

Bigelow Institute for Consciousness Studies (BICS)

Essay Contest

“Pursuit of Best Evidence for Survival of Human
Consciousness after Permanent Bodily Death”

Honourable Mention Award

Walter Meyer zu Erpen, BA, MAS

Victoria, BC, Canada

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Introduction

The question of whether some part of the human personality or consciousness survives death presents the greatest existential challenge of all time. The ancient Egyptians had an elaborate process to ensure the safe arrival of their Pharaoh in the afterlife, and today most world religions include some form of afterlife. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam teach that the soul continues to exist after death. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism incorporate a system of reincarnation and karma, in which the soul transmigrates between bodies.

In *Heaven: A History* (1988), Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang discuss the ways in which the afterlife has been described, interpreted, and illustrated within the context of the Christian promise of life after death. They consider the impact of the eighteenth-century descriptions by Emanuel Swedenborg upon the emergence of a modern heaven, as well as the influence of nineteenth-century Spiritualist writings.¹ Likewise, John Casey's *After Lives: A Guide to Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory* (2009) provides overviews of the Swedenborgian and Spiritualist influence upon mainstream Christian thought.²

While there may be general agreement among religions about some form of post-mortem survival, more controversial is whether surviving spirits are able to interact with our world. If so, can there be two-way communication between their world and ours? Christianity teaches that Jesus of Nazareth was resurrected on the third day after his crucifixion and burial. His followers saw him so clearly that they were convinced that he was bodily risen from the tomb. Independent of religious belief, the cumulative evidence for some form of survival is compelling.

If the question of survival were raised before a court of law, before any hearing, a preliminary step would be to determine what evidence exists and how to evaluate it. That would require a multi-year process to discover what might be admissible as evidence of survival. Credible experts would be sought to provide written opinions in support of the evidence. Much of the historical evidence would not be admissible due to our inability to provide the date and location of the experience and to identify with certainty the percipient.

Various authors have pointed to the muddled discussions around the evidence for life after death.³ Historically, Spiritualists, psychical researchers and parapsychologists have studied many phenomena that do not constitute evidence for survival of individual personality. As

¹ McDannell and Lang, 1988, pp. 181-227 and 292-303. Several Anglican ministers figured prominently among Spiritualist writers.

² Casey, 2009, pp. 337-380.

³ Braude, 1986; Becker, 1993, back cover where Carol Zaleski refers to "discussion that is usually muddled [sic]."

children we feared that things that went bump in the night could be a ghost. As adults, some survival researchers believe that spirits can interact directly in our physical world and cause paranormal object movement.

Through a broad overview of human inquiry into life after death, my essay will highlight approaches that offer the best survival evidence and those that support the possibility of survival. Along the way I will endeavour to disentangle some of the muddled discussions, based upon personal observations.

First-Person Testimony

The best evidence is found in the unmediated experiences of individuals where there is a straightforward and apparent personal interpretation. These are subjective experiences that can rarely be substantiated by a second witness. Though there is the risk that such experiences result from wishful thinking or self-delusion, meaningful experiences stand out. They will not be everyday occurrences of a delusional mind, rather ones remembered many years later.

As examples, I will share four personal experiences dating from 1975 to 2011, about which my belief has not changed. I am still able to attest to the earliest of those after the passage of almost forty-six years. One involved me as percipient of a spontaneous after-death communication (ADC); three were experiences of mediumship that likewise convince me of life after death. ADCs shared by two trusted relatives, about individuals known to me, round out my testimony. Some readers will accept those experiences as anecdotal evidence of spirit communication. Others will think me crazy for including them.

Bibliography and Citation Method

Since 1983, my research focus has been the vast English-language, life-after-death monograph literature, including some foreign-language translations. Monographs are also my focus here, because they are generally more readable and accessible for the lay person than articles in psychical research and parapsychology journals.

Many periodicals are difficult to locate, with only partial runs available through university libraries. Digital versions of complete sets of journals and proceedings, including those of the [Society for Psychical Research](#) (SPR), are often behind membership paywalls. The parallel publications of the [American Society for Psychical Research](#) (ASPR) for years 1907-1956 are available thanks to the digitization initiative of the [International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals](#) (IAPSOP); the remainder are virtually inaccessible.

A bibliography of over 700 relevant monographs, from the [Survival Research Institute of Canada](#) library database, is appended in the hope of inspiring new researchers. The author-date citation system is used, with titles sometimes included within the essay, and with footnotes where a chapter or page is referenced or elaboration warranted. Years separated by a slash (/) indicate first publication and actual copy. Book chapters, and journal and newspaper articles, are cited in footnotes. The bibliography lists many significant titles beyond those referenced.

Useful Reference Sources

Within the bibliography, reference books include *A Dictionary of Mind and Spirit* (1991/1993) compiled by Donald Watson, *The Encyclopedia of Parapsychology and Psychical Research* (1991) by Arthur Berger and Joyce Berger, and the *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology* (2001) edited by Gordon Melton.⁴ Important by way of introduction to the main academic researchers since 1950 are two volumes of personal reflections of *Men and Women of Parapsychology* (1987/2010 and 2013), edited by Rosemarie Pilkington. The most reliable online resource is the SPR's [Psi Encyclopedia](#).⁵ Regrettably, Wikipedia articles about individuals and topics connected with the paranormal are often corrupted by hostile editors.

Frequent Abbreviations

- ADC After-Death Communication
- ASPR American Society for Psychical Research
- DOPS Division of Perceptual Studies, University of Virginia (Charlottesville)
- EHE Exceptional Human Experience
- ESP Extra-Sensory Perception
- EVP Electronic Voice Phenomenon
- ITC Instrumental TransCommunication
- JASPR *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*
- JSR *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*
- NDE Near-Death Experience
- OBE Out-of-Body Experience
- PF Parapsychology Foundation
- PK Psychokinesis

⁴ For those new to the field, *The Paranormal* by Brian Inglis (1985/1986) provides an encyclopedic overview of psychic phenomena. Other titles are included to show the evolution of such works, including some with a narrower Spiritualist focus. Robert Ashby's *A Guide Book for the Study of Psychical Research* (1972) still provides useful information.

⁵ The [Buckmaster legacy](#) helped launch the SPR's [Psi Encyclopedia](#) and is also supporting the society's forthcoming monograph, *Is There Life after Death?* The response during Spring 2020 to the call for chapters was so enthusiastic that a second volume of case studies is in preparation.

- PN *Psychic News*
- SPR Society for Psychical Research
- SRIC Survival Research Institute of Canada
- UMASC University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (Winnipeg)

Contextualization

Rather than contextualize organizations and topics, or add nationality and profession to individuals, hypertext links to reliable sources are provided. For works by a referenced main author, searching this document for that surname followed by a comma should take one to the first instance in the bibliography. Where known, inclusive years are provided there.⁶ For mediums and lesser-known individuals, or where they provide useful context, years are included within the essay.

Self-Disclosure: Background, Biases, and Approach

A court of law would first seek to determine my credibility as a witness.⁷ Raised within the United Church of Canada,⁸ I stopped attending when there were no older children to lead Sunday school. Suddenly it had become my turn in that role. I tried for a few weeks before extricating myself. The death of my maternal grandfather in 1972 sparked my interest in life after death. By 1975, I had identified a Spiritualist church that met coincidentally in the banquet hall of the hotel my great-great-grandfather had built in my hometown of Nanaimo, British Columbia.

From teenage Spiritualist, my approach evolved to psychical research and in particular survival research. From 46 years of exploration and reading, I believe that some of part of personal identity survives death, at least temporarily. My conviction is based upon personal experience. From the perspective of archivist and historian, I will outline the main historical endeavours to study the question of post-mortem survival, independent of religious belief. My approach will:

- examine avenues of inquiry about types of human experience that suggest post-mortem survival, including spirit communication
- summarize historical and ongoing approaches, including chronology, nomenclature and, where known, who devised which terms
- discuss what we can believe constitutes evidence of life after death

⁶ Corrections and missing years would be gratefully received to assist in bibliographic research.

⁷ In *Noted Witnesses for Psychic Occurrences* (1928/1963), Walter Franklin Prince presented his selection of reports of some 170 men and women whom he deemed credible. Prince brought to his research extensive experience of mediumship and decades of review of cases and witnesses.

⁸ The United Church of Canada is a liberal Christian denomination that evolved from the 1925 amalgamation of Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist churches.

- cite some of the monograph literature relevant to each approach.

Those seeking answers about survival are confronted with the great muddle of what is portrayed as evidence. Each means of inquiry resulted in phenomena and human experiences of which the investigators and percipients were convinced, regardless of their value as survival evidence. Though few experiences can be substantiated “scientifically,” I will dispense with the cumbersome inclusion of words expressing doubt.

Historical Context: Spiritualism, Psychic Research, Parapsychology, and Survival Research

To provide historical context, an overview of the advent of the Spiritualist movement, the establishment of societies to investigate claims of psychic phenomena, and the evolution from psychical research to parapsychology and survival research, is warranted.

The modern Spiritualist movement dates from March 1848 in Hydesville, near Rochester, New York, when the Fox family, including parents John and Margaret and their youngest daughters [Maggie and Kate](#), were disturbed by inexplicable rapping noises in the walls of their cottage. The girls quickly established intelligent communication with a deceased pedlar, Charles Rosna,⁹ who had been murdered and buried there.¹⁰

For decades, *The History of Spiritualism* (1926) by [Arthur Conan Doyle](#) provided the primary overview of the movement. During World War I, Doyle had become the propagandist for Spiritualism. Doors opened quickly for the famous creator of Sherlock Holmes, and Doyle observed all manner of psychic phenomena. Unfortunately, Doyle’s ability to discern genuine from fraudulent may have become impaired by his enthusiasm for the phenomena experienced and the expectation that others even more remarkable were possible too.¹¹ Doyle is not alone in having experienced exaggerated expectation of the possibilities of the paranormal.

Now the comprehensive overview, *The Spiritualist Movement* (2013), a three-volume anthology edited by [Christopher Moreman](#), covers: Spiritualism’s origins in America and spread globally; beliefs, practices, and evidence for life after death; and social and cultural responses to the

⁹ That no historical record of such an individual has been found is not conclusive because Rosna lived before the mandated recording of births.

¹⁰ For the story of the Fox sisters’ involvement in the beginnings of Spiritualism, including their 1888 public confession of fraud, that Maggie recanted a year later, books by Langworthy Taylor (1933), Mariam Buckner Pond (1947), Barbara Weisberg (2004) and Nancy Stuart Rubin (2005) are recommended.

¹¹ Critics dismiss Doyle’s work on the basis that he was duped in 1917 by two young girls who claimed to have photographed the [Cottingley fairies](#) at the bottom of the garden. Decades later the cousins admitted that their harmless joke had gotten out of hand.

movement. My [review essay](#) outlines the 43 chapters, contributed by as many authors, living on four continents.¹²

The purpose here is not to explore the history of Spiritualism or its belief system beyond identifying the movement's role in the popularization and proliferation of the practice of mediumship. Spiritualism also normalized the ability of seekers to consult mediums, who two centuries earlier might have been condemned as witches for communicating with spirits or speaking in tongues. For Spiritualist afterlife beliefs, my chapter in *The Routledge Companion to Death and Dying*, edited by Moreman (2018), provides an overview.¹³

Claims of Spiritualist phenomena that defied the known laws of physics demanded a response. The [Society for Psychical Research](#) was founded in 1882 by a group of Cambridge scholars that included [William Barrett](#), [Frederic Myers](#), and [Edmund Gurney](#).¹⁴ It was the “first society to conduct organised scholarly research into human experiences that challenge contemporary scientific models.”¹⁵ In December 1884, the [American Society for Psychical Research](#) was founded with the assistance of [William James](#), as a result of Barrett's visit to America.

While some founding scholars hoped that study of telepathy and investigation of séance-room phenomena would determine whether human personality survives death, others approached the phenomena as skeptics, determined to prove fraud. Some scientific investigators, upon convincing themselves that the phenomena were genuine, attributed them to little-understood human abilities, within the realm of [abnormal psychology](#). Barrett, originally a skeptic, examined the phenomena and concluded in *On the Threshold of the Unseen* (1917/1919)¹⁶ that some did provide evidence for survival.¹⁷

From the 1930s, some psychical researchers adopted new approaches. Resulting from their frustrated attempts to investigate mediums in the early 1920s, including [Mina “Margery”](#)

¹² Published in the *JSPR* and other journals, my review is available online in [PsyPioneer Journal](#), vol. 9, no. 11 (2013), pp. 330-335.

¹³ Walter Meyer zu Erpen, “Afterlife beliefs in the Spiritualist movement,” in Moreman (2018), pp. 218-229. Despite participation within Spiritualism over many years, my belief is that the modern movement originated in an adolescent poltergeist outbreak that resulted in widespread attempts to communicate with the deceased.

¹⁴ Barrett is credited with having organized the founding meeting.

¹⁵ SPR website, homepage, 15 August 2021. There are SPR histories by Edward Bennett (1903) and Renée Haynes (1982), marking the society's twentieth and one hundredth anniversaries.

¹⁶ This is a revised edition of *On the Threshold of a New World of Thought* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1908).

¹⁷ Not to be confused with Sir William F. Barrett, American philosopher William Barrett, in *Death of the Soul* (1987), argued that “the fact of consciousness as a human reality” was at risk of “getting lost in the modern world” (p. xvi).

[Crandon](#) (1889-1941),¹⁸ [J.B. \(Joseph Banks\) Rhine](#) and his wife [Louisa Rhine](#) distanced themselves from questions of survival.¹⁹ In 1935, the [Parapsychology Laboratory](#) was created at Duke University where Rhine's new scientific approach to the mysteries of the human psyche resulted in repeatable laboratory experiments. The goal was data that could be analyzed statistically to determine whether telepathy and psychokinesis (PK) were real. In 1965, when Rhine retired, the [Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man](#) (FRNM) was formed to encompass the [Institute for Parapsychology](#). In 1995, the organization was renamed the [Rhine Research Center](#).

In 1951, under the leadership of [Eileen Garrett](#) (189?-1970), the [Parapsychology Foundation](#) (PF) was established to support and publish reports of "impartial scientific inquiry into the total nature and working of the human mind."²⁰ Eileen Garrett became known worldwide because of the evidential messages conveyed from deceased Flight Lieutenant Herbert Carmichael Irwin two days following the October 1930 crash of the [R101 dirigible](#) near Beauvais, France. Irwin's communications related to technical details about the cause of the crash. *My Life as a Search for the Meaning of Mediumship* (1939) demonstrates Garrett's inquisitive mind about the nature of her "gifts" and her willingness to subject her gift to analysis. Now in reduced circumstances, PF has for over 70 years supported the work of three generations of parapsychologists, thanks to the generous endowment created by [Frances Bolton](#).

In 1957, on the suggestion of J.B. Rhine who is often referred to as the father of parapsychology, the [Parapsychological Association](#) was created to provide the field with professional oversight. As psychical research and parapsychology shunned mediumship, others refocused on questions of life after death. In 1971, in Arizona, [Susy Smith](#) and [Frank Tribbe](#) founded the [Survival Research Foundation](#).²¹ The [Survival Research Institute of Canada](#), founded in 1991, has focussed on research into historical cases.

Death Defined and Thanatology

For centuries, [death](#) was defined as cessation of breathing and lack of perceptible heartbeat. With technological advances, it became possible to detect continued brain activity in individuals who would have otherwise been declared dead. Chris Carter (2010) discusses how scientific

¹⁸ Biographies by Thomas Tietze (1973) and David Jaher (2015) provide the best overviews of the Margery case.

¹⁹ In *J.B. Rhine, Letters 1923-1939, ESP and the Foundations of Parapsychology* (2021), Barbara Ensrud and the Rhines' daughter Sally Rhine Feather present a selection of Rhine's early correspondence.

²⁰ From inside cover of the Parapsychology Foundation's Parapsychological Monograph no. 3.

²¹ Tribbe was an attorney; Smith was the author of over 30 books on aspects of the paranormal and president of the Survival Research Foundation until 1981 when Arthur Berger succeeded her.

definition of death has evolved and that the precise definition of clinical death varies between jurisdictions.²²

[Thanatology](#) derives from the Greek *Thanatos* (death instinct), who in mythology was the twin of *Hypnos* (sleep). The term was introduced in 1903 by [Elie Metchnikoff](#) (1845-1916),²³ but study of death has typically remained the domain of psychology. Thanatology is now sometimes used for study relating to death and dying, grief, suicide prevention, and end-of-life legal and moral issues.²⁴ Teaching death and dying has become a specialization within comparative religion.²⁵

The work of [Elisabeth Kübler-Ross](#) (1969 and 1974) was instrumental in drawing attention to the grieving process encountered in work with dying patients.²⁶ In particular, it opened the door for public discussion of care for the dying, and Kübler-Ross is credited as a pioneer of the hospice movement. In an edited anthology, she framed death as the final stage of growth (1975). Her research ultimately led to questions of afterlife survival (1991).²⁷

In *Life is Victorious* (1976), Diane Kennedy Pike outlined phases of grief as experienced through the death of her husband [James Pike](#) (1913-1969) who had become lost and died in the wilderness of Israel. Following the loss of his son Jim to suicide in 1966, Bishop Pike experienced poltergeist phenomena and attempted to communicate with Jim through mediumship, including the controversial 1967 televised session with [Arthur Ford](#).

Following the death of their daughter, Phran Ginsberg (1953-2020) and husband Robert founded in 2004 the [Forever Family Foundation](#) to assist others who had suffered a loss, including facilitating spirit contact through certified mediums.

²² Carter, 2010, pp. 246-249.

²³ Kastenbaum and Kastenbaum, 1989, p. 267.

²⁴ For example, Whytehead and Chidwick (1980) reflect the Anglican Church of Canada's discussion of death and dying and moral decision-making around questions of terminally ill patients, as well as legal considerations around newborn infants with gross and uncorrectable defects.

²⁵ See, for example, the *Teaching Death and Dying* anthology edited by Christopher Moreman (2008) as part of the American Academy of Religion's Teaching Religious Studies series.

²⁶ Kübler-Ross identified five stages of grief experienced by the dying: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Her main books about death and dying were first published in 1969 and 1974. Many titles by other authors in the self-help genre followed. Also useful are the *Encyclopedia of Death* (Kastenbaum and Kastenbaum, 1989) and *All About Death* (Potter, 1988), a compilation of quotes by 615 great thinkers.

²⁷ In 1977, Kübler-Ross convinced her husband to purchase land for the Shanti Nilaya Healing Center in Escondido, California, which proved a personal and professional disaster. She was duped by Jay Barham who claimed to channel spirits of the departed, while having instead introduced sex into the séance room, which proves that even well-educated individuals can be duped.

What Survives?

For survival with post-mortem communication, human consciousness must remain intact with access to historical memory. Good spirit communication may convey awareness of current conditions among the living. The best evidence would demonstrate intentional planning and follow through and retention of new memories.

In 1990, Gary Doore edited *What Survives?* as a collection of original writings by 22 experts who explored the evidence for survival, the challenge of materialism, discussion of death and beyond in philosophy, and death transcended. While no consensus emerged about what might survive, some form of dualism, allowing the soul or spirit to survive the physical body, would be required. Dualism has a long history among tribal societies that embrace shamanism. By contrast, materialism holds that consciousness is a by-product of the brain and cannot therefore survive physical death. For materialists, death is final.²⁸

During 2020, the [Institute of Noetic Sciences \(IONS\)](#), founded by astronaut [Edgar Mitchell](#) in 1973, conducted a [survey](#) to question what part of us might survive physical death. Is it “personality, memories, soul, nothing, or something else?” The survey attracted some 2,300 respondents from around the world.²⁹

Some survival researchers believe that the answers to the question of survival lie in quantum mechanics. Jim Tucker (2021) points to Max Planck, founder of quantum theory, who argued that consciousness is fundamental, with matter derived from it.³⁰ In *The Roots of Consciousness* (1975), [Jeffrey Mishlove](#) provided an encyclopedic, cross-cultural overview of the history of consciousness exploration, including scientific approaches to study of psychic phenomena.

In *The End of Materialism* (2009), [Charles Tart](#) investigated how evidence of the paranormal is bringing science and spirit together. *Irreducible Mind* (2007/2010) offers the best contemporary overview of consciousness studies, cognitive science, memory, and other aspects of the mind-body problem, all of which are key to the question of what survives. The book results largely from research at the University of Virginia by [Edward Kelly](#) and [Emily Williams Kelly](#).³¹ A sequel, *Beyond Physicalism* (2015/2019), attempts a framework in which psychic phenomena and

²⁸ David Fontana (2005/2007, pp. 443-467) touched upon the question of what survives in context of the nature of an afterlife.

²⁹ Helané Wahbeh and Dean Radin will present their results in “What Survives Death? A Survey of People’s Beliefs,” in Ruickbie and McLuhan, eds., (in preparation), *Is There Life After Death? Arguments, Theories, Evidence*. Email communication with Dean Radin, 10 July 2021.

³⁰ Tucker, 2021, p. xi.

³¹ *Irreducible Mind* (2007/2010), authored by Edward Kelly, Emily Williams Kelly, Adam Crabtree, Alan Gauld, Michael Grosso, and Bruce Greyson, is dedicated to F.W.H. Myers, “a neglected genius of scientific psychology.”

survival might be understood.³² Somewhere among all those discussions might lie the kernel that will lead to the theory needed to advance survival research.

Memory Challenges

Human memory is elusive, and memory retained by surviving spirit may be also. That may be one reason communication between humankind and surviving spirit seems so difficult. At 63, I am surprised at how often I have claimed not to have seen something before, to be corrected by a fellow researcher with a better email retrieval system. I mention this to raise the question of what memories might survive at the end of a human life that are worth communicating. Skeptics frequently complain that spirit communication through mediumship is a string of banal comments, much of which might be accounted for through the sitter's body language ([cold reading](#)). But when one thinks of introductions between humans, it is those conversational pleasantries through which we introduce ourselves, not a succinct statement from a *curriculum vitae*.

In communication between surviving spirit and the living, memory may be a challenge in both directions. With mental mediumship, there is the filter of the medium's consciousness through which messages must be relayed, often received in symbols to be interpreted before delivery in a private reading or from a Spiritualist church platform. From opposite sides of the "veil" separating our worlds,³³ frustration is inevitable. Here I am seeking a message from my grandfather, then questioning its accuracy. Likewise, Grandpa may be frustrated finding an appropriate medium.

Survival Theories

In 1978, [Robert Thouless](#) classified theories about what happens to an individual's stream of consciousness at death, as follows:

- non-survival (consciousness ceases at death)
- continued survival (consciousness continues indefinitely after death)
- intermittent revival (periodic rebirth through reincarnation)
- terminal revival (the Christian resurrection)
- timeless survival

³² Edited by Edward Kelly, Adam Crabtree, and Paul Marshall, *Beyond Physicalism* (2015/2019) results from collaboration with eleven other scientists and humanities scholars who dispute the materialist view that mind and personality end at death.

³³ The concept of a thin [veil separating heaven and earth](#) originated in Christianity; the term was adopted by Spiritualists.

- survival in a different time dimension.³⁴

This essay addresses primarily approaches that provide evidence of “continued survival.”³⁵ The last sections will discuss aspects of reincarnation research relevant to survival.

Is Survival Universal?

When I pondered the question 30 years ago, I anticipated survival should be universal. With no way to conduct a census of surviving spirit, I would like still to think that survival is part of the universal package surrounding death of the human body.

An often-asked question is whether animals survive too. Certainly, many Spiritualist mediums describe and convey messages of love from family pets, and ITC researchers have recorded images of pets. Given the limits of our current knowledge, I dispute the attitude that human consciousness alone survives because it is superior to that of animals.

Faith and Immortality

Though most world religions incorporate an afterlife as an article of faith,³⁶ orthodox theologians are not keen on adherents delving into the details.³⁷ Historically, some clergymen attempted to reconcile spirit communication with their Christian faith. For instance, Stainton Moses, Drayton Thomas, and Maurice Elliott became prolific authors following their conversion to Spiritualism, intent on documenting what they considered evidence of life after death.³⁸ More recently, some have collaborated through the [Churches Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies](#) or [Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship](#).

Belief in immortality, a concept that cannot be tested, is based upon faith. [Immortality](#) means the ability to live forever, “being exempt from death.” That can include the possibility of unending human life prolonged through biological means or the existence of an immaterial soul

³⁴ Robert H. Thouless, “Theories about Survival,” *JSPR* 50 (March 1979), pp. 1-8, based upon his paper presented at the SPR conference in March 1978.

³⁵ I do not agree with Thouless that continued survival need be indefinite.

³⁶ In *Beyond the Threshold* (2008), Moreman reviewed afterlife beliefs in major religions and research into categories of afterlife experiences (mediumship, apparitions, hauntings, NDEs, OBEs, and past-life memories).

³⁷ See, for example, Massimo Biondi, “Spiritualism in Italy: Opposition of the Catholic Church,” in Moreman, 2013, vol. 1, pp. 37-53.

³⁸ The contribution of William Stainton Moses is discussed below within the context of automatic writing. [Charles Drayton Thomas](#) documented the evidence for survival in books published between 1922 and 1948, some based upon sittings with Gladys Osborne Leonard. The bibliography includes only a selection of his books. In *The Psychic Life of Jesus*, Graeme Maurice Elliott (1938/1969) highlighted the miraculous elements in the Bible.

that possesses immortality. In a useful compendium, Elisabeth Tischler (1954) presented the views of 500 prominent personalities on faith and immortality, grouped by vocation.³⁹

Christians sometimes equate survival with immortality, as a romantic notion of eternal life. Revisiting the medical, philosophical, and theological aspects of life after death, [Hans Küng](#) in *Eternal Life?* (1982/1984) exercised caution in discussing whether reincarnation, NDEs or parapsychology had proven life after death.⁴⁰ In his new vision of *Eternal Life* (2009), [John Shelby Spong](#) argued from the fact that the universe had a beginning, that it must have an end, and that therefore nothing is eternal.⁴¹ Though hard pressed to clarify his concept, Spong was convinced that “this life is not the end of life.”⁴² Searching for evidence, not proof, [Tom Harpur](#) concluded *There is Life after Death* (2011).⁴³

The Egyptian and Tibetan books of the dead are well known.⁴⁴ Following the death of his father, [Ptolemy Tompkins](#) offered *The Modern Book of the Dead* (2012) as a contemporary Western perspective, concluding that somehow consciousness continues. Tompkins was influenced by the research of [Robert Crookall](#) documented in *The Supreme Adventure* (1961/1975), as well as by the communications from F.W.H. Myers, “or at least someone claiming to be him,”⁴⁵ through automatist [Geraldine Cummins](#) (1890-1969) in *The Road to Immortality* (1932/1967) and *Beyond Human Personality* (1935).

Is Survival Permanent? - Combining Concepts

In the early 1980s, when I attempted to share my investigation into mediumship with my paternal grandmother, who was opposed to such inquiry, she countered with “To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die.” That quote by [Thomas Campbell](#) (1777-1844) from his poem “[Hallowed Ground](#)” predates Spiritualism. It is found on grave markers, sympathy cards, and bookmarks, and could be interpreted as refuting life after death and spirit communication or that survival is not permanent.

³⁹ Tischler was so moved by Spiritualist Arthur Findlay’s *On the Edge of the Etheric* (1931) that she obtained his permission to reproduce his introduction in her book.

⁴⁰ Küng, 1982/1984, pp. 13-14.

⁴¹ Spong, 2009, p. 108.

⁴² Spong, 2009, p. 212.

⁴³ This is a revised edition of Harpur’s 1991 book.

⁴⁴ Karl Richard Lepsius was the first translator of a complete *Book of the Dead* (*Das Todtenbuch*, 1842) from ancient Egyptian funerary texts that may date from 1550 BCE, based upon spells and beliefs dating from possibly 3,000 BCE. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, translated by W.Y. Evans-Wentz, with a psychological commentary by Carl Jung, was first published in 1927.

⁴⁵ Tompkins, 2012, p. 274.

The best evidence through mediumship is about family members and close friends where the recipient can evaluate details about personality. Though messages about remote ancestors or acquaintances could include intriguing details, they cannot be subjected to the same degree of validation. Personal memories of our siblings and our parents' generation are strongest. Specific memories of our grandparents are dimmer. Though we may have been fortunate to have a living great-grandparent or two when born, they often died when we were children or in our teens, so those memories are less reliable.

Those who do not believe in an afterlife may take comfort in perpetuation of their genes through family members. Others achieve "immortality" through their writings or artwork, which achievements then survive beyond the one or two generations during which human memory ensures survival of the deceased loved one. The pub of the hotel built by my ancestor provides a place for descendants to gather occasionally. A paternal great-aunt will be remembered into the generation of my niece and nephew and possibly beyond through her paintings. Neither individual would be recognized today through mediumship.

While belief in eternity may be comforting for some, there is no way to prove that personal consciousness survives in an eternal afterlife state. Looking at the constant change around us, surviving spirit must also continue to evolve, which is consistent with Spiritualist teaching. What could be the point of survival for eternity? If by immortality one is to understand survival of the soul's energy, in that energy is never destroyed, that makes sense. When the personality that expresses itself as Walter Meyer zu Erpen dissolves, that "energy" will continue as part of a universal pond of consciousness. From my perspective, a temporary afterlife, while those left behind remember me, will suffice.

Evidence of Survival versus Proof

My belief in survival is based upon four instances of spirit communication, considered in context of the vast literature reporting similar human experience. That is the body of evidence upon which I consider survival proven.

Though sometimes used interchangeably by Spiritualist mediums, proof results from consideration of evidence. *Webster's College Dictionary* defines evidence first as "that which tends to prove or disprove something" and proof as "evidence sufficient to establish a thing as true or believable."⁴⁶ [Arthur Berger](#) wrote that "belief is arrived at by a process of reasoning that goes on entirely within the mind of the individual to whom something is proved."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Random House Webster's College Dictionary* (New York: Random House, 1991), pp. 463 and 1080.

⁴⁷ Berger, 1988, p. 132.

Over time, every one of us has changed our position on some topic. What convinced me today may not next year. In that sense, proof is not absolute. Also, one need only look at political discourse to see that evidence which seems incontrovertible to one party is not accepted by another. No single case among those promoted as best evidence is going to win the survival debate or be upheld in a court of law. What could win the day is the weight of the cumulative evidence of documented human experience over recent decades.

The problem with focussing on a single case is that history is constantly revised, and interpretations of events updated, which applies to survival evidence as well. Though the website of the [Association for Evaluation and Communication of Evidence for Survival](#) (AECES) is not currently available, it indicated that the forty top-rated cases could move up or down the list as new evidence came to light.⁴⁸ Though challenged from the start by the SPR's [W.H. Salter](#), for decades many researchers cited the Chaffin Will Case⁴⁹ as among the best evidence of survival.⁵⁰ In *Spook* (2005), Mary Roach reappraised the case by interviewing descendants and hiring a hand-writing expert to compare the wills. She suggests that family members overlooked by the first will colluded to create the ghost and forge a new will.⁵¹ Interestingly, the Chaffin case is one in which a court of law considered the appearance of a ghost.

Mediumship Defined

The birth of Spiritualism increased interest in spirit communication through mediumship. A medium is the human instrument through whom surviving spirits convey messages or influence physical phenomena. Many Spiritualists believe that psychic faculties lie dormant in all humans. Today there are thousands of psychics working as mediums, most independently of Spiritualism.

Regardless of affiliation, genuine mediumship must include spirit contact and provide evidence of a deceased individual's identity and personality so that the individual receiving the information is able to recognize the deceased. In some cultures, establishing the identity of a specific individual has little influence on belief in spirit communication. For instance, the Spiritist philosophy codified by [Allan Kardec](#), and based upon reincarnation, placed less emphasis on survival evidence.

⁴⁸ Hamilton, 2012, pp. 113-114.

⁴⁹ James L. Chaffin died in 1921 and left everything to son Marshall, to the exclusion of his widow and other children. Chaffin's ghost appeared to son James, drawing attention to an old jacket which held the clue to the location of a later will hidden in a Bible.

⁵⁰ Baird, 1943, case 9, pp. 20-25; Berger, 1988, pp. 256-30; and Fontana, 2005/2006, pp. 52-53.

⁵¹ Roach, 2005, pp. 241-259.

My [life-after-death survey](#) conducted during August and September 2020 garnered 960 unique completions.⁵² Almost two thirds of respondents claimed mediumistic ability: 37 percent claimed to be mediums able to deliver verifiable survival evidence; a further 26 per cent reported doing so occasionally. Of the self-identified Spiritualists, 85 per cent reported being very convinced that mediumship had proven life after death.⁵³

Researchers point out that evidence through mediumship is often conveyed in uncontrolled settings. Such communications lack blind or double-blind controls and rigorous evaluation of the mediums' statements, which are part of standard practice in the important research conducted by Julie Beischel and Mark Boccuzzi. The couple founded the [Windbridge Research Center](#) in 2017 to promote "rigorous scientific study of mental mediums."⁵⁴

My first evidential message was received in Fall 1975 during a Spiritualist church demonstration of mediumship in Nanaimo, BC, when the pastor addressed my mother and me, indicating that Mom's father was standing between us and gave his name. Though we were unknown to the church, John is a common first name. The accompanying message from my grandfather was that my mother had recently received an emotional shock, with words of encouragement to me, a troubled teenager. Not the most evidential message in terms of communicator identification, yet Reverend L.E. (Nell) Beresford (1903-2002) did convey accurate and relevant context. She had addressed us directly and made declarative statements. Ultimately the timeframe in which the situation resolved itself made sense.⁵⁵

Of the many individuals providing services as mediums, some occasionally deliver good survival evidence. Notwithstanding cassette and now digital recordings of readings, rarely is a detailed analysis of the number of accurate and false statements undertaken. Consequently, mediumship does not typically result in documented evidence that could be presented in a court of law. In *Tell My Mother I'm Not Dead* (2012), Trevor Hamilton provided a meticulous exception in his documentation and analysis of ten attempts between 2002 and 2010 to connect with his son Ralph through mediumship.

⁵² The survey was circulated primarily to Spiritualists; 80 per cent of respondents reported using or maybe using "Spiritualist" to describe their belief system.

⁵³ The survey results have been submitted for publication in my chapter in Ruickbie and McLuhan, eds., (in preparation), *Is There Life After Death? Arguments, Theories, Evidence*.

⁵⁴ The Center has continued the peer-reviewed research about life after death and after-death communication conducted at the Windbridge Institute, LLC, since 2008.

⁵⁵ A similar account was submitted for publication in my chapter "Is Survival A Fact: Spiritualism, Mediumship and Evidence for Survival," in Ruickbie and McLuhan, eds., (in preparation), *Is There Life After Death? Arguments, Theories, Evidence*.

In mediumship, spirit communication is complicated by having the medium as intermediary. Direct experience of surviving spirit, when interpreted as meaningful, is more compelling than an evidential mediumship reading and can have a lifelong transformative effect.

Spirit Communication Challenges

Mediums have suggested that some spirits are better communicators than others. Certainly, humans vary in their ability to communicate, with some over-communicating and others so reticent that it is hard to get an answer from them. In *Aristocracy of the Dead* (1987), [Arthur Berger](#) presented his findings about the characteristics of individuals who tended to be more effective communicators through mediums. The evidence through mediumship and ADCs suggests that communications are strongest when there is emotional need or unfinished business, often during the months following a family death when loved ones are grieving.⁵⁶

Surviving family members intent on contacting a loved one are sometimes sorely disappointed. Such failure can turn them against belief in life after death and the possibility of communication. Several fellow researchers fall into that category, and the disappointment of [Harry Houdini](#) at not receiving communication from his beloved mother is well known.

From the perspective of post-mortem individuals, some may have been so indoctrinated about the danger of spirit communication that they are closed to the possibility. Others may not find a compatible medium. And harsh as this may sound, some may not wish to communicate with those they left behind. Free will presumably continues beyond death.

Exceptional Human Experiences (EHE)

Human belief in some form of afterlife is grounded in thousands of years of human encounters with the deceased. When not faith-based, belief resulting from personal spontaneous experience can last a lifetime and result in compelling recorded testimony. Because they occur infrequently, [Rhea Amelia White](#) (1931-2007) called them [Exceptional Human Experiences](#) (EHE) from at least 1991, and founded the [EHE Network](#).⁵⁷ Others label such events anomalous or extraordinary.

[Emanuel Swedenborg](#) was an early recorder of personal EHEs. In 1745, in London, he experienced “the worlds of spirits, heaven, and hell,”⁵⁸ and reported visions in which he visited heaven and spoke with angels. Swedenborg’s experiences are the basis of a [belief system](#) that

⁵⁶ The ADCs told to me by my father and great-aunt were during such a window of need.

⁵⁷ During the last decades of her life, White became the librarian of the paranormal, providing invaluable assistance to many researchers.

⁵⁸ Casey, 2009, p. 337.

filled a void in Christian views of the afterlife. To Swedenborg and his followers, the visions were real.

Many individuals have recorded descriptions of the afterlife based upon personal EHE. In *Multi-Dimensional Man* (2008), [Jurgen Ziewe](#) shared his eyewitness account of the world that awaits us based upon the diary of his OBE excursions over a period of forty years. In his introduction, Ziewe acknowledged opening himself to ridicule by writing about something that cannot be backed up by scientific proof, nor sound corroborating evidence.⁵⁹ In *The Afterlife Unveiled* (2011), Stafford Betty compared claims by spirits through mediums about the nature of the afterlife. In *The Afterlife Revealed* (2011), Mike Tymn also focussed on what happens after we die, a topic of perennial interest.

Whether one individual or a thousand describe such experiences upon awaking from sleep or during an out-of-body experience, commendable studies such as Betty's can suggest only that EHE have common characteristics. Scientific experiments are based upon repeatability, to prove consistent outcomes. In studying EHEs, the first step is to document and categorize them and determine how frequently a particular type is reported.

Any one of us listening to another individual's EHE may think, *this is crazy, totally crazy!* How is one to evaluate such personal, subjective experiences? EHEs regarding life after death are simple, uplifting, infrequent, spontaneous, and often unsought. They do not feed a percipient's illusions of grandeur or obsessive behaviour patterns.

Having contemplated the possibility of life after death for almost fifty years, I am convinced that the less "mediated" an experience the more valuable it is as survival evidence.

Theory of Super-ESP (Super-Psi Hypothesis)

About 1882, F.W.H. Myers invented the word telepathy to describe communication of impressions from one mind to another, previously known as thought-transference. Telepathic data interchange between humans (psi among the living), typically where there is an emotional bond, is widely accepted based upon J.B. Rhine's extra-sensory perception (ESP) experiments.

Super-ESP, alternately framed as the [super-psi hypothesis](#), posits that the human mind has unlimited means of perception, to retrieve information from other living minds or any source in any library or archives in the world. Some include the Akashic record (universal, etheric "warehouse" for knowledge storage) within the realm of what could be accessed by the super-ESP practitioner. Though the theory predates the widespread use of computers, personal

⁵⁹ Ziewe, 2008, p. 9.

devices and cloud data storage, advocates would presumably extend it to include any email ever sent or even drafted.

As an archivist, I appreciate the difficulty of locating and accessing appropriate information and the need for indexing. The concept of super-ESP functioning at a level far exceeding documented human telepathic communication has not been proven. In fact, there is little evidence that super-ESP exists, while there is abundant documentation of evidential communication from discarnate personalities.

Notwithstanding parapsychological analysis and criticism of whole research categories and specific cases, individuals routinely contemplate and accept personal experiences suggestive of some form of continued existence. Most spend no time worrying about the unproven super-psi hypothesis.⁶⁰ No further word count will be expended on super-ESP.

Best Evidence Compiled

In discussing evidence through Spiritualist mediums, Hans Küng warned of wishful thinking, unconscious delusion, and deliberate deception.⁶¹ In 1938, [H.F. Saltmarsh](#) wrote that: “It is a truism that human testimony is unreliable; human memory is fallible and there is an innate tendency in most people to embroider and amplify.”⁶² Those are all important factors to consider in determining what constitutes evidence for survival.

Many authors have presented their collection of most convincing cases. Since the 1940s, several case books have been published. In *One Hundred Cases for Survival after Death*, A.T. Baird (1943) organized his selection in eleven categories: dreams; haunted houses; apparitions; deathbed visions; automatic writing; trance phenomena; cross-correspondences; book tests; proxy sittings; direct-voice phenomena; and materializations.⁶³ In *Best Evidence*, Michael Schmicker (2002) expanded his scope of discussion to include psychokinesis, NDEs, OBEs, and reincarnation. When Miles Edward Allen presented the most convincing survival evidence yet compiled, he included in *The Survival Files* (2007) evidence from near-death OBEs and reincarnation cases.

⁶⁰ Has anyone apart from illusionists and mentalists claimed such ability? Super-psi proponents need to document their strongest cases of “psychics” who can forage the minds and libraries of the world to provide impressive results.

⁶¹ Küng, 1982/1984, p. 14.

⁶² Saltmarsh, *Evidence of Personal Survival*, 1938/2004, p. 3

⁶³ In publishing a second collection of one hundred cases, A.T. Baird (1947) followed a similar structure, but eliminated the categories of cross-correspondences, book tests and proxy sittings. Arthur Berger (1988), in a casebook for the tough-minded, examined mental phenomena (7 cases), mental mediumship (13 cases), and physical phenomena (10 cases).

Careful evaluations of the evidence for survival have been undertaken by [Hornell Hart](#) (1959), [C.J. Ducasse](#) (1961), [Arthur Berger](#) (1988), [Stephen Braude](#) (2003), [David Fontana](#) (2005/2007), and [Leslie Kean](#) (2017), who considered the super-psi hypothesis and other alternate explanations. Victor and Wendy Zammit have devoted their retirement years to disseminating information about life after death, initially in book form (1996/2002), then [online](#). A retired lawyer, Victor Zammit is convinced that “the evidence collected would be accepted by the highest court in any civilized country.”⁶⁴

In *Talking about Psychical Research* (2019), [Mary Rose Barrington](#), then a retired lawyer and 60 years an SPR member, compiled her perspectives on aspects of psychic phenomena previously presented as lectures. On survival, she included among three strong cases the personal experience of Nigel Buckmaster (1918-2010) who was so convinced of its reality that he left the SPR a sizeable bequest.

Some colleagues believe that the [Maroczy chess game](#), arranged in 1985 between a living and deceased grandmaster, proved survival. The game was played over eight years. The deceased grandmaster made his moves through a medium who specialized in automatic writing. The living grandmaster won after 47 moves. My concern would be the risk of basing the case for survival on a high-profile game involving multiple players and a foreign language.

Deathbed Visions and Observations

[Deathbed visions](#) present an important category of evidence for life after death when the dying individual, during a moment of full consciousness, is surprised to see someone awaiting them whom they believe yet to be among the living. In 1882, Francis Power Cobbe named such occurrences [Peak in Darien Experiences](#).

[William Barrett](#) was the first to conduct a careful study of deathbed visions. When he died suddenly in 1925, Barrett had been working on *Death-bed Visions*. His unfinished manuscript was published the following year.⁶⁵ Some of the cases had been reported to Barrett by [Florence Barrett](#), an obstetric surgeon. She later wrote *Personality Survives Death* (1937) about her conversations with her dead husband, over a period of eleven years, through the mediumship of Gladys Osborne Leonard.

Continuing the research of Myers and Barrett, [Karlis Osis](#) as the Parapsychology Foundation’s research director appealed to 5,000 physicians and 5,000 nurses for their observations of

⁶⁴ Victor Zammit’s [home page](#): A Lawyer Presents the Evidence for the Afterlife.

⁶⁵ Pencil annotations, apparently by Stanley De Brath, in the copy he acquired in December 1926 (now in the SRIC library) explain that the editor’s preface by F.E.B. (widow Florence Elizabeth Barrett) was “for William’s sister”.

psychological or psychic experiences of patients as death approached.⁶⁶ The 10,000 questionnaires represented a 2.8 percent sample of the mailing company's lists; the 640 completed and returned represented three times the number predicted. In the PF monograph *Deathbed Observations by Physicians and Nurses* (1961), Osis reported that the terminally ill "predominantly hallucinate phantoms representing deceased persons," typically close relatives. For the most part, the non-relative phantoms represented living persons.⁶⁷ Eileen Garrett had encouraged the survey as an innovative attempt to look at the question of survival after death.⁶⁸

In 1972-1973, under the auspices of the ASPR, Karlis Osis and [Erlendur Haraldsson](#) conducted a large-scale survey of dying patients in northern India. The resulting data about their experiences allowed for cross-cultural comparison between India and the United States. In *At the Hour of Death* (1977), the investigators analyzed the nature and impact of the more than 1,000 apparition cases. With an introduction by Kübler-Ross, the book was translated into 14 languages. Looking at available interpretations, the authors reported that deathbed experiences suggestive of an afterlife had an emotionally beneficial impact upon the dying.

To help make sense of experiences around the deaths of her father and sister, [Patricia Pearson](#) studied *At the Hour of Death*. She found that over half of bereaved people reported "coincidental visions at the exact moment of a loved one's death, comforting visits from a departed friend in an hour of need," and noted "the uncanny precision with which the dying predict their own deaths."⁶⁹ In *Opening Heaven's Door* (2014/2015), Pearson shares "what the dying are trying to say about where they're going."⁷⁰

Looking at the continuation of experience from individuals near-death and resuscitated, to the [deathbed visions](#) of those whose pending death becomes permanent, the perception of loved ones waiting provides compelling survival evidence, especially when they are not known to have died. Also relevant to deathbed visions is [terminal lucidity](#), a term coined by Michael Nahm in 2009 that refers to restored mental clarity and memory before death in patients suffering impaired cognitive ability.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Regrettably, Osis (1961) does not include the years during which the survey was conducted.

⁶⁷ Osis, 1961, pp. 104-105.

⁶⁸ Osis, 1961, p. 13.

⁶⁹ Pearson, 2015, back cover.

⁷⁰ Pearson, 2015, front cover.

⁷¹ Nahm first used the term "Terminal Lucidity" and its German equivalent "Terminale Geistesklarheit" in 2009. He described the phenomenon in two English articles, one of which was co-authored with Bruce Greyson, and in a German article co-authored with Erlendur Haraldsson. Email communication with Michael Nahm, 8 November 2021

The value of future study of deathbed observations by medical professionals as survival evidence is dubious, given that dying patients may still be holding a telecommunications device providing worldwide intelligence, making it impossible to conclude that the death of a particular loved one could not have been known.

After-Death Communications (ADC)

An [After-Death Communication](#) is a spontaneous experience that a grieving family member or friend may have of a loved one. The phenomenon of spirit visitations can be traced to pre-Biblical times. They are often described as apparitions, which were a significant focus of *Phantasms of the Living* (1886).⁷²

During 1974-1975, [Erlendur Haraldsson](#) was lead researcher of an Icelandic survey of 902 persons that was deemed representative of the country's population. To the question "have you ever been aware of the presence of a deceased person," 31 percent responded affirmatively. Detailed follow-up interviews were conducted. Originally published in Icelandic, *The Departed among the Living* (2012), updated and revised, categorizes the experiences according to the sense(s) by which the deceased was perceived, the type and location of death, whether the percipient was widowed, and other questions.

During 1980 and 1981, Gallup conducted surveys to determine the beliefs of Americans around life after death. In *Death and the Life After*, evangelist [Billy Graham](#) noted that the Gallup results reported in *Adventures in Immortality* (1982)⁷³ showed that while two-thirds of Americans believed in heaven, only 53 percent believed in hell.⁷⁴ Significant to this discussion is that 24 percent thought it possible to have contact with the dead.⁷⁵

My interest in life after death was piqued again following the 1982 death of a paternal cousin while he and his wife were visiting Vancouver. That Fall I joined a Spiritualist circle for mediumship development and would engage my parents in discussion of messages received. To my surprise, Dad shared that a decade earlier he had awakened to see a friend standing at the foot of the bed. Erich had been murdered on his fishing boat at Hecate Sound, near Prince Rupert, by his mentally-disturbed brother, who then drowned himself by jumping into the ocean.⁷⁶

⁷² Gurney, Myers and Podmore, 1886.

⁷³ Gallup with Proctor, 1982.

⁷⁴ Graham, 1987, pp. 15-16.

⁷⁵ Gallup with Proctor, 1982, p. 195.

⁷⁶ To confirm the year of Erich's death, I checked an online index, but have omitted his surname to protect the family's privacy. Dad was not the type to share his experience with Erich's widow or daughter.

In those same years, my maternal great-aunt Alice told me of waking to see my grandfather near the foot of her bed. At the time, following the deaths of her parents and brother within 12 months, emotions had run high among her siblings. Typical of such messages, Grandpa's words to Alice were reassurance that things would sort themselves out. Neither Dad nor Alice was the type to fabricate stories.

When one discusses the possibility of spirit communication, others will often share their spontaneous ADCs, which appear to be a universal experience dating back millennia. The ancient Greeks are believed to have had a [temple](#) to facilitate communication with their ancestors. Drawing upon that concept in *Reunions* (1993/1994), Raymond Moody popularized the term [psychomanteum](#).⁷⁷ He explained how to create an enclosed space with low lighting, comfortable chair, and angled mirror to invoke visionary encounters with loved ones.⁷⁸

The expression "after-death communication" was in use during the 1960s already and possibly earlier.⁷⁹ Formerly a self-described rational materialist, [William \(Bill\) Guggenheim](#) began study of mediumship in 1975. By July 1989, Bill and Judy Guggenheim were hosting conferences about after-death communications and the abbreviation ADC was in use for spontaneous, non-assisted communication.⁸⁰ Based upon *Hello from Heaven* (1996), the Guggenheims are the originators of modern ADC research. The *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology* (2001) includes a short entry for the ADC project, established by the Guggenheims, to collect first-hand ADC accounts through telephone interviews.⁸¹ By 2001, they had collected over two thousand accounts from people who had seen or "felt the direct presence" of deceased loved ones. In *Goodbye Again* (1997), [Edie Devers](#) explored the therapeutic nature of ADCs in the grieving process.

Given the grief of a parent on the loss of a child, it is not surprising that parents explore communication. In the [Matthew Books](#), Suzanne Ward (2001/2002) tells how, 14 years after the death of her son Matthew (1962-1980), her telepathic connection with him opened. In their

⁷⁷ It has not been possible to substantiate a claimed earlier term for such chambers, [psuchomanteia](#). Moody may have created psychomanteum from psychomancy, meaning "divination by spirits or the art of evoking the dead" (Melton, 2001, vol. 2, p. 1257).

⁷⁸ In 2004, Moody's book inspired Jeremy Turner to create a [psychomanteum exhibition](#) at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, in British Columbia.

⁷⁹ To date, the expression has been located in a 1968 announcement of a serialized version of James Pike's *The Other Side* (1968) ("Contact with the Dead?," *Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester, New York), 22 November 1968, p. 1). It was also used in a 1969 review of *Life After Death: The Challenge and the Evidence* (1969/1971) by [Hans Holzer](#) ("Book Reviews: Psychic Phenomena", *Pensacola News Journal* (Pensacola, Florida), 12 October 1969, p. 107).

⁸⁰ "Whether a psychic phenomenon or not, 'After-Death Communications' from deceased children can give comfort to their grieving parents," *Tamp Bay Times* (St. Petersburg, Florida), 19 July 1989, p. 41.

⁸¹ Melton, 2001, vol. 1, p. 10.

first book, Matthew talked about the beauty of the other side; in the second, he shared revelations for a new era. [Elisa Medhus](#) gave voice to her son Erik (2013), and [Matthew McKay](#) to his son Jordan (2016). Both had died tragically, Erik by suicide, and Jordan murdered. One cannot imagine the additional trauma such deaths cause a grieving parent. In *Journey to Heaven* (2016), Anne Salisbury and Greg Meyerhoff collaborated with Anne's deceased mother who had announced her return at their front door in the middle of the night, six months after she died.

[Induced After-Death Communication \(IADC\) Therapy](#) helps people suffering grief and traumatic loss. Results indicate that induced apparitional encounters with a loved one can heal grief regardless of belief. In 1995, using a variation of [Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing](#) (EMDR),⁸² [Allan Botkin](#) discovered IADC while working with a veteran suffering [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder](#) (PTSD). He was haunted by memories of a young girl he had not been able to save in Vietnam.⁸³ IADC is a registered TradeMark owned by Botkin, who established a central clearing house for IADC research.⁸⁴ Botkin has reviewed similarities and differences between NDEs and IADCs.⁸⁵ He concluded that while suggestive of life after death, IADC experiences do not constitute proof.⁸⁶

My one ADC dates from May 2001. Just before the British Columbia provincial election in which I was the Victoria Green Party candidate, my campaign manager became agitated by the negative pressure exerted upon him by another campaign that wanted me to withdraw. There was little remaining to be done. We agreed that Roy should take the last days off and come to the election party. When Roy did not arrive that evening, the police were called. Roy had [disappeared without a trace](#), but not intentionally as his cat was without food. At home, I collapsed into bed and woke hours later to the clear image in my "internal vision" of Roy on his back floating in water. Smiling, his message was to effect "don't worry, I'm fine." Rarely am I aware of such mental imagery. Friends were convinced that Roy had suffered amnesia and taken off for points unknown. During the Canada-wide missing person search, I remained convinced that Roy was dead. When more than two months later his body surfaced in Victoria Harbour, the police ruled out foul play. [Roy McFarlane](#) (1955-2001) had possibly suffered an aneurysm that caused him to topple into the water from a nearby wharf.⁸⁷

⁸² [Francine Shapiro](#) originated and developed EMDR in the late 1980s as a therapy to resolve traumatic life experiences.

⁸³ Botkin, 2005/2014, pp. 11-14.

⁸⁴ Botkin, 2005/2014, p. 198.

⁸⁵ Botkin, 2005/2014, pp. 176-188.

⁸⁶ Botkin, 2005/2014, p. 203.

⁸⁷ A similar account was submitted for publication in my chapter in Ruickbie and McLuhan, eds., (in preparation), *Is There Life After Death? Arguments, Theories, Evidence*.

Out-of-Body Experiences (OBE)

In an [Out-of-Body Experience](#) (OBE), a term created by G.N.M. Tyrrell in *Apparitions* (1943),⁸⁸ an individual becomes aware of some part of their consciousness having separated from their body. Initially, such experiences are involuntary. Some percipients may be aware only of the separation and observe their body nearby. Others will explore tentatively their immediate surroundings, but not venture beyond the room where their body is resting. Some may experience an instantaneous projection of consciousness to a remote location, even at great distance, including passing through the building roof or walls. They may observe known individuals, or lands never visited, and return to recount veridical details. OBEs indicate that some part of human consciousness can function separately from the human body, at least temporarily, and are therefore relevant to study of survival.

Such experiences have been reported by humans since ancient times, and the concept of an astral, subtle, or etheric body predates its popularization as part of Theosophical teachings. F.W.H. Myers wrote that “these self-projections represent the most extraordinary achievements of the human will and are perhaps acts which a man might perform equally well before and after death.”⁸⁹

Astral projection, or the conscious attempt to induce an OBE, may have originated in Theosophy in the 1880s.⁹⁰ From at least 1903, [Vincent Turvey](#) (1873-1912) claimed that he had taught himself to leave his body and travel to places he had never seen.⁹¹ After suffering a severe health breakdown, Turvey, an engineer by profession, spent hours in meditation and study of occult philosophy. Turvey’s *The Beginnings of Seership* was published in 1911, thanks to W.T. Stead’s publishing house. [Ralph Shirley](#) reviewed the book in his journal, [The Occult Review](#).

During his early teens, [Sylvan Muldoon](#) (1903-1969) frequently experienced spontaneous OBEs. Seeking to achieve voluntary projection, Muldoon read a book by [Hereward Carrington](#) that led to their multi-decade research collaboration. Their first book, *The Projection of the Astral Body* (1929), documented Muldoon’s experiences and explained his methods, discussed the astral or silver cord believed to attach the two bodies, and claimed that death was a permanent projection of the astral body with the cord severed. Most of the cases in *The Phenomena of Astral Projection* (1951) related to projections produced through drugs, hypnosis, accident, or illness, and discussed projections in which spirits were involved or seen. Both books were first published by William Rider and Sons. As company director, Ralph Shirley did much to promote

⁸⁸ Tyrrell, 1943/1969, p. 165.

⁸⁹ Cited in Muldoon and Carrington 1929/1952, title page.

⁹⁰ “Modern Spiritualism,” *The Boston Globe*, 8 August 1887, p. 3, in reference to the Theosophist belief.

⁹¹ Turvey, 1911/1969, p. i.

astral projection, including his own survey of the topic, *The Mystery of the Human Double* (1938/1965).

Based upon OBE experiences that began in 1958, [Robert Monroe](#) (1915-1995) studied altered states of consciousness and elaborated methods to achieve an OBE. His book *Journeys Out of the Body* (1971) and subsequent volumes helped others understand their experiences. Thousands have studied Monroe's method through [Monroe Institute](#) courses.⁹² Although Bayard Stockton's biography of Monroe, *Catapult* (1989), touches upon NDEs and after-death communication, there was no significant connection between Monroe's work and survival.

From 1975-1995, the US government, in response to research undertaken by the Russians, funded experiments to determine whether [Remote Viewing](#) (RV)⁹³ had any application in military intelligence. RV is sometimes likened to an OBE or travelling clairvoyance. RV focusses on geographic or living targets, not deceased spirits.

OBEs do not provide direct evidence of survival, rather evidence of the dual nature of man: the physical body; and some separable part that is beyond what materialists accept as possible. By demonstrating a component of self operating at a distance from the body, OBEs raise the possibility that that component may continue after death.

Near-Death Experiences (NDE)

The term [Near-Death Experience](#) (NDE) was popularized by [Raymond Moody](#) in *Life after Life* (1975) and *Reflections on Life after Life* (1978).⁹⁴ The increased use of resuscitation technology from the 1960s had resulted in larger numbers of individuals recalling an NDE. Though surveys typically document NDEs in hospitals, a near-death may result from drowning,⁹⁵ being run over by horses,⁹⁶ or other causes. Following publication of Moody's books, others began to publish personal experiences. For instance, George Ritchie (1978/1997) told of his death from pneumonia in 1943. Study of NDEs brought survival research to mainstream attention and allowed individuals from all faiths to share their experiences.

⁹² The Monroe Institute was established in 1971.

⁹³ Though the research of [Hal Puthoff](#) and [Russell Targ](#) popularized the term remote viewing from 1972, Targ credits [Ingo Swann](#) with first having suggested the term in December 1971, during an experiment at the ASPR. The US experiments became known as the Stargate Project.

⁹⁴ Research within the Newspapers.com online index and the *Psychic News* digital archive confirms that before the mid-1970s discussion of NDEs was infrequent, though individuals did describe experiences when they had been near death. For instance, World War I flying ace [Captain Eddie Rickenbacker](#) who was adrift on a raft in the Pacific with other men for three weeks before their rescue on 14 November 1942 later told of his experiences when he had been near death.

⁹⁵ Mary Neal (2012) drowned in a 1999 kayak accident in Chile.

⁹⁶ Lesley Lupo (2018) was trampled by horses in 1988.

The NDE pattern proved similar across medical studies by, among others, Michael Sabom (1982), Kenneth Ring (1982), and Pim van Lommel (2010). During clinical death while the heart was stopped, patients reported observing, from a point separate from their body, medical intervention or other physical trauma and hearing the voices of the resuscitation team, neither of which should have been possible. NDEs often include an OBE, sometimes with travel through a light tunnel. About two thirds of NDErs reported meeting another person.⁹⁷

A veridical NDE is one during which an individual reports having observed something specific while out of their body that is later verified. The case of the blue tennis shoe that Maria reported to [Kimberly Clark Sharp](#) (1995) is often cited as an example. Sharp investigated and discovered a shoe that matched Maria's description on the outside ledge of the Seattle hospital where Maria was resuscitated.

Many experiencers report details of what heaven is like, but some report hellish experiences. Maurice Rawlings (1978) was the first to report multiple cases of hellish NDEs.⁹⁸ Both types have been largely documented within Judeo-Christian cultures.

In 1980-1981, George Gallup conducted surveys about American afterlife beliefs. The resulting report, *Adventures in Immortality*, included the qualitative experiences of respondents who had had an NDE.⁹⁹ Organizations were founded to advance understanding of NDEs, including the [International Association for Near-Death Studies](#) (IANDS).¹⁰⁰ In 1998, Jeffrey and Jody Long founded the [Near-Death Experience Research Foundation](#). Its websites host the largest NDE, ADC, and OBE research database worldwide, with stories of about 16,000 paranormal experiences in many different languages. Long's *Evidence of the Afterlife* (2010) is organized around nine proofs of the afterlife.

Medical professionals have long played a role in investigating psychic phenomena, often quietly. With publication of Moody's NDE findings, there evolved gradually a respectable field in which doctors could study experiences reported by patients. Kenneth Ring's research began with detailed surveys that described and provided comparative analyses of the experiences (1980/1982), in part to refute early claims that NDEs were drug induced or the last gasp of the dying brain. The research of Ring (1984/1985) and others evolved to the meaning of NDEs for the percipients and possibly our planet. Common post-NDE effects include loss of fear of death, desire to live life to the fullest, and a search for meaning that sometimes made it difficult to re-

⁹⁷ Greyson, 2021, p. 152.

⁹⁸ Angie Fenimore (1995) reported her NDE, to the edge of hell and back, following her 1991 suicide attempt.

⁹⁹ Gallup with Proctor, 1982. For statistics relating to "verge-of-death experiences," see pp. 198-212.

¹⁰⁰ Founded in 1978 by John Audette, Bruce Greyson, Kenneth Ring, and Michael Sabom, the Association for the Scientific Study of Near-Death Phenomena changed its name to IANDS in 1981.

enter daily life. Penny Sartori (2014) and others have focussed on the transformative, life-changing aspects, including the drive to lead a more meaningful life.

Other professionals have contributed to the vast NDE literature. Lawyer Nanci Danison (1994) wrote of her transformative experience. In the *Big Book of Near-Death Experiences* (2007), [P.M.H. Atwater](#) provided an encyclopedic overview of NDE research, focussed on what happens when we die. In *Science and the Near-Death Experience* (2010), philosopher Chris Carter concluded his discussion with comparison of NDEs and deathbed visions.¹⁰¹

Since the 1990s, dozens of NDE experiencers have published book-length accounts. The powerful nature of the experience has caused some individuals to become full-time life coaches and counsellors; others have established ministries dedicated to supporting experiencers. The most recognized name among NDE experiencers is neurosurgeon [Eben Alexander](#), who was trained to believe that NDEs are illusions created by a dying brain. Based upon Alexander's vivid journey "to the other side" in 2008, his first book [Proof of Heaven](#) (2012) became a bestseller but was criticized by some neurologists. With [Ptolemy Tompkins](#), Alexander wrote *The Map of Heaven* (2014) to explore how science, religion and ordinary people are proving the afterlife. His 2013 speaking engagement in Vancouver was to a full church.

Others such as [Bruce Greyson](#), one of the IANDS founders, are more cautious. In *After* (2021), the latest substantial treatment of NDEs from a medical perspective, Greyson estimates, based upon four decades of NDE research, that ten to twenty percent of those near death recall an NDE.¹⁰² Illustrative of how the field has evolved, Greyson relates how at the start of his career a senior professor had demanded that he stop wasting time on anecdotal research and focus on controlled laboratory experiments. Now, some medical and nursing schools include information about NDEs in their curricula.¹⁰³

When during an NDE the experiencer encounters a deceased family member or friend, that aspect is relevant to evidential survival research, especially if the individual is not known to be deceased.

Dreams of Loved Ones

Dreams are the most common means by which people might perceive deceased loved ones. Upon awaking from the surreal consciousness of sleep, dreams are often confusing. Dream researchers have authored many books to help us understand and derive therapeutic benefit from our dreams. In *Working with Dreams* (1979), Montague Ullman and Nan Zimmerman

¹⁰¹ Carter, 2010, pp. 253-270.

¹⁰² Greyson, 2021, p. 216.

¹⁰³ Greyson, 2021, pp. 59 and 214.

wrote that “issues of life, death, and survival often hover in the background,” even when the dream content seems unrelated.¹⁰⁴

Some dreams may involve interaction between the sleeping consciousness of the living and the spirit of the deceased loved one, in other words an after-death communication within a dream. In *Dreamspeak* (2001), Rosemary Ellen Guiley offered a short chapter on dreams about death, including precognitive dreams of accidents and deaths of loved ones or close friends. Dreams of the recently deceased may represent a farewell encounter that helps lift the burden of grief. Guiley believed that we also receive glimpses of the other side through our dreams.¹⁰⁵

Most often dreams of deceased loved ones are not subject to validation and are chalked up as “I dreamt of Grandma, last night.”

Survival Evidence through Mediumship

With so much information online, lengthy digressions about historical mediums and researchers are not justified. Most overviews of the field have covered the mediumships of D.D. Home, Eusapia Palladino, Leonora Piper, and Gladys Osborne Leonard. Further study of those cases will not advance survival research,¹⁰⁶ but they do serve as useful examples of the challenge of obtaining survival evidence through mediumship.

The Scottish-born, American-raised [Daniel Dunglas Home](#) (1833-1886)¹⁰⁷ and the Italian [Eusapia Palladino](#) (1854-1918) were known for their demonstrations of telekinetic effects (now better known as macro-PK). The physical phenomena that manifested in their séances, including levitation of tables, rapping sounds, paranormal breezes, and materialized hands, were attested to by many eminent scientists. Their reports suggest that Home and Palladino had genuine PK ability.

Palladino, who came to prominence soon after the creation of the SPR, was tested in series of experiments reported by [Hereward Carrington](#) (1909), [Filippo Bottazzi](#) (1909/2011), and [Everard Feilding](#) (1963), among others. Although Palladino acknowledged cheating when controls were lax because of the lesser toll on her body, many investigators were convinced that she could produce phenomena under conditions of control that made fraud impossible.

¹⁰⁴ Ullman and Zimmerman, 1979, p. 299.

¹⁰⁵ Guiley, 2001, pp. 250-266.

¹⁰⁶ An exception would be including those individuals in a study of the psychological profiles of mediums and psychics.

¹⁰⁷ Home described his inexplicable abilities in *Incidents in My Life* (1863/1991), as did his widow in two further books. Many other biographies of Home exist, including balanced accounts by Jean Burton (1948) and Peter Lamont (2005/2006).

Palladino was arguably the most tested physical medium, and it is frequently claimed that Home was never detected in fraud.

Focussed on psychokinetic phenomena, Home and Palladino did not produce survival evidence comparable to that of the mental mediums that succeeded them at the centre of psychical research. They were labelled mediums because they produced phenomena typically found in Spiritualist séances. The extensive literature about them does not suggest they were gifted at evidential communication. Likely their ability in that regard paled by comparison to the physical feats attributed to spirits.¹⁰⁸ Belief that object movement by an invisible force constitutes evidence of survival is part of the muddled thinking about the spirit world.

[Leonora Piper](#) (1857-1950) and [Gladys Osborne Leonard](#) (1882-1968) were trance mediums who conveyed evidence of survival to their sitters. Each was tested by psychical researchers over several decades. Despite being followed by detectives hired to discover where they were obtaining the detailed information delivered to sitters, neither was ever discovered in fraud. Residing in Boston, Mrs. Piper was investigated by [William James](#) who famously declared her to be his single white crow (one genuine medium) and later by [Richard Hodgson](#). The [George Pellew](#) (1859-1892) communicator, who had while alive one sitting with Piper, recognized 29 sitters he had known, who were included in the sessions without introduction. Those sittings were considered among the best evidence of two-way interaction between spirit and sitters.¹⁰⁹

Mrs. Leonard was the medium who delivered evidence of Oliver Lodge's son [Raymond Lodge](#) (1889-1915), killed in Flanders, that resulted in Lodge's book *Raymond or Life and Death* (1916). Reference to a photograph of a group of soldiers that included Raymond, about which the family knew nothing, proved evidential when sent to them after his death.¹¹⁰ Mrs. Leonard's mediumship was also studied by [C. Drayton Thomas](#)¹¹¹ and others.

Spirit Guides, Trance Controls, and Secondary Personalities

For many mediums, a spirit guide is essential to their delivery of clairvoyant or clairaudient messages. Mediums who work in trance often have a "control," believed to be a discarnate

¹⁰⁸ Burton, 1948, p. 207, cites Home's friend Lord Adare who, having convinced himself of the genuineness of the phenomena, discontinued his investigation. Adare concluded that the phenomena "were all of the same character, mainly physical, designed apparently to prove that some force or forces other than physical, as we understand it, could be made to operate upon inanimate objects."

¹⁰⁹ Michel Sage documented the SPR's study of Mrs. Piper (1903). Altea Piper published her mother's story (1929). Michael Tymn resurrected Leonora Piper's contribution to scientific study of the afterlife (2013).

¹¹⁰ Mrs. Leonard published three books about her experiences, each in part autobiographical (1931, 1937 and 1942). Susy Smith contributed *The Mediumship of Mrs. Leonard* (1964).

¹¹¹ Most of Drayton Thomas' books reference Mrs. Leonard and her control "Feda."

spirit who acts as the doorkeeper or master of ceremonies during readings. Most people who attempt self-induced trance can attest to the cogent flow of thoughts, more easily conveyed when attributed to a spirit guide. Historically, some controls adopted a childish manner or used broken English,¹¹² and the trance utterances and antics of twentieth-century North American Indian controls often reflected the stereotypical knowledge of the “mediums.” [Percy Wilson](#) warned that individuals who seek to be a trance medium can succumb to “involuntary self-deception.”¹¹³

A control could also be a [secondary personality](#) that demonstrates consistency over time and conveys unknown information, or an unconscious impersonation by an individual deluded about the value of their “trance” utterances. Consideration of [multiple personality and dissociative states](#) is essential to study of guides, with books by Adam Crabtree (1985) and Robert Mayer (1988) recommended.

In Manhattan, during 1932-1934, [seven teenaged boys](#) kept meticulous minutes of séances that included table raps and levitations, answers to questions printed by an unseen hand, and images projected onto unexposed film, among which a requested portrait of their communicator.¹¹⁴ Over decades, group members remained convinced of the reality of their experiences. Granted access to the group’s records, [Rosemarie Pilkington](#) interviewed surviving members for [The Spirit of Dr. Bindelof](#) (2006).¹¹⁵ Attempts to identify Bindelof confirm that he was a fictitious creation.¹¹⁶

[Eileen Garrett](#) was never fully convinced whether her guides Uvani and Abdul Latif were independent entities or some secondary aspect of her own personality, but accepted them as integral to the functioning of her trance.¹¹⁷ The guide of [Arthur Ford](#) was a French-Canadian childhood friend, referred to by his middle name Fletcher,¹¹⁸ killed as a soldier in World War I.

¹¹² Saltmarsh, 1938/2004, p. 16.

¹¹³ Hutton, 1966/1968, p. 65.

¹¹⁴ The images had some similar characteristics to those of [Ted Serios](#).

¹¹⁵ Email communication with Rosemarie Pilkington, 28 July 2021. Pilkington believes that Gilbert Roller (1915-2004) was primarily responsible for the phenomena and the name Bindelof and that he was in effect the group’s physical medium. In addition to living members of the main group, Pilkington interviewed Gilbert’s aunt Ellie who participated occasionally and had been treated by Dr. Bindelof for a tooth ache. Pilkington got to know several of the participants well and became convinced beyond doubt of their sincerity.

¹¹⁶ Searches of the Internet and genealogical sites provide no evidence of anyone named Bindelof. Gilbert Roller, or the boys collectively, managed to create an unknown name for what Pilkington considers was a father-figure guide.

¹¹⁷ Progoff, 1964, pp. 1-9, and Angoff, 1974.

¹¹⁸ His middle name was used to protect the privacy of his family.

Attempts to identify him among the [Canadian Expeditionary Force records](#) have been unsuccessful. Ford believed without question in Fletcher's reality.¹¹⁹

Walter Stuart Stinson (1884-1911), the brother of Mina "Margery" Crandon, was his sister's main control (1923-1941). From 1928, a Walter claiming to be Margery's brother manifested in the [T. Glen Hamilton family experiments in Winnipeg](#) and continued with medium [Mary Ann Marshall](#) (1880-1963) in later experiments (1947-1958) by [Sylvia Barber](#). In 1992, Walter emerged again as one of the principal guides in the physical mediumship of [Stewart Alexander](#). In collaboration with Mina Crandon's great-granddaughter Anna Thurlow, a detailed biographical study of Walter Stinson has been prepared. As Glen Hamilton concluded, there is no way to prove that the manifestations of Walter are one and the same personality.¹²⁰

[William Lang](#), discussed below in context of spiritual healing, is one of the few controls whose former personality was repeatedly acknowledged. Lang claimed to work only through medium [George Chapman](#), citing five years' preparation for them to work together.¹²¹

Automatic Writing and Cross-Correspondences

Among early attempts to create a mechanical device for spirit communication was the "planchette," a flat wheeled board into which a pencil was inserted. Two or more sitters would sit around a table, with fingers lightly touching the device. The users would experience inexplicable movement that would cause the pencil to write on the sheet of paper on the table. By 1890, such devices had evolved into the [Ouija board](#) or talking board. Practitioners of such modes of mediumship often discarded the tools and progressed to more direct means of communication, such as [automatic writing](#) or trance speech.¹²²

One of the early clergymen to explore Spiritualism and develop mediumship was [William Stainton Moses](#). In *Direct Spirit Writing* (1878/1952), Moses coined the term psychography to describe the phenomenon of automatic writing where the inspirational source is a discarnate intelligence. Moses' automatic scripts date from 1872 to 1883.¹²³ Spirit controls, both "anonymous," such as Imperator and Rector, and others with claimed historical lives, wrote through his hand. First published under the pseudonym M.A. (Oxon.), *Spirit Teachings* (1883/1970) became a staple for Spiritualist church readings. Despite criticism of the source of

¹¹⁹ Rauscher, 1975, p. 131.

¹²⁰ Walter Meyer zu Erpen and Anna Thurlow, "Walter Stuart Stinson: A Biographical Sketch," is pending publication in the *Magazine of the Society for Psychical Research*.

¹²¹ Hutton, 1966/1968, p. 56.

¹²² Thanks to research assistance from Brandon Hodge, curator of the [Mysterious Planchette](#), the world's largest collection of devices for speaking to the dead.

¹²³ Of Stainton Moses' 24 notebooks, 23 are preserved by the London Spiritualist Alliance, now known as the [College of Psychic Studies](#).

Moses' writings, his contemporaries were convinced of his honesty and integrity. In *The "Controls" of Stainton Moses* (1923), A.W. Trethewy detailed possible sources of information and included autographs for comparison to signatures of communicators in the scripts.

[F.W.H. \(Frederic\) Myers](#), one of the key players in the SPR's early years, is best remembered for *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, published posthumously in 1903 in two volumes. Myers' meticulous documentation and categorization of such a large collection of recorded human experience, including phantasms of the dead, motor automatism, trance, and possession, was unique. In poor health for several years, Myers passed peacefully, convinced that an afterlife awaited him. That a discarnate Myers should wish to communicate makes sense, and in fact he may have tried through numerous mediums over decades.

Among the SPR leadership were members who were experts in classical literature. The cross-correspondences are communications attributed to the surviving Myers (1843-1901) and fellow investigators [Edmund Gurney](#) (1847-1888) and [Henry Sidgwick](#) (1838-1900) that provided fragments containing literary allusions that only made sense when pieced together, like a puzzle. Prominent SPR members discovered how to make sense of the fragments received over thirty years through automatists on three continents, some unknown to one another. They became convinced that the scripts were an intentional effort organized by Myers to provide a form of communication that could not be explained by telepathy or clairvoyance.

Though the cross-correspondences are often treated favourably, survival researchers are far from united about their value. Thirty years ago, based upon the reputations of those who interpreted and presented the cross-correspondences, I considered them a sophisticated form of survival evidence. There are so many volumes interpreting their meaning that appraising their value is difficult. Stephen Braude believes that their complexity argues against their usefulness as good evidence.¹²⁴ Additionally, documents now available reveal a degree of intimacy between participants that casts doubt on their reliability in interpreting the events in which they were involved. For students wishing to study the cross-correspondences, Archie Roy's *The Eager Dead* (2008), and Trevor Hamilton's *Immortal Longings* (2009) and Arthur Balfour's *Ghosts* (2017), are essential reading.

A century ago, cross-correspondence proponents argued that contamination of content between the mediums and investigators had been precluded by the mediums living at great distances from one another. Additionally, some mediums were referred to only by pseudonym. For instance, after she died, Mrs. Willett was revealed to be the suffragist and Liberal politician [Winifred Coombe Tennant](#) (1874-1956). [Archie Roy](#) (2008) recounted, based upon records maintained by Jean Countess of Balfour, that Coombe Tennant and [Gerald Balfour](#) (1853-1945),

¹²⁴ Braude, 2003, pp. 95-100.

both married, had had an affair that resulted in a son [Augustus Henry Coombe Tennant](#) (1913-1989). What concerns me is not the romantic liaison and love child, but that Gerald (later Lord Balfour) was one of the interpreters of the scripts. In the first sentence of *The Ear of Dionysius* (1920), Balfour introduces the automatist Mrs. Willett. Charles Fryer (1990) revealed the closeness between Winifred and Gerald and their families, including that from 1911 until 1931 Balfour was Winifred's only sitter.¹²⁵ Roy's revelation that Gerald and Winifred considered their child an intended Messiah suggests a degree of delusional thinking that should trigger reassessment of the value of the cross-correspondences. Possibly there is evidence of extra-sensory perception of information to which the automatists did not normally have access, and perhaps the early scripts did originate in an attempt by Myers and friends to prove their survival. However, among the living members of the extended Myers / Balfour / Sidgwick family and friends, there was a strong desire to prove survival, steeped in romanticism about unfulfilled love dating back decades. Could that shared goal have strengthened the intention among the living to make the pieces of the puzzle fit? Also, curiously, the fact that Oliver Lodge's book *Christopher: A Study of Human Personality* (1918) was about Winifred's son Christopher Tennant (1897-1917), fallen in action, is little mentioned. The post-1910 cross-correspondences are too contaminated by interpersonal relationships to be considered evidence for survival.

[Geraldine Cummins](#) was the best-documented and most prolific twentieth-century automatist. [Charles Fryer](#), who analyzed his own attempt to communicate with his father through writing (1982), provides a balanced review of Cummins' legacy (1990).

Tests for Communication with the Deceased

Despite the good intentions of those who have prepared tests for post-mortem communication, none has proven successful. Skeptics argue that lack of intended communication from those individuals proves that they did not survive death. Given how little we know about the nature of successful spirit communication, there could be other reasons. For instance, nothing in the mediumship literature suggests such a high degree of specificity as would be required to break a lock combination or cipher test. Also, much of communication with spirit through mediumship involves interpretation of symbols.

The most famous claimed test may have involved trickery. Before his death in 1926, [Harry Houdini](#) had left a two-word message with his wife Bess, stating that she was the only person

¹²⁵ Regarding Balfour's sittings with Coombe Tennant, Fryer (1990) continues: "A very large number of sessions took place, either at her home in Wales or at his at Fisher Hill, Woking. In this way she became closely attached to Balfour and his wife and got to know his sister, Eleanor, one of the most intelligent and intellectual women of her day, who had married Henry Sidgwick, the first President of the Society for Psychical Research" (pp. 114-115).

who knew it. Three years later, [Arthur Ford](#) gave Bess the message “Rosabelle believe,” which incorporated Houdini’s pet name for his wife. Bess Houdini signed a statement acknowledging that Ford was accurate, but within 48 hours the story had descended into claims of deception.¹²⁶

The purpose of tests for spirit communication was to counter the argument that what mediums deliver as spirit communication is in fact perceived through telepathy or clairvoyance. Some early experiments were called book tests, in which a deceased communicator, often through an automatic-writing medium, would instruct the sitter to look for a particular page, in a specified book, on a specific bookshelf in their home. If within that book, they found a passage accepted as appropriate coming from that person, the test was a success.¹²⁷

Sealed-package experiments involved a message or personally selected items placed within one or more envelopes and entrusted to a friend to determine when to reveal their contents, because once opened the test would be finished. Such tests prepared by [F.W.H. Myers](#) and [Oliver Lodge](#) were not successful. [Robert Thouless](#) was a sitter at some séances at which Lodge was believed to have communicated. In *From Anecdote to Experimental Research* (1972), Thouless explained that “it proved impossible to get a plain statement from him as to what was in the envelope.”¹²⁸

In 1948, Thouless promoted a more sophisticated test for survival that he named a cipher test, which involved preparing an encoded message which could only be deciphered through post-mortem communication of a specific key. In that manner, the test result would be either correct or wrong. The experiment could be tried any number of times without spoiling it.¹²⁹

In reviewing attempted tests for communication with the dead, [Arthur Berger](#) raised the possibility that there are stronger and weaker communicators and discussed his composite personality of good communicators, concluding that Thouless did not approximate that profile.¹³⁰ Berger evolved the cipher test into a dictionary test and attempted to promote his method among psychical researchers who would receive and validate communication attempts. In the dictionary test, a key word is selected from an identified dictionary edition. A test message is then enciphered by substituting numbers for the actual intended letters. The experimenter creating the test remembers the single word-key, does not reveal it to anyone

¹²⁶ Melton, 2001, vol. 1, p. 748.

¹²⁷ Melton, 2001, vol. 1, pp. 205-206.

¹²⁸ Thouless, 1972, pp. 157-158.

¹²⁹ Thouless, 1972, pp. 162-164.

¹³⁰ Arthur Berger, “Tests for Communication with the Dead,” in Doore, 1990, pp. 51-60.

else, or even write it down. The message can only be understood when the correct key is communicated from the spirit of the deceased experimenter through a medium.¹³¹

In 2000, when in her ninetieth year, [Susy Smith](#) published *The Afterlife Codes: Searching for Evidence of the Survival of the Soul*, in which she explained that she had saved a specific coded phrase in a computer. After her death, she planned to transmit the phrase to a medium who would compare her transmission to the version stored in the computer. As reported in *The Afterlife Experiments* (2002), Gary Schwartz and Linda Russek, working with Smith, created the Susy Smith Project at the University of Arizona. They worked with Smith to design an experiment, with additional codes, to establish a level of control that might be acceptable to scientists, in the hope that after her eventual passing Susy would be able to communicate her code.¹³²

[Ian Stevenson](#), who died in 2007, also prepared a combination lock test, which as of 18 August 2021 has not been resolved.¹³³ My assumption is that these various tests fail because of the limits of post-mortem memory, but also because the level of specificity does not reflect the way that spontaneous spirit communication works. At times in my life, I have had discussions about a test with friends, and there may even be a sealed envelope around here in some drawer. I lost touch long ago with one friend with whom I recall discussing such a post-mortem test, and I have no idea what message might be in that sealed envelope.

Channeling: Communication with Famous Discarnates

Mediums offering to connect with a specific deceased overstate their ability, and communications from alleged famous discarnates rarely provide evidence that can be validated. Channeled communications claiming to be revelatory are rarely impressive and often contradict established facts. Without a comprehensive, accessible analysis of the results of psychical research, history repeats itself every generation.

Enthused about the Ouija board and trance speech communication documented with Louis Benjamin,¹³⁴ [Albert Durrant Watson](#)¹³⁵ published two books about the messages received, many from renowned individuals. The spirits introduced the concept of a twentieth plane from which revelation flowed. Watson's books (1918 and 1920) received mixed reviews and he

¹³¹ Berger and Berger, 1991, pp. 105-106.

¹³² Schwartz, 2002, pp. 23-30.

¹³³ Email communication with Jim Tucker and Bruce Greyson, 18 August 2021.

¹³⁴ Louis Benjamin (1886-), a former Sunday school student of Watson, had in 1917 purchased a Ouija board for the amusement of his son. Between 1918 and 1920, Benjamin was the medium in many séances held in the Watson home.

¹³⁵ Debra Barr was my co-author on the A.D. Watson sketch for the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, pp. 1058-1059.

discontinued his research. In *Mediums and Mystics* (1923), he cautioned that there are genuine, little-understood phenomena worthy of study by qualified investigators.

In 1973, [Robert Leichtman](#) determined to write biographies about well-known geniuses and psychics that “would rekindle public interest in the exploration and investigation of the human mind and psychic potential.”¹³⁶ In compiling his list of historical personages, Leichtman realized that all were deceased individuals with whom he had communicated through clairaudience. Rather than limit the sketches to historical research, he decided to let the individuals speak for themselves, through a medium, to “talk about their lives, experiences, inspirations, and current thoughts *in their own words*.”¹³⁷ Most interviews were conducted in 1973 through the mediumship of David Kendrick Johnson.¹³⁸ The 24 sketches, published in two “From Heaven to Earth” booklet series between 1978 and 1984, included biographies about prominent psychics, psychologists, scientists, musicians, political leaders, and Theosophists.

When consulted in 2011, Eileen Garrett’s daughter [Eileen Coly](#) (1916-2013) and granddaughter Lisette Coly recalled that they had not found any evidence of Garrett’s personality in Leichtman’s *Eileen Garrett Returns* (1980). There is nothing to suggest that Leichtman’s books were intended as fiction, and no doubt the authors were sincere in their collaboration. Publisher Carl Japikse did not consider it necessary to prove life after death or mediumship, which had been “scientifically proven many times.”¹³⁹ Their literary endeavour provides no evidence of life after death.

In *Hungry Ghosts* (1990), [Joe Fisher](#) documented his efforts to prove the existence of channeled spirit guides, including travels in Europe and the Near East. Disillusioned by his inability to substantiate their historical existence through extensive investigation of the claims of one control and her fellow discarnates, Fisher concluded that the guides were earthbound spirits unable to admit that they were dead, not highly evolved spiritual guides.

That I am leery of channeling is based also upon experiences from early 1990s Spiritualist services when I discovered that a state of light self-hypnotic relaxation allows ideas and thoughts to emerge and coalesce effortlessly. And those can make for a fine inspirational address. No doubt many an orator has droned on, including politically, with eyes wide open in a light self-hypnotic trance. It is only a matter of practice and drawing upon the store of

¹³⁶ Leichtman, 1980, p. 5.

¹³⁷ Leichtman, 1980, p. 6.

¹³⁸ Leichtman was the medium for some biographies, including Nikola Tesla. [Carl Japikse](#), publisher at Ariel Press, participated in some interviews and wrote most introductions.

¹³⁹ Leichtman, 1980, p. 7.

knowledge to which one has been exposed. The “wisdom” conveyed contains little new or profound.

A short time after the passing of my close friend [Debra Barr](#), our spiritual development group was attempting trance.¹⁴⁰ We often “felt” Debra’s presence. On one occasion, sitting as the channel, I allowed her to begin to speak, before shutting down the communication. There was no way to prove it was Debra and not my impersonation of her based upon our 25-year friendship. What could she convey that I could not have known? But that is my experience, unwilling to risk misleading my friends by giving voice to what might have genuinely been the surviving Debra.

That attempts to communicate with the famous can rarely be substantiated does not diminish personal experience of surviving loved ones and friends where the percipient is able to evaluate the evidence. For analysis of the content and claimed sources of channeled material, Jon Klimo’s investigation about receiving information from paranormal sources, including through automatic writing, is recommended (1987).

Crime Detection: Missing Persons and Murder

Evidence suggestive of survival is also found in murders solved and bodies located by psychics. In the *Supernormal Faculties of Man* (1922/1923), [Eugene Osty](#)¹⁴¹ documented the discovery in March 1914 of the body of Étienne Lerasle, aged 82, missing for two weeks. Osty argued that without any suggestion of foul play, there was no other human mind from which Madame Morel, hypnotized over 200 km south of Paris, could have experienced the path the man took that located his body after thorough searches of the area had already been conducted.

Stories of mediums able to communicate with the spirit of a murder victim to provide evidence that help convict a killer make front-page newspaper headlines.¹⁴² In *Casebook of a Psychic Detective* (1981), Dixie Yeterian described her collaborations with police departments to help solve hard cases. Using psychometry, astral projection, and other techniques, Yeterian had helped solve murders and missing persons cases, including projecting herself into the victim’s body to identify the murderer. Colin Wilson (1984) also contributed to the literature on psychic detectives.

¹⁴⁰ Though by then the group was reduced through the loss of three members, we continued our studies for about another 18 months.

¹⁴¹ Osty, 1923, pp. 104-109; reprinted in Collins, 1939/1946, pp. 151-160.

¹⁴² Magnus Smith, “Medium Catches Killer and Proves Life after Death,” *PN*, 27 October 2001, p. 1.

Apparitions, Ghosts, Hauntings and Poltergeist Phenomena

Reports of hauntings and apparitions of the living or deceased were among the first anomalous phenomena systematically studied.¹⁴³ [Apparitions](#) most often involve a person or animal, briefly seen or felt, but not physically present, and often called a ghost.¹⁴⁴ Typically, [hauntings](#) are linked to a location. Genuine hauntings of a repetitive nature may involve an inexplicable form of “memory trace” that replays like a film, at intervals.

[Harry Price](#) was the most controversial British psychical researcher of the twentieth century.¹⁴⁵ In early 1925, he established the [National Laboratory of Psychical Research](#) where he conducted experiments with physical mediums Stella C. (1923, 1926, 1928)¹⁴⁶ and [Rudi Schneider](#) (1932), including through use of infrared photography.¹⁴⁷ Price is best remembered and most criticized as principal investigator of a haunting that turned [Borley Rectory](#) in Essex into the “most haunted house in England.” Though there had been earlier disturbances, Price began his investigation in 1929 and phenomena continued even after the house was damaged by fire in 1939 and demolished. In the 1940s, Price published two books about Borley.¹⁴⁸ He has been criticized both for his credulity and for having faked some of the Borley phenomena. At least six authors have revisited the case or other aspects of Price’s research and taken positions on opposite sides of the debate.¹⁴⁹ Most likely, Price’s desire for publicity resulted in a bungled investigation. The truth about Borley will never be known.

Hauntings involving so many “characters” will not provide good evidence of survival, though when controls are possible they could add to our knowledge of [poltergeist phenomena](#). The German word poltergeist means noisy or mischievous ghost and can be traced at least to the

¹⁴³ Gurney, Myers and Podmore, 1886.

¹⁴⁴ Books by Frank Podmore (1894/1915), Camille Flammarion (1923), W.H. Salter (1938), G.N.M. Tyrrell (1943/1969), Raymond Bayless (1973), and Celia Green and Charles McCreery (1975) are recommended.

¹⁴⁵ Price’s research is housed in the [Harry Price Library of Magical Literature](#) at Senate House Library, University of London. Price told his story in *Confessions of a Ghost Hunter* (1936/1974), which was elaborated upon in a biography by his literary executor Paul Tabori (1950/1974).

¹⁴⁶ Price (1925), revised and edited by James Turner (1973, pp. 1-43), provides an additional perspective about Price and his research with Dorothy Stella Cranshaw (1900-1986). Hall (1978, pp. 190-195) was the first to publish the romantic liaison between Price and Cranshaw that ended upon her engagement to Leslie Deacon.

¹⁴⁷ Price, 1933.

¹⁴⁸ Harry Price wrote *The Most Haunted House in England* (1940/1990) and *The End of Borley Rectory* (1946).

¹⁴⁹ Substantial works by six authors (listed in order of publication) reveal the complexity of the case, including investigation of the subsequent lives of occupants of Borley Rectory: David Cohen (1965); Trevor Hall (1978); Robert Wood (1992); Ivan Banks (1996); Richard Morris (2006); and Paul Adams (2017).

writings of Martin Luther. Anomalous disturbances connected to a person or place have been well documented and often associated with preadolescents.

In *Who Can Explain the Poltergeist?* (1964), [A.R.G. \(George\) Owen](#) examined cases that had survived the tests for normal causes. Based upon investigation of the [Sauchie poltergeist](#) that manifested around Virginia Campbell during 1960, Owen accepted the reality of some physical psychic phenomena. He also investigated, for several years beginning in 1966, the poltergeist outbreak around [Matthew Manning](#).¹⁵⁰

Relevant to understanding hauntings is Melvyn Willin's review (2019) of the case of the [Enfield poltergeist](#), based upon transcriptions of the audio tape recordings made during 1977-1978 by investigators [Maurice Grosse](#) and [Guy Lyon Playfair](#). Though some phenomena resulted from pranks by children, there remained a residue that the researchers considered genuine. The best poltergeist phenomena demonstrate a strong psychokinetic (PK) force, but do not contribute to the evidence for survival. Rather than poltergeist, parapsychologists prefer [recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis](#) (RSPK), the term coined by [William G. Roll](#) following his 1958 investigation with [Gaither Pratt](#) of the [Seaford poltergeist](#).

Psychokinesis Experiments and Imaginary Ghosts

The term [psychokinesis](#) (PK), referring to mind-over-matter interaction, became associated from 1934 with the experiments conducted at Duke University in which subjects would attempt to influence the results when dice were rolled.¹⁵¹ The earlier term [telekinesis](#) had been coined in 1890 by [Alexander Aksakof](#) to describe object movement with mental power.¹⁵²

To the extent that séances for physical phenomena involve table tilting or levitation, trumpets in flight, or ectoplasmic materializations, PK is involved. Such physical phenomena do not

¹⁵⁰ Manning (1974 and 1978) told the story of the PK phenomena that manifested around him. Eventually Manning learned to control the manifestations and channel the PK into spiritual healing work (1999).

¹⁵¹ Though the term "psychokinesis" appeared in US newspapers briefly in 1907 (Newspapers.com), the intended meaning in that instance is not clear. [Henry Holt](#) is credited with having coined the term psychokinesis. The first American newspaper reference to the Duke University Parapsychology Laboratory experiments refers to the New York story dated 21 July 1943, that references a *Journal of Parapsychology* report: "Lucky dice prove mind over matter, Duke study indicates," *Beatrice Times* (Beatrice, Nebraska), 22 July 1943, p. 2. In *The Reach of the Mind*, J.B. Rhine wrote that psychokinesis was a new word for an old idea and that the word was even in the dictionary, meaning "the action of the mind upon a physical system" (1954, p. 75).

¹⁵² The Google Books Ngram Viewer shows 1943 as the year in which psychokinesis was first used more frequently than telekinesis in publications. However, a Newspapers.com search shows that psychokinesis became the more popular news media term in the 1970s.

constitute survival evidence unless there are accompanying mental phenomena that convey evidence of personality.

A decade of observation of [table phenomena](#) in good light in a room in my home set aside for psychic and spiritual development convinced me that there is a psychic force that can manifest in a sitter group, beyond what might be attributed to [ideo-motor effect](#) or unconscious muscular action.¹⁵³ The [T. Glen Hamilton table levitation photographs](#) are the best such collection worldwide, based upon experiments during 1921-1927 that resulted in over fifty images, including several of non-contact levitations.¹⁵⁴

Some survival researchers espouse the unproven assumption that spirits cause physical objects to move, and before direct involvement convinced me that the “energy” that causes table-tilting comes from the living, I was inclined toward that belief as well. I have, however, found no evidence that the spirit world acts directly upon the physical world. Through the mind(s) of the medium and sitters, physical phenomena may be influenced by the intention of a surviving spirit or of an imaginary ghost-like creation, but that is separate from what causes movement.

In 1970, George and Iris Owen emigrated to Toronto where they had been contracted to conduct psychical research experiments.¹⁵⁵ A group formed under the [Toronto Society for Psychical Research](#) (TSPR), intent on replicating [British table-tilting experiments](#), obtained results after creating [Philip the imaginary ghost](#), as a thought form.¹⁵⁶ The group introduced historical inaccuracies to Philip’s life story, which they rehearsed, and a group member drew his portrait. The information that Philip communicated through raps in the table surface never went beyond the story of the invented character.¹⁵⁷

As leader of the Philip sitter group, [Iris Owen](#) with Sue Sparrow wrote *Conjuring Up Philip: An Adventure in Psychokinesis* (1976) about the group’s attempts to replicate Spiritualist table-tilting phenomena. The Owens concluded that the combined psychokinetic force of the sitter group produced the table phenomena. In other words, some psychic phenomena are caused by little-understood abilities of the human mind.

¹⁵³ The Victoria table experiments are discussed in my chapter “Canadian Psychical Research Experiments with Table Tilting and Ectoplasm Phenomena in the Séance Room,” in Moreman, 2013, vol. 2, pp. 219-221.

¹⁵⁴ My presentation about the history of [table levitations](#) is illustrated with photographs and video.

¹⁵⁵ I was fortunate to meet [Iris and George Owen](#) during presentation of my T. Glen Hamilton study at Toronto’s Springdale Church in 1992 and again later in Calgary. Their perspective influenced my own.

¹⁵⁶ Watson, 1993, pp. 353-356.

¹⁵⁷ The TSPR’s Philip experiments are summarized in my chapter in Moreman, 2013, vol. 2, pp. 216-219.

PK is a genuine phenomenon and an integral aspect of many physical phenomena. As Spiritualists contend, the energy required for physical mediumship is drawn from the medium and sitters. To appreciate the complexities of PK, books by Michael Brown (1976), Diana Robinson (1981), John Randall (1982), Stephen Braude (1986), and Scott Rogo (1986) are recommended.

The Trickster in the Paranormal

The trickster personality exists in all cultures. George Hansen's decade-long study of the role of the trickster within the paranormal culminated in [The Trickster and the Paranormal](#) (2001). Within Spiritualism and psychical research, the trickster personality is often apparent among mediums, both fraudulent and genuine. The trickster also appears among the investigator intent on studying mediums, as well as the magician intent on exposing both. Adding to the difficulty of understanding mediumship, professional mediums who give demonstrations from the platform, often before large audiences, sometimes assume a stage persona. [David Young](#), whom I knew well, certainly did, to enhance the entertainment value of a demonstration of mediumship in the context of dinner theatre.

Among the individuals involved historically in psychical research and mediumship have been a significant number who suffered childhood trauma, including death of one or both parents, illness, abuse, or adoption. Some were married more than once or had irregular marital relations.¹⁵⁸ Others suffered unemployment, poor health, or alcoholism. Authors often used pseudonyms, sometimes to anglicize an Eastern European or Jewish name or to obscure association with Spiritualism.

Obviously, not all individuals who suffer trauma are drawn to the paranormal, and many mediums had an uneventful childhood. Still, there is enough evidence in the known biography of well-known mediums and psychical researchers that a comparative psychological analysis might yield clues about the possible correlation of such marginalizing personal circumstances and, for instance, the ease and frequency with which one dissociates.¹⁵⁹ Detailed biography is vital to investigating the apparent higher incidence of EHE among such individuals.¹⁶⁰

D.D. Home and Eusapia Palladino figure in Hansen's list of tricksters. Home's personal story included an unsettled childhood and early ability to produce psychokinetic effects. Home is

¹⁵⁸ Fortunately, divorce, children born out of wedlock, and same-sex relations no longer have the associated stigma and trauma they had forty years ago.

¹⁵⁹ Email communication with Lis Warwood, 17 August 2021, to whom a thank-you for helping clarify my thinking.

¹⁶⁰ The Survival Research Institute of Canada is building a library name authority (i.e., authors' birth names and inclusive years) as a starting point for such study.

touted as the physical medium never exposed in fraud. Based upon understanding of mis-observation in dimly-lit séance rooms, reports of Home's miraculous feats were probably embroidered. In any case, the physical feats of Palladino and Home did not add to the evidence for life after death.

Like [Harry Price](#), magicians [Harry Houdini](#) and [James Randi](#) were driven by desire for publicity, upon which their careers depended. They are to be commended for exposing fraudulent mediums. Beyond that, their rancorous and dishonest campaigns often made study of psychic phenomena impossible when they were involved. Some honest magicians have acknowledged the residue of psychic phenomena that cannot be replicated by stage magic.¹⁶¹ In *Religion, Magic and the Supernatural* (2006), [William Rauscher](#) shares his life experience as a priest, magician, and psychical researcher. Though Christian in perspective, Rauscher's book provides an invaluable overview of the field.

In 1960, having obtained permission to film séances at [Camp Chesterfield](#), investigators [Andrija Puharich](#) and Tom O'Neill exposed fraud when their use of infrared photography revealed an accomplice moving about during the séance.¹⁶² In 1976, fresh allegations rocked the Spiritualist camp when medium [Lamar Keene](#), in his exposé *The Psychic Mafia*, confessed to participating with other mediums in a system of fraud. Keene coined the term [true-believer syndrome](#) to describe individuals who refused to believe they were deceived.

Wading through reports of mediumship for best evidence, one must distinguish the parts that might be genuine from parts imagined, embroidered, or faked. As much as I would like to dismiss outright the work of any medium caught in fraud, even mediums deemed largely fraudulent sometimes demonstrated psi. The skeptical [Hereward Carrington](#) caught [William Cartheuser](#) in fraud, but maintained that he sometimes demonstrated genuine telepathy.¹⁶³

Facial Features and Voice as Means of Recognition

Good survival evidence is often received through spontaneous, unmediated experiences that are by their nature entirely subjective. That we have sought more objective means of communication is understandable. Often such attempts have involved face or voice recognition.¹⁶⁴

Facial features are among the strongest means of recognition, including after years of not having seen a friend. Recognition of a spirit face is possible within psychic portraiture, spirit

¹⁶¹ Hansen, 2001, p. 132, table 5.

¹⁶² Tom O'Neill was publisher of *Psychic Observer*, in which he exposed the fraud on 10 July 1960.

¹⁶³ Bayless, 1972, p. 138.

¹⁶⁴ Face and voice recognition have of course new meaning in our high-tech age.

photography, and ectoplasmic materializations. Psychic portraits by Frank Leah are discussed below in relation to Spiritual Healing.¹⁶⁵ My own recognition of spirit faces falls within the categories of Transfiguration and Spirit Photography. The materialized miniature faces in the T. Glen Hamilton research are covered in Ectoplasm. Voice as a means of identification is discussed within Direct-Voice Mediumship, Telephone Calls from the Dead, and Electronic Voice Phenomena.

Spiritual Healing and Healing Mediums

Spiritual healing is relevant to discussion of survival when a healing medium demonstrates that a surviving spirit assists in the healing process. While most spiritual healers claim access to an impersonal, universal, or divine source of healing energy,¹⁶⁶ some claim a healing guide as intermediary. Gordon Turner (1970) explained that a small proportion of healers are “completely controlled during the healing process by a ‘spirit operator,’ generally referred to as a guide or control.”¹⁶⁷ Many of the psychic surgeons in the Philippines and Brazil, who came to prominence during the 1960s and 1970s, claimed that the spirit of a known doctor worked through them to perform the surgeries on the etheric or subtle body and effect the miraculous cures that were documented.¹⁶⁸

The best-documented case of a spiritual healer with an identified guide involves [George Chapman](#) (1921-2006), a fireman who discovered his true calling and worked as a trance medium and spiritual healer for over 60 years. Chapman became aware of his healing gift after relaxing an old man’s arm while helping him cross the street.¹⁶⁹ From first contact, [William Lang](#) (1852-1937), FRCS, gave details of his former existence that were confirmed in 1946 by his daughter [Marie Lyndon Lang](#) (1883-1977).¹⁷⁰ An ophthalmic surgeon in life, Dr. Lang worked through the entranced Chapman to conduct surgery, including eye operations, on the spirit

¹⁶⁵ In the *Living Image* (1984), [Coral Polge](#) told of her career as a Spiritualist psychic artist.

¹⁶⁶ The Spiritualists’ National Union trains that spiritual healing does not require guides. The Christian faith healers Kathryn Kuhlman and Agnes Sanford claimed connection with the divine. By contrast, Methodists Ambrose and Olga Worrall (1976) also lectured about psychic abilities and phenomena.

¹⁶⁷ Turner, 1970, p. 18, elaborated: “The controlling entity is usually a doctor or surgeon, or some other person who has had contact with therapeutics while here on earth. It is from these healers that a different and fascinating variation of the healing technique may occasionally be observed.”

¹⁶⁸ Books by Harold Sherman (1966/1967) and Tom Valentine (1973) focussed on the Philippine healers. *Healers and the Healing Process*, edited by George Meek (1977), provided an overview of paranormal healing in the Philippines, Brazil, England, Russia, and the United States. Gordon Turner (1963/1970, pp. 18-21) explains types of healing, including spirit operations.

¹⁶⁹ Hutton, 1966/1968, p. 54.

¹⁷⁰ Chapman as told to Stemman, 1978, p. 160. Confirmed by 12 July 2021 email communication with Roy Stemman that the later year given by Hutton (1966/1968) is not correct.

bodies of many thousands of patients. Former medical colleagues and patients also attested to continuity of personality between the historical Lang and the healing guide.

The Lang/Chapman story was first told at book-length in *Healing Hands* (1966/1968) by journalist [Bernard Hutton](#).¹⁷¹ In 1963, Hutton had been seriously ill, on the verge of blindness, and deemed beyond help by specialists. On the insistence of his wife Pearl, he attended an appointment with Chapman in January 1964. Not a believer in miracles, Hutton had reservations about the visit. Lang, through the entranced Chapman, did not open his eyes throughout the consultation, yet diagnosed his eye prescription and knew about a “squint operation” he had had at age six. Lang operated on Hutton’s spirit body and promised to visit him in his sleep state, to continue the treatment. Initially fearful that Lang had worsened his situation, Hutton began to regain his vision while seated in the car, awaiting the return of his wife and children who had gone for a walk. With his eyesight and health much improved, he determined to investigate spiritual healing. He wanted proof. Granted access to Chapman’s case files, Hutton found that the spirit doctor had succeeded in treating thousands of cases, from among which he located and interviewed former patients. The story of his investigation was published two years later, with Hutton stating his conviction that Dr. William Lang was Chapman’s spirit control.¹⁷²

Hutton includes compelling evidence of individuals who had known Lang, including some whom Lang first greeted by their childhood name. In describing his first meeting with Lang, Hutton explained that the spirit doctor had transfigured Chapman’s face.¹⁷³ That his facial features changed is borne out by other patients’ descriptions, also that Lang was shorter and stooped, in effect the old man he had been. Importantly, Chapman’s consultations were held in full light. The healer’s son [Michael Chapman](#) worked with his father for over thirty years. In a unique arrangement, Michael continues the healing work with Lang’s son, [Basil Thorne Lang](#) (1880-1928), also a medical doctor, as his guide.

The story of Dr. Lang was retold in *Surgeon from Another World* (1978) by Chapman and Roy Stemman, who was examined by Dr. Lang on their first meeting.¹⁷⁴ In an updated edition,¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Joseph Bernard Hutton was the name Josef B. Heisler adopted after escaping the German invasion of Czechoslovakia. Hutton dedicated his first book on psychic matters, *Out of This World* (1965), to “Dr. William Lang and Mr. George Chapman—the wonderful spirit doctor and his medium who saved and greatly improved my once hopeless eye-sight.” On 27 October 1964, before a Commissioner for Oaths, Hutton swore a declaration that the events described in *Out of This World* were true (publisher’s note, p. 8).

¹⁷² Hutton, 1966/1968, p. 25.

¹⁷³ Hutton, 1966/1968, p. 15.

¹⁷⁴ Roy Stemman, “A Day in the After-Life of a Spirit Surgeon,” *PN*, 30 December 1967, pp. 4-5.

¹⁷⁵ Chapman with Stemman, 2017 (revised ed.).

Stemman elaborated upon the ten-year special medical contract by which Chapman had held twice-monthly meetings in Lyndon Lang's London home, to which she invited her brother Basil's medical colleagues, many of whom had also known their father.

Following wartime service, [Harry Edwards](#) became engaged politically in Camberwell, London, including nominations as the Liberal Party candidate (1928-1935). Apart from experience of a Spiritualist service in the early 1920s, Edwards' study of Spiritualism began in 1934 at meetings in Balham when he was told of spirit guides waiting to work with him. Like his father, Edwards' rationalist approach was that it would be presumptuous to assume that a personal hereafter awaited humans.¹⁷⁶ Soon convinced that Spiritualism was worth investigating, he began hosting a home circle for development of mediumship.¹⁷⁷ Edwards' first two books were about physical mediums [Jack Webber](#) (1907-1940)¹⁷⁸ and [Arnold Clare](#) (1901-1991).¹⁷⁹ Some of Edwards' photographs of table levitations and ectoplasm at the Webber séances employed infrared photography. He was convinced that fraud was not possible.

The late 1930s saw the beginning of Edwards' nearly forty-year career of service as a healing medium. His fame grew until he received as many as ten thousand healing requests by post each week. By 1946, when the volume of healing work had outgrown the Edwards' home, the [Harry Edwards Healing Sanctuary](#) was founded. Located at Burrows Lea, Surrey, it continues to offer healing to this day. From that time, Edwards was convinced that his principal healing guides were the French microbiologist Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) and Lord Joseph Lister (1827-1912) who pioneered antiseptic surgery and insisted upon the sterilization of surgical instruments. The evidence came first through Paulette Austen (ca. 1920-2016)¹⁸⁰ who

¹⁷⁶ Branch, 1982, p. 60.

¹⁷⁷ The [Psychic News digital archive \(1932-2010\)](#), available through the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections digital collections, allows researchers to identify and date workers in the field. For instance, among the 7,000 pages that mention Harry Edwards or his books, we find that he first delivered the address and clairvoyance at the Muswell Hill Spiritualist Centre on Sunday, 11 July 1937 (*PN*, 10 July 1937, p. 10). Six months later Edwards was offering spiritual healing from his home in Southwest London, as part of the Fellowship of Spiritual Service (*PN*, 22 January 1938, p. 10).

¹⁷⁸ Thanks to Harry Edwards, the physical mediumship of Jack Webber is among the better documented. Webber's nephew Denzil Fairbairn continues (2021) to promote the work of his uncle.

¹⁷⁹ Edwards, 1940 and 1942.

¹⁸⁰ Paulette Austen was married to A.W. (Arthur William) Austen (1906-1974) who edited some of the early Silver Birch books. Paulette became the medium for a spirit guide called White Ray.

mentioned Lister and that there was a whiff of antiseptic in the air.¹⁸¹ For Edwards, the proof came in pencil portraits of Pasteur and Lister drawn by psychic artist [Frank Leah](#) (1886-1972).¹⁸²

The [National Federation of Spiritual Healers](#) (NFSH) was formed in 1954 with Harry Edwards invited to be its first President. The organization later distanced Edwards' healing work from Spiritualism. The healer's story is told in biographies by Paul Miller (1948), Ramus Branch (1982), and Edwards' daughter Felicity Joan Medland (2007).

That the search for evidence of survival is interwoven with laying-on-of-hands healing is not surprising given that Jesus demonstrated his survival to his disciples and was also a great healer.

Direct-Voice Mediumship

[Direct voice](#) involves a spirit voice manifesting through a physical medium without use of the human vocal cords. The voice may be heard through a séance trumpet or emanating from an ectoplasmic voice box created in proximity to the medium.¹⁸³ The voice of a loved one provides more compelling evidence of personality than a string of facts through mental mediumship.¹⁸⁴ Jan Vandersande (2008) argued that direct-voice mediums [John Campbell Sloan](#) and Leslie Flint provided some of the best survival evidence.

[Leslie Walter Flint](#), whose mediumship did not involve a trumpet, is remembered as the most tested direct-voice medium.¹⁸⁵ His legacy, including audio recordings and now transcripts of his séances, is preserved by the [Leslie Flint Educational Trust](#).

At Toronto's Britten Memorial Church on 18 September 2007, I attended a production in which the "performer" had untied his bindings and was walking about, waving the séance trumpets, that he tossed to the ground before moving on to his next trick. When the lights were turned on, the imposture was seated in front of the cabinet with his legs crossed to hide the fact that they were no longer bound. In the dark, he had been unable to find the rope which I spotted and held up for all to see.

¹⁸¹ Branch, 1982, pp. 112-113, refers to the Austens' new centre. "New London Centre," *PN*, 4 May 1946, p. 4, identifies Paulette Austen as the resident medium of the Brompton Psychic Centre.

¹⁸² Branch, 1982, pp. 111-114, and photographs facing p. 162. The story of Frank Leah's portraits of Pasteur and Lister was revealed in *PN*, 13 November 1948, p. 6, in a review of Miller's *Born to Heal* (1948). In *Faces of the Living Dead* (1943), Miller documented the stories behind the psychic portraits drawn by Frank Leah.

¹⁸³ Bayless' *Voices from Beyond* (1976) claimed regarding direct voice, one of the rarest forms of mediumship, that "the reality of paranormal voices is no longer contested" (dustjacket).

¹⁸⁴ Audio recordings of family members while alive are not often available for comparison.

¹⁸⁵ Flint, 1971, and Uphoff and Uphoff, nd.

Following the Toronto misadventure, participation on 3 June 2008 as a guest in the home circle of [Stewart Alexander](#) in Kingston-upon-Hull, Yorkshire, convinced me that aluminum trumpets can fly about the séance room, high above the sitters' heads. The two airborne trumpets were a genuine manifestation of macro-PK.

Three historical mediums deserve mention. [Elizabeth Winn Blake](#) (1847-1920) is the subject of *The Direct Voice* (2017) by Riley Heagerty. Mrs. Blake was investigated by magician [David Abbott](#), author of *Behind the Scenes with the Mediums* (1907). Though critical of psychic phenomena, Abbott remained open-minded and upon hearing of Blake's ability to produce voices in daylight determined to investigate. [James Hyslop](#) joined Abbott for the 1906 trip to Ohio. Both men attested to the voices heard through the trumpets the medium held to her ear. The voices resembled those of known deceased and conveyed accurate information that Blake could not have known. Though her vocal cords did not move while the voices were speaking, Abbott later suggested that Blake had "ventriloquized the sounds by talking out of her ears."¹⁸⁶ Could Abbott's observation suggest the presence of the voice box sometimes visible in ectoplasmic research? For instance, a 1950 photograph by Winnipeg researcher [Sylvia Barber](#) shows a [materialized voice box](#) near the right ear of [Mary Ann Marshall](#).¹⁸⁷

In *The French Revelation* (2000/2001), Riley Heagerty compiled the story of [Emily French](#) (1831-1912) whose direct-voice mediumship was first documented by [Edward Randall](#), regarding both the voice and the evidence conveyed.¹⁸⁸ [Henrietta Wriedt](#) (1861-1942)¹⁸⁹ worked as a direct-voice medium for 50 years, convincing among others [William Lyon Mackenzie King](#) of the reality of spirit communication.¹⁹⁰

Telephone Calls from the Dead

Long before the advent of telephones and audio-recording technology, direct-voice mediums were demonstrating discarnate voices through trumpets that amplified the sound. In 1935, under a misleading title, [Cosmo Hamilton](#) claimed to be "the only man in the world who has

¹⁸⁶ Rogo and Bayless, 1979, p. 160.

¹⁸⁷ For the 1 February 1950 experiment, Sylvia Barber used four cameras to photograph Mrs. Marshall from different angles. In addition to the voice box, the images show a piece of ectoplasm covering the medium's nose.

¹⁸⁸ See also Randall, [The Dead Have Never Died](#) (1918/1930).

¹⁸⁹ Email communication, 5 August 2021, with Megan Owen, who descends from Etta Wriedt's half-brother Frank Hannegan, indicates that Etta was born Marie Henrietta Knapp.

¹⁹⁰ The earliest Newspapers.com mention of Etta Wriedt is "Mediums Hand Out Tips from the Departed," *Arizona Daily Star*, 26 March 1911, p. 4, based upon a New York report the previous day of the convention of the National and New York State's Spiritualist Associations. However, from *The Voices* (1913, pp. 426-427) by William Osborne Moore, we can infer that she began working as a medium in the late 1880s.

talked over the phone with people who are dead,” but admitted in the article that it was a London medium who gave voice to the dead celebrities by calling him through the London switchboard.¹⁹¹

Phone Calls from the Dead (1979), by [Scott Rogo](#) and [Raymond Bayless](#), was hailed a breakthrough study. When Rogo became interested in the phenomenon and started collecting cases, little had been written on the topic.¹⁹² Thanks to colleagues who provided leads or put them in contact with acquaintances who had received calls, the authors documented a selection from the hundreds brought to their attention. Bayless was the lead investigator, with Rogo as principal author.

Apart from the odd case determined to have been a cruel hoax, when telephone records were checked there remained anomalous calls not initiated by any living person. Often the calls came within minutes, hours, or days of the death of the individual whose voice was heard through the phone. Some callers conveyed knowledge unknown to the individual who picked up the receiver. Longer calls resulted when the person responding had no conscious awareness that the caller was deceased. Investigation of whether the calls originated in the local phone or arrived at the phone as an electromagnetic impulse suggested that both means of transmission were possible.

In addition to mechanical ways that the dead might reach out to the living, Rogo and Bayless questioned whether the phenomenon known as direct or independent voice might underlie the phone calls. They included an overview of electronic contact with the dead, dating back to the telegraph and wireless technology. In 1915, London solicitor David Wilson reported in the Spiritualist journal *Light* about communications he had received through Morse code, including one in Russian that was also partially repeated six minutes later to a colleague in Paris working with a replica of his equipment.¹⁹³ Wilson’s research demonstrated an independent intelligence, not necessarily discarnate.

With the proliferation of radio technology came increased interest in constructing [electrical devices to contact the dead](#), some inspired from designs received through mediumship. None were successful. Because of Thomas Edison’s fame as an inventor, the [machine linked to his name](#) is best remembered, although there is no evidence that Edison got beyond [discussing the possibility](#).

¹⁹¹ The story originated in New York: “English Writer Says He Gets 'Phone Calls from Dead Persons,” *Palm Beach Post*, 20 November 1935, p. 3

¹⁹² Before 1979, the *PN* digital archives did not reference such telephonic phenomenon. Likewise, a search of the Newspapers.com archive results in few results before Rogo and Bayless began soliciting stories from the public.

¹⁹³ Rogo and Bayless, 1979, pp. 139-176.

In *Electronic Voices* (2010), Anabela Cardoso referred to the phenomenon as anomalous telephone contact (ATC).¹⁹⁴ Callum Cooper brought renewed attention to the research of Bayless and Rogo in *Telephone Calls from the Dead* (2012). He also revealed new cases, including repeated calls from cell phones of individuals who had been dead for hours.

Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP) and Instrumental TransCommunication (ITC)

[Electronic Voice Phenomena](#) (EVP) is the term coined by Peter Bander in 1973 to describe the recording of anomalous voices on audio tape, at first reel-to-reel, then cassette. Initially, the method of recording included equipment such as a microphone, radio, radio-microphone, frequency-transmitter, and/or diode. Among EVP researchers, there was ongoing experimentation and discussion of the type of equipment best suited for recording.

In 1956, Raymond Bayless became interested in the earlier work of [Attila von Szalay](#) with spirit voices. Experimenting together, they discovered that the voices could be amplified through audio recording.¹⁹⁵ [Friedrich Jürgenson](#) accidentally discovered voices on audiotape after recording birdsong in his garden in 1959. Convinced by the voice of his deceased mother calling him by her special nickname for him, Jürgenson determined to establish an electronic bridge for the voices and published several books about his research in Swedish. Though the Vatican did not express an official opinion about the voices, Pope Paul VI made Jürgenson a Knight Commander of the Order of St. Gregory in 1969.

[Konstantin Raudive](#) met Jürgenson in 1965 and became the first researcher to publish a book in English about recording the voices of deceased individuals.¹⁹⁶ *Breakthrough: An Amazing Experiment in Electronic Communication with the Dead* (1971) includes transcripts of many recordings. It was the result of six years' research into what was heralded as a new phenomenon. Raudive had lectured about his research in Germany and had organized 43 opportunities between 1966 and 1968 for about 300 individuals to "listen in" to the recorded voices.¹⁹⁷ The responses of those listeners, including physicists, philosophers, and parapsychologists were recorded and tabulated. During a test on 21 June 1968, when 150 voices were demonstrated, [Hans Bender](#) "could hear 50 voices very clearly, 57 clearly and the

¹⁹⁴ Cardoso, 2010, p. 19.

¹⁹⁵ Bayless 1972, pp. 145-154, and Butler and Butler, 2003/2004, p. 11.

¹⁹⁶ Raudive's book in German, *Unhörbares wird hörbar*, was published in 1968.

¹⁹⁷ That fact helped convince the British publisher [Colin Smythe](#) to proceed with the book. Peter Bander, who was responsible for recommending to Smythe that the book be published, was critical of the voices attributed to well-known individuals.

rest insufficiently clearly,”¹⁹⁸ but was dismissive of the survival hypothesis.¹⁹⁹ Some voices were of well-known individuals which is a challenge to the critical thinker.

Breakthrough demonstrated Raudive’s methodical approach, analyzing the speech-content of recordings, and documenting the results of experiments conducted in partnership with others. Appendices include reports from experts, including theologians, philosophers, psychologists, parapsychologists, physicists and electronic engineers, and comments from collaborators.

For [Peter Bander](#), who had a broad interest in psychic phenomenon, the work of editing Raudive’s book and managing the publisher’s relationship with the author became a full-time job. It was Bander who proposed the term electronic-voice phenomenon, to steer the media away from use of “Raudive voices.”²⁰⁰ In *Voices from the Tapes* (1973), Bander published statements from clergymen about their assessment of the taped voices and shared his own technique in recording the voices. Importantly, he included the human backstory of ego and rivalry that surrounded Raudive in relation to discovery and interpretation of the voices.

Breakthrough brought to public attention experimentation that could be inexpensively undertaken by virtually anyone who had the patience to listen, often repeatedly, for recorded voices. A decade later, in May 1982, EVP researcher [Sarah Wilson Estep](#) founded the [American Association-Electronic Voice Phenomena \(AA-EVP\)](#) to “provide objective evidence that we survive death in an individual conscious state.”²⁰¹ Estep defined a three-level system of grading EVP quality. In *Voices of Eternity* (1988), she reported that the voices of surviving spirits demonstrated clairaudient, clairvoyant, and sometimes precognitive abilities.²⁰²

With advances in video and computer technology during the 1980s, the range of means of capturing voices, images, and sometimes typewritten text expanded. In 1989, Ernst Senkowski coined the term [Instrumental TransCommunication](#) (ITC), in a book of that title, to cover audio-visual experimentation in capturing voices or images of the deceased or other entities.²⁰³

Tom and Lisa Butler, both from the telecommunications industry, assumed the role of AA-EVP directors in 2000 when Estep retired. Lisa had started recording EVP in 1987. The Butlers have worked tirelessly for the organization, including publication of its [quarterly journal](#) and

¹⁹⁸ Raudive, 1971, p. 383.

¹⁹⁹ Raudive, 1971, pp. 4-6.

²⁰⁰ Butler and Butler, 2003/2004, p. 15, point out that in *Carry on Talking* (1973) Bander used the term “electronic-voice phenomenon” to recognize the role of Friedrich Jürgenson in discovery of the voices.

²⁰¹ Association TransCommunication website, 15 August 2021.

²⁰² Estep, 1988, p. 77

²⁰³ Cardoso, 2010, p. 11.

documentation of the stories of members that Sarah had started. In 2010, AA-EVP was renamed [Association TransCommunication](#) to better reflect how the field had evolved.²⁰⁴

Many dedicated individuals and organizations throughout the United States, Britain, Europe, and beyond have conducted ITC experiments over the past 40 years. It would not be possible to do justice here to that story. For the history of EVP and ITC, *There is No Death and There are No Dead* (2003/2004) by Tom and Lisa Butler, and *Electronic Voices* (2010) by Anabela Cardoso, are recommended.

My experience of EVP is limited. At midnight on 14 April 2012, the one hundredth anniversary of the sinking of the *Titanic*, I visited the Halifax graveyard where some of the victims are buried with an EVP researcher and TV crew. My memory is of how cold that night was, not of impressive EVP results. The adventure was part of a contrived scene for an episode of *Supernatural Investigator*, not what I would consider conducive to spirit communication. Despite an attempt to communicate with my father, there was nothing evidential.²⁰⁵

Although a common interpretation of “fuzzy” EVP voices and ITC images presents a challenge, most experimenters focus on their best results. Many EVP and ITC researchers are convinced that photographic, video, and audio media, including now digital, have captured evidence for life after death. Though I include within Spirit Photography my experience of the digital image showing the likeness of friend and colleague Debra Barr, that experience could have equally been included within ITC.

Transfiguration Personally Experienced

In 1984, in Nanaimo, I secured the last seat for a demonstration of [transfiguration mediumship](#). Sometimes described as involving an ectoplasmic mask, transfiguration meant that the face of medium [Irene Griffey](#) (1920-1989) would alter to reveal spirit loved ones. For the first half of the séance I saw nothing. Then, as though a switch had flipped, I saw transfiguring the medium’s face what others were describing. Come my turn, I recognized a male visage that I thought should be my grandfather but looked like his younger brother Bill. The master of ceremonies, a spirit guide called Parkinson, encouraged us to interact and I suggested that the facial features and hair line were not right. Upon looking at photos that evening, I discovered that my grandfather had accurately projected his image onto the medium’s face. My mind had interpreted the man’s face as my then living great-uncle. My memory of Bill was more vivid, and I found out later that the brothers’ cousins had even confused them. Though transfiguration has been photographed, this seemed like a subjective psychic experience, but with a twist. Grandpa John had accurately shown himself, but my faulty memory did not

²⁰⁴ *Association TransCommunication NewsJournal*, vol. 28, no. 4 (Winter 2010), p. 1.

²⁰⁵ Tell Tale Productions, [Supernatural Investigator, episode 303](#) (released 8 January 2013).

recognize him.²⁰⁶ I have long questioned whether this was some form of group hallucination, as once my “sight” was triggered I was seeing what others were describing during their turns.

Ectoplasm: Myth or Reality?

[Ectoplasm](#), meaning an exteriorized substance, is the basis for materialization.²⁰⁷ In his *Thirty Years of Psychological Research* (1923), [Charles Richet](#) claimed to have invented the term ectoplasm²⁰⁸ to describe the exteriorized substance observed in study of Palladino during the 1890s.²⁰⁹ Ectoplasm has also been referred to as psychoplasm, ideoplasm, and teleplasm.²¹⁰

Even for individuals who hold all manner of unproven beliefs, ectoplasm is typically beyond their boggle threshold. Materialization is a rare form of physical phenomena believed to manifest mostly in séance-room conditions. Under the cloak of darkness, fraud has been frequently perpetrated by individuals claiming to be a physical medium. Consequently, twentieth-century psychical researchers largely avoided study of physical phenomena. The question remains, is ectoplasm myth or reality?²¹¹

Michel Granger, a retired chemist living in France, is the world’s leading authority on ectoplasm.²¹² More than 20 years of research about 500 historical cases of ectoplasmic phenomena worldwide have resulted in 2,700 pages of historical documentation. Granger’s three-volume *magnum opus* includes 850 photographs of the phenomenon and its protagonists, and an appendix listing more than 350 mediums who produced or claimed to be capable of materialization. To each case, he has assigned a credibility value of one through ten, based upon his assessment of the available evidence, to indicate whether he considers it genuine. Although many cases involve fraud, Granger concludes that “there remain enough cases to consider the existence of ectoplasm as a true phenomenon of physical mediumship.”²¹³ The first volume of [La Saga de l’ectoplasme](#) was published in June 2021, with the others to follow soon.

²⁰⁶ A similar account was submitted for publication in my chapter in Ruickbie and McLuhan, eds., (in preparation), *Is There Life After Death? Arguments, Theories, Evidence*.

²⁰⁷ “Nobody Has Explained What an Ectoplasm Is,” *PN*, 15 April 1944, p. 3.

²⁰⁸ [William Benjamin Carpenter](#) first used the term ectoplasm in the field of cell biology in the 1881 sixth edition of *The Microscope and Its Revelations* (London: J.& A. Churchill, 1881).

²⁰⁹ Richet, translated by De Brath, 1922/1923, pp. 454-545.

²¹⁰ The evolution of the four related terms is treated in my chapter in Moreman, 2013, vol. 2, pp. 206-207.

²¹¹ [Ectoplasm: Myth or Reality?](#) is illustrated with images from the T.G. Hamilton experiments.

²¹² Michel Granger and I have collaborated since 2004 on historical research.

²¹³ Email communication with Michel Granger, 8 May 2021.

The earliest ectoplasm documented in Granger's research was described in 1877 by lawyer A.T.T. Peterson (1813-1906) with the British medium William Lawrence. Peterson described the light, flacid cloud phenomenon he observed in reduced light that seemed to gradually emerge from the side of the medium and form into a solid body representing Peterson's former client from India named Joteepersaad.

Many well-evidenced cases of ectoplasm were not photographed, either for lack of permission from the medium or trance controls, or for fear of inhibiting the phenomenon or impairing its development, given that it dissolves in light. Winnipeg medical doctor [T. Glen Hamilton](#) determined to photograph psychic phenomena from multiple angles. He soon had a [bank of eleven cameras and three remote-control flash apparatus](#) in his séance room. The [resulting photographs](#) are the best evidence worldwide of ectoplasm within a stable sitter group.²¹⁴

The experiments conducted by T. Glen Hamilton, his wife Lillian, and their colleagues between 1918 and 1944 are documented in two books. Edited by James Hamilton, [Intention and Survival](#) (1942/1977) focussed on the intentional actions by the trance personalities in his parents' psychical research study into the question of survival. Edited by Margaret Hamilton, [Is Survival A Fact?](#) (1969) was likewise focussed on the role of the trance personalities, but with respect to the deep-trance automatic scripts.²¹⁵

Anecdotal reports of materializations in what I refer to as "the travelling road show" of physical mediums will not produce useful evidence because of the impossibility of meaningful controls. Though not beyond criticism, the conditions of control that Dr. Hamilton was able to impose within the context of his séance room are well-documented. I believe that the materialization phenomena in the Hamilton experiments were authentic ectoplasmic creations.²¹⁶

The fact that [Charles Haddon Spurgeon](#) (1834-1892) attempted to put through [his facial likeness on four occasions](#) during 1928 and 1929 suggests strong intention by a surviving

²¹⁴ The T. Glen Hamilton psychical research experiments are the main case presented in my chapter in Moreman, 2013, vol. 2, pp. 207-216. The best introduction to the Hamilton experiments is the Winter 2016 Hamilton Family Fonds Special Issue of the SPR's *Paranormal Review* (issue 77). A longer overview is available in [The Quest for Immortality](#). The *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* sketch for T.G. Hamilton will be published during 2022.

²¹⁵ With Hamilton family permission, SRIC organized digitization of the two books and UMASC made them available though it's digital collections.

²¹⁶ See [The Quest for Immortality](#), pp. 6-7, 11-22, 31-32, for discussion of séance-room controls and related factors that convince me that fraud was not a factor in the 1928-1934 ectoplasmic manifestations.

personality. In particular, the miniature face photographed on 1 May 1929 provides a compelling example of ectoplasm as survival evidence.²¹⁷

Based upon the Spurgeon faces and others in the Hamilton collection, one must contemplate whether the surviving consciousness of the individual portrayed was somehow able to manipulate the ectoplasmic mass to create the well-defined facial features. Alternately, was the mind of the medium or collective sitter group the creative force behind the faces? That possibility must be considered, given manifestation of a facial likeness of Oliver Lodge on 22 May 1932, who was at the time asleep in England. If accurately identified, the Lodge face suggests an ideo-plastic process and that the ectoplasm was manipulated by the mind of the medium or the sleeping mind of Lodge.

That some ectoplasm is genuine is not a conclusion I arrived at lightly. In fact, it took years of fence-sitting and trepidation. If I am correct, the miniature faces in the Hamilton ectoplasmic research are among the best evidence worldwide for survival of human consciousness and attempts of surviving spirits to communicate through mediumship. On four occasions during 1928 when ectoplasm had been photographed, an affidavit was typed for each participant and signed in the presence of a notary public. Though never used in a court of law, those documents reveal the desire of the Hamilton researchers “to put as much material as possible, on a sound legal basis.”²¹⁸

The evidence documented in the T. Glen Hamilton experiments, together with Michel Granger’s conclusion, convince me that somehow the human body can exude a vaporous substance that is subject to manipulation by discarnate and incarnate minds and can become dense enough to be photographed and handled.

Materialized Hands

From the earliest Spiritualist demonstrations of physical phenomena, individuals have claimed to have been touched in the dark of the séance room. For believers, the assumption was that spirit hands were at work, though sometimes individuals also reported being lightly touched by a spirit communication trumpet. Either way, the precisely placed touches were attributed to spirit, which could see in the dark. Given frequent exposures of mediums or their accomplices moving about darkened séance rooms, not all random touches were by unseen spirits. Where there was no corroborating evidence through mental mediumship to identify the communicator, the phenomenon of spirit touches has no value as survival evidence.

²¹⁷ The story and image of the 1 May 1929 Spurgeon ectoplasm are included in [Association TransCommunication NewsJournal, 32 \(1\), Spring 2013, p. 12.](#)

²¹⁸ UMASC, MSS 14, box 3, folder 9: Richard E. Bennett-Margaret Hamilton Bach interview, p. 23.

Space does not permit to do justice to the rich and controversial history of phantom hands.²¹⁹ Attempts to document their authenticity have included requesting that the spirit communicator dip their fingertips or entire hand(s) into a bucket of molten wax, then immediately into a bucket of cold water. The spirit would then dematerialize their hand and the wax mould would be found floating in the water. By filling the mould with plaster of Paris, a more permanent paranormal object of the spirit hands could be produced. Some of those survive among the archives of psychical research organizations. Crude materialized hands have also been photographed in the Winnipeg research of T. Glen Hamilton and Sylvia Barber and other psychical researchers worldwide.

The possibility of materialized hands is not such a stretch of the imagination following my reluctant acceptance that ectoplasm is a genuine human phenomenon. My first encounter with the concept of materialized hands was through the Hamilton research during the early 1990s. Among the credible evidence of such phenomena are photographs of the wax fingertips obtained during a short series of experiments in 1924 with the medium Elizabeth Poole (ca. 1870-1935) and the report by William Creighton about the controls implemented.²²⁰ The wax fingertips obtained in the Hamilton group post-date the European experiments with the Polish medium [Franek Kluski](#) (1873-1943), but predate the wax fingerprints in the research with Margery Crandon.

As discussed in relation to the flight of aluminum trumpets as a PK manifestation, I was fortunate to be able to participate in Stewart Alexander's home circle on 3 June 2008. As the only guest that evening, I was invited to sit directly at end of the small oval table for the demonstration of the hand materialization for which Alexander's mediumship has become known. Rereading my typed notes from June 2008, the process began with a dark amorphous mass at the opposite edge of the table that pulsated outward toward me. From the mass protruded a node, from which formed a hand that came across the light table toward me. I did not touch that hand. The circle leader Raymond then put on the light to show that the medium was still secured with cable ties. The guide then announced that his medium's arms would be dematerialized through the plastic ties. Alexander's hands were placed on the edge of the oval table between two other sitters with fingertips touching. The fully materialized hand then reappeared from the opposite side of the table and grasped my hand briefly.

The hand felt warm and soft, just like a human hand. Michel Granger has also shaken hands with Walter Stinson through Alexander's mediumship, as have hundreds of others, not to mention the home circle members who witnessed the hand materialization repeatedly over

²¹⁹ See Melton, 2001, vol. 1, p. 689, for hands of spirit.

²²⁰ Walter Meyer zu Erpen, "Of Teleplasms and Wax Fingerprints: Dr. William Creighton's Role in Authenticating Physical Phenomena," *Paranormal Review*, no 77 (2016), pp. 15-16.

many years. Alexander (2010) has shared his journey as a physical medium, and Katie Halliwell (2003 and 2006) documented her experiences of trance, physical mediumship, and associated phenomena as a long-time circle member. Leslie Kean included Alexander's story in *Surviving Death* (2017).

There has been no suggestion of fraud with respect to Alexander's mediumship. Could it really have been Walter Stinson's hand reaching to shake mine? Was it a more solid and repeatable form of the ectoplasmic limb than those reported in séances with Palladino and other physical mediums? We have no means of confirming whether these alleged attempts of the spirit world to extend a hand to humanity are all created through the same means. The concept of the spirit world reaching out to humanity is of course represented in the famous painting on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel. If not a hand from spirit, might some of the historical materialized hands have been ideo-plastic creations of the sitter group?

Spirit Photography

With the advent of photography came attempts to photograph the unseen, in particular the possibility that spirits might be captured on film. Spirit photography, as it became known, is a controversial phenomenon, because historically it was often faked.

A possible parallel approach in Japan suggests, however, that spirit photography may be a genuine psychic phenomenon. In 1910, psychology professor [Tomobichi Fukurai](#) coined the term thoughtography to describe the "impressing of mental images on photographic plates" that he had observed.²²¹ Fifty years later, the case of [Ted Serios](#) (1918-2006), who could project images onto film, was brought to the attention of [Jule Eisenbud](#). Though Serios did not attribute his images to spirits, his ability supports the possibility that others (living or discarnate) could also influence film.

Eisenbud was interested in psychical research long before his 1964 meeting with Serios. After successful tests in Chicago, Serios relocated to Denver to work with Eisenbud. A series of experiments conducted in full light, with several individuals providing cameras and new film, proved that Serios could affect film to create images that were categorized as either black, white, or recognizable. In the Polaroid process, the exclusion of light resulted in black images. Intense light resulted in overexposed, white images.

Though often distorted and fuzzy, like images in a dream, the recognizable images were distinct enough to reveal a car, double-decker bus, or a building. The experiments have been criticized because Serios often held a "gizmo" over the camera lens to focus his concentration as he stared into it. The open-ended cylinder, fashioned from the black film packaging, was routinely

²²¹ Melton, 2001, vol. 2, p. 1566. Fukurai's 1911 book was published in English in 1931.

inspected to confirm that Serios had not inserted pre-existing images into the process. With Serios at a distance, images were also impressed on film.

Eisenbud reported his experiments with Serios in *The World of Ted Serios* (1967). He did not refrain about Serios' unreliable and mercurial personality, excessive drinking, and arrests.²²² Though Serios later lost the ability to produce psychic photographs, Eisenbud remained convinced that thoughtography was real. The publicity around the images brought criticism from skeptical psychologists and others who had not looked at the extensive documentation, now preserved at the University of Maryland. Archivist Tom Beck has lectured and written about the [Eisenbud-Serios collection](#).²²³

Though most of the Owens' Toronto research was published in the [New Horizons Journal](#), [Iris Owen](#) shared her regret that their psychic photography research with Detroit psychologist [Tracy Wolfson](#) was not reported. Wolfson had the ability to capture on film an image that other observers could not see in the area photographed. Experiments were conducted repeatedly under good conditions of control that involved new cameras and film. Mrs. Owen was convinced that Wolfson's ability was genuine and that it validated the experiments by Eisenbud with Serios. During the lifetimes of Mrs. Wolfson and her psychiatrist husband William Q. Wolfson, information about the experiments was not to be released. The Eisenbud-Serios and the Owen-Wolfson experiments, as well as the Bindelof group images, corroborate Fukurai's observations, that some individuals can project mental images onto photographic film.

Boston engraver and amateur photographer [William Mumler](#) (1832-1884) was spirit photography's first practitioner. About 1862, Mumler found a spirit extra on a plate he developed and set up shop as a spirit photographer, charging \$10 per photograph. His best-known photograph shows [Mary Todd Lincoln](#) (1818-1882) seated with the alleged spirit form of Abraham Lincoln standing with hands on her shoulders. At some point, Mumler was charged with fraud.²²⁴ Though acquitted by the trial judge because the accusers were unable to prove that genuine spirits did not exist, Mumler's career in spirit photography was ruined.

²²² Serios is another match for Hansen's trickster within the paranormal.

²²³ Tom Beck, "Science and the Paranormal: The Case of the Jule Eisenbud and Ted Serios Collection: A Summary of Remarks Made at the Conference on Preserving the Historical Collections of Parapsychology," *Paranormal Review* 89 (2019), pp. 10-13.

²²⁴ Various sources give different years. Melton, 2001, vol. 2, p. 1070, does not offer a date, but does reveal that Mumler wrote *Personal Experiences of William H. Mumler in Spirit Photography* (1875).

Many of Mumler's successors²²⁵ met a similar fate, accused of fraud while hundreds of clients were convinced of the spirit extras obtained on film. Regardless of interpretation, recognition of a loved one's facial features on film strongly influences belief in life after death.

My most recent evidential communication results from what I consider a form of physical mediumship, photographed digitally. I can imagine readers reaching their boggle threshold over this account. The experience certainly threw me for a loop, for several days, because there is absolutely no chance of fraud or imposture, only the possibility that I am deluded in my observation. Somehow my dear friend [Debra Barr](#) (1954-2008) impressed a striking image of herself into the spirit breathwork of photographer Christopher John Abbott seven months before he and I knew of each other's existence. If my conclusion is false, then this is one of the most personally relevant and visually striking pareidolia imaginable, photographed in Burnaby, BC, on 7 May 2011, some 30 months after Debra's October 2008 passing. Chris and I met online and following email exchange met for dinner during work-related travel. He mentioned the "ectoplasm" that he might be capturing during thousands of experiments photographing his breath on cool evenings against the dark background of the night sky. Chris was spending hours reviewing the digital images looking for interesting images. After dinner, he showed me two dozen of his most striking images. Though skeptical of light orbs and possible photographic anomalies, I saw immediately many of the allegorical figures that had caused Chris to select those images. Somewhere in the middle, I focused briefly on an image and saw Debra's unmistakable profile with long-flowing hair. Given the circumstances, there could be no trickery. Mutual friends to whom I emailed the image, with the simple request "what do you see," immediately recognized Debra. The photograph is part of a [selection of Chris' photography](#) at the University of Manitoba. This was either the most amazing Rorschach test or Debra had somehow instigated to impress her image into the research of a photographer, who is not a Spiritualist, whom I would not meet for seven months.²²⁶

Reincarnation Introduced to the West

Based upon cycles of rebirth, [reincarnation](#) does not provide evidence of survival in a post-mortem afterlife. An overview of reincarnation research is warranted, however, to situate it within the field of survival research. To be able to investigate a reincarnation case, rebirth in a new human body must occur within a short number of years, to locate surviving relatives of the individual whose life is remembered and prove or disprove the child's past-life memories.

²²⁵ Well-known spirit photographers included William Hope (1863-1933), Ada Emma Deane (1863-1956), and John Myers (died 1972). Edward Wyllie (1848-1911) was active as a spirit photographer in California after 1886; several of his photographs were well-authenticated.

²²⁶ A similar account was submitted for publication in my chapter in Ruickbie and McLuhan, eds., (in preparation), *Is There Life After Death? Arguments, Theories, Evidence*.

Though reincarnation is mainly associated with the Hindu and Buddhist religions, it was contemplated by the Greek and European philosophers. In the English-speaking world, the concept was little known before the 1880s when Theosophists went to the East. In September 1893, the first [Parliament of the World's Religions](#), convened in Chicago during an early world fair,²²⁷ was attended by leaders of Eastern religions.

Initially, most English-speaking Spiritualists rejected reincarnation. From 1935, *Psychic News* published that a North American Indian guide named [Silver Birch](#) claimed reincarnation to be a fact.²²⁸ None of the dozen books of [Silver Birch's teachings and philosophy](#) provides evidence of life after death.

Theosophical authors were instrumental in popularizing reincarnation in the West. Completed and first published in 1927, *Reincarnation: The Ring of Return* presented writings from the pre-Christian era to the twentieth century. Compiler Eva Martin referenced the condemnation of reincarnation by a local synod at Constantinople.²²⁹ Taking issue with claims that reincarnation references were removed from the Bible, [Tom Harpur](#) wrote that neither at Nicea (325 AD) nor Constantinople (553 AD), “nor indeed at any other ecumenical council, were passages relating to the doctrine of reincarnation or any other theory expurgated from the Biblical text.”²³⁰

In *Reincarnation: An East-West Anthology* (1961), Joseph Head and Sylvia Cranston, now recognized as Theosophists [Joseph Pope and Anita Atkin](#), sought to dispel the myth of reincarnation as an oriental concept. With quotations from 400 Western philosophers, theologians, poets, and scientists, including J.B. Rhine,²³¹ their work brought reincarnation and related concepts to greater public awareness at the start of the [New Age movement](#).²³²

How is one to reconcile the Western concept of an enduring afterlife with the Eastern concept of cyclical rebirth and a temporary “life between life,” complicated by the fact that reincarnation beliefs vary? [Helena Blavatsky](#) claimed that the cycle of rebirth occurred after

²²⁷ In late August 1893, a [Psychical Science Congress](#) also met there.

²²⁸ “A Spirit Answers your Queries,” *PN*, 5 October 1935, pp. 1 and 7. Silver Birch was first introduced to *PN* readers in the previous week’s issue (*PN*, 28 September 1935, p. 5). At first referenced only as one of the controls in Hannen Swaffer’s home circle, [Maurice Barbanell](#) acknowledged in 1957 that he was Silver Birch’s medium (*Two Worlds*, 24 August 1957).

²²⁹ Martin, 1927/1963, p. 12. Martin’s book is a remarkable compilation by an author, journalist, and translator, about whom little is known. A week before reading about the June 2021 G7 leaders’ meeting at Carbis Bay, Cornwall, I discovered that Eva and her mother had lived there during the 1920s.

²³⁰ Harpur, 2011, p. 97. Harpur also corrected the dating of those councils.

²³¹ Head and Cranston, 1961/1975 Quest printing, in section on scientists on immortality, see pp. 316-317 for excerpts from J.B. Rhine’s publications.

²³² Head and Cranston published three different titles (1961, 1967 and 1977).

hundreds of or even a thousand years, which could make it compatible with belief in post-mortem survival.

In 1985, the suicide of his young wife only months after giving birth to their daughter launched Peter Novak on a ten-year study of the nature of death, including NDEs and reincarnation. In two books, Novak (1997 and 2003) concluded that at death there is a division of consciousness “with the conscious mind reincarnating and the subconscious mind judging itself.”²³³ This [Binary Soul Doctrine](#) (BSD) was evident already in Ancient Egyptian beliefs.

Spontaneously Recalled Past-Life Memories

[Ian Stevenson](#) was the first individual to conduct substantive research about cases of spontaneously recalled past-life memories.²³⁴ From 1960, he published articles about his preliminary findings. His first monograph, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (1966), focussed on young children in India, Ceylon, Brazil, Lebanon and among the Tlingit Indians of Southeastern Alaska. Usually between ages two and four, the children began to speak of their past life and would continue for about seven years.²³⁵ They were typically reborn within five years of their previous death, a much tighter rebirth cycle than Blavatsky envisaged. In the strongest cases, children were so insistent that the parents relented and searched to find the previous birth family. Stevenson examined at length the normal counterhypotheses, including fraud, [cryptomnesia](#), genetic memory, ESP, and personation, as well as more obscure ones such as a psychometric link between the child and his claimed prior existence.²³⁶

Stevenson’s research attracted funding that allowed him in 1967 to establish the [Division of Personality \(now Perceptual\) Studies](#) (DOPS) at the University of Virginia. Over the next forty years, Stevenson investigated and meticulously documented over 2,500 children’s cases suggestive of reincarnation (CORT), mostly in Asia. In about 700 cases, the memories were so detailed, including former name, those of relatives, and where they lived, that Stevenson was able to match the facts to a deceased individual.²³⁷ Some children even had birthmarks and birth defects that corresponded with an injury in their prior existence.

²³³ Novak, 1997, inside cover.

²³⁴ Earlier reincarnation cases had been investigated, notably that of [Shanti Devi](#) (1926-1987) who remembered her past life as Lugdi Devi (1902-1925). Both women lived in Northern India where reported cases are more prevalent than in the South (Stemman, 2012, p. 267).

²³⁵ Stevenson, 1966, table 1, p. 326.

²³⁶ Stevenson, 1966, pp. 291-354.

²³⁷ Carol Bowman’s foreword in Leininger and Leininger, 2009, p. xi.

Though past-life memories fade, that some children recall so many accurate details of a former existence is impressive. During the 1980s and 1990s, [Erlendur Haraldsson](#),²³⁸ Jürgen Keil, and Antonia Mills, working in Sri Lanka, Turkey, Thailand, Myanmar, and India, undertook CORT replication studies that confirmed Stevenson's methodology and results.²³⁹ Erlendur also collaborated with James Matlock on *I Saw a Light and Came Here* (2017) about children's experiences of reincarnation.

The documentation of CORT cases provides evidence of temporary recycling of memory and personality from one life to the next. Tucker reports some children also have memories from the period between lives, including the funeral of their former self, decisions around being reborn and choice of parents, being inside the womb of their new mother, and occasionally having met relatives or divine beings in heaven.²⁴⁰

The Big Book of Reincarnation (2012) by [Roy Stemman](#) provides a comprehensive overview of reincarnation research, including sketches of the principal researchers and therapists. He considers 42 CORT, most investigated by Stevenson, and 48 instances of claimed past-life memories.²⁴¹ Stemman questions whether death is the end, or merely the end of a chapter.

Spiritualists adverse to the theory of reincarnation have argued that children with past-life memories are gifted mediums through whom a spirit has communicated. However, perceiving intricate details and family relationships, some children have upon meeting their former family identified individuals and known the location of items in their former home. Such memories demonstrate a degree of precision and intention not found in mental mediumship.

The largest CORT studies have been conducted by Westerners in foreign cultures where reincarnation forms part of the majority religion. The fact that the researchers were not native speakers of the language means they relied upon a translator or guide as another form of mediator in the process. What might they have missed or misconstrued?

Jim Tucker has followed in Stevenson's footsteps and reports that in the past year over one hundred parents have contacted DOPS about their child's past-life memories. Substantiation of American cases avoids the cultural challenges of foreign cases. In *Before: Children's Memories of Previous Lives* (2021), Tucker combines *Life before Life* (2005) and *Return to Life* (2013) to provide an accessible overview of research with children, both Stevenson's and his own.

²³⁸ Erlendur Haraldsson's 50-year career spanned parapsychology experiments, field work, and academic study of historic cases. I was pleased to coordinate the tribute from Erlendur's friends for the *Magazine of the Society for Psychological Research* (MSPR), issue 2 (2021).

²³⁹ Those studies are largely reported in *JASPR*.

²⁴⁰ Tucker, 2021, *Life before Life* reprint, pp. 164-173.

²⁴¹ Stemman, 2012, pp. 301-302 (cases index).

Tucker investigated the case of [James Leininger](#), whose past-life memories began at age two with terrifying nightmares of having died in a plane crash. Over ensuing months, James provided additional details about the plane and his war-time service. His mother Andrea was open to reincarnation, but her husband Bruce did not want to accept it as a possible explanation. Yet Bruce persisted in searching until fighter pilot [James Huston](#) (1923-1945) was identified.²⁴² At that point, he could no longer deny that his son's memories matched details in the life of Huston, whose fighter plane had been shot down during the Battle for Iwo Jima. In 2004, the six-year-old James met his surviving sister, Anne Huston Barron. The Leiningers told their story in *Soul Survivor* (2009),²⁴³ and the case is featured in the last episode of Leslie Kean's *Surviving Death* on Netflix. Unlike many of the children in Stevenson's cases, whose former lives often ended within five years before rebirth, James Leininger was not born until 53 years after Huston's death.

Stevenson's research and the later replication studies reduce the possibility of acquired memory and knowledge which is a challenge in cases of adults who explore past lives through hypnotic regression.

Past-Life Recall through Hypnotic Regression

Past lives resulting from psychic readings or retrieved through [hypnotic regression](#) are complicated through the role of the psychic or therapist as mediator. In *A Critical Examination of the Belief in a Life after Death* (1961/1974), [Curt John Ducasse](#) attributes the first attempts to regress an individual to an earlier life, to the work of [Albert de Rochas](#) in 1893 with a subject named Laurent. In 1904, it occurred to de Rochas to regress Josephine, another subject, beyond the time of her birth, to the intra-uterine period and then to the period before conception.²⁴⁴

America's sleeping prophet [Edgar Cayce](#) became famous for the thousands of readings he gave, including 1,200 [life readings](#) in which he explained how the individual's past lives impacted the current one. The Cayce material provides little evidence of post-mortem survival.

Past-life memories retrieved through hypnosis risk contamination of the percipient's story. The possibility of [false memory syndrome](#) resulting from questioning by an investigator is recognized in legal cases. The case of Virginia Tighe (1923-1995), who under hypnosis relived memories of a past life in Ireland as [Bridey Murphy](#), was published by [Morey Bernstein](#) (1956) and attracted considerable publicity. With opposing newspapers arguing pro and con, the case

²⁴² As a genealogist, I recognize the effort and diligence in the research required to resolve such cases.

²⁴³ Leininger and Leininger, 2009. In her foreword, past-life researcher Carol Bowman considered it the best American case among the thousands she had encountered involving a child's past-life memories (p. 9).

²⁴⁴ Ducasse, 1961/1974, pp. 271-274.

became hopelessly muddled through the attention it attracted. Ducasse devotes two chapters to discussion of the arguments for and against the case as evidence of reincarnation.²⁴⁵

It is possible to mention only a few of the psychologists, psychiatrists, and therapists who since the 1970s have adopted hypnotic regression to explore past lives. Skeptical of Bernstein's claims, [Helen Wambach](#) dated her interest to 1966, with active research from 1973. Before writing *Reliving Past Lives* (1978), Wambach had regressed in small workshops over 1,000 subjects to specified time periods. Based upon answers to questions about their lives, including gender, occupation, clothing, buildings and landscape, the food they ate, and what they had felt at death, Wambach analyzed and presented her findings in a series of tables.

In *Life before Life* (1979/1981), Wambach presented additional findings about regressions to the period immediately before birth to address questions about choosing to be reborn, including selection of gender, parents, and types of births.²⁴⁶ Under a similar title, *Life between Life* (1986), [Joel Whitton](#) and [Joe Fisher](#) explored the meaning of Whitton's case histories of 30 patients, including those regressed to the "bardo," the term used by Tibetans for the state between lives.

As Wambach was investigating the nature of past-life memories, [Dick Sutphen](#) became convinced of his past lives with then partner Trena. Though Stevenson never claimed to have proved reincarnation, Sutphen proceeded as though he had. His first book, *You Were Born Again to be Together* (1976), documented case histories to show that love is immortal, a powerful message to seekers. The "Dick Sutphen Past Life Hypnotic Regression Seminars" reached a broad audience. Based upon his friendship with the Sutphens and seminar participation, Alan Weisman described in *We, Immortals* (1977) the nature of the sessions that attracted thousands.²⁴⁷ Weisman did not believe it possible to prove reincarnation. He sought rather to document the "valid experience of the search itself," providing valuable insight into New Age practices.²⁴⁸

At first skeptical, [Brian Weiss](#) authored *Many Lives, Many Masters* (1988) about the past-life experiences of a young patient who revealed personal information about Weiss' family,

²⁴⁵ Ducasse, 1961/1974, pp. 276-307.

²⁴⁶ Though the records of Wambach's experiments are apparently lost, there are efforts underway to [republish her books](#). Fortunately, she was [interviewed](#) about her research.

²⁴⁷ Weisman, 1977, back cover.

²⁴⁸ Though focussed on Sutphen, Weisman set out "to draw the larger journalistic picture of the entire Aquarian Age – New Spiritual Consciousness movement and all its cultural implications. All the personalities are here – the objective truth-seekers, the 'spiritual groupies', the supportive psychologists, the hypnotherapists, psychics, Indian spirits, and even the fundamentalist clergy who oppose it!" (Weisman, 1977, p. 6)

including deceased son, that converted him to belief.²⁴⁹ For myself, in late 1984, I proved a difficult subject for a Spiritualist friend who wanted to test her regression skills. After lunch, still seated at the table, Anna van Selst tried again to get me to relax. Suddenly, I perceived the mental image that would resolve my anger toward my then partner. I doubt that bizarre glimpse of a life shared three centuries earlier had historical basis, but the “insight” had immediate therapeutic benefit.

Two cases of adults who researched and wrote books about their past-life memories warrant mention. The first supports Tucker’s finding that it is not only memories of past events that survive, but also “longing for loved ones from before.”²⁵⁰ [Jenny Cockell](#), an English podiatrist, first spoke of spontaneous memories at age four. In 1988, she explored further through a series of hypnotic regressions her memories of the life and children left behind upon her death in Malahide, Ireland, in 1932, twenty-one years before her current birth. With research assistance, her life as Mary Sutton was rediscovered. Following her death, seven of her eight children were placed in orphanages. In 1993, this well-attested case culminated in a filmed reunion between Cockell and five former children.²⁵¹ At the time, Roy Stemman appeared with Jenny and her eldest former son on TV chat shows.²⁵²

The second case involves [Robert Snow](#), professionally trained in homicide investigation research, who in the mid-1990s succumbed to a dare to try hypnotic regression. In *Looking for Carroll Beckwith* (1999), Snow describes his determination to find a rational explanation for what seemed like past-life memories. He was succeeding in dismissing them until his wife suggested visiting New Orleans where he walked into a small art gallery and discovered the portrait he had seen during hypnosis. The biographical details Snow had perceived related to painter [Carroll Beckwith](#) (1852-1917). His search culminated in a visit to Beckwith’s grave in New York.²⁵³ Snow shared his story at the [2001 International UFO Congress](#).²⁵⁴

While it is difficult to reconcile children’s memories of a quick rebirth with post-mortem survival, discussion about what might be proven becomes impossible when one entertains concepts of fragmented group souls, alternate universes, or simultaneous lives. At that point, anything is possible, and evidence of a surviving personality beyond physical death a challenge

²⁴⁹ In *Through Time into Healing* (1993), Weiss argues the therapeutic benefits of past-life regression.

²⁵⁰ Tucker, 2021, p. x.

²⁵¹ Jenny Cockell’s search for her past life children is documented in *Across Time and Death* (1994).

²⁵² Stemman, 2012, pp. 164-165 and 212-213.

²⁵³ Snow’s book provides no dates regarding his search for his past life. He had read Raymond Moody’s *Coming Back* (1991) before the social gathering at which he was dared to try [past-life regression](#).

²⁵⁴ During that 2001 presentation, Snow inferred that his experience began five to six years earlier, so about 1995.

to general comprehension. Many believers in life after death tend to see the afterlife as a continuation of our lived experience.

If reincarnation does occur, but only after dissolution of the previous personality, there would be nothing tangible to document and study, for lack of memories that could be substantiated among the living.²⁵⁵ In that sense, the Western concept of personality-centric survival and the Eastern concept of successive rebirth could be compatible. That [Helena Blavatsky](#), who had started her career as a Spiritualist medium, suggested in her Theosophical teachings a very long interval between births avoided conflict with Spiritualist teachings of an enduring afterlife.

Reincarnation cases provide strong evidence of memory of a previous life lived, which supports the argument that human personality and memory can survive death.

Conclusion

In 1894, [Oliver Lodge](#) wrote regarding psychical research “that in this department of science, as in every other, the wholesome and valuable part of scepticism will ultimately be broken down, if at all, not by any one conclusive experiment, but by converging lines of testimony coming in from many and unexpected quarters.”²⁵⁶ Many of the approaches to survival research since Lodge wrote those words have provided evidence for survival, or evidence of the dual nature of man that supports the possibility of survival.

Thousands of historical and modern reports suggest that some part of individual human consciousness survives death. Within the field of survival research, however, nothing has been scientifically proven. Statements cast about as “proof” reflect opinion or belief. My opinions about various approaches to survival research are included throughout this essay.

To summarize my position, I believe that something of my personal consciousness, including memory and intention, will survive the death of my body. The type of survival I envisage will not be eternal, rather only for as long as an individual remains in the physical world, with whom a continued connection would be of mutual benefit. To be meaningful, communication between surviving spirit and the living must be bi-directional:

- spirit will sometimes become aware of our intentional outreach
- we will occasionally become aware of spirit.

²⁵⁵ Based upon the theoretical concept of [Akashic records](#) introduced by [Theosophy](#), conceivably one’s past-life memories and karmic record might be accessed. But how would one substantiate such information?

²⁵⁶ Cited in Collins, 1939, p. 99, from *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, vol. 10 (1894), pp. 23-24.

When there is no longer a purpose for my personality to sustain itself in an afterlife state, what remains will lose itself into the common pool of consciousness, or whatever one prefers to call that source. Memory is transitory and the concept of an Akashic record facility, storing all memory permanently, seems implausible.

My goal here has been to provide a broad overview of research endeavours relevant to life after death. I have shared personal experience and offered opinions about approaches that provide the best evidence for survival of human consciousness after permanent bodily death. Research colleagues and Spiritualist friends may disagree with my positions on the various topics that have become clearer through the essay-writing process, notably

- a shorter-term survival than immortality implies
- the challenges around knowledge about the nature of the afterlife and substantiating spirit guides
- the role of human PK (not spirits) in causing objects to move
- the reality of ectoplasmic manifestations as a vaporous extrusion from the human body.

I have spent many years pursuing survival evidence through mediumship. Most of such communications would not be admitted by a court of law, for lack of documented specifics as to date, identity of the medium, sitters, and discarnate communicators, and details proving the message was evidential.

Regarding the vast historical literature, apart from knowing the scope of it, there is little purpose in attempting detailed re-analysis of a particular case or series of compiled cases. I offer that observation having spent 30 years studying in-depth the T.G. Hamilton case. Also, some mediums and researchers have become so infatuated with the claimed revelatory nature of their observations, that they have constructed an elaborate story, often metaphysical, around their original, simple findings. That presents another challenge in sifting through the research literature, to identify the elements that point to survival.

The way forward is not study around the edges of human paranormal experience (that is, not investigation of PK table movements or ectoplasm), but rather focussed on the more common experiences suggestive of survival. The most compelling evidence is based upon subjective human experiences that occur spontaneously and infrequently, which is why Rhea White called them exceptional human experiences (EHE). They often occur during circumstances of heightened emotion among living and discarnate loved ones, as simple after-death communications where the meaning is obvious.

Most directly relevant as survival evidence is the spontaneous ADC, which can also form part of an NDE. That some experiencers of ADCs and NDEs are so convinced of their perceptions

demonstrates the powerful effect of such events. Those experiences are repeatedly shared with family and friends, or even published. Such unmediated personal experience avoids the added complexity of interpretation when a medium or other mediator (for example, hypnotist or translator) is involved. The downside is a subjective experience to which there are no other witnesses.

Moving forward, the way to advance the field of survival research is through investigation and documentation of fresh cases, where contemporary interviews are possible, to ask probing questions about EHEs and particularly ADCs. Ranking such cases would allow researchers to focus on the stronger ones that might reveal a previously overlooked common denominator.

Given the accomplishments of scientific research into reincarnation cases and near-death experiences, an ongoing survey to collect a broad perspective of other types of human experience might provide new insights into the nature of human personality. To that end, an online survey tool could be devised, possibly incorporating artificial intelligence to assist with processing and analysis of responses. Anonymous submissions could be accepted as general background but omitted from analysis. For a court of law, it is important to know all the details: who, what, when, where, why, and how.

Modern social science research protocols and methodology to conduct interviews and create detailed documentation of ADCs could be followed, along the lines of the meticulous research pioneered by Ian Stevenson at the University of Virginia (Charlottesville) and continued now by the Division of Perceptual Studies researchers.

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- [College of Psychic Studies](#)
- [Division of Personality Studies](#)
- [Institut für Grenzgebiet der Psychologie und Psychohygiene](#)
- [Institut Métapsychique International](#)
- [Institute of Noetic Sciences](#)
- [International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals](#)
- [Rhine Research Center](#)
- [Society for Psychical Research](#)
- [Society for Scientific Exploration](#)

Bibliography of Monographs Relevant to Aspects of Survival Research

In selecting from over 3,200 monograph titles in the Survival Research Institute of Canada library, the focus has been more analytical works with academic apparatus (bibliography, citations and/or index).

Apart from biographical studies of some of the mediums, psychics and researchers referenced, most biographies have been excluded, despite their value as a source for comparative psychological study of psychically gifted individuals. Consequently, most accounts of personal journeys, often embedded within Spiritualist, Theosophical, Swedenborgian, or Edgar Cayce belief systems, are omitted.

Books are organized here by author names, then by first year of publication. Where known, inclusive years are provided, as well as pseudonyms. Additions and corrections would be gratefully received.

Where there are two publication years separated by a slash (/), the first is the earliest known publication year and the second the copy held in the SRIC library.

There are many titles listed that it has not been possible to reference in the essay, including some only tangentially related to survival research, such as the Seth material (Jane Roberts). In future, this essay may be expanded to reference additional research categories, including some that form part of the muddled thinking about survival of individual personal consciousness after death.

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