

THE PK ZONE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

BY PAMELA RAE HEATH

ABSTRACT: There has been a recent increase in qualitative research to help uncover process oriented aspects of performing psi. Informal reports (Isaacs, 1992; Stanford, 1977/1986) and descriptive analyses (Gissurarson, 1997) have revealed a number of factors that seem to correlate with PK performance. This study used the phenomenological method to analyze the spontaneous and intentional experiences of eight participants to try to better understand its meaning and nature.

There appears to be one core PK experience, which is far more fluid than normal experience. Rather than discrete elements, there are constituents that form a fluid pattern, organic in quality. Fifteen constituents were found for all PK experiences (with 2 more that appear in intentional PK). They are: 1) the presence of an altered state of consciousness; 2) a sense of connection to the target or other people that involves a transcendent level of interconnectedness; 3) a feeling of dissociation from the individual ego identity; 4) suspension of the intellect; 5) the presence of playfulness and/or peak levels of emotion; 6) a sense of energy, that may have a transcendent quality; 7) the physical state may contribute to, and reflect, PK energy; 8) awareness is focused; 9) release of effort/attention; 10) an altered sense of time; 11) investment; 12) openness to the experience; 13) impact on feelings and/or worldview; 14) a sense of "knowing"; and 15) overlap with ESP. With intentional PK there are also: 16) guiding the process; and 17) trusting the process. This paper briefly reviews some of the more important aspects of these constituents, and how it might impact on our understanding of PK and future research.

Recent years have seen an increase in interest in qualitative research to help uncover process oriented aspects of performing psi. Gissurarson (1992) has suggested that "future research might consider reporting and exploring more systematically what subjects claim to do and experience while trying to use their PK" (p. 332). Informal reports (Isaacs, 1992; Stanford, 1977/1986) and descriptive analyses (Gissurarson, 1997) have previously revealed a number of factors that seem to correlate with PK performance, but what those factors mean, and how they might relate to each other, remain unclear.

Phenomenology would seem to be a particularly effective tool for revealing the qualitative aspects of PK. It was originally developed as a means of describing the essential features, or themes, that characterize human experience. Phenomenological research methodology, including its usual mode of data analysis, is understood and widely accepted (von Eckartsberg, 1998). Phenomenological methods have previously been used to successfully elucidate the meaning of a number of

exceptional human performance experiences, such as occur in sports, and trance mediumship (Alessi, 1994; Barrett, 1996; Murphy & White, 1995). This study, therefore, chose to use Giorgi's (1985) phenomenological method to analyze the spontaneous and intentional experiences of eight participants to try to better understand the overall meaning of the PK experience.

METHOD

The participants were eight male and female English-speaking and -writing adults who had experienced at least one memorable psychokinetic event that they apparently caused and who were able to articulate that experience. Some careful thought was taken into who would be asked to participate, in order to try to ensure that a wide range of experiences were represented. The first eight participants who agreed to the study were accepted (two individuals who were asked refused). All participants satisfied one or more of the following modes of having had their PK experience or ability "verified": witnessing by another, reputable person; their PK having been lab/experimentally ascertained (which probably also includes witnessing at labs such as PEAR, SRI, and the ASPR under Dr. Osis); measurement, detection, recording of their PK effect by someone/someplace (like prior item); or, weaker, having a general reputation as a successful PK performer.

It should be recognized that this study does not concern itself with participants' magnitude of PK abilities, but rather the nature and quality of their experiences, both inside and outside the laboratory. There is a possibility that some participants may not actually have performed PK successfully, because of conscious or unconscious trickery, fortuitous timing, and/or their task was informational rather than causal, as in Decision Augmentation Theory (May, Utts, & Spottiswoode, 1995), and will be inappropriately included in the study. Nonetheless, because of a desire to include a wide range of PK events, particularly spontaneous ones and forms of PK that tend to occur outside of the laboratory, it was decided not to limit experiences to those "proven" in the laboratory (see Table 1 and Table 2 for participant details).

Before the study was started, Barbro Giorgi (the wife of Amedeo Giorgi, who is herself an expert in phenomenology) was consulted to make sure that the methodology was Giorgi's. Considerable time was also spent discussing interview techniques and creating a list of nonleading questions.

Participants were solicited by telephone contact or email, using introductions and phone numbers from parapsychologists who had worked with them. At the time of this contact, the nature of the study was

TABLE 1
PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Table 1 lists some basic characteristics of the participants, including what kinds of experiences they described during their interviews. It should be noted this may, or may not, reflect their actual range of apparent PK experiences.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Gender (M for male, F for female)	M	M	F	M	M	F	M	F
Background as professional psychic	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Background as a parapsychologist	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Performed as subject in laboratory experiments	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Described intentional PK experiences	Yes							
Described spontaneous PK experiences	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Described group PK experiences	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Described RNG target experiences	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Described effecting metal experiences	Yes	No						
Described anomalous healing experiences	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Described fire walking experiences	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Described object movement (RSPK) experiences	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Described human-machine interactions	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

explained, and, if possible, an interview scheduled. Where possible, the interview was performed in person, and, if not, by telephone. All interviews were taped. The interview began by asking the participant to describe an event at which PK was demonstrated, the same way that he or she would tell a friend. Further questions were nonleading and open-ended, such as "Can you say more about that?" and "Does this feel complete to you?" The interviews were unstructured and ranged from 30 minutes to two hours in length. Next, the taped interviews were transcribed, and the accuracy double-checked.

Phenomenology relies on two main ways to prevent bias. The first is bracketing, which involves suspending one's preconceptions and presuppositions. This is done by laying them out in as clear and complete a form as possible (Valle et al., 1989). Polkinghorne (1989) describes bracketing as self-reflection by the investigator to examine his or her own beliefs, in order to become aware of any hidden or potential presuppositions and biases that could change the way the investigator obtains the data and interprets the results. It is one of the key features of phenomenological methodology and is done not only before the interviews are performed but also repeatedly throughout the data analysis.

The second method of preventing bias is the use of imaginative variation. This involves playing with the sentences to see if they could have more than one possible meaning. Where a sentence was found which had more than one possible meaning, the protocol was checked to see if other sentences clarified it. When the meaning remained in doubt, participants were asked by email or in person to please explain what they meant, or "say more about that."

The analysis began by reading all of the participants' descriptions (referred to as protocols) multiple times in their entirety, in order to acquire a feeling for the material, and get a sense of likely categories. Every sentence was then individually examined for possible meanings and implications.

Each protocol was then reviewed to identify the experiential statements in the participant's own words. These naturally occurring units, called Natural Meaning Units, or NMUs, each represent specific thoughts, feelings, or perceptions, as expressed by the participants. The NMUs were analyzed to determine the conveyed meaning(s), placing them into psychological categories as appropriate. A synthesis was then made of those constituents that were irreducible elements. Any and all relevant data that occurred during the interviews was worked into the revised, final description.

Barbro Giorgi was again consulted after the data had been analyzed to review some of the protocols and ensure the material had been handled correctly. Giorgi knew nothing about the PK literature, and had only

the participant interviews to go by; however, in the passages she reviewed, she informally noted the same constituents as the author.

A final step (which is technically not part of Giorgi's methodology) was to take the material back to the participants and ask "does this feel right to you?" The data analysis was given to the participants for review, and any comments made by them were added to the final summary. The material itself determined what, if any, further analysis was required. The constituents from all of the protocols were then grouped together and integrated into a final description of the PK experience.

RESULTS

The evolution of understanding the data was itself an interesting journey. When the descriptions were first looked at, they appeared to be distinctly different experiences, as the participants themselves believed. Yet the more deeply the underlying structure of these experiences was examined and uncovered, the more it became apparent that those differences were, in fact, superficial, and that there were striking similarities between the core essences of the various experiences. When looked at across all participants (so as to drop out individual idiosyncrasies and personal likes), there appeared to be only one overall core PK experience with a slight variation between intentional and spontaneous events.

One of the first things that must be recognized here is that, perhaps because of the altered state of consciousness involved, this experience is far more fluid than normal experience, and has fewer boundaries. After a great many hours of study, it was found that performer descriptions of PK experiences could not be broken down by the author into separate discrete elements, but consisted rather of constituents that formed a fluid pattern, organic in quality. The order in which they are listed here is not a reflection of either magnitude or significance of each constituent, as this may change from experience to experience.

It will be noted that many of these constituents have often appeared in the literature before. There were fifteen constituents for all PK experiences (with two extra that appear in intentional PK). The constituents are listed as follows, with a few brief quotes from various participants to try to give a better sense of what is being described (see Table 2 for the frequency of reported constituents):

1) An altered state of consciousness (ASC). While the ASC varied considerably in depth, it often had an ineffable quality and frequently involved aspects of other constituents, such as a narrowed focus of attention with loss of awareness of surroundings, an altered sense of time, and merger. Participant 1 said, "I feel like I'm expanding my consciousness, it's growing. It stretches out farther from me, and it no longer prevents

TABLE 2
WHICH CONSTITUENTS WERE REPORTED BY THE PARTICIPANTS

Constituent	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Altered State	Yes							
Sense of connection	Yes							
Dissociation	Yes							
suspension of the intellect	Yes							
Peak emotions and/or playfulness	Yes							
Sense of energy	Yes							
Guiding the process	Yes							
Physical state	Yes							
Focused awareness	Yes							
Trust in the process	Yes							
Release of effort/attention	Yes	Yes	Yes	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Altered sense of time	Yes	—	—	Yes	—	Yes	Yes	Yes
Investment in the outcome	Yes	Yes	Yes	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Openness to the experience	Yes							
Impact	Yes	Yes	Yes	+/-	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sense of "knowing"	Yes							
PK-ESP overlap	Yes	—	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	—	Yes

A "yes" was entered if the participant mentioned the constituent (or it was reflected in the events that were described) for at least some of their experiences. A "—" means that the constituent was not mentioned (which may not mean that it didn't occur, simply that it wasn't discussed). In the one case of the +/- result, the participant seemed to be more effected by the ASC than the PK event itself.

things from coming in, as, as it does ordinarily,” and added, “I would describe the state as beyond time and space.” Another description from Participant 8 is “I kind of feel like I’m in a, a void . . . it’s like a non space. It’s so concentrated . . . Nothing else is going on around me.”

2) A sense of connection to the target or other people that involves a transcendent level of interconnectedness. Deep levels of connection or merger were often associated with spontaneous PK events. Participant 6 noted both the ASC and sense of connection here:

“It’s like . . . and I almost want to say of oneness, although I have been in that state of oneness and it’s been somewhat different from what I’m describing here . . . but at the same time that’s probably the best thing I can say . . . it’s almost like . . . I’ve moved into sacred space. It’s like I am the spoon, I’m the person I’m talking to, there’s no separation.”

Participant 1 said there is, “A feeling of being joined together on a spiritual level” and, “a joining of consciousness, a very deep one.” It should be noted that emotional distance seemed to be more important than physical distance in being able to connect to a target.

3) Dissociation or detachment from the individual ego identity. Participant 5 said:

“There was a sense of detachment [that would] come over me every once in a while. It wasn’t something I could bring on. It was first, first a sense of calm, and then it was like an ultra-calm, in a sense . . . at that point. And almost that, I would almost watch, consciously watch, my body move on its own. “

Participant 1 said, “It’s like I go into another world, sometimes, beyond my ego. I speak of it as expanding consciousness into another dimension . . . It’s almost like I forget who I am.” While Participant 8 said, “The ego cannot be any part of this. At all.”

4) Suspension of the intellect. This often appeared as a lack of thought or critical analysis. Participant 8 said, “You can’t make any judgments. You have to let it just be there.” Similarly, Participant 3 said:

“I think the common thread that runs through them is that the cognitive left brain analyzing part of the mind is out of the picture for a while, either through my getting very emotional, or deliberately occupying that part of my mind with something else. So I think getting that cognitive, verbal part that said, “oh, you can’t do it,” just disabling that, or putting it out of the way for a while seems to help.”

5) Playfulness and/or peak levels of emotion. There was a tremendous range of emotions that were associated with PK, including anger, fear, joy, excitement, boredom, love, frustration with others, sadness, and hilarity. Another emotion frequently associated with apparent PK experiences was playfulness. The author could not determine if this was simply a

lesser degree of hilarity, or a separate emotion that ranged from in peak levels to those of a lesser degree, but it did seem to have the same effect as peak emotions in the experience. The only emotion that didn't seem to promote PK was self-frustration (which might relate to enhancing the sense of self and the intellect because of internal comments, such as "why can't I do this?" and "what's wrong with me?"). Participant 3 noted that, "there is an altered mood." Her spontaneous PK experiences seemed to be triggered by a range of emotions. Participant 3 said of one experience, "I was in a highly emotional state, I'd been in a disagreement with a colleague and didn't feel I'd got my point across. So [I] . . . was very annoyed and frustrated." With another event there was "sadness, extreme sadness," while in a third there was "excitement."

Playfulness would seem capable of enhancing PK through a number of ways beyond that of being an emotion, such as by encouraging openness, decreasing performer defensiveness, and diminishing emphasis on rationality or the intellect. Participant 3 played with computer targets, and stated, "It was a game." Participant 7 said, "Play is very important in these sorts of things . . . it's entertainment at a certain level." Participant 1 said, "It was a matter of becoming excited. And sort of a feeling of hilarity, or . . . humorous, definitely humorous . . . You make jokes, and . . . just say outrageous things. They get them in a lighthearted mood."

6) A sense of energy that may have a transcendent quality. Descriptions of energy varied by experience, but seemed to be the most detailed for anomalous healing and metal bending experiences. Descriptions varied in terms of opening to the energy, feeling energy around one, sensing energy flow, actively manipulating energies, and closing to the energy. Participant 7 said:

"First of all, you have to become aware of energy in a certain way, and that takes a moment. You have to spend a little time doing that; you get IN to the state where you can recognize the energy. And then you have to FEEL the energy that is outside of you, and . . . It's like you're an irrigation line, and there's this big irrigation canal going on behind you, and to figure out sort of how to sort of open the valve and let the irrigation water come down your channel."

He also said that once you are in that state, "things become labile. You can move them around." Participant 1 said "I'm aware, of, well let's call it channeling energy, from . . . like the center of the universe, or cosmic, or, or a God-like energy." And later he said:

"I become very aware of energy centers within my body (especially the solar plexus) becoming activated. And energy feelings running up my body through the spine. And sometimes down my spine, as well. I feel energy expanding around my head."

7) The physical state may contribute to and/or reflect PK energy. In particular, anomalous healers described warmth and tingling sensations in the hands. Participant 1, for example, said there is “a feeling of the heat on the palm of the hand, and . . . sort of like a kind of a mild electricity, an actual energy, and usually the other person can feel it as well.” Others noted that feeling physically energized seemed to enhance psychic energy.

8) Awareness is focused. Participants discussed being focused on a number of different things, including the process, the goal, another person, a thought, an emotion, the energy, or the feeling tone of the state of consciousness itself. Focused intent, not surprisingly, only appeared in intentional PK. Even Participant 3, who used what she described as “diffuse attention” for computer RNG targets, was actually focused on a distracter, such as a magazine.

Spontaneous PK experiences also clearly described participants being intensely focused on something at the time of the event, though whether they were focused on an emotion, individual thought, another person, or something else varied. Thus, if we consider spontaneous and intentional PK together, all of these experiences reflect some form of focused awareness. Examples of descriptions of this focus in what seem to be intentional PK experiences include this statement by Participant 3:

“I felt pretty much focused on the experiment itself. I didn’t hear things from outside the room, [I] was just aware of what I was doing with the experiment. It’s as if the outside world got shut off for a while.”

Participant 6 said, “It’s almost as though I become, I get so . . . focused.” Participant 7 said, “You focus on the thing that matters. It’s all a function of focus,” and, “the one-pointedness is the key. Is that . . . you get to the point of focused intention. That’s the critical issue.” Participant 8 said:

“It’s a point of awareness of isolating the situation. And so, when I’m focused on a, well, a whole human being that’s having a problem, I’m so totally focused on that person there’s nothing else there. Everything else . . . is not there.”

9) A frequent release of effort/attention. It should be noted that this might represent a by-product of trust in the process. Release of effort seemed less important or even disappeared when there was a strong sense of detachment from the outcome. Seven of the eight participants described a release of effort/attention for at least some of their PK experiences.

Participant 7 said, “Just when my consciousness shifted away from the spoon, just in that fraction, that instant, all of a sudden the spoon felt like stiff plastic when it’s just about to go gooey . . . And it bent!” Participant 5 also described a natural release of effort/attention here:

"I knew when I was going to get a strike. It had nothing to do with how I threw the ball, it had to do with a sense. I had this calm sense come over me as I was getting up to walk towards the alley, towards, towards the foul line. And I just simply literally throw the ball and turn around. My friends would always look at me like . . . After a while they would know, he got a strike. Without even seeing the ball hit. Because they knew that they could see me, and that [when it] seems like I was not excited and simply turned around, and happily walked away without watching it, that something was going to happen. And it was inevitably a strike when that happened."

10) An altered sense of time. This was sometimes experienced as timelessness, time slowing down or stopping, or a focus on the now. It is possible that this may, in part, be a result of the ASC. Participant 1 said, "I lose sense of time." Participant 7 said, "Time has a different quality . . . there is a kind of timelessness that occurs. And you have enough time to make the decisions and take the actions you need to take . . . Time stretches out." And Participant 8 said, "There is no time . . . and in fact I use that terminology a lot. There is no time."

11) Investment in the outcome. While some explicitly spoke of caring about the outcome, others indicated it through their reactions to the events. Participant 8 said, "The joy of being able to help someone is just unbelievable, for me . . . it's just unbelievable." Participant 1 said:

"Well, I have to say this, that I know when the psychic connection works best, is because the person has a genuine need, and is not just curious, or like skeptical and wanting to be convinced, that sort of thing . . . So I find myself not caring one way or the other, don't bother me, go do it yourself, if you want to convince yourself. But for people who have a genuine need it generally works, and this is true for the healing work as well."

12) A sense of openness to the experience. All of the participants were very open to the experiences, which could conceivably be a self-selection response bias (since only those open to PK experiences were likely to volunteer to talk about them). Participant 7 said, "I like adventure. I want to have a good time and . . . I like explorations. Of all kinds." Participant 8 said there is "Complete openness!" There was also an openness to her approach to PK, as can be noted here: "I said, sure, let's try it. Why not? I mean, you know, it was just like okay, let's see if this works." Participant 1 noted that openness may also be important in the target person for anomalous healing, and said:

"Most people . . . are, you know, generally open, and they're not demanding . . . they'll say well, I'm not terribly sure I believe in this, but I don't think it will hurt. Those, you know, are the people it generally seems to work with."

13) Positive impact on feelings and/or worldview from the experience. This may also be a self-selection response artifact, related to the likelihood that the participants who volunteered for the study and were willing to talk about their experiences had probably had good ones. Participant 3 noted that after PK “happens, and you do it, and you’ve been told that it’s one of the things that’s almost impossible to do, but you do it, and you go wow! I did it! So it’s a feeling of achievement.” Participant 7 said:

“When you are touching these aspects of yourself which you don’t normally interact with very often, um, there’s a thrilling quality to it. Because you’re doing it Because you’re experiencing an extension of what normal human functioning is supposed to be. And you know that it’s genuine, because you’re the one who’s having the experience, and you know . . . the authenticity of the experience . . . so these things where you are having an extended awareness experience, and you recognize that the limitations of reality that you have accepted are not . . . the final limitations. That you can go beyond this So there is an empowering aspect to it.”

14) A sense of “knowing.” In this study, “knowing” refers to a sense of knowledge where there is not a known explanation or obvious factual background for the origins of the knowledge. This may involve not only ESP, but also knowledge from forgotten sources and/or subliminal or subtle cues. In anomalous healing, “knowing” sometimes manifests as a sense of what to do, awareness of whether a connection has been made, how the healing is being received, and whether to stop sending the energy. In RNG targets, “knowing” was sometimes reported as a sense of whether the run was going to be successful and/or what to do. With metal bending, it might be a “knowing” something was about to occur, and finally, in object movement, it appeared as a “knowing” of success and/or of responsibility for the event. Participant 7 said, “I just had this very strong knowing.” Participant 3 said, “Sometimes, occasionally, I would know it was going to be a . . . good run.” Participant 6 said, “It’s like being in that space of knowing,” which was echoed by Participant 8, who said it was “like being in that space of knowing.”

15) Overlap between ESP and PK. This overlap was experienced in several ways: 1) five participants described simultaneous ESP and PK, most often as clear-cut remote viewing, and occasionally the suggestion of telepathy or precognition — and if one considers that “knowing” includes some degree of ESP, then all eight participants reported this overlap; 2) two participants stated that ESP and PK are both active, energetic processes; 3) five participants said the same ASC facilitated both ESP and PK; 4) two participants said the physical sensations for ESP and PK are the same or similar; 5) one participant stated that overuse of one (PK or ESP) may prevent success with the other.

One example of apparent remote viewing during anomalous healing was where Participant 8 said:

“On the third breath when I send them the goop, of course I don’t know what this person looks like, okay? But what happens is I immediately get a picture of that person. And it’s like they’re a long ways away, I can see them, they’re either standing, sitting, sometimes I’ve seen them in bed, I’ve described the whole room

And what has been so extraordinary, especially in the class with a group, is that they will go right back and, you know, see that person, talk to them or find out what happened at that particular time. We always date everything and time it, the time it happened. And that’s where the person was, they were either in the bedroom, they were sitting on a chair, they were in the place — I mean I saw them where they were.”

She said, in reference to this, “So it’s like remote viewing . . . It’s the same process.”

Participants also spoke of an overlap in energetic feeling qualities, and the altered state of consciousness facilitative of, both forms of psi. Participant 1, for example, discussed here how ESP is an active process, just like PK:

“Well, consider that there are billions upon billions of, of humans, living and having lived in the past, and everybody’s got their own code, everybody’s different. And so it’s like dialing that access code, to tune into that individual person I feel like I’m putting out energy, kind of scanning to find that right person.”

In addition, the same participant also said:

“I mean it is an extremely important point, that there is an energy that enables one to bring through information from another person, or about another person, or whatever. And also healing. I mean, my model of it is that, one is putting forth thought-consciousness-energy to the target, ah, I would call that ESP, but it’s also part of healing, that you put out the energy, or direct it.”

There may also be an overlap of physical sensations. Participant 8 noted that the same area of the frontal lobes that feels active during PK will hurt after intense ESP sessions. She described the feeling here, saying:

“Oh, one last thing! And that is . . . a modest, um, sensation at my frontal lobes Like something moving in there. Activity. A lot of activity. When I’m doing police work, which is the most strenuous thing that I do, because I go on for hours, the top of my head will hurt when I finish. And it’s because I’m bringing in the energy with information through there.”

With intentional PK (see figure 2) two additional constituents appear (neither of which was ever noted in spontaneous PK experiences).

16) The process is guided in an interactive (or reactive) manner. All of the participants described at least some attempt to guide the PK process, most often through a combination of intent, visualization, and the hands. Participant 1 said:

“The model I use in the meditation, sort of, is to . . . visualize like the universe, the center of bright light, coming down like a laser beam through the top of my head and through my body, and to flow through me and to where ever I direct. I do a fair amount of absent healing too, where I visualize the person, and visualize light coming around them, and I also have a feeling of well-being that I try to project to them, see a smile on their face, and then have their, that they have their own connection with that source of energy.”

The hands may also be used, either physically or as a visualization. Participant 1 said:

“Well if the person is with me, you know, in my presence, I’ll put forward my hand, next to their body, but not touching, and feel the energy coming through my hand . . . but . . . even if they’re at a distance. Every now and then, I’ll sort of mentally put my hands around them.”

17) There is a trust in the process. This was a difficult category to unveil. Only one participant spoke of it outright as trust. Most described aspects such as “lack of effort,” “effortlessness,” “not trying too hard,” “surrender to the experience,” “letting go,” and “not getting in the way of whatever needs to do the PK.” For example, Participant 1 said, “I found that I had to be careful not to try too hard.” Participant 7 noted, “You have to just surrender. That’s very important.” When these are looked at closely, it becomes apparent that these are all actually derivatives of an underlying trust in the process. Participant 8 actually stated this, saying:

“You have to just let it come And you have to trust that it is going to be there. And that, that’s the hard part, you know, because we’re so judgmental as human beings, and we, we’re concerned oh am I going to fool myself, and this is not going to work, and blah, blah, blah What happens when I’m doing this, is that’s just gone. It’s just erased. And it’s like okay, here we are, we’re just going to do this, and send the white goop, and it’s just going to be there. And my trust and faith that it’s just going to be there. And it will take whatever form it needs to take.”

Perhaps this is easier to understand by recognizing that despite a strong investment in the outcome, the participant is doing nothing overt to cause that outcome, which implies an ability to let go of the need for

control and trust that something else will allow it to happen. All of these suggest in common that it is important not to act “in order to” accomplish your result, but to allow the process to accomplish it for you. This letting go of control by the self may also be associated with a sense of “rightness,” detachment, and lack of worry. More than anything else, however, it reflects a willingness to let go of an egocentric center of control, and trust something else — the process — to do whatever is needed for success. It is interesting that this constituent was not present in spontaneous PK and only sometimes present in early attempts at intentional PK. This therefore seemed to be part of the learning process and tended to be associated with PK success at will.

One might ask why bother changing the term to “trust in the process”? One of the problems with using the old terms of nonstriving, effortlessness, and lack of effort is that they are what not to do, rather than what to do. By giving only what not to do, however, there are a wide range of possible things still which could be done yet are not what is needed. It is far easier in teaching others how to perform PK to give them something positive and specific to do, such as “trust the process.”

The fact that a belief you can successfully perform PK was neither necessary nor sufficient for apparent PK success, and that motivation was rarely mentioned, were also unexpected findings. It should be noted, however, that confidence might be of more importance when overcoming PK inhibitors. The “easiness” of affecting a given type of target (inanimate or animate) seemed more dependent on what was “easy” to connect to, rather than a result of some intrinsic quality of the target.

Although the focus of the study was on what is a part of the PK experience, certain factors were reported that seemed to hinder or prevent experienced successful PK performance. Inhibition of PK seemed to be related mostly to elements that would be the natural opposites of the constituents. They included:

1. Bystander hostility. This was experienced as inhibiting PK performance by two of the five participants who had been in group situations. It is possible that hostility could affect a combination of constituents, such as by causing performer defensiveness, discouraging connection, inhibiting the ability to open up to the energy/state of consciousness, enhancing awareness of the individual ego identity, preventing suspension of the intellect, blocking the ability to trust, inhibiting investment in the outcome or in the process, or by other methods. Hostility might also be a factor in the experimenter effect, and could furthermore operate in manners additional to simply effecting constituents of the experience, such as by directing energy/intent towards PK failure. Participant 1 noted, “When he was there absolutely nothing happened. There was no energy. Just as if it didn’t exist. So I . . . feel that the people around one can determine whether or not one will be successful.”

2. Self-frustration. It is possible that this involves an increased sense of individual identity and activation of the intellect with negative self-talk, such the statement Participant 3 made, “I’m thinking gosh I’m going to be the only one here who doesn’t bend a spoon.”

3. Effort (which is lack of trust in the process). Participant 1 said:

“That’s the mistake a beginner always makes, is trying too hard. And . . . you can see it dramatically, with people scoring way below chance. Both in the ESP and the PK mode. And then once they begin to loosen up . . . and I went through this myself . . . It took me forever. Because I was being so super serious about this. And it took me a very long time to be able to do well with that.”

4. Analytical thinking (inability to suspend the intellect). Participant 3 said “I took part in one of his workshops and was one of the very last people to bend a spoon. Because I think I was being the scientist.” And Participant 1 noted, referring to someone else who’d had trouble when first trying to perform PK, “he couldn’t bend anything because the intellect was really involved.”

5. Ego (lack of dissociation). Participant 8 said, “The ego has to be out of it . . . The ego cannot be there in any way, shape or form. And one of the things that I do in teaching my students is to make sure that their ego is out of the way.”

6. Inability to focus awareness. Participant 3 noted that PK seemed to occur when there was an inward focusing and narrowing of attention, rather than a general awareness of what was going on at the spoon bending party. She said “it was a shift of attention . . . into myself. I had been very focused on the group, in watching the group, then I seemed to focus more inside . . . and at that point, the metal went soft.”

7. Investment. This was the only constituent that seemed to show up both as a potential promoter, and a potential inhibitor, of the PK experience. Descriptions of experiences suggest that too much investment in a given outcome may block it. This may also depend on the quality of that investment, such as whether it involved a sense of needing to control the situation. On the other hand, too little of investment may cause emotional distance from the target and diminish the ability to connect.

8. Overuse of ESP. Participant 1 noted that using too much energy by doing ESP seemed to block further psi functioning.

DISCUSSION

After the study was completed, the author first went back to review the beliefs about the PK experience that had been bracketed prior to the study. One might remember that bracketing and imaginative variation

were performed throughout the study in an effort to prevent bias. Only three bracketed expectations appeared as final constituents. They were: 1) the involvement of an ASC; 2) an altered sense of time; and 3) lack of ego.

At this point, the author felt some concern that more of the final constituents were not foreseen, as it seemed unlikely that so many so many competent and dedicated researchers could have missed these constituents . . . and, indeed, they had not. A repeat review of the literature showed that the constituents had shown up in prior studies; the similarity was simply not recognized until the author went back to the old literature.

All of the seventeen constituents reported here have appeared in some form in prior anecdotal material and experimental studies. Indeed, Stanford (1986) described most of these constituents, including the release-of-effort effect, and Murphy and White (1995) documented all but two of these constituents—openness to the experience and release of effort/attention—in their book on transcendent experience in sports. Considering that athletes clearly seem willing to endure hours of training and ordeals of pain to excel in their sports, one would think that they are open to peak experiences. The athletic experiences described by Murphy and White involved a strong sense of detachment from the outcome, which might explain the lack of the “release of effort” constituent, as participants in this study also did not seem to have a release of effort or attention when there was a strong sense of detachment. It thus appears that the experience of apparently performing PK is in accordance with that of transcendent experience in sports. What is different about this study, however, is the focus on how these constituents may interact.

One of the more interesting facets of the experiences was how spontaneous PK and beginners at intentional PK seemed to rely to a greater degree on high emotion states for success. With greater experience at PK, and a sense of control over being able to perform at will, there seemed to be a shift in the experience to one where the altered state of consciousness predominated, though this was sometimes also associated with euphoric emotions. Thus, emotion may in some way lead to or produce an altered state of consciousness.

These two constituents would seem to share a number of potential ways of affecting PK performance. Both may facilitate: 1) a greater ability to connect to the target; 2) a narrowing or focusing of attention; 3) increasing energy access/production; 4) dissociation from the ego identity or awareness of self; and 6) shifting activity away from the rational left-brain. It was interesting that almost any kind of emotion, whether one we traditionally think of as energetic, such as anger or excitement, or one we traditionally think of as low affect, such as sadness or boredom, seem to be effective in facilitating PK. This would tend to suggest that there is something about emotion per se, as long as it does not interfere with other factors the way self-frustration might.

Many of the participants mentioned having a model that they liked to use. It was interesting to note, however, that several of these models seemed to differ in fundamental ways and yet still be equally effective. One participant also stated that having a model to work from is important, and astutely noted that whether or not the model is correct doesn't matter.

There are several ways that having a model might be helpful. It is possible that having a model for PK may: 1) create a structure for beliefs to make PK acceptable, hence normalizing it; 2) generate (rightly or wrongly) a sense of control over the process and enhance the performer comfort zone; 3) bypass ownership resistance by crediting the PK to a discarnate entity, ritual, or another entity (extraterrestrials and dolphins are quite popular currently); 4) get the conscious mind out of the way of whatever really needs to happen; 5) actually be correct and guide the performer in performing PK; 6) allow us to let go of the need to analyze what is going on since we have a "reason" for what is occurring; and 7) enhance a sense of trust in the process. The latter could be particularly important for successful PK performance. It was noted during the interview process that a worldview that supports PK seemed to make it easier for performers to accept responsibility for their events, but it is unclear if this had any real effect on the actual performance or experience of PK.

One of the most interesting findings of this study is the apparent lack of importance of believing that you can perform PK, or confidence, which is contrary to what is stated in most of the experimental literature. In this study, belief was neither necessary nor sufficient for PK performance. There may be several possible explanations for this. First of all, it is possible that PK which involves group spectators and potentially hostile bystanders may be a different situation than performing PK in a friendly, or solitary, setting. One participant did note that confidence is important for performing in public. Another possibility is that belief limits can be bypassed if we don't think about them. This certainly could be part of what is happening both in highly emotional states and altered states of consciousness. Our beliefs simply become irrelevant. Yet a third explanation could be that it is openness, rather than belief per se, which is truly the deciding factor.

It may be worth noting that the fact that belief or confidence is not sufficient for PK success would be in conformance with findings of ESP studies of people in mental institutions who sincerely believe that they have psychic abilities yet perform poorly on psi tests (Nelson, 1994). Looking at the other end of the "belief" spectrum, we can see that many mothers and children, close family members, and therapist-patient dyads do indeed seem to manifest real psi despite not necessarily "believing" it exists, because there is a deep connection and often intense focus as well (Mintz & Schmeidler, 1983; Rhine, 1961).

While this study cannot determine for certain if PK and ESP are the same process, their overlap in ASC and energetic qualities raised the question that ESP and PK may, in fact, be the same experience, with the apparent differences being more superficial than real. It is possible that their outward differences have blinded us to their similar core essence, and that PK and ESP may be the same process, or overlap in such a way that they cannot be clearly separated or defined. Needless to say, a great deal of further work is needed to clarify the situation.

To summarize, the PK experience appears to have seventeen constituents for intentional PK. Spontaneous PK has fifteen constituents, with "trust in the process" and "guiding the process" being absent. It is hoped that using this framework for looking at PK may aid not only our understanding of prior experimental results, but also enhance theory development, allow us to design better experiments, clarify what is occurring in spontaneous cases, and enhance our ability to help people learn how to perform PK. Avoiding negative terms, what the PK experience is not, is particularly important for the latter. It should be noted that this study attempted a broad overview of PK and is unlikely to be a complete picture of what is occurring. More research is needed to better illuminate and define the constituents.

REFERENCES

- ALESSI, L. E. (1994). "Breakaway into the zone": A phenomenological investigation from the athlete's perspective. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 5602B. (University Microfilms No. DAI9518256).
- BARRETT, K. (1996). A phenomenological study of channeling: The experience of transmitting information from a source perceived as paranormal. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, RA12106. (University Microfilms No. LD03475).
- GIORGI, A. (Ed.). (1985). *Phenomenology and psychological research: Edited and with an introduction by Amedeo Giorgi*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- GISSURARSON, L. R. (1992). Studies of methods of enhancing and potentially training psychokinesis: a review. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, **86**, 303-346.
- GISSURARSON, L. R. (1997). Descriptive analysis of mentations on volitional tasks. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, **62**, 22-35.
- ISAACS, J. (1992). Clinical issues in the parapsychology laboratory. In B. Shapin & L. Coly (Eds.), *Spontaneous psi, depth psychology, & parapsychology* (pp. 28-60). New York: Parapsychology Foundation.
- MAY, E. C., UTTS, J. M., & Spottiswoode, S. J. P. (1995). Applications of decision augmentation theory. *Journal of Parapsychology*, **59**, 221-250.
- MINTZ, E. E., & SCHMEIDLER, G. (1983). *The psychic thread: Paranormal and transpersonal aspects of psychotherapy*. New York: Human Sciences Press.
- MURPHY, M., & WHITE, R. (1995). *In the zone: Transcendent experience in sports*. New York: Penguin/Arkana.

- NELSON, J. E. (1994). *Healing the split: Integrating spirit into our understanding of the mentally ill* (Rev. Ed.). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- POLKINGHORNE, D. E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In R. S. Valle & S. Halling (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology*. New York: Plenum Press.
- RHINE, L. E. (1961). *Hidden channels of the mind*. New York: Morrow and Company.
- STANFORD, R. G. (1986). Experimental psychokinesis: A review from diverse perspectives [Abstracts]. In B. Wolman, L. Dale, G. Schmeidler, & M. Ullman (Eds.), *Handbook of parapsychology* (pp. 324-381). Jefferson, NC: McFarland. (Original work published 1977).
- VALLE, R. S., KING, M., & HALLING, S. (1989). An introduction to existential-phenomenological thought in psychology. In R. S. Valle & S. Halling (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology: Exploring the breadth of human experience*. (pp.3-16). New York: Plenum Press.
- VON ECKARTSBERG, R. (1998). Introducing existential-phenomenological psychology. In R. Valle (Ed.), *Phenomenological inquiry in psychology: existential and transpersonal dimensions*. (pp. 3-20). New York: Plenum Press.

*1843 Holland Drive
Walnut Creek, CA 94596-2242
psychon@earthlink.net*