

TRANSPERSONAL MATE SELECTION: AN INVESTIGATION OF SPIRITUAL AND  
EXTRAORDINARY FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE DECISION TO MARRY ONE'S  
PARTNER

by

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## **Abstract**

### **Transpersonal Mate Selection: An Investigation of Spiritual and Extraordinary Factors**

#### **That Influence the Decision to Marry One's Partner**

**by**

**Sarah Neustadter**

Love and relationships are of central importance in people's lives, and the process of choosing a mate for marriage is often depicted as containing ineffable, magical, and mysterious qualities. Research on mate selection has been limited by this point in time to studies based on evolutionary psychology and social psychology perspectives, and little formal literature is available that explores the more transcendent, transpersonal, and mysterious factors involved. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the transpersonal factors involved in premarital courtship and the marriage decision process in order to formally reveal and acknowledge this perspective on mate selection. Eighteen married or engaged individuals who reported having had extraordinary and transpersonal experiences during courtship were interviewed. Thematic analysis identified 19 different kinds of transpersonal experiences that occurred during participants' mate selection processes. Six other themes were identified and included transpersonal factors that were found to have been present prior to the initial meeting, to have occurred during early stages of the relationship; and to have influenced a sense of certainty, catalyzed the actual marriage decision, contextualized the purpose for being brought together, and revealed the qualities of a transpersonally inspired partnership. Results provide evidence for this phenomenon, articulate a model of understanding of these events, and serve as a frame of reference for individuals experiencing or seeking this variety of mate selection. This study

presents an alternative perspective on mate selection useful for individuals, psychologists, and mate selection researchers and theorists, as well as premarital counselors.

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved former partner John Wayne Dulaney, who left this world in 2008 and now serves as my greatest teacher, friend, and spiritual guide. John, you have inspired me to the greatest depths, lowest lows, and highest highs of this human experience. You have taught me everything I know about love and you continue to teach me about your transcendent way of being. I am beyond grateful for you in my life; this work—and all my work in the world—is dedicated to you. I could not have asked for a better collaborator or a more beautiful guide. With all my heart, thank you.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	6
Evolutionary Psychology Perspectives.....	12
Social Psychology Perspectives.....	16
Transpersonally Relevant Literature.....	31
Conclusion.....	49
Chapter 3: Research Methods.....	51
Participants.....	52
Recruitment.....	54
Procedure.....	55
Treatment of the Data.....	56
Limitations and Delimitations.....	59
Chapter 4: Results.....	63
Description of Sample.....	63
Thematic Analysis Process.....	64
Themes.....	65
The Varieties of Transpersonal Experiences.....	66
Transpersonal Occurrences and Circumstances That Preceded the Relationship.....	83
Transpersonal Phenomena Related to Initial Stage of Relationship.....	91

Transpersonal Certainty Factor.....	96
Transpersonal Marriage Decision Process.....	100
Transpersonal Purpose for Being Brought Together .....	102
Qualities of Transpersonally Selected Partnership.....	104
Chapter 5: Discussion .....	111
Findings as Related to Evolutionary Psychology Literature.....	124
Findings as Related to Social Psychology Literature .....	132
Findings as Related to the Transpersonal Literature.....	134
Counterpoints.....	140
Gender Discrepancies .....	145
Limitations .....	146
Conclusions and Implications for Transpersonal Psychology .....	147
References.....	153
Appendix A: Consent Form.....	159
Appendix B: Screening Questionnaire.....	162
Appendix C: E-mail Regarding Participation in Study.....	164
Appendix D: Flyers or Advertisements .....	165
Appendix E: Interview Question Protocol.....	166
Appendix F: Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement.....	168
Appendix G: Preinterview Priming Questions .....	169
Appendix H: Participants' Processes for Manifesting a Life Partner .....	170



## Chapter 1: Introduction

Love and relationships are of central importance in peoples' lives and intrinsically contain much magic, mystery, and potential for spiritual growth (Brown, 2000; Rowe, 2005). Person (1998) wrote, "Romantic love remains one of the most worthwhile and transcendent human experiences, its inherent dilemmas and the fact that it serves as a magnet for psychopathology notwithstanding" (p. 24). Western culture, as situated within the United States, is obsessed with romance and getting married (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Galician, 2004; Glebatis, 2007), and the theme of romantic love and marriage dominates popular culture from television programs to films, celebrity tabloids, novels, and self-help books. Person (1992) stated that, with the rise of "the cult of radical individuality" in Western society, love is being "invoked as the major route to happiness" (p. 383) and the main source of defining meaning in life. Moreover, participation in the institution of marriage is upheld as the ultimate achievement in one's early adult life (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Galician, 2004; Glebatis, 2007). However, in conjunction with this prevailing emphasis on the importance of marriage, divorce is abundant within the United States and in 2007 occurred at a rate of 3.6 per 1,000 people (the rate measures the total number of divorces against the total population) (Faststats, 2007), with approximately 720-745 marriages ending in divorce, according to statistics gathered in 44 states (Tejada-Vera & Sutton, 2008). The common incidence of divorce has created a fear of eventual divorce that strongly impacts the decision-making process when selecting a mate (Larson, 1992).

Choosing a life partner is often considered one of the most challenging, life altering, and significant decisions one can make in life (Brickman, 1987; Lydick, 1994; Murray, 1999). Murray (1999) stated that the decision to marry is unique because fewer other contexts exist in which adults voluntarily intertwine the outcomes and satisfaction of their goals, hopes, and

wishes with those of another. Pressures to get married are rigorously enforced by society, the family, and the workplace (Nadelson & Notman, 1981) and influence the mate selection process. Larson (1992) reported that the magnitude of the decision and the expectations that people place on marriage cause many to struggle with finding the right mate, feeling confident in their abilities as future spouses, and being able to demonstrate the success of their relationship before marriage. Additionally, the advent of Internet dating has increased the number of potential mates and added more confusion to the selection process.

A myriad of factors—social, cultural, biological, religious, political, and spiritual—inform and influence the decision to marry one's partner, and the field of psychology is abundant with research on mate selection. However, all of the formal literature on mate selection stems from either evolutionary or social psychology perspectives. Evolutionary psychologists theorize that processes involved in attracting a mate are biologically determined and not necessarily consciously controlled (Aron et al., 2005; Buss, 1989; Miller, 2000). In contrast, social psychologists have done much research and conceptualization on love, relationships, commitment, and marriage (Carrere, Buehlman, Gottman, Coan, & Ruckstuhl, 2000; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986; Murray, 1999; Sternberg, 1986). A small body of literature exists on the phenomena of exceptional romantic relationships, soul mates, or “uncommon bonds” (Achterberg, 1998; Boyce, 2001; Brown, 2000; Young, 1992), nonetheless, few scholars have specifically researched and addressed the spiritual, transcendent, more mysterious, otherworldly, or transpersonal qualities of mate selection. Little is known about these magical or transpersonal factors that contribute to the decision to marry a particular partner, and the purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the magical, spiritual, or cosmic factors that, from this point on,

will be referred to in this paper as *transpersonal* factors that influence the decision to marry one's partner.

This study makes the explicit assumption that these phenomena do indeed exist and are utilized in the decision process to marry. In a study on the development of commitment towards marriage, Cowman (1995) stated,

Each couple's story of courtship leading to marriage was a story about beginning. It recorded the happenstance meeting of two people who, by some miracle of coincidence, conversed for the first time, gravitated toward one another, and changed their lives forever as a result. (p. 118)

Additionally, she reported that her research participants believed that "Magical origins gave rise to thoughts about a purpose behind the unfolding of events in the universe" (p. 118). Cowman is one of the few scholars who formally acknowledged the magical or transpersonal factors at play in courtship. Other relevant research will be discussed in the literature review chapter.

Transpersonal psychology has often been cited as an emerging field (Hartelius, Caplan, & Rardin, 2007; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993), and, as such, the precise definition of the word *transpersonal* has remained vague and in flux for the course of its existence as a field. However, recently, Caplan, Hartelius, and Rardin (2003) undertook the endeavor of systematically defining the term *transpersonal psychology* by thematically analyzing previous definitions and synthesizing the most frequently occurring themes into a concise definition. For the purposes of this paper, this definition will be utilized and *transpersonal* will be generally referred to as defined by Hartelius et al.:

An approach to psychology that 1) studies phenomena beyond the ego as context for 2) an integrative/holistic psychology; this provides framework for 3) understanding and cultivating human transformation. To be even more succinct, we can say that transpersonal psychology studies human transcendence, wholeness, and transformation. (p. 11)

“Phenomena beyond the ego,” in their terms, includes “Non-ordinary perceptual capacities, perceptions gained by non-ordinary means, realities beyond ego, deep psychic structures, states tending toward ego-transcendence, or beyond-ego phenomenon not otherwise specified” (Hartelius et al., 2007, p. 9). It is hypothesized that *beyond-ego phenomena* such as dimensions of interconnectedness, synchronicities manifesting as events of interconnectivity, and access to numinous sources of knowledge or divine guidance are the most likely transpersonal factors that occur during romantic courtship and influence the decision to marry one’s partner.

Caplan et al. (2003) solicited 41 contemporary transpersonal psychologists for their own definitions of transpersonal psychology and compiled the results into a cohesive document. Hastings (as cited in Caplan et al., 2003) contended that a specific and separate transpersonal domain of reality exists that is uniquely distinct from the physical and psychological world. Characteristics of the third reality transcend the qualities of the first two worlds and can include experiences of

expanded identity, merging with absolute being, unconditional love, transcendent values and motives, feelings of unity with all that exists, nonlocal consciousness, information via ESP, direct knowledge, transcendence of time and space, effects of intention on material reality, and subtle energies. (p. 149)

Transpersonal psychology is often considered a field that incorporates psychological development as encompassed by a larger and more ultimate goal of spiritual growth and it is hypothesized that the two developments can occur on parallel continuums that often intersect and come together. Cortright (as cited in Caplan et al., 2003) wrote that transpersonal psychology “sees the psychological process of healing and growth within the larger context of spiritual unfolding” (p. 145). The understandings gained through engagement with transpersonal aspects of reality are not merely fleeting, but provide deep expansion and lasting influences that penetrate to the very core of one’s being. Tart (as cited in Caplan et al., 2003) wrote:

Transpersonal experiences generally have a profoundly transforming effect on the lives of those who experience them, both inspiring an understanding of great love, compassion and non-ordinary kinds of intelligence, and also making them more aware of the distorting and pathological limitations of their ordinary selves that must be transformed for full psychological and spiritual maturity. (p. 156)

The themes of unitive experiences; interconnectedness; transformation; spiritual growth; and experiences of divine guidance or knowledge received through ESP, oracles, signs, meditation, dream work, or contemplative practices are included, for purposes of this study, as subdefinitions of transpersonal psychology, as well as being considered potential transpersonal factors that may help an individual determine a marriage partner. These definitions and approaches to the transpersonal are by no means finite and remain open to elaboration through ongoing discourse. The results of this study contributed to the field of transpersonal psychology by expanding the understanding of phenomena that fall under the purview of the transpersonal.

In conclusion, this investigation further informed the mate selection literature, moved the discourse beyond the more traditional and conventional psychological approaches to relationships, and unmasked some of the more mysterious and transpersonal elements that intersect with individuals' perceptions of reality and contribute to their love stories. The study provided a transpersonal approach to love, courtship, marriage, and mate selection that was currently lacking and additionally confirmed the transpersonal mate selection process as a valid phenomenon, thus providing a context of professional acceptability that allows people who have these experiences to be more open, honest, and forthcoming about them.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

According to Person (1992), “Whatever we may think of it, professionally or personally, romantic love is the single most powerful passion in many contemporary lives” (p. 383).

Through the media of television, books, and films, children in the United States are inundated with stories about the magical qualities of love and the importance of finding one’s prince or princess and living happily ever after (Galician, 2004). The story of Cinderella, and other more modern adaptations, is the quintessential example of a magical or seemingly divine intervention that helps a young woman find her true love and its theme pervades children’s literature around the world. Bachen and Illouz (1996) argued that visual media images of love and romance as associated with happiness and luxury were originally created by advertisers and media entrepreneurs of the leisure, travel, and consumption industries at the beginning of the 20th Century in the United States. As a consequence of these images, children develop visual schemata for instantly recognizing and prioritizing ideal images of romance and love versus more common, everyday depictions of love.

Furthermore, in this day and age, television, films, and magazines serve as a love and courtship guide for people of all ages within the United States (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Galician, 2007; Glebatis, 2007; McClanahan, 2007). According to Glebatis (2007) and McClanahan (2007), the oversaturation of the media which sends powerful suggestions that the audience needs romantic love and needs it immediately, that marriage is the normative goal for everyone, and that those who do not marry are somehow defective. Moreover, if a woman is not married by a certain age, she is stigmatized and perceived as an “old maid” (Nadelson & Notman, 1981, p. 1352).

Given the pressure from within the culture to marry, the collective beliefs in the experiencing of romantic love and participating in the institution of marriage as being two of the most important human endeavors, and the advent of the increased number of potential mates available on the Internet dating sites, the process of identifying and selecting a prospective marriage partner can be quite confounding. The decision to marry one's partner at a particular time is seen to have tremendous consequences that impact the course of one's life.

The field of psychology is abundant with research on mate selection; however, all of the formal literature on mate selection stems from either evolutionary or social psychology perspectives, and very few scholars address the spiritual, more mysterious, or otherworldly qualities of mate selection. Popular literature on love, New Age phenomena, and self-help is rife with material on the transpersonal, cosmic, or supernatural elements at play in bringing two people together (e.g., Canfield, Hanson, Donnely, Donnely, & DeAngelis, 2003; Canfield, Hanson, & Verso, 2007; Moore, 1994; Weiss, 2000) and is in great consumer demand. However, these phenomena have not been formally researched from a mate selection perspective and little is known about these magical or transpersonal factors that contribute to the decision to marry a particular partner.

Within the field of transpersonal psychology and theory, an important distinction has been delineated between specific types of transpersonal experiences, and a discussion of what is called the *pre/trans fallacy* is required before advancing further. According to Wilber (1993), consciousness develops through three basic stages, and individuals operating from within the different stages have different perceptions and experiences of an "integrated universe" (J. Wade, personal communication, November 5, 2008). At each stage, the experiences have wholly distinct qualities and nuances that influence a person's perceptions of unity or

interconnectedness. The first phase of development begins with “the realm of matter and of simple bodily sensations and perceptions” (Wilber, 1993, p. 124), a realm much like the state of infancy that occurs before the development of rational thought. This stage is known as the prepersonal, and, according to Wilber, is often unnecessarily glorified in the psychological and spiritual literature. The second phase involves a development from the prepersonal stage to a more self-conscious, mental, or egoic state of awareness called the personal level, roughly equivalent to Piaget’s Formal-Operations stage and considered by most developmentalists to represent the normal level of adult development in developed countries such as the United States. Eventually the process of self-actualization transforms and culminates into the transpersonal or superconscious stage that may include authentic realizations of “Spirit’s discovery of Spirit as Spirit” (p. 125), nondual states of awakening, and a sense of the interconnectedness and guidance from “‘signs’ or non-self sources” (J. Wade, personal communication, November 5, 2008). Since development moves from prepersonal to personal to transpersonal, as well as from transpersonal to personal to prepersonal, and since the prepersonal and the transpersonal stages are both nonpersonal, “then prepersonal and transpersonal tend to appear similar, even identical, to the untutored eye” (Wilber, 1993, p. 125). The pre/trans fallacy comprises the confusing and misidentification of prepersonal and transpersonal perceptions and experiences that occurs in both directions. The pre/trans fallacy is relevant to this investigation because individuals in a prepersonal or personal stage of development might have experiences that they perceive to be transpersonal, such as superstitions, animistic beliefs or rituals, common or ordinary events construed as synchronicities, or omens that have been naively interpreted as supernatural guidance to marry a partner. Obtaining an objective truth regarding a distinction between a prepersonal and transpersonal state would require an expert in these matters and is beyond the



scope of this paper. However, the concept of the pre/trans fallacy in the context of this research brings a greater discernment to the phenomena being investigated and is included as a lens through which the transpersonal factors that influence mate selection may be viewed.

The topic of this research study assumes that people do indeed have transpersonal experiences or perceive themselves as interacting with external transpersonal factors, such as synchronistic events that sway a decision about one's romantic partner toward or away from marriage, and that these factors carry enough weight and consideration for the individual that they inform the decision process. In short, this paper assumes that a transpersonal level of mate selection exists, at least for some people. Though the research in that regard is sparse, some scholarly literature does acknowledge incidents of a transpersonal nature that are used to help inform the decision to marry one's partner.

The transpersonally relevant research on mate selection begins with a dissertation study investigating the correlation between the levels of calculation of the decision-making process leading to marriage and marital satisfaction. Lydick (1995) used a self-designed, pretested, and factor-analyzed marital satisfaction inventory, the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MRI), and the Caring Relationship Inventory (CRI) to assess quantitatively 104 ethnically diverse individuals in the early stages of their first marriage. The results showed that "the premarital decision-making process was calculated more from intuition than from a formal, logical structured, planned methodology" (1995, p. 110). Lydick did not expand on the term *intuition*, and did not indicate how she came to this conclusion, as she had not set out to hypothesize about intuition, nor did she address any implications of her findings as they pertain to intuition. Therefore, not much is known about this finding. The reference to intuition in her study is to a modality of knowing that is in contrast to a systematic, rational, or strategic decision process. Perhaps

Lydick's lack of discussion about intuition reflects Claxton's (1998) description of intuition as "an uncomfortable, and therefore, for most of this century a neglected notion in psychology" (p. 217). It is precisely these often overlooked phenomena that fall under the purview of examination by the field of transpersonal psychology.

Vaughan (1979) provides an example of an incidence of transpersonal mate selection as it occurs in the form of intuition. A woman in an intuitive workshop recounted the following experience:

The most important intuitive experience I've had in my life was the day I heard a voice in myself proclaim that the man I was sitting across from would become my husband. At that time I did not know Ralph well, though we were acquainted. I had no plans for marriage, let alone marriage to Ralph. Yet the day we shared lunch after a two-year lapse of contact was a fateful one for me. As he sat across from me recounting his experiences with a person on a plane, I heard a voice behind and to my left that said, "That man is to be your husband." I responded by almost laughing. Ralph interrupted his story and questioned my mirth. I informed him I was reluctant to propose at that moment. We left the restaurant at some level already committed to a marriage now 6 years old. (p. 154)

Moreover, in an examination of the media effects on societal romanticism constructs, Glebatis (2007) analyzed the reality television show *The Bachelorette*, in which a woman who is deemed conventionally desirable is designated as the "bachelorette," and male contestants brutally compete for her hand in marriage. With each episode the bachelorette must eliminate a contestant in a high-pressured elimination ceremony. Glebatis observed that in all of the episodes the main contestant of the program used "gut reactions" as a factor in her decisions to select or eliminate prospective husbands (2007, p. 327). The term *gut reaction* is a common colloquial description in the United States of an embodied form of intuition that is frequently used in romantic decision-making processes within all popular culture and artistic media such as films, television, music, and literature. The term gut reaction is also commonly used in other domains, including business, nursing, and sports. A gut reaction or any other form of intuition or felt-sense

of knowing is considered transpersonal because it is a nonrational phenomenon often regarded as producing “correct” answers. The aforementioned examples provide scholarly evidence for the existence of transpersonal factors utilized in mate selection decisions. Further research will be discussed following a review of the foundational literature on mate selection.

It is necessary to acknowledge that there is a plethora of literature that documents the history of romantic love in Western society and traces its origins back to Plato’s *Symposium* and through the troubadour movement of the middle ages. For excellent summaries of Plato’s myth and overviews on the history of romance and marriage in the Western world, the reader is advised to see reviews by Young (1992) and Brown (2000) and works by Murstein (1974) and De Rougemont (1983).

Romantic love and the transpersonal or spiritually infused mate selection process are not phenomena that occur only in Western culture. In a cross-cultural study on romantic love, Jankowiak and Fisher (1992) analyzed ethnographies from 166 different cultures and found documentation of the occurrence of romantic love in 146 of the cultures. The findings led the researchers to conclude that romantic love is a universal, or at least near-universal, human experience. Moreover, the research topic being studied, transpersonal experiences that contribute to mate selection, is not found solely in the United States’ version of Western culture. Many cultures around the world invoke spiritual methodologies, divinations, and rituals in an effort to gain certainty and guidance about their partner choice in marriage. Some (1997) wrote that, in the Dagara culture of Burkina Faso in West Africa, the selecting of a partner is assigned to the affairs of the elders and that they must “divine on the subject. They will present the matter to spirit to get approval” (p. 72). Some, a native of Dagara culture, shared the story of how she decided to marry her husband. She was asked by the elders to consider marrying a man from

another town. Some reportedly had reservations about the match and took 3 months to think about her decision. One night, as she contemplated this marriage decision, she visited her grandmother's grave. It was there that she heard her grandmother say the words "Don't worry. Just say yes and you'll see that everything will be fine" (p. 71). In the morning, she awoke and made her decision to marry this man. She stated, "There is a spiritual dimension to every relationship, no matter what its origins, whether it is acknowledged as spiritual or not. Two people come together because spirit wants them together" (p. 12). Additionally, Murstein (1974) documented that, in traditional Chinese and Japanese cultures, when two people are set up for marriage by parents or matchmakers, it is customary to consult with a fortuneteller or astrologist to see if the pair is compatible and if the union is auspicious. According to Murstein, having incompatible horoscopes is a socially acceptable reason for breaking off the marriage negotiations, and neither side "loses face" in that break-up (p. 491). Conversely, having compatible horoscopes fosters confidence in the match and contributes to the marriage decision. In India and the Indian Diaspora, Vedic astrology is commonly consulted to determine a marriage match. It might even be hypothesized that the prevalence of transpersonal and spiritual factors in a marriage decision is more predominantly a cross-cultural, nonwestern norm and that Western United State culture is less likely to acknowledge this more spiritual form of decision making.

#### *Evolutionary Psychology Perspectives*

Though evolutionary psychology does not address the factors that people consciously or intentionally utilize to decide on a partner for marriage, the field contributes a more empirically and neuro-scientifically based approach to mate selection that must be reviewed here, as it is foundational to the present inquiry because it elucidates a number of subliminal determinants of behavior that may be associated with felt senses that seem to be supraphenomenal in nature.

Evolutionary psychology theories view mate selection as a utilitarian requirement for reproduction of the species and propound the requirement that the criteria for which mates are chosen are dependent on whether the males will be able adequately to provide resources for the female and children and on whether the females are reproductively successful (Buss, 1989).

In the landmark study on human preferential mate characteristics, Buss (1989) administered surveys on marriage age and marriage preferences to approximately 10,000 people from 37 different cultures from across six continents and five islands, making it the largest sample ever obtained on mate preferences. As a general finding, Buss discovered that, universally, men and women wanted mates who were intelligent, kind, understanding, dependable, and healthy. Mutual attraction and love were found to be highly valued traits. The results also indicated distinct gender differences in mate preferences. It was found that, in all 37 countries, males preferred mates who were younger than themselves, while women preferred mates who were older. Males were also found to value physical beauty and attractiveness in potential mates more than were females. Beauty, attractiveness, and youth are desirable for men because these traits are hypothesized to be correlated with fertility and greater reproductive success that can, therefore, competitively perpetuate the male's genetic material. The findings also indicated that, across cultures, females value financial success, ambition, and industriousness in males because females are emotionally and biologically invested in the survival of their offspring and are, therefore, seeking mates who can best provide security and protection for their young.

Although the study solicits supporting evidence from a highly broad sample, the findings support rather than prove the theory, and, thus, the approach remains still a theory, and the precise functions of certain preferences remain obscure. Buss (1989) reported that some of the

preferential characteristics of mates could not necessarily be explained by evolutionary theory and that some of the determinants in sex differences could perhaps be better explained by the cultural system in which they originate (p. 14), such as the cross-cultural finding of female chastity as a common preference by males in mate selection. The theory may also serve to reinforce normative stereotypes of men and women that, in a modern age of diversity of experience, may not accurately reflect most mate decisions. Despite the research findings, it is an overgeneralization to contend that women as a species seek only financially successful men and that men as a species seek only beautiful, young women. People may have ideal images of partners that they would theoretically prefer, but these ideals are often in stark contrast to their actual partner options and selection criteria. A study on people's actual mate selection criteria versus their ideal criteria might be more reflective of the lived reality of mate selection.

Aron et al. (2005) explained romantic love as a biological drive that originates in the brain and whose main purpose is to facilitate mating, attaching, and reproducing with a selected partner. Aron et al. conducted a study that scanned the brains, using functional MRI (fMRI) methods, of 7 men and 10 women, aged 18-26 and recruited people from the New York City area and the Rutgers University and Stony Brook University communities who were identified as being in the early stages of love. Participants alternated between viewing a photograph of their beloved while simultaneously recounting a positive event with the beloved, and viewing a photograph of a familiar individual. A total of 146 brain scan images were collected for each individual and were analyzed using Statistical Parametric Mapping software (SPM 99). The results showed that the caudate nucleus was highly active within the brains of individuals in love. The caudate nucleus is a region of the brain that detects, seeks, motivates, and executes movement to receive rewards and is responsible for having focused attention and learning. The

study found that the more passionate the participants were towards their partners, the more active the caudate. Additionally, the findings indicated that individuals who were in love had a more active ventral tegmental area (VTA), a region of the brain that produces and distributes dopamine. In addition to elevating a person's mood, dopamine is found to increase focused attention.

Due to the association between romantic love and passion with increased levels of dopamine and the activity of the caudate nucleus, Aron et al. (2005) posited that romantic love functions in the brain as an integrated system for motivation, focused attention, and goal-oriented behaviors and is "possibly a developed form of mammalian drive to pursue preferred mates" (p. 327) that is critical to human reproduction. The findings suggest that romantic love is no more than a mating drive to keep the lovers motivated and focused on one another long enough to procure successful reproduction. The study is limited by its small sample size that may not generalize across all populations, and the findings only apply to the early stages of love and do not explain mate selection decisions that occur when the in-love feelings subside.

Miller (2000) argued that, as courtship and mate selection became more and more competitive, the human mind evolved and adapted in order to succeed at mating. Exceptional human traits such as entertaining language skills, talented athleticism, religious piety, humor, virtues, and artistic skills are too extraneous and metabolically useless to have evolved simply as functions in the struggle for survival. According to Miller, these traits have evolved to help humans court successfully and persuade prospective partners to move toward mating. He wrote, "Minds evolved not just as survival machines, but as courtship machines" (p. 3). Miller has not scientifically tested his theory; however, it appears to support Aron et al.'s (2005) research findings.

Miller (2000), Aron et al. (2005), and Buss' (1987) studies and theories provide salient and exemplar representations of evolutionary perspectives in mate selection. Their views posit that all universal human behavior, particularly as it pertains to love and selecting a mate, has been biologically programmed and is simply an execution of the species' mammalian drives. Every specific nuance of human behavior is viewed as an adaptation whose sole function is to perpetuate the species—a view that promotes that drive as if there were no other purpose to human existence. Any trait that does not ultimately serve the greater purpose of procreation, in this view, is predicted to become eventually extinct. The biological drives that occur during courtship and the mate selection process often occur on a more subliminal level and are not consciously realized and integrated into the marriage decision process. However, the subliminal urges might contribute to people's felt sense of desire to be with someone or a felt sense of conviction to marry a particular partner. Nevertheless, evolutionary psychology theories fail to provide explanations for phenomena that cannot be scientifically attributed to biological programming, have no connection to the drive toward procreation, and can be better explained by social, existential, or transpersonal psychology.

#### *Social Psychology Perspectives*

In contrast to evolutionary psychologists, social psychologists do not view people as mating machines but see individuals as social creatures integrally connected to a social system that directly involves relationships with others. Social psychology has investigated factors that contribute to marital relationships by examining love, mate preferences, commitment, and marriage. According to Cowman (1995), the development towards marriage can be viewed as a story that occurs in stages from initial attraction and selection to commitment, the decision to marry and become engaged, and, eventually, marriage. Buston and Emlen (2003) researched



factors that contribute to initial attraction and selectivity in a mate by administering combined mate preference and self-perception surveys to 978 heterosexual undergraduate students, ages 18-24, at Cornell University. The study found strong support for the hypothesis that the importance that individuals place on the attributes of potential long-term partners is dependent upon their self-perceived value as a mate. Individuals who had a high self-perception were more discriminating in their mate preferences than were individuals who had lower self-perception scores. The researchers concluded that, in Western society, people use a “likes-attract decision rule” (p. 8809) to select a mate that is based on preferences for partners who are similar to themselves across a number of characteristics. The study is limited due to an absence of report on the demographics or ethnicity of the students who partook in the survey. Moreover, Cornell University is an affluent private institution whose student body is predominantly Caucasian, and to conclude generalizable statements for all of Western society from findings for such a population seems biased and ethnocentric.

In the Self-Expansion Model, Aron and Aron (1996) attempt to further the understanding of cognition and motivation in close relationships and the central role that the self may play in these processes. The self-expansion model posits that relationships expand the self by including an other in the self and that individuals choose mates and relationships that will lead to optimal and maximum self-expansion and growth. Aron, Paris, and Aron (1995) conducted two studies to confirm the hypothesis that being in relationship contributes to an expansion of self. Study 1 examined “falling in love” and assessed 325 undergraduate students at five intervals over the course of 10 weeks. At each testing the participants were asked to list as many self-descriptive words or phrases as came to mind during a 3-minute period in response to the question “who are you today?” At each interval the participants were assessed for falling in love during the

interims. The results were analyzed using a content analysis and showed that the group that reported falling in love increased their amount of self-descriptions from before to after falling in love as compared with the group that reported not falling in love. The researchers determined that the results indicate that falling in love increases one's sense of self and that this expansion of self is a motivator for being in relationship.

The study addresses the validity of the phenomenon that relationships increase sense of self; however, it does not actually demonstrate that individuals consciously choose particular mates that will contribute to their maximum self-growth. Although the study documents a difference from one interval to the next between the study groups, the results may not necessarily be indicative of changes in self-concept. The discussion does not consider other possible explanations for the findings other than self-expansion, such as the effects of increases in hormone and dopamine levels that could have a variety of positive effects on creativity and cognitive abilities. Falling in love may provide partners with a sudden experience of being positively mirrored, in ways in which they were not previously reflected, that may contribute to receiving much glorified feedback and reinforcement of themselves that might be perceived by the researchers examining participant comments as an expansion of self. The conclusions of the study appear limited to the biases of the researchers and their research intentions.

Study 2 by Aron et al. (1995) was similar to Study 1 except that it tested their hypothesis that falling in love and entering into a love relationship expanded one's sense of self due to increases in self-esteem and self-efficacy. The content of the questionnaires was the differing factor between these two studies. In this study, 529 first year undergraduate students at a different university than the one drawn from for Study 1 were given standard measures of self-efficacy and self-esteem. The study was designed in such a way that the students had no

awareness that the study pertained to falling in love, and questions about love and if they had fallen in love at the time of study were discreetly embedded in the assessment. The questionnaires were administered during regular class sessions at the start of the 10-week quarter and then regularly every 2 weeks, for a total of five testings. Results were obtained using content analyses similar to Study 1. The results indicated that 138 participants were classified as having fallen in love. There were no significant differences in gender, year in school, or age between those who had fallen in love and those who had not. The authors reported that the results supported their hypotheses and found reliable evidence that variables of self-esteem and self-efficacy seemingly do increase after falling in love. Changes in one's self-concept appear to help the individual feel a greater ability to accomplish goals and feel a greater sense of self-worth. The authors extrapolated from the analyses that falling in love may involve a period of self-discovery and that it provides one with the opportunity to explore and try out ideal aspects of self, to incorporate these aspects into a new social context, and thereby to facilitate a transformation of the self. This transformation is likely to lead to an increase in self-esteem. The limitations of the study are similar to those of Study 1. Additionally, the study examines the falling in love among young people who are not yet individualized, actualized, or out in the work force. Had the authors conducted the study on adults in their mid-twenties or older, who might have a more mature sense of self, the results might have been different. As people mature and move into a different stage of development, they might be less likely to rely on others for self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-concept. The results are not necessarily generalizable to all age brackets. Additionally, the researchers were unable to control for exposure to other variables in the students' lives that may have contributed to increases in self-esteem or self-efficacy. Therefore, the results are correlational, and not causal.

After initial attraction and selection occur and the relationship is deemed valuable enough to continue, individuals with a desire eventually to marry intentionally or unintentionally commit to the one that they have selected. Several studies on the development of commitment to marriage illuminate social-psychological factors that influence the decision to marry. In a phenomenological study on the development of commitment to marriage, Surra, Hughes, and Jacquet (1999) synthesized data from two of their previous studies on commitment that interviewed a total 584 dating individuals and graphed their changes in chance of marriage over the course the relationship up until the date of the interview. The interviews were coded into separate reasons for commitment that were then categorized according to content. The results found that commitment was formed due to the presence of several factors: self-disclosure in relationship with one's partner; agreement on stages of involvement; conflict; interaction with the joint network; behavioral interdependence and the amount of time spent together; positive attitudes towards the relationship and levels of satisfaction, also referred to as dyadic attributions; positive or negative network attributions of the relationship; alternative partner involvements or the degree to which alternatives to the relationship are perceived as available or rewarding; moral reasons and holding normative beliefs about marriage and commitment (e.g., appropriate time or circumstances to get married); and, finally, circumstantial reasons, such as life events or changing geographic location. These markers in the development toward commitment appear to be crucial elements, or plot lines, in the evolution of a marriage story, and, from a social perspective, each couple has a uniquely individualized configuration of these factors that either instigated or prevented a marriage union.

Once the commitment is established, it is inevitable that doubts about the relationship and partner choice will arise. Murray (1999) stated that being in a committed, stable, long-term

relationship is a vulnerable experience and that, as such, individuals need a sense of conviction about their partner being the “right” one. In an overview of the findings of a variety of studies that she conducted, Murray presented the motivational constructs of commitment that help individuals dispel doubts about their partner and about the relationship, maintain certitude and conviction about their partner choice, and foster successful relationships.

The results from Murray and Holmes’ (1997), Murray, Holmes, and Griffin’s (1996a), and Murray, Holmes, and Griffin’s (1996b) studies indicated that people maintain conviction about their choice in partner by unknowingly adopting what the authors call *positive illusions*. Positive illusions is a construct defined as perceptions that are based on a small kernel of truth but that are overly inflated and exaggerate the reality of one’s partner or the relationship by seeing them in the most positive light possible. This is an instrumental component in feeling convicted in one’s commitment. Murray (1999) stated that dating and married individuals expressed greater satisfaction in their relationship the more that they idealized their partners. Their relationship well-being was associated with a particular benevolent and generous way of perceiving: the ability to see virtues in their partner that they were not able to see in themselves. Based on her studies that followed a large sample of long-term couples over the course of a year (Murray & Holmes, 1997; Murray et al., 1996b), the findings indicated that, contrary to what might be generally assumed, the couples that showed the greatest amount of positive illusions and idealization were not at risk for eventual disillusionment, as has been initially hypothesized. The researchers found that there was a self-corrective and self-fulfilling nature to the idealization process: that those individuals who were idealized naturally shifted their perceptions to match the reality of their partner’s views of themselves and that this, consequently, prevented disappointment.

Murray (1999) claimed that it is the absence of idealistic perceptions that predicts increases in conflict and a decline in overall satisfaction as the relationship progresses. A component of having positive illusions about one's partner includes the individual's ability to reframe the partner's faults and perceive them as simply aspects of his or her greater, more significant, and positive character. Similarly, another way that successful couples dispel doubts is to reorganize their representations of relationships in ways that elevate the importance of virtues and minimize the importance of faults. Apparent weaknesses are interpreted only in light of their connection with the partner's greater virtues. A "yes, but . . ." rationalization process is operationalized in defense of any faults of the partner or relationship. Individuals who are most successful at finding the proverbial silver lining have fewer doubts and greater relationship stability. These individuals maintain a broader perspective about the relationship; bypass complicated, sophisticated, and analytical thought structures that increase and sustain doubts; and do so without sacrificing needed insight into their partner's more overt flaws. Murray's discovery and espousal of positive illusions as fostering commitment appears to be a scholarly and lexicological articulation and investigation of a notion that is seemingly obvious and simple and that incorporates good common sense.

Bader and Pearson (1988) created a developmental model of romantic relationships that provides a perspective on how people evolve to a mutual decision to marry. Through clinical research and practice, they discovered that particular aspects of childhood development have a direct impact on adults' capacity to create and sustain successful intimate relationships. The purpose of this developmental model is to provide a clinical orientation that allows therapists to facilitate health, wholeness, and functionality for couples in distress. The therapist must understand and identify the differing stages within which each partner is currently operating and

recognize the overall pattern of behavior within the relationship as a unit. It must be noted that the therapy focuses on the couple's current behavior and experiences and delves into the psychodynamics of the individuals' childhoods only on an as-needed basis.

Bader and Pearson's (1988) model for relating posits that couples go through a progression of normal developmental stages that parallel the stages of early childhood development. The way in which individuals progressed through the stages of early childhood development mirror the ways in which they progress through the stages that create a mutually satisfying and functional intimate relationship. Each stage has a specific task that must be mastered before commencement of the next stage. Additionally, each stage becomes incrementally more complex than the preceding one and necessitates more maturity, integration, transformation, and cultivation of new skills than had been previously required.

*Symbiosis* is the first stage in the Bader and Pearson (1988) model. Symbiosis is the initial and intense phase of bonding in which the two individuals merge their lives, interests, and personalities. The purpose of this stage is to create attachment, and so, in order to facilitate this bonded union, similarities are magnified and differences are often overlooked. This stage provides much nurturance and mutual giving and receiving. Both partners make few demands or requests for change and instead make special efforts to accommodate, please the other, and manage their images. This stage is rife with excitement and stimulation, as neither party wants to jeopardize the blissful state by making demands or appearing selfish or insensitive. This stage is crucial in forming the foundation of the relationship and allowing each partner to move beyond symbiosis and into the next stage. When the foundation is not securely established, Bader and Pearson contend that both partners will remain in the symbiotic stage, which will usually turn into one of two dysfunctional hybrids: enmeshment or hostile-dependency. An enmeshed

relationship occurs when two people have merged but minimize their differences and avoid conflict. A hostile-dependent relationship occurs when the couple is dominated by anger and conflict.

*Differentiation* is the stage that follows symbiosis. In differentiation, each member of the couple has been taken down from her or his respective pedestal and is viewed more objectively. Many of the couple's differences have become evident, they do not necessarily spend so much time together, and they have reestablished their individual boundaries that became blurred during the symbiotic stage. Through the process of differentiation, they become aware of their different feelings, opinions, and behaviors as their desire to stand out as unique individuals becomes stronger. This can be a gradual or sudden process that can cause disillusionment and can be a source of many difficult conversations.

The third stage of development is that of *practicing*. In the practicing stage, the couple experiences a period of relative normalcy, in which each participates in his or her individual activities of interest away from one another. The individuals no longer feel as empathically attuned to one another. In this stage, the individuals are more focused on themselves and on the external circumstances of their lives. Autonomy, individuation, and rediscovery of self are the main concerns. Issues of self-esteem, individual power, and worthiness become central to the relationship. During this stage conflicts appear to intensify, and it becomes crucial that the couple develop a healthy process for resolving any conflicting aims to facilitate maintaining an emotional connection while they are also developing their separate selves in the world.

In the *rapprochement* stage, the individuals have established well-defined identities and the couple now begins to look again toward the relationship for intimacy. The individuals once again begin to feel emotionally vulnerable as they seek comfort and support from one another. At



this point in the relationship, the participants alternate between seeking intimacy and forging independence. Typically, anxiety about the other is resolved quickly, as communication and negotiation are easier than before. This stage pronounces a balance between the “me” and the “we” (Bader & Pearson, 1988, p. 11) and promotes a greater resolution of childhood issues that may have been interfering with the relationship.

The fifth stage of Bader and Pearson’s (1988) developmental model is that of *mutual interdependence*. In this stage, the relationship encourages more contact with others outside of the couple and is simultaneously strengthened by the implicit knowledge that each partner is loved and supported by the other. This is a phase of constancy in which the idealized versions of the relationship and of the other are now reconciled with the reality of the partnership. At this point, both partners are well integrated, have found personal satisfaction in their own lives, and have developed a bond that is perceived as deep and mutually fulfilling. The relationship promotes mutual growth and is not in service of dependent needs.

According to Bader and Pearson (1988) difficulties arise in relationship as a result of an imbalance between individuals being in differing stages at different times or when individuals or the couple are unable to progress through the stages in order. According to this model, the main source of conflict in a relationship occurs when one or both individuals are not able to master the developmental tasks that are needed in order to move to the next stage. As world renowned couples therapists, Bader and Pearson (developed a unique assessment protocol that helps the therapist diagnose which stage of development the couple is in. Once the diagnosis is recognized, the therapist employs the appropriate intervention tailored to the specific developmental stage.

Developmental patterns of relationship, expansion of self, commitment, and conviction in one’s decision to marry all contribute to a robust understanding of the process of mate selection

and the motivating factors for mating and marriage. However, love as a contributing factor has been absent from the literature reviewed thus far. Marrying for love in Western culture is currently the most conventional and common reason for marriage, as well as being the aspired-to ideal. According to Murstein (1974), love as foundation and determinant for marriage is the accepted norm of modern society. However, a few hundred years ago, love was considered to be separate from marriage. Murstein cited that, in the 19th century, most spouses were satisfied being in a marriage that was polite and civil while often leading separate but compatible lives. In contrast, married people of the 21st century assume the role of lover, therapist, friend, activity and sports partner, and colleague in their partners' lives.

Sternberg (1986) defined love as a “complex whole that appears to derive in part from genetically transmitted instincts and drives but probably in larger part from socially learned role modeling that, through observation, comes to be defined as love” (p. 120). He investigated what it means to love someone, the experience of loving someone, and the ways in which love can differ from person to person. He was curious about why some love seems to last and some does not. Consequently, he developed the Triangular Theory of Love, a conceptual and psychological framework for understanding love that operationalized three main components that are central to the experience. The three components of love are intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment, and they are conceptualized as forming the three vertices of a triangle. The triangular model is highly dynamic and depicts these components as relating to one another, in continual dynamic motion and change, and also as producing behaviors. The degree to which these components are prevalent in a given relationship allows for a variety of different kinds of loving experiences.

The intimacy component refers to the emotional investment between the two partners in the relationship and the feelings of closeness, connectedness, and loving bondedness. Some

features of intimacy as detailed by Sternberg (1986) include these factors: (a) a desire to facilitate the well-being of the beloved, (b) experiences of happiness when with the loved one, (c) high regard for the other, (d) trusting and being able to rely on the other in times of need, (e) giving and receiving of emotional support, and (f) intimate communication and mutual understanding with the other. According to this model, one experiences the intimacy component of love when one has encountered a sufficient amount of the above-mentioned criteria of intimacy. However, the number of aspects of experienced intimacy varies with each individual and with each relationship.

The passion component refers to the motivational involvement of the couple and the drives that contribute to romance, physical attraction, arousal, and sexual relationship. The passion component may be what initially draws a person to the relationship. According to Sternberg (1986), passion consists of a sense of longing for union and can include a need for self-esteem, nurturing, connection, domination or submission, and self-actualization. Passion and intimacy have a reciprocal dynamic, in that the prevalence of intimacy may be a function of how well the relationship meets one's need for passion. In some relationships, the passion develops immediately, and it is only in time that intimacy develops. Conversely, in some relationships, the passion component may develop only after the intimacy is established. Sternberg posited that the intimate/emotional component and the commitment/cognitive component appear to be relatively stable in most relationships, as compared to the passion component, which is often fleeting and unpredictable. This is due in part to the fact that a person is usually more aware and conscious of the passion component while less aware of his or her psychological, emotional, or unconscious aspects of intimacy and commitment. Additionally, the individual has some degree of conscious control over her or his feelings of intimacy and commitment invested in the relationship. In

contrast, there is very little conscious control over the amount of arousal, passion, and motivational drive that one feels when with—or even when simply looking at—another person.

The decision/commitment component of the Sternberg (1986) model refers to the cognitive aspect of deciding on short- and long-term commitment. Short-term commitment is the decision that one loves someone else, whereas long-term commitment is the decision and dedication to maintain that love. However, the short-term and long-term aspects need not go together. The decision to love does not necessarily imply a commitment to love and a commitment to a person does not necessarily imply a decision to love. Logically and chronologically, the decision to love someone most often precedes the commitment to the relationship. As illustration, Sternberg referred to the institution of marriage as symbolizing the legalization of the commitment to the decision to love one another for the rest of each other's lives. Despite the fact that this is a more cognitive aspect of love, Sternberg stressed the importance of this component in helping people navigate through difficult bumps in relationship.

Beyond the three components of love, Sternberg (1986) outlined eight types of love. He considers the eighth type of love, consummate love, to be the balanced achievement of all three components. The first type of love is *nonlove* and it refers the absence of all three components of love and comprises the majority of personal relationships. The second type is that of *liking*, and liking results when one only experiences the intimate aspects of love without the passion or commitment component. It can characterize a set of feelings that are true to friendships. The third type of love is *infatuated love* resulting from strong feelings of passionate arousal in the absence of intimacy or commitment. "Love at first sight" falls under this category. *Empty love* refers to love that originates from a strong commitment to the love without any intimacy or passion. Initial stages of arranged marriages fall into this category. The fifth type of love is

*romantic love* and emanates from a combination of intimacy and passion. Romantic lovers are emotionally and physically drawn to one another. *Companionate love* derives from a combination of intimacy and decision/commitment, and it lacks the passionate component. It is akin to a long-term committed friendship in which the physical attraction and sexual relationship has waned. The seventh kind of love is *fatuous love* and results from a combination of passion and decision/commitment in the absence of intimacy. These types of relationships are passionate affairs that catapult to marriage without the couple thoroughly knowing one another. Fatuous love relationships are at risk for termination. The eighth and final kind of love is called *consummate* or complete love. It manifests as the full combination of the three components and is the type of love for which most people strive. However, once attained, there is no guarantee that consummate love will last. However, Sternberg (1986) contended that developing and maintaining varieties of this kind of love is not necessarily difficult. According to Sternberg, the amount of love that one experiences depends on the strength of the three components, while the kind of love that one experiences depends on the strength of each component relative to another.

The purpose of Sternberg's (1986) theory of love is to help people obtain, improve, or sustain all components of the healthy and meaningful love triangle. Consequently, he examined the different types of relationship configurations that arise from the three components and the different kinds of love. He calls this the geometry of the love triangle, and contends that these different geometries are dependent upon two factors: amount of love and balance of love. The triangular theory involves identifying the degree to which the individual's actual triangle in relationship matches up with his or her idealized version of love and also whether each participant in the relationship experiences his or her triangle in the same way. The manifestations of the three components of love can be determined by whether one is in a long- or short-term

relationship. For example, in short-term relationships, especially those of the romantic variety, the passion component tends to play the most significant part, while the other components might play moderate or minor roles. In contrast, in long-term relationship, the intimacy components and the decision/commitment component typically play large roles and hold much more value, as it is difficult to sustain a relationship in the absence of some degree of involvement and commitment. The passion component might contribute only moderately, and its role in the relationship might decline over time.

The Triangular Theory of Love and the eight kinds of love provide an excellent lens through which to view relationships of all kinds and the romantic relationship in particular. Sternberg's (1986) model and Bader and Pearson's (1988) developmental model seem to interface well in assessing the social dynamics that may or may not activate a couple towards marriage.

By way of summarizing the literature, it appears to this researcher that social psychology perspectives on mate selection are valuable in that they address the idiosyncratic behaviors of human beings and acknowledge patterns of development, love, commitment, and relationships as natural manifestations of cognitive, affective, and inner psychological experiences. The literature is limited in that it is bounded by conventional experiences of relationships. Social psychology does not explore the more transcendent states of love, the impact of spirituality on relationships, and the more ineffable states of consciousness and life experiences that affect individuals' worldviews and that can contribute to an interconnected and unified social experience of the world.

### *Transpersonally Relevant Literature*

Transpersonally relevant literature articulates some of the phenomena that cannot be best explained through the research of mainstream psychology. Cowman's (1995) dissertation investigating "the process by which couples negotiate their way from first introduction to marriage vows" (p. 77) provides directly relevant literature for the study of transpersonal factors influencing the marriage decision. Cowman ascertains that the formation of marriage commitment is best described as a coauthoring of a marriage story. Cowman used a modified form of grounded theory to analyze interviews of both partners of 4 recently married couples. The analysis revealed four themes of transformation that occurred during the unfolding process toward marriage: personal, interpersonal, social, and cosmic. The personal theme relates to the story of self-actualization in the context of the marriage and of changes in personality, identity, and day-to-day life. The interpersonal theme is the story of the couple, the intimacy shared, and the shared growth. The social theme is about the story of the couple in relation to the community. The personal, interpersonal, and social processes were deemed not sufficiently adequate to explain all aspects of the marriage experience; therefore, the cosmic theme, which is most relevant to this study, was constructed and refers to the "couple's spiritual or existential experiences with respect to marriage" (1995, p. 81). Some participants reported synchronicities and coincidences of similar life experiences that they believed were signs of "predestination" (p. 129) for the couple to be united and that helped solidify the decision to commit to one another. Other participants reported undergoing indescribable spiritual or "magical" (p. 129) transformations throughout the marriage story that directly expanded the participants' spiritual beliefs. Furthermore, Cowman described the marriage ritual itself as a spiritual experience that served to connect the participants with something larger than themselves. Marriage was seen as a

communion with one's partner, as a communion of the couple with the congregation and humanity, and as a communion with God. Cowman reported that it was important to the participants that the wedding ceremony had a spiritual component that distinguished between personal spirituality and religion. The study is limited by its small sample size and homogenous sample with respect to age, length of time married, and life-span development stage.

Nonetheless, the findings provide relevant information about the perceived beliefs of participants that a transpersonal or cosmic layer contributed great significance to their marriage story. Based on Cowman's finding, the development towards marriage appears to be a multi-dimensional hologram that is influenced from many angles by deeper cosmic or spiritual dimensions of existence.

A large body of literature on intuitive knowing and alternative modes of sense perception exists and is crucial to an expanded understanding of Lydick's (1995) finding that decisions to marry are calculated from intuition. In the decision to marry a particular partner, people might experience a felt sense of knowing, claim that they "just know," or have a gut feeling—or visceral sensation—that imparted a sense of rightness to their decision. The literature attempting to define and understand intuition is abundant, and many dissertations have investigated this topic.

Vaughan (1979) defined intuition as a knowing without knowing how. This seems to be the most commonly held explanation of intuition. The word intuition comes from the Latin *intuire* which means looking, regarding, or knowing from within (Vaughan, 1979). The intuitive way of knowing is typically experiential and holistic and involves the body, mind, spirit, and all senses. Claxton (1998) reported that intuition captures information that is inarticulate and fleeting and arises on liminal and subliminal levels. Vaughan furthered the notion that intuition is



a type of knowing that utilizes channels beyond those of the ordinary five senses. Intuition, by definition, means that the information that is gathered is true. If seemingly intuitive knowledge eventually proves to be incorrect, then it did not come from intuition, but rather from a form of self-deception or wishful thinking. Scholars have attempted to understand intuition from a rational perspective; however, intuition as a way of knowing defies rational explanation and conventional scientific investigation. Vaughan added that reports of psychic experiences, paranormal ways of knowing, and precognitive dreams all represent a type of intuitive knowing.

According to Vaughan (1979), overall, people who know things intuitively often cite that they are confident about the certitude of their intuitive knowledge, although they may not be able to explain this certitude. Vaughan compares feeling the certainty of an intuition to feeling the certainty of a sensation. Both occur as part of one's experience and both are recognized as what they are. Intuition may not necessarily be apparent or come into an individual's awareness, and the information might seem vague. However, Vaughan advocated the notion that, if one focuses his or her attention on it and develops greater recognition of it, the intuition can grow increasingly stronger, clearer, and more useful.

Vaughan (1979) asserted that intuition is a psychological function that is operative, for example, in scientists, musicians, businessmen, nurses, and doctors in the production of inventions, art, and discoveries, as well as in calculating daily decisions. Claxton (1998) reported that, in a survey of Nobel laureates, the majority indicated that intuition had been instrumental in their successes. Vaughan and Claxton both claim that everyone either intentionally or unknowingly utilizes intuition in some way to solve problems, and that major decisions in life are seldom made from the rational mind. Vaughan wrote that decisions solely based on reason may not even be desirable. As a relevant example, Vaughan wrote, "An intuitive choice of

marriage partner, for example, may develop into a more successful marriage than a rational choice which ignores unconscious factors” (p. 154). Intuition is used in a mundane sense to gather knowledge that will help answer a question, find a solution to a problem, or determine a course of action. This type of knowledge may come in a variety of different forms and at variety of different speeds. It may arrive abruptly as a “bolt from the blue,” it may emerge slowly into consciousness, or it might present clearly or unclearly as something that as yet cannot be fully articulated.

In creating a qualitative research method entitled *intuitive inquiry* that utilizes intuition as a valid form of knowing, Anderson (2004) presented five typologies of intuition that describe how intuition manifests in the creative process. The first type is that of the unconscious and symbolic process. According to Anderson, intuition appears through the realm of the unconscious, dreams, and symbols occurring in daily life. She does not elaborate much about this process and defers the analysis of this scope of this topic to psychoanalytic theory and archetypal psychology.

The second intuitive typology is of psychic or parapsychological experiences. This grouping of intuitive experiences has aspects similar to those Vaughan (1979) articulated. Anderson (2004) posited that, despite the fact that psychic and parapsychological phenomena are not considered under the purview of conventional scientific research, direct and unmediated experiences of intuition include telepathy, clairvoyance, or precognitive experiences.

Sensory modes of intuition comprise the third typology of intuition and include subtle and subliminal information that comes from the inner or outer physical body. Anderson (2004) asserted that the body continually gives off signals for danger, beauty, and security that may or may not be brought to conscious awareness. However, with focus, awareness, and practice, these

signals can be developed to serve intuition and imagination. Anderson added two additional senses to the five that are commonly known. These include the sense of proprioception, or that accessed via an inner body sensor, and the sense of kinesthesia, or movement. These two senses act as intuitive channels that convey subtle forms of information that are usually inaccessible to the thinking mind. An awareness of proprioception and kinesthesia can be enhanced through specialized attention and training.

The fourth typology of intuition is that of empathic identification, or compassionate knowing. This is the modality through which writers, actors, scientists, and psychotherapists know and understand the world, another person, or an object of study. This style of intuiting invites the knower into a full spectrum of sensory awareness and allows greater access to the field of knowledge embedded in proprioception and movement. Much as does a skilled actor, the intuitor embodies the lived experience of his or her subject. Anderson (2004) suggested that children inhabit and experience the world in this way and that a meditation process can facilitate this way of knowing.

Anderson's (2004) fifth type is intuition accessed through one's personal wounds. She professed that people's emotional wounds are openings to the world and that a person's intuitive style "tends to settle along the fault lines or wounds in the personality in a manner akin to the concept of the wounded healer" (pp. 312-313). She further noted that it is these fault lines that hold the capacity to transform the personality and yield tremendous insight. The wound acts like a conduit to the individual's higher self and can access information that was otherwise unknown.

Intuitive inquiry requires that the researcher screen every aspect of the research through several lenses and cycles of intuitive contemplation. Even the research topic itself is to be chosen through intuitive faculties. This is a novel approach in that Anderson (2004) incorporated a

phenomenon that is generally perceived as “unscientific” into a formalized and scientific research procedure. Anderson regards intuition as being on a par with any of the other more generally acceptable investigative tools. In this sense, she validates intuition as a legitimate form of knowing and as an essential part of any decision-making or creative process.

Regardless of Anderson’s (2004) legitimating of intuition as a scientific research method, an understanding of intuition can often be untenable and confusing. Sowerby’s (2001) dissertation examined the qualitative experience of intuition and identified the signals that identify the felt sense of intuition. Toward that end, he interviewed 12 professional intuitives whose jobs included working as psychics, channelers, healers, clairvoyants, medical intuitives, psychotherapists, counselors, and coaches. The participants described a wide variety of experiences of intuition that ranged through insight, mood changes, profound and peak experiences, and altered states of consciousness. To the detriment of his work, Sowerby did not conduct any formal or scholarly analysis of his results. Rather, he reported all findings in their “as-is” state and underwent a dream incubation process to facilitate a reflection on his findings. He reported that, for each participant, intuition manifested as a unique combination of signals and forms that, over time and with practice and feedback from clients, enabled greater recognition and an accurate interpretation. Sowerby found that, while intuition occurred spontaneously, it also was accessed deliberately by inducing altered states of consciousness through meditations, trances, or dreams. Through this process a question could be asked and the intuitive would wait for the answer to appear.

The participants in Sowerby’s (2001) study cited several characteristics and indicators of intuition. Among those are included an “aha” awareness or recognition, an awakening toward something that they already knew, a sense of certitude and/or sense of clarity, a compelling

force, a feeling of connection, a sense of defying logic, a direct feeling, a strong knowing, absence of time and space, the “feeling of a smile” (p. 168), an effortless feeling, a feeling of elation, a strong emotional charge, absence of emotional charge, a sense of receiving the divine spirit, something immediate, and joy.

The forms that intuition reportedly manifests in include a wide variety of experiences: answers to questions or problems; being-ness of love; blood appearing in the mouth; body sensations such as chills, goose bumps, or hot, cold, or prickly sensations; smells; a sense of déjà vu; desires; direct immediate knowing; a deep sense of being-ness and of peacefulness; distant healing; dreams; contact with a spirit guide or a deceased person; precognition; psychokinesis; and seeing auras. The list appears to be a conglomeration of many sensory and transpersonal experiences. Sowerby (2001) acknowledged that intuition seems to have many varying attributes and can manifest in practically any form.

According to the participants’ responses, intuition appears to come from a spiritual and transcendent source and to be a direct line to the divine. The intuitives in Sowerby’s (2001) study cited many sources of their intuition. The origins of intuitive messages were believed to be from: the Akashic records; the universe; God, spirit, or the Holy Ghost; the higher self; the heart; entities or spirits; the astral plane; the client’s physical body; consciousness itself; the collective unconscious; an energetic field; past lives; a soul level; and spirit guides.

Sowerby (2001) listed 26 different yet overlapping definitions of intuition. Some of these include the act of connecting with a deeper part of one’s being and tapping into a different space that contains different levels of consciousness and a quality of truthfulness. Intuition was also defined as receiving information without the intervention and filter of the ego. Intuition was reported to be an immediate felt sense and/or a gut feeling. Intuition was described as a knowing

but not knowing how it was known. Additionally, intuition was defined as an immediate receptivity to metaphysical information.

A weakness of this study is that Sowerby (2001) did not condense or operationalize his participant's responses into one formalized definition of intuition. Several themes of immediacy, felt sense of knowing, connection with spirit, and bypassing the ego, appear throughout, and it seems incumbent that he distill these variables and create a working definition. Nevertheless, the intuitives' responses left as they had been reported still impart a general understanding of intuition.

The plethora of potential versions of intuitive manifestations and the fact that intuition appears in so many forms seem to beg the question of how one is to distinguish between the sensations and feelings that occur as a result of ordinary human existence and the feelings and sensations that are indicators of intuition. Sowerby (2001) did not address this issue with his participants or in his own discussion. He did ask how they recognized the intuitive information that comes through for the purposes of guidance and direction. Each participant reported that she or he relied upon an idiosyncratic combination of signals, sensations, emotions, body movements, and desires that were unique to that person. Sometimes one form of intuition might appear for a single participant and at other times two or more forms would manifest.

Some of the intuitives reported that they were not able consistently to know for certain that their interpretations of their intuition were correct without having some kind of external validation, such as confirmation by clients of their practice. Several intuitives asserted that it was possible to have certainty, and that, if they did not have certainty, then they underwent a process of seeking proof by asking the same question several times to see if they received the same answer consistently. If the answer was the same each time, they felt it signified that their

interpretation was correct. Others reported receiving confirmation of their interpretation of intuition in the form of raps on walls, physical, emotional, or inner sensations, or images happening all at once.

In summary, intuition is a form of knowing that provides the knower with information to which she or he might not ordinarily have access through the rational mind. Intuition is reportedly received through extrasensory or transpersonal channels that appear to bypass the egoic mind. Individuals utilize intuition in the process of making mundane and/or major life decisions, creating major artistic endeavors, discovering scientific breakthroughs, and treating patients. Additionally, intuition is used to help select a mate and to inform the decision process about whether to marry one's partner. The intuition may appear in many forms, such as dreams, telepathic or telekinetic experiences, goose bumps, an immediate and sudden awareness, a gut feeling, an altered state of consciousness, or a kinesthetic experience. As was described by Sowerby's (2001) intuitive participants, the information received through intuition may be a form of divine intervention or spiritual guidance that is directing the individual and relationship in a certain way.

There is an abundance of popular literature on the phenomenon of *soul mates*. Moore (1994) described a soul mate as "someone to whom we feel profoundly connected, as though the communicating and communing that take place between us were not the product of intentional efforts, but rather a divine grace" (p. xvii). The concept of soul mate is evident throughout self-help, romance, and New Age literature. Some literature depicts the ways in which this phenomenon manifests in real people's lives (Canfield et al., 2003, 2007; Moore, 1994; Weiss, 1997), while other books purport to offer self-help steps or lists for determining whether one has

met one's soul mate. The popularity of these books indicates that many people are familiar with the phenomenon and believe in it to some degree or another.

Weiss (1997), a psychotherapist, graduate of Columbia University and Yale Medical School and Chairman Emeritus of Psychiatry at the Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami, wrote a book about a unique soul mate relationship that he witnessed in his private practice. It is included here because it is an extraordinary story that epitomizes the soul mate phenomenon and transpersonal factors operational in bringing people together. Weiss is well known for conducting past-life regression hypnosis treatments on clients who express a desire for this kind of therapy. Two of his clients, Pedro and Elizabeth, who did not know each other and who were from different parts of the world, both sought past-life work at around the same time. In the course of his work with both of these individual clients, Weiss gradually noticed that they appeared to have past lives that described similar settings, people, and culture. The clients were both seeking fulfilling love partners, but were having much difficulty in finding them. Pedro and Elizabeth saw each other on only one occasion in Weiss's waiting room. In the interest of maintaining his clients' confidentiality, Weiss did not tell either of them about these uncanny similarities, nor did he make any efforts to introduce the two. He decided to let fate determine the course of their lives. A few months later, Pedro and Elizabeth were both stranded, thousands of miles from their homes, at the Boston airport on unexpected layovers. They happened to be sitting in the same terminal and saw each other. They both vaguely recognized each other from Dr. Weiss's waiting room and reported feeling magnetically compelled toward one another. They spoke, and both experienced an inexplicable feeling of love and completion. From that instance, they began dating and discovered that they had indeed shared many past lives together and had been the mysterious and unknown "other person" in many of their past-life experiences. They



married, and, according to Weiss, live a rich, fulfilling, and loving life together.

In a more scholarly endeavor, Boyce (2001) conducted a mixed-method dissertation study that investigated the variables that characterize soul mate relationships. Boyce administered an assessment packet that included the Sternberg Triangular Love Scale (STLS), the Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships (PAIR), the Need Fulfillment Inventory (NFI), and a questionnaire of open-ended questions about the concept of soul mates to 112 adults at Arizona State University and the University of South Florida. She assessed 86 females and 26 males. Based on their responses, Boyce divided the participants into four groups: romantic soul mates (RS), romantic partner non-soul mate (RN), friendship soul mate (FS), and friendship non-soul mate (FN). She compared the responses between groups. She hypothesized that soul mate relationships would have greater degrees of intimacy, passion, commitment, similarity, and need fulfillment than would the non-soul mate relationships. Boyce analyzed the quantitative data through a series of ANOVAs, and analyzed the qualitative data through a grounded theory method. The results were consistent with her hypothesis and both categories of soul mate relationships, RS and FS, differed on 7 of the 12 dependent variables of intimacy, passion, commitment, need for self-actualization, need for love and affection, need to provide nurturance, and need for autonomy. The qualitative data yielded similar themes related to the definition and differentiation of soul mates. The results indicated that non-soul mate relationships were meaningful but at a lesser degree of significance than were the soul mate relationships.

Boyce (2001) found several themes and variables that were most salient and indicative of soul mate relationships. First, the partners felt a strong sense of intimacy, connection and reciprocity within the relationships. Second, both partners in the relationship felt a strong and powerful sense of commitment to each other and to the relationship. They reported that they felt

that the relationship was a lifelong partnership that would last forever, and they were committed to staying together. A third theme was that of similarity. The partners felt a strong sense of having similar beliefs, values, backgrounds, personalities, and worldviews. Next, a soul mate relationship was marked by a heightened sense of passion that was unlike any other relationship previously experienced. It was not surprising, however, that the romantic soul mates experienced greater levels of passion than did the friend soul mates. Certainty was another theme that differentiated soul mates from those in other relationships. The individuals in the relationship felt an intuitive sense of certainty about the rightness of their choice in partner. Boyce cited the finding that a third of the participants in the soul mate groups stated that they “just knew” and experienced an inner knowing about the certainty of their mate choice. Additionally, a third of those in soul mate relationships felt that their soul mates were “instantly recognizable” (2001, p. 83). Lastly, a spiritual and magical component, or a supernatural quality, was ascribed to the relationship. The magical and spiritual features were described as an “unknown inexplicable factor that describes a sense of wonderment and fascination about the person or relationship . . . it often suggests that the relationship transcends time and space and common levels of depth” (p. 83). Boyce did not explore the spiritual or magical theme in any further depth.

Soul mate relationships are described as a meeting of kindred spirits (Boyce, 2001). The relationship itself, as well as how these kindred spirits came to meet seem to contain ineffable qualities that are hard to articulate. One participant in the study provided an exemplary quote that describes her experience of soul mate. She said a soul mate is

Someone with whom you have so much in common that you feel as if you're always “there” together; totally connected and understanding of each other, having a bond between you that neither you nor the universe at large has been capable of severing. (p. 66)

Boyce asserted that a romantic soul mate relationship is most closely likened to Sternberg's (1986) consummate love, the type of love that has strong degrees of intimacy, commitment, and passion.

Advancing the concept of soul mate, several scholars have written about the *bonded couple* or *uncommonly bonded couple* phenomenon (Achterberg, 1998; Brown, 2000; Young, 1992). Their research was predicated on an informal group of couples that formed in the late 1970s in California and self-reported to have a special and exceptional bond with their partners. The group was led by the late cultural anthropologist Virginia Hines. According to Young (1992), Hines named these relationships as *bonded couples* and described them as feeling profoundly connected to one another on all levels: mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual. The relationships were reported to be intensely intimate, passionate, playful, spurious of individual growth and self-actualization, and central to the lives of the individual partners.

In a dissertation study, Young (1992) conducted a quantitative and descriptive examination of the nature of these exceptional, bonded relationships as compared to reportedly average relationships. Eighteen couples were assessed using a relationship questionnaire created by Young, a Personal Orientation Inventory, and open-ended questions. Nine couples were in the bonded group, 9 couples were in the comparison group, and 5 of the couples were from Hines's original group. All data were analyzed using *t*-tests. The study did indeed confirm the existence of the phenomenon of bonded couples and showed significant difference between the bonded couples and the comparison group. The phenomenon of bonded couples provided evidence of a transcendent element, a third and mysterious variable that operates in certain relationships.

Achterberg (1998) was an original member of Hines's group and reported that she and her partner had an exceptional and bonded relationship. Due to her involvement with the group,

and building on the research conducted by Young (1992), Achterberg (1998) took the concept operationalized it, and further defined the term. She thus coined the term *uncommon bonds* and postulated that this type of union or merging “grounds the esoteric concept of ‘the one’” (p. 10) and that the telling of the story of uncommon bonds creates a “new myth for relationships that involves the evolution and transformation of our being” (p. 10). Achterberg’s concept of an uncommonly bonded relationship is grounded in the basic assumption of many spiritual and religious traditions and scriptures that postulate that all people and all living beings are interconnected, commonly bonded, and considered one. As such, each action and each thought within the web of interconnectivity impacts the flux of occurrences in the universe at large. This web or matrix is sometimes referred to as God, the Source, the Universe, or love. Achterberg asserted, however, that even among the interconnectivity of all, some relationships have the exceptional and powerful ability to “mold us, shape us, and bring us to our truths and to our own divinity and often to our knees” (p. 4). It is this type of relationship—be it between a parent and child, siblings, friends, or romantic partners—that she refers to as uncommon bonds. This term is used not because these types of relationships are rare but because they are “uncommonly recognized and appreciated” (p. 4). These relationships transcend gender, bloodlines, and kinship. However, of all the different types of relationships, she holds that the intimate mate relationships are the richest and the most fulfilling because they include the possibility of bonding on every level, mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical. Achterberg believes that uncommon bond relationships are an “increasingly pervasive evolutionary trend that is necessary to wholesome family life and even to survival” (p. 5). She hypothesizes that, if the relationship, regardless of how challenging, is perceived as transcending the mundane and difficult aspects of

staying alive, then individuals, couples, and families will be less abusive and more authentic and loving toward one another.

According to Achterberg (1998) uncommon bonds appear to have two main characteristics. The first is that the relationship, much like a spiritual practice, shapes and transforms the souls of the partners in the relationship. She calls this process “soul crafts soul” (p. 5). She wrote that this soul work is akin to polishing a diamond in the rough and that the work, in addition to being blissful, is often arduous and dark. She wrote,

Relationships that are oriented toward the soul cannot necessarily be judged in terms of their so-called psychological or functional health, or whether they make people feel better or worse, heal inner childhood wounds or inflict new ones, or last a weekend or a life. That is not the point of such relationships. (Achterberg, 1998, p. 5)

Oftentimes, these soul-crafting relationships can be painful, trying, and heartbreaking. The relationships may or may not follow a conventional trajectory of time, as the couple may break up and get back together often and/or the relationship might simply end as needed.

The second feature of an uncommon bond is that it has a transpersonal direction and contains transcendent and transpersonal elements. Achterberg (1998) cited several examples of transpersonal factors that could fulfill the transpersonal criteria for an uncommon bond, such as certainty that the relationship appears destined, the relationship frequently being described as resulting from grace and involving parapsychological or paranormal events, synchronistic occurrences, and nonlocal psychic communications that defy rational laws of time and space. The uncommon bond relationship is usually perceived by the individuals within it as extraordinarily unusual and qualitatively different from any previously known or experienced relationship. A lifetime commitment was not a necessary requirement for uncommonly bonded couples studied by Achterberg. The couples within the group reported that the complex aspects of the relationships were not sufficiently addressed by the psychotherapeutic paradigm because

psychology did not have a model or language for the spiritual connections between beings. Even the term *soul mate* failed to capture the essence of the couple's experiences and was found to be superficial and limiting.

Achterberg (1998) noted several other variables that are common to uncommon bonds. Most couples reported a sense of "being cut from the same cloth" (p. 8) and the feeling of being distantly related and even of having inhabited the same body in a previous lifetime. The couples shared a unique energetic exchange that was not felt on an interpersonal level, but rather on a transpersonal level. The couples reportedly are very engaged in spiritual practices that are considered essential to their lives and to their well-being. The relationship itself is also viewed by some as the highest form of spiritual practice. The couples' physical attraction and erotic intrigue with one another sustain itself over the course of a lifetime together as they both experience intense highs and lows of ecstasy and despair. Separation from one another feels like a death. While there is an acknowledged and non-pathological need for one another, the individuals within the couple each have a healthy sense of self and have individuated before coming together. They both recognize, however, that they cannot go any further on their journey alone and that traveling in mutuality will take them where they need to go. The relationship is not necessarily about having a good marriage in the conventional sense. The power of the bonded relationship is such that it transcends the personal level of the self with all of its neuroses, addictions, obsessions, insecurities, sorrows, and inevitable pitfalls of aging. The uncommon bond is an immanent manifestation of a transpersonal romantic relationship that explores the experience of embodied mutual transcendence.

The uncommonly bonded couple usually share work and service and serve a worldly purpose together, usually in the helping professions. Achterberg (1998) reported that the couples'

vocational interests typically initially brought them together, and they share a vision for social and global change. There is very little distinction between work and play, and the two come together easily. An indescribable “something” that is particular and unique is created as a result of the union. The nature of the relationship has implications that span far beyond the microcosmic lives of the couple involved. It was felt by individuals in the group that, through their relationship, they were participating in the evolution of consciousness and creating a new paradigm for relationships.

Brown (2000) wrote a heuristic dissertation on his experiences in a self-assessed uncommonly bonded relationship with a woman he calls Sarah. The dissertation details the saga of the relationship and the components that he contended fulfill the criteria for an uncommonly bonded union. While most of his observations and critiques are similar to Young’s (1992) and Achterberg’s (1998), what is relevant to this study is that Brown (2000) described the feeling and experience of being in love as containing a sense of magic. His experience of being in love is described as being inexplicably complete and outside any sense of time. He asserted that there are strong qualitative differences between different intimate relationships and that “not all love is created equal” (p. 3). Brown’s experiences with love informed him that certain intimate relationships are the essence of spiritual life, a pathway to the divine and the “godself itself” (p. 3).

Brown (2000) reported that what made his relationship significantly different and contributed to a felt sense of divinity was that he and Sarah experienced and perceived “numerous signs and symbols that have been manifest around and between us, compelling the conclusion that providence played a role in bringing us together and sustains our connection (p. 3). Brown’s narrative about his relationship with Sarah contains references to many

transpersonal factors that appeared to bring the two together. Brown and Sarah each had their own separate and compelling chain of synchronistic events and flashes of intuition that led them to be at the same place at the same time where they initially met, and both reported having an instantaneous connection upon first sight. They both reportedly experienced transcendent and unitive states of consciousness as a result of their union, and they felt a feeling of wholeness. They shared a visceral sense of knowing that both of their deceased relatives, a grandfather and a cousin, had helped bring the two of them together. Brown and Sarah reported uncanny similarities between the histories of their lives and shared many deep-rooted interests that ranged from spirituality to politics. The signs and symbols that appeared on the journey of their relationship included symbolic songs playing on the radio at opportune times, feathers appearing at synchronistic moments, and viewing license plates that were out of the norm and somehow relevant to their relationship at that particular instant. Brown (2000) wrote that he saw and experienced hundreds of clear symbols. The relationship ended after approximately a year's time and each gained what she or he considered to be an invaluable amount of growth from the experience. This case provides excellent examples of some of the transpersonal elements that people report as contributing to bringing people together in love.

The distinctions between the soul mate phenomenon and the uncommon bond phenomenon seem somewhat tenuous. The two phenomena overlap in many ways, and perhaps these terms are two different ways of articulating more or less the same thing. What distinguishes uncommon bonds, however, is an awareness by both partners that their union is in part powered by the need to be of service together to the world. The uncommonly bonded relationship is viewed as a necessary agent for growth and as an agent to create a shift on the individual level, as well as on the collective level. Additionally, the description of the uncommonly bonded



relationship places less emphasis on life-long commitment than does that of the soul mate relationship, as uncommonly bonded relationship can be temporary and intentionally fleeting. These phenomena are significant to this study because there appears to be a high potential for transpersonal variables (e.g., synchronicities, intuition, past life memories) to manifest in the courtship between individuals who have a felt sense of meeting a soul mate or of being in an uncommonly bonded union.

### *Conclusion*

All of the literature reviewed is relevant because this study investigated phenomena that have not previously been researched within mainstream psychology. Little transpersonal research exists that explores the transpersonal components of love, courtship, commitment, or marriage. Thus, this study expanded upon the range of experiences that are considered transpersonal, operationalized and framed mate selection within a transpersonal context, produced an articulation of the more subtle and spiritual components of deciding to marry a partner, and subsequently broadened the field. Additionally, the study explored phenomena that many people in the general population experience, as reflected by the enormous popularity of self-help literature and popular culture references in television, film, and music to the magic and mystery of love, soul mates, and marriage that either implicitly or explicitly pertain to transpersonal dimensions of relationships. Individuals appear to be experiencing these transpersonal phenomena in connection to their romantic partners, and this study provided a scholarly platform for the experiences to be more publically acknowledged.

The literature reviewed reveals that, while there is abundant research available on mate selection, there is also a paucity of research that explores the more magical, cosmic, spiritual, or transpersonal aspects that individuals report having sensed as playing an integral part in the

union of two seemingly arbitrary individuals. Evolutionary psychology perceives mate selection to be determined by biology, the structures of the brain, and the instinctive drive to procreate. Social psychologists look to patterns of human behavior; they theorize and research the social and more conscious aspects of relationships that include individuals' perceptions of attraction, development of commitment, the self, and love. Popular literature is abundant with love stories and varying interpretations of the transpersonal, spiritual, and the paranormal factors that occur through love and that inspire committed partnerships. However, little scholarly literature is available that discusses transpersonal aspects that could fall under Cowman's (1995) theme of cosmic, transformational, or magical features that bring individuals together. Literature exists on intuition, uncommon bonds, and soul mates, but has yet to be bridged through research to the mate selection literature. Transpersonal psychologists examining all aspects of human experience are informed of the more traditional psychology perspectives and then proceed to use those as a foundation to explore the more transcendent and ineffable phenomena that may not be easily observed in a scientific laboratory. Drawing upon much of the work that had been done by others, this study is a transpersonal approach to mate selection that fills the gap in the literature that attempts to explain human behaviors regarding love and the decision to marry.

### Chapter 3: Research Methods

Based on the fact that there is scant literature available that investigates mate selection from a transpersonal perspective, this researcher chose to conduct a qualitative study that was designed to explore the ineffable, magical, cosmic, or transpersonal factors that individuals report having experienced during courtship and that influenced their decision to marry a particular partner. Creswell's (2007) definition best describes the intention and use of qualitative research for this study:

Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action. (p. 37)

To ensure quality research, the requisite minimum of 18 men and women were interviewed about their transpersonal experiences that occurred and influenced their engagement to their respective partners. The interviews were systematically analyzed using the thematic analysis method described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a "method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Thematic analysis is the research method of choice for this study because it facilitates a rich and in-depth analysis and description of the material (J. Wade, personal communication, October 28, 2008) that yields a list of themes that accurately reflect the participants' experiences and are relatively devoid of theoretical or philosophical perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### *Participants*

Participants were selected based on the following criterion: They reported having had transpersonal factors that influenced their decision to marry their partner. Out the outset of the study, transpersonal factors included, but were not limited to, significant meditative experiences; altered states; dreams; past-life regression or awareness; psychic, oracle, shamanic, tarot card, I-Ching, or any form of divinatory consultation; peak or unitive experiences; out-of-body experiences; holotropic breath work or other breath work; spiritual transformation through death of a loved one; encounters with ghosts or communication with the deceased; transcendent sexual experiences; shamanic journeys; an “aha” moment or other strong sense of intuition; or uncanny synchronicities. Altered states while on a substance were screened for and excluded from this study. This list was in no way definitive, and the researcher acknowledged that participants might present with a transpersonal experience of another variety. If that was the case, the researcher assessed the experience for its transpersonal components by using the criteria set forth within the definition of transpersonal psychology articulated by Hartelius, Caplan, and Rardin (2007). The length of time that these experiences lasted was not a criterion of inclusion or exclusion. The experience may have lasted a second or even a year. What was significant to the study was the degree to which the experience impacted the person and influenced his or her viewpoint or decision about marrying his or her romantic partner. If the person simply reported having a transpersonal experience and the event had no direct or indirect impact on feelings, attitudes, viewpoints, or the decision making process toward marriage, he or she was not selected for participation in the study.

For the purposes of this study, participants, either male or female, had to have been at the time of the study in a heterosexual marriage with the intention of remaining married for the

foreseeable future. An investigation of homosexual unions was beyond the scope of this dissertation. The study investigated the individuals in a marriage and not the couple as a unit. This included separate interviews of both partners of the couple. The study sought 18 participants and aimed to interview an equal number of men and women (9 of each gender). If this ratio was not possible the study sought at least 6 participants of one gender. This study intended to ascertain whether or not the phenomenon of transpersonal mate selection occurred all across the board and within the general population. Toward that end, the researcher screened for: 6 participants who self-identified as having a religious background of any type (e.g., Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism); 6 participants who self-identified as spiritual or transpersonal but not religious; and 6 participants who identified with neither a religion nor a spiritual paradigm. The purpose of this three-part participant pool was to glean information as to whether the phenomenon of transpersonal mate selection would emerge or not regardless of any pre-existing spiritual beliefs and to facilitate an investigation that would generate results that do not apply only to the small and specific segment of the population that already subscribes to a transpersonal way of being.

Participants had to be above the age of 25 at the time of the study and the criteria excluded people who had become engaged or married during their teenage years. While levels of development, maturity, and reflective thought were not formally assessed, the age criterion was enacted to screen for participants with a higher level of maturity, for whom mate selection was a more discretionary choice or one made from a field of possible candidates. Individuals in or embarking upon second or third marriages were included. Additionally, participants were required to speak English fluently so that language was not a barrier to communication. It was anticipated that the majority of participants would reside in the San Francisco Bay Area where

the researcher attends school or in the Los Angeles area where the researcher resides; however, the study did not exclude participants who lived elsewhere. Additionally, the study was open and available to people from all different racial, ethnic, spiritual, and religious backgrounds.

### *Recruitment*

Participants were recruited through a number of means. Fliers were posted in various locations (e.g., coffee shops, yoga studios) throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles. Emails were sent detailing the study and participation requirements to several transpersonal schools, such as the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology, John F. Kennedy University (JFK), California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), Wisdom University, and Naropa University. The study was advertised on the Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay Area Craig's List website, in addition to being posted on internet message boards such as on Meetup.com, and the institutions mentioned above, the forum *Shift in Action* on the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) website, as well as on the Byron Katie Institute for the Work online forum. The study was advertised on the East-West Bookstore website. Additionally, snowball e-mail recruitment was employed through the researcher's personal and professional networks. The researcher set an intention that individuals of excellent caliber who met the criteria and had extraordinary transpersonal stories and insight would become aware of the study and participate in it.

The fliers and e-mails advertising the study did not explicitly use the word *transpersonal* to describe or entitle the research because this term is not in the vernacular and is often unclear to most people. Words such as spiritual, magical, extraordinary, supernatural, mystical, psychical, paranormal, peak experiences, and divine intervention were utilized instead. However, the word transpersonal was included amongst the other qualifiers in case participants did have familiarity

with transpersonal psychology. The e-mails and fliers included a list of possible experiences that would qualify for the study (see Appendix D).

The solicitations for the study required that individuals respond via telephone, and the researcher determined whether individuals qualified for the study by asking a series of screening questions over the telephone (see Appendix B). Questions regarding age, ethnicity, religious and spiritual background, and length of marriage were asked in addition to requesting an account of the transpersonal experience that influenced the decision to marry. After the completion of the screening questionnaire, candidates who did not meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria were immediately informed that they did not qualify for the study.

#### *Procedure*

Individuals who qualified were contacted by telephone or email and a specific date and time for the interview was arranged. The interviews took place either in the Spiritual Guidance room at the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, California, or at designated locations in Los Angeles. The choice of location for the interviews was intended to foster an intimate environment that allowed greater access to the individual's sense of the transpersonal factors inherent in her or his story. All interviews were done in person to ensure maximum rapport and to help the researcher understand the participant as fully as possible.

Prior to the interview, the selected participants were sent through email a list of five questions (see Appendix G) that they were instructed to read and answer on the day of the interview in order to activate and prime their senses of and memories about their transpersonal experiences. This preinterview exercise was intended to enrich the depth and the quality of the content and process of the interviews.

The interviews were semi-structured and the questions asked were about the specific transpersonal experience or event that occurred during the participant's courtship of the person who became his or her eventual spouse. Other questions about the participants' spiritual or religious practices and the frequency of occurrences of transpersonal phenomena in their lives were also asked (see Appendix E). After the participants shared their transpersonal experiences the interviewer asked them to take a deep breath and tap specific points on the body such as knees, chest, and shoulders (bodily locations similar to those used in the Emotional Freedom Technique). They were then asked to repeat their story a second time, and then a third time, in this manner. According to Pearson (personal communication, October 20, 2009), this tapping and iteration method would have helped the participants to go beyond their rehearsed story of their experience and facilitated a visceral and sensorial deepening and retelling of their memories. Thus, with each iteration, it was observed by this researcher, they indeed remembered more details that enriched the data. The interviews lasted approximately an hour and a half and were audio-recorded. A few days after the interview, the researcher contacted the participants with a follow-up phone call, asking them if any other details or memories had come to mind since the interview. The follow-up contact gave the participant the opportunity to report any details that may have been forgotten during the interview or that may have surfaced following the meeting.

#### *Treatment of the Data*

Once all the interviews were completed, they were transcribed professionally. The transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement ensuring the anonymity of the participants (see Appendix F). All materials received from the participants, including consent forms and interview transcripts, were coded with a fictitious name (unless participants indicated that was not necessary) to ensure confidentiality and protection of identity. The participant had the option to



select his or her code name or to have the researcher assign one at random. The chosen pseudonym was used in the analysis, the reporting of the findings, and the discussion of the results. As a further protective measure of participants' privacy, all the materials were stored in a locked file drawer and only the researcher had access to the key and the file.

After the interviews were transcribed, the researcher did an overall read of all of the transcripts as one whole unit of data. Next, the researcher placed the transcripts in their respective groups—the religious, the spiritual non-religious, and the non religious/non-spiritual group—and read the data subgroup-by-subgroup. The researcher took notes at this point about any similarities or differences across the three groups. These observations informed the construction of codes and themes and contributed to the discussion of the results. However, it must be noted that the data were coded and analyzed as one whole unit of data, and the researcher did not analyze each subgroup as a unit with the express intent of comparing and contrasting its data with that of the other subgroup units. That review was done in order to ascertain themes that were representative of the whole data set and, thus, could be generalizable to the population at large.

Before this researcher began thematic analysis, she had read the transcripts several times. As per the procedures detailed by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), the thematic analysis involved several steps to create codes, themes, theoretical constructs, and a theoretical narrative. “The coding method is a procedure for organizing the text of the transcripts, and discovering patterns with that organizational structure” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 31). After the overall read, the researcher kept only the relevant text and discarded the rest so as to make the text more manageable to work with. Next, the researcher looked for repeating ideas and variables that appeared relevant to the participants' experiences and to the research question. These were

classified as codes. The researcher created a codebook that detailed the name of the code, a description or definition of the code, indicators or flags, examples and quotes from the transcripts, and exclusions or special conditions (as recommended by Boyatzis, 1998).

At this point in the data analysis, an intercoder agreement check similar to the inter-rater reliability component in quantitative research was conducted to validate the coding process to that point. Toward that end, a colleague was randomly assigned five transcripts and coded them “blind” in order to provide an “external check on the highly interpretive coding process” (Creswell, 2007, p. 210). The intercoder agreement check ensured that the data were not interpreted solely in a vacuum and the interpretation left entirely to reflect the singular subjective viewpoint of the researcher. The results of the external coder’s analysis were then compared with the researcher’s codes for similarities and/or any major incongruencies. The purpose of the intercoder check was to establish agreement between the two coders, and any necessary adjustments reflected in that process were made to the codebook. Consequently, this consensual peer validation enhanced the reliability of the research.

Once it had been confirmed that the codes were indeed reflective of a relatively accurate, albeit subjective, perspective and they had been validated by the outside source, the codes were then classified into themes. According to Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), a theme is “an implicit topic that organizes a group of repeating ideas” (p. 38). The next step involved taking the themes and organizing them into larger, more abstract ideas that are referred to by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) as *theoretical constructs* that may reference, be informed by, or compared to the theories previously articulated in the literature review. In the final step of thematic analysis, the researcher organized the theoretical constructs into a theoretical narrative that summarized what was learned about the research question. The theoretical narrative is “the

culminating step that provides a bridge between the researcher's concerns and the participant's subjective experience" (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 40). For the narrative, this researcher attempted to use as much of the participants' own words as possible. The researcher's theoretical constructs and themes were reflected in italics and parentheses throughout the narrative.

The researcher did not superimpose preformulated themes or ideas onto the data analysis process. Rather, she allowed the themes to emerge as organically as possible from the participants' answers. The researcher included a discussion of the findings that were most significant and/or interesting.

During the data analysis phase, the researcher made every attempt to compartmentalize the objective research as separate from her subjective thoughts and feelings about the data. Toward this end, she kept a journal for reflection on any subjective observations, assumptions, insights, or intuitions she had about the data. The contents of the journal were not included within the report of the study.

#### *Limitations and Delimitations*

As with all research investigations, this study had several limitations. First, this author is currently a student at the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology and aligns her beliefs about reality with the transpersonal school of thought. The author has had two beyond ordinary romantic relationships that are perceived to be of the "uncommon bond" variety that had penetrated and transcended the boundaries of conventional physical and psychological realities. As such, the researcher recognizes that her beliefs in transpersonal phenomena might have biased her attitudes toward the study and the participants' stories and could potentially have limited her objectivity regarding the data collected. This could have impacted the research results in unknown ways, despite every attempt that she had made to remain true to the data even when the

data were disconfirming of these assumptions. The researcher managed this bias by taking steps to articulate her own transpersonal views, experiences, and assumptions in her personal journal before conducting the study, and intentionally bracketed or removed those from the project's data interpretation.

Second, experiencing transpersonal factors in the world is generally not an everyday occurrence, and it was anticipated that it might prove difficult to find participants who had had these transpersonal experiences in the context of mate selection. The ineffable, intangible, and indescribable nature of the content of the study could have proved challenging for some participants accurately to describe. This difficulty in articulating the phenomenon was anticipated to impede upon the data analysis process and potentially to affect the results in unknown ways.

An anticipated potential delimitation of the study was that most of the participants were solicited from the San Francisco Bay Area and from transpersonal institutions that are commonly regarded for their liberal and progressive mentality. This was intentional; however, it influenced the data because some of the participants who responded to the study were narrating their responses to the interview questions from a previously established transpersonal philosophy or a cultural milieu that accepted that philosophy. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable to the population at large. Moreover, because the participants were required to speak English fluently, the results of the study do not generalize across all cultures.

Individuals who were married might have been heavily invested in the commitment to their spouses, and all decisions and beliefs regarding their romance might be filtered through their commitment to this marriage investment. Consequently, it was anticipated that individuals might unknowingly employ certain cognitive processes that continually justified and reinforced

their marital decision. Therefore, at the outset of the study, it was anticipated that participants in the study might report idealized, selective, retrospectively revised memories or self-fulfilling thoughts about their courtship process in order to maintain positive beliefs in the marriage. This was observed throughout the research interviews, and observations in that regard were discussed in the discussion chapter. However, understanding the exact dynamics influencing the marriage story of each participant could never have been fully accomplished, because it was beyond the scope of this investigation.

Finally, the exact nature of the transpersonal experience that the participant reported and where the person and event fall on Wilber's (1993) pre/trans fallacy developmental spectrum of consciousness was ultimately indeterminable. During the recruitment process, the researcher did not screen participants based on the content of the transpersonal experience or on the prevalence of or lack of any spiritual practices. During the interview, the researcher asked questions regarding the participants' spiritual practices and the frequency of occurrence of transpersonal phenomena in their daily life, however this did not provide an indication of the developmental nature of the transpersonal phenomena, and the researcher felt an ethical compulsion purposely to avoid attempting to make any such distinctions. However, it must be noted that the age selection criterion required of participants might have minimized the involvement of people operating from the prepersonal level of awareness. Nevertheless, it was anticipated that the study would collect reports from individuals that included phenomena and experiences that originated from more mysterious and ineffable prepersonal states, as well as from transpersonal states of awareness.

The last point of delimitation acknowledges that, regardless of how real and meaningful the events are for the participants, it is impossible to verify the objective reality of what was

reported in order to establish an ultimate objective truth of the events described. Therefore, it is recognized that the researcher was able to report only on individuals' subjective experiences and interpretations of certain events, not to establish whether such events actually happened or are indications of a supraphenomenological reality.

## Chapter 4: Results

This chapter includes a description of the demographic information of the participants selected for the study, as well as a presentation of the major themes extracted from the interview data through the process of thematic analysis. Participants were given the option to select a fictitious code name in order to ensure confidentiality. Several participants chose not to use a fictitious name and preferred to be referenced by their actual name. A fictional name was also assigned to any individuals mentioned by a participant whose name could potentially compromise the anonymity of the participant and/or the individual mentioned.

### *Description of Sample*

Eighteen people met the selected criteria for inclusion in the study. Of those, 10 were women and 8 were men. Fourteen of the participants recruited were married and 4 were engaged to their partners for lengths of time varying from 1 month to 2 years. The sample included 3 couples, as 6 of the participants interviewed were either married or engaged to another of the research participants; one of the couples was engaged and the other two couples were married. It must be noted that each of these 6 participants was interviewed individually and not as a couple.

Participants' ages ranged from 27 to 69. Only 1 participant was in her 20s at the time of the interview; 5 were in the 30-39 age bracket; 4 participants were in the 40-49 age bracket; 4 participants were in the 50-59 age bracket, and 4 participants were in the 60-69 age bracket. Of the 18 participants, 6 reported being in a second marriage, and 1 male participant was in a third marriage.

Fourteen participants were Caucasian, and, from within those 14, 2 cited being of Pacific Island descent. As for the remaining 4 participants, 1 woman reported her ethnicity as Mediterranean American; 1 man described himself as "mixed," African American and "other"; 1

man described himself as mixed Chinese and Eastern European American; and 1 woman reported her ethnicity as half Latina and half Italian American.

The sample was entirely of American citizenry. One woman holds dual—U.S. and Italian—citizenship. Seventeen of the participants currently live in California, with 12 residing in the San Francisco Bay Area and 5 in the greater Los Angeles area. One participant is a former Los Angeles resident and currently lives in New Mexico.

Regarding the requisite conditions of the study, 6 participants held a religious point of view at the time of their significant experience, 6 participants held a non-religious spiritual/transpersonally based perspective; and 6 participants stemmed from neither a spiritually based paradigm nor a religiously based paradigm at the time of their significant mate-selecting experience. The participants in the religious category reported their religious orientations as based in Muslim/Sufism, Eckankar, Episcopalian, Catholicism, “Charismatic Christianity,” and Judaism (through conversion from Unitarianism). Those in the spiritual/transpersonal category held individualistic and idiosyncratic beliefs that had been informed by a variety of spiritual practices. The individuals who held neither a spiritual nor a religious perspective ascribed to a secular viewpoint that did not orient itself around any type of faith or any beliefs in a god or a higher power.

The sample was entirely of college educated participants. Some participants had completed or were pursuing graduate level and doctoral degrees in various fields, such as filmmaking, social work, business, psychology, and art history.

#### *Thematic Analysis Process*

The transcripts were analyzed as one whole unit and were read several times before the coding process began. As part of the thematic analysis, several iterations of coding were enacted.



Step one involved a process of initial coding whereby the data were broken down into small, discrete, and meaningful units of information that were closely examined and analyzed for similarities, differences, and overlap. These meaning units included all phenomena, as well as significant sensations, beliefs, and feelings. In the second step of the coding process, all similar codes were arranged into categories, often encompassing many subcategories. During this phase, categories were continually refined and streamlined and resulted in a code-book containing 28 codes. These 28 codes were further categorized, selected, or eliminated in the construction of seven themes extracted in order to articulate best the sequence of events observed in the data. Finally, the sequence of themes was then organized to convey the narrative or conceptual schema developed by the researcher. The following is a presentation of the research findings as was delineated through this process.

Additionally, as per the requirements within the methods section, five transcripts were selected at random and were given to a colleague for outside coding and analysis in order that the research could demonstrate intercoder reliability. The psychologist reading the data found similar codes to those that were selected into the final version of the codebook and served as the building blocks for the themes that will be presented below. Agreement was found on general codes and patterns within the data. It must be noted that there were a few variances between the researcher and the intercoder in selection of code names; however, upon further discussion, it was found that, with respect to the general intention of the code and its corresponding exemplary passages of text, the two were in agreement.

### *Themes*

This study sought to investigate the magical, spiritual, cosmic, and transpersonal factors that influenced the decision to marry one's partner. As such, each of the participants cited having

had a specific or otherwise related transpersonal experience or event that had occurred during the courtship of her or his partner that significantly informed the decision to marry him or her. The list of these transpersonal experiences is the first main theme and serves as the foundation for the other themes embedded within this larger category. After the process of coding, categorizing, and organizing for similarity, overlap, or dissimilarity had been completed, it became apparent that 19 different forms of spiritual or transpersonal events/experiences had been reported. Some participants had had more than one transpersonal experience, and several participants cited events of a nature similar to those reported by other participants. Across the sample, repetition of certain experiences across participants was evident. The varieties of transpersonal events or experiences are presented below. One or two exemplary quotes are provided to demonstrate the nature of each phenomenon. Some participants' exemplary experiences are purposely included in the discussion of later themes.

#### *The Varieties of Transpersonal Experiences*

*Synchronicities.* Synchronicities, appearing in a variety of different forms, were prevalent in 16 accounts. This is the largest and most multi-faceted transpersonal incidence and encompasses several subthemes. For the purposes of this study, two definitions of the word *synchronicity* are provided: one dictionary definition and the other a definition created by the researcher as a summary of synchronistic findings. The *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* (2005) defines synchronicity as the “coincidental occurrence of events and especially psychic events (as similar thoughts in widely separated persons or a mental image of an unexpected event before it happens) that seem related but are not explained by conventional mechanisms of causality” (p. 1267). Synchronicity is also defined by the researcher as seemingly unlikely

occurrences and events orchestrated by the universe as part of a greater, intelligent plan. These occurrences helped bring the pair together and facilitated a permanent relationship.

The participants interviewed cited a myriad of varying examples that qualify as synchronistic occurrences. Because they include such a wide spectrum of experiences, the category of synchronicities has been broken down into the following different types of synchronicities as they are reflected in reports from the sample of participants.

*Near misses* refer to the awareness of a pair of persons of having literally almost met one another at a specific place and time, while the meeting had not actually occurred.

But there's other things like we both lived in—there's all these near misses. Like we both lived in Boston but at different times, we both—she has a friend who lived right across the street from me—like of all—I mean one of her best friends. Like of all the places any two people can live that don't know each other—you know Kansas and Texas or Bangladesh and Canada or whatever—we just happened to live across the street, my address was 23 and her address was 20 Claim-Oxford . . . There's all these near misses . . . to me the near misses are the weirdest thing and I'm just forgetting a ton. (Frank)

I do believe we were destined to meet, and that if we hadn't met at Northrup we would have met somewhere else. Actually in the last year we uncovered a possibility that we could have almost met before Northrup. We had a close encounter that we could have been in the same place at the same time. So there was this sense of ok, the universe is working with us. Trying to get in alignment here. So our employment turned out to be the alignment. (Moriah)

*Coinciding break-ups* were also mentioned by several participants, who cited that, at the time or close to the time that they met their current husband, wife, or fiancé, they had been in a previous relationship or had recently broken up with an ex. Moreover, the husband, wife, or fiancé was also in a relationship and/or had just come out of one. Four participants and 1 of the married couples (Frank and Elizabeth) reported that, prior to entering into relationship with the person who would become their future husband, wife, or fiancé, both partners ended previous relationships at approximately the same time, and these break-ups were independent of each other and had nothing to do with wanting to date their future spouses.

So for 2 years we were friends, but I knew that I always had an attraction for him, but we had partners. I had my partner and he had his partner, but then we both broke up with our partners. And, coincidence?

*Researcher: Was it near the same time?*

Yeah.

*Researcher: "How soon apart?"*

Pretty much the same month. And we had both been with our partners for many, many years. We thought we were gonna marry them. Many many years. (Connie)

*Synchronicities that led to meeting and/or first date* occurred for some participants:

It was almost Christmas and there were these three holiday parties he told me about, like one two three, bam bam bam. And the one I could go to was on Sunday. . . . So I said I could go to the one on Sunday, and then we started having a problem because all these obstacles came up, like my—it looked like there was a problem with my car, I lost my wallet, I suddenly lost my place to stay. Like I had three possible places to stay and all of a sudden none of them were available. So sometimes that's 'cause you shouldn't go, and then sometimes it's like barriers to keep in your way to challenge you. I'm like, "I'm gonna take it that way." And I was like "I'm gonna go, dammit!" So I didn't actually talk to him till 7 o'clock on Sunday night, and then when I called him I was getting a little freaked out because I'm like gosh, I haven't talked to him all week and all of a sudden I'm supposed to—he knows I'm driving down there about now, and he's not answering the phone. That's so weird. So I called back and I got his—I called back and I realized I got a message and it was him. Like after I left him, a message, I got a message and it was him and then we both realized we had called each other at exactly the same time. And we both had the same reaction, we found out later. We were both like "Oh my God, what's going on, that's so weird." So anyway we connected and I said "Well, I need to stay somewhere, I don't have any place to stay, it's gonna be way too late for me to drive home, can I stay at your place?" And he's like "Oh, sure." (Maya)

I think there were just a bunch of little synchronicities. Things that—the thing about he had heard this woman say this particular word and she didn't know it, and then I used that word the first time we spoke. The fact that I ended up being in a place where I—maybe two years before—couldn't have imagined that I would be. And being set up by this guy who just came up to me and said, you know. (Nadine)

*Bizarre object-related synchronicities* occurred in 3 participants' experiences, 2 of whom—Frank and Elizabeth—are married. The objects involved included a photograph, a calendar, and paintings. The synchronicities seemed highly unusual and triggered reactionary responses exclaiming how bizarre and weird these synchronicities were. Therefore, this subtheme is termed "bizarre" and the accounts speak for themselves.

He was sitting on the couch, I was pulling out the art and saying “Oh, cool.” And then I saw this piece and I said to him, I took it over, I said “Who is the artist of this?” and he said “Me. This is my art, you asked to go through my art closet.” I’m like ok, well people collect other people’s art too. He said to me “I’m the artist” and I was like you can’t be the artist. This is not—this is unreal. He said “Well, what do you mean?” and I just told him that I had gotten a calendar when I was seventeen or eighteen years old. . . . And I taped them on the back of these wicker plates. So that they would kind of stick out of the wall, they would be a little—it was almost like a little mini-frame but it wasn’t—the images weren’t put in a store bought frame. And then I would decorate my walls with them. And when I was moving back from L.A after I had met Robert, I went through those images and I looked at them and I was thinking “I need to pare down on my belongings.” I was moving and just trying to be more selective and I said “Oh, I guess I don’t need these anymore.” I left them. And it turns out that those images were Roberts’s art. He was the artist. And for 4 or 5, 6 years I had been always had those up in my room whatever room I was in, it was my bedroom. I would have those images up on the wall. There were only about three or four of them, and I used to imagine who painted them and who the artist was. I was like wow, that really—there was this resonance with me for the art. So when I told Robert this story, tears were just streaming down my eyes. I said “You and I are meant to meet.” I said this is just too uncanny that I’m meeting you now.  
(Sophie)

*Transpersonal sex*, defined as any sexual experience that transcended the limits of one’s ordinary five senses, as well as the boundaries of one’s usual sense of self as experienced in ordinary states of consciousness, commonly experienced during sexual intercourse, was mentioned by participants who reported having had transpersonal sexual experiences that were qualitatively different from sexual encounters with previous partners.

I mentioned that our initial sexual experiences—I would have visions just flash images of places that I’ve never seen before in my life, like—I remember one where I saw myself in a field like almost in the plains in the Midwest and there’s a house there, a little house . . . and the place that he’s never been before either. They’re not my memories, they’re not his memories and they’re so random. Sometimes I would see colors or I would see—and it still happens to this day. Not all the time, only when I’m really relaxed and not in my head. (Daniela)

*Work with a spiritual teacher* was reported by 3 participants who had had, along with their partners, a spiritual teacher who offered significant guidance and insight that directly impacted the course of their relationship with their partners in the direction of marriage. An assumption of this category is that the spiritual teacher embodies a state of consciousness and/or

teachings that are transpersonal in nature and transcend the participants' current levels of spiritual awareness.

My whole relationship with him is a transpersonal experience. . . . There's a lot that transpires between us that's not spoken. . . . Totally influences my life and also feels like it communicates at a level that is transpersonal by definition and in fact his very presence has that effect on me. It changes my state and in his presence, both physical and non physical, I'm able to know more and to perceive more with more clarity and be more fully connected with what's most original within my own being. . . . A lot of time that would be like I'd be standing there, he'd be going from one room or I'd be following him around like a puppy dog or whatever, it'd be this kind of milieu and it was right I think at the time when my, when I really was thinking about wanting to get married to Mary. I was really—it was a burning question. What do I do about this difference? So it was not just happen—certainly it was either coincidence or synchronicity that he said it at that moment. It was on my mind. I may even have been thinking about it at the very moment he said this. Wouldn't be surprised—can't be sure but it wouldn't surprise me 'cause that's the way it always happens with him. And he says virtually over his shoulder, "I like Mary." [pause] "She's a believer." Instantly my question dissolved. (Jamal)

This amazing guy, he was like a shaman. And he wasn't a Ph.D., he was just an amazing shaman. So he started working with both of us, but we also worked with him alone, and I met with him more because I think I had more stuff to work on. So one day I'm in his office and I go "This is not gonna work, she's not good enough for me, she doesn't have a real job." I always thought I'd marry someone like Diane Sawyer. She doesn't earn enough money, she didn't finish college, she's too old. I had a whole list of reasons why this was not gonna work, and I realized on a core level that I was right, that Debra was not good enough for me. And then about a month and a half goes by, and we had a good run, and we're at his house one day, and I'm realizing how loving she was, how unconditional, how gentle, how nurturing, how kind, how compassionate, how beautiful. I realized at the core level how lucky I was to have her. And there it was. I was right either way. I was too good for her, or I was lucky to have her. And I would choose and I was right either way. So I said I'm the one who's going to decide which one I'm going to live in, because I'm right either way. So where do you want to live? And I said I want to live in love. I'm lucky to have her and that's what I did ever since. It was a pretty powerful realization that we are the ones who decide what is true for us. She's not good enough for me, or I'm too lucky to have her, and I was right either way, so where do you want to live? (Matthew)

*Guidance from deceased loved one* was mentioned by 1 participant who described being strongly influenced by guidance from her deceased grandfather. She received communication from him through a medium, a practitioner who communicates with the spirits of deceased people. At the time of meeting with the medium, Connie had been involved with a man whom

she thought she would marry. Based on her grandfather's guidance she broke up with this man and eventually went on to meet her husband.

I always knew my grandfather that passed on was sort of like an angel that was guiding me . . . So I went to see a medium. And it was one of those where you're in a room where people, they only come to you if they have a specific thing, like a message for you. And every single time, my grandparents love to talk to me, and every single time they'd talk to me. So they came up to me and . . . my grandfather said . . . "On the day of your wedding day, it's gonna be a glorious day, promise you. It's gonna be a beautiful, wonderful day." . . . And he said, "but this is not the man you want to marry. Please date other guys. 'Cause this is not the one." He said it a couple of times. Several times. Like he really wanted me to understand to stay away from this guy, to not marry this man, that it wasn't the one, that it was gonna be another man. And that he wanted me to date other people. So that's how that came about. (Connie)

*Sharing a telepathic connection* was mentioned by 2 participants who cited a transpersonal, non-verbal, psychic form of communication and interaction that occurred and that utilized senses greater than the five ordinary ones. This type of connection and communication was found to be unique to interactions with their eventual spouses and had never occurred with anyone else.

When we first starting dating he was actively practicing—he was meditating a lot, he was actively practicing what he called psychism where he was deliberately trying to see auras and deliberately trying to expand his psychic capacities. I have to say he got really good at it. I remember that there was this one moment where we were on the couch, and I just kept thinking about how uncomfortable I was physically and I wanted to move but I wasn't—I didn't say anything. And he literally said, he said "If you want to move just say something." I was like whoa—that's weird. (Daniela)

*Consulting a psychic whose messages came true* was reported by 5 women in the study who had consulted with a psychic about finding their future husband. The psychics foretold what they saw and several used a deck of simple playing cards as part of the reading. In all cases, the participants reported that the psychics' predictions had come true and had provided confirmation about their choice of partner.

I had been to see this psychic before. She's a celebrity psychic. My sister—a different sister, was a celebrity personal assistant for 20 years, so she got to know who all these

people were. And she recommended this woman and I was visiting LA so I went to see her, and first I walked in before she even—before I even had a chance to ask her any questions, she started telling me how this guy . . . and she said “Most of my clients want me to tell them that I see this for them, but I don’t. I see it for you.” And she said he’s about 5’11” and she couldn’t—she kept having trouble seeing his physical appearance. But she described—and I can’t remember all the details but—she said “You’re gonna have it all with this.” She said most people you know, they would like a guy who has a good job, has money, has good romantic, sexual, whatever. I remember all these things. She said, “But you’re gonna have it all with this man,” she said. (Nadine)

All of a sudden just like she said [the psychic]. He said everything I had ever wanted to hear and like I mentioned to you this turned out to have been 3 years later. And I have heard that that’s the toughest thing for psychics to read is time. But then I had long since forgotten about it. I did think after a year—maybe it was a year and 3 months. But I had forgotten about it by 3 years. But I didn’t think about it till quite a while later when I went back and had listened to the tape and was blown away when I listened to it again- it was like whoa. And then I realized she had accurately described those two people neither of us had met yet while we were—when she told me who we were gonna be with, and it was very very right on. That funny little lady. (Sandy)

*Consulting an oracle for guidance* was reported by 2 women participants who had consulted an oracle for guidance regarding marriage. An oracle is categorized distinctly from a psychic in order to highlight the difference in modalities. *Oracle* is referenced in this study to describe an inanimate, non-sentient object, used *by the participant* and not accessed through a third party, to communicate with Spirit or the divine and foretell the current and future circumstances. Examples of oracles used in the sample include the I-Ching, the Runes, and the Bible. In all cases, the messages from the spirit, appearing at that specific moment in time, were revelatory for the participants and provided necessary clarification about their choice in partner.

One of the things I always liked about the Runes, I like they’re—they’re kinda my favorite thing of that sort. And what I like about them is that they don’t directly answer your questions. Typically they up-level your questions, so what I noticed was when I asked—“Is this person Mr. Right?” kinda thing—the way it would say yes was— “Yes there is much work to be done with this person.” [Laugh] And so I guess the message I got from that was this is the right work, this is—what we’re working on—is not an indication that this is the wrong partner it’s what this person and I are together to work on. (Sandy)



So we were talking about this on my bed and I said “You know, sometimes I flip through the Bible and ask the Bible a question and just open it to any page, kind of like an oracle to ask for guidance, so do you want to do that right now and ask for guidance?” It was very spontaneous. And he said “Yeah, let’s do that.” So we said a little prayer, just to ask for guidance, and I opened the Bible and I looked down at the page, and the first thing I read was “She is like a bride, dressed for her wedding day.” And I think it was in Isaiah, and it was talking about the state of Israel, getting married, but obviously of all the scriptures, so I couldn’t believe it. I was just like “Are you kidding me?” So he was laughing and I felt like it was a done deal. (Katharine)

*Awareness of a past life connection* was reported by 10 participants who expressed the possibility of having shared a past life with their partner. Some participants referred to the possibility and others articulated this possibility with certainty. Awareness of a past life connection is based on a belief in reincarnation and refers to the participants having a subjective sense of having lived previous lives in previous times in history and in different countries and cultures. The participants believe that, during those past lifetimes living while embodied as someone else, they had known and shared a relationship in some capacity with their current partners from this lifetime: “It’s almost like lifetimes beforehand we’ve known that we were gonna be here with each other in this time, in this place in the world” (Michael).

The main thing would be the birthing workshop that I did, the pre- and perinatal psychology based on Lee Castaliga’s work . . . And that’s when I worked with the whole twinning issue. Apparently 40% of all pregnancies start off as twins. It’s pretty high. And so people who lose twins in early stages of the pregnancy have a real particular set of issues. Mostly because they don’t know that they’ve lost a twin . . . So that’s what I discovered, that I’d lost a twin. And it had been a boy . . . This whole really shocking trauma happened. And it felt like we were both being stabbed and one of us had to go. And there was actual discussion, like ‘Who’s going to survive this family better?’ And it was definitely not him because my father was gonna go much easier on a girl than a boy. So then he left. And I started to experience the loss of that. But then I realized—“Hey, wait. I think that’s Michael. I think that’s Michael.” So then I started to realize that, it started to make sense. I just would lay there and look at him at night and go “Why does he look like he’s related to me?” And then I would—when I was away from him, I would expect him to look a certain way, and when I would meet him I’d be like “Why doesn’t he look like I expect?” Like I carried this image of him. And then when I would see him again, I would—I would have to adjust. So that’s the answer there, there were certain things that started to make a lot of sense about it. Like just the physical connection. Just the way we’d sleep together. It was like we were really reconnecting in a very deep way

in the beginning. Oh and then the food. The food, we like the same foods. Thirty pounds later that's been a bit of a problem. Same weaknesses. It's kind of funny . . . I always knew that my father had had a car accident. And for some reason—he broke his arm, and for some reason I didn't realize that that was when my mother was pregnant with me. I didn't make that connection until she told me about it. Until I asked her and she said “Yeah, 8 weeks is when I had the accident.” And she said “But you were fine.” And I was like “Yeah, right.” He wasn't fine though. One of us left . . . Well we have that past life connection for sure. (Maya)

But I did go to the New Living Expo, and I went to a past life regression workshop. And I remember the instructions were to focus on a particular individual in your life, and I had this knowingness about him. I remember the first time I explored a past life with him at that workshop, I got an image of living in France. And I could see this small house, it was a little bit bigger than a cottage, but it was a small house, and I could tell there was a lot of land around the house. And I saw the two of us standing in the front yard. And what is interesting is that later on I saw the picture of the cottage with the woman with her hair in a bun and the skinny guy with the pitchfork and I said “Oh, that looks just like us!” and I had seen the dream, had the waking dream first, so I saw the place that we lived, I saw us standing together in the yard. And there was a sense of a great love. And I was kind of short and plump and I wore my hair in a bun and he was tall and thin. And there was just this sense of—it was a really good life. We really enjoyed being together. And then later on, after we married, I went to somebody who read the Akashic. And they were at the New Living Expo, the New Age Expo, I think it was called. And I had a session with him, an individual session, and one of the first things he said was “You and your husband have had a life together in France.” And that was my confirmation of ok, somebody else is getting this as well. And then I actually had another psychic that said that to me too. So I had two psychics tell me the same thing, and I didn't reveal anything. I was very careful about being very close-lipped in any of those, and not leading them on. So that was a little confirmation for me that ok yeah, we had something there together. (Moriah)

*Manifesting a mate* was mentioned by 3 participants who proactively engaged in specific practices with the intention of bringing the partner of their dreams into their lives. While they were single and seeking their life partners, Maya, Matthew, and Nadine each wrote a list of qualities and characteristics—specific details, as well as emotional essences—that they would like their spouse to embody. They practiced visualization exercises, envisioning their imaginary mate; Nadine said daily affirmations that she believed helped her to love and accept herself more fully and helped her open up to allowing her husband to come into her life. (See Appendix H for

Matthew and Nadine's processes for manifesting a partner.) Maya reported "That's when I wrote my manifesto—my "man"-ifesto, pretty much I got everything that I was looking for with him."

I had done a visualization about 2 and a half years before I met her. And in this visualization I wrote down the kind of woman I wanted, the qualities of a relationship I wanted, how we'd fit together, how we'd push through issues, how we would discuss things. I described her hair, her body type, the shape of her breasts, and when I met her, a while afterwards, about a year and a half afterwards I showed her the visualization and she gasped because I had described her as I was looking at her. And she did the same thing, around the same time, exactly the same year, and it was the same thing, she described me to a T. (Matthew)

*Having a vision* was reported by 1 participant—a vision in which she saw images that were out of her ordinary range of sight that were accompanied with profound and visceral feelings. Wade (2004) described visions as "subjective, nonvolitional imagery superimposed on the here and now and experienced by someone with intact ego boundaries" (p. 275). In this study, the vision foreseen was a premonition of the arrival of Daniela's fiancé and contributed to a confirmation of right partner choice.

What came over me was an image. But also a feeling that came with the image and I saw a man that later on when I met Steven, he meets the description. In my vision he doesn't look exactly like it but it was really nebulous in my vision anyway, so in the feeling was just so strong—it was a feeling of someone that I knew that I didn't that I hadn't met yet. It was someone, that I felt like a part of me I guess . . . He met, if you put that description next to him you would be like wow, there's—you can't ignore it . . . I think I probably had stomach flip or something—just something somatic like—what—and I actually told him about it because it hit me so hard—just the likeness to that description, that I was like, I know it's only the first date, I know I probably shouldn't get too excited about this, but I have to tell you that this is just too weird. And he had the same reaction that I did. He was like this is incredible, that's crazy [laughing] and then later—but of course I still tried to keep a little skepticism about it but then as time went on it just—I settled into it—I was like "of course of course" [laughing]. (Daniela)

*Experiencing an awakening of consciousness* was reported by 1 participant who fell into the category of having neither religious nor spiritual beliefs at the time of significant transpersonal experience and who described a profound and spontaneous awakening experience. According to Costeines (2009),

The awakening of consciousness initiates the dismantling of egoic structures of perception, which leads to the permanent stage of nondual consciousness. At the outset, nondual consciousness can be defined as the stage in which consciousness no longer constructs a separate self through identification with the body, mind, or any other phenomenon. (pp. 3-4)

Feeling as if I'm not a body. I'm just something that's moving through limitless space. My awareness at this point in time from the external world around me was completely shut off. I was completely within my mind. Yet seeming as if I was totally out of the body. And even though I couldn't discern a particular direction of movement there was just the awareness of movement. And I was aware that there was awareness of no thinking, there was just this experience. But then I also became aware that a thought occurred. A thought came up followed by another thought and these two thoughts pulled me back into bodily awareness and the mind started running again trying to analyze what happened; instead of just letting it happen without thinking about it, suddenly I was trying to figure it all out and the mind was off to the races again. But the first thought that came up was—it wasn't spoken in the first person, it was as if something else was speaking to me. "You're going to see God" and the next thought was—my answer— "but I don't believe" but what was actually said was— "but you don't believe in God." Which, at that point in time, was true. That point in time I was agnostic on a good day atheist on a bad day. And so the mind starting going again: what it was thinking was—first of all— what just happened? It was the awareness that, by just bringing my attention to the breath and letting my mind get still, something changed. And with that I fell asleep . . . And my view of all sensation was of being much, much larger. And the thought that came to me was "I'm not angry. I'm not mad at anyone." It was like—I don't think I put words to the underlying realization, which was that we're all one. It was probably a couple of years later before I was able to see that ah yeah—I really felt connected. I knew that I couldn't make a judgment about something else without intrinsically making that judgment about myself because—we're one. (Jon)

Before the experience Jon reported, he had been chronically depressed and angry. After the awakening, he said, his "burden was released" and he experienced a blissful shift in awareness. His shift in consciousness allowed him to have a clear knowing that there was no reason for him to wait to marry his girlfriend.

*Receiving direct instruction from a transpersonal source to marry one's partner* was reported by 3 participants who received direct instructions from sources either inside or outside themselves or from a third party with strong intuitive abilities. Sources from within were described as a form of internal guidance perceived as an actual voice.

And so we're leaving the doctor's office and it's latish in the afternoon and we're gonna go up to Romano's Macaroni Grill for dinner and on the way—I heard the same voice that said “Be cool” and wanted to know why I still wanted to be sad, said “Well, what are you waiting for? and “You've known for a couple of years now that you're not going to ever look for anyone else. You're hers so long as she'll have you [laughing]. I—I can't honestly say that I remember the exact words that I used, but it was along the lines of “What are you waiting for? (Jon)

And at a certain point, 'cause I was contemplating every day and asking for guidance, I was told inwardly, and this was not a voice like I told you about before, this was an inner knowing like a voice inside me. And it took about a week and a half to kind of get a full understanding of it, but I was told that if I did not marry Debra, my spiritual and emotional progress would halt for a time: till then and until the wheel came back around and you get back on again. And it was my choice. I didn't have to marry her, but that would be the repercussion; and I said I don't want to stop growing emotionally and spiritually, so we ended up getting married 2 years to the day on which we met. (Matthew)

*Asking and praying to God/Spirit* was mentioned by 4 participants who shared that they came to a point in their lives where they no longer wanted to be single; they were ready to be with a life partner they believed existed. As such, they explicitly asked God to bring the right romantic partner into their lives.

That kind of leads me to this poem, which I would love to read. And I do remember that when I was going to college, before I went to Northrup, it might have even been a few months before, I was tired of the dating: “I want to settle down with somebody, Spirit; can you bring me somebody?”

*Researcher: “Oh, so you asked?”*

I asked. And that's the name of the poem.

### *I Asked*

I asked God for you  
 In the greatest depth of my loneliness  
 I asked for you  
 My friend, my partner, my soul mate  
 Your laughter is my joy  
 God gave me you  
 In my darkest nights  
 I am comforted by you  
 In my naked rawness  
 I am held by you  
 Looking into your eyes

I am heard by you  
 Laying by your side  
 I am healed by you  
 I asked, and I was blessed by you  
 God gave me love

This is really the essence of how I feel. (Moriah)

*Significant or prophetic dream about the relationship* was reported by 3 participants who said they had significant dreams, before they met their spouses or during the courtships, that either provided guidance about the relationship or helped contributed a sense of certainty about their mate literally being the one they had always dreamed of.

But I had had a dream about 5 years before I met my husband now. And I had this dream that was just very intense and very real. And it's very clear to me that it was him that was in that dream . . . While I was dating him, getting to know him, I definitely remember the dream and felt that he felt the same way as this man in the dream. And it seemed very likely that it was that per—that this was who I was dreaming about. (Nadine)

And then when I went to sleep that night I found myself in a parking lot. And usually when I have these dreams of these empty, vacant places, there's something auspicious and significant about it. I look ahead and I see that there are these two Tibetans, so I get in my car and I start going towards them, moving towards them. They both stood parallel to each other and held their arms straight out, and opened their arms, like they were opened as if they were going to hug somebody. But as they opened and their arms reached the full length of the spread, I felt myself fall back, and everything became dark. And I just kept falling and falling. And it went for hours. I had the experience of falling for hours and hours. And I just knew that was in a way telling me, now is your chance to be human. To really experience the earth, to be incarnated fully. And I woke up and she was there next to me, and it was really significant. So that was something that led me to then tell my ex-wife not to come back. (Mark)

*Asking for and receiving a sign* was mentioned by 2 participants who felt a strong and innate need to receive a sign from spirit or God that could serve as concrete evidence that the person they were dating would be the right person for them to marry. Both Matthew and Katharine said it was imperative that they have their sign before they could proceed further. The signs served as confirmation and granted permission to marry.

I remember saying something to him like “I don’t want to make the same mistake that my mother made,” which was marrying a man that she was not meant to be with. And that I wanted to get guidance from God. And the way that I put it at the time was that I wanted to get permission to marry him from God. To know that it was meant to be, that we were supposed to get married, so that if there were problems in the future, I could look back on that as a touchstone and know that I had been given permission, that this wasn’t a mistake. That this wasn’t just me, desperate to make it work. So we were talking about this on my bed and I said “You know, sometimes I flip through the Bible and ask the Bible a question and just open it to any page, kind of like an oracle to ask for guidance, so do you want to do that right now and ask for guidance? . . . Totally believing that I would get my sign, I wasn’t going to get married without one, so there was no negotiation there. Either I would keep waiting for my sign, or I would get my sign. (Katharine)

*Sensing a ghost-like presence* was reported by 1 participant couple. Frank and Elizabeth both reported that, at the beginning of their relationship, soon after Frank’s father passed away, they both felt a ghost-like presence in Frank’s bedroom. The presence of this ghost created an intense atmosphere within their relationship and served to bring them closer together.

That night there was this—. . . it was almost like, picture this classic angel looking down and it wasn’t wings, it was like this flowy whiteness, but it wasn’t like a—I wasn’t sure what it was and it was—I didn’t see like I see this lamp in front of me or I see you—I saw it like—I can’t even explain it but it was definitely there—and I don’t walk around saying oh there’s this—I just told these stories where there are these things, but that’s not—I don’t walk around seeing things. . . . But it was really almost like watching over or satisfied that it’s work had been done. I’m saying it’s a her because it seemed like a her and it was so weird, it was just weird. (Frank)

And then we felt like at the beginning of our relationship there was a female spirit who was present during our first week together. What her presence meant exactly I’m not sure but I never had that with anybody else where a supernatural or a different part of the world came together. And I like—I said it’s kinda hard to put into words but I feel like it was meaningful that she was there. Almost maybe like a blessing. But I don’t know who she was or where she came from. (Elizabeth)

*Out-of-body experiences* were reported by 2 participants. An out-of-body experience (OBE) is the perception, sensation, and experience of being outside of one’s physical body while still retaining an “intact sense of ego in the here and now” and still maintaining a “personal sense of self and agency” (Wade, 2004, p. 274). Out-of-body experiences are often described as floating above one’s body and observing the self from that vantage point. Two participants,

reported having left their physical bodies and that these OBEs influenced their relationships with their spouses.

It started with the out-of-body experiences. I was living in my car at the time. I was totally alone, up in the mountains. And sometimes she would come to me in out-of-body, and I could always tell the difference when it was a dream or out-of-body. And these were not dreams, these were out-of-body experiences where I was very aware of what was happening. It was very vivid, the recall is in the regular part of my memory, I remember it like it was an actual event, it's not fleeting or fading. . . . And then the next morning, I get this message and it's about her experience. And so she had one. And she said that after she had said this thing where "No, I can't go to him tonight, he'll have to come to me," that she felt herself lift out of her body and that my voice was with her and I was guiding her to this bright planet, like a star planet. And it was like a spinning ball of light. And she said we were moving towards it but she couldn't see me, she could only feel my presence and hear me and see it. But that's where we were moving towards and we were moving together. And it was at that moment that we had both decided we're gonna definitely be together forever. It's beyond—for us, it doesn't end with physical death in any way. The body experience alone isn't enough. We get so much out of it, but it goes beyond that, as well. (Mark)

It felt great to realize that I'd been a selfish oaf. It was like, it was like a burden had been released. I don't have to know what anything means—thank god. I called up Kathleen and she's like hey—and I'm like hey—you're not gonna believe what happened. I had this crazy out of body experience last night and I woke up this morning and, I don't know—I feel different. I'm just not mad at anybody. She said—"That's great—now what time you coming over?" (Jon)

*Out-of-character* experience refers to the experiences of several participants unintentionally enacting behavior that was fundamentally out of their character—that they had never done before. *Out of character* experiences also include atypical feeling states and atypical environmental circumstances. Participants who experienced themselves doing or saying something out of character or feeling a state of consciousness that was highly unusual to them reported that this experience created an opening that allowed their burgeoning relationship to develop in a greater way.

I'll just say that first week when we had the presence and we were transitioning kinda in that luminal space I mean I had—wouldn't say I had had a ton of relationships, but that relationship's beginning was much more intense than previous relationships and, by intense, I just mean highly charged, like almost as if the air could be lit with a flame or



something—and I don't mean like passion it's more just like—it just felt more intense like more was at stake—it was more or less dangerous because it was more meaningful, and then maybe that's what the presence was there for—to add kinda the element of. . . . it was just super intense. (Elizabeth)

And we had decided beforehand that neither one of us really wanted to get married until we were in our 30s. So at this point we were 27, and when I moved out of the apartment after we broke up, I told him that I wouldn't move back in until I had a ring on my finger, that I wasn't interested in getting back into this sort of never-ending, go-nowhere relationship. And I don't even know at the time why I said that. I really wasn't the type of person to want to get married. (Katharine)

*Awareness of death* was mentioned by 2 participants who had encounters with death that influenced their relationship, each in different ways. For Frank, it was the death of his father that coincided precisely with his future wife's birthday. This was significant to the initiation of their relationship and the way it unfolded. The death of his father transformed the way in which he saw his life.

My dad died on her birthday which is—now I'm not saying that these are things that made me say that's the one for me—but I'm saying that I probably read a lot—I took a lot more away from the connection than I might have otherwise. I mean, a lot of people's birthdays are around the day my dad died or whatever. . . . my whole purpose of not telling her about the death is because I didn't want her to think every year on her birthday—maybe I knew we were gonna get together or something. I didn't want her to think—that's the day—its like that's like a solemn day every year. . . . When my dad died, there was sort of this thing lifted from my shoulders in a way—it made me kinda focus on my life and say ok, what are the things I'm doing—am I just doing to—so other people can see them and be impressed by them or whatever. So I'm just saying that because that may be a reason why I felt like I could be out with people on the day—think of—it's like your dad—it's half your DNA and the person who raised you and dies on that day and I didn't tell anybody. (Frank)

Jon had two significant brushes with death: he was held up at gun-point, and he was diagnosed with a rare form of thyroid cancer. Both experiences, in conjunction with his awakening experience, changed his normal way of reacting and responding to such immediate life and death stressors and created an opening whereby he seized the opportunity to marry his long-term girlfriend.

She shows up and she's breaking down in the doctor's office. I know there's no reason to be sad. It's easier to say to her "Honey everything's gonna be ok" and mean it. And she found that confidence comforting. And because she did, it's just that the connection between us was—how deeply she was concerned about me. . . . The overriding sense was just her sadness for me. . . . so yeah, so much potential . . . and so we're leaving the doctors office and it's late-ish in the afternoon and we're gonna go up to Romano's Macaroni Grill for dinner and on the way—I heard the same voice that said "Be cool" and wanted to know why I still wanted to be sad, said "Well, what are you waiting for?" and "You've known for a couple of years now that you're not going to ever look for anyone else. You're hers so long as she'll have you [laughing]. I can't honestly say that I remember the exact words that I used, but it was along the lines of "What are you waiting for?" (Jon)

Following the above discussion of the list of the transpersonal experiences found in the sample is a presentation of the six major themes identified through thematic analysis. The themes are presented through the conceptual schema this researcher constructed from the data. A conceptual schema "ties the data together, answers the research question, is coherent, and goes beyond the obvious" (Foss & Waters, 2008, p. 3). The patterns and connections analyzed across the whole data set revealed a narrative about the processes of and purpose for transpersonal mate selection. The transpersonal experiences were categorized into six main themes structured around the development of a spiritually influenced marriage relationship: preceding factors, onset, courtship interim, marriage decision process, and the corresponding qualities of this type of union. This variety of mate selection is viewed as a "step along the way" on a journey of moving toward the fulfillment of some higher purpose that is exclusive of the relationship itself. The organization and categorization of the themes reflects the journey upon which the individual embarks—a journey in which meeting one's right partner is but one crucial part in the unfolding of a fulfillment of some individual, relational, or collective higher purpose. Toward that end, each theme has several subthemes based on the more nuanced variables revealed through the analytic process. Several of the subthemes include a reiteration of phenomena within the *varieties of transpersonal experiences* and have been inserted into relevant places within the

researcher's conceptualization.

*Transpersonal Occurrences and Circumstances That Preceded the Relationship*

This first theme relates to the stage preceding the relationship, before the two people even met, and also refers to the meeting event and the beginning stage of the relationship. This first theme addresses several questions whose answers appeared in the data. How did two seemingly random people come together? What precipitated the relationship? What transpersonal circumstances or events brought the pair into physical alignment with each other? The story begins even before the two individuals have met: a prayer has been said or a manifesto has been written.

*Asking and praying to God/Spirit.* In many cases, before the individuals in the couple met one another, several participants reported, they had expressed an explicit desire to meet their life partner. Before meeting their spouses, 5 participants reported having taken matters into their own hands. Three participants (Daniela, Moriah, and Nadine) reported having prayed to their respected divinity sources to meet their partners. "In some ways I almost feel like I prayed for him. And that in some ways he is like the answer to a prayer but there is also a meant-to-be quality" (Daniela). As was cited in the presentation of the *varieties of transpersonal experiences*, Moriah sat down and consciously, intentionally, asked spirit for her husband. Moreover, she also wrote a poem (included in the previous category) entitled *I Asked*. This poem is a prayer in written form, addressed to spirit and her husband. It is significant to note that the prayer expresses gratitude and is written in the present tense, as if her partner is already in her life. Gratitude and speaking in the present tense as if the object of the request has already been received appeared to be key components in the manifestation processes within the date.

You ask, but you don't put it in the form of a petition. You ask as if it's already there. Because obviously if the universe has no time, then you already have it. And you do it

with gratitude. So it's "Thank you God for providing me this wonderful whatever." And that's really the way it has to be. So that's where I do my affirmations. If I lose something and try to find it, I visualize it coming in my hands and saying that. It always shows up. So yeah, "Thank you God for guiding me to or guiding this man to me. Guiding this man to me who is \_\_\_\_." Or "bringing him to my life," or whatever. However you want to put it. But "Thank you, God, for making this, bringing this man to me. Or for guiding me to be with this person who is compatible in all ways. Body, mind, spirit, all that stuff. So it was really about not only being clear about my intentions and focusing on my intuition, and being willing to accept myself who I was. And then actively saying ok—having the gratitude of saying "Thank you for bringing this in my life." So to me that's a way of drawing it in. And then to be willing to be open when it comes. (Nadine)

*Manifesting a mate.* Nadine is describing her experiences of saying affirmations in order to "draw" her unmet husband into her life. Affirmations were used as an integral segment of a proactive process that she and 2 other participants (Maya and Matthew) employed to attract their partners.

The thing I did the most of was the affirmations 'cause I had my list of affirmations, and I kind of honed them so they wouldn't be too specific. So they'd be just—have the right feel to them. And I memorized them. And I would say each one, I had seven of them. And I'd say each one three times to myself when I went jogging. So I had kind of a routine. But I did other things, too. A lot of other things. I just kinda did it all. I had gone to this class about Feng Shui stuff, and so I did some of that. (Nadine)

Nadine was 53 at the time she became engaged to her second husband Robert. She reported that she had been a single mom and hadn't been on a date in 10 years before she decided she was ready to be in another relationship and to manifest her husband. In order to do this, Nadine engaged in a five-step process she designed by taking bits and pieces from various spiritual traditions and New Age literature. Her five steps for procuring a mate include having clarity of intention for what kind of man she wanted to be with, having the belief that this was possible (this step includes doing any necessary inner work to train the mind towards believing), trusting intuition, letting go of specific results, and loving her life as it was. (For an expanded version of Nadine's process on manifesting a mate, the reader is referred to Appendix H.) In addition to following her formula, Nadine also recited daily affirmations and made "treasure

maps . . . where you cut out pictures and you make a little poster with pictures from magazines or different sources to help imagine what you want.”

Additionally, Matthew, age 58, had met his wife when he was 38 by engaging in a process for manifesting a life partner. The steps he took to bring about his wife were:

First to commit to a path of self-healing. That’s the first step. And it involved books and workshops and retreats and meditations, so that’s the first. But then I put together a visualization. And I called on—and of course I told Spirit this is what I believe that I want and I described, in the most incredible detail that I could, down to how I would find her scent and taste. Down to that detail. And then I released it and I said “You know better than I do, I’m coming from ego and mind here, I believe it’s what I want but of course you know much better than I. I want to align my ideal with yours, so if anything about this is not good for me, block it. But if it is good for me, bring it. Or bring me the experiences I need so that I can earn the right to have it. And it took me 3 and a half years from when I made my visualization to when I actually met her. So—it was 2 and a half years, yeah. It didn’t happen immediately; I had to do this stuff first. (Matthew)

(For an expanded description of Matthew’s process for manifesting a mate, the reader is referred to Appendix H.)

Maya, a 45-year-old woman engaged to be married to Michael, had previously been married. After her divorce, she had dated several men and said she had learned many lessons from the relationships but that she was looking for “the One” and was very intentionally focused on finding him. Her process for manifesting a mate involved writing what she calls a “Manifesto.”

That’s when I wrote my manifesto—my “Man”-ifesto, pretty much I got everything that I was looking for with him . . . I told you I did a lot of preparation for a partner, starting when I got divorced in 2003. I really put a lot of work into it, and every relationship I was in after that, there’s maybe just three serious ones. Yeah, just three, four. Or they were so short it didn’t go past a weekend. ’Cause I was like “I’m looking for the one.” And I’m like, “Well, you’re not the one for me.” And that was it, he was gone. But I want to be with you, but . . .”

*Researcher: Did you write out everything that you were looking for in a man?*

Yeah. And I refined that over the course of several years. I got really clear on the very key essential points.

*Inner preparation work.* As was mentioned concerning the manifestational processes, participants emphasized that preparing themselves and doing inner work was a key component in attracting the right partner, as well as in establishing readiness to be in a lifelong committed relationship. As Matthew stated, “The first step is to commit to a path of self-healing.” Self-healing, or inner work in preparation for the desired relationship before the actual meeting, involves learning through “books, workshops, retreats, or meditation,” therapy, spiritual seeking, and/or individual work separate from work with a therapist or healing practitioner. Maya’s preparation for her partner involved a process of significant inner work that spanned years and entailed much private introspection and healing of past trauma from childhood and previous relationships.

And I’d gone through a huge, huge process before this. Like of really withdrawing from everything in my life and really having to let it die . . . But really I have to say it was a process of really deep work. That I did by myself. More about removing the barriers to intimacy in a relationship that were really in place from a lot of trauma . . . I feel like I had to do a lot of preparation, a lot of shedding, a lot of clearing, a lot of purifying, a lot of healing. My journey was like that all the way up until that point. I was preparing myself. (Maya)

In order for Nadine’s manifestational process to come to fruition she felt she needed to do inner work so she could “have the belief” (step two of her process) that the man she wanted in her life could become a reality.

I had some trouble even believing that a man would be attracted to me, being as old as I was and in my current body state. So I had to work on accepting myself. I had to work on that whole thing of certainly doing my best to take care of myself, but also to believe that it was ok, that I was acceptable. And loved myself as I was. And that I could be—that I had a lot to offer. So I had to work on the belief. (Nadine)

The data indicated that asking or praying for one’s partner was the initial step taken along the journey towards marriage. Several participants asked spirit or god for their mates and took the initiative to ensure the meeting. The 3 participants who reported manifesting their spouses all did

so with success and attributed the meeting of their partners to the inner work, self-healing, and processes of manifesting they used. Each process appears to be a variation of the other and each contained three main steps: (a) getting clear about what was wanted; (b) writing it down; and (c) engaging in a process of inner work in order to be ready, prepared, and available to the desired relationship.

*Having a vision.* Two months before Daniela met her fiancé, she had a vision of him that appeared spontaneously and without conscious inducement. The feelings associated with her vision and the details she saw and sensed came to fruition when she eventually met Steven through an online dating site.

So 2 months before I met Steven, I was sitting on my bed, I was actually—it was my first year of school and so I was getting ready to do an assignment. I had my laptop open and I think I was reading something . . . I was reading and my eyes were getting tired so I just decided to just lay down for like a minute to rest my eyes, and I got into this really relaxed state where I just wasn't thinking about anything I was just spacing out, I guess, and it was—it's so, it's amazing to me every time I think about it. What came over me was an image. But also a feeling that came with the image and I saw a man that you know later on when I met Steven, he meets the description. In my vision he doesn't look exactly like it but it was really nebulous in my vision anyway, so in the feeling was just so strong—it was a feeling of someone that I knew that I didn't—that I hadn't met yet. It was someone that I felt, it just felt like a part of me I guess, like maybe like my inner masculine or something like that. It just had this feeling of closeness to me. I decided since my laptop . . . I started describing. I wrote down what I saw. I described this man and I wrote "light brown to blondish hair, facial hair with red undertones. I got specific. Blue eyes. Average height. The thing—oh I'm getting chills now because the thing that struck me was I had written that he had a near death experience that changed his life . . . And then I just put it away—I was like, that's it. Didn't forget about it but it was like along with all the other journal entries and poems, it just kinda had its place there [laughing]. And then when I met Steven and I got to talking with him, what really hit me was when he told me that he had not one but two near death experiences. And I was like—that is too weird. And he has a beard with red undertones and blue eyes and light brown to blondish hair. He met—if you put that description next to him you would be like wow, there's—you can't ignore it. And the first time I met him, it was in the back of my mind but I didn't want to let—didn't want to get too excited about it but it was in the back of my mind, I was like wow he sort of fits that—but not gonna just you know I don't know—I'm just gonna let that be that way right now. (Daniela)

In a way similar to that of Matthew's, Nadine's, and Maya's manifestational processes, Daniela

wrote down the details of her vision and then put the document away. Writing down and putting the document away (i.e., letting it go) appear to be consistent aspects of such incidences preceding the relationship.

*Consulting a psychic.* Four participants, all of whom were women, consulted with a psychic in order to know about their future husbands. The psychics varied in their spiritual orientations. The psychics that Maya and Eve consulted divined the future through the use of regular playing cards. The psychics that Connie and Nadine consulted did not use any divinatory tools and gave their readings based on their psychic faculties alone. All of the psychics consulted accurately predicted the 2 women's future husbands.

A friend's mother was reading cards, and before I went to New York, she was in Los Angeles. She's also the mother of one of these people I'm going to tell you about. The mother had read my cards, and she knew the current boyfriend that I was living with, who was a really sweet guy who everybody liked, but she said "I don't think it's gonna last with David. There's someone who you haven't yet met who has fair skin and blonde hair and he's really wonderful I think he's gonna be the one." Then I met Clark next weekend and I thought, "Wow, this is really interesting." It just felt superstitious more than magical, but whatever. It felt magical. If I think about it now, it was just sort of making a decision to believe it. But that was there. (Eve)

But she said all these things about him that later, several months later, nobody had shown up in my life. And I happened to call her on another matter, I said I want a phone reading because I was about to take a trip with my daughter and I'm afraid of flying. I said "That guy never showed up, the one you told me about." She said "Oh, guys, they're always the last to show up. It's so hard to get the timing right with them." But she said "Has anyone talked to you about introducing you to anyone, setting you up?" and I said no. And she knew that I was in the process of converting to Judaism, so she said "I think you should start hanging around at your synagogue more often." And I'm thinking to myself "That's so Dear Abby"—the kind of advice you would give to anybody. But I was going often to the synagogue because at that time I was in the process of starting—I had made a decision, I needed to start feeling more comfortable in that setting. If I'm gonna do this, I need to start feeling more comfortable. And I felt anything but comfortable. I would go there and I was all alone and I didn't understand the Hebrew, and it was awful. And I remember even crying a few times. But I just kept going 'cause I was determined that I was gonna do this. So that's how I happened to be at the synagogue. (Nadine)

Following the psychic's suggestion, Nadine did in fact encounter someone at her synagogue



who, immediately upon meeting her, offered to set her up with the man who is now her husband. According to the participants who consulted psychics, information conveyed about dates and timing is reported to be the least accurate. Sandy said, “I have heard that that’s the toughest thing for psychics to read is time.”

*Guidance from a deceased loved one.* In a similar vein, Connie had been involved in a relationship before she met her husband George. It was while she was in this relationship that she consulted with a medium to communicate with her deceased grandparents. Her grandfather, whom Connie described as a prominent source of guidance and protection in her life both when he was physically alive and in deceased form, strongly urged her to end her current relationship and seek her future husband elsewhere.

So I went to see a medium . . . And every single time, my grandparents love to talk to me, and every single time they’d talk to me. So they came up to me . . . And my grandfather said that . . . “Bells are gonna be ringing.” Like what . . . and I don’t remember any bells on my wedding day. Bells are gonna be ringing. And he said, “But, this is not the man you want to marry. Please date other guys ’cause this is not the one.” He said it a couple of times. Several times. Like he really wanted me to understand to stay away from this guy, to not marry this man, that it wasn’t the one, that it was gonna be another man. And that he wanted me to date other people. So that’s how that came about. (Connie)

Within this sample, consulting a psychic or medium prior to meeting their future mates proved to be a prophetic source of guidance that offered assurance, as well as uncannily accurate information about what the future held.

*Significant or prophetic dream about the relationship.* Prior to meeting their spouses, Matthew and Nadine both had significant and prophetic dreams about their mates. Matthew had his dream when he was a young boy and Nadine had her dream 5 years before meeting her husband. The common variable in both the dreams is that the feeling or essence of that person

was what was most vivid and significant and indeed did match the feelings associated with being in their partner's presence.

But I had had a dream. There was this little thing my sister told me about that you're supposed to say if you want to dream about the man you're gonna marry. And I had done it actually once before and got a really clear symbol with my first husband. And I had done it again several years before, about 5 years before I met my husband now. And I had this dream that was just very intense and very real. And it's very clear to me that it was him that was in that dream. . . . And it was one of those dreams that just—and I don't have these very often—it just kind of woke me up, and had this intense feeling attached to it. We came some place together and then we went up into this place at a higher level, and turned around to face out to the world essentially. And to see all the lights. And he put his arm around me and he was showing me the world. . . . The what I didn't get at the moment was the way I felt with this person, and when I met Robert, I mean, he is that same body type. He is that same height as that guy. And similar body type. And physically, the feeling that I had was the same feeling that I had with him. And then the whole idea of him going up to a higher level which to me is also symbolic. And then turning around to face the world and him showing me the world. And he had this whole thing of wanting to kind of show me the world in a sense too, 'cause he wanted to travel and he wanted to take me places. (Nadine)

I'm nine, maybe ten, and I have this dream. And it was one of the most vivid dreams of my life. And in this dream I was in this woman's car garage, in her driveway. There was a big bank of oleanders on the left. And I was walking on it and I see this young girl. She was older than I was. She had this long dark—this long brown hair and the sweetest face, and we walked towards each other and we embraced, and the feel of this embrace was other-worldly. In the dream I remember feeling "Oh my God." It was like I'm returning home. And so we just sat that way and for the longest time we were just holding each other and letting this feeling wash over us of just coming home. And then we pushed back and she goes "It's gonna be a long time till I see you again." And I said "I know, I'm going to miss you so much." She said "I know but I'll be back, just be patient." And so we walked away from each other, looking back away and so I wake up. And I hear a sound, and I remember to this day and I'm fifty. Anyway let's fast forward now. Debra and I have been married a year and a half. We're setting up picture albums and I see this album of hers as a young girl, and I'm flipping through her family photos, I come across a photo from when she was like 13 or 14. And I gasped. Because it was the girl from my dream. And I told her and we just started crying and were like "Oh my God." (Matthew)

The themes of *consulting a psychic, guidance from a deceased love one, significant or prophetic dream about the relationship, and having a vision* all provide anecdotal evidence that perhaps the future can be foretold. Moreover, the fact that 3 participants claimed to have successfully manifested their partners seems to indicate that not only can the future be seen and foretold, but

that it can also be influenced and impressed upon, depending on one's desires, intentions, and focus. All of these factors and incidences appear to herald and draw forth the onset of the relationship.

*Transpersonal Phenomena Related to Initial Stage of Relationship*

Several *varieties of transpersonal experiences* appeared to occur within the initial stages of the relationships of the participants in this study. The appearance of these transpersonal phenomena at the beginning of the relationship and/or friendship seems significant because it, in no uncertain terms, caught the participants' attention and demanded that they take note and regard the connection to their new dating partner as unique and the partner as potential marriage material. Synchronicities of all types were most abundant during the beginning stages of the relationship.

*Coinciding break up synchronicities* occurred within 6 participants' trajectories toward the marriage. Prior to meeting their spouses, Connie, Ray, Mark, Frank, Elizabeth, and Jon had been in previous relationships. Additionally, their spouses were also in other relationships. In order for the participants and their spouses to be available to their future marriage partners, both parties ended the relationship at what, unintentionally, turned out to be around the same time, without a conscious awareness of who their future partner might be. This synchronicity appears to have cleared the path for the individual's right mate to appear and for the 2 to be emotionally available for a relationship.

She had been living in Arcadia in an apartment she had been in with her son. Her son was 7 when I started dating her—from her first marriage, which, ironically, is almost the same dates as mine. She got married in '91 and they separated in '94, which is the exact same as me. (Jon)

*Synchronicities that led to meeting and/or first date* were prevalent in the cases of 5 participants (Moriah, Maya, Elizabeth, Frank, and Eve). Events and obstacles appeared to occur

serendipitously in order to bring about a most propitious and auspicious circumstance in which the 2 could come together and get to know one another in a unique way that seemed to be out of the ordinary.

We met at a place of employment. We started working on the same day at a company in Southern California in Pico Rivera, Northrup . . . I was still working on my undergrad, and I was in my last year, and they had all these companies that came on campus that we could drop our resume off with. And one of the tables there was for Northrup. And they just had a box there to collect resumes. And it's really interesting because I had a knowing feeling about the company, and theirs was the only box that I dropped my resume in, out of—there was over 20 companies there. It was the only one. There was just kind of this knowing about them, and then I went for an interview. They were interviewing all these college hires. And I got lost on the freeway going there and I was late for my interview. And they said "That's ok, just have a seat and if there's time at the end, we'll interview you." So it was interesting because I spent several hours—God, probably 5 hours just sitting in the waiting room, waiting for all these college hires to get through, and during the process I was just talking to people to pass the time and I was asking "Well, did they ask any technical questions, or anything" [and they said] "Yeah, this one guy asked me 'How do you do a two-dimensional table?'" because it was a programming position. So I just had all this info, so when I went into the interview and he asked me that question I go, "Oh yeah, that's a 'two key' [technical term] statement," and just the fact that I had the answer so quickly, they were hugely impressed with me, it's like "Oh you gotta see this girl." So of course I got the job, it was very interesting. It was my first day at work and it was also his first day at work, and there was this round rotunda. I remember it, it was this round entrance to the building, and I was sitting there, and I think there was 10 of us in the group, college hires. And I saw him walk in the door, and there was somebody else that he had already met there named Richard. I heard Richard introduce my husband to somebody else, "This is Tom." And I looked up just at that moment, and there was this sort of feeling. But I was so excited about the new job and everything, though I clearly remember, even 20 years ago, the first time I laid eyes on him. The first time he walked in. We went through a training program together and the group would go to happy hour. And so then I think it was October 30th, we went to TGI Friday's for happy hour, and Tom and I were the only two that showed up. The rest of the group had bailed, had not shown up, so it was just him and I. (Moriah)

Eve, age 67, has been married to Clark for 37 years. When Eve was 24, she was told by a psychic card reader that she would meet a fair-haired man. A week later, Eve took a previously scheduled week-long trip from her home state of California, to visit friends in New York City. It

was on this trip that she met her future husband Clark, decided to move there, and found a job and a place to live.

I met him on a Saturday night. I think I probably went home the following Sunday. In that week, I got a job, I decided to move to New York . . . I come home, I say “I had a great time in New York, I’m moving there, I have a job and a place to live.” And I have it all within that week.

*Bizarre object-related synchronicities.* Frank and Elizabeth met at work, in a high-tech company in Silicon Valley. They were friends for several years before they started dating. During the pre-courtship friendship phase of their relationship a bizarre object-related synchronicity caught their attention and planted a seed of inclination toward a possible future together.

And I saw this picture the first time I went to her place, which was months before the date. And I just went over for—I guess it was like a co-worker friend or maybe a little—I don’t know maybe there was a little seedling there or something—but she was showing me her pictures and I just—it was so bizarre that—the fact that this person I didn’t know had a picture of my friend walking to see me, like 4 years earlier. So I took that picture. I still have it in one of my journals that I keep ’cause she said “I don’t have any use for it.” And I just thought it was so bizarre and maybe it was more bizarre because maybe I felt like I wanted to have a connection with her, whereas if it was just some random person and I saw it—I’d be like “Oh that’s really weird,” and then that’s it. (Frank)

*Out of character.* When Daniela and Elizabeth met their husbands for the first time, they noticed themselves doing certain things in an atypical manner that struck them as unusual and against their own idiographic norms, and thus indicated to them that something significant was occurring.

This probably is totally irrelevant, but I’m just remembering when I first met him I—we were playing foosball—that’s like the very first time. And I said “Hi, I’m [XX]” [her nickname is withheld]. And um, I’ve never introduced myself as [XX] in my entire life—I never have since then. And he—I mean there’s—like he thought that was my name. And—it is kinda weird cause that was very unique—like I’ve never done that before or since and so it was something about meeting him. (Elizabeth)

Yeah. I remember when I met him I remember feeling just utterly relaxed, which I thought was strange because normally on first dates I’m analyzing like my mind is

constantly chattering “What does he really mean when he says that?” and then “Dat dah dat dah—what does he really mean? What is he trying to do? What’s his intention? What’s his motive?” I wasn’t doing that. I felt very calm and relaxed and just open, really open and curious, just genuinely just curious about him. And like there was a permission for him to just be himself without me having to like pick at it or analyze it. . . . That to me— I mean it doesn’t sound very transpersonal but it sort of was to me because it’s just so different than my normal behavior on first dates and that to me was just how—and it was involuntary. I wasn’t trying to relax—I just was. (Daniela)

*Transpersonal sex.* Five participants reported that, once the connection and relationship had been established, sex seemed to have a noticeably different quality than had the sexual experiences of previous relationships. Clark and Elizabeth noted that the first week of their respective relationships had an overwhelming sense of “intensity” that was unique and uncharacteristic to both of their usual temperaments and their previous courtships. This out-of-character quality is considered transpersonal because it was described as an external force completely outside and beyond the usual self. Elizabeth remarked that it was this initial transpersonal circumstance of intensity, compounded with the awareness of a *ghost-like presence*, that helped solidify or “cement” her bond to her future husband Frank.

I’ll just say that first week when we had the presence and we were transitioning kinda in that luminal space I mean I had—wouldn’t say I had had a ton of relationships, but that relationship’s beginning was much more intense than previous relationships, and by intense I just mean highly charged, like almost as if the air could be lit with a flame or something—and I don’t mean like passion its more just like—it just felt more intense, like more was at stake, it was more or less dangerous because it was more meaningful, and then maybe that’s what the presence was there for—to add kinda the element of . . . like it was just super intense . . . A little bit dark, and that was a bit of a dark time ’cause Frank’s dad had just died . . . But then the sex was intense those—that first week we would do it like six times a night, which was unusual for me. Like at most I would do it once, maybe twice in a night. So that was just weird for me. I was like this is a new level of sex, a new level of—like I said we were kinda in this bubble otherworldly space in that he didn’t even have a bed, we were on the floor—it was almost like primitive and, I don’t know, it was just very intense and in a way neither one of us is a particularly intense person in general. So it was us being uncharacteristic in order to fuse; it cemented and started this really good future. I don’t know. It just was a weird time [laughing]—a time that I mean that—it also seemed very natural that it was supposed to happen that way and all of that. (Elizabeth)

And I definitely felt there was something different sexually . . . On the one hand you could say this wouldn't necessarily mean much, just so you have better sex with one person than another. That sounds like what it can come down to. So I'm not sure, but I did always think that the fact that we had that experience from the beginning, and that was certainly part of that time, that week, and part of my attraction, but it was all very complicated, intertwined with these many different factors . . . it was all part of that being shaken. Well I was telling you before, this experience in the coffee shop of feeling like I was sort of going overboard or something. Being shaken in the sense of shaken up, being shook up by the experience. So the sexual part was part of that, sort of more intense in that area, more intense in all these areas. I suppose intensity would be—which was what was sort of scary about the week. (Clark)

This unusual, out of ordinary, sexual chemistry and intense atmosphere induced strong emotional responses that all served to provide a clear indication that something special and wholly significant was transpiring. Having an immediate physical chemistry and becoming physically affectionate at an uncharacteristically early point in time was also reported: “And then I had this chemistry with him that was just, oh my gosh! It was just fantastic. And still is. And it's just like better than anything I'd ever experienced” (Nadine).

And I liked his hand; it felt like a big warm paw. And I said—he said, “Oh, your hand is really cold.” And I said “Yes, you can warm it for me if you like.” And so he held my hand. So within five minutes of meeting each other we were laying next to each other holding hands. And I was thinking—this is putting me on my edge, I don't usually do this. (Maya)

*Early knowing about marriage.* One of the most significant findings of the study is that an overwhelming majority (15 out of 18) of participants reported having an early inner knowing that this particular relationship would eventuate in marriage. This early knowing was described as an intuition that occurred at any point between the first time a participant was asked if she would like to be set up on a blind date (Nadine) or the first time a participant spoke to her partner on the phone (Sandy), to any other occasion within the first 3 months of the romantic courtship: “Right away I knew, oh we're just gonna get married . . . I was like, ‘I'm gonna marry him,’ like I made my own plans without him knowing, ‘I'm gonna marry him!’” (Connie).

I think shortly into the dating, there was something in me that knew. Whether it actually showed up in my head as the idea that this was the person I should marry or not, there was something that I knew that I had no reason to look anywhere else. Like ever again. Yeah, this was, this was good. (Jon)

It was our second date when I think I told you I was sitting with—we were sitting down for dinner in Palo Alto at the Gatehouse and. . . . I was thinking this was the face I'm gonna be looking across at for the rest of my life, I never thought he'd be so beautiful. (Sandy)

But about a month, a month and a half into our dating, maybe 2 months, I said “We need to go into therapy.” Because I knew it was going to be a serious relationship, and I knew it had the potential to go into marriage. (Matthew)

This early knowing was described as an intuition and a felt sense that was not recognized as a cognitive faculty originating in the mind. This knowingness, as it pertains specifically to partner choice for marriage, was described by several participants. “The knowingness is very interesting 'cause the knowingness comes from the solar plexus and the heart. It resides in kind of both of those areas. It isn't just a gut feeling” (Moriah) and “The original sense of knowing this is ‘the One’ has more to do with a—it's—I don't know how to talk about it except there's a sense of resonance” (Sandy).

There was something in me that had this sort of feeling that this was gonna be the person I was gonna be with. But again, I don't know where it came from exactly, other than it just sort of felt that ok, this is it. You asked and here he is. (Nadine)

There was a moment when I first laid eyes on her when I was kinda like “Whoa.” Somehow I knew.

*Researcher:* “Was it like a physical somatic feeling or—”

Yeah. Well it was a full body experience. This electrical charge or some kind of energetic thing. (Ray)

### *Transpersonal Certainty Factor*

As the relationships advanced, the early and inner knowing about marriage developed through several means into a sense of certainty that was rooted in the transpersonal experiences. This theme articulates the aspects that participants reported that contributed to their sense of



certainty about their partner being the right partner for marriage. The various subthemes encompass the transpersonal and intangible feelings, sensations, and qualities that were prevalent within the courtship.

*Sense of “meant to be”/destiny.* Thirteen participants reported feeling a sense of destiny in meeting their particular mates. They felt that their relationship was meant to be, and they described their first meeting as seeming like they were meeting someone they felt they already knew. This sense of destiny contributed to a confidence, conviction, and certainty about the partner choice by imbuing a spiritual and divinely intervened sense of fate, with origins that extended back in time and space. When she met her future fiancé for the first time, Daniela said, “I felt like I was waiting for someone I already knew.” Likewise, Maya said, “He felt like somebody I’d been waiting to—I’d known for a long time.” “I definitely felt like we were destined to be together” (Connie). “It’s almost like lifetimes beforehand we’ve known that we were gonna be here with each other in this time, in this place in the world” (Michael).

That it was really a matter of this was the person—my *besheret* [Yiddish word meaning *one’s destined mate*]. And this was a person who I would be supposed to marry and that things were gonna grow and get better as time went on. And they have—totally feel that that was it, it was almost this marriage arranged by God . . . There’s always stuff. But I think that knowing and trusting and sort of like I said before, the arranged marriage, sort of believing that that was arranged by God and there’s a reason for it, and there were all these things that went into—that this was the right thing for me. (Nadine)

I was like wow, that really—there was this resonance with me for the art. So when I told Richard this story, tears were just streaming down my eyes. I said “You and I are meant to meet.” I said, “This is just too uncanny that I’m meeting you now. It was almost like the art was the conn—was sort of leading me to him. (Sophie)

Well, like I said, it just always felt right and these things, it’s almost like a math theorem. Like if the thesis is “I will marry Frank \_\_,” then the theorem part are these things that prove that it’s meant to be even though I just kinda felt like it was meant to be. And, like I said, I never wanted it not to be. Like I never wanted not to have a future or a marriage with him. (Elizabeth)

*The transpersonal experiences alleviated doubts and induced certainty.* Nine participants reported that their transpersonal incidences were meaningful because they provided a sense of certainty about the relationship, instilling a divinely inspired confirmation and sense of conviction in their partner choice and decisions to move toward marriage. Daniela stated, “We both have a sureness of it [the relationship], and that’s grounded in our initial transpersonal experiences with it.” The transpersonal incidences helped alleviate doubts if there were any, and also provided confirmation that their partner was the right one.

*Asking for and receiving a sign.* One way of alleviating doubt was by asking Spirit, God, or the universe for a sign. Katharine’s experience in asking for a sign from God about whether to marry her boyfriend, and then using the Bible as an oracle is one example of this and was referenced in the previous section. The sign she received from the Bible contributed to a strong sense of certainty and sanctity about marrying James.

So I felt this incredible sense of relief. And also this knowing that the marriage was almost sanctified. It didn’t matter what happened with it. I’ll be ok. It was all meant to be. That I wasn’t taking a wrong path. That this wasn’t gonna be a mistake. Just like a real sense of security and knowing and peace . . . But I still maintain a sense of confidence in the marriage because of that sign. I don’t really need that, I guess, but it was like I was sanctified, it was blessed. It was just fate. No compromising, like there was no other option, I wasn’t gonna end up like my mom. I had such a horrible fear of divorce. And I really needed something like this to sustain me through the belief in marriage, ’cause I did not believe in marriage. I really thought marriage was a bogus institution. I didn’t see the point in it, unless you were gonna have kids, maybe. Even the idea of getting married at such a young age—to me, 27 was young—was almost antithetical to everything I was about . . . So in some respects I had lost faith in trusting marriage, trusting that people could be together and be faithful and so this was sort of just a way to fortify the little trust I had, and to start to help me build more trust. Like a touchstone. If I were to lose faith and get scared, I could always look back and say “I was told to go forward with this, I didn’t make a mistake, I didn’t go into this blindly.” It’s like an insurance policy.  
(Katharine)

So I’m sitting there and I’m at the last table in the corner of the room; we’re looking at a show in the center of this big ballroom. So I’m just feeling playful and I just had this sense—I talked to Spirit a lot—I said “You know I think I want to marry this woman here, Spirit, I need a little guidance here. If this is the woman I’m gonna marry, have her

turn around and look at me.” Literally, one, two, three, she turned around, looked and smiled at me. And it freaked me out. And I said “Stop stop stop, it’s bullshit.” So I said “Ok, let’s try it one more time, that was luck, this is ridiculous. Well I count to three, if this is the woman I’m going to marry, I want her to turn around and look at me. One, two, three.” She looks and turns around and smiles at me. And I really was just freaked out, I was like “This is bullshit, no no no.” So I waited 5 minutes. Ok, on the count of three I’m gonna—and in my head I’m doing this—if this woman turns around, this is the woman I’ll marry. And I said one, two, three. And she turned around again and smiled at me. And I was deeply affected. I was horrified, you know, just horrified. What marriage meant to me, what I saw as a child, I was like “Oh my God.” That’s when I said, “We got to go into therapy.” (Matthew)

*Work with a spiritual teacher.* Jamal and Michael’s interactions with their spiritual teachers helped alleviate questions and doubts about whether their partners were right for marriage. Jamal had originally had doubts about whether their differences in religions (he is Sufi and she was Christian) could sustain itself in marriage. Jamal did not ask his teacher for marriage counsel; however, while standing in his teacher’s presence, Jamal was thinking about his dilemma. Suddenly, and seemingly out of the blue, his teacher turned to him and made a comment that pertained to Jamal’s unspoken thoughts. It was his teacher’s guidance and select comments that directly dispelled his doubts and helped him gain certainty about Mary being the woman he wanted to marry.

So when he said that, he transcended—the question of difference was immediately transcended. After that I knew I would go home and propose to her . . . Yeah. I was done . . . So it was hugely significant . . . His intervention, it gave me the certainty that it was the right direction and that she was the right person but it never made her be the answer . . . When Mary and I got married and I said “I do” there was this certainty that it was the right thing. I really meant it; my whole being was saying yes. I think that’s how the divine intervenes, it’s when you can connect with the place in you that has the ability to receive divine knowledge, then you’re aligned with that, that’s intervention. (Jamal)

*Researcher: “Did the work with your spiritual teacher and this process influence your knowing you wanted to marry Maya?”*

Absolutely. Yes. It allowed me to overcome anything that was holding me back. Any fears or any of that, it allowed me to process through all of that. And then it allowed me to feel into where I needed to go, to be with her, that she’s the right person for me. It wasn’t really a tough decision at all. It was just very easy once all the trauma’s gone. Once all that baggage or whatever you want to call it has been released, and the layers are

off, the answer just lays right there. It's just like—there it is, it's so simple. That's the interesting part. (Michael)

### *Transpersonal Marriage Decision Process*

This theme describes the factors at play in influencing and helping participants determine that they wanted to deepen their commitment to their partners and embark upon a marriage.

*No decision.* Four participants reported that the actual decision to marry their partners was not in fact the result of a conscious or cognitive process. The decision came to them, rather than their consciously trying to decide. In these four cases, the data indicated that the ensuing step of marriage simply became an inevitable eventuality in the unfolding of their lives. No effort was required to decide to marry. “I don't think I consciously made a decision. I think that the decision just seemed to—it wasn't—it was never put to either one of us as a choice” (Ray).

You know the way things unfolded for me I don't even know if I can say that I actively made a decision to marry Kathleen. I mean, if I was, if it was a conscious decision, it happened so quickly. It was more like a knowing that I expressed. It wasn't a “Will you marry me?” It was more along the lines of—look I already know that you want to get married. I don't know what I'm waiting for, what are we waiting for? We should get married . . . but the feeling that I have at this moment, that that was what the process was “Now is all there is,” and maybe in the back of the mind there's this—you know, what are you waiting for? Now is all there is. You can't know for sure that you'll be sitting—you'll be alive in that body an hour from now, a year from now, or 10 years from now. You can't know that, you don't know. So what are you waiting for? Not like a sense of urgency—it was like, you know you love her, you're not interested in anything else, what are you waiting for? (Jon)

I had moments in my mind I can recall thinking, “Ohhh.” Kind of this whole fear thing and backing off and saying, “Oh no wait, there's no decision required here. All you have to do is go one day at a time.” And then that was a little easier and more comfortable, but at the same time it was kind of still lurking that this would be something that would happen. (Nadine)

As I went to sleep, I felt myself enter into a telepathic link with Marla. And it was actually amazing because it went on for a while, and there was all of this verbal stuff and yet it wasn't because there was—none of it made sense, it was just jibberish. But it was happening, it was more like a reflection of this transmission that was happening between us. And it's amazing because that's how the extent of it was for me, from my recall, it was telepathic. I know the difference for sure because it wasn't like my own thoughts. It

was as if she were right there talking into my ear and I was right there talking into hers. And then the next morning, I get this message and it's about her experience. And so she had one. And she said that after she had said this thing where "No, I can't go to him tonight, he'll have to come to me," that she felt herself lift out of her body and that my voice was with her and I was guiding her to this bright planet, like a star planet. And it was like a spinning ball of light. And she said we were moving towards it but she couldn't see me, she could only feel my presence and hear me and see it. But that's where we were moving towards and we were moving together. And it was at that moment that we had both decided we're gonna definitely be together forever. (Mark)

*Decision determined by directed guidance.* Three participants' decisions to marry their partners and propose were directly determined by guidance from some source in the form of either a spiritual teacher, intuitive counselor, or internal guidance. The messages communicated and received were absolutely clear, leaving no room for guesswork or confusion.

And at a certain point, 'cause I was contemplating every day and asking for guidance, I was told inwardly, and this was not a voice like I told you about before, this was an inner knowing like a voice inside me. And it took about a week and a half to kind of get a full understanding of it, but I was told that if I did not marry Debra, my spiritual and emotional progress would halt for a time. Till then and until the wheel came back around and you get back on again. And it was my choice. I didn't have to marry her, but that would be the repercussion, and I said "I don't want to stop growing emotionally and spiritually," so we ended up getting married 2 years to the day on which we met. (Matthew)

We work with this—it's kind of hard to put a title on what she does, but she basically does nutritional healing, but she's very, very intuitive. And she's starting to really develop her psychic abilities. I think she was having a conversation with Maya during one of the appointments, and I guess they had talked about marriage and stuff like that, and so anyway this woman calls me and says "Look, I have this strong feeling that until you decide to make it official, your future's not going to go the way you need it to. So you need to be able to just go out and—you just need to propose to her." I was like "Ok." So I've got this woman telling me that I need to propose to my woman here and I'm just like "Alright." It's just kinda funny . . . So I just went out, and we had an idea of what sort of style of ring she likes, and so I just went out and bought a ring . . . That's what was gonna take us into our future. It's that, it was time. It had to be time because we were ready. . . . Life tells you what to do sometimes. (Michael)

It was right I think at the time when my—when I really was thinking about wanting to get married to Mary. It was really it was like a burning question. What do I do about this difference? So it was not just happen—certainly it was either coincidence or synchronicity that he said it at that moment. It was like on my mind . I may even have been thinking about it at the very moment he said this. Wouldn't be surprised—can't be

sure but it wouldn't surprise me cause that's the way it always happens with him. And he says virtually over his shoulder, "I like Mary." [pause] "She's a believer." Instantly my question dissolved. (Jamal)

*Transpersonal Purpose for Being Brought Together*

The data indicated that participants perceived that their relationships had significant meaning for the purpose of their lives. This purpose was reported to lie on either a personal, relational, or couple level; on a larger, more global, and collective level; and/or on a spiritual level. Ultimately, all of these varying levels of purpose can be viewed and classified as serving a spiritual purpose or destiny for these participants. The relationships appeared to be not just about the interpersonal and personal dynamics, but rather were reported as serving some higher purpose. Sophie said, "It was almost like divine intervention. It was like, ok, there must be a greater purpose to the relationship." This finding intimates that the spiritual mate selection process was but one step along the way towards the fulfillment of a higher goal and that the relationship itself is not necessarily an end goal in and of itself.

*Purpose is personal growth.*

And for him, I give him some of the inspiration and encouragement and pushing that he requires. And I've had a lot of various psychics and oracle thingies mention that the marriage was about projects. And about getting things done. He's super helpful and pivotal with my documentary, and my book. I'm not so sure I affect him in that same way. I think I just provide tools for him to stay conscious and stable. Like I'm the little investigator in the relationship that's always like "Let's do this" and "Check this out," kind of keeping him healthy in a way so he can go and do his work. So it's always—it's kinda dorky but call it Team XX. It's sort of like a combination of our names. So yeah, we'll do like 'Team XX, this is a job for Team XX.' So we have to do it together. (Katharine)

*Purpose is to be of service to the world.*

There's change in the world that we both need to make. And there is—we both have our each individual purposes of what we're doing. And because there's a big purpose for both of us, there also is a bigger purpose as a couple. That we're both—we both have our individual things and then our couple purpose. And we're both somewhat stronger because we're together. It's exponential. The power that we share in our ability to make

change. . . . I guess I could say, to sum it up, the purpose is to be who we are or what we are completely. Not only as each other, together, but as individuals. And supporting each other as individuals and as together, as in a relationship. And that's our purpose. And there's so much that that brings. There's just constantly new things that—there's a big purpose in the world for us. To be leaders and to be examples. (Michael)

We were put together on this earth because we're meant to do a lot of good . . . And together we're supposed to be this duo that makes an impact on the world on a massive level. And we've gotten confirmation after confirmation after confirmation from healers that there's a reason why you two were brought together; it's more than "Oh, cute relationship." It's like a powerful duo that's gonna transform the world. (Connie)

*Researcher: "Do you believe that there's some sort of higher purpose for the two of you to be together?"*

Mm hm. I do. But it's the same higher purpose that brought my mom and dad together even though they had a contentious relationship and it's the same higher purpose that brought me and my first wife Shell together, even though that wasn't a super happy healthy relationship. There was a higher purpose in that . . . ultimately the purpose of life is to remove the blocks to the awareness of the presence of love. Unconditional love—not worldly love that changes that can come and go. And worldly love is tied in with control and fear. (Jon)

*Purpose is spiritual realization and growth.*

Well I have this quote on my Facebook page: "The best way to know God is to love" and I think that that's for me what it's all about, and my love for Frank is a way of knowing Spirit. Yes, there's a lot of daily challenges that are kinda—but this is a different plane—its like above all that stuff. I think with Frank, too, I had this confidence like this feeling that I can trust him that we can work on developing each other, developing ourselves and continuing to protect our connection in a way that I never felt with someone else. And I feel like that the universe does support our being together because it feels most of the time really easy. (Elizabeth)

The purpose is to learn more lessons, like lessons having to do with learning to love better and learning to love more and learning to progress to the next level . . . I think it's also just nice that we can be together and have this time together. That maybe that's even kind of a reward that we get that together. Maybe it's a karmic reward. I don't know. (Nadine)

It's the most perfect reflection of how things are in the spiritual reality, the wholeness. Together we mirror this back to each other, and as that gets reflected we take it in and there's this mutual aspiration and striving to embody relationship in the way that we experience it on a spiritual level, but in body. And actually share this with the world. And in addition to that, to start out young, to open a school together. And instead of—not just simply just raising our kids, but raising hundreds of kids, being kind of the eternal mother-father archetype in that way. And doing this together, and doing it healthy. Doing something that, for example, our parents never were able to do, and that many of that

generation could not. And that the following generation had tried to remedy through the '70s with open relationships and all that but that never worked. For us everything is just coming together. All the past is reconciled. The only thing left to do is to experience life together and then to leave together and then continue on with other experiences, other places, other realities. (Mark)

*Qualities of a Transpersonally Selected Partnership*

This theme is meant to articulate the qualitative nature of being in a relationship that was brought together through unseen transpersonal variables. This theme answers the questions How does this relationship feel? What is the lived experience of this type of courtship?

*Sense of connection.* Feeling a deep connection was explicitly reported in 10 participants' accounts. Of those 10 people, 5 reported that the connection was felt and experienced very early on, and in some cases almost instantly upon first sight. This immediate sense of connection is distinct from immediate attraction in that it was reported to go deeper than the physical level and was reportedly experienced on intuitive, emotional, and spiritual levels.

When I first actually saw him, I went "Oh, perfect." Meaning there was—I looked in his eyes, he looked straight in mine and there was definitely a connection between us. 'Cause he told me that he had actually—when he saw me, he said "Oh my God" . . . I felt like there's a deeper connection between us. Just like that. It was intuitive. I didn't have to think about it. And he said he had had the same reaction, it was just [snaps fingers]. As soon as I saw him I went—I don't know—there was some thing that . . . I don't want to say it was as if I knew him, but there was definitely some kind of connection, definitely was not just sex attraction. It didn't feel. . . . it felt different. It felt deeper to me when I met him. (Sophie)

I felt affection toward him immediately and I felt a very deep like of him immediately. And I felt that—I felt close to him immediately . . . He's very introverted but thinks about stuff and he got right down to it—he just—he doesn't like superficiality at all, and we both glazed over all of that stuff right at the beginning. We went for the heart of stuff and that struck me as really unique. (Daniela)

But first kind of moments of solid connection all the way through, that I never experienced with other people . . . A connection's a connection. See that's the thing, I don't think there's, I think soul mates, I mean what do I know, I'm only one of a pair. But it seemed so natural, you know the people that we know who've been together for a long time, and who really fit together, it seems like there's this kind of knowing already. (Ray)



Another thing that was very pertinent was a kind of sense of historical connection, in that, in a sense we both suffered from history. My father died in the Second World War, and her father—well, parenthetically served in the Second World War, but more importantly, the downside- being a blacklisted Hollywood actor. So that the idea—the sort of potentially terrible impact of history hitting you, and I really think that always meant something to me, even though they were very different experiences . . . Her father’s part, being a war hero and my father’s part, had a public dimension. I went to ceremonies and things. So it wasn’t just a sort of secret or hidden, private connection but kind of—one that entered the public realm. That seemed oddly, I mean I certainly wasn’t seeking—not consciously seeking someone who shared the sort of historical \_\_\_\_\_, to draw a connection like that one, but I don’t know. I’ve often thought of that as a kind of odd coincidence or something. (Clark)

We were not connected through—but aligned, I think there is a level of connected through our affiliation with spirituality, maybe there is a level of connecting through that, that I’m not giving enough credence to, that in some ways that forms the basis for us to be able to be with each other. (Jamal)

So as we started talking and I’m still holding her hand, it was like this connection was just immediate. But there was definitely plenty of mystery still in there, but there was a pretty strong connection . . . I was really into her, really enjoyed every moment that we had, it was really right from the start, a deep connection. The thing that I definitely noticed is it seemed like the connection ran so deep so quickly, that even after a couple weeks of hanging out it just seemed like we had just been together for so long. It was really a kind of odd feeling, like we’ve only been together a month but it feels like 6. You know, ’cause it was just so comfortable. (Michael)

I felt really—beginning with his voice on the phone I felt that sense of resonance—harmonic resonance—being met or connecting at the most important levels, which you could think of as chakra terms or—the way I usually talk about it—that we had a profound spiritual connect that—that mattered to me more than anything else. (Sandy)

*Sense of “fit.”* This quality found within the data conveys that the interpersonal and interdependent relational dynamics of the relationship had a certain sense of ease, comfort, and easiness. A right fit and a compatible and/or complementary match was experienced and clearly evident to the participants. The couple felt that their unique individual selves contributed a unique aspect that, when put together with the other, created a complementary design that was mutually beneficial and pleasurable, and that instigated the achievement of maximum self-actualization. “It’s such that I believe that she truly embodies that other half that remains

unconscious within me. I embody that half that remains unconscious within her” (Mark). “We fall in love with other people who represent or embody parts of ourselves that need our love—attention, awareness, nurturing, acceptance” (Sandy).

So when I met Richard it wasn't as if—it was something that struck me, was just “ah—fit.” It was more like “Fit.” Knowing that there was some sort of fit . . . Although there's a lot of similarities, it's more like we complement each other. We're like pieces of a puzzle that fit together. (Sophie)

What's very interesting is there's places where she has a lot of strength where I have wounding. It's like this puzzle piece that fits together really nicely. And what happens is that we go through our lives and wherever there's a place where one of us is not strong, the other one seems to have the strength to help. And it just kind of swings back and forth as we go through life. (Michael)

*Sense of rightness.* The quality of rightness can incorporate all other qualities found in the data. Although it was not explicitly asked about, it was observed that participants had a relatively challenging time articulating, identifying, and describing the specific and concrete aspects of rightness. The sense of rightness was found to be a non-formulaic, wholly original, subjective quality that was uniquely idiographic to each person and each relationship. As Nadine expressed it, “It just felt right.” “I can't say that it was love at first sight, so much as an energy that this was right, the feeling that it was right” (Moriah). “It just felt magical and right and exciting. Very romantic” (Eve). But I know that everything that is happening and continues to happen is supposed to be happening, like it feels very right, I guess” (Daniela).

Certainly when we talked, definitely everything was—felt like there were a lot of points of synchronicity and also comfort level, just familiarity. I don't know if familiarity is the right thing to say, but it just felt right. (Nadine)

We just have a really strong feeling, a really strong intuition about—this is the right match for both of us. It's very deep. In some ways it's even difficult to explain because it's so powerful, it's kind of beyond words, it's beyond explanation sometimes, you know? You just have to have that—it's like a feeling that's very detailed and complex and strong. (Michael)

Just the sense of rightness of just the way everything in my life is unfolding. I was aware of that then and I'm aware of it now. I look at some of the neighbors and their relationships with their spouses and I'm just really, really lucky to be exactly where I am right now. And I felt that way then about everything about my relationship with Kathleen . . . about my relationship with my, with the cancer that was growing in me that I was hosting. (Jon)

*Sense of trust.* Six participants relayed having and developing a strong sense of trust in the unfolding process of their relationship, in themselves, in their guidance, and in the awareness that their relationship has meaning and purpose. “There’s a trust in the process or there’s a security in it. . . . This is supposed to be happening, that there’s like a trust in the process. Or there’s a security in it” (Daniela). “I trust that I am being led and guided. I look back and I see that that’s the case” (Jon).

I think with Frank, too, I had this confidence like this feeling that I can trust him that we can work on developing each other, developing ourselves and continuing to protect our connection in a way that I never felt with someone else. And I feel like that the universe does support our being together because it feels most of the time really easy. (Elizabeth)

But I think that knowing and trusting and sort of like I said before, the arranged marriage, sort of believing that that was arranged by God and there’s a reason for it, and there were all these things that went into—that this was the right thing for me. And I could get really upset at \_\_\_\_ walking out but maybe feeling more that this was meant to be, helps me stay more committed and know that as long as I work through it, it’s going to be ok. (Nadine)

*Sense of recognition/resonance.* This subtheme expresses the felt sense of meeting someone and either recognizing him or her from some other nonlocal time or place or recognizing an intangible quality or essence that could have originated from a dream, vision, or possibly even a recognition of himself or herself in the other. This quality was found to be felt most significantly during the early stages of the courtship. “It was a kind of feeling that I always wanted to have with somebody. So it was like a recognition in a way maybe” (Nadine).

And then he shook my hand and I had this sense of pleasure and kind of a lot of recognition; you know in hindsight when you look back there's a lot of recognitions. The thoughts—actually turn out to be true. And I liked his hand, it felt like a big warm paw. And I said—he said “Oh, your hand is really cold.” And I said “Yes, you can warm it for me if you like.” And so he held my hand. So within five minutes of meeting each other we were laying next to each other holding hands. And I was thinking this is putting me on my edge, I don't usually do this. And he seemed like a nice guy, and some of the thoughts that were going through my head were the recognition like “Oh, that's right, I marry teddy bears.” 'Cause I married a guy that was kind of like a big teddy bear. (Maya)

I don't know how to talk about it except there's a sense of resonance or—one image that I refer—I don't really know what I'm talking about when I say this—one notion I have in my head is that the we'd be meeting on several chakras that had a really harmonic vibration. But it was a sense of being met—and that's probably the powerful thing that brought us together and that's kept us together through discovering that being together was incredibly difficult for a really long time, but that sense is hard to come by. And I really, really value it. (Sandy)

*Timing.* Participants considered timing, or the “right time,” as an aspect that was highly significant to the initiation, materialization, and development of the relationship and eventually as the catalyst toward marriage. The sense of certainty includes the security of events happening within a particular, intuitive, and intelligent order. The phenomena of *coinciding break-up synchronicities*, “*near misses*,” *synchronicities that led to first meeting/date*, *bizarre object-related synchronicities*, and *receiving directed guidance* were seen as variables that contribute to a sense of timing.

It was time. It was time for us both as far as all the experiences we'd been in and had in our lives, that we were the right people for each other. It was the right time in each other's lives, everything, it was just really about timing, I think. In many ways it was just the right moment. And just being aware enough to recognize it. (Michael)

I feel like I had to do a lot of preparation, a lot of shedding, a lot of clearing, a lot of purifying, a lot of healing. My journey was like that all the way up until that point. I was preparing myself. And I felt like I met Michael when he was also prepared. He had gotten—if I had met him at any other time—he had gotten out of that relationship, he had been out of it for 9 months, which is a decent time to be out of a relationship. And he was 36 and I was 44. If we had met at any other time it would have been too soon. And I didn't like having to wait that time to meet my partner, if somebody had told me I probably would've just killed myself. (laughs). “You will not meet the right guy till you're 44!” . . . So we had the same idea at the same time and ended up in the same place

at the same time. That felt like divine intervention. I feel like I met Michael because I listened to myself there. (Maya)

Well that's when I was really sure I would marry her. The summer that we kind of were dating, I felt like "Oh, she's gonna be in my life forever." That this was somebody I was gonna hold onto. But no sense of, I'm gonna drop what I'm doing and date her exclusively.

*Researcher: "How come?"*

Well I had this other girlfriend. I don't think there's any really logical reason for it, even though I kinda knew, I think it was mostly intuitive, that if we did this now, that our relationship wouldn't weather the things we had to go through as individuals, to get to the place of maturity to make the commitment. 'Cause up until the point where we got to marry—where we got married, well, we both had long-term relationships but I guess there was other things on the agenda. The life trip agenda . . . I think it was kind of a timing thing. And eventually those alternate relationships started to flounder, and Linda was about to come out to be with me, but had an art show that she had to prepare for at home, and it was too important in her career to just kind of blow that off. So while she was doing that I, through a kind of—a series of events, met my first legal wife. (Ray)

I met him on a Saturday night; I think I probably went home the following Sunday. In that week, I got a job, I decided to move to New York . . . So things were moving very fast in terms of, this guy's great, I'm making some major life changes. Within a week. (Eve)

In conclusion, the data presented in this chapter describe the process of transpersonal mate selection from inception to fruition and its transcendent purpose. The individuals embark on a conjoined journey with the divine, Spirit, or the universe in order that each may meet the right partner for the purposes of optimally fulfilling her or his individual and spiritual purpose—be it on a personal or a spiritual level. To summarize briefly, the themes associated with transpersonal mate selection were as follows:

1. The varieties of transpersonal experiences
2. Transpersonal incidences that preceded the relationship
3. Transpersonal phenomena related to initial stage of relationship
4. Transpersonal certainty factor
5. Transpersonal marriage decision process

6. Transpersonal purpose for being brought together
7. Qualities of a transpersonally selected partnership

## Chapter 5: Discussion

One of the most significant aspects of this research occurred during the recruitment phase. It was anticipated that finding participants who had had significant transpersonal experiences might prove to be difficult. However, this did not prove to be the case, as there was a strong response to the solicitation for participants, and the pool of appropriate participants exceeded the number that was needed for the study. Additionally, many people responded to the advertisements, asking for ways in which to meet their “spiritual mate.” The study garnered more interest in the topic and its implications than was anticipated, thus indicating that the topic at hand is relevant to the personal lives of people in the California areas where advertisements were distributed. This researcher was even approached by a man creating a documentary television series about spiritual love that includes interviews with spiritual writers and teachers such as Deepak Chopra and Marianne Williamson. The topic is perhaps articulating an experience of life and an approach to dating that appears to be desirable and in demand. This is consistent with the plethora of popular literature and popular media abundant in the United States culture that pertains to dating strategies, dating etiquette, finding “the one,” soul mates, and the cultural value that stresses the importance of marriage.

Another significant finding, embedded in the inherent structure and method of the study, was that it was surprising and unexpected to find participants who held no particular spiritual or religious beliefs but who reported having experiences of a transpersonal nature that occurred seemingly randomly and spontaneously and that strongly influenced their lives and partner choice. Regardless of beliefs, this phenomenon was found in individuals coming from a myriad of spiritual, religious, and secular paradigms. The nature of this type of experience is innately subjective, typically dependent upon one’s worldview, and highly subject to personal

interpretation. However, this study found and provided examples in which individuals had no belief systems about spirituality or god and yet found themselves surprised by an unexpected transpersonal type of event in their lives and attributed significant meaning to that event that affected the way in which they valued their partners. It can be concluded from this study that individuals need not necessarily have any particular or general spiritual or religious orientation in order for a facet of transpersonal mate selection to manifest and occur in their lives. The cliché “If it’s meant to be, it will be,” regardless of one’s subjective lens, seems to apply at the foundation of this phenomenon.

Prior to the research phase of this study, it was anticipated that participants would mythologize their relationships and courtships and depict their history in an overly positive way because of the inherent investment in the relationship. It was surprising to observe that this was not actually the case. Although the researcher is unable definitively to ascertain the demarcation point between fact and fiction and reality versus perceived reality within the participants’ narratives, overall, participants tended to avoid overly romanticizing their courtship process and their relationship. Participants were reluctant to ascribe to romantic constructs and appeared reserved, conservative, disclaiming, and self-conscious about their transpersonal experiences. One participant qualified his experience of seeing and sensing a ghost by saying that he rarely shared this experience with anyone because he felt “cuckoo,” and told the researcher that he found it somewhat uncomfortable to hear himself use the word ghost or spirit so often during the interview. Another participant told the researcher during the telephone screening that she was very concerned about the confidentiality of participating in this study because she was embarrassed and self-conscious about her experience and that she had not told many people her story. She said that she even found her experience to be somewhat unbelievable and over the



years had preferred not to share it. Amongst the sample at large, there was a general sense of keeping private about the participant's experiences, downplaying its uniqueness, and attempting to minimize and normalize the incident. This reticence could perhaps stem from the prevailing American mainstream perspective of "scientism" (Tart, 2009) that pervades Western United States culture. It asserts that events that cannot be proven in a scientific laboratory are not necessarily real and usually casts judgment upon those that believe in unseen forces and realities that cannot be objectively observed and measured. This general acceptance of the scientism paradigm fosters cynicism and skepticism that creates a social stigma for individuals who have had or believe in these kinds of paranormal, parapsychological, or transpersonal experiences. Consequently, some individuals have become cautious about revealing their psychic or transpersonal experiences lest they be branded crazy by others or by society. In this study, no overidealization or mythologizing of one's transpersonal courtship experience or of one's marriage was found in the reports of its participants, to the researcher's knowledge.

Of all the themes found in the analysis, the theme of *synchronicities* was the most notable and prevalent transpersonal incident within the sample. Synchronicities occurred within 16 cases, and the unusualness of their occurrence had significant impact on the courtship, causing the participants to pay special attention to the relationship. In many cases the prevalence of synchronicities provided opportunities for the 2 to meet and laid pathways by which the couple could be in close and intimate proximity with one another, thereby promoting a deep getting-to-know-you process and connection. The abundance of synchronicities is in accordance with Cowman's (1995) findings about the negotiation of relationship toward marriage commitment, which revealed a "cosmic" theme including the prevalence of synchronicities that participants believed indicated a sense of predestination about the relationship. Cowman (1995) stated,

“Magical origins gave rise to thoughts about a purpose behind the unfolding of events in the universe” (p. 118). In her study, she observed that “the participants were impressed with the synchronicities and coincidences of similar life experiences, like being an only child, being left-handed, having experienced the death of a family member” (Cowman, 1995, p. 119). As was found in Cowman’s study, the findings of this research indeed corroborate the significance of synchronicities in the development of a relationship with the potential toward marriage.

The question arises as to what constitutes an actual synchronicity and what constitutes a common everyday life experience that is perceived and constructed to hold subjective meaning for individuals. Is it because of an intrinsic desire for the ensuing relationship to be more than any other one or is there something objectively metaphysical occurring that is meaningful and indicative of guidance from a higher source? Cowman’s (1995) examples of left-handedness, being an only child, and experiencing the death of a family member appear to be events that happen on a regular basis. The fact that the 2 people in the couple happen to both be left-handed or only children need not be that unusual or miraculous; however, to the people to whom these circumstances are occurring, the events hold import. The same could hold true about certain examples of synchronicities found in this study. The theme of synchronicity covers a wide range of events that range from the common place, to the unusual, to the highly unusual, from small synchronicities of small import to large synchronicities of huge import. For example, Clark mentioned that he felt that it was a coincidence that on the day that he met his wife, Eve, he was in an unusually upbeat and social mood because he had surprised himself by doing well on an Italian language exam. At the outset, this example appears to be a minor form of synchronicity, something that could be easily dismissed as the usual ebb and flow of events and fluctuating moods that occur as a result of engaging in life. However, the timing of the events within the

broader perspective of Clark's life is of note. Furthermore, since meaning and value of any event is subjective in nature, the significance can only be identified and reported by the beholder. Clark is now 69 years of age, self-identified as a "secular man," was categorized in this study's non-religious and non-spiritual category, and was reporting on the story of courtship of his wife that occurred over 40 years ago. His memory of and inclusion of the detail of what particular mood he was in at the time he met his wife and why, was clearly important to his narrative and the meaning he has constructed over the course of his life. It is his subjective perspective that constructs the significance of this small detail as a synchronicity that contributed to his attraction to his wife. Conversely, it is difficult to minimize the highly unlikely probability of Sophie's bizarre-object-related synchronicity in discovering that her boyfriend was the artist of a series of paintings she had cherished and traveled with over the years as a teenager and young adult. It is easy to see how meaning could easily be constructed from this event and could lead to a belief that the relationship was predestined.

Jung (1952/1972) was the first scholar formally to acknowledge the phenomenon of synchronicity and observe the important psycho-spiritual messages it imparts, particularly with reference to psychotherapeutic work. According to Jung (1952/1972), synchronicity is "the simultaneous occurrence of a certain psychic state with one or more external events which appear as meaningful parallels to the momentary subjective state" (p. 441). He has also described it as "an acausal connecting principle" for which there is no casual explanation (Jung, 1952/1972, p. 452). Additionally, Jung (1952/1972) described synchronicity as consisting of two factors: "a) An unconscious comes into consciousness either directly (i.e., literally) or indirectly (symbolized or suggested) in the form of a dream, idea or premonition. b) An objective situation coincides with this content" (p. 447).

Jung's explanation of synchronicities emphasized the important role that he believed ESP, psychic phenomena, and divinatory tools such as the I-Ching and astrology play in the interconnectedness of synchronistic internal and external events. Interestingly, the elements of telepathy, premonitions, dreams, astrology, and the I-Ching were all found in the data of this study and were either presented as themes of the main transpersonal incidents or as significant indicators of compatibility and immanent variables that participants described in their courtship process. This researcher chose not to categorize all of these variables under one large theme entitled "Synchronicity." Rather, it was intentionally decided to separate all of these incidences into distinct phenomena, as they appear to have unique characteristics distinguishing them from one another and they held different and individually idiographic significance for each participant.

Main (2006) contended that Jung's beliefs in the existence and significance of synchronicities promoted a near-spiritual attitude that questioned and undermined the conventional and collective attitude of scientific rationalism that would oppose an acknowledgement of an intersection of psychic states and external events or any invisible agent or force not scientifically observable. Progoff (1973) highlighted the distinguishing feature of synchronicity and noted that it includes both nonphysical and physical phenomena. The occurrence of synchronistic events, says Main, "provides experiential evidence for a dimension of reality not reducible to the physical or psychic; providing a theoretical framework for understanding the autonomy and spontaneity that Jung sees as hallmarks of spirit" (2006, p. 44). Since, synchronicities pertain to a realm that is not scientific, it is difficult to ascertain how, where, and why synchronicities occur. They are unpredictable, beyond premeditation, and irreplicable. Nachman (2009) includes synchronistic events as part of parapsychological, or psi, phenomena. She wrote,

Meaningful coincidences may derive from numerous sources including delusional thinking, self-deception, cognitive information processing deficits, and probability misjudgment. In other cases, they may point to something entirely different, which stretches our current scientific understanding of how the universe operates and the nature of consciousness itself. (p. 298)

The study of synchronicities and the finding that synchronistic events play such a large role in the mate-selecting courtship process is significant to a spiritual investigation of mate selection in that it does indeed corroborate and point to a transpersonal dimension of consciousness and transpersonal origin that is perhaps responsible for the coming together of two individuals for the unfolding of a greater, higher purpose. Progoff (1973) stated,

Synchronicity is significant to us on two levels: On a theoretical level, it opens an additional dimension of consciousness with respect to the nature of human experience in the unfolding universe. And on the empirical level, it provides avenues for the factual study for some of the most elusive aspects of human life and destiny. (p. 20)

The bizarre occurrence of a synchronistic event could be viewed as a message from Spirit and/or a divine or transpersonal source indicating an important direction that the individual has the option to choose in order to fulfill his or her destiny or purpose in life. Partner choice has many ramifications for the actualization of one's highest potential and destiny. According to Progoff (1973), mainstream modern Western society has deviated from its ancient religious and more spiritual ways of understanding life and the divine. However, synchronicities are an extension and an outcome of Western spiritual origins and serve the purpose of reorienting individuals toward a comprehension of consciousness and metaphysics (e.g., the transpersonal). Progoff theorized about the different, yet parallel, planes on which a human life unfolds. There is the human dimension of individual perceptions, thoughts, actions, decisions, and choices that help propel the person towards a perceivable goal by incorporating an assumption of cause and effect.

The second dimension, on the other hand, is more than individual. It is the transpersonal macrocosmic field in which Synchronicity operates. Within this field, which encompasses the patterning of the universe across time at each specific moment of time, there are, as Jung says, “certain regularities and therefore constant factors.” (Progoff, 1973, p. 129)

The robust finding of synchronicities within the transpersonal mate-selection data offers a theoretical indication that there could be forces within the universe that transcend the usually conceived variables about what brings two people together for marriage and why.

Synchronicities pertain to the realm of the mysterious and the unknown and appear as concrete and tangible examples of a patterned, intelligent, and yet inexplicable universe. The fact that 16 participants reported synchronicities within their courtship indicates that the meeting of the couple was acausal, yet not random, and indicated, for some participants, a sense of predestination and feelings of a situation that was “meant to be.”

The results of the study found that individuals hold a form of transpersonal power and influence over the process of selecting their right partners, indicating that people are not passive victims or victors to the whims of fate. There was a strong and overwhelming belief in fate and destiny across the sample, and even those participants who directly manifested their partners believed that their spouse was the person that they were supposed to be with. Participants’ beliefs in destiny, fate, and free will were generally consistent across the board. Two participants best described the general consensus:

I believe in destiny and fate, and I believe that that exists on an infinite spectrum of possibilities. So in a way it’s saying it’s a little of both. We chart our course among some specific pathways that are—that we’re not really able to alter. But individual choice—it’s kinda like water running down a hill— it can hit certain places the way it goes, and it can shift over, but it’s still going down the hill. Except going down the hill is linear and this is kind of multi-dimensional. (Ray)

You definitely create your own destiny, you make your own life, but there’s also a higher order, like things that are supposed to happen in a certain way that the universe operates in a certain way for our higher good. Our soul makes certain decisions before we come

here and so in essence it's us making the decision but it's really our higher self, us making this decision. Why? For whatever reason of bettering ourselves. (Connie)

The general consensus was found to include that meeting their spouses was inevitable and that, if it did not happen at one specific place and time, then it would have happened in another way at a different place and time. In some cases, however, several participants found that, with a specific intentional focus, they could impact the course of their lives and actively participate with the universe, Spirit, or the divine in the unfolding of their destiny. This process required them to be at a certain level of readiness within the context of their lives. The manifesting process necessitated a certain degree of inner work and self-healing so that participants were prepared on all levels—mental, emotional, psychological, and spiritual—to begin carrying out their intended purposes.

Literature on the phenomenon of *manifesting a mate* was absent from this study's literature review, as it had not been anticipated by this researcher as being a potential form of a transpersonal mate-selection experience. Within the United States' popular culture, and especially in California, there appears to be a recent explosion of ideas and techniques about new ways of embodied spiritual living that revolve around principals of “manifesting” one's desired life. New Age, self-help, and popular literature are rife with material about the secrets to creating any form of material possessions, life experiences, career opportunities, or relationships (e.g., *The Secret* by Byrne, 2006, and *Ask and It is Given* by Hicks & Hicks, 2004). With the major success and media recognition of *The Secret* (Byrne, 2006) and the influx of ideas about the powers of creating, many people have utilized these processes and have applied them to their lives in order to help find their mates. Scholarly literature and empirical research has yet to catch up with this rising trend, and so studies about this specific phenomenon were sparse. Two popular literature authors who write on this topic (Alice, 2007; Ford, 2009) corroborate differing

aspects of the manifesting-a-mate process. Both authors recommend letting go of past relationships and setting clear intentions about the desired relationship as necessary steps in attracting their spiritually intended life partner. Both reported that this process worked for them and included anecdotal and testimonial reports of how the process worked for others.

Scholarly literature available on the phenomenon described here as “manifesting,” was scarce, as searches in databases using this word yielded no relevant results. However, an abundance of literature on the effects of setting an intention and the effectiveness of using visualizations and imagery was found in relationship to healing, enhancing athletic performance (Burhans, Richman, & Bergey, 1988; Rushall & Lippman, 1997; Suinn, 1985) and paranormal/parapsychological (psi) phenomena (e.g., psychokinesis). Searches showed no evidence of scholarly research conducted specifically on how manifesting, setting intentions, visualizations, affirmations, or imagery work was useful in mate selection.

Since the 1950s, researchers have been investigating psi phenomena and have attempted to discover the science behind the inexplicable occurrences of certain events. Parapsychologists (e.g., Braud & Schlitz, 1983; Radin, 1997; Tart, 2009) have amassed an abundance of research and literature that demonstrates the existence and validity of paranormal phenomena that provides scientific evidence for the paranormal events that were reported in this study, such as telepathy, precognition, and out-of-body experiences. It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate the scientific existence of the reported events, however. [For comprehensive reviews of parapsychological research on these phenomena, the reader is advised to see Tart (2009) and Radin (1997).]

Braud (2000) marked a distinction between certain types of paranormal events: active psi events such as psychokinesis, on the one hand, and receptive psi events such as telepathy,



clairvoyance, precognition, and psychometry on the other. Both types of psi events were revealed as facilitating factors in the unfolding of mate-selecting processes; however, the phenomenon of psychokinesis in its various incarnations is relevant to the theme of *manifesting a mate* because participants who had reportedly done so had in effect purported to have exerted a significant influence on the physical world by transmitting their desires about their right partner out into the universe.

According to Tart (2009), psychokinesis is “the ability of mental intentions to directly cause physical effects on the material world without any known physical mechanisms, such as muscle action, being involved” (p. 151). Psychokinesis (PK) appears to incite much fascination in researchers, as numerous studies have been conducted on this phenomenon (Braud, 1983, 1992; Radin, 1997; Radin, Hayssen, Emoto, & Kizu, 2006; Radin, Hayssen, & Walsh, 2007; Schlitz & Braud, 1997). Over time, PK research has evolved from an examination of ways in which mental attention and intention can influence the random generation of a specific machine called an electronic random event generator (Radin & Nelson, 1989), how mental focus affects water crystal formations (Radin, Hayssen, Emoto, & Kizu, 2006), mood fluctuations related to intentions impressed upon chocolate (Radin, Hayssen, & Walsh, 2000), healing of various diseases, and other desired and intended outcomes. Tart (2009) distinguished between two types of psychokinetic activities. Psychokinesis can have a target that is considered dead matter or a target considered living matter. Healing work is considered psychokinesis involving living matter. Manifesting a mate would likewise be considered to influence living matter (i.e., life, or the world, itself).

McTaggart (2007) conducted a review and meta-analysis of over 40 experiments that either directly or indirectly related to the power of intentions over both dead and living matter.

She cited the domain of sports as being most instructive and exemplary in demonstrating the phenomenon. Researchers (Burhans et al., 1988; Hinshaw, 1991; Rushall & Lippman, 1997) have studied its effects on athletes who mentally rehearse their performances while training for a sports competition. The findings have shown that, across all varieties of sports, from running, boxing, and skiing to cycling and weight lifting, winning depended on how specifically, viscerally, and kinesthetically the athlete was able mentally to rehearse the performance in preparation for the event. Feeling and envisioning the desired outcome in vivid detail as if it were happening in present time, was found to bring about significantly enhanced results. Thought and intention alone were shown to have an effect on physical reality and specifically to have a demonstrable physical affect on the material world (e.g., the biological make-up of the human body).

Additionally, Braden (2008) cited a text written by a now deceased spiritual teacher named Neville. Neville (1952) appears to be an early teacher who espoused the power of envisioning and manifesting one's desired reality. In his book, he cited many examples of students who reported receiving and/or manifesting their desired goals. One such case is of a young man who lay in the hospital suffering from a rare heart disease. Upon Neville's suggestion, this man imagined his own healing and wellness: he saw in his imagination his doctor's face as he pronounced his amazement at his miraculous recovery—saw him double-checking his examination and saying over and over “It's a miracle. It's a miracle.” Long before *The Secret* and the popularity of the law of attraction, Neville (1953) taught the power of imagining one's wishes as having already been granted and strongly urged his students to assume that their desires have already been attained and to pray and give thanks for already having what is desired. He wrote:

Your assumption, to be effective, cannot be a single act; it must be a maintained attitude of the wish fulfilled. [*And that maintained attitude that gets you there, so that you think from your wish fulfilled instead of thinking about your wish, is aided by assuming the feeling of the wish fulfilled frequently. It is the frequency, not the length of time, that makes it natural. That to which you constantly return constitutes your truest self. Frequent occupancy of the feeling of the wish fulfilled is the secret of success*]. (Chapter 22, para. 7)

Within months of following Neville's guidelines, this young man experienced a full and medically unexplained recovery.

McTaggart's (2007) investigation of the extensive scientific and parapsychological research on the power of intentions led her to explore further this topic of the effect of manifesting a desired outcome. She is currently conducting an ongoing, interactive online study that endorses readers to follow an intention procedure she has delineated from her research. McTaggart (2007) asks her readers to set intentions to manifest certain experiences in their lives that range from improving the weather to having one's child make her or his bed in the morning. The protocol that she recommends in order to maximize optimum results involves nine steps: (a) Set up a specific place for setting intentions and sit there; (b) prepare one's psychological, cognitive, emotional, and energetic states through meditation; (c) obtain peak focus by moving into mindful awareness of the present moment; (d) focus on compassion and making a meaningful connection; (e) state the intention and make it specific; (f) using all five senses, move through a mental rehearsal of each moment of the event; (g) visualize in vivid detail the intention already realized as fact; (h) time this intention process to coordinate with specific geothermal qualities of the sun by checking a suggested website and engage this process on days when one is feeling happy and well; (i) release the process and let go of the desired outcome.

Several features of McTaggart's (2007) protocol appear to resemble participants Nadine's, Matthew's, and Maya's processes for manifesting their right partners. Future studies

on spiritual mate selection that exclusively examine the manifesting procedure using a controlled method with a specific and delineated protocol such as McTaggart's (2007) would be useful additions to the fields of parapsychology, mate selection, and the burgeoning literature on the power of intentions and manifesting.

#### *Findings as Related to Evolutionary Psychology Literature*

The study had no direct, significant, or relevant results relating to the literature reviewed on evolutionary psychology's mate selection. The thematic analysis of the data revealed no information about the process of mate selection consciously, intentionally, unconsciously, or intentionally occurring or desired to occur for the main purpose of procreation. No participants mentioned that they wished to find their marriage partners in order to have children. In accordance with Buss' (1989) theory on mate selection, males are invested in finding female mates who are young and beautiful and, therefore, potentially reproductively fertile and easily capable of producing offspring. However, the male participants in the study did not report being drawn towards their wives or fiancés because of external appearances such as beauty and youth. Rather they cited qualities of personal character that they found appealing, such as the woman being "a person of quality" or the man having a sense of her "uniqueness," "mystery" and connection with him. Of the 8 male participants in this study, 5 reported having children and 1 has stepchildren. There was, however, no indication that the male participants chose their particular partners with the intention of reproducing successfully or because they believed their wives would make good mothers. Across the board in this study, no unions were reported to be about having children. In fact, 1 participant reported feeling very happy that he and his wife never had children.

We'd tried to get pregnant for years and of course it didn't happen, it's tough for women to conceive in their 40s. I was really upset about that because I really wanted a kid. It

was—in a way I was using it as an excuse to distance her and punish her, and I finally realized that had I known before I married her that she could not or she was not going to conceive, I would have still married her. And once I had that realization, I just let it go, and we have had—it's been great. In fact, we're so grateful we don't have kids now—I don't know if you want kids one day but—having no children has allowed us to travel all over the world, we're just so intimate, we get up every morning, we hold each other, we have a lot of affection and intimacy in our marriage in many ways. Kids can suck that out of most marriages. Because the parents let them. It's the parents fault, not the kids'. So we're very happy about that. (Matthew)

Additionally, Buss' (1989) finding that women selected male mates whom they believed would be able to provide material security for their offspring was not found or substantiated within the data of this study. The female participants made no mention whatever about wanting a husband who could offer financial security and did not report choosing their husbands based on their financial, societal, or economic status. The participants in the study would be categorized in the middle socio-economic bracket, with some reporting financial success while others were reportedly unemployed, working retail jobs at the time of courtship, or employed as full time graduate students. Job position, income earnings, and societally perceived definitions of success were not reported as factors in the initial attraction stages of the relationship or in the marital-decision making process. The female participants did not cite having children as the impetus for marriage. Two participants, one man and one woman (Mark and Elizabeth) did state that they felt that a part of their purpose in life was to raise children. Elizabeth referred specifically to her newborn daughter, while Mark referred to opening an alternative school and raising hundreds of children who would not necessarily be his own. Rather than having children as the main objective of their lives, there was a general sense among participants that the purposes that they felt they were supposed to serve pertained to healing and serving the greater good of humanity.

Although the sample size of this study is too small to make any generalizable statements about mate selection from its findings, the results of this study could be seen as a counterpoint to

the views of evolutionary psychology as it pertains to certain segments of the population. In contrast to a biological evolutionary theory, the findings of this study could postulate a spiritual or transpersonal evolutionary process for mate selection that is antithetical to the classic evolutionary psychology perspective. Instead of mate selection serving the purpose of the evolution of the species, mate selection can be seen as serving the purpose of the evolution of spirit and of individual and collective spiritual growth. In this approach to transpersonal evolutionary mate selection, children are not born for the sake of procreating and the perpetuation of the species. Rather, children are created with a mindful awareness of the spiritual well-being and purpose of both child and parents.

Transpersonal mate selection fosters psycho-social and spiritual expansion in the process towards self-actualization, the fulfillment of a personal destiny and purpose while also being of service to the collective good that helps heal individual and collective trauma. The findings indicate that the uniting of two disparate individuals brings greater strength and power to the evolution of spirit, consciousness, and the world than to the potential of solitary individuals working to fulfill a purpose on their own. Perhaps the world is better served by the dynamic interplay of two people coming together versus one individual working alone. Michael best expressed this perspective in his interview for this study.

And because there's a big purpose for both of us, there also is a bigger purpose as a couple. That we're both—we both have our individual things and then our couple purpose. And we're both somewhat stronger because we're together. It's exponential.

The findings from this study and other accounts in the literature (Achterberg, 1998; Higgins, 2009) appear to intimate a self-reported perceived sense that a different form of evolution is occurring through these spiritually inspired and transpersonally grounded relationships. In a meta-analysis of the available literature on consciously created psycho-

spiritual relationships, Higgins (2009) noted the commonly held perspective amongst scholars and participants alike that contended that, when two individuals joined together in a relationship, it provided a better opportunity and stronger platform from which to “support each other’s evolution” (p. 86). Additionally, Achterberg (1998) wrote, of the uncommonly bonded couple, “we felt that the nature of the relationships had implications far beyond the lives of the couples involved and that, in some sense we were a part of the evolution of consciousness” (p. 7). As was noted in the literature review section, uncommonly bonded relationships are part of an “increasingly pervasive evolutionary trend” (Achterberg, 1998, p. 5) that is essential to the survival and flourishing of wholesome family life.

The purpose of this form of mate selection is an eventual development for individuals to self-actualize in the process of attracting their mates, and then, once the union has been secured, for the individuals and the couple, both as conjoined and separately, to engage in meaningful service to the world. Higgins (2009) reported, “In general, couples expressed wanting to contribute to the wellbeing, awakening, and development of others and saw this as one of the purposes for the relationship” (p. 160). In these types of spiritually inspired marriages, the individuals in this study felt they were required to do their own *inner work* of introspection, psychotherapy, healing trauma, spiritual seeking, and cultivating of self-love in order to arrive at a station in life where they were ready and available to meet their right partner to whom they could join and increase the potentiality for fulfilling their own individual, relational, and collective higher purposes. According to Higgins (2009), many couples from within her data set reflected that, had they not seriously committed to their own individual self-healing, growth, and transformation, they would not have been prepared and equipped to assist others along their path. Moreover, Higgins (2009) noted that several couples viewed their love, connection, and support

of one another as directly contributing to the level of service that they are able to provide others. Without the special love and intimacy that their relationship fostered between them, they would be significantly less effective and helpful in being of service to others. The couples also reported that being of service provides a sense of joy, fulfillment, and happiness in their lives that in turn reinforces their relationship.

The Aron et al. (2005) study discussed in the literature review section on evolutionary psychology hypothesized that the strong experience of “falling in love” is a biological drive designed specifically to keep two potential mates together long enough to create an attachment that will eventually facilitate procreation. The findings of this study neither proved nor disproved this hypothesis; however the general concept of the existence of a strong impetus that creates an initial impact and facilitates an attachment was found to be supported in the data. This current study’s theme of *transpersonal phenomena related to initial stage of relationship* parallels the concept behind the Aron et al. (2005) study, albeit stemming from a transpersonal paradigm as opposed to a biological and evolutionary one. The phenomena found within the theme of *transpersonal related to initial stage of relationship*, such as *synchronicities*, sensing a *ghost-like presence*, exhibiting out of character behavior, and experiencing *transpersonal sex*, are seen as serving the same function as the “in-love drive”: to help the couples become aware of the significance of their connection, help them bond, and create strong attachments. However, this attachment was not necessarily found to be fostered for the purposes of procreation but rather for the purposes of the fulfillment of a higher purpose. In the words of 1 participant, Elizabeth, the transpersonal incidences occurred in the relationship “in order to fuse; it cemented and started this really good future.”



Additionally, only 5 participants made references to falling in love or being in love. The interview protocol contained one question about love: Did the participant experience love at first sight? All participants answered no to this question; and some qualified their answers by saying that they had felt something akin to love or attraction, such as “intrigue at first sight,” instead of love at first sight. No other questions were asked specifically about love, and even though it was implicit and assumed that participants loved their spouses during their courtship, there was little mention of love as the precipitating factor within the mate-selecting process. This does not necessarily indicate that love was not a reason for marriage, and this researcher is drawing no conclusions as to whether love was a catalyzing factor in the marriage decision; the idea is merely presented as an interesting observation about the data, as many scholars (Aron et al. 2005; Fisher, 2004; Sternberg, 1986) cite love as a vital part of the evolutionary and social theories on mate selection.

One participant mentioned having an innate suspicion and disillusionment about the volatility of fatuous love during the early stages of a relationship.

It goes back to your other question—did I experience love at first sight? And I said no. I didn't experience love at second or third sight either in the sense of that thing of being swept off my feet or whatever that thing is—that sense that on some level this person is the answer. You know that thing. That I had experienced in my life before and it didn't make for stable relationship, interestingly enough, and it didn't endure. (Jamal)

In some cases, love was in fact not enough of a reason to marry, and in these relationships where the love was already quite evident, the significant transpersonal incidence was the factor that swayed the individual in the direction towards marriage. In many cases the transpersonal event was interpreted as a divine catalyst for the marriage. Several participants reported that they would not have married their partners if they had not received their sign. The transpersonal sign was seen as divine intervention and/or divine communication and

confirmation, enabling them to overcome psychological barriers and commence forward with the relationship. In Jon's case, following a divorce from a previous marriage, it took two brushes with death (*awareness of death*), in the form of being robbed at gunpoint and being diagnosed with thyroid cancer, as well as a profound shift in consciousness (*experiencing an awakening in consciousness*) before he was able and ready to realize that he wanted to marry his girlfriend. Some participants cited that their transpersonal experience fostered a sense of trust, security, or "insurance" in the relationship that they would not have normally felt otherwise.

Four participants (Matthew, Katharine, Michael, and Sandy) reported feeling disillusioned about love and marriage in general as a result of their parents' divorces when they were children: "Marriage is probably one of the things that is tough for me because I came from divorced parents. I'm probably one of those would avoid marriage. Like, marriage is the first step towards divorce, y'know?" (Michael). In a landmark 25-year follow-up study tracking the development of 131 children whose parents divorced when they were children, Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) found that children of divorce are afraid of making the same mistakes as did their parents and ending a marriage in divorce. One third of the men and women in the study were pessimistic about marriage, and even those who were in fulfilling relationships felt a sense of unease, panic, and desire to flee the relationship. Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) observed that negotiating these fears about love and marriage often took many years and was reputedly an arduous struggle. In this present study, concerning the 3 participants who reported feeling traumatized, conflicted, and fearful about embarking on marriage due to parents' divorces, each received evidently clear signs and guidance from a transpersonal source that directed them to marry their partner. Michael received direct guidance to propose to Maya from an intuitive counselor. Matthew asked Spirit for a sign that the woman he was dating was the woman he was

supposed to marry, that if she was the woman then she would turn around and look at him at that very moment he had chosen at random. She did turn around and smiled at him. Matthew asked for this sign two more times, and, in each instance, she turned around and smiled. Matthew also reported hearing a voice that told him that his spiritual path and purpose would be compromised if he did not marry his partner. Katharine consulted the Bible as an oracular divinatory tool to communicate with God about whether she and her boyfriend should get married. Perhaps the appearance of some form of communication from the divine, Spirit, or spiritual teacher/guide (or any other *variety of transpersonal incident*) is a way in which god, spirit, or the universe can help those people who have been fractured from parents' divorces feel safe and secure enough to marry. A transpersonal sign or message from a divine source is a way of bypassing individuals' conscious, rational, and psychological minds that would keep them struggling for years about their fears of marriage. In some ways, a transpersonal mate-selecting incident is a most efficient healing method of bringing together two people who are "meant to be together" in a bonded marriage relationship.

The same situation could hold true not just for the child survivors of a parent's divorce but also for the adults who have experienced their own divorce. Seven participants in this study reported having endured their own divorces. Six individuals were either in or embarking upon a second marriage, and 1 participant was in his third marriage. Two participants who had been divorced reported that the divorce process helped them become very clear about what kind of person they wanted to marry the second time around. This clarity was used by the 2 participants in order to manifest their second husbands (*manifesting a mate*). Maya said:

I did a lot of preparation for a partner, starting when I got divorced in 2003. I really put a lot of work into it, and every relationship I was in after that, there's maybe just three serious ones. Yeah, just three, four. Or they were so short it didn't go past a weekend.

'Cause I was like "I'm looking for the one." And I'm like, "Well, you're not the one for me." And that was it, he was gone.

A correlation between the experience of having gone through divorce, transpersonal mate selection, and the usefulness and effectiveness of receiving a transpersonal sign from a divine source as a method of facilitating another love relationship was not necessarily evident within the data, and perhaps further research could prove fruitful for that discovery.

#### *Findings as Related to Social Psychology Literature*

The results of this study yielded two areas of overlap with the literature reviewed on social psychological perspectives on mate selection. The first area of overlap relates to the Self Expansion Model formulated by Aron and Aron (1996) that theorized that romantic relationships contribute to an individual's increased sense of self and promote a greater sense of self-efficacy. In keeping with this conceptual schema that organizes this study's research findings, transpersonal mate selection is a step in the process of helping individuals attain the most beneficial circumstances and partner with whom they can fulfill a higher purpose in the world. Expansion of self and joining in right partnership vis-à-vis transpersonal mate selection processes were found to promote the development towards self-actualization and alignment with one's higher purpose.

*Researcher: "How have these experiences been meaningful in your life?"*

In my life, well, for example with meaning and purpose, the sense of direction. I know where I'm going and since then, on a practical level, I went from not knowing, for example, my topic for dissertation to now being in the proposal stage of the same topic consistently for over a year. And just being grounded, there being focus now, and understanding that that is my calling. (Mark)

Mark's transpersonal experiences of having an out-of-body experience with his fiancé, Marla, and sharing a vision with her of a star planet toward which they were ascending, helped him know that he and Marla are committed to being together forever and are united in their desire to

start a school together and raise hundreds of kids. Additionally, he reported that he now feels “grounded” and “focused” and has a clear understanding of his calling in life, whereas previously he did not have this strong sense of purpose, motivation, and organization. His relationship with his fiancé and his transpersonal experiences helped him develop and expand his sense of self and his sense of self-efficacy directing him towards the fulfillment of his self-perceived higher purpose.

The second area of overlap with social psychology relates to the theme of the *transpersonal certainty factor*. This theme contributes a transpersonal feature to Murray’s (1999) theories on sense of conviction in the development of a committed marriage relationship. Having a transpersonal event occur during one’s courtship appears to be a way in which individuals obtain and maintain a sense of certainty and conviction about their marriage choice. Within the social psychology literature, Murray and Holmes (1997) and Murray et al. (1996a, 1996b) observed that couples with successful marriages who have alleviated doubts about their partners unintentionally employed a construct of positive illusions to bypass the mental interference of doubt and help create certainty about their partner choice and about the relationship. The occurrence of a transpersonal incidence within a relationship prior to marriage helps the individuals construe spiritual meaning and value from their partnership, thus fostering a belief in a transcendent nature and higher purpose that creates conviction and certainty. The transpersonal events provide divine benediction of the union—a blessing of auspiciousness that deepens connection and makes doubting the relationship less of a possibility and an obstacle. In some ways *transpersonal incidences* foster positive illusions about the relationship that in turn either inherently embody or promote a *transpersonal certainty factor*. The transpersonal incidences create a cognitive, psycho-spiritual paradigm from which to view and experience the

relationship, and thus contextualize the relationship as part of a meaningful personal spiritual cosmology operating on both microcosmic and macrocosmic levels. Simply stated, a transpersonal mate-selecting experience promotes faith in the relationship and in partner choice. The transpersonal incidents provide sufficient material and fodder from which individuals and couples can successfully mythologize their relationship in a positive manner. The couple's spiritual mythology, as based on their unusual experiences, helps impart a strong sense of specialness about their partner choice that is impervious to doubt. Several participants reported that, even throughout the years of their marriage, the early occurrence of their transpersonal incidence has helped them endure challenging vicissitudes of the relationship. They have even said that, during the darkest and hardest moments of their marriage, they think back to their early transpersonal experiences and that the knowledge and memory of those helps them maintain faith and certainty about the relationship, thus helping them to continue in the marriage. Transpersonal mate selection processes are multi-dimensional and serve many functions: they bring individuals together, help develop and deepen the relationship, alleviate doubts and inspire certainty, and help keep the relationship intact during times of trouble.

#### *Findings as Related to the Transpersonal Literature*

Cowman's (1995) assertion that the development of commitment towards marriage is a co-authored story containing themes of transformation proved to be an apt framework for the results of this study. The transpersonal mate-selection process did appear as a narrative that initiated before the individuals even met and continued to be told throughout the courtship, the marriage, and the development of individuals toward the fulfillment of her or his life purposes. The transformation that Cowman discussed as occurring on varying levels—personal, interpersonal, social, and cosmic, as well as spiritual and psychological, was also evident in this

study's data. Cowman's (1995) "cosmic" variable of inter-relational transformation appears to be the very essence of many reports in this study, as participants related having felt a sense of cosmic connection with their partner and having experienced events occurring in their lives together that were "cosmic" in nature.

Intuition was a variable that was found to play a large role in the transpersonal mate-selection process. Intuition was described by many participants as an "inner knowing" about their partner being the right one and was also found to play a role in the form of precognitive dreams and visions. Participants reported that following and trusting their intuition was a step in the process to meeting their mates. For example, Maya had an intuition that she was going to meet her husband at a particular party. She went to the party and did meet her future husband, even though at the time she was unclear about whether he was the one she was supposed to meet. Nadine followed her intuition that told her for many years to convert to Judaism. Finally, after the conversion process, while attending prayer services at her synagogue, a man she did not know asked if he could set her up with his friend. This blind date led to marriage.

Additionally, the results of this study confirm Lydick's (1995) finding that the marriage decision was not made by utilizing a cognitive, rational decision-making process. Rather, the decision to marry was made either by using intuitive faculties or by not even "using" anything but allowing the intuition to come forth. This was especially true for 3 male participants who reported that the decision to propose was not actually a decision. Jon articulated it best when he said it was a "knowing that I expressed." The qualities of *sense of rightness* and *sense of ease* dovetailed with the sense of intuition. When the relationship contains a certain feeling of rightness, then it intuitively feels natural to stay together, deepen the commitment, and get married. Experiencing difficult, stressful, or confusing cognitive decision-making processes was

not reported by participants in this sample. The transpersonal experiences provided an easy and intuitive understanding that the partner was the right partner for marriage and that no formal decision had to be made. As Boyce (2001) had found in his research, in many cases in this study, participants “just knew.” This sense of “just knowing” may appear simplistic, yet was found to be connected to a larger context, or story: transpersonal events out of the norm contributing to the knowing; divination from divine, human, or oracular sources; and a sensitized awareness of somatic sensations and their corresponding meanings. “Just knowing” is connected to a story, containing significant events, feelings, and sensations whether or not the individual can explain or articulate them.

The phenomena of soul mates was indeed coded for in the data, but was not synthesized into a concrete theme in and of itself because it was noted that the participants did not voluntarily offer any insight or reflection about soul mates; rather it was the researcher’s question about belief in soul mates that elicited the responses. It was decided not to conflate the spiritual concept of soul mates with the phenomenon of mate selection because so much has been written (within popular literature and in transpersonal literature) about it, spurring many disparate and oftentimes skeptical notions that in many respects have branded the concept as a New Age cliché unworthy of serious regard. Therefore, it was decided to discuss the similarities and overlap within the discussion chapter rather than in the results section.

When explicitly asked about their views on soul mates, 13 participants responded with an affirmative answer expressing a belief in the existence of soul mates. Of those 13 participants, all but 1 felt certain that their partner was their soul mate. Participants’ views about soul mates included beliefs that there are more than just one soul mate per person and that there exist many different kinds of soul mate relationships, such as friendships, parent, and sibling soul-mate



relationships. Two people expressed a belief in a “twin soul” or “twin flame”—a romantic love type of relationship that originated with one soul that has broken into two parts and resides in two separate bodies. One male participant was very adamant about his view on the “One” and expressed a belief that there was only one, not two, three, or multiple right partners. He felt very strongly that he was with his one and only soul mate. Three male participants said they did not believe in soul mates. One participant explained that he did not believe in soul mates, “Because the soul is never divided, the soul is complete in and of itself. The soul doesn’t split itself in half and then need to meet itself. That to me is nonsense” (Matthew). However, Matthew said he believed in something called “wound mates.” In his view, he says,

I also believe that you have to meet your wound mates first. You meet your wound mates before you get the right to meet your soul mates because life’s going to hold a mirror up to you. You’re going to get a chance to see all the errors at work in the wound so you can fix them . . . So as far as soul mates, the typical definition, no. However, I do believe there are souls that come together and make agreements to come together. And if you want to call that a soul mate then I would totally be ok with that, but the notion I’ve heard of a soul mate is that the soul is now split in half somehow and goes wandering off and they try to find each other—no I don’t believe that.

Two participants responded to the question, respectively, that they did not know and were unsure about the existence of soul mates.

It must be noted that in certain ways the qualities of a “right,” *transpersonally selected partnership* resemble the qualities described for soul mate relationships and uncommonly bonded relationship. To reiterate a succinct description, Moore (1994) wrote that a soul mate is, “someone to whom we feel profoundly connected, as though the communicating and communing that take place between us were not the product of intentional efforts, but rather a divine grace” (p. xvii). Moore’s (1994) description of a soul mate was depicted within the data. This sense of divine grace—a divinely intervened, effortless, easeful sense of connecting and relating—was articulated by the majority of participants. However, this sense was not necessarily conveyed

within the context of the concept of soul mates; rather participants expressed these qualities about their relationship and about the ways in which they felt drawn to one another and committed to being together. It can be extrapolated that a transpersonal mate-selecting process involving any transpersonal incident or processes can be seen as a divinely inspired coming together of two soul mates.

Many similarities were found between this sample's description of love courtships with the literature reviewed on uncommonly bonded relationships. Achterberg (1998) asserted that an uncommonly bonded relationship has a profound transformative effect on the individuals within the couple. She termed this "soul crafting soul" (p. 5). This type of soul expanding interplay was evident within the data and contributed to aspects found in the themes of *transpersonal purpose for being brought together* and *inner preparation work*. Within the theme of *transpersonal purpose for being brought together*, many participants reported that, for them, the purpose for being in a relationship was for their own individual growth on both a personal level and a spiritual level. Additionally, participants reported that their relationship served the purpose of healing old spiritual, emotional, and psychological wounds and trauma, thereby helping craft the metamorphosis of their souls. In two cases, the soul-crafting work was so essential to Michael's and Matthew's spiritual growth that they were both informed through intuitive sources that, if they did not marry their partners, then their spiritual growth would be impeded, thus indicating the soul-enhancing qualities of the relationship each would have with his spouse. Similarly, within the theme of *inner preparation work*, several participants reported that the process of arriving at the relationship to their partners necessitated sufficient inner healing work and reparation of previous wounds to have fostered an opening that allowed for the relationship.

Once partnered up, they reported, the relationship continues to promote deeper transformation and growth.

According to Achterberg (1998), the second criterion for an uncommonly bonded relationship is that it contain an element of the transpersonal, such as feelings of being destined, a sense of grace, synchronicities, parapsychological or paranormal events, and/or psychic communications. All of these variables were evident within the participants' accounts of their courtship and of their relationship. Moreover, the uncommonly bonded couple was described as having and sharing some form of work and/or service that serves a worldly purpose together. This was also found to be true of the sample as a whole, as Connie, Maya, Moriah, Michael, Mark, Sophie, and Daniela each reported that, together with their spouses, they felt called to be of service to others and that they are fulfilling some higher purpose.

The sense of being “cut from the same cloth” (Achterberg, 1998, p. 8) was also expressed by 1 participant, Maya, in her account of feeling as if she and her partner Michael were originally twins in the womb but were then separated by his demise during her mother's car accident. Additionally, 2 participants expressed sharing a psychic, telepathic link with their partners that fits with Achterberg's (1998) depiction of a unique energetic, transpersonal exchange flowing between the uncommonly bonded pair. Lastly, the theme of *sense of recognition* found within the data and expressed explicitly by Maya, Nadine, Daniela, and Sandy, is another similarity with a theme that was articulated by individuals with whom Achterberg (1998) interviewed.

Achterberg (1998) wrote that the phenomenon of uncommon bonds was entitled “uncommon” because it was a rarely appreciated occurrence. The recognition and prevalence of these types of relationships appears to be on the rise and report of it is becoming more and more

popular within the social media outlets. The largely expressed interest in this study also demonstrates a breadth of recognition of these kinds of relationships. Perhaps this study as an adjunct to previous studies on uncommon bonds can add more recognition, understanding, and appreciation to the phenomenon.

Brown's (2000) report that certain love relationships contain an ineffable sense of magic and can serve as a pathway toward an experience of the divine proved to be an accurate assessment of the transpersonally inspired and selected relationship. The quality of magic was expressed by several participants and was found in the data manifesting as feelings, sensations, and the occurrence of highly unusual and serendipitous events. While he was in an uncommonly bonded relationship, Brown (2000) cited experiencing many signs and synchronicities that represented divinely yielded intervention, guidance, and approval about the union. As was presented in the results, a plethora of signs and synchronicities were found in this study and had a variety of significant impacts on the courtship and on the relationship. This theme of *synchronicities* and receiving signs appears wholly significant across the transpersonal literature.

#### *Counterpoints*

It is important to provide a reasonable dose of skepticism and present a counterbalance to some of the findings and ideas presented in this study so that readers do not misconstrue the results of this study as indicative of everyone's experience with romantic courtship. The romantic and magical nature of the topic under investigation might provoke beliefs that all romantic relationships that contain events that are synchronistic, psychical, paranormal, or indicative of mystical phenomena or connections are indicators that the relationship is destined to work out: for instance, that they will result in a happy and successful marriage that fulfills one's life purpose. Because there is much conditioning in that regard within the Western United

States culture, and especially amongst New Agers on the west coast, it is easy to believe in the magic and romance of predestined love, soul mates, and the fairytale of a spiritually sanctified union. Within certain circles of spiritual thought, many people construct strong meaning around the concepts of soul mates, psychic consultations, messages from oracles, dreams about a particular person, astrology readings, past lives, sacred contracts, out of body experiences, telepathic links, synchronicities, and signs. Individuals want to believe that these events and experiences hold magical meaning for the future of their love life. This can be dangerous in that it heightens expectations about the fairytale romance and can set individuals up for disappointment. Though this was not the subject of this dissertation, it is practically guaranteed that many people have experienced some form of the resulting *varieties of transpersonal mate selection* reported in this study during the course of a romantic relationship, and that, even with the prevalence of the incident, the partnership did not result in marriage or end in a mutually satisfying manner. It must be assumed and stated that, just because an individual experiences a transpersonal, psychical, mystical, or synchronistic event, it does not mean that that person is necessarily the “one” or the person that he or she is predestined to marry. The experience of meeting one’s soul mate also does not necessarily indicate that that person is the right person for marriage. One participant best expressed this:

I think if I thought somebody was my soul mate I think I’d probably think it means I’m in trouble, I’m in the wrong relationship [laughing] cause I’ve had soul mates who had borderline personality, who had multiple personality. I don’t know . . . it may have been, and in fact it might have been this huge transpersonal connection with those people in that moment, but it wasn’t anything reliable, so I don’t know what that means. I’ve had transcendent sex and it’s like ok, it’s fantastic, so is acid, and you get to a certain age and it takes a certain toll on your body—[laughing] time to settle down . . . There was something profound in the level of connection. In the interpersonal connection itself that was transcendent, it was erotic, it was mystical it was—it went to a place of nonduality where we were one and we were in the godhead together. I mean I’m not making light of that, it just wasn’t—it didn’t change anything. It kind of was like taking acid, if you come down, when you want to be together again, you have to take another hit. I love what Ram

Dass said about that. It's like, once you get the message, hang up the phone. Mistaking the experience for the context of the experience, you can't hold on to it. It doesn't matter if it's through mystical sex or a drug or—it's like that ain't it. It's what that is pointing to is the point . . . To me it's a partnership—it's a spiritual partnership. So I don't know about soul mates but it's a spiritual partnership. (Jamal)

According to Jamal, the point of all of these transpersonal type of experiences is not for smoke and mirror effects, glamour, or simply for the sake of having a “spiritual” or otherworldly experience. Rather, the point of this is about having, sharing, and cultivating a grounded and profound spiritual partnership.

Perhaps a companion study on relationships and courtships that had the occurrence of a transpersonal incidence and then did not work out and eventuate in marriage could just as easily be conducted and possibly negate the significance of the findings of this study. It is, therefore, hypothesized that, in those cases of relationships that had highly bizarre transpersonal incidences but did not become a married couple that those individuals, for whatever reason, were not predestined to marry. They were predestined to meet, but, if the relationship did not endure and establish a solid, successful, and life-fulfilling commitment, then it is the bias of this researcher that the relationship was not predestined for marriage. If it had been so predestined, it is this researcher's bias that the pair would have married, as the fulfillment of their purpose and destiny. It is further hypothesized that those relationships that had transpersonal events occur but did not work out did not contain the qualities found in the theme related to *qualities of a transpersonally selected partnership* with particular emphasis placed on the *sense of rightness*, the *sense of ease*, the *sense of “fit,” sense of trust*, and *timing*. It was found in this study that relationships that had transpersonal origins and have proven to be long-lasting, contain a certain quality of easiness to them, at least during the mate-selection process prior to marriage—as was the focused stage for the interviews in this study. Qualities of emotional volatility and disturbance with frequent

incidences of breaking up and getting back together again, with arguing and/or clashing frequently, were not described in the data. Moreover, it would also be interesting to investigate how much *inner work*, healing, growth, and transformation the individuals in the unsuccessful relationships did prior to meeting that partner. In this study, it was found that engaging in a rigorous endeavor of self-healing and *inner work* was a key predecessor to the relationship and also a vital part of deepening the relationship and moving towards a marriage commitment.

One thing of vital note in this study is the maturity level and age of the participants. The majority of the participants became engaged to their partners at mature ages above 25. The youngest ages of engagement were of 2 participants, Daniela and Connie, who became engaged to their partners at 24 and 22, respectively. Other participants got engaged in their late 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s. For some, the age at time of engagement was at a mature level due to the fact that 7 participants had already gone through a divorce and were embarking on a second or third marriage. For the majority of participants, the phenomenon of transpersonal mate selection resulting in a successful marriage relationship occurred amongst individuals of a relatively mature age bracket and stage of life; thereby indicating that this type of mate selection requires a certain amount of self-awareness and self-knowledge. It is speculated that perhaps relationships that have transpersonal phenomena but that did not evolve into marriage occur amongst individuals who are of a young age, low maturity level, and without sufficient inner work or self-healing.

Despite the prevalence of transpersonal experiences in the courtship and mate-selecting process, several participants acknowledged that, no matter how strong the spiritual connection or how closely they feel they are being divinely guided in the relationship, marriage and the relationship itself still requires a considerable amount of work and is not—and has not been—

without its fair amount of ups and downs. Even if there is a deep spiritual connection, it does not mean that the relationship is always easy. Several participants indicated that their marriages had often been rife with challenges.

*Researcher: How have all of these experiences been meaningful in your life?*

Well, for one thing, it is because of those that we stayed married. It felt like this is the person—one of the things I always liked about The Runes is that they don't directly answer your questions. Typically they up-level your questions, so what I noticed was when I asked, "Is this person Mr. Right kinda thing—the way it would say yes was "yes there is much work to be done with this person" [laugh]. And so I guess the message I got from that was this is the right work. What we're working on is not an indication that this is the wrong partner, it's what this person and I are together to work on—and what one thing that was not at all clear to me for a long time was ok I can see how I'm helping Bill out, but how the hell is this good for me? I feel really diminished in my—I feel traumatized by my experience of this relationship and diminished in my capacity for love. How is this good for me? And I have more sense of that now. But for a long time it wasn't at all clear to me—and although I did—from the very beginning—once I got that it was gonna be a rough ride, my feeling of it was I needed—he needed to be healed first and then it would be my turn but it was gonna have to go in that direction and I was on board for that. I guess there really isn't anything that means more to me than that deep sense of spiritual connect. See, that was the foundation of our connection and it's the thing that we've grabbed onto when falling from time to time—yes he's still there, I can still talk to that person, he can acknowledge that this is happening and that it's bad and that he's grateful that I'm still here, and that's been the foundation of the whole relationship. (Sandy)

And then she [spiritual teacher] said, "Now remember, marriage is a business. It's like a business; you have to work at it." And I knew she was telling me something I needed to know, and actually she's quite right. That's exactly true in my experience . . . So I realize that's not of your central concern but the reason I'm saying it—the relevance of it is it's not my idea of what a transcendent spiritual relationship would be in the sense that all my dreams would come true and we'd have transcendent sex every night and we'd gaze into each other's eyes endlessly and see god there and dissolve and melt. It wasn't that. It's never been that. I don't think it's ever gonna be that. To me, it's better than that. It's a real relationship with all the—it is work. It is very mundane in a lot of ways and we certainly have our petty neuroses that we act out with each other. But there is that conviction that I'm with someone who can recognize and respond to what I hold to be most important in life. (Jamal)

The point that a spiritually based marriage is not all transcendent, sparkly, and magical is important to note so that individuals don't naively expect the prevalence of transpersonal phenomena and spiritual connection to negate or minimize the real, eminently human, lived



experience of a marriage and the challenges that arise along the journey toward self-actualization and fulfillment of one's life purpose. However, having a strong spiritual connection has been reported to help serve as a strong foundation for the relationship.

### *Gender Discrepancies*

Based on the results of recruitment for this study, women are reporting having had these kinds of transpersonal mate-selecting experiences with more frequency than do men. The results also indicated that women were the ones consulting with psychics, oracles, and other divinatory tools in order to seek guidance about finding their husbands. The women in this study reported being more interested and curious about finding a life partner than did the men in this study. No men in this study reported consulting a psychic, oracle, or other divinatory resource. It is speculated that this is because women are more socialized than men to get married, as marriage is evidence of successful fulfillment of conventional gender roles. From the earliest age, girls become concerned with finding a husband, as the pressure to get married is abundant within the culture. This pressure thus propels some women to seek out council, in the form of a psychic, tarot cards, I-Ching, and so forth, regarding the state of their marital status in order to alleviate the anxiety associated with being single.

Since the responsibility for initiating the official marriage proposal question typically lies with the man, it was not surprising that men were the ones that received outside or intuitive guidance in the form of either hearing a voice or verbal communication with a spiritual teacher or intuitive counselor that catalyzed their decision to propose. Another observation about gender differences is that, for the third recruitment category of participants who held neither spiritual/transpersonal or religious views, the majority of those positions (4 out of 6), were filled by men. This is in contrast to the other categories where women were the majority. Perhaps this

is because the men in the secular category had events happen to them, thereby compelling, propelling, or forcing them to participate in the circumstances happening around them, whereas the women and men in the other categories actively sought out these types of experiences or were generally more open and available to the possibility of transpersonal experiences occurring and informing their lives.

### *Limitations*

Several limitations were evident and impacted the findings of the study so as to prevent the results from being generalizable to the population at large. In keeping with the previous discussion, an equal ratio of men to women was not found in accordance with the religious and spiritual views categorical requirements. Men who expressed holding religious or transpersonal beliefs had to be turned away because the maximum number of participants for those two categories had already been obtained. As a result, only 8 men were recruited for this study.

Another limitation was the lack of ethnic and cross-cultural diversity among the participants. The majority of the participants described their ethnicity as Caucasian, with only a handful of participants coming from mixed ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, all of the participants resided in the United States, and so the results of the study itself provide no indication that this phenomenon is occurring within countries and cultures outside of the United States (although some literature has been cited in chapter 2 that reports that this type of mate selection is common in other parts of the world). Finally, the small sample size of this study did not allow for making generalized conclusions about the prevalence of these phenomena and their associated meaning as they relate to the greater public and populations with other sexual orientations.

Because this study only investigated 18 individuals' experiences, the breadth and scope of other possible transpersonal experiences that occur within courtship narratives has not been

definitively established. It is highly likely that other types of transpersonal incidents exist that help initiate, bond, and catalyze a marital relationship. Each individual and each couple had a unique experience that manifested in idiographic and eclectic ways that make it challenging for the researcher to predict and speculate about inclusive or exclusive potential variables. When it comes to the realm of spirit or the divine, an endless variety of creations are possible and so many kinds of transpersonal mate-selection stories are speculated to exist. The study, therefore, can be seen as a platform for further research and discussion.

### *Conclusions and Implications for Transpersonal Psychology*

Despite the theory and research on synchronicities and the other reported findings, the phenomenon of transpersonal mate selection still remains mysterious and intangible even at the conclusion of this study. The findings of this research offer no definitive understanding about what is indeed actually occurring throughout these transpersonal events and throughout the mate-selection process. The finding of *synchronicities* as the most prevalent transpersonal incident at play in the courtship process does not necessarily elucidate anything further than the occurrence of it, because what constitutes and causes a synchronicity, despite the literature on this topic, is still elusive. This researcher presented a conceptual schema that provided a narrative through which to view the development of these transpersonal events within the courtship process within the larger context of the individuals' and couple's lives; however, this conceptual schema is still speculative, subjective, and theoretical, much like the evolutionary and social psychology perspectives. The experiences and the phenomena presented are still ultimately unknown and mysterious. The results of the study contain no predictive powers to ascertain any future findings or supraphenomenological knowledge. Rather, this study adds an alternative perspective on

events that have occurred in some individuals lives and lends meaning to these events in a way that provides a non-religious spiritual understanding that is lacking in other theories.

The themes of *transpersonal certainty factor* and *qualities of a transpersonally selected relationship* are themes that are most personally and professionally meaningful to this researcher. Often, during courtship and dating rituals, individuals find themselves confused and uncertain about how to know if the person they are dating is the right person for them to marry. A disconnection between what individuals think in their heads, what they feel in their hearts, and what they sense in their guts occurs. Due to pressures to marry and desires to be partnered, people may mistake thoughts and ideas about who they are looking for and who they think is their right partner for feelings of genuine love and rightness. Gut feelings and intuitions about whether one's partner is "right" or "wrong" may often be overlooked, or intentionally or unintentionally unnoticed. Guidance may be sought from other people, and that can itself create more confusion and disconnect. Individuals may not know themselves and have self-awareness of their own intuitive faculties and relationship to Spirit or the divine. In some cases, many people are searching for a sign to let them know whether a person is their soul mate or whether they should get married. The themes of *transpersonal certainty factor* and the *qualities of a transpersonally selected relationship* help to clarify and shed light on the question of How do you know? These themes and the accompanying stories provide examples of what it is like to have certainty about one's partner choice. These themes can serve as guidance to help individuals measure the qualities of their own relationship with the qualities of ease, rightness, and trust described by participants in this study. These themes in particular and the findings in general can help foster spiritual and intuitive discernment about partner choice and marriage. The findings of this study can inspire those seeking these kinds of qualities and relationships by

offering hope and a sense of trust in the dating process, by granting permission to individuals to relax and allow the unseen forces of the universe to participate in the mate-selection process, and by helping individuals cultivate and allow intuition and spiritual guidance to play a bigger role in the partner-selecting and marriage-decision processes. This is a more spiritually aligned approach to dating that fosters clarity, ease, trust, certainty and a felt sense of rightness as opposed to the confusion, doubts, fear, and disconnection that may arise through cognitive ruminations in attempting to make this important life decision.

The findings of this study may prove relevant and useful to the field of transpersonal psychology because they establish a framework and context for the existence of these types of experiences occurring with regard to mate selection. According to the abundance of literature within the popular media such as television, film, and literature, people are fascinated by the entwinement of love and spirituality. Many are on a search for a type of love relationship that is infused with the divine and feels as if it originated in some divine source. This interest appears to be increasing over time, and, as ideas about intentional manifesting and paranormal phenomena become more and more mainstream, people may be looking more toward spirituality and transpersonal psychology for answers, guidance, and theory regarding vital aspects of human experience such as love, dating, relationships, and marriage.

This study serves as a bridge between the literature and phenomena of parapsychology and paranormal activity and the literature available on mate selection. The findings provide evidence of an overlap in these areas and evidence that individuals are indeed experiencing and reporting transpersonal events that inform their marriage-decision process. Individuals have many astounding, awe-inspiring, and oftentimes bizarre stories about how they met their spouse and how they came to know that s/he was “the one.” Oftentimes, evolutionary psychology

theories and social psychology theories on mate selection do not quite illuminate the unknown and inexplicable factors that bring two people together. These fields simply do not have the language or historical context from which to document and explain transpersonal phenomena, as it does not necessarily fall under traditional scientific purview. Moreover, this study validates those individuals who report having these kinds of events and normalizes these experiences. Perhaps this study can begin to allow individuals to share their transpersonal stories without needing to minimize them or feel self-conscious or embarrassed about them. As transpersonal, paranormal, parapsychological events become more and more socially accepted, this study establishes a precedent for individuals to feel less self-conscious and embarrassed to self-disclose their transpersonal mate-selection narratives.

Additionally, this study may also provide a scholarly roadmap and contextual understanding for individuals who are in courtships that contain features of transpersonal mate selection and feel uncertain or confused by their experiences. The results of the study may inform individuals and counselors alike about the specific features that are relevant for spiritual premarital counseling. The findings in this study, as presented in this paper in this format, might inspire and promote new ideas and thoughts about how to find one's right mate and inform others about the qualitative feelings associated with being in relationship with the right person with whom one shares a life's purpose. Likewise, because it appeared to be in such a high demand during the recruitment phase of the study, the researcher is strongly considering using the findings of this study to formulate a less scholarly process for helping individuals find their right partner. At the very least, this study has expanded the discourse on the conventional views of mate selection.

Further research could continue to solicit for other varieties of transpersonal experiences that had significant impact on the mate-selection process. A study involving participants from outside California, and perhaps from other countries, would likewise expand the generalizability of the results. Empirical research on the effectiveness of intentionally manifesting a mate for marriage has yet to be conducted and could provide a more specific scientific basis for some of the results on manifesting a mate that were found in this study. A study comparing couples who report having had a transpersonal mate-selection experience as against couples who have not and investigating any differences or similarities between their sense of purpose in the world, both as individuals and as a couple, could provide more information about the spiritual evolution of consciousness and mate selection in general. How is their sense of being together to fulfill a specific purpose dependent on their mate-selecting processes?

In summary, the purpose of this study was to explore transpersonal factors and variables that influenced individuals toward marriage so as to provide a new and transpersonal understanding of the features of mate selection. This investigation set out to shed further light upon phenomena that have been alluded to by other researchers yet have not been fully elaborated upon within the context of mate selection. The study sought to deepen an understanding of the inexplicable, magical X-factor that brings people together and helps foster a bond for marriage. Limited by the number of participants, this study uncovered 19 distinct transpersonal phenomena that influenced individuals toward the selection of their particular mate and propelled them toward marriage. The varieties of transpersonal incidences were organized according to when they occurred in the relationship. This organization revealed that certain transpersonal incidents occurred before the actual relationship became available, before the two individuals even met. Several transpersonal incidences transpired during the initial stages of the

developing relationship, helped the couple pay special attention to the union, and also helped deepen the bond. Transpersonal events were evident during individuals' processes for deciding whether to marry their partner and had significant impacts on the decision. In addition to the delineation of where and when the transpersonal mate-selection experiences occurred, themes emerged from the data that indicated a sense of certainty that was rooted in a transpersonal awareness or a specific transpersonal event. This phenomenon was called a *transpersonal certainty factor*. The data also revealed that, for the selected individuals in this study, many felt there was a purpose for being brought together with their mates and that this purpose was of a spiritual and transpersonal nature.

Finally, this study articulated certain qualities that were found to describe these types of relationships that were inspired by transpersonal mate-selection processes. This research has verified that spiritual forms of mate selection and beliefs about spiritual forms of mate selection are operant in a segment of the population. As Braud (1995) stated, "Spirit permeates the material and impacts upon all facets of our lives, both exceptional and mundane—upon our bodies, our emotions, our relationships, and our expressions of creativity" (p. 19). This study has demonstrated the perceived impact that Spirit has upon relationships and marriage choice.



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## Appendix A: Consent Form

To the Participant in This Research:

Thank you for your interest in this study. You are invited to participate in a study that investigates the mysterious, magical, spiritual, extraordinary, cosmic or synchronistic factors that influence a person's decision to marry their particular romantic partner. These factors can occur in a variety of forms and can include mystical or meditative states and experiences, seeing and/or receiving signs of guidance, synchronistic events, major life transforming events, peak experiences, consultations with psychics or oracles such as the Tarot or I-Ching, dreams, and much more.

The research seeks to investigate these alternative modalities used to select a mate that are meaningful to many people but have not received much attention by scholars of mate selection. Engaging in structured self-reflection about your spiritual and extraordinary experience of coming to marry your partner can promote well-being and insight that perhaps you didn't realize before and can serve to validate and acknowledge your experience. Your participation will also benefit this research and help to expand the field of Transpersonal Psychology.

You will be asked to participate in a private and confidential hour and a half-long interview about your own experiences regarding the decision to marry your partner. On the day of the interview you will be asked to reflect on answers to five preparatory interview questions. There is no need to write the answers down, simply think about them. Pre-interview questions should take approximately 15 minutes. The interview will take place at the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, California, or at another designated and neutral location at a time that is convenient to you. The interview will be audio recorded. I will contact you a few days after the interview with a follow up phone call or email to see if you remember any further information. This follow up should take approximately 15 minutes but can take longer if the participant needs it.

Your name will be omitted from all records and will be replaced with an assigned fictional name that will connect you with your interview transcript. You have the option of choosing this fictitious name, or I may select one for you. Your name as well as the audio recordings of the interview will be kept confidential and will only be shared with my dissertation committee and the transcriber. The fictitious name will be the name used in the written report of the study. All materials including the informed consent form, the key to the fictional names, and the interview transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, and the key will be shared with no one. The transcriber of the recordings will be mandated to sign a strict confidentiality agreement before typing up the interviews, and the finished results of the study will use your fictional name to protect your anonymity.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may decide not to participate you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue your participation without penalty or prejudice. Should you terminate your participation, all of your records and transcripts will be destroyed.

The study is designed to minimize any potential risks to you. As such, I have devised a thorough screening questionnaire to ensure that you are appropriate for the study. I have also carefully and thoughtfully developed interview questions that are neutral but can promote well-being and greater insight. At the end of the interview there will be an opportunity for you to debrief and ask any questions that you would like so that you feel stable and safe when you leave. A neutral location has been allocated to make sure that you are safe, and the Research Ethics Committee of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology has reviewed my research proposal to ensure that it meets the required ethical standards. However, discussing your experiences of your marriage decision might bring up unexpected emotions. Should that occur I will provide you with a referral to a psychotherapist in your area in case you would like to consult with someone. Also, if at any time you have concerns or questions, I will make every effort to discuss them with you and inform you of the options to resolve these concerns.

You may request a summary of the final research findings as they are presented in the results and discussion sections of my dissertation by providing your email address at the bottom of this form. Please note that nothing about your individual responses will be sent to you, and only a summary of the group responses will be sent.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me, the primary researcher, Sarah Neustadter at (650) 380-1586 or Dr. Frederic Luskin, chair of my dissertation committee as well as the head of the Research Ethics Committee at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology at (650) 493-4184.

I attest that I have read and understood this form, had the study explained by the researcher, and had any questions about this research answered to my satisfaction. My participation in this research is entirely voluntary and no pressure has been applied to encourage participation. My signature indicates my willingness to be a participant in this research.

---

 Participant's Name (please print)

---

 Date

---

 Participant's Signature

---

 Date

---

 Researcher's Signature

 Sarah Neustadter  
 XXXX@gmail.com

---

 Date



Yes, I would like to have the research results sent to the following e-mail address:

---

Fictitious Code Name of Your Choice:

---

## Appendix B: Screening Questionnaire

To be administered by telephone and conducted by the researcher, Sarah Neustadter

Script: "I am going to ask you a few questions to determine whether you are eligible for this study. Please answer all of the questions asked. Your answers will remain confidential, and I will be the only person to see your specific responses."

"Please tell me your"

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Address: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

6. How do you describe your race or ethnicity?: \_\_\_\_\_

7. How do you define your sexual orientation?: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Are you fluent in English? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Are you married or engaged? \_\_\_\_\_

10. For how long have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_

(a) When did you get engaged? \_\_\_\_\_

11. How old were you when you got married or engaged? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Have you had any magical, mystical, transpersonal, psychic, supernatural, or spiritual experiences that helped you decide to marry (or become engaged to) your partner?

\_\_\_\_\_

(a) If so, please describe your experience briefly? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

13. Were you on any substances at the time of your experience? \_\_\_\_\_

14. Do you have any religious or spiritual beliefs? \_\_\_\_\_

(a) If religious, what religion? \_\_\_\_\_

(b) If spiritual, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Would you identify yourself as having a transpersonal orientation? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Do you have any spiritual or transpersonal practices? \_\_\_\_\_

(a) If yes, please describe them: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) If yes, how often to you practice them? \_\_\_\_\_

If the applicant's responses fulfill the criteria of the study, I will move on to the time commitment portion of the questionnaire.

If the applicant does not meet the above criteria I will say:

"Thank you for your time today. You currently do not meet the needed criteria to participate in this study. If you would like a summary report of the findings of the study, I would be happy to send that to you at the completion of the research."

Keep this information on file and include those who want the data in the final mailing of summary reports.

### **Time Commitment if Candidate Meets Eligibility Criteria**

1. Will you be able to meet for 1½ hour in [Palo Alto] or [Los Angeles] to complete the interview?

\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_ No

2. If you are asked to participate in this study is it OK for the interview to be audio-taped and transcribed?

\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_ No

3. Looking at your calendar, when will be a good time for you to complete the initial phase of the study? \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix C: E-mail Regarding Participation in Study

Dear Participant,

Thank you once again for your interest and availability in my research endeavor. I am happy to say that you have been selected to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, I would like to schedule a convenient time to meet with you in person or talk on the telephone in order to conduct the hour and a half interview.

The interview will be audio-recorded, and your identity will be kept anonymous during this process, and all communications will be kept confidential. In addition, during the interview, if there are any questions you do not want to answer, you have the option to not answer.

Please let me know by [specified date] if you would like to participate in this study. If you are interested, please indicate a few time slots that are most convenient for you.

I am very grateful for your willingness to participate in my research, and I appreciate all the time, energy, and commitment that you are donating of yourself. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Sarah Neustadter, Doctoral Candidate  
Institute of Transpersonal Psychology  
[XX@XX.com](mailto:XX@XX.com)  
(650) XXX-XXXX



## Appendix E: Interview Question Protocol

1. How did you and your partner meet?
2. Please tell me about your first impressions of him/her?  
Follow up question:
  - A. What was your first date like?
  - B. Did you experience love at first sight?
3. How similar or different were your backgrounds, upbringings, and values?
4. Did you have a sense early on that you would marry him/her?  
Follow up, if yes:
  - A: Please describe.
5. Tell me about your magical, transpersonal, psychic, mystical, synchronistic, intuitive, or paranormal experience that occurred during the courtship to your partner.  
Probes, if needed:
  - A. At what point in your relationship/courtship did you have this experience?
  - B. Have you had any type of experience like this before?
    - a. If yes, what was it?
    - b. How often do you have these types of experiences?
6. What can you tell me about the specific qualities of your experience?  
Probes:
  - A. What were you feeling?
  - B. What were the sensations that you felt?
  - C. How did your body feel?
  - D. How did your emotions change or remain the same from before, during, and after the experience?
7. What do you think contributed to, precipitated, or caused this experience?
8. How has this experience been meaningful in your life?
9. How did this experience influence your decision to marry your partner?  
Probes, if needed:
  - A. How did this experience transform the way you saw your partner?
  - B. How did this experience alleviate any doubts that you might have had about marrying your partner?
  - C. At what point did you think or know that you wanted to marry your partner?
10. Are there any other ways in which this experience has been meaningful in your life?
11. Did you ever have any doubts about him/her being the right partner for you?

If yes:

A. What were they?

B. How did you overcome those doubts?

12. What are your views about god, a higher power, or divine intervention?

Follow up:

A: Do you believe in destiny or fate?

13. What are your views about soul mates?

Probe, if needed:

A. Do you believe that your partner is your soul mate?

14. Is there anything else that I did not think to ask you or that you would like to share?

## Appendix F: Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement

As a transcriptionist, I agree to maintain confidentiality with regard to all participant information, specifically the tapes from the interview sessions, but also the assessments and any other related written material. I will also help to aid the researcher in protecting the identity of participants to ensure anonymity. I agree to securely store the data that I transcribe, and I will keep the data in a locked filing cabinet and/or encrypt the data if it is stored on computer as well.

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Transcriber's Signature

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Date

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Researcher's Signature

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Date



## Appendix G: Preinterview Priming Questions

Dear Participant,

These are questions for you to think about and answer on the day of the interview. They are intended to get you in the frame of mind of your significant experience. Please take a few moments to think about your responses.

What had you eaten for breakfast on the day of your experience?

Describe the weather and the atmosphere around you before you had your significant experience?

When you had your experience were you sitting, standing, or lying down? What position was your body in at the time?

What thought was going through your mind right before you had this experience?

Can you recall the feelings in your body as you were having the experience?

## Appendix H: Participants' Processes for Manifesting a Life Partner

### *Nadine's Process*

1. Have clarity of intention.
2. Have the belief. The belief is not always easy:
  - a) Work on the belief:
 

“So I had to work on accepting myself - to believe that it was ok that I was acceptable. And love myself as I was . . . Believe that I had a lot to offer. So I had to work on the belief. “
3. Trust intuition: “Really cultivating that, and making an active effort when I had intuitions, little things, whatever it was, call a friend, to do it, to act on it. Because knowing again that the more I got, more I followed through with that the more I would receive. “
4. Let go of specific results or any kind of specific outcomes.

Try to look at the essence of what you want. Not the specifics. Not you know – he’s six feet tall and has dark hair and makes \$100,000 a year, whatever, drives this kind of car. Not the specifics, but more like what is the essence? And essence boils down to how do you want to feel? How do you want to feel when you’re with this person, or in this relationship, or making this much money, or whatever it is.

5. Be able to love what is:

The whole Byron Katie thing, which is embrace where you are now, because if you’re hating where you are now or who you are now, it’s impossible to start believing that these wonderful things are gonna come to you.

6. Use affirmations:

Not too specific . . . but just so they would have the right feel to them.

“Thank you God for providing me this wonderful whatever.”

If I lose something and try to find it, I visualize it coming in my hands and saying that. It always shows up . . .

“Thank you God for guiding me to or guiding this man to me who is compatible in all ways. Body, mind, spirit.”

“Thank you God for bringing this man \_\_\_\_\_ to my life.”

“Thank you God for guiding me to be with this person who is, all that stuff . . .”

### *Matthew's Process*

1. Commit to a path of self-healing involving books, workshops, retreats, and meditation.

2. Visualize the desired partner and describe in vivid detail, what he she is like, down to details scent and taste. Make a list and write it down.

3. Call on Spirit and tell Spirit what “I believe that I want.”

4. Release the visualization and prayer saying,

You know better than I do, I’m coming from ego and mind here, I believe it’s what I want but of course you know much better than I. I want to align my ideal with yours, so if anything about this is not good for me, block it. But if it is good for me, bring it. Or bring me the experiences I need so that I can earn the right to have it.

5. Read the list in contemplation on occasion and then let it go.

6. Watch what comes up in your life, the books, magazines, articles, and people.

7. Know that the process takes time and inner work. “It didn’t happen immediately, I had to do this stuff first.”