



**RESEARCH  
BRIEF**

# The Ultimate Recycling? Positing the Effect of Past Life Belief on Fair Trade Consumption: A Preliminary Study

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## HIGHLIGHTS

People who believe in reincarnation also tend to purchase sustainable and fair trade products.

## ABSTRACT

As societal and environmental injustices are increasingly prevalent, expectations for organizations to implement sustainable practices, such as Fair Trade, have grown. Previous research has demonstrated that Fair Trade consumers have the emotional attribute of compassion and the educational trait of desire for sustainability awareness. This paper builds on prior research by introducing consumers' spiritual attributes of past life belief (PLB) and positing the effect of PLB on Fair Trade consumption (FTC). The article is novel as it is the first to introduce and link the spiritual attribute of PLB to FTC while addressing racism, religious discrimination, sexism, classism, societal and environmental stewardship, and nationalism. The sample size for this study is one hundred fourteen, N=114. Results were analyzed through hierarchical multiple regression. It was found that PLB is positively related to FTC.

## KEYWORDS

Past life belief, fair trade, sustainability, societal and environmental stewardship, social identity theory.

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## INTRODUCTION

The objective of this research is to determine whether individuals who hold PLB are likely to engage in FTC. The purpose of this paper is neither to prove/disprove the concept of reincarnation nor to analyze the reasons that cause individuals to accept this spiritual belief over other spiritual beliefs. While these topics are important, they are outside the scope of this paper.

This paper highlights literature which suggests that the attributes of individuals who hold PLB are compatible with those who consume Fair Trade products. Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory are fea-

tured as foundations in the theoretical framework. Belief in past lives is growing at approximately 30% of the U.S. population (Pew Research Center, 2021 and Kain, 2021) and over 20% of the European and South American populations (Moraes et al., 2021).

## PLB Defined

In this article, PLB is defined as an individual's belief that they have in the past and will in the future be born into different races, ethnicities, religions, genders, nationalities, and social classes in order to learn and evolve. This definition was derived from past life regression and



life-between-lives regression literature (Weiss, 1988; 1992; 1997; 2000; 2004; Newton, 1994; 2000).

Past life regression is a method that places subjects into a state of deep relaxation and enhanced focus to access memories that some individuals believe are from their past lives. Brian L. Weiss conducted hundreds of past life regressions (Weiss, 1988; 1992; 1997; 2000; 2004). For example, the past life regressions of one of his female patients revealed memories which she believes are from her past lives as a Parisian boy, a Native American woman, a Moroccan boy, an ancient Egyptian female, and a German male soldier (Weiss, 1988). Weiss (1988) states, “we change race, sex, religion, physical health or impairment, and nationality during our incarnations because we have to learn from all sides. We are rich and poor, powerful and weak, privileged and deprived. We learn by experiencing everything” (p. 220).

Michael Newton also conducted hundreds of life-between-lives regressions (Newton, 1994; 2000). His work helped found the Michael Newton Institute (MNI), which recorded more than 55,000 life-between-lives cases in over 40 countries (MNI, 2023). Newton (1994) states, “the essential purpose of reincarnation is self-improvement” (p. 41-42), and “souls do have the freedom to choose when, where, and whom they want to be in their physical lives” (p. 203). He documented cases where his patients believed remembering their between-lives intermission periods. For example, his subjects believed that in this intermission period, they would reflect on their prior lives before choosing to reincarnate into the next life (Newton, 1994; 2000). Newton (1994) states that “souls are not inclined toward life selections based on ethnicity or nationalism. These products of human separatism are taught in childhood” (p.218) and “by surviving different challenges, our soul identity is strengthened” (p. 230). He advises that the life between life “movement is designed to help human beings mentally become whole by connecting with the essence of Oneness in the life between lives” (MNI, 2023).

### Social Identity Theory, Self-Categorization Theory, and Linkage to PLB

According to Bhattacharya et al. (2009), Social Identity Theory (SIT) “describes how individuals categorize themselves as members of social groups or organizations” (p. 264). For instance, “identification represents a sense of *oneness* between an individual’s self-concept and their concept of the group or organization with which they consider themselves a member. This overlap of values can be heard anecdotally when references to ‘I’ become references to ‘we’” (p. 264). Hornsey (2008) elabo-

rates further on SIT stating, “Tajfel and Turner [among the theory’s founders] argued that [as individuals strive] for a positive social identity, group members are motivated to think and act in ways that achieve or maintain a positive distinctiveness between one’s group [i.e., ingroup or intragroup] and relevant outgroups [i.e., intergroup]” (p. 207). Concerning Self-Categorization Theory (SCT), Hornsey (2008) states that “Turner and colleagues nominate three levels of self-categorization that are important to the self-concept: the superordinate category of the self as a human being (or human identity), the intermediate level of the self as a member of a social ingroup as defined against other groups of humans (social identity), and the subordinate level of personal self-categorizations based on interpersonal comparisons (personal identity)” (p. 208). Per Bohm et al. (2020), “cooperation with outsiders [i.e., intergroup members] is often impaired by prejudice, discrimination, and spite” (p. 947). Moreover, “intergroup conflict affects the perceptions (e.g., stereotyping, prejudice), emotions (e.g., fear, hate), and behaviors (e.g., discrimination, aggression) of the individual involved” (Bohm et al., 2020, p. 950).

A great deal of SIT and SCT literature has focused on negative intergroup dynamics (e.g., hostilities and prejudice). For example, according to Bohm et al. (2020), “there has been a steady increase in the number of research articles focusing on topics related to intergroup conflict in leading social psychology journals over the last 25 years” (p. 948). One can argue that this is due in part to ongoing societal injustices, including but not limited to sexism (Russo et al., 2011), racism (Matsuda et al., 2020), and religious discrimination (Scheitle & Ecklund, 2020). Scholars have also analyzed positive intergroup attitudes and dynamics, e.g. (Crisp et al., 2009, Dovidio et al., 2011, Mazziotta et al., 2011). In addition, Bohm et al. (2020) highlight ways “to de-bias intergroup relations” (p. 947).

In theory, PLB holders are expected to engage in positive intergroup relations. Since PLB holders believe that they may reincarnate into people of different social groups (i.e., different races, religions, social classes, genders, and nationalities) in a future life on earth, they may be less likely to hold hostility and prejudice towards these groups. In addition, they might be more likely to support societal and environmental stewardship, as they expect to occupy the earth again in another lifetime. Therefore, they would likely purchase Fair Trade products, as those products support the livelihoods of various social groups and the environment. In theory, individuals who hold PLB are also likely to pursue positive intragroup relations. Bohm et al. (2020) advise that SIT “proposes a direct link between a positive social identity and self-esteem...indi-

viduals can follow different strategies to achieve positive distinctiveness” (p. 952). SIT supports the notion that membership alone fosters self-esteem. In theory, PLB holders might also acquire self-esteem by taking actions that align with one of their ingroup identities, e.g., being part of a PLB group. For example, sharing news with their PLB peers about Fair Trade product purchases may be used to encourage other intragroup members to follow their lead and become engaged in causes that support societal and environmental stewardship. This paper contributes to the literature on SIT and SCT positive intragroup and intergroup dynamics’ literature by inferring and discussing how positive group relations may be applied to societal and environmental stewardship through the spiritual lens of PLB.

In addition, it is important to note that some scholars have used SIT and SCT to develop a higher-level global social identity construct, e.g., global human identification (Reese & Kohlmann, 2015). For example, invoking Social Identity Theory, Reese and Kohlmann (2015) conducted initial empirical research with a small sample (n=68) and discovered that “participants who identified strongly with all humanity would rather choose a Fair Trade product alternative over a conventional one, compared with low identifiers” (p. 98). Conducting a logistic regression analysis, the authors found that global identification was mildly and positively related to Fair Trade consumption. This relationship accounted for approximately 8% of covariance.

The global identification construct is gaining popularity in psychological discussions as it entails harmonious intergroup dealings and concern for all humans (Reese & Kohlmann, 2015). For example, “recent research findings in the tradition of social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) suggest that identification with the largest human social group relates to a variety of desirable outcomes, such as concern for global human rights, humanitarian needs, or contributions for humanitarian relief (McFarland, Webb & Brown, 2012), intergroup helping and intergroup empathy (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013) as well as cross-national cooperation (Buchan, Brewer, Grimalda, Wilson, Fatas, & Foddy, 2011). Based on these findings, [Reese & Kohlmann (2015)] argue that global identification may also relate to consumer choices” (Reese & Kohlmann, 2015, p. 98). In addition, “a growing body of research suggests that identification with the world community is a meaningful psychological construct. McFarland (2010; McFarland et al., 2012) developed a measure of ‘identification with all humanity’ as a deep and positive concern for all humanity—a ‘belief that all humanity is “family”’ (McFarland, 2010; p. 1760, as cited in Reese & Kohlmann, 2015, p. 99). Furthermore, Buchan et al.

(2011) conducted a multinational study and found “that an inclusive social identification with the world community is a meaningful psychological construct that plays a role in motivating cooperation that transcends parochial interests” (Buchan et al., 2011, p. 821). According to Buchan et al. (2011), “global social identity is associated with a desire to maximize collective outcomes and motivates individuals to contribute to collective goods regardless of whether they expect a return on their investment” (p. 826). Moreover, Reysen & Katzarska-Miller (2013) examined “the antecedents and outcomes of identifying with a superordinate identity—global citizen” (p. 858) and found “the pathways to identification with global citizens, and the prosocial outcomes to feeling connected to the superordinate global category” (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, p. 866). According to Reysen & Katzarska-Miller (2013), “global citizenship [identity] predicts prosocial values of intergroup empathy, valuing diversity, social justice, environmental sustainability, intergroup helping, and a felt responsibility to act for the betterment of the world” (p. 869). Hence, the empirical studies of Buchan et al. (2011), Reysen & Katzarska-Miller (2013), and Reese & Kohlmann (2015) support the notion that some individuals can and do identify as members of the largest human social group. The literature supports this paper’s assumption that PLB is related to global social identity.

SIT and the superordinate category of the SCT, i.e., identifying oneself as a member of the human family, is compatible to the PLB construct, as it is defined as an individual’s belief that they have in the past and will in the future be born into different races, ethnicities, religions, genders, nationalities, and social classes in order to learn and evolve. Therefore, per the PLB definition, in theory, individuals are expected to also view themselves as part of the *human family*, as the PLB construct infers a sense of oneness or interconnectedness towards others.

Because societal and environmental injustices, due in part to racism, sexism, religious discrimination, classism, and nationalism, are increasingly prevalent (Matsudaet et al., 2020; Cosgel, 2020; Liu et al., 2004; Russo et al., 2011; Amadi, 2020), this paper incorporates SIT and SCT to address these issues through the lens of PLB. Regardless of continued attempts to eliminate racism, it prevails globally, leading to severe negative implications on mental health, education systems, economic development, and societal relations (Matsudaet et al., 2020). Persecution based on religion includes the genocides of the twentieth century and ongoing global attacks on minorities (Cosgel, 2020). Discrimination thrives under populist regimes, which acquire political support by dividing their populations into segments based on race, nationality, and religion while marginalizing immigrant communities

(Cosgel, 2020). Upward classism is discrimination toward people belonging to a higher social class, while downward classism is oppression towards people belonging to a lower social class (Liu et al., 2004). Lateral classism is manipulative behavior that keeps individuals within a social class (Liu et al., 2004). Sexism is discrimination towards individuals based on gender (Russo et al., 2011). Nationalism and protectionism are on the rise in America and Europe, which will increase discriminatory practices and decrease policies that promote inclusiveness (Amadi, 2020).

Hundreds of past life regressions (Weiss, 1988; 1992; 1997; 2000; 2004) and life between lives regressions (Newton, 1994; 2000) found that participants believed that they reincarnated in different races, ethnicities, genders, religions, social classes and nationalities to learn and evolve. Therefore, it is theorized that individuals who hold PLB can view themselves *in someone else's shoes* (i.e., the individual can imagine themselves as a person of a different race, ethnicity, gender, religion, social class, and nationality). Hence, PLB holders are likely to share a sense of oneness or interconnectedness with others and be able to empathize with them because of these beliefs, which is consistent with the tenets of SIT and SCT.

### Fair Trade and the Possible PLB Connection

There is increasing awareness and expectations for firms and organizations to embrace sustainable practices and implement Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies (Matten, Crane, & Chapple, 2003; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Castaldo, Perrini, Misani, & Tencati, 2009; Harwood, Humby, & Harwood, 2011; Wicks, Keevil, & Parmar, 2012; and Craig & Allen, 2013). For example, Wicks et al. (2012) found that a growing number of customers believe that organizations should be mindful of the ecological consequences of their operations and develop environmentally sustainable business practices. In addition, McWilliams & Siegel (2001) define CSR as the "actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law" (p. 117).

Fair Trade is a form of sustainable business which encourages entrepreneurial endeavors among communities in developing countries (Blowfield & Dolan, 2010). Fair Trade is defined as "an approach to business and to development based on dialogue, transparency, and respect that seeks to create greater equity in the international trading system. Fair Trade businesses partner with farmers and craftspeople in developing countries who are socially and economically marginalized in finding markets and customers for their goods" (FTF, 2023). Fair

Trade products include many commodities such as food, clothing, personal care, accessories, and home furnishing. Fair Trade organizations adhere to the following ten principles, which are approved by the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO): "1) creating opportunities for economically disadvantaged producers, 2) transparency/accountability, 3) fair trading practices, 4) fair payment, 5) ensuring no child labor or forced labor, 6) commitment to non-discrimination, gender equity and freedom of association, 7) ensuring good working conditions, 8) providing capacity building, 9) promoting Fair Trade, and 10) respect for the environment" (WFTO, 2023).

Fair Trade products are often priced higher than conventional alternatives due to the inclusion of a Fair Trade premium cost, which is used to support programs that adhere to the above-referenced 10 WFTO categories. According to Doherty et al. (2013), "Fair Trade products in the mainstream are suggested to provide the opportunity for ethical/political consumers to exercise economic voting" (p. 177). Moreover, according to Witkowski (2005), "Fair Trade applies moral criteria to consumers' decisions" (p. 25). Therefore, Fair Trade consumers know they spend more money to purchase an ethical product which supports society and the environment.

Thus, the literature indicates that as an expectation for firms and groups to act sustainably grows, Fair Trade offers a path for customers to buy merchandise that positively impacts society and the environment. In addition, the sustainable manufacturing, merchandise lifecycles, and supply chains of Fair Trade goods may offer an opportunity for the empowerment of marginalized communities when these groups utilize their talents and artistry to create products that appeal to the characteristics of unique target markets (FTF, 2023).






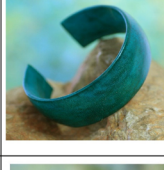


Prior research suggests that Fair Trade shoppers have the emotional attribute of compassion for themselves, others, and the environment (COOE) (Musa & Gopalakrishna, 2022). The literature also suggests that Fair Trade consumers have the educational trait of desire for sustainability awareness (DSA) (Musa & Gopalakrishna, 2022). Benevolence and universalism are also qualities held by consumers of Fair Trade (Doran, 2009). This paper is novel as it dives deeper into consumers' traits by introducing and analyzing the spiritual attribute of PLB and positing that PLB is positively related to FTC.

Due to their unique manufacturing processes, Fair Trade products are advertised to highlight their positive societal and environmental impacts (Davenport & Low, 2012). Fair Trade ads typically include photos of the worker who manufactured the product and a summary of their background (Musa & Gopalakrishna, 2022). This is important to note because as a PLB consumer reviews



the Fair Trade worker’s photos and reads about the lives of these individuals from different races, ethnicities, religions, genders, nationalities, and social classes, the PLB consumer may feel inclined to purchase the Fair Trade product, which supports that worker and the environment. Because the PLB consumer believes that they have in the past and will in the future be born into different races, ethnicities, religions, genders, nationalities, and social classes, they may be able to easily identify with the worker depicted in the ad. See Figure 1 for examples of Fair Trade ads (Novica, 2023). For instance, it is likely that the PLB consumer may experience a sense of *oneness* with the worker rather than a sense of *separation* from the worker, as the typical societal barriers of racism, religious discrimination, sexism, classism, and nationalism are likely less relevant to the PLB consumer (Weiss, 1988; 1992; 1997; 2000; 2004; Newton, 1994; 2000; Bhattacharya et al., 2009; Reese & Kohlmann, 2015).

The literature supports the assumption that individuals who hold the spiritual attribute of PLB are expected to have not only an awareness of interconnectedness towards others but also an interest in supporting society and the environment. Therefore, they are likely to seek out and consume Fair Trade products, as these products promote societal and environmental stewardship.

Photo of Fair Trade Worker	Photo of Fair Trade Product	Excerpt of Fair Trade Worker's Life Story
		<b>Fernando Cano – Peru</b> "I was born in 1973 in the district of Macate in Ancash. My parents were engaged in agriculture. I consider myself a very creative man, and very enterprising. One of my dreams is to continue growing as a textile artist, to be recognized not only locally but at the international level, and to give a better quality of life to my family."
		<b>Khun Boom – Thailand</b> "I have a passion for life, art and jewelry. I was born in 1979 and grew up in Chiang Mai. Being born into the varied and abundant culture of Chiang Mai, I was exposed to the world of traditional art and the customs from China and Southeast Asia. I am so proud to be Thai, and I hope to share some of that pride with you."
		<b>Ila Suleyman – Ghana</b> "I was born into a family of artists who have carved and crafted wood and leather products for several family generations. My favorite thing about my art is the way people react to it. I also work with other artisans who create handmade jewelry in order to highlight the positive impact it has in our lives when people support artisans."
		<b>Rituu Agarwal – India</b> "I was born in Jaipur, popularly known as the Pink City. I am greatly influenced by the ancient designs and I bring them to my work. I have also dedicated some of my time to an NGO in Rajasthan that works with school children and provides medical facilities to elderly people. The NGO is connected with a school where we provide education, books, uniforms and other necessities to the school children."

**Figure 1:** Example of Fair Trade Worker Ads All photos and quoted text in Figure 1 are from Novica.com-May 2023

**Table 1.** Sample Demographics

Characteristic	N=114	%
<b>Income</b>		
< \$30,000	17	14.9%
\$30,001 to \$60,000	23	20.2%
\$60,001 to \$90,000	39	34.2%
\$90,001 to \$120,000	24	21.1%
> \$120,001	11	9.6%
<b>Political Ideology</b>		
Conservative	15	13.2%
Somewhat Conservative	22	19.3%
Independent	39	34.2%
Somewhat Liberal	25	21.9%
Liberal	13	11.4%
<b>Age</b>		
Between 18 to 29 years	10	8.8%
Between 30 to 44 years	21	18.4%
Between 45 to 54 years	51	44.7%
Between 55 to 64 years	24	21.1%
65 years and greater	8	7.0%
<b>Education</b>		
High School diploma or GED	7	6.1%
Associates Degree	21	18.4%
Bachelor's Degree	52	45.6%
Master's Degree	20	17.5%
Doctoral Degree	14	12.3%

**H1 – Past Life Belief (PLB) positively relates to Fair Trade consumption (FTC).**

**METHOD**

**Participants**

For this study, an online survey was shared with 546 members of a Fair Trade organization’s social media group. One hundred fourteen members completed the online survey, which yielded a response rate of 21%. This response rate is comparable to the recommendations of (Malhotra & Grover, 1998). Table 1 displays the sample characteristics. Data was collected through an online Qualtrics survey. The population was instructed that the survey was voluntary, contained six questions, and would take approximately 5 minutes to complete. The survey was open for one week from October 24, 2022, through October 30, 2022, and one hundred fourteen participants completed the voluntary online survey.

**Demographic Variables:** The populations’ age, income, education, and political affiliation characteristics,



as shown in Table 1, were included as control variables. See Doran (2009), Magnusson et al. (2015), Tremblay-Boire & Prakash (2017), Taylor & Boasson (2014), Musa & Gopalakrishna (2022), and Antiel et al. (2014) for examples of similar measurements.

**Measures**

**Fair Trade Consumption (FTC):** was measured by an individual’s annual Fair Trade purchases as a percentage of their total annual purchases. Participants were asked to provide their approximate level of FTC via an eleven-point scale that ranged from 0% (1) up to 100% (11). Scholars have used comparable scales to measure their dependent variable in various business and sustainability studies (Barnes et al., 2016; Beaton & Tougas, 1997; Kuusela & Amacher, 2016; Mast et al., 2011; Musa & Gopalakrishna 2022; Perugini & Bagozzi 2004; and Zhang 2011).

**Past Life Belief (PLB):** Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement, “I believe that I have in the past and will in the future be born into different races, ethnicities, religions, genders, nationalities, and social classes in order to learn and evolve” via a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

**RESULTS**

Statistical analyses were conducted on the data using IBM SPSS software version 28. A hierarchical multiple linear regression was used to test the hypothesis to **Table 2.** Hierarchical Multiple Regression Results – N=114

Variable	Hypothesis	Model 1 Control Variables		Model 2 Main Effects	
		$\beta$	<i>b</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>
Income		0.211*	0.551*	0.174	0.455
Age		-0.031	-0.095	-0.051	-0.155
Education		0.159	0.469	0.165	0.488
Politics		0.120	0.312	0.123	0.321
PLB	H1			0.252**	0.665**
Constant			2.054		0.313
R <sup>2</sup>		0.084*		0.146**	
$\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup>				0.062**	
F		2.514*		3.693**	
F of $\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup>				7.786**	

Note: Standardized and unstandardized beta coefficients are presented with: \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistics and Correlations.

(N=114)	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1 - FTC	5.76	3.09					
2 - Income	2.90	1.18	.233*				
3 - Age	2.99	1.02	-.034	-.030			
4 - Education	3.11	1.05	.145	.052	-.207*		
5 - Politics	2.99	1.19	.094	.113	.301**	-.256**	
6 - PLB	3.18	1.17	.271**	.140	.076	-.031	.033

predict FTC by PLB while controlling for age, income, education, and political ideology. In addition, descriptive statistics, a Pearson’s correlations matrix, and tests for distributional normality were administered. Variance of Inflation (VIF) score for all variables in the multiple regression test ranged from 1.02 to 1.17, which is below the multicollinearity threshold of 10 (Fassoulis & Alexopoulos 2015 and Müller & Haase 2014).

A two-stage hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted using 2 Models in ANOVA. Hierarchical multiple regression is a common method used when scholars aim to identify the importance of a predictor variable after other predictor variables are entered into the equation (Cohen et al., 2013). The hierarchical multiple regression analysis was completed in SPSS in the following manner. First, all control variables were entered simultaneously into one block in SPSS. Next, the PLB main effect variable was entered separately into another block in SPSS. The results of this hierarchical multiple regression structure are depicted in Table 2. For stage 1, which had control variables, the regression was found to be significant ( $F(113) = 2.514, p < .05$ ) with an  $R^2$  of .084. For stage 2, which had a hierarchical structure of all the control variables (in one block) and then the PLB main effect variable (in a separate block), a significant regression equation was found ( $F(108) = 3.693, p < .01$ ) with an  $R^2$  of .146. The difference between Model 1 and Model 2 is the inclusion of the PLB main effect variable, which had a significant coefficient, with  $\beta = .252$  PLB ( $p < .01$ ) and resulted in an  $R^2$  change of .062 between both Models, predicting FTC. These results supported H1 showing a mild predictive relationship between PLB and FTC. All control variables became non-significant when controlling for covariance. Thus, PLB is positively related to FTC when controlling for age, income, education, and political affiliation.

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations. A normal probability plot (P-P) of the residuals was conducted, and because the points followed the diagonal line, it can be assumed that the data is normally distributed and that the model's assumption of normality is accurate (Morgan, 2017).

## DISCUSSION

### Interpretation of the Results

The results of this paper show that, as hypothesized in H1 and per previous findings linking global identity to Fair Trade consumption, that PLB is mildly and positively related to FTC. This relationship accounts for approximately 6% covariance. Therefore, it can be inferred that individuals who hold PLB are slightly more likely to purchase Fair Trade products to support societal and environmental stewardship. This is expected as literature and research support the importance of Fair Trade consumers possessing the traits of compassion, benevolence, and oneness or interconnectedness toward others (Musa & Gopalakrishna, 2022; Doran, 2009). These characteristics, according to the literature, might also be shared by individuals who hold PLB (Weiss, 1988, 1992, 1997, 2000, and 2004; Newton, 1994 and 2000; Woods & Baruss, 2004; Meyersburg & McNally, 2011; Johnson et al., 2021; Dhiman, 2016; and Rezapouraghdam & colleagues, 2017).

These results are unsurprising as the literature supports the notion that those who experience memories, which they believe are from a past life may change their view of life, e.g., worldview and/or meaning of life (Woods & Baruss, 2004; Meyersburg & McNally, 2011; Johnson et al., 2021). These newly acquired views may, in theory, motivate them to support societal and environmental stewardship through purchasing Fair Trade products. For instance, Woods & Baruss (2004) found that subjects with past life memories experienced altered "body image, time sense, [and] perception of the world" (p. 604). Meyersburg & McNally (2011) found that participants who experienced past life memory reported a "greater presence of meaning in their lives" (p. 1218). Johnson et al. (2021) "found that reincarnation beliefs were significantly positively correlated with high-involvement sustainability practices [and] general environmental concern" (p.7).

Aligned with the results of this paper and similar to Past Life Regression and Life Between Lives Regression, the Near-Death Experience (NDE) literature also documents comparable changes post-event to individuals' perception of worldviews and a sense of interconnectedness towards others. NDEs are defined as individuals who believe recalling the events that occurred when they had clinically passed away (van Lommel, 2010, as cited in

Dolsen-Groh & Sexton-Radek, 2018). Significant positive life changes have occurred in the majority of individuals who had an NDE (Dolsen-Groh & Sexton-Radek, 2018). For example, "major studies consistently reveal a pattern of positive [consequences] from those who have NDEs, which typically include but are not limited to: an increased concern or feelings of compassion for others; a greater appreciation for life; a positive self-attitude and clearer sense of self-identity; less concern with consumerism and materiality; less general anxiety; an increased 'thirst' for knowledge; and an enhanced sense of spirituality" (Atwater, 2008; Groth-Marnat & Summers, 1998; Greyson, 2003; Musgrave, 1997; Noyes, 1980; Schwaninger et al., 2002; Sutherland, 1995; van Lommel et al., 2001, as cited in Tassell-Matamua, 2014, p. 266). Thus, similar to past life regression and live-between-lives regression literature, NDE literature backs the notion that some individuals have memories, which they believe are of their soul surviving outside their current body. In theory, memories may lead to a change in the individual's worldviews and/or meaning of life, including but not limited to a) increased compassion, b) less materialism, and c) a sense of oneness towards others. These attributes may infer a relationship with Fair Trade consumption.

In addition, according to Mead (1912), the concept of reincarnation supports the idea that as the soul advances, it can develop the "all-attractive power of harmlessness and that positive power of [interconnectedness], of sympathy and compassion for all other souls and the whole creation" (p. 179).

The results of this study show a relationship between PLB and FTC. Per the literature, one may assume that individuals who hold PLB might be more inclined to have a unique spiritual view of life: a view that supports interconnectedness or oneness towards others and is inclusive and accepting of other races, religions, genders, nationalities, social classes, and mindful of societal and environmental stewardship.

### Implications for the Theory

This article contributes to the Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory literature by linking the spiritual concept of PLB to these theories and inferring its applicability concerning Fair Trade consumption. For example, prior research by Musa (2015) and Musa & Gopalakrishna (2021) introduced and identified the association between Fair Trade consumer behavior and SIT. Musa & Gopalakrishna (2022) showed a potential relationship between SIT and Fair Trade consumer attributes of compassion for oneself, others, and the environment (COOE). This paper provides an example of how SIT may

be compatible to the PLB construct associated with Fair Trade consumption. For example, it is inferred that PLB consumers might be able to view themselves in someone else's shoes (i.e., the individual can imagine themselves as a person of a different race, ethnicity, gender, religion, social class, and nationality). SCT may also be relevant to this study, as the results of this research infer compatibility to the theory's superordinate category of human identity. For example, the empirical studies of Buchan et al. (2011), Reysen & Katzarska-Miller (2013), and Reese & Kohlmann (2015) support the notion that some individuals can and do identify as members of the largest human social group. Moreover, the correlation between PLB and FTC assumes that PLB consumers will likely view Fair Trade workers as part of the human family.

### Possible Applicability for Academia and Practice

This article contributes novel insights for both academia and sustainable businesses, such as Fair Trade, in multiple ways.

First, the study adds to the literature that connects spirituality to sustainability. For example, Dhiman's (2016) work supports the concept that spirituality is intertwined with sustainability, and if a person's spirituality is underdeveloped, it can cause social conflict and the exploitation of nature. Therefore, sustainability cannot exist without spirituality (Dhiman, 2016). He also advises that sustainability "depends upon our deeper understanding of fundamental spiritual values such as interconnectedness and oneness, non-violence and compassion, contribution, and selfless service" (p.2). Moreover, asserting the association between environmentally sustainable behavior and spirituality, Rezapouraghdam & colleagues (2017) advise that connectedness to nature is understood to be a fundamental cure for the global environmental crisis. Second, scholars may build upon the framework of this study and the literature cited to conduct empirical studies analyzing the correlation between the PLB construct and attitudes toward societal and environmental stewardship, racism, sexism, classism, nationalism, and religious discrimination.

This paper also provides insight for Fair Trade companies to potentially modify their marketing campaigns and messaging to appeal to consumers who hold PLB, as according to Goworek (2011), consumer knowledge of the Fair Trade concept has grown in recent years. Furthermore, because there is scarce literature on PLB as a predictor of Fair Trade consumption, this article provides the opportunity for Fair Trade companies to explore and understand this potentially highly loyal segment of their consumer base and promote their products in a way to

increase sales, which would support societal and environmental stewardship.

### Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The author would like to emphasize that the current work is a preliminary study based on a convenience sample. While supporting previous research relating to global identity and Fair Trade consumption (e.g., Reese & Kohlmann, 2015), additional research is needed to provide further insight and replicate the relationship between PLB and FTC.

As discussed earlier, PLB is defined as an individual's belief that they have in the past and will in the future be born into different races, ethnicities, religions, genders, nationalities, and social classes in order to learn and evolve. Therefore, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement, "I believe that I have in the past and will in the future be born into different races, ethnicities, religions, genders, nationalities, and social classes in order to learn and evolve" via a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. However, it is important to note that this PLB construct is not necessarily the definition of reincarnation subscribed to by *all* believers in reincarnation. Thus, this is noted as a limitation. Next, religion was not included as a control variable in this study. However, scholars may want to analyze an individual's religious beliefs a) pre and/or post-past life regression and b) pre and/or post-life between-lives regression in future studies. This type of research may provide insight into how well the individual accepts PLB. Furthermore, while SIT and SCT were identified as compatible to this study, based on the literature and other cited empirical research (e.g., Reese and Kohlmann, 2015), this study did not directly test the exact higher-level global identity constructs that were used by other scholars.

Future research linking reincarnation beliefs to societal and environmental stewardship is encouraged, as Johnson et al. (2021) proclaimed, "if people believe they will come back to the earth after death (albeit in a different form), they may be motivated to ensure the earth is habitable -- even flourishing" (p.8).

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