth date) that can help to establish facts are frequently called into play.

After interviewing the subject and his or her family, Stevenson interviews the previous person's family, if it has been identified, striving for an independent verification of the case. If the previous family has not been identified, and an attempt to do so seems justified, Stevenson will undertake this himself (e.g., see Stevenson&Samararatne, 1988). Stevenson routinely follows up his interviews with the principal informants or has persons on his team undertake follow-up investigations on his behalf. Each case report includes a detailed description of how the investigation was conducted.

It is important to realize that Stevenson's methods have developed over time, and that our knowledge of all cases is not equal. When he first went to India in 1961, Stevenson was unprepared for the striking behavioral memories found in many cases; it took him some years before the full significance of such behavior sank in, and he began to make systematic inquiries about it (Stevenson, 1987a, pp. 126-127). We may imagine that Stevenson was slow to appreciate the importance of other features of the cases, and to make systematic inquiries concerning them as well. His early notes contain many gaps, as he did not then appreciate the importance of recording what informants said verbatim as much as possible, and it was not until about 1970 that he and those working with him began to record systematically the questions

put to informants as well as the answers received from them (Stevenson, 1987a, p. 128).

Nonetheless, there is no reason to believe that Stevenson's earlier reported cases (e.g., Stevenson, 1966b, 1974c) were inadequately investigated. Criticisms, both general and specific, of Stevenson's research methods are treated in Section 4, and readers wanting to know more about them may turn to those pages. For the present, we may accept the methods as adequate to the material, and move on to consideration of it.

2.3. Features of the Typical (Child) Case

Section 3.2 discusses indications that the typical published past life memory case lies at the end of a continuum, whose other end is represented by relatively undeveloped cases that may include nothing more impressive than a vaguely suggestive birthmark or behavior. In this section, features of the typical published case, which may be understood as representing the (relatively rare) well-developed variety, are described.

Because of the large body of case material to be summarized, it will not always be possible to cite all sources on which generalizations or conclusions are based. This practice is regrettable but unavoidable, given editorial constraints. Readers should consider also that we do not yet have studies of incidence of most of the features covered. Further substantiation of many points will be found in Stevenson (1987a).

The case of Ravi Shankar (Section 1.3) furnished an example of a typical published past life memory case. It did not, however, demonstrate all the commonly recurring features of such cases. In the following review Stevenson's cases will be considered along with cases reported by others, both before and after 1960. Although only the best-attested cases will be cited, comments made above on the varying quality of the case material should be kept in mind. Unless stated otherwise, all cases are solved.

2.3.1. The Typical Subject

The better developed spontaneous past life memory cases are distinguished by a child's claim to have lived before as a specific other person; the reincarnation interpretation nearly always comes from the subject himself or herself, and is not imposed by the surrounding adults. The children do not seem to regard the previous persons as separate from themselves, as they would imaginary playmates, but identify themselves with these persons along lines of continuous development.

Many children demand to be called by the name of the previous person, and some seem to expect that they should be recognized as from the previous

life (see Stevenson, 1983b, p. 94, for examples of the latter). Interestingly, many children are said to be more intelligent and more mature than their siblings or peers. They may learn to speak earlier and to use adult language more readily, and they may be precocious in their interest in religion or sex or their desire for cigarettes or alcohol.

Most spontaneous past life memory cases develop within cultures that hold beliefs about reincarnation. Most subjects reside in small towns or villages and are born into relatively uneducated and impoverished families (Stevenson, 1987a, p. 96). Boys outnumber girls two to one (Stevenson, 1986a; see Section 3.3).

2.3.2. The Subject's Statements

Two of the strongest recurring features of the more developed past life memory cases are the young age at which subjects begin speaking of previous lives and the somewhat later age at which they stop doing so. The typical subject is between the ages of two and five when he or she makes a first statement about a previous life. (Matlock, 1989a, found a median age of 2.75 years at first speaking of the previous life in a series of 95 solved published cases.) Subjects typically cease speaking spontaneously of their memories after a few years, and the memories seem to fade from consciousness. This normally happens between ages five and eight, although some subjects claim to be able to remember the previous life in later years and even into adulthood.

The typical subject is in the ordinary waking state when speaking of his or her memories. In a few cases the memories are related to sleep, and even more occasionally to illness, but so rarely do more radical alterations of consciousness occur in children that they are worth noting when they do occur. Parmod Sharma (Stevenson, 1974c) and Dolon Champa Mitra (Stevenson, 1975b) were unusual in that they sometimes seemed abstracted from the present life in speaking of their memories. Krishnanand (1968) reports the case of a 10-year-old boy who slipped into an alternate personality on one occasion, during which episode he led the way to the home of the previous person and located some hidden money there. Altered states of consciousness are connected to past life memories more frequently with adult subjects (see Section 2.4).

The typical child subject requires no apparent stimulus to speak about his or her memories (Matlock, 1989a; see Section 3.5.3). Some subjects seem to speak of the previous life constantly. Others require stimuli of one sort or another, while a few make no statements that are not stimulated. Mallika Aroumougam (Stevenson, 1974c) made no statements that were not stimulated by something that reminded her of the previous life.

Some subjects make many different statements about the previous life while others say the same few things over and over. A few subjects say almost

everything they have to say in a short period of time. Gopal Gupta (Stevenson, 1975b) said most of what he had to say in an outburst following a request to remove a glass used by a guest in his home.

While many subjects give the impression that their memories are always with them, the events they claim to remember do not constitute the full range of experiences of the person whose life they say they recall. If a generalization can be made, it is that the statements concern events that would have been of emotional significance to the previous person. Most subjects describe the way the previous person died, and on the whole their memories tend to cluster around events of the last year, month, and days of the previous life. However, some subjects report memories from many years before. Lalitha Abeyawardena's memories related mainly to events in the later years of the previous life, but she also made verified statements concerning an incident that occurred 22 years before the previous person's death (Stevenson, 1977a).

Subjects usually give the name of the previous person and the names of this person's family and friends, as well as the town from which he or she came, and other names that assist in the verification of the statements. The majority of Stevenson's Asian cases are solved (Stevenson, 1983b, p. 191), and although over 90% of recorded statements in these cases may be verified (e.g., see Stevenson & Samararatne, 1988), the subjects often make errors of one sort or another. They are particularly likely to make errors in describing the way the previous person died. Sometimes they seem to merge or confuse memories of the previous life. Sujith Lakmal Jayaratne (Stevenson, 1977b), for instance, apparently confused memories of two different houses.

In the majority of cases, only a single previous life is recalled. However, there have been reported a few cases in which subjects claimed to remember more than one previous life. Swarnlata Mishra (Stevenson, 1974c) claimed memories and performed dances and songs she said were related to a life intermediate between her present life and the previous life to which the majority of her memories referred (this intermediate life, however, was unverified). In a few cases, subjects have recalled lives of persons who themselves claimed to remember previous lives (e.g., Mounzer Haider, in Stevenson, 1980). Some subjects also claim to recall events that occurred between the deaths of the previous persons and their own births (see Section 2.3.6).

The fading from consciousness of the memories may be due to a layering over of the imaged memories. The parents of many children relate the fading to the start of school, with its new concerns and impressions. The subject's parents not infrequently encourage the fading of the memories, as Ravi Shankar's father did. Fading seems to occur at about the same age regardless of whether the subjects had help from their families (Stevenson, 1987a, p. 107), although it occurs earlier in unsolved than in solved cases (Cook et al., 1983b; see Section 3.5.2).

2.3.3. *The Subject's Recognitions*

Many subjects request repeatedly to be taken back to their previous homes, as they see the matter. In order to silence them, if for no other reason, sooner or later many parents oblige, and these visits sometimes trigger additional memories of the previous life. Not uncommonly, subjects are able to lead the way to the previous person's home, sometimes over paths or ways no longer in use. If places or persons have changed substantially in the interval since the previous person's death, however, the subject may not recognize them. Many subjects are better at recognizing persons in photographs taken during the periods when the previous persons knew them than they are in recognizing these same persons as they presently appear.

Recognitions of persons or places are frequently the initiating stimuli to the memories (Matlock, 1989a; see Section 3.5.3). In such cases, of course, we have no assurance that the subjects did not have some memories before they began to speak about them. Katsugoro (Hearn, 1897) said his memories were already fading when he first spoke about them.

2.3.4. *The Subject's Behavioral Memories*

Subjects of spontaneous past life memory cases identify with previous persons through their behaviors as much as through their statements and recognitions. The subjects may exhibit a wide range of behaviors, habits, aptitudes, skills, phobias, and phobias related to the previous life, some of them quite specific to the persons they are talking about. These may be grouped together as *behavioral* memories.

Behavioral memories in subjects who say they were persons of the opposite sex may include dressing in the style of the opposite sex and preferring play of a type usually associated with the opposite sex as well as exhibiting personality traits of the opposite sex. Ampan Pecherat (Stevenson, 1983b) and Paulo Lorenz (Stevenson, 1974c) are examples. Subjects who claim to have been persons from foreign countries in their previous lives (subjects of so-called "international cases") may exhibit behaviors consistent with the habits of the countries they say they were from. Stevenson (1983b, pp. 216-217) lists several behaviors characteristic of a group of Burmese subjects who said they were Japanese soldiers killed in Burma during the Second World War.

Equally striking behaviors are evident with subjects who claim to have been members of different castes or religious groups. Jasbir Singh (Stevenson, 1974c) and Veer Singh (Stevenson, 1975b) are notable for the Brahman attitudes they displayed in their lower-caste families. Swaran Lata (Pasricha & Stevenson, 1977), who said she had been a member of the sweeper caste in her previous life, enjoyed cleaning up after her siblings and engaging in other behaviors characteristic of the previous person's station in life.

Behavioral memories may include skills possessed by the previous persons, but unlearned by the subjects. Thus Paulo Lorenz (Stevenson, 1974c) was particularly adept at the sewing machine; Carlos Chotkin, Jr. (Stevenson, 1974c) at repairing boat engines; and Bishen Chand Kapoor (Sahay, 1927; Stevenson, 1975b) at playing a musical instrument, the tablas. Foreign languages, unknown to the subjects in their present lives but used correctly by them (xenoglossies), form a special class of remembered skills, and are treated in Section 2.5.2.

The identification with the previous person typically has a strong emotional component. Mounzer Haidar (Stevenson, 1980) felt such a strong desire to go to the previous person's home that he refused to eat for three days until he was taken there. Some subjects, like Ravi Shankar and Prakash Varshnay (Stevenson, 1974c), run away from home. Many subjects reveal strong attachments to the property of the persons of whom they are speaking, to the point of asserting their ownership of it.

Emotional involvement is shown especially in the way many subjects relate to the families and other persons connected to the previous life. In many cases, subjects behave toward members of the previous person's family as the previous person would have behaved. Sukla (Stevenson, 1974c) and Hair Kam Kanya (Stevenson, 1983b) behaved like mothers to the previous person's children, and Erkan Kilic (Stevenson, 1980) acted like a father. When animosity would be more appropriate than affection, one finds subjects maintaining distance. The previous persons in the cases of Gopal Gupta (Stevenson, 1975b) and Ratana Wongsombat (Stevenson, 1983b) were in bad marriages, and Gopal and Ratana were cool toward these persons' former spouses.

Among the most interesting behavioral memories are phobias, which occur frequently in cases in which the previous person died violently (Section 3.4.6). Subjects who claim to remember having died by drowning, for example, may have a phobia to water. The phobia may be to instruments that figured in the previous person's death, to the persons who wielded them, or to the place where the murder or accident occurred. Some phobias are very specific. Parmod Sharma (Stevenson, 1974c) had a strong aversion to eating curd, from which the previous person of his case had died. Other phobias are generalized. Sujith Lakmal Jayaratne (Stevenson, 1977b) had an intense fear of trucks and jeeps, and when he was eight months old his mother accidentally discovered that saying the word "lorry" would cause him to drink his milk when he otherwise resisted doing so.

Behavioral memories, especially phobias, may appear before a subject begins to speak about the corresponding previous life. Sujith's reaction to the word "lorry" provides one example of this. Similarly, Erkan Kilic (Stevenson, 1980) would cower when he heard airplanes fly over before he began to say that he had been a man who had died in a plane crash. Some young subjects supplement their words with gestures. Suleyman Zeytun (Stevenson, 1980), born deaf and dumb, expressed his memories entirely by gestures.

Behavioral memories usually outlast imaged and verbal memories by a few years. Some are quite durable. Ma Tin Aung Myo (Stevenson, 1983b), the subject of an unsolved sex change case, carried her masculine sexual identity into adulthood, and eventually began to live openly with a woman. Aversions to persons (especially murderers) related to the previous life may also persist after the associated imaged memories have faded from consciousness. Ravi Shankar continued to fear the murderers of the person he claimed to have been, although he could not say quite why, as occurred also with Amy, a subject of Mills (1988b).

2.3.5. *The Subject's Physical Memories*

Physical correspondences between the subject and the previous person (such as birthmarks) may (for the sake of convenience and consistency) be called *physical* memories. Physical memories may be *no* more than a reported physical likeness. When Katsugoro (Hearn, 1897) met the family of the person he claimed to have been they remarked on the resemblance he bore to this person. Alexandrina Samona (Lancelin, n.d.; Shirley, 1936) bore such a close resemblance to her deceased sister that she was given the same name. The English Pollock twins also bore close resemblances to their deceased sisters (see the photograph reproduced in Wilson, 1982).

In cases in which both the subject and the previous person are of the same family, physical memories may be ascribable to genetics and nothing more. This is especially true when only some general physical similarity is claimed. Physical memories, however, like behavioral memories, may be very specific. Bishen Chand Kapoor (Stevenson, 1975b) and the previous person of his case had similar eye infections that responded to the same special ointment. Alexandrina I and II had similar eye and ear infections (Lancelin, n.d.; Shirley, 1936). Both Jacira (Andrade, 1980, 1988) and the person she claimed to have been were cross-eyed.

The most striking physical memories are certainly birthmarks and birth defects, of which Stevenson has collected some 200 cases. He has published a few of these (Ravi Shankar is an example), although he has reserved most of them for volumes, now in preparation, devoted specifically to this topic.

Andrade (1988) reports two (unsolved) cases with birthmarks, and reproduces photographs related to one of them. Birthmarks in the places of shoulder and neck wounds appeared in the case studied by Aurangzeb (see Stevenson, 1987a). A birthmark representing a shoulder wound appears in a case reported by Fielding Hall (1902). A birthmark also figures prominently in one of Sunderlal's (1924) cases. Interestingly, birthmarks (and birth defects) are particularly common in the relatively undeveloped cases often reported in the anthropological literature (Matlock, 1989b; see also Parrinder, 1951).

Although birthmarks usually correspond to death wounds, this is not always

the case. Kumkum Verma (Stevenson, 1975b) had marks at the lobes of her ears where her previous person had worn earrings. Birthmarks sometimes take the form of moles. Maung Yin Maung (Stevenson, 1983b) had a mole on his lower neck in just the place his previous person had one.

Perhaps the most striking birth defect so far published is that of Wijeratne (Stevenson, 1974c). Wijeratne was born with a stunted right arm and webbed fingers, which he credited to his having killed his wife with his arm in his previous life.

Birthmarks and birth defects may correspond to markings or mutilations placed or performed on the previous person's body after death. These markings are made with the intention of aiding in the identification of the person in the next life (Stevenson, 1983b, 1985). Thus, Ampan Pecherat (Stevenson, 1983b) had a birthmark that corresponded to a red ochre mark that the previous person's aunt had placed on the body before its cremation.

Except in the most extreme cases (e.g., that of Wijeratne), birth defects heal and internal diseases disappear over time. Birthmarks may also shift position and fade.

2.3.6. *Other Common Features*

Some features commonly found in child past life memory cases relate not to the subject, but to his or her family, or to the previous person of the case. The previous person in the case of Corliss Chotkin, Jr. (Stevenson, 1974c) expressed his intention to be reborn into Corliss' family and said he would be recognized by birthmarks representing scars he had; Corliss was born with marks in the places indicated. The previous person in the case of William George, Jr. (Stevenson, 1974c) expressed a similar intention, also apparently fulfilled. Both of these are Tlingit Indian cases; such cases occur frequently among the Beaver and Gitksan as well (Mills, 1988b).

In some cases, predicted returns are associated with subsequent dreams by the pregnant mother. This occurred in the case of William George, Jr. (Stevenson, 1974c). In many other cases, the "announcing dream" occurs without a return having been predicted. Announcing dreams occur usually, although not always, to the mother shortly before or while she is pregnant. They may also occur to the father (e.g., see Emmons, 1982) or to a close relative or friend of the mother (e.g., see Mills, 1988b). Stevenson (1987a, p. 99) states that announcing dreams have been found in all cultures in which he has found cases.

Although dreams are the most common vehicle for such "announcements," they took the form of apparitions in the cases of Blanche Batista (Delanne, 1924; Shirley, 1936) and Maung Yin Maung (Stevenson, 1983b). Announcements may also be associated with haunting or poltergeist effects (Mills, 1988b). Other announcements come in the form of mediumistic communications. The cases of Alexandrina Samona (Lancelin, n.d.; Shirley, 1936), Paulo

Lorenz (Stevenson, 1974c), Hair Kam Kanya (Stevenson, 1983b), and Jacira (Andrade, 1980, 1988) provide examples of announcements in mediumistic communications.

A noteworthy feature of some cases is the cravings experienced by mothers of subjects during their pregnancies with *them*. During her pregnancy with Bongkuch Promsin (Stevenson, 1983b), his mother had a strong craving for noodles with soup and tamarinds. Bongkuch himself was especially fond of soup with noodles (although not of tamarinds), as was the previous person of his case. Interestingly, the mother of the previous person had the same craving when she was pregnant with him.

Some subjects say they remember experiences they had between their deaths in the previous lives and their births in their present ones (the *intermission* period). Sometimes they say they remember sending announcing dreams, and on rare occasions they claim to remember having visited their parents as apparitions before they were born. Stevenson (1982) mentions three cases with the last feature. For a published example, see the case of Maung Yin Maung (Stevenson, 1983b).

We may call memories related to the intermission period *intermission memories*. Subjects claiming intermission memories may say that after they died they remained close to the previous person's home, and they may say that they observed events that actually occurred at this time. Veer Singh (Stevenson, 1975b) said that he had lived in a peepal tree after his death. He mentioned lawsuits involving the previous person's family and a camel bought by the family. He also stated the names of the children born after the previous person's death and recognized two of them. Furthermore he said that he had become annoyed with some women who were swinging from a branch of his peepal tree, and caused the plank on which they were sitting to break. All these incidents had occurred as described.

Some subjects say that their intermission experiences terminated when they encountered one of their parents. Story (1975) describes a case in which a subject said he had waited by the village well for the mother of the previous life to come when his mother came instead. Other subjects (especially in Southeast Asia) say that after death they encountered a man dressed in white who guided them to their parents. These figures are similar to those who sometimes precipitate the return to the body in near-death experiences (e.g., see the case reported from India by Osiris & Haraldsson, 1977, p. 152).

Subjects claiming intermission memories sometimes say that were offered a food, usually a fruit, by the "man in white," but managed to dispose of it when he was not looking. They credit their ability to recall previous lives to having done this. The "fruit of forgetfulness" has been reported from several cultures, but sometimes with transformations. In the Vietnamese case of Le Quong Hu'o'ng (1972), it is a soup and the subject disposes of it by slipping it to his dog, who had been killed at the same time as he. Stevenson (1983b)

and Story (1975) describe several cases with intermission memories. Schnetzer (1986) examines 20 published cases with this feature.

2.3.7. The Subject's Later Development

Longitudinal developmental studies of subjects of past life memory cases are needed in order to determine the long-term effects on them of their memories. In the absence of such studies, we may look to those cases in which subjects who claimed memories as children were interviewed in adulthood. The cases of Jagdish Chandra and Bishen Chand Kapoor (Stevenson, 1975b) are especially valuable, because as children they were studied and reported upon by Sahay (1927). In these two cases we have a contemporary report of childhood memories with which to compare the later report. An added bonus is the written record Sahay made before he attempted to verify the children's statements (Section 2.5.1). Other cases studied by Stevenson when their subjects were in middle or late adulthood include Marta Lorenz and Paulo Lorenz (Stevenson, 1974c), Choakhun Rajusthajarn (Stevenson, 1983b), and Sayadaw U Sobhana (Stevenson, 1983b). Andrade (1988) provides another example in the case of Rodrigo.

Jagdish Chandra's imaged memories underwent little fading with the years, and he remained strongly attached to the previous person's family, visiting their home (in a distant city) every few years. Most of his behavioral memories, which in early childhood had been fairly strong, weakened after age six, although a few (such as a fondness for sweets) persisted into middle adulthood before diminishing. The only behavioral memory that persisted strongly in middle adulthood was an interest in cars. Sahay noticed small birthmarks on the upper parts of Jagdish Chandra's ears (at the place earrings might be worn) in 1926, but these had faded by the time Stevenson's investigation began in 1961.

Bishen Chand Kapoor's imaged memories, by contrast, had almost entirely faded by about age seven, and by the time he reached adulthood he retained a clear memory of a single event—his previous person's impulsive murder of a man he saw leaving the rooms of his favorite prostitute. Bishen Chand shared with the previous person a quick temper which continued into middle adulthood, although the accompanying tendency to violence had diminished by the time he reached his late teens. Besides the quickness of his temper, the only behavioral memories Bishen Chand carried into middle adulthood were an interest in music and a liking for meat and fish (out of place in his vegetarian family).

Stevenson follows his subjects for several years and each of his case reports includes a section on the subject's later development. Usually these suggest the same pattern of pronounced verbal and behavioral memories in childhood gradually diminishing in strength until by middle adulthood only a residuum remains. In some cases, however, strong identification with a previous person in

childhood may interfere with normal personality development. This seems to have occurred with Parmod Sharma (Stevenson, 1974c). More severe problems may also occur. Wijeratne (Stevenson, 1974c), unable to form a lasting relationship with a woman, was in and out of mental hospitals. Paulo Lorenz (Stevenson, 1974c) followed the previous person of his case in committing suicide.

2.4. Features of the Adult Case

Adult cases of spontaneous past life memory lack the detailed verbal memories and the pronounced behavioral and physical memories so common in the better developed child cases. Some adult cases involve no more than a strong emotional identification with a particular person or place. A recently published example is the case of Dorothy Eady (Cott, 1987). Some adult cases include a strong *deja vu* in which the visit to a certain place seems to elicit certain memories that prove to be veridical; for example, the subject is able to guide persons through towns or rooms or to predict what will be around the next corner. Delanne (n.d.) and Shirley (1936) record examples of this sort of *deja vu*, and Stevenson (1960a) describes another. Hubbard's (1973) account should perhaps be classed here as well.

A more interesting type of adult case includes imaged memories. Adult imaged memories have been said to have surfaced in various states of consciousness. Cases of memories occurring to subjects when in their ordinary waking states are described by Osborne (1937), Lenz (1979), and Rogo (1985). Proportionately more adult cases than child cases seem to be related to dreams, often recurring dreams (see Lenz, 1979; Rogo, 1985; Shirley, 1936). Stevenson's (1983b) Pratomwan Inthanu recalled two previous lives while meditating. A case of McCracken's (1982) involves meditation, and meditation seems to have played a role also in evoking the memories of Uttara Huddar (Akolkar, 1985; Stevenson, 1984a). Lawden's (1979) poltergeist case subject reported her memories from within a spontaneous trance. Pasricha, Murthy, and Murthy (1978) report an adult case (also included in Pasricha, 1978) involving memories that surfaced during a psychotic break. Grof (e.g., 1975) describes very similar experiences reported by subjects on LSD.

With the exception of the case of Pratomwan Inthanu (Stevenson, 1983b) and the case reported by Pasricha, Murthy, and Murthy (1978) all these cases are unsolved, but, rather surprisingly, a consistent picture of adult past life memory emerges from them. Subjects typically say that the images they identify as being related to a previous life are different in quality from ordinary images, in some way sharper and more focused. Adults often have the feeling of distance from the images, as if they were passing on a screen before them (but cf. Dowding, 1951, pp. 44-45). When names are recalled, adults usually report the sense that they are heard or seen superimposed on the images.

Adults identify with the images, but to a much lesser degree than children identify with the previous persons they talk about. While an initial image may lead to other images entering consciousness with adults, the period during which this occurs is rarely as protracted as the period during which children may speak of their memories.

The general absence (and weakness when present) of verbal memories in adult cases makes them very difficult to solve. When they are solved, frequently it is on the basis of a single name or two, not the network of detailed correspondences typical of child cases. Solved adult cases are reported by Lenz (1979); McCracken (1982); and Neidhart (1956); as well as by Pasricha, Murthy, and Murthy (1978) and Stevenson (1983b). Neidhart's is a German case and Lenz's is American; the others are Asian.

Child and adult cases are phenomenologically so different that they may seem to be different types of case. Matlock (1988a), however, argues that child and adult cases are only different forms of the same type of case, and gives examples of transitional cases between the two forms. In the transitional cases, which begin to be seen with subjects about age four, fewer statements are made, fewer recognitions occur, there are less likely to be strong, emotional or behavioral features, and one does not find birthmarks or birth defects. The memories are in all ways weaker than in cases in which the subjects were a few years younger when the memories first penetrated into consciousness. There is, moreover, a gradual attenuation in the strength of the reported memories, related to the subject's age. The process seems to be complete by age 15, after which memories take the adult form exclusively. Examples of transitional cases are Mallika Aroumougam (Stevenson, 1974c), Hair Kam Kanya (Stevenson, 1983b), and Suleyman Andary (Stevenson, 1980). The case of Uttara Huddar (Stevenson, 1984b) appears to be anomalous in the strong penetration of the previous personality, but is perhaps explicable in terms of the subject's relative psychological and physical maturity, which could have impeded a more complete integration of the memories.

For all we know, children's memories may arise in the same way as those of adults, the main difference being the relative abundance and detail of children's memories. Much work remains to be done with adult cases and their relation to child cases. The available adult cases are as a whole considerably less well investigated than child cases; most were studied by lay researchers and published in popular forums. They are reviewed here mainly in the hope of stimulating more serious research with adult cases.

2.5. *Special and Variant Types of Case*

2.5.1. *Cases with Written Records*

Cases in which written records of a subject's statements were made prior to verifications of them are important because in these cases lapses and distortions of memory, as well as the possibility of contamination from knowledge of the previous person's family, are minimized. Unfortunately they are very rare. Of Stevenson's approximately 2,500 cases, only 24 (less than 1%) include written records made before verifications (Stevenson & Samararatne, 1988), and only 12 have been published.

The earliest published were the case of Prabhu (Sunderlal, 1924) and the cases of Jagdish Chandra (Sahay, 1927) and Vishwa Nath (Sahay, 1927), called by Stevenson (1975b) Bishen Chand Kapoor. Other cases with written records made before verifications include Georg Neidhart (Neidhart, 1956); Swarnlata Mishra (Stevenson, 1974c); Imad Elawar (Stevenson, 1974c); Kumkum Verma (Stevenson, 1975b); Indika Guneratne (Stevenson, 1977b); Sujith Lakmal Jayaratne (Stevenson, 1977b); and Thusitha Silva, Iranga Jayakody, and Mashini Gunasekera (Stevenson & Samararatne, 1988). Stevenson (1975b, p. 144*n*) lists three additional unpublished cases from West Germany, Lebanon, and Sri Lanka. The Neidhart case is an adult case from West Germany; the rest are Asian child cases.

Cases with written records made before verifications do not differ from other cases in any obvious way. They do not, for instance, seem to have a greater proportion of outright errors reported for them (Stevenson & Samararatne, 1988). Nonetheless, it would be good to have a formal comparison of these two groups, as we have for solved and unsolved cases (Cook et al., 1983b; see Section 3.5.2).

2.5.2. *Cases with Xenoglossy*

Xenoglossy differs from the more familiar glossolalia in that glossolalia involves nonsense or at most a private or pseudo-language, while xenoglossy entails the correct use of a recognized language. Recitative xenoglossy is distinguished from responsive xenoglossy, where the former involves a rote or uncomprehending use of the language, and the latter involves the ability to use the language appropriately in conversation. Responsive language is a skill, in that it takes practice to learn, and thus responsive xenoglossy (if it could be established) would provide good evidence of the survival of bodily death of at least some part of the personality.

Stevenson (1974d, pp. 14-18) describes several spontaneous child cases with xenoglossy, including those of Swarnlata Mishra, Bishen Chand Kapoor, and Kumkum Verma, for which we have written records made before verifications

(see Section 2.5.1). Elsewhere Stevenson (1983b, pp. 216-217) lists apparent xenoglossy along with other striking behaviors shared by the group of Burmese children who claimed memories of Japanese soldiers killed in Burma. Andrade (1988, pp. 10-81) reports another case (unsolved) of a Brazilian child with Italian xenoglossy.

All these cases provide examples of recitative xenoglossy. The better-known responsive xenoglossy cases (Stevenson, 1974d, 1984b) are hypnotic regression cases (see Section 1.4), but the most spectacular example is that of Uttara Huddar (Akolkar, 1985; Stevenson, 1984b), who was in her 30s when she began to undergo changes of personality during which she claimed to be a Bengali woman, and spoke only Bengali. Huddar apparently had some exposure to Bengali, but both Akolkar and Stevenson (whose investigations were conducted independently) are satisfied that she could not have learned enough to account for the fluency displayed by her alternate personality.

Huddar, in her Sharada personality, gave out many details of a life she recalled from a life in mid-19th-century Bengal, including several names that were found listed on a genealogy of the family in question. Unfortunately the list is limited to the male line, and so Sharada's existence remains unproven. The hypnotic regression cases with responsive xenoglossy (Stevenson, 1974d, 1984b) are also unsolved, whereas in all available solved child cases the xenoglossy is recitative rather than responsive. Thus, it is possible to retain some doubt about the significance of xenoglossy as evidence for survival, much less for survival in the form of reincarnation. Solved past life memory cases with responsive xenoglossy would help to settle the matter, but no such cases have been reported as yet.

2.5.3. *Cases Involving Twins*

Cases involving what are called "identical" twins (twins born of a single egg, or monozygotic) are of special interest because any observable differences between the twins would seem to be attributable to nongenetic factors. However, the only reliable way of distinguishing between one- and two-egg twins is by means of blood tests, and Stevenson (see Stevenson, 1987a, p. 305) has been able to arrange for blood tests for only six twin pairs. He has usually had to rely on his observation of the twins' physical similarities. Without greater confidence in the determination of the twins' biological status, it would be unwise to stress the differences between apparently monozygotic twins.

Twin cases possess other characteristics that make them of interest to us here, however. Stevenson (1987a, p. 187) notes that of 36 cases of twins in his files, 26 have been solved for both twins. Among these 26 cases, the previous persons had been related in 19 cases and been friends or acquaintances in the remaining seven. In none of the 26 doubly-solved twin cases were the previous persons strangers.

The same pattern is evident in published twin cases. Stevenson (1983b) describes in detail a case involving one set of twins, Ramoo and Rajoo Sharma, who remembered lives as twins who were murdered at the same time and thrown together into a well. He (Stevenson, 1987a) summarizes the case of another set, the Pollock twins, who gave evidence of being the reincarnations of their sisters who had died together in a hit-and-run accident. Fielding Hall (1902) describes the case of twin boys who recognized themselves as husband and wife from a previous life in which they had died together. Cook (1986a) reports a similar case. In two published cases, only one of the twins recalled a previous life. Rankawat (1959) mentions a case in which one twin claimed to remember a previous life in which his brother was his cook. Alexandrina Samona (Lancelin, n.d.; Shirley, 1936) was also a twin; the other twin claimed no past life memories.

2.5.4. Cases with Anomalous Dates

There are many published cases with intermissions of less than nine months, and a few cases with intermissions of one or a few days or even a few hours, as seems to have occurred in the case of Nasir Toksoz (Stevenson, 1980). In even rarer cases the intermission is a negative one; that is, the subject was born before the previous person died. The case of the Buddhist monk Chaokhun Rajusthajarn (Stevenson, 1983b) illustrates this phenomenon. Chaokhun Rajusthajarn was born about a day before the death of the previous person and claimed to recall the events surrounding the transition from one body to another.

In other examples of what Stevenson (1987a) calls cases with “anomalous dates,” the transition from one body to another is said to have occurred when the subject was some years old. Stevenson (1974c) has published a case of this type (the case of Jasbir) in which the subject was three years old; and Stevenson, Pasricha, and McLean-Rice (1989) have recently reported another (the case of Sumitra Singh), in which the subject was 17 when the transition occurred. In these cases, the subject underwent a severe illness, seemed to die, but revived exhibiting a radically different personality and claiming to be a different person (who, as it turned out, had died at about the same time).

Stevenson has at least six other unpublished cases in which he is satisfied that recording errors cannot account for the discrepancy between death and birth dates (see Stevenson, 1987a, p. 124). If he is right in his estimation of these cases, they hold a particular theoretical challenge, for they indicate that reincarnation need not necessarily occur before the subject’s birth. Such cases resemble possession cases except that the possession appears to be permanent rather than transitory (cf. Stevenson, 1974c, pp. 374-377).

With the exception of the case of Choakhun Rajusthajarn (Stevenson, 1983b), who was in his 60s when Stevenson interviewed him, anomalous date

cases have not been followed for long enough for us to determine that there will not be a reversion to the original personality (Jasbir had been followed 17 years and Sumitra two years by the time of publication). In all cases, however, the second personality has remained in control considerably longer than the four months that occurred in the case of Lurancy Vennum (Myers, 1903, v. 1, pp. 360-368; Stevens, 1897), which provides *the closest parallel from the literature on possession*. In a more recent case reported by Giovetti (1985), the period of possession (36 hours) was even shorter.

2.5.5. *Claimed Lives as Nonhuman Animals*

The belief that human beings can be reborn as nonhuman animals is widespread, being found not only in Hinduism and Buddhism, but also throughout Africa (Besterman, 1968; Parrinder, 1951) and among some American Indian tribes (Hall, 1956). Given this fact, it is somewhat surprising that so few claims to have once been animals are made. Even if past life memory cases are not responses to cultural demands (as the fantasy hypothesis holds), one might expect cultural demands to shape them more often than one finds in this instance.

Claims to remember animal lives are extremely rare (Stevenson, 1987a, p. 210). They occur in only two of Stevenson's published cases. Wamasiri Adikari (Stevenson, 1977b) claimed to recall four previous lives, one of them as a hare that ate leaves and had been shot, and Pratomwan Inthanu (Stevenson, 1983b) believed she had been a monkey in one or two previous lives anterior to the two human ones she remembered. Stevenson (1987a, p. 302) briefly describes a third such case, in which a Burmese girl claimed an intermediate life as an ox.

More often than one finds subjects claiming to recall lives as animals, *one finds adults in a society identifying animals as the reembodiments of deceased persons*, usually on the basis of the sudden appearance of an animal at the moment of death, or of some perceived similarity of behavior between the animal and the deceased person. Fielding Hall (1902, pp. 298-300) records the curious case of a woman who saved the life of a fawn, believing it to be the reincarnation of her son, and then was sued in court by the hunters who had been pursuing it. The court ruled that neither party had made its case, and retained custody.

2.5.6. *Spurious Cases*

Perhaps unfairly, we begin our discussion of spurious cases with strongly anomalous cases of which we have no substantial reason to be suspicious. Guirdham's Cathar cases are intriguing because they involve features both typical and atypical of past life memory cases. The young age at which two of Guirdham's (1970, 1974) subjects first reported their memories, the presence

of illness on these occasions, and the recurrent dreams that followed, are features found in other cases. Of unusual features, we may note the centuries-long intermission, the strongly mediumistic quality of some of the cases, the dream and waking apparitions, and the concept of group reincarnation itself, which in a later book (Guirdham, 1976) is revealed to have occurred at intervals over the last 2,000 years. Guirdham's books have become successively more popular in style, and as Gauld (1982) remarks in regard to them, any final evaluation will have to be made on the basis of an examination of the original records.

Lenz (1979) presents another series of anomalous cases, this time purely adult ones. Again some features are similar to features reported elsewhere, while others are not. In the brief flashes or visions, in the subject's sense of being apart from the imaged scene and then gradually blending with it, in his identification with the central figure of the image, these cases are similar to other adult cases. Lenz (1979) however reports several other associated features—such as a ringing in the ears at the onset of the memories—which have been reported in other types of case (e.g., out-of-body experiences), but do not figure in other past life memory cases of adults or children. The treatment is again popular, and any proper assessment of the material will again have to be made with the original data.

We pass now from anomalous cases to spurious cases proper. Stevenson, Pasricha, and Samararatne (1988) describe six Asian child cases initially felt to be authentic (in the sense described by Stevenson, Palmer, & Stanford, 1977) but which subsequent investigation showed to involve some degree of self-deception, if not outright deception, on the part of persons involved. These six cases all involve features similar to the typical past life memory cases, and may in fact be very weak or undeveloped cases around which fantasy or deception accrued. A seventh case described by the authors includes more anomalous features, and is more clearly fraudulent. This is the case of King David (Heiman, 1968), a report of which appeared in *Fate* magazine. The subject was purportedly a child, but the intermission of some 3,000 years is well beyond what authentic cases would lead us to expect (see Section 3.4.3).

A few other clearly spurious cases more or less similar to the typical past life memory case have been reported. Bose (1959) describes a case involving cryptomnesia (source amnesia). Bose's subject gave out a description of a murder, information that was later traced to a news clipping used to paper a window in a building his family had formerly occupied. The child did not, however, claim to have been the murder victim, as would a typical subject. The classic case described by Rosen (1956) is similar in this respect. The subject spoke a few words of Oscan, a language long dead, but he did not claim to have memories of the life of a person who used it. The information involved in these cases, as in most cases of cryptomnesia, is far less than that involved in most past life memory cases. For a comprehensive treatment of cryptomnesia in parapsychology, see Stevenson (1983c).

Chari, who is fond of labeling even strongly veridical past life memory cases “fantasies,” has briefly described cases in which fantasy does seem to have played a role (Chari, 1973a, 1978, 1981; see Section 4.3). In one such case a girl claimed to be the incarnation of the goddess Kali or Durga. She had birthmarks resembling necklaces, bangles, and anklets worn by this goddess, and continued to speak “with an oracular wisdom beyond her years” until she reached age seven (Chari, 1981, pp. 127-128). The claimed identification, the birthmarks, and the fading by age seven make this case of value to us. It helps us to understand how culture may help to shape cases of this sort, but we may ask why it should cause us to question cases that on other grounds we have come to consider paranormal. Like other strongly anomalous and spurious cases, however, it can help *us* to locate the boundaries of the authentic case.

2.6. *Comments on Case Studies*

We are now in a position to evaluate the case material in terms of the reincarnation and fantasy hypotheses.

The reincarnation hypothesis, admittedly, is so far in good shape. However we are to account for past life memory cases, it is obvious that they are very similar to each other, regardless of the cultures from which they are reported. Everywhere the majority of subjects are said to have begun speaking of previous lives between two and five years old and to have ceased speaking about them between the ages of five and eight. In addition to making reportedly veridical statements about deceased persons and the lives they lived, subjects are said to have recognized persons connected with the previous life and to have behaved in ways unusual in their families and peer groups but consistent with the behavior of the persons with whom they identify. They are said to have skills possessed by these persons but unlearned in their present lives and to have phobias related to the way the persons they are talking about died.

Subjects may be said to share physical characteristics with the previous persons ranging from general likenesses to specific internal diseases, birthmarks, or birth defects. In addition, there are frequently associated features such as the previous persons’ expressed intention to return, dreams in which these persons seem to announce their arrival in the subjects’ families, and pregnancy cravings on the part of the mothers that match the food preferences of both the previous persons’ and the subjects’ after they are born. Subjects may be said to have remembered events between the death of the previous persons and their own births and to have given accounts of how they came to be born to their parents.

This description of course applies to child cases. Adult cases are somewhat different, although very similar to one another in their way. In order to explain these similarities according to the fantasy hypothesis, we would have

to assume a diffusion of beliefs of immense antiquity. Past life memory cases with the features summarized above have been reported from Hindu cultures (India), Buddhist cultures (Thailand, Burma, and the Sinhalese of Sri Lanka), Islamic cultures (Druse and Alevi), African cultures (Igbo), and North American Indian cultures (Tlingit, Haida, Kutchin, Gitksan, Beaver, Carrier), as well as from throughout Europe and the United States, to name just those societies and areas that have contributed a substantial number of cases. Moreover, the belief in reincarnation—with corollary beliefs in the possibility of recalling previous lives and in the specific ways they should be recalled when they are—must have been maintained in some places (e.g., Europe) not only in the absence of cultural sanction, but in the face of outright prohibition.

We must not forget that we have records of many—hundreds, if we count unpublished cases (see Section 3)—past life memory cases that are not only veridical, but solved. Brody (1979a, 1979b) regards this fact as the strongest point in favor of Stevenson's interpretation of the cases as suggestive of reincarnation. But it is worth noting that even if we disregard the veridical nature of the cases—even were we to hypothesize fatal flaws in the methods of investigating them—we would still have to explain why cases so similar to each other have been reported by so many persons from so many places over such a length of time.

This consideration helps to tilt the balance of argument in favor of paranormality, but it would be unwise to dismiss the fantasy hypothesis so soon. We have seen that conformance to beliefs seems to be the best explanation for claims to recall lives as nonhuman animals. And if beliefs are so clearly implicated in this instance, why not in others?

Indeed, in several societies one finds a belief in the possibility of reincarnating in more than one body at the same time. Such belief occurs among the Igbo (Stevenson, 1985) and other West African tribes (Parrinder, 1951), the Tibetans, the Burmese, the Eskimo (Stevenson, 1987a), and several American Indian societies in Alaska and British Columbia (de Laguna, 1972; Mills, 1988a, 1988b; Stevenson, 1975a). De Laguna (1972) describes cases with multiple identifications of the same previous person, but they are all of the weak and undeveloped variety, and do not include verbal claims by more than one subject to recall the same previous life. Mills (1988b) and Stevenson (1975a) report similar experiences with the Gitksan and Haida. We seem to be confronted here with identifications imposed by adult members of the society, such as occurs when animals are identified as reincarnations of deceased persons.

Undeniably the majority of cases occur in places where beliefs about the possibility of remembering previous lives are found, and it is clear that in many instances families had heard of other cases before their children began speaking of previous lives (Barker & Pasricha, 1979). In cases in which a child is born into a family with older children who have spoken of previous lives

(and there are these), the child would have had direct exposure to cases. In many cases subjects claim to remember the lives of grandparents, deceased siblings, or other relatives. Predicted returns and announcing dreams would also predispose a family to think a given person had returned. Moreover, Gauld (1985) has drawn attention to the fact that very few cases have come down to us from before the mid-19th century, even in sources in which we might expect to find them.

We must therefore take seriously the possibility that cultural and social factors are responsible for some cases or some aspects of all cases. This cannot be the entire explanation, because there are many well-developed cases in which the two families lived far apart and were unknown to each other before the child began to speak of the previous life (Section 3.4.1). But even if in the end reincarnation comes to seem the most satisfactory interpretation of the cases as a group, social and cultural influences of some sort on their individual expression probably are unavoidable.

3. Patterns Across Cases

Unlike case studies, which have been reported by many persons over many years, pattern analyses have been conducted mostly by Stevenson and his colleagues during the last two decades. Section 3.1 provides an overview of pattern analyses and Section 3.2 describes and evaluates Stevenson's case collection, on which most of these studies were based. The following sections summarize findings from the pattern analyses. Special attention is paid to cultural factors and influences.

Section 3.3 describes cultural variations on the recurrent features of cases identified in Section 2.3. Section 3.4 treats studies of the relationship between the subject and the previous person, such as length of intermission and differences in sex and socioeconomic status. Section 3.5 discusses analyses of other variables and Section 3.6 considers replication studies. Section 3.7 returns to an evaluation of the reincarnation and fantasy hypotheses.

3.1. Pattern Analyses

The first pattern analyses were of demographics and other features of cases culturally and cross-culturally. In the late 1960s Stevenson reported summary data on cases among the Tlingit Indians (Stevenson, 1966a) and Eskimo (Stevenson, 1971a) of Alaska. In 1970 Slobodin published an analysis of cases among the Kutchin of British Columbia and Stevenson compared cases from among the Alevi of Turkey, the Druse of Lebanon, and the Tlingit. Later Stevenson (1975a) turned his attention to the Tlingit's neighbors, the Haida.

Summary data for India appears in Stevenson (1975b), for Sri Lanka in

Stevenson (1977a), for Lebanon and Turkey in Stevenson (1980), and for Thailand and Burma in Stevenson (1983b). Stevenson (1983a) has also compared nontribal American cases with cases from India. More recently he (Stevenson, 1986a) has compared cases from the Igbo of Nigeria with cases from nine other cultures. Many of these data are summarized and updated in Stevenson (1987a). Mills (1988a, 1988b) compares features of cases from the Beaver, Gitksan, and Wet'suwet'en (Bulkley River Carrier) Indians of British Columbia.

Pasricha (1978) and Pasricha and Stevenson (1979) compare a series of cases investigated by Pasricha with cases previously studied by Stevenson. Cook, Pasricha, Samararatne, U Win Maung, and Stevenson (1983b) compare solved and unsolved cases. Pasricha and Stevenson (1987) compare cases two generations apart. Chadha and Stevenson (1988) report correlates to cases in which the previous person died violently. Matlock (1989a) examines the relation of the subject's age at first speaking of his or her memories to external stimuli (cues) to the memories on that occasion.

All pattern analyses except those of Slobodin (1970), Mills (1988a, 1988b), and Matlock (1989a) were reported by Stevenson and his colleagues, and are based on the case collection described in Section 3.2. The Matlock study was based on published cases, the majority of them Stevenson's, but the samples of Slobodin and Mills were entirely independent. (Although Pasricha's 1978 study was done independently of Stevenson, her cases are included in Stevenson's collection; see Pasricha & Stevenson, 1979.)

Studies based on independent series of cases have advantages in terms of comparison, but they may have disadvantages also. As anthropologists, Slobodin and Mills appear to have included in their studies all cases that were reported to them, regardless of their evidential value. Stevenson, by contrast, usually includes in his samples only cases he has investigated, and in whose authenticity (if not in whose paranormal aspects) he places confidence. The studies of Slobodin and Mills are therefore not strictly comparable to those of Stevenson.

Stevenson's studies themselves are not truly comparable to one another, because the samples used in different studies often are based on different criteria. Many studies combine solved and unsolved cases, although some studies are restricted to one or the other. Sample sizes also vary because the case collection from which they were drawn has grown.

Descriptive statistics only are reported in most studies, but a few (Chadha & Stevenson, 1988; Cook et al., 1983b; Matlock, 1989a; Pasricha & Stevenson, 1979, 1987) employ inferential statistics as well. When two or more analyses of the same variable or relationship of variables have been reported, the most recent one usually is cited here. Sample sizes as well as percentages and probability values are given whenever appropriate. In general, all figures are treated as if they were contemporary and comparable, and due allowances should be made for the considerations raised above.

3.2. *Stevenson's Case Collection*

As described by Cook (1986b), the case collection at the University of Virginia's Division of Personality Studies consists of a main collection and a smaller miscellaneous collection. The main collection contains primarily child cases while the miscellaneous collection contains adult and other cases purged from the main collection in accordance with tighter requirements for admitting a case to the collection introduced in the early 1980s. During the first years of Stevenson's research, nearly all past life memory claims reported to his Division were admitted to the (main) collection. The most recent census figure given for the main collection is 2,500 cases (Stevenson & Samararatne, 1988), of which only a small portion have been reported or summarized in print (see Section 2.1).

With only a small proportion of the cases in the collection published, it is reasonable to ask how representative of all the cases the published cases are. Stevenson has published cases with a wide range of evidential strengths, from unsolved cases to solved cases rich in specific verbal, imaged, behavioral, and physical memories, and this should give us some confidence in the representativeness of the published cases. This confidence is strengthened by the finding (Matlock, 1989a) of close agreement between means of subjects' ages, proportions of subjects' sexes, and other factors in a sample of 95 published cases and figures reported for larger series of unpublished cases (although the Matlock data do not agree with Stevenson's in all respects; see Sections 3.4.3 and 3.4.6).

We must also ask how representative Stevenson's cases are of the past life memory case as a type. The majority of Stevenson's cases come from certain regions and certain countries within them (Section 3.1). These are the places where he and his colleagues have made the most serious efforts to locate and study cases, and does not mean that there are not cases to be found elsewhere. Indeed, we have seen that other authors (e.g., Emmons, 1982; Mills, 1988a, 1988b; Slobodin, 1970) have reported cases from other societies. Stevenson (1987a) himself believes that many cases are to be found in Tibet, Japan, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, besides those countries in which he has worked. Cases are known to occur also among the Australian Aborigines (Warner, 1937), throughout equatorial Africa (Besterman, 1968; Parrinder, 1951), and among North American Indian tribes besides those already mentioned (Hall, 1956).

The number of Stevenson's cases from any given society is not necessarily an indication of their incidence within that society. Stevenson has more cases from Burma than from any other place (Cook, 1986b), but a higher incidence may occur in Lebanon (Stevenson, 1980, p. 8). To date only a single systematic survey has been conducted. This arrived at a prevalence count of 2.2 cases per 1,000 persons in a development block in northern India (Barker & Pasricha, 1979).

Almost all of Stevenson's cases have come to his attention through news

counts or have been voluntarily reported to him, and they are not necessarily representative of all cases in character. There is evidence that information about cases with particularly dramatic features is most widely dispersed (Barker & Pasricha, 1979, p. 239). Cases with previous persons of considerably better socioeconomic circumstances than the subject (Section 3.4.5) and cases in which the previous person died violently (Section 3.4.6) may be disproportionately represented in the collection. The proportion of cases with both the subject and the previous person in the same family coming to Stevenson's attention has increased markedly since the beginning of his research, suggesting that these private "same family" cases were held back initially (Stevenson, 1975b, p. 2).

The cases in the files, like the published cases, vary greatly in quality (Stevenson, 1974c, p. 2). Moreover, there are intriguing suggestions that the quality of cases varies by culture. This last point is worth emphasizing, because it may indicate the strongest source of bias in Stevenson's collection. The seven Tlingit Indian cases in *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* were among the weakest in the book, both individually and as a group, but in their weaknesses they are representative of cases found on the Northwest Coast of North America. Haida cases are also notably weak (Stevenson, 1975a), as are other cases from that region (see de Laguna, 1972; Goulet, 1982; Mills, 1988a, 1988b; Slobodin, 1970).

Cases reported from other areas outside the parts of Asia where most of the more developed cases occur are also relatively weak. Although many fine cases have been reported from north India, cases in the south are notoriously scarce and poor. Nontribal American cases tend to be poorly developed (Stevenson, 1983a), as do Nigerian Igbo cases (Stevenson, 1986a). The Chinese cases reported by Emmons (1982) are so undeveloped that we would not call them cases at all, except for the fact that their features resemble features characteristic of more developed cases.

Less developed cases often do not include a claim by the subject to remember a previous life, but may consist of no more than a striking birthmark or surprising behavior, perhaps only an announcing dream. The undeveloped variety of past life memory cases has frequently been reported in the anthropological literature. (Matlock, 1989b, found that out of 17 societies with beliefs in human reincarnation—of 42 societies surveyed—birthmarks or other evidence in support of the beliefs were cited in 12.) Cases with claims to memories appear rarely in ethnographic accounts, although there are some, especially from the Northwest Coast region (e.g., in addition to the studies cited above, Hara, 1980; Honigman, 1964; Osgood, 1937; Seguin, 1985; Swanton, 1908).

The fact that there exist reports of weak, undeveloped cases suggest that these reports should be regarded as the opposite end of a continuum from the better developed cases. There are two ways to interpret this observation.

Many undeveloped cases are so weak that a reincarnation interpretation

based on them—much less an identification with a specific deceased person, when it occurs—can clearly be seen to be the result principally of a belief in reincarnation. Identifications influenced by beliefs can be seen even in some better developed cases, as in the Simone case reported by Andrade (1988), where the name given for the previous person comes from a Spiritist medium, rather than from the child subject herself.

One might wish to argue from such examples to the better developed cases, and say that if imposed identifications are present in the less developed cases, they are probably present in the more developed cases also. But this argument would be unfair to the better developed cases, in many of which there exists such a complex network of specific references that the subject seems clearly to be referring to one deceased person and no other (e.g., Stevenson & Samararatne, 1988). Certainly cases of imposed identifications are interesting and instructive, but they should not be made to cast doubt on those cases in which imposed identification seems unlikely to have occurred. Spontaneous cases in general show a wide range of expression, and it would be surprising if past Efe memory cases differed from this rule.

Our observation that Stevenson's case collection contains largely examples of the more developed type of past life memory case does not impugn the reliability of the results of studies based on the collection, but does mean that we should be careful how we interpret these results. Stevenson has proceeded with his investigations as a parapsychologist, mainly interested in the cases for their evidential value as paranormal phenomena. Put another way, Stevenson's research has been aimed at seeing what evidence there is for reincarnation, and he has emphasized the better developed cases. We must therefore be sure to understand the findings based on his collection as referring to the better past life memory cases (those in which a claim to remember a previous life is made by the subject), rather than (necessarily) as applying to all cases of the same general type (which may or may not include a claim by a subject to recall a previous life). We must remember also that other factors (e.g., methods of sampling) may have biased the collection in other, unknown ways.

3.3. Cultural Variations in Recurrent Features of Cases

The pattern analyses discussed in Sections 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6 either are limited to a single culture (such as India) or else compare variables cross-culturally. It is clear from such analyses that some variables show considerable cultural variation. Recurrent features of the typical (well-developed) spontaneous past life memory case described in Section 2.3 also show some cultural variation, both in prevalence and in character. These variations will be discussed in the present section. Unless otherwise indicated, figures refer to combined samples of solved and unsolved cases.

Stevenson (1986a) found males to outnumber females as subjects of child cases 2 to 1 (63% : 37%) in a series of 1,152 cases. The highest incidence of male subjects occurred among the Igbo of Nigeria, where 77%, or 44, of 57 subjects were males. The only country in which females outnumbered males was Sri Lanka, in which 51%, or 60, of 117 subjects were females.

Cook et al. (1983b) give the mean age of a subject's first speaking of a previous life as 37.16 months, or just over 3 years, in a series of 458 solved cases from six cultures. When looked at by culture, the mean varied somewhat, ranging from 29.08 months (2.42 years) for 36 cases in Sri Lanka to 39.19 months (3.27 years) for 136 cases in Burma (Cook et al., 1983b). The mean age at fading (or more precisely, the age at which subjects cease speaking of the previous life spontaneously), ranged from 72.55 months (6.5 years) for 11 cases in Sri Lanka to 125.59 months (10.5 years) for 17 cases in Lebanon. The sample sizes involved in the latter analyses were unusually small because systematic collection of data on fading had then only recently begun.

Other case characteristics show cultural variation as well. Sinhalese (Sri Lankan) and nontribal American subjects are relatively unlikely to mention the names of the persons they claim to have been, resulting in a relatively small number of solved cases in these societies. Only 16 (20%) of Stevenson's 79 American cases and only 37 (32%) of his 117 Sri Lankan cases are solved (Cook et al., 1983b). Solved outnumber unsolved cases in Asia overall (Stevenson, 1983b, p. 191) and in each of four other Asian countries (India, Burma, Thailand, and Lebanon), with the highest percentage (80%) found in Burma, where 185 of 230 cases are considered solved (Cook et al., 1983b).

Igbo, Tlingit, and Haida subjects make relatively few statements of any sort about the previous life (Stevenson, 1985), something which is true also for Beaver, Gitksan, and Carrier subjects (Mills, 1988a, 1988b), although cases from these cultures may be distinguished in other ways. Haida cases are relatively rich in behavioral memories (Stevenson, 1977a). A high percentage of Igbo cases have birthmarks or birth defects. A high percentage of Tlingit, Beaver, and Gitksan cases have birthmarks or announcing dreams.

Birthmarks and birth defects are strongly related to cases in which the previous person died violently, and are found frequently in those cultures (Alevi, Tlingit, Burmese) in which there is an unusually high proportion of cases with violent deaths (Section 3.4.6). The unusually high proportion (39 of 57, or 68%) of Igbo cases with birthmarks or birth defects is anomalous in that only 30% of Igbo previous persons met violent deaths (Stevenson, 1986a). The anomaly may be explained partially by Stevenson's special concern with such cases during his field trips to Nigeria (Stevenson, 1986a, p. 205), but an interesting cultural factor may be involved as well.

The Igbo believe that some children who die in infancy do so deliberately to torment their parents. They call these children *ogbanje*, or "repeater babies," and believe that they may be reborn to the same parents only to leave

them again if they are not stopped. The most extreme of the ways a suspected *ogbanje* may be stopped is by mutilating the child's body, perhaps by amputating a portion of a finger. Whether or not this act has the desired effect of preventing premature deaths, some Igbo children are born with a missing finger end or other deformity that seems to correspond to a mark made on a deceased sibling. (Stevenson & Edelstein, 1982, found that sickle-cell anemia cannot account for the incidence of such cases; Stevenson, 1986a, gives examples.) Similar beliefs and practices are found in other societies, especially in West Africa (Parrinder, 1951).

Some peoples believe it is possible to choose one's next incarnation, while others hold that it is not possible or are agnostic on the matter. Hinduism and Buddhism ascribe reincarnation to karmic forces, beyond the immediate control of the individual, and predicted returns are not usually found in societies influenced by these religions. Predicted returns, however, are common among the Tlingit (de Laguna, 1972; Stevenson, 1966a) and the Haida (Stevenson, 1975a). They occur also among the Beaver and Gitksan, although not among the Carrier (Mills, 1988a).

Announcing dreams have been reported from all cultures for which Stevenson has cases (Stevenson, 1987a, p. 99), although with varying frequency. Announcing dreams are rarely reported in Lebanon, consistent with the Druse belief in immediate rebirth (Stevenson, 1980). However, they are reported with relative frequency in Burma (Stevenson, 1983b); in Turkey among the Alevi (Stevenson, 1980); and among the Eskimo (Stevenson, 1971a) and the Indian tribes of Alaska and British Columbia, such as the Tlingit (Stevenson, 1966a), the Haida (Stevenson, 1977a), the Kutchin (Slobodin, 1970), the Beaver, the Gitksan, and the Carrier (Mills, 1988a, 1988b).

Not only the prevalence, but the timing and character of announcing dreams shows cultural variation. The dreams tend to occur in the last month of pregnancy among the Tlingit, but shortly before conception in Burma (Stevenson, 1987a). Tlingit announcing dreams typically take a symbolic form. For instance, the figure may appear at the garden gate carrying suitcases (Stevenson, 1966a, has examples). Sri Lankan announcing dreams are even more symbolic (Stevenson, 1973c, 1977b). In Burma, by contrast, the dreams are polite and petitionary. Rather than announcing their intention to come to the family, Burmese figures request permission to be reborn there (Stevenson, 1983b).

3.4. *The Relation of the Subject to the Previous Person*

Several studies have touched upon the relationship of the subject to the previous person. As will be observed, distinct cultural patterning is evident on many variables. Often it is possible to associate the cultural patterning with specific beliefs or other social or cultural factors, as was the case with the

Ogbanje mutilations practiced by the Igbo, the prevalence of predicted returns, and the character of announcing dreams (Section 3.3). Each culture seems to place its distinctive stamp on its past life memory cases, which thus depart in various ways from the cross-culturally recurrent type. We will return to this important point in Section 3.7.

3.4.1. *Contact Between the Present and Previous Families Before the Development of the Case*

Acquaintance between the families of the subject and the previous person before a case begins to develop is partly, but not entirely, a function of the geographical distance between the families. Two families living far apart may be related or otherwise known to each other, whereas families living in the same town or vicinity may belong to different socioeconomic strata, castes, or religious groups that may separate them from each other as effectively as would great physical distance. At any rate, the extent of acquaintance (particularly the frequency with which the two families were related) varies widely across cultures.

Stevenson (1986a) reports that in the majority of his cases, the two families had some acquaintance before the case developed. In a total of 702 cases from 10 cultures the two families were related in 46% of cases, otherwise acquainted in 31% of cases, and unknown to each other in 23% of cases. Among the Tlingit ($N = 67$), the Haida ($N = 23$), and nontribal Americans ($N = 16$), no cases in which the two families were unknown to each other have been reported. The two families were acquainted in 52 (99%) of 53 Igbo cases. At the other end are Sri Lanka, where the two families were acquainted in 15 (48%) of 31 cases and India, where they were acquainted in 104 (57%) of 183 cases. The two families were acquainted in 25 (78%) of 32 Thai cases, 131 (85%) of 154 Burmese cases, 52 (83%) of 63 Alevi cases, and 56 (70%) of 80 Druse cases.

Acquaintance between the two families may be of various sorts. Pasricha (1978) breaks acquaintance down by five categories of relationships and associations. Biological relationships between the two families were present in 9 (10%) of 87 cases and marital relationships in 3 (3%) of 86 cases. Social associations were present in 35 (55%) of 64 cases, commercial associations in 27 (63%) of 43 cases, and other associations in 34 (37%) of 91 cases. Relevant data were not available on all cases, while some cases fell into more than one category. Pasricha's study involved only Indian cases. Comparable data are not available for other societies.

In cases in which the two families were acquainted, the subject and previous person are most often of the same family. The incidence of same-family cases varies from 29 (16%) of 183 cases in India to 64 (96%) of 67 cases among the Tlingit. Same-family cases account for 6 (19%) of 31 Sri Lankan cases, 19 (24%) of 80 Lebanese cases, 18 (29%) of 63 Alevi cases, 83 (54%) of 154 Burmese

cases, 22 (69%) of 32 Thai cases, 20 (87%) of 23 Haida cases, 49 (92%) of 53 Igbo cases, and 15 (94%) of 16 cases from nontribal American Society (Stevenson, 1986a). Mills (1988a) defines family in terms of lineage, and reports 32 (91%) of 35 cases among the Gitksan and 26 (93%) of 28 cases among the Carrier as conforming to this rule (the Beaver, who do not reckon descent in terms of lineage, are omitted from the analysis).

The prevalence of familial relationships between the two families bears some relation to social rules and practices, if not to beliefs about the reincarnation process. Hindus, roughly speaking, are exogamous with regard to lineage within caste (meaning that they must marry outside their families but within their castes), and their cases show a relatively large proportion of cases with the two families unknown to each other before the cases develop. The Tlingits, on the other hand, trace descent within family groups. The Tlingits also place emphasis on being reborn in the same family, and a large proportion of their cases are same-family cases.

It is important to note that the figures on acquaintance refer to the families of the subject and the previous person, and not to the subject and the previous person's family. Figures have not been reported for the frequency and degree of acquaintance between the subject and the previous person's family before the development of the case, but this would be much less than that between the families (which include brief and passing encounters as well as strong ties). In focusing on acquaintance and relationship between the families, moreover, it is easy to overlook the fact that in almost a quarter (23%) of all cases, no acquaintance of any sort was present.

3.4.2. *Intermission Distance*

Intermission distance—the distance from the place of death of the previous person to the place of birth of the subject—has not yet been studied systematically, and few data are available on it. Wilson (1982, p. 19) gives a table of intermission distances in Stevenson's cases published as of 1977, but this table is not wholly reliable, partly because of Wilson's failure to distinguish clearly between the distance from the place of death of the previous person to the place of birth of the subject and the distance from the residence of the previous person to the residence (or birthplace) of the subject. These distances need not be the same, and in international cases (in which the previous person typically dies far from home) they clearly are not.

Pasricha (1978) gives the median distance (death place to birthplace) as 10 kilometers in 38 Indian cases studied by her, but 46.1 kilometers in 40 cases studied by Stevenson. Pasricha also reports figures for the median distance between the previous person's residence and the subject's place of birth. This was 8 kilometers in 37 cases studied by her but 45.1 kilometers in 40 cases studied by Stevenson. The differences between the Pasricha and Stevenson figures

in both instances were nonsignificant by a *f* test (Pasricha, 1978). However, they were significant ($p < .05$, in both instances) by a median test (Pasricha & Stevenson, 1979, p. 56).

It would be good to know the range of intermission distances as well as the medians for various cultures. The upper range of distances in Stevenson's sample discussed above clearly far exceeded that in Pasricha's. Judging by published cases, the distance can sometimes be quite long. In the case of Jagdish Chandra (Stevenson, 1975b), it was 500 kilometers.

The determination of intermission distance in international cases is complicated by the fact that all such cases so far reported are unsolved (Stevenson, 1987a, p. 216). If the subject's statements in these cases are credited, however, the median distance—as the distance between the place of death to the place of birth—would be fairly short. In most international cases death is said to have occurred away from home, in the vicinity of the subject's birthplace, although Stevenson (1987a, pp. 247-248) mentions a few cases in which death may have occurred abroad.

3.4.3. *Intermission Length*

Intermission length—the interval between the death of the previous person and the birth of the subject—may, like intermission distance, be fixed for solved cases only. Wilson (1982, p. 17) supplies a serviceable list of intermission lengths in Stevenson's cases published as of 1977.

The median intermission length for 616 cases in 10 cultures is reported by Stevenson (1987a, p. 117) as 15 months. The length varies from culture to culture, ranging from 4 months in Haida cases ($N = 17$) to 34 months in Igbo cases ($N = 35$), excluding nontribal American cases ($N = 25$) in which it is 141 months. In Lebanon the median is 8 months ($N = 79$), in Turkey it is 8.5 months ($N = 64$), in India it is 12 months ($N = 170$), in Sri Lanka it is 16 months ($N = 35$), in Thailand it is 18 months ($N = 33$), in Burma it is 21 months ($N = 125$), and among the Tlingit it is 24 months ($N = 41$) (Stevenson, 1986a).

Other authors have reported findings consistent with Stevenson's. Slobodin (1970, p. 69) states that among the Kutchin reincarnation is expected to occur within a year of death. Mills (1988a) reports a median intermission of 12 months for the Beaver ($N = 16$) and 16 months for the Gitksan ($N = 14$), although the median of 180 months she gives for the Carrier ($N = 16$) exceeds even the median for Stevenson's nontribal American cases, and is the longest on record.

In some societies the median intermission length clearly relates to beliefs and expectations. The Druse, for instance, believe that rebirth occurs immediately upon death, and the eight-month median for Druse cases is the second shortest of any culture for which data are available. Buddhism holds that a

full-term gestation is required before rebirth, and cases from Buddhist cultures (Burma, Thailand, Sinhalese of Sri Lanka) have a median of greater than nine months. In most other societies there are no beliefs regarding the appropriate interval between lives. There appears to be no determining belief for the 4-month median intermission in Haida cases, or for the 141-month median in nontribal American cases. The long median in Carrier cases may simply reflect the fact that the Carrier expect subjects to be identifiable with specific deceased persons after long periods of time (Mills, 1988a).

Again, the median tells us little about the range. Stevenson (1987a, p. 171) says that in the cases he has examined, the intermission length varies from a few hours to 20 years or more. Elsewhere (Stevenson, 1973b, p. 31) he mentions a solved Sri Lankan case with an intermission of 82 years, which may be the record-holder.

Some studies have tried to relate intermission length to other variables. Chadha and Stevenson (1988) found a significantly ($p < .01$) shorter intermission in cases in which the previous person had died violently than in cases in which the death had been natural, although this finding held only overall for 326 cases from eight cultures and individually for 108 Indian cases, and was not confirmed by Matlock (1989a) with a series of 56 published cases.

Stevenson (1987a, p. 208) found no significant relationship between intermission length and the abundance of memories a subject expresses and Matlock (1989a) found no significant relationship between intermission length and the subject's age at first speaking of memories, or between intermission length and European as opposed to non-European cases (with nontribal American cases treated as European and Alaskan tribal cases treated as non-European).

3.4.4. *Differences of Sex*

The number of subjects who claim to remember previous lives as members of the opposite sex varies widely by culture. Stevenson (1986a) includes a table comparing the incidence of sex change cases in 10 cultures. In four of these—Haida ($N = 24$), Tlingit ($N = 65$), Druse ($N = 77$), Alevi ($N = 133$)—no such cases have been reported at all. The proportion of sex change cases is 3% in India ($N = 261$), 12% in Sri Lanka ($N = 114$), 13% in Thailand ($N = 32$), and 15% ($N = 60$) in nontribal American society. In Burma the rate is 33% ($N = 154$), the highest rate in any of the cultures studied by Stevenson. Slobodin (1970) reports a rate of 50% for 44 Kutchin Indian cases. Mills (1988a) reports finding no sex change cases among the Gitksan ($N = 35$) or Carrier ($N = 28$), but 3 (13%) out of 23 cases among the Beaver.

The absence of sex change cases in some cultures may be related to beliefs about the reincarnation process. The Druse, Alevi, Tlingit, and Carrier all hold it to be impossible to change sex between lives, according to Stevenson (1987a, p. 173) and Mills (1988a). De Laguna (1972) reports sex change

cases for the Tlingit, but she was working with an interior group, while Stevenson and Mills visited a more southern coastal branch. The Haida and the Gitksan do not rule out the possibility of changing sex (Mills, 1988a, 1988b; Stevenson, 1975a), although no sex change cases have been reported from these societies.

In Nigeria male and female subjects have claimed to recall previous lives as the opposite sex equally often (Stevenson, 1986a). Taking together cases from all other cultures where sex change cases are found, female subjects have more often claimed previous lives as males than vice versa by a 3-to-1 margin (Stevenson, 1987a, p. 174). In some cultures the proportion is even higher; in the United States, only 1 of 15 children claiming to remember a previous life of the opposite sex was a boy (Stevenson, 1983a). The imbalance is particularly striking, given the disproportionate number of male subjects in most cultures (Stevenson, 1986a; see Section 3.3).

3.4.5. Differences of Socioeconomic Circumstance

Wilson (1982) attempts to classify Stevenson's cases published as of 1977 according to differences in socioeconomic circumstance between the subject and the previous person, but the errors he makes in doing so render his data unusable (Stevenson, 1988; see also Section 4.6).

Differences in the socioeconomic circumstances of the subject and the previous person are most apparent in societies, such as India and Sri Lanka, where widespread variation in economic circumstances is found. Stevenson (1987a) notes that of his Indian subjects, two-thirds claimed to recall lives in better conditions and one-third in similar or worse conditions. In most Sri Lankan cases, the circumstances of the two families showed no clear differences. In ten cases in which there was a distinct difference seven involved the previous person in better conditions and three in worse (Stevenson, 1973b).

Pasricha (1978) distinguished between social and economic circumstances and found that 34 (43%) of 79 Indian cases represented a change of circumstances (from the previous person to the subject) in a "downward" direction socially, while there was no difference in 24 (30%) cases and a difference in an "upward" direction in 21 (27%) cases. She found that 45 (58%) of 78 cases represented a change of circumstances in a downward direction economically; there was no difference in 16 (21%) cases, and a difference in an upward direction in 17 (21%) cases.

Where there was a difference between circumstances (whether in an upward or downward direction), this was not always marked. Of the 55 cases with differences in social circumstance, the difference was "small" in 17 (31%) cases, "moderate" in 23 (42%) cases, and "great" in 15 (27%) cases. Of 62 cases with difference in economic circumstance, the difference was small in 22 (35%) cases, moderate in 24 (39%) cases, and great in 16 (26%) cases.

A fairly consistent picture emerges from Barker and Pasricha's (1979) survey of cases in northern India. Of 15 cases for which information was obtained, there was no change of caste in 3 cases (20%), a "demotion" in 8 cases (53%), and a "promotion" in 4 cases (27%). Four of the eight demotion cases involved "great" changes, two "moderate" changes, and two "small" changes. Two of the promotion cases involved small changes, one a moderate change, and one a great change in caste status.

Except for the magnitude of the changes between castes, for which we may read socioeconomic status, Barker and Pasricha's (1979) figures are very similar to Pasricha's (1978). (The former sample may have been included in the latter, but we are not told this.) However, they differ somewhat from Stevenson's (1987a; see above).

Stevenson reports that about two-thirds (66%) of his subjects recall lives in better circumstances, while the comparable figures are 53% for Barker and Pasricha and between 43% (social) and 58% (economic) for Pasricha. Although Barker and Pasricha's sample is small, it is based on a systematic survey, and deserves special respect for that reason. Interpretation is difficult because both this sample and Pasricha's (which represents a pooled sample of cases investigated independently by her and by Stevenson; see Section 3.6) would have been included in Stevenson's analysis. We may conclude only that while there does seem to be a tendency for the previous person to have lived in better circumstances than the subject, at least in India, the disparity is probably no greater than that which Stevenson's data suggest, and may even be less.

3.4.6. *Factors Related to the Previous Person's Circumstances at Death*

Interestingly, the age at which the previous person died varies by culture, ranging from a median age of 17 years in nontribal American society ($N = 14$) to 60 years among the Tlingit ($N = 26$) (Stevenson, 1986a) and 69 years among the Gitksan ($N = 14$) (Mills, 1988a). The median age at death is 18 years in Sri Lanka ($N = 33$) and Thailand ($N = 32$), 26 years in Turkey ($N = 66$), 32 years in India ($N = 159$), 35 years in Burma ($N = 151$) and Lebanon ($N = 77$), and 55 years in Nigeria ($N = 35$) (Stevenson, 1986a). Among the Carrier it is 22 years ($N = 15$) and among the Beaver it is 30 years ($N = 17$) (Mills, 1988a).

For convenience of discussion and analysis, the death of the previous person is classified by Stevenson as either natural or violent. The latter occurs disproportionately often in the cases in his collection. In 725 cases from six cultures, 61% of subjects claimed memories of lives that ended in violent death (Stevenson, 1987a, p. 160, based on data presented by Cook et al., 1983b; see also Stevenson, 1980, pp. 356-357).

The prevalence of violent death cases in Stevenson's collection far exceeds the incidence of violent death in the general population in all cultures for which data are available. The disparity is most extreme in Turkey, where 73.7%

(59 of 80) of cases in which the cause of death is known are violent death cases, but violent deaths account for only 4.5% of deaths in the general population. The ratios are 46.8% (52 of 111 cases) to 6.7% in India, 40% (10 of 25 cases) to 3.4% in Sri Lanka, and 36.2% (17 of 47 cases) to 24.9% among the Tlingit (Stevenson, 1980, p. 365).

This finding seems to hold even when it is considered that subjects of unsolved cases claim to remember dying violently much more frequently than the previous persons of solved cases are known to have died (see Cook et al., 1983b, for figures), and that violent death cases are more likely to be reported to investigators voluntarily than are natural death cases. Stevenson (1987a, p. 116) reports that 35% of Barker and Pasricha's (1979) 19 survey subjects remembered violent deaths. This is below the 46.8% figure given for the larger series of cases unsystematically obtained, but still well above the 6.7% incidence of violent deaths in the general population during the same period (see above).

Chadha and Stevenson (1988) compared solved violent death cases with solved natural death cases in relation to the age of the subject when first speaking of the previous life and to intermission length, finding significant differences with both variables. Subjects of natural death cases began to speak of previous lives at a mean age of 42.96 months (3.58 years), while subjects of violent death cases began at a mean age of 32.14 months (2.68 years) ($p < .01$). Intermission length in natural death cases was found to be 72.60 months (6.05 years) and in violent death cases 46.50 months (3.88 years) ($p < .01$). Matlock (1989a), however, was unable to confirm these findings with a series of 56 solved published cases.

Animosities, phobias, and birthmarks appear to be strongly related to violent death cases, although there is not as much data available on these variables as we would wish. Pasricha (1978) reports finding animosities in 5 (71.4%) of 7 violent death cases but in none of 5 natural death cases, phobias in 6 (50%) of 12 violent death cases but in none of 12 natural death cases, and birthmarks in 12 (75%) of 16 violent death cases but in only 3 (17.6%) of 17 natural death cases. She also found that 19 (100%) of 19 subjects of violent death cases recalled the previous person's manner of death while only 5 (29.4%) of 17 subjects of natural death cases did so. Subjects of both types of case recalled the previous person's name with great frequency. In 15 (88.2%) of 17 violent death cases and in 17 (89.4%) of 19 natural death cases the subject recalled the name of the previous person.

Pasricha's (1978) data refer to India. Stevenson (1970) compared the incidence of the mode of death and the incidence of birthmarks or deformities in cases among the Alevi, Druse, and Tlingit. He reported violent death as occurring in 39 (75%) of 52 Alevi cases, in 10 (36%) of 28 Druse cases, and 19 (43%) of 47 Tlingit cases. Birthmarks or birth defects occurred in 28 (54%) of 52 Alevi cases, 4 (14%) of 28 Druse cases, and 24 (51%) of 47 Tlingit cases.

Stevenson (1980, pp. 355-360; 1987a, pp. 211-213) has noted several patterns related to the previous person and his or her circumstances at death when death was natural, and although figures on these have not been reported, they are worth mentioning briefly. In one group of natural death cases the previous person's death came about suddenly and unexpectedly. In another group, the previous person died in childhood or youth. Other previous persons died leaving "unfinished business," such as young children to care for, while yet others died while so involved in their affairs that Stevenson considers them to have had "continuing business." These categories are not mutually exclusive, and some previous *persons* fall into *wore than one of* them. Cases in which the previous person died violently but which fit into one or more of these categories may also be found.

3.5. *Studies of Other Relationships*

3.5.1. *Cases Two Generations Apart*

Pasricha and Stevenson (1987) compared (using median tests and chi-squares) 36 Indian cases whose subjects were bom before 1936 with 56 cases whose subjects were bom in 1965 or later on 54 variables—relating to demographics, to major features of the cases, and to the investigation of the cases—and found nonsignificant differences on all but 5 variables.

Subjects of both earlier and later series were found to be disproportionately male (58% male and 42% female in the earlier series, and 61% male and 39% female in the later series), to have mentioned the previous person's name with great frequency (91% earlier and 86% later), to have mentioned the previous person's mode of death with considerable frequency (74% and 76%), and to be likely to have a phobia related to the mode of death (40% and 45%). The intermission was about the same in both series (12.5 months and 14.5 months). The two families were acquainted before the start of the case in 46% of cases in the earlier series but in 68% of the later series, a difference which approached but did not reach significance.

Cases of the later series were found to have been more thoroughly investigated ($p = .003$), but in cases of the earlier series the previous personality was identified more often ($p = .049$), violent death occurred less often ($p = .0245$), and the first communication and first speech about the previous life came at an earlier age ($p = .019$, given for both variables).

The median year at birth of subjects in the earlier series was 1921 while that of subjects in the later series was 1971, a separation of 50 years. Pasricha and Stevenson do not make clear what sampling procedures were used in defining the two series, but presumably they used all cases that met their requirements. Although the study might have *been* better reported, the strong

Similarities between the two series are impressive. We may tentatively accept the findings as indicating considerable stability in the features of past life memory cases in India, at least for several decades of the present century.

3.5.2. Solved Versus Unsolved Cases

Cook et al. (1983a) describe a series of unsolved cases and (1983b) report a comparison of 576 solved and 280 unsolved cases in six cultures on several variables. They (Cook et al., 1983b) do not say how their sampling was done, but the number of cases involved makes it appear that they used all cases in Stevenson's collection for which sufficient data were available. Multivariate statistics (loglinear models and likelihood ratio testing) were employed to investigate the relationship between pairs of variables across cultures.

Proportions of solved and unsolved cases in the six cultures were compared by estimating the lambda coefficients for the loglinear model for the appropriate 2x6 table. The estimates were then divided by their respective standard errors to produce a z score for each culture, indicating how far the ratio of solved to unsolved cases in that culture was from the average ratio across cultures. (The same technique was used in comparing the six cultures on other variables.) The sample was found to include significantly more solved cases than unsolved cases in Burma ($N = 230$, $z = 3.83$, $p < .0001$), Thailand ($N = 38$, $z = 3.46$, $p < .001$), India ($N = 266$, $z = 2.82$, $p < .01$), and Lebanon ($N = 126$, $z = 2.74$, $p < .01$), and significantly more unsolved cases in Sri Lanka ($N = 117$, $z = -7.17$, $p < .0001$) and the United States ($N = 79$, $z = -7.94$, $p < .0001$) (nontribal cases).

Interested readers may consult the published paper for the results of other cross-cultural comparisons. Cook et al. (1983b) compared solved and unsolved cases as a whole using chi-squares or analyses of variance, and it will be sufficient to indicate the results of these here. A nonsignificant difference was found with respect to the age at which subjects in solved and unsolved cases began to speak of previous lives, but the difference in the ages at which subjects of the two groups ceased speaking of the previous lives was significant ($p < .00001$).

Subjects of unsolved cases mentioned the name of the previous person less often ($p < .00001$) as a whole and ($p < .005$) across cultures than did subjects of solved cases. The incidence of violent death among the claimed previous persons in unsolved cases was significantly higher than among the previous persons of solved cases ($p < .00001$) overall but nonsignificant across cultures. Subjects of both groups mentioned the mode of death of the previous person with about the same frequency, showed a phobia related to the previous death with about the same frequency, and referred to a previous death that was violent with about the same frequency.

Edge (1986, p. 347) assumes that unsolved cases are fantasies, and inter-

prets the similarities between solved and unsolved cases as throwing solved cases into doubt, but his reasoning is unclear. A case may remain unsolved for many reasons, only one of which is that it is a fantasy. Subjects of unsolved cases mentioned the name of the previous person significantly less often than did subjects of solved cases (see above). Because names are usually required to solve a case (Cook et al., 1983a, p. 47), this fact would certainly have contributed to their being unsolved. Some unsolved cases, moreover, include verified statements (Cook et al., 1983b, pp. 132-133).

On the other hand, some unsolved cases are demonstrably mixtures of fantasy and fact (Cook et al., 1983b, pp. 133-134). The significantly higher incidence of claimed memories of violent deaths in unsolved "cases (see above) could derive from fantasies in which violent death looms large, but it must be remembered that solved cases, also, have an unusually high incidence of violent death (Section 3.4.7). Unsolved cases may well consist of fantasies in part or in their entirety, but we have no right to assume that this is all that they are. Meanwhile, the strong similarities between solved and unsolved cases justify our pooling them for most analyses.

3.5.3. *The Effect of the Subject's Age*

Past life memories reported by adults and by children are phenomenologically so different (compare Sections 2.3 and 2.4) that they may seem to be of different orders, but Matlock (1988b, 1989a) hypothesizes that the differences may be understood as a function of the subject's age at the time the memories first surface in consciousness. Matlock (1988b; see Section 2.4) describes a series of "transitional" cases between the typical child and adult forms, and (1989a) examines the age of the subject at first speaking of the previous life in relation to a reported stimulus to the memories.

"Stimulus" is defined (Matlock, 1989a) as an event, such as the subject's encounter with a figure related to the previous life, that served as a cue or catalyst for the memories. The cues were external to the subject; that is, their reporting depended on the observation of adults or older siblings who acted as informants for the cases and not on self-reports by the child subjects. The sample consisted of 95 solved published cases, 60 of them Stevenson's, with the remaining 35 cases contributed by 19 other authors.

The cases were arranged by age of subject at the time of first speaking of the previous life, and a median split (2.75 years) was used to divide the series into two age groups, younger and older. A chi-square test was then used to determine the difference between the proportion of stimulated to unstimulated cases in the two age groups. The result was highly significant ($p = .00005$), with subjects in the younger group more likely to have begun talking about their memories without a stimulus having been observed.

In order to examine the possibility of a cultural effect, the same factors

were analyzed in a subseries of 30 Indian and 65 non-Indian cases and then compared using a two-factor ANOVA (with age as the dependent variable) (Matlock, 1989a). The proportion of stimulated to unstimulated cases varied significantly between the age groups in the Indian subseries ($p = .0014$) and the non-Indian subseries ($p = .0079$), tested by chi-squares. A chi-square showed no significant difference between the proportions of stimulated to unstimulated cases in the Indian and non-Indian subseries. In the ANOVA, the main effect of type of case (stimulated vs. unstimulated) was significant ($p = .0006$), but the main effect of culture (Indian vs. non-Indian) and the interaction between type of case and culture were not significant.

The finding of a strong effect of the subjects' ages on the cases does not necessarily indicate that they involve genuine memories. A child's cognitive development may be expected to relate to the penetration into consciousness of images related to a previous life, whether or not these images derive from a life actually lived before (cf. Matlock, 1988b). The hypothesis of a continuous relationship between child and adult cases is supported, however, as is the hypothesis that this relationship obtains cross-culturally. Although further studies need to be undertaken before the effect is established, it appears as if the relation of age to stimulus may be a cross-culturally recurrent feature of past life memory cases.

3.6. Replication Studies

In several instances two or more researchers have investigated the same case independently of each other. This occurred with the cases of Shanti Devi (Bose, 1952; Gupta, Sharma, & Mathur, 1936; Manas, 1941), Sukla Gupta (Stevenson, 1974c; Pal, 1961-1962), Jagdish Chandra (Sahay, 1927; Stevenson, 1975b), Bishen Chand Kapoor (Sahay, 1927; Stevenson, 1975b) and Uttara Huddar (Akolkar, 1985; Stevenson, 1984b). In all these instances, the different researchers agreed on major facts and interpretations.

Chari (1967) and Stevenson (1966b, 1974c) disagree on the best interpretation of the South Indian case of Mallika, but Chari's opinion is based on correspondence and a police report and does not include on-site interviews (Chari, 1986; see also Section 4.6). Wilson (1982) and Stevenson (1987a) may disagree on the most appropriate interpretation of the Pollack twins case, but this is not clear from Wilson's account, which is primarily descriptive. The only case on record in which there is clear disagreement between two researchers, both of whom conducted interviews, is the case of Rakesh Gaur, reported by Pasricha and Barker (1981; Pasricha, 1983).

Ideally past life memory cases would be examined by two or more investigators more often, but because a subject's memories fade with time, routine reinvestigation of cases for the purpose of replication is impractical. The preva-

lence of such cases in many societies, however, opens the possibility of a methodological replication—the investigation of new cases using methods similar to those used with the earlier cases—in order to determine whether different researchers, using similar methods, can come to similar conclusions regarding cases that presumably are similar. A higher level of replication would be achieved if it were shown that the two series of cases were similar in their main features.

A study designed to compare large groups of cases by two investigators working independently was reported by Pasricha and Stevenson (1979). This is a revised version of a chapter of Pasricha's (1978) doctoral dissertation. Because the dissertation reports results in greater detail, it was cited in earlier sections, but the published paper is reviewed in this section.

The replication effort was not entirely independent. Stevenson trained Pasricha and funded most of her research. Pasricha's cases were included in Stevenson's files, bringing to around 200 the total number of cases from India. More than half of these were discarded because they lacked sufficient data for analysis or there were serious questions about the reliability of testimony. The resulting sample of 95 cases was divided into two series: 50 cases classed as Stevenson cases (those that he and colleagues had investigated before Pasricha joined their team) and 45 classed as Pasricha cases (those she had investigated independently of Stevenson).

Of 86 variables on which data were collected during interviews, 9 lacked sufficient data for comparison. The two series were initially compared on the remaining 77 variables, although in the published report some variables with nonsignificant differences were combined. The published report includes the results of the comparison of 56 variables, with significant differences found for 12. Of these 12 variables, 3 occurred among the 16 demographic items, 6 occurred among the 36 items concerned with the principal features of the cases, and 3 related to *the investigation of the cases*. *Chi-squares (with Yates corrections for cells of less than 5)* were used to compare the 45 variables recorded as either present or absent. The remaining 11 variables were scalar with skewed distributions, and comparisons were done with median tests.

Stevenson reached his cases sooner after the meeting between the two families had occurred ($p < .05$) than did Pasricha. Stevenson's subjects were older than Pasricha's at the time of the last, follow-up interviews ($p < .05$), and on the whole Stevenson's cases were more thoroughly investigated ($p < .05$). Both *Stevenson's* subjects and his previous persons lived more often in cities as opposed to villages and small towns (on both variables, $p = < .01$). Stevenson's subjects' fathers were also significantly ($p < .01$) better educated than were the fathers of Pasricha's subjects.

The distance from the subject's birthplace to the previous person's place of death and the distance from the subject's birthplace to the previous person's main residence differed significantly ($p < .05$ on both variables) between the

two series (see Section 3.4.3). Stevenson's subjects tended to mention lives in better socioeconomic circumstances more often than Pasricha's ($p < .05$). Behavioral memories persisted somewhat longer in Stevenson's subjects than in Pasricha's ($p < .05$). Observers reported an "adult attitude" on the part of Stevenson's subjects more often than Pasricha's ($p < .05$), and they reported ESP on the part of the subject more often with Stevenson's subjects than with Pasricha's ($p < .01$).

No statistically significant difference was found on the age and circumstances of the subjects' speaking of previous lives, the prominent characteristics of the previous persons, or the frequency and type of connections between the two families before the development of the case. Granted Pasricha's connections to Stevenson, the strong similarities between the two series of cases cannot be passed over lightly. Given the dominant position of Stevenson in past life memory case studies, any study that helps to reduce the likelihood of an "investigator effect" is important.

3.7. Comments on Pattern Analyses

If at the conclusion of Section 2 it seemed that the reincarnation hypothesis had the upper hand, now it must be said that the balance of power has shifted to the fantasy hypothesis. The numerous instances of case characteristics in a given culture reflecting that culture's beliefs about reincarnation make it seem unlikely that the reincarnation hypothesis can survive further scrutiny. Although stability in the main features of cases has been demonstrated across time (Section 3.5.2) and between investigators (Section 3.6), these studies refer to a single culture (northern India), and may indicate no more than the persistence of beliefs about reincarnation there. On the other hand, we cannot forget that in the better developed cases subjects frequently identify with previous persons through complex networks of verbal, imaged, behavioral, and physical memories, and that such cases occur in cultures quite widely spaced.

In trying to explain the widespread occurrence of the various features of the past life memory case, including veridical memories of previous lives, advocates of the fantasy hypothesis have begun to develop it into a more sophisticated form. Let us henceforth call it the *psychocultural hypothesis*. The psychocultural hypothesis has been the popular rival to the reincarnation interpretation of Stevenson's cases (see Section 4).

Chari (1962b) began to frame his version of the hypothesis before Stevenson began his major work, and has extended and developed it on several subsequent occasions (see Section 4.3). L. E. Rhine (1966) took a similar approach in her review of *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*, and Brody (1979a, 1979b) followed the same line in his review of the second volume in

Stevenson's series, *Cases of the Reincarnation Type*. Brody published his review first in the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* and then reprinted it in the *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, which he edits. Because his is probably the most concise statement of the psychocultural hypothesis in its basic form, it will be used to introduce the concept here.

Brody (1979a, 1979b) is content to rule out fraud and recording error as explanations for the cases, and concludes that we are confronted with a real phenomenon. The main question for him is whether it is necessary to invoke reincarnation to explain the cases, or whether verbal claims may be understood in terms of information transferred by normal means. Apparent behavioral memories might be due either to parental interpretation and reporting of behavior or reorganization of both the subject's and the parents' perceptions with increasing information about the other family. Even a shred of information could act as the reorganizing event, or the previous family might unwittingly be selected by the subject's family to fit the subject's statements and behaviors. The belief in reincarnation would provide the supporting context for such a process.

A good initial test of any hypothesis is to ask how well it handles the data it is intended to explain. Brody is clearly aware of the speculative nature of his proposed explanations, and seems to have advanced them largely because of the difficulties of reconciling reincarnation with the accepted body of scientific knowledge. "The problem lies less in the quality of the data Stevenson adduces to support his point," he says, "than in the body of knowledge and theory which must be abandoned or radically modified in order to accept it" (Brody, 1979a, p. 770). Brody raises his points more as questions not yet answered satisfactorily than as interpretations strongly supported by the data. Indeed, there is a good deal of data that does not fit his hypothesis very well.

In many cases, the two families lived far apart and had no contact before the development of the case (Section 3.4.1). The contact came about as a result of claims by the subject, not as a precursor to them. Brody does not deal with birthmarks and other physical memories, no doubt because they played no prominent part in the volume he is reviewing. But birthmarks provide another strong challenge to his hypothesis, especially when they occur as many do—with subjects whose families were unrelated to and had no knowledge of the previous person's family before the development of the case.

There are other problems with explaining the patterns of the cases of a given culture as an expression of the reincarnation beliefs of that culture. Although case characteristics do as a general rule follow the beliefs of their culture, not all cases in a given culture conform to the beliefs.

This is apparent from the numbers and percentages given in the previous sections. To take one example, the Druse believe that reincarnation occurs immediately upon death, yet the median intermission in Druse cases is eight months—shorter than for any culture except the Haida, but still far from

what the belief would predict (Section 3.4.3). The Druse get around the awkward problem by hypothesizing brief intermediate lives that are not recalled, although Druse subjects themselves rarely claim to recall intermediate lives or give other evidence of having lived any such lives. The 8-month median pulls Druse cases away from the belief, closer to the 15-month cross-cultural median.

The characteristic most strongly associated with beliefs is the occurrence of sex change cases (Section 3.4.4). Sex change cases are not found (or are found with extreme rarity) in cultures in which it is believed to be impossible to change sex between lives. However, some other beliefs are not reflected in the cases. This is true of the belief in the possibility of reincarnating as nonhuman animals (Section 2.5.5) and in reincarnating in more than one person at the same time (Section 2.6). It is also true of karma, if thought of in a narrow punitive or retributive sense (see Stevenson, 1987a, pp. 258-259). The reincarnation hypothesis may rightly ask of the psychocultural hypothesis why, if past life memory cases are derived purely from beliefs, such important beliefs are not more often reflected in cases.

Moreover, some features occur universally, seemingly quite apart from supporting beliefs. Verbal, imaged, behavioral, and physical memories are characteristic of cases wherever they are found. In cases with verbal claims, the subjects everywhere first mention remembering a previous life at a very early age (between ages two and five), and everywhere such claims are said to cease in the majority of cases after a few years (between ages five and eight). In almost every culture males outrank females as subjects (Section 3.3), and previous persons died violent deaths with a frequency far above the incidence of violent death in the culture (Section 3.4.7). It appears that in various cultures, the younger the subject, the more likely the memories are to arise without stimulation (Section 3.5.3).

The psychocultural hypothesis is also faced with explaining the occurrence of cases with similar features in places where reincarnation is a foreign concept, such as Europe and the United States. Certainly subcultures that believe in reincarnation can be found in the West, but the beliefs are likely to be related to adult memories, hypnotic age regressions, or past-life readings of sensitives—not to young children who, in addition to claiming memories of previous lives, behave in odd ways and bear strange birthmarks or other physical signs.

On the other hand, the difficulty the reincarnation hypothesis faces in regard to the relation of case characteristics to beliefs is superficial, probably brought on by ideas about reincarnation derived from Eastern sources and their offshoots, such as Theosophy or the teachings of Allan Kardec or Rudolf Steiner. These systems have in common the concept of karma, frequently defined as a “moral law of cause and effect,” and shorn of all the subtleties attendant with the concept in Hindu and Buddhist theology. Karma makes reincarnation into an automatic, almost mechanical process, and most West-

erners are unaccustomed to thinking of it in other than rigid terms. Thus, Wilson (1982, 1987) frets because he cannot discern in Stevenson's cases the "rules" by which the process is governed, and Schmeidler (1988, p. 193) counts cultural variation as an "anomaly" to be explained.

Matlock (1989b) proposes that reincarnation be thought of in psychological rather than mechanical terms. Perhaps the dying person has some (albeit usually unconscious) control over the process. If one believed firmly that one *could not* change sex between lives, one might not be inclined to try. If one believed that one ought to be reborn in one's family, that is where one might choose to go. If one believed that the period before one's next life ought to be of a certain length, one might strive to make it as close to this length as possible. The Tlingit and other Northwest Coast tribes believe they have control over the process, and some of their cases suggest that they do in fact have such control (Section 2.3.6). Control is also suggested in those cases in which subjects claim to recall having chosen their parents in the interval between lives (Section 2.3.6).

If one does not believe in reincarnation, would one then not reincarnate? This question may be anticipated as the first skeptical response to this version of the reincarnation hypothesis, but it does not follow logically from what has been said. Reincarnation may be a natural process; we may not have control over the process as such, but merely over some aspects of its operation. There may be other constraints on the process. One of these may be the impossibility of reincarnating in the bodies of other species, and another may be the requirement that we reincarnate in only one body at a time.

The reincarnation hypothesis thus formulated handles the data with considerably greater ease than does the psychocultural hypothesis. The links between beliefs and cases no longer pose a problem, and veridical memories have a natural explanation. Many questions still stand in the way of a general acceptance of reincarnation, however, including Brody's problem of reconciling reincarnation with mainstream scientific beliefs. Some outstanding questions are addressed in Section 4, which considers commentary and *criticisms* Steven son's work has engendered.

4. Commentary

Before 1960, past *life* memory cases most often were used as illustrations by writers friendly to reincarnation, and commentary on them was favorable. Chari seems to have been the first to criticize the early cases, in 1955 and again in 1962 (Chari, 1955, 1962a, 1962c). Since Stevenson published *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* in 1966, commentary in the popular literature has continued to be favorable, but commentary in the scientific literature has more often been negative. Some of the negative criticism has referred to

methodological issues, but much of it has sought to find explanations for the cases alternative to the reincarnation interpretation endorsed by Stevenson.

With rare exceptions (e.g., Gauld, 1982, on Guirdham, 1970, 1974; Rogo, 1985, on Lenz, 1979), the recent commentary has referred exclusively to Stevenson's work. This section therefore deals with Stevenson alone. Due to limitations of space, only the more significant or influential criticisms are treated at length, although many others are cited in the review in Section 4.1 and referenced throughout. Section 4.2 lists criticisms to which Stevenson has responded. Following this, the major critics are taken up roughly in historical order.

The comments of Chari (1978) are addressed in Section 4.3, those of Reyna (1973) in Section 4.4, those of Roll (1982) in Section 4.5, those of Wilson (1982) in Section 4.6, and those of Rogo (1985) in Section 4.7. Skeptical commentary is considered in Section 4.8. Section 4.9 returns to an evaluation of the reincarnation and fantasy hypotheses, with the commentaries in mind.

4.1. Commentaries

Chari, lately of Madras Christian College, was Stevenson's first critic, and has been one of his most persistent and influential critics (Chari, 1961-1962a, 1961 - 1962b, 1962c, 1967, 1973a, 1973b, 1978, 1981, 1986). L. E. Rhine (1966) commented on Stevenson in the course of her review of *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (Stevenson, 1966b). In 1973, Pratt made what is perhaps the first unqualified statement in support of Stevenson, and Murphy and Reyna proposed new ways of interpreting the case material.

Hick (1976) receives credit for being the first philosopher to tackle Stevenson's material in a major way. In 1977 Roll first stated what has become an influential reinterpretation of Stevenson's (1974c) case of Imad Elawar, and began to weave it into his psi structure theory (Roll, 1982, 1984, 1989). The magician Christopher initiated the skeptical treatment of Stevenson in 1979. Brody's review of the second volume of Stevenson's series, *Cases of the Reincarnation Type* (Stevenson, 1977a), treated briefly in Section 3.7, appeared that same year. In 1980, Murphy (Leeds & Murphy, 1980) developed further the theoretical context for past life memory cases he had first charted in 1973, and Siegel (1980) dealt with Stevenson's work in an important skeptical paper on survival published in the *American Psychologist*. Interestingly, Siegel seemed more impressed by the adult claims of Lenz (1979) than the child cases studied by Stevenson.

Citations of Stevenson increased in the 1980s, with signs of a softening critical stance late in the decade. Capel (1981a, 1981b) criticized Stevenson strongly in Spanish and Anievas (n.d.-a, n.d.-b) even more strongly in Portuguese. Moore (1981) showed how the psychocultural hypothesis can dispose of a case

with written records made of a subject's statements before their verifications. Sheldrake (1982, 1988) offered an interpretation of past life memory cases in terms of his hypothesis of formative causation. Gauld, Wilson, and Zusne and Jones all published books with sections on Stevenson's work in 1982, Gauld from a favorable point of view, Wilson and Zusne and Jones from negative ones. Onwubalili (1983a) offered an explanation for the Igbo *ogbanje* phenomenon (Section 3.3) in terms of sickle cell disease but then, in the face of criticism by Edelstein and Stevenson (1983), backed away from it (Onwubalili, 1983b).

Child (1984), a psychologist, seems favorably disposed to Stevenson's work; as do Lund (1985), a philosopher; and Heaney (1984), a theologian, but Rogo (1985) was severely critical of it in a popularly written book that has been widely cited. Edge (1986) treats Stevenson evenhandedly, making only mild and passing criticisms. Almeder, a philosopher at the University of Georgia, produced an energetic defense of Stevenson in 1987; but Edwards (1986a, 1987b), another philosopher; and Hines (1988), a journalist, are hostile. Schmeidler (1988) is respectful if somewhat skeptical of a reincarnation interpretation of the case material in her book on psychology and parapsychology, as is Irwin (1989) in his recent introductory textbook. Anthropologists have as yet had little to say about Stevenson's work, although if recent book reviews by Hess (1988) and Bock (1988) are indicative he can expect an open-minded reception from them.

4.2. *Commentary to Which Stevenson Has Responded*

Rogo (1985, pp. 77-79) has portrayed Stevenson as unresponsive to criticism, a charge made by Wilson (1988) as well. A look at the literature, however, shows that Stevenson has often responded to questions about his work and to interpretations of cases alternative to those he has put forward.

Stevenson has engaged in dialogue with Chari (Chari, 1961-1962a, 1961-1962b, and Stevenson, 1961-1962; Chari, 1962a, 1962c, and Stevenson, 1962; Chari, 1973b, and Stevenson, 1973b; Chari, 1986, and Stevenson, 1986d), L. E. Rhine (Rhine, 1966, and Stevenson, 1967), Murphy (Murphy, 1973, and Stevenson, 1973a), Haynes (Haynes, 1976, 1978, and Stevenson, 1979), Grosso (Grosso, 1979, and Stevenson, Tart, & Grosso, 1980), Siegal (Siegal, 1980, and Stevenson, 1981), and Roll (Roll, 1984, and Stevenson, 1984a), as well as with Rogo (Rogo, 1985, and Stevenson, 1986b; Rogo, 1986a, and Stevenson, 1986b, 1986c; Rogo, 1987, and Stevenson, 1987b) and Wilson (Wilson, 1988, and Stevenson, 1988) themselves.

These exchanges occurred in scholarly journals, whereas many of the critiques of Stevenson's work have been made in popular books (Rogo, 1985; Wilson, 1982, 1987) or magazines (Edwards, 1986b, 1987b). Stevenson has not

considered criticisms of his work directly in his own books, but since he has addressed responsible criticism elsewhere in the literature, it is hard to censure him for this.

Rogo also has charged that Stevenson has suppressed reports critical of his work. One of these is a “devastating” report that is said, on secondhand testimony, to have been prepared by Ransom before he left Stevenson’s employment as a research assistant (see Rogo, 1985, p. 79; 1986). Stevenson (1986b, 1986c) has defended himself against the charge, which nonetheless was picked up by Edwards (1987b). Evidently in response to Edwards, Ransom (1987) himself has now gone on record to say that Stevenson did not suppress this report and that “I find it difficult to think that Stevenson would ever try to suppress any writing critical of his research.”

Rogo (1985, p. 78; 1986) also refers to unpublished reports by Barker, based on a conversation he thinks he may have had (see Rogo, 1986, p. 470) with Barker during a Parapsychological Association convention. This charge, too, has been mentioned by Edwards (1987b). In his reply to Rogo, Stevenson (1986b, 1986c) explains that the disagreement with Barker stemmed not from written reports but from Stevenson’s siding with Pasricha in a dispute she had with Barker over the sharing of data. Barker had joined Pasricha in a survey of past life memory cases in India (Barker & Pasricha, 1979) and had assisted her in investigating cases as part of her large-scale replication of Stevenson’s research methods (Pasricha & Stevenson, 1979).

Barker (Weiner, 1979, p. 56) later presented a report of one of the cases they investigated together at a Southeastern Regional Parapsychological Association conference, under both their names but without Pasricha’s approval, and without stating that her interpretation of the case differed from his (see Pasricha, 1979). The case (that of Rakesh Gaur) was later reported in full, with both opinions represented (Pasricha & Barker, 1981). Meanwhile, however, the dispute over data sharing had led to arbitration by a committee of the University of Virginia Medical School, during which Stevenson supported Pasricha.

4.3. Comments by C. T. K. Chari

Chari (1981, 1987) takes the position that the pattern analyses discussed in Section 3 are invalid because the cases are culturally and socially influenced to such an extent that statistical independence between them is not achieved. He accepts the comparison of cases neither within cultures nor across cultures. In earlier writings (e.g., Chari, 1962b) he tried to show that information about some cases could have dispersed widely, thereby acting as models for other cases.

Barker and Pasricha (1979), however, found that information about cases

normally spreads over very short distances, with cases in one village usually not known to the inhabitants of the next. Cases that were more widely known had unusually dramatic features and were not typical of the average case. Moreover, statistical independence of the sort Chari wants is rarely attained in studies with human populations. The criticism simply is inappropriate to the research domain.

The criticism of pattern analyses is recent, evidently a response to the growing number of such studies. It is related to Chari's longstanding critical approach, the psychocultural hypothesis (Chari, 1962b, 1967, 1973a, 1978, 1981, 1987; cf. Section 3.7). Chari (1962a, 1962c) has also proposed cryptomnesia (source amnesia) and paramnesia (distorted memory) as explanations for past life memory, more or less explicitly combining them with the psychocultural hypothesis (e.g., Chari, 1978). At times (e.g., Chari, 1978, p. 315) he has assigned a possible role to ESP, although he has not been consistent on this point. Writers impressed by his arguments include Reyna (1973), Rogo (1985, 1986b), Irwin (1989), Zusne and Jones (1982), and Edwards (1987a).

Chari's most comprehensive (and oft-cited) statement is his chapter in the *Signet Handbook of Parapsychology* (Chari, 1978). Here he proceeds by posing and answering a series of questions. The first of these, "Is reincarnation a testable hypothesis?", he answers in the negative, mainly on the ground that it is at present too incoherently phrased. By "testable" he evidently means amenable to experimental proof or disproof. We may agree with his assessment, and also with the conclusion that some future coherent formulation of the hypothesis is not thereby ruled out.

The second question is, "Are the reincarnationalist anthologies of the West conclusive?" Citations refer to Delanne (1924), Shirley (1936), and various other sources, apart from Stevenson. By "conclusive" Chari evidently means establishing reincarnation. Again he answers in the negative, and again we may agree with him. Indeed, none but the most popular of writers have considered reincarnation to be established by these texts, or for that matter to be established at all. The combination of cryptomnesia, paramnesia, and ESP that Chari introduces as a counterexplanation becomes important only when these early cases are considered along with more recent cases investigated by Stevenson and others.

The third question is, "How plausible are current studies of Asian children who have 'claimed memories' of 'earlier lives'?" Chari's response is merely a general description of Stevenson's case material. The answer begins to come only with the fourth question, "How prone are Asian children to spontaneous and persistent fantasies of 'former lives'?" Here Chari advances the view that past life memories in Asia serve a function similar to that of imaginary playmates in the West. The idea is interesting, but in order to develop it Chari would have to ignore or downplay reports of past life memories in the West (e.g., see Stevenson, 1983a, 1987a).

Under the same heading, Chari presents the longest original case report he has given us. The two pages he devotes to A. V. R., however, are far from allowing an independent judgment of the case. Chari's description of his investigation is very circumspect, and it is difficult to determine what he did and didn't do. He tells us that the name of the town A. V. R. claimed to have been from sounded vaguely as if it could be in North India, but that it had a Telugu stem and ending, which would suggest a South Indian derivation. He does not tell us what this name was, nor does he tell us how he went about confirming or discontinuing the existence of the town, apart from his linguistic analysis. If he is right that the case contains a mixture of northern and southern Indian influences, it could be exceptionally interesting, and it is a pity that he has not described it in more detail here or elsewhere.

Chari next asks, "Are there seemingly 'veridical' cases of 'rebirth' without any personal recall and/or personal recognition in the concerned Asian children?" He then describes the case of Sheela Ratna (see also Chari, 1967, 1981), which involved the subject being told of her identity by Lord Krishna in a vision. This case is phenomenologically so different from the typical spontaneous past life memory case that its bearing on the typical case is unclear.

Chari's final question is, "Are 'mediumistic communication' and 'reincarnation' mutually exclusive 'all-or-none' phenomena?" Here his major concern seems to be that some persons are said to have been reincarnated and at the same time to appear as mediumistic communicators. The example he cites is not documented elsewhere in the literature, and it is difficult to know what to make of it from the short description Chari gives. The fact that occult belief asserts the possibility of such dual expression says nothing about its factual basis.

At the core of Chari's criticism (expressed more clearly elsewhere) is the psychocultural hypothesis. The only real difference between his version of the hypothesis and Brody's (1979a, 1979b; discussed in Section 3.7) is the allowance for cryptomnesia and ESP as well as paramnesia. Cryptomnesia typically involves small amounts of information, far less than that communicated by most subjects of past life memory cases (Section 2.5.6). Chari appears to consider ESP not as a blanket explanation for any given case, but rather as one of several factors that might be involved. This possibility, of course, cannot be ruled out, but if ESP is a major factor in past life memory cases, it is odd that subjects almost never exhibit the faculty at other times (Stevenson, 1987a, pp. 154-155).

ESP becomes the more strained as an explanation the more broadly it is applied. Many errors subjects make would seem to accord better with the characteristics of memory than of ESP. A simple ESP explanation cannot readily explain why some subjects have difficulty recognizing persons and places that have changed substantially since the previous person's death. ESP alone also would have difficulty producing behavioral and physical memories.

In order to explain these phenomena by ESP, one would have to stretch the concept well beyond what has been established in laboratory research or field work with spontaneous cases, into some form of super-psi. Super-psi, of course, has long been a bugaboo of survival research. Strongly criticized by Gauld (1961, 1982), the concept has recently been rationalized anew by Braude (1989).

Physical memories may be due to genetic factors, Chari (1967) believes, although he (Chari, 1987) points out that they sometimes show distinct cultural patterning as well. This he thinks indicates their ultimately cultural source. But few birthmarks and birth defects have distinctive cultural features and even fewer occur to subjects in a direct line of descent from the related previous person (cf. Andrade, 1988, pp. 63-78, and Stevenson, 1987a, pp. 153-154, on "genetic memory").

4.4. *Comments by Ruth Reyna*

Chari (1973a) contributed the first of two Forewords to Reyna's (1973) *Reincarnation and Science*, and her indebtedness to him is clear throughout the book. Zusne and Jones (1982) make it recommended reading, and Venn (1986) also cites it favorably.

According to Zusne and Jones (1982, p. 169), Reyna offers a "new subatomic particle view of reincarnation." Reyna begins by arguing that reincarnation violates accepted laws of physics, and therefore cannot occur, at least in any traditional sense. Her preferred view is that the "soul" (that which reincarnates) is actually a type of meson field with which new bodies may associate themselves during gestation. Because subatomic particles decay at different rates, only a portion of the particles associated with the deceased person would be available for transfer to the subject, and therefore the "reincarnation" (as it would appear) would be partial at best.

Along the way Reyna makes various criticisms of Stevenson's research methodology and conclusions. She holds that parentally imposed identification, coupled where necessary with maternal impression, is sufficient to explain past life memory cases. Maternal impression, which requires the pregnant mother to impress the child in her womb with certain characteristics, is as scientifically controversial a proposition as is reincarnation (but see Mills, 1988a, and Stevenson, 1985, for possible examples). Maternal impression would be conceivable as an explanation for birthmarks and birth defects in cases where the mother was acquainted with the previous person, as in same-family cases. However, it could not account for physical memories in the numerous other cases in which the two families were unknown to each other before the start of the case, unless we were to posit the mother's acquisition of the requisite information via ESP.

Reyna complains that the “laws of genetics” are ignored in interpreting past life memory cases in terms of reincarnation. “If there were no dependable laws of heredity.... A pregnant woman could never be certain just *what* she was likely to bear. If it were not for the control exercised by evolution and genetics ... many incongruous situations could and would arise” (Reyna, 1973, p. 107; italics hers). For instance, a jealous and violent man hanged for murder might be reborn as a son to his former wife. If reincarnation could override genetics, then we should expect to find such “nasty” cases as well as “nice” ones.

Just how she sees her hypothetical case to be in conflict with evolution and genetics Reyna does not make clear. She seems to be confusing two different avenues of influence. Students of past life memory cases do not propose reincarnation as an alternative to heredity but as a supplement to it—reincarnation would add a third dimension (along with heredity and environment) to the formation of the personality (cf. Stevenson, 1987a, pp. 237-240). In any event, many “nasty” cases are available in the literature. Wijeratne (Stevenson, 1974c) claimed to recall the life of his uncle, who had been hanged for murdering his wife. Michael Wright (Stevenson, 1987a) gave evidence of remembering the life of his mother’s former boyfriend, who had been killed in an automobile accident before her marriage to his rival.

Reyna writes as if she is not aware of a fundamental contradiction in her position. On the one hand she dismisses the evidence for reincarnation on various grounds, while on the other hand her meson field hypothesis is intended to account for the same evidence. Reyna is not the only author to fall into this trap. Rogo (1985) also attacks Stevenson’s methods (see Section 4.7), but then accepts his data as requiring explanation, and devises his own exotic hypothesis to account for them (Section 4.9).

4.5. *Comments by W. G. Roll*

Roll (1982, 1989) accepts Stevenson’s data without cavil, although he interprets them in his own way. According to Roll, the personality fragments at death, there no longer being a physical body to hold it together. The fragments remain associated with certain places or persons meaningful to the previous person, and the subject, coming into contact with one of these places or persons, is able to access the fragments through a psychometry-like process. This hypothesis is intended to account for mediumistic, apparition, and other spontaneous case material as well as past life memory cases. Edwards (1987a) refers to Roll (1982), but except for his reinterpretation of the case of Imad Elawar (Stevenson, 1974c; see below), Roll’s ideas have not had a great deal of influence.

Roll (1982, 1989) opens his discussion of “spatial relations” in past life

memory cases by discarding all of Stevenson's cases *except* seven published ones in which written records were made before verifications were attempted. In five of these seven cases, he finds connections or possible connections between the families of the subject and the previous person before the start of the case. Where such connections do not provide for the normal transfer of information between the subject and the previous person's family, Roll believes they could allow for the paranormal transfer of information. Roll closes his discussion by noting that there remain two cases in which there were no apparent connections of any sort (although there may in fact be three; see Roll, 1983, which refers to a Parapsychological Association presentation, but applies also to the paper under discussion).

Roll (1982, 1989) next discusses "temporal relations." Again he discards all of Stevenson's cases except the seven in which a written record was made before verifications were attempted, and again he finds two that do not conform to his expectation, which now concerns the fading of the memories from consciousness after a certain age. He admits that his sample is too small to draw conclusions, but he makes no effort to enlarge it by drawing in the numerous other published cases available to him.

Roll's "*linkage* hypothesis" faces other problems besides the small sample size and the fact that the proportion of cases in the sample that do not support the hypothesis is considerable (2 of 7 = 29%; 3 of 7 = 43%). The hypothesis does not even attempt to deal with behavioral and physical memories. Furthermore, on its basis we would expect to find instances of more than one child claiming to recall the same previous life, or a child claiming memories of more than one life lived concurrently. Cases with multiple identifications (see Section 2.6) come close to meeting the first of these predictions, perhaps, but in none of them are verbal claims to have been the same person made by two or more subjects.

Enter Roll's interpretation of Stevenson's (1974c) case of Imad Elawar. Roll first presented his interpretation of this case in 1977 and restated it in 1982 and 1984, when it was challenged by Stevenson (1984a). The 1982 discussion is repeated, with no references to Stevenson's (1984a) objections, in Roll (1989). Although inconsistent with Stevenson's presentation of the case, Roll's interpretation has been adopted (somewhat strangely, without credit) by Grosso (1979) and Rogo (1985, 1986b). Elements of it are apparent also in comments made by Schmeidler (1988). Imad Elawar recalled many details concerning the life of a certain Ibrahim Bouhamzy, but he also recalled a truck accident in which Ibrahim's cousin and good friend Said had been involved. A claimant to Said's memories was also found. Imad seems to have been somewhat confused over which of his memories related to Ibrahim and which to Said, and Roll concludes from this that Ibrahim's and Said's memories must have joined postmortem and then reappeared in both Imad and the second subject, resulting in "merged" and "divided" rebirth.

Are we justified in concluding that this is what happened? Imad recalled nothing that would not have been known to Ibrahim, and the second subject, besides recalling the truck accident, spoke of many events in the life of Ibrahim's cousin which played no part in Ibrahim's memories. Apart from the events surrounding the truck accident, the memories of Imad and the other subject were completely different. We seem to be confronted with nothing more exotic than the independent memories of two subjects whose previous persons had been intimately acquainted. In this respect the case resembles Stevenson's (1980) cases of Ismail Altinkilic and Cevriye Bayri, who independently recalled lives of persons who had been married.

4.6. Comments by Ian Wilson

The British writer Wilson launched an extended critique of Stevenson's work in 1982. Although Gauld (1982) and Rogo (1985) have faulted this critique on various grounds, Wilson (1987, 1988) has since repeated his major points unaltered. Stevenson (1988) has recently replied to the mote important of them. Wilson is cited favorably by Edwards (1987b) and Irwin (1989).

Wilson (1982, pp. 16-26) notes that Stevenson has built up a seemingly impressive dossier of cases, then attempts to tear it apart. Stevenson's cases, Wilson thinks, should be sufficient to reveal the "rules" by which reincarnation is governed, yet in comparing the cases he can discover no such rules. He is particularly troubled by the "inconsistencies" he sees in intermission length and distance. These inconsistencies do not allow him to determine whether or not there is a "waiting period" between lives or whether one shifts nationality or regional affiliation between lives. Evidently Wilson believes that if reincarnation occurs, it ought to occur in the same way for each person. However, given the great range of human experience, it is not at all clear why he should expect this. In criticizing Stevenson's material for not supplying "rules" that could govern a reincarnation process, Wilson ignores the many patterns that have been found in Stevenson's case material (see Sections 3.4 to 3.6).

The grounds for mistrust that Wilson believes he has uncovered become even more acute in his eyes when he turns his attention to the persons who have assisted Stevenson in his research. Wilson notes that some of these persons are adherents to religions (Hinduism, Buddhism) that embrace reincarnation, and this leads him to wonder whether these persons could have assisted in the investigations in an unbiased way. Irwin (1989) seems to be impressed by this argument, although Gauld (1982) is not. Gauld points out that many scientists are motivated by personal interest, but such motivation need not affect their ability to conduct research impartially. We may also ask on whom Stevenson is to rely, if not persons who have personal interests in his endeavors. His research is, after all, time consuming, expensive, and not without controversy.

Wilson next turns his attention to Stevenson's subjects. Here he makes the rather good point that, given the poverty rate in India, we should expect to find the majority of Indian subjects recalling previous lives of poverty, yet the majority of Indian subjects claim previous lives in markedly better socioeconomic circumstances. He finds only one Indian case in which the claimed previous life was markedly worse than the present one. This indicates to Wilson that there must be something seriously wrong with an interpretation of the cases in terms of reincarnation. Stevenson (1988) has pointed out problems in Wilson's coding for status, but one does not have to allow for these to observe that the 17 cases Wilson is using constitute a very small sample. According to Stevenson (1987a, p. 215), while two-thirds of his over 300 Indian cases involve previous persons in lower circumstances, one-third were in the same or higher. The imbalance remains, but the ratio is very different (see also Section 3.4.5).

Wilson next raises the question of whether Stevenson could have been fooled by his subjects and informants. He notes that Stevenson is sensitive to this possibility, but considers that he has been too quick to dismiss it. Here Wilson reveals himself to be more concerned with charges than with their plausibility or their substantiation; the fact that a dissident witness raises a question is enough for Wilson to call the case into doubt. Dissident witnesses, however, appear in only a small minority of Stevenson's cases, and Wilson is forced to conclude of this and other potential problem areas that there are "considerable numbers of his cases where such an interpretation cannot be justified" (Wilson, 1982, p. 23).

Wilson believes Stevenson's cases suggest maternal impression and parental influence rather than reincarnation. The bulk of his reincarnation book (Wilson, 1982) is concerned with developing the thesis that past life memory is related to multiple personality disorder, in the course of which he draws in hypnotic regression and mediumistic cases (see Section 1.4). Wilson never attempts to relate his theory to Stevenson's work, which is dropped after the first two chapters. Nor does he repeat this thesis in his subsequent writings (Wilson, 1987, 1988) on Stevenson's work.

4.7. Commentary by D. Scott Rogo

Although Rogo has commented on Stevenson's work in several places, his criticisms are conveniently collected in his book (Rogo, 1985) on reincarnation. Stevenson (1986b, 1986c) has responded to some of Rogo's specific allegations in this book, two of which were considered in Section 4.2. Other Rogo criticisms (Rogo, 1986b) have been countered by Matlock (1988b). Rogo's (1985) charges have been picked up by Edwards (1987b) and to a lesser extent by Irwin (1989).

Rogo (1985, pp. 73-86) centers his attention on four cases in which he has detected problems. The first of these is the case of Mounzer Haidar (Stevenson, 1980). In investigating this case, Stevenson first sketched the location of a birthmark on the subject's abdomen. When he subsequently interviewed the previous person's mother, he asked her where he had been shot, and she pointed to the right side of her abdomen. Stevenson then showed her his sketch, and the woman said that the wound was in the place marked. For Rogo, this indicates that Stevenson sometimes leads his witnesses. He would prefer that Stevenson had asked the woman to sketch the place the bullet had entered the body before showing her his sketch.

The second case dealt with by Rogo is the case of Mallika Aroumougam (Stevenson, 1974c), much criticized by Chari (1967, 1986). This case indicates to Rogo that Stevenson "sometimes deletes important information when writing his reports" (Rogo, 1985, p. 73) because Stevenson does not mention in either the first (Stevenson, 1966b) or second edition (Stevenson, 1974c) of his book that the subject's father and grandfather had publicly refuted a reincarnation interpretation of the case, or that he used one informant (the previous person's brother-in-law) as an interpreter to interview another (the subject's father) without stating clearly that he had done so. Stevenson (1986b) admits that the investigation and reporting could have been better handled, but points out the crucial fact that neither the father nor the grandfather were witnesses to any of Mallika's statements, and so their testimony was immaterial in judging the case.

The third case taken up by Rogo (1985) is the case of Imad Elawar (Stevenson, 1974c), Roll's interpretation of which we considered in Section 4.4. Here Rogo finds evidence to suggest that Stevenson misrepresented some of the subject's memories to make them seem more applicable to the previous person than in fact they were. He bases this conclusion on a comparison of the results of a complicated inductive process involving Stevenson's account of his investigation with his tabulation of the subject's statements. One statement is given in an unadorned way that Rogo feels is incompatible with what other evidence suggests. However, he has overlooked Stevenson's extended discussion of this statement (which concerned Imad's memory of the truck accident which took his previous person's cousin's life) and defense of the way it is presented in the tabulation.

The last of the four cases in which Rogo has found a problem is the Uttara Huddar case of responsive xenoglossy (Stevenson, 1984b). Rogo refers to Akolkar's (1985) report as supplying "considerable evidence" that Huddar had learned Bengali "well enough to read a primer" (Rogo, 1985, p. 76), while Stevenson had stated that she could read only a few words. Unfortunately for Rogo, Akolkar's (1985) "considerable evidence" consists solely of a statement of a classmate of Huddar's to the effect that he and she had once learned Bengali together and could read a Bengali primer. Uttara herself was surprised that

this should be construed as learning the language, and Akolkar could find no record that she had ever taken classes in it. Rogo, moreover, omits Akolkar's important observation that even if Uttara had learned to read some Bengali, this could not easily account for her speaking the language fluently in the specific dialect she did.

Rogo (1985, p. 77) admits that his criticisms are "very trivial," but nevertheless considers that "they indicate that a systematic bias may be pervading all of Stevenson's work." He was able to detect the "flaws" in these four cases because he was able to cross-check them with independent accounts, which raises the question of how many more flaws must reside in cases he cannot cross-check. Here Rogo falters again, because it is apparent that he had access to independent accounts in only two instances—correspondence from Chari in the case of Mallika, and Akolkar's (1985) unpublished report in the case of Uttara Huddar. It is at this juncture that Rogo asserts that Stevenson "tries to stifle" criticism (Section 4.2). His major point here is that not all of Stevenson's assistants agree with his interpretation of his cases or indeed have found cases like his to interpret. These are important issues, and it is regrettable that they are presented in the way that they are, with liberal citations of second-hand testimony and unpublished documents unseen by Rogo. As discussed in Section 3.2, Stevenson's cases may well be superior rather than average examples of their type. This may help to explain why others have sometimes had trouble finding strong cases, but it should not cause us to devalue the strong cases that we have.

Rogo next turns to the Rakesh Gaur case reported by Pasricha and Barker (1981; Pasricha, 1983). *He* emphasizes the differences in interpretation by the two authors, and concludes by asserting that since they chose to report this case because it was the "strongest" they had found, the problems they encountered in its investigation provide some idea of "the confusion that may have existed in many of Dr. Stevenson's cases" (Rogo, 1985, p. 83). But Pasricha and Barker (1981, pp. 381-382) say merely that they are reporting this case because it was the case they studied most thoroughly together without Stevenson's participation. In fact the case is not notably strong (Rakesh, who was five when he first spoke of his memories, made an unusual number of errors), which makes it the more puzzling that Rogo should think it would call into question all of Stevenson's work.

4.8. *Skeptical Commentary*

Zusne and Jones (1982, p. 166) brush off Stevenson's material as due to "parental chicanery, the readily malleable imagination of a child, and the researcher's methodological naivete and bias."

Christopher (1979) describes Stevenson's (1974c) case of Prakash Vrashnay

in some detail, then dismisses it with a series of questions: "Did someone tell the child about the Jain family in the town six miles away? Did he go there before his second known trip and observe the people he later called by name? Is this theory more farfetched than the hypothesis of reincarnation?" (Christopher, 1979, p. 182). Christopher goes on to describe another Stevenson case, that of Gnanatilleka Baddewithana (Stevenson, 1974c), this time with no comment at all.

Hines (1988) devotes two paragraphs to Stevenson. He states that "the major problem with Stevenson's work is that the methods he used to investigate alleged cases of reincarnation are inadequate to rule out simple, imaginative storytelling.... In the seemingly most impressive cases ... the children claiming to be reincarnated knew friends or relatives of the dead individual" (Hines, 1988, p. 74).

On the first point, see Section 2.2.3 on Stevenson's methodology. One may also ask how cases so strongly veridical as many of these can be construed as "simple storytelling." On the second point, Stevenson states clearly in all his works that he regards those cases in which there was prior contact between the two families (much less prior contact between the child and the previous person's family) to be inferior to cases in which the two families lived far apart and there was no evidence of contact before the child began to relate his or her memories.

Edwards' (1986a, 1986b, 1987a, 1987b) four-part article is largely philosophical in orientation. His discussion of Stevenson (Edwards, 1987a) relies heavily on secondary and popular sources, especially Rogo (1985), Wilson (1982), and Chari (1978), although he also cites Roll (1982). He (Edwards, 1986a) includes a discussion of only one case Stevenson worked on, that of Edward Rya 11. Besides being atypical of Stevenson's cases, the Rya case is arguably the weakest case Stevenson has endorsed, and Edwards neglects to mention that Stevenson has backed away from it publicly.

Although Rya claimed to have memories as a child, he spoke little about them until adulthood, and wrote his book (Rya, 1974) when in his 70s. Although Stevenson looked into the case, he has never published a scholarly report on it. His main remarks occur in his Introduction (1974a) to Rya and in his reply (Stevenson, 1979) to the criticisms of Haynes (1976, 1978). Thouless (1984) also has raised questions about the case, as have Rogo (1985) and Wilson (1987, 1988). Stevenson (1983c, p. 27; 1986b; 1988) has stated that he no longer considers the case to be as strong as he once did, but refuses to abandon it, saying that critics have ignored items Rya got right while making much over ones he got wrong.

There is no doubt that Stevenson has been hurt by his early advocacy of this case, but his critics have not done him justice in ignoring his public reappraisals of it. In any event, final judgment will have to wait until Stevenson has published the scholarly report he has promised.

4.9. *Comments on the Commentary*

Commentators on Stevenson's work fall into four groups. The first group is comprised of critics who dismiss the material out of hand as due to fraud, fantasy, and "the researcher's methodological naivety and bias," as Zusne and Jones (1982, p. 166) put it. This is the skeptical position.

The second group is made up of persons who are respectful of Stevenson's methodology and the data he has collected, but believe the psychocultural hypothesis is adequate to explain the data. This is the position of openminded scientists like Brody (1979a, 1979b) and perhaps the majority of parapsychologists.

A substantial minority of commentators comprise a third group. These persons accept the data and their implications, but offer exotic explanations short of reincarnation for them. In this group are Murphy (1973; Leeds & Murphy, 1980), Hick (1976), Roll (1982), Rogo (1985), and Liverziani (1987). Reyna (1973) has the status of an honorary member.

Finally there are commentators who accept not only the data, but also Stevenson's presentation of the cases as suggestive of reincarnation. The existence of this group has often been overlooked by critics, who tend to portray Stevenson as alone in his beliefs (e.g., Anievas, n.d.-a, who declares that Stevenson is a "fanatic" about reincarnation). This last group includes scientists and scholars from several different disciplines.

Among parapsychologists we find Pratt (1973), Beloff (1975), Gauld (1982), Thouless (1984), Child (1984), and Haraldsson (1985), all of them psychologists also. Among philosophers, Ducasse (who contributed the introduction to Stevenson's, 1966b, 1974c, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*), Lund (1985), and Almeder (1987) stand out as supporters (see also Broad, 1958, and Ducasse, 1961, for their treatment of pre-1960 cases). Heaney (1984) includes a significant discussion of the compatibility of reincarnation with Christian (read Catholic) theology.

Anthropologists Hess (1988) and Bock (1988) also are supportive, although Bock finds himself parting company with Stevenson on his speculations about the process of reincarnation. Given Bock's stature in anthropology (he is past Chairman of the Anthropology Department at the University of New Mexico and editor of the *Journal of Anthropological Research*), however, it is good to read that in his estimation Stevenson "has had to find ways to verify interview data that many readers would accept if the topic were less controversial" (p. 445).

How do we now stand in terms of the reincarnation and psychocultural hypotheses? The psychocultural hypothesis has seen some small development. Maternal impression has been introduced to account for birthmarks (Section 4.3), and the possibility that some subjects may obtain information via ESP has been suggested (Section 4.3). It is unclear how much these additions con-

tribute to the hypothesis, however. Maternal impression is as hypothetical a concept as is reincarnation, and in any event could account for physical memories in only a minority of cases. Schmeidler (1988) is probably right that the super-psi hypothesis could be stretched to account for all the cases, but it cannot do so without strain.

Specific challenges to Stevenson's methodology are potentially more damaging than are general ones, because they may pinpoint where he has gone wrong. We have seen such challenges in the criticisms of Wilson (1982; Section 4.6) and Rogo (1985; Section 4.7), but we have also seen these criticisms themselves do not stand up to scrutiny. In fact, readers may have been surprised to learn how weak specific methodological criticisms of Stevenson's work have been.

The reincarnation hypothesis also has undergone some development, in the form of the exotic explanations of Reyna (1973; Section 4.4), Roll (1982; Section 4.5), Rogo (1985), Murphy (1973; in Leeds & Murphy, 1980), Hick (1978), and Liverziani (1987). Although there are differences in these authors' proposals, they have in common the idea of a disintegration of the personality after death and a subsequent integration of fragments of the deceased's personality with the personality of the subject. All of these authors give the subject an active role in the process, although Rogo (1985) thinks that the dying and deceased may also play a part.

Except for the hypotheses of Reyna (1973) and Rogo (1985), which were developed specifically as models for reincarnation, all these models are intended to cover mediumistic, and sometimes apparitional and other spontaneous case data, as well as past life memory cases. This is due in part to their origins as hypotheses designed to account for the mediumistic material, much of which suggests survival of the personality in fragmentary form at best (Murphy, 1945). They owe a great deal to the ideas of Carington (1945), who suggested that the mind was constructed of a set of associated constructs ("psychons") that could survive the death of the body. (The connection to Carington is explicit with Murphy, Hick, and Roll; and implicit with Liverziani, Rogo, and Reyna.) Debatable enough as explanations of the mediumistic material (see Gauld, 1982), psychon-based models have even less success in accounting for past life memory cases. To the extent that such models depend on action by the subject to bring in information about the deceased, they encounter the same problems as does ESP (see Section 4.3). The problems are less immense but still substantial if we credit the dying or deceased person rather than the subject with action involved in bringing about the transfer of memories from one body to the next.

A different model of the reincarnation process is suggested by Stevenson (1974b, 1987a). Stevenson believes that a body or vehicle of some kind (to which in Stevenson, 1987a, he assigns the neologism *psychophore*) is necessary to explain the transfer of interrelated imaged, behavioral, and physical

memories from the body of the previous person to that of the subject. The psychophore would act as a “template” for some features of the new physical body, but it would transmit less than the totality of a person’s personality characteristics, memories, behaviors, and physical traits. Past life memory cases suggest that these are transmitted by the psychophore in a reduced or shrunken form. Stevenson’s psychophore sounds, very much like a new word for the astral body of occult literature, and has some philosophical advantages over psychon-based models.

Reincarnation logically entails survival, in that unless a person can be said to survive death in some way, he or she cannot be said to reincarnate at a later time. Philosophical discussion of reincarnation therefore must begin by clarifying what is meant by survival. And here we find no general agreement that the concept is even intelligible. Once we have agreed to set the debate about dualism aside, the main doubt, expressed by Penelhum (1970) and Flew (1972) and endorsed by Wheatley (1972), concerns the difficulty of conceiving of disembodied survival. A body would seem to be required for the maintenance of identity, for perception, and for interaction with the world and with others. Although Penelhum apparently regards his arguments against survival as conclusive, Flew (1972) leaves open the possibility of survival through an astral form.

The basic issues are nicely summed up by Wheatley (1979), who brings Broad’s (1962) psi-component into the discussion. A psi-component may be thought of as a compound of a person’s mental factors, in other words his or her mind, as opposed to body. Survival would be conceivable either via psi-components alone or via psi-components in association with astral bodies. The former alternative would amount to disembodied survival, and although Wheatley considers that both alternatives would be compatible with reincarnation, given the disagreement over the intelligibility and implications (see Grosso, 1979) of disembodied survival, we may conclude that the latter approach is logically the sounder.

Thus, if we wish to consider survival leading to reincarnation, we seem to be on the best philosophical footing if we think of it in terms of what Wheatley (1979, p. 118) calls the “‘minded’ astral body.” Psychon-based models are examples of psi components surviving without astral bodies and face all the philosophical difficulties of that state of affairs. Stevenson’s (1974b, 1987a) subtle body or psychophore, on the other hand, sounds remarkably like a “‘minded” astral body, a point not lost on Wheatley.

Stevenson’s psychophore proposal also harmonizes with the model of the reincarnation process advanced in Section 3.7. There it was suggested that reincarnation be thought of in psychological rather than mechanical terms, with the dying and deceased given some (perhaps largely unconscious) control over the process. If the psychophore has a mind (as in Wheatley’s “‘minded” astral body), the control would reflect its operation.

The psychocultural and reincarnation hypotheses have been somewhat better elaborated in this section, but the balance of argument has not moved from where we left it at the conclusion of Section 3.7. Stevenson's critics have not succeeded in damaging the reincarnation hypothesis, which still seems to have the conceptual advantage. But Brody's problem of the incompatibility of reincarnation with the body of scientific knowledge remains. Because there is little prospect of further advance on this front within the current scope of our knowledge, our best option is to press forward with research, leaving a final answer for the future.

5. Conclusions

We may conclude that reincarnation provides a rational and coherent explanation for the data from past life memory case studies. Further research within the framework of that hypothesis would be appropriate. But it would be rash to declare that reincarnation has been shown to occur. Until the data and concepts discussed in this chapter can be assimilated to the rest of scientific knowledge, the data, at their best, will remain no more than suggestive of reincarnation.

Moreover, our conclusions represent only our best guesses, given the current state of our knowledge. Although it seems unlikely that the reincarnation hypothesis can be overturned by the psychocultural hypothesis, some future formulation of the latter might succeed in doing so. Or perhaps more likely, a third hypothesis, which we cannot yet envision, may turn out to provide the real answer.

However one feels about the matter, one must admit that reincarnation seems infinitely more likely today than it did in 1960, when Stevenson published his first paper on the subject. This is in no small part due to his labors, and to a research program that is second only to J. B. Rhine's in its longevity in parapsychology. Although, as this review has shown, Stevenson and his colleagues have not been alone in discovering and reporting past life memory cases, certainly they have contributed the overwhelming bulk of serious research with them.

Like Rhine, Stevenson has been committed to a particular methodology that has carried the field far and will probably carry it farther, but which shows signs of giving way to other approaches as new workers join the ranks. Stevenson's emphasis on proof-oriented research was and continues to be necessary to establish the phenomena as requiring explanation. Cook (1986b) outlines ways in which this type of research is being extended, including trying to reach more cases early in their development (preferably before verifications have been attempted), more twin cases, and more cases with birthmarks and birth defects. Meanwhile process-oriented studies (e.g., Chadha & Stevenson, 1988;

Matlock, 1989a) are beginning to appear, as are studies that place cases in their social and cultural context (Mills, 1988a, 1988b). These new approaches promise to help answer many questions raised by the research to date.

Commentators have indicated other problems that could be taken up, most notably in the areas of psychological and psychoanalytic anthropology. Haraldsson (1984) calls for formal psychological assessment of the child subjects, and Brody (1979a, 1979b) asks for systematic study of their states of consciousness. Brody also draws attention to the psychodynamics surrounding the children's claims, as does Hess (1988), who points out the potential value to mental health professionals and social scientists of a better understanding of them.

Hess (1988) is probably right that giving attention to nonevidential (as well as evidential) aspects of paranormal phenomena is the surest way for parapsychologists to attract support from other disciplines, because the broader relevance of parapsychological studies then is more apparent. Stevenson has already succeeded in gaining some support from scientists in other fields, but if more such persons were to become engaged in the study of past life memory cases, progress toward answering the outstanding questions would be accelerated.

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