

SUPERNORMAL FUNCTIONING IN ACTORS

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read SUPERNORMAL FUNCTIONING IN ACTORS, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Transformative Studies at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

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ABSTRACT

This inquiry sought to answer the question, “Do professional actors experience supernormal functioning in their work?” Relevant subquestions included “What specific types and subtypes of supernormal capacities do professional actors develop and use?” and “What causes and sustains supernormal functioning in professional actors?” This thesis concludes and argues that supernormal functioning is, in fact, an integral and essential component of actors’ work across cultures and pedagogies.

Using narrative interviews with experienced actors who were also experienced spiritual practitioners this study identifies various specific categories of supernormal functioning, as well as some of the causes of, and blocks to, sustained access to these supernormal capacities. Using semi-structured interviews to explicate narratives relative to this inquiry, this study developed ten short case studies. Participants were working professional actors who had received at least 3 years of formal training in acting technique and had participated in some form of long term (five years or more) transformative practice.

By situating the data analysis within an integral epistemology, the thesis offers a meta-pedagogical framework which can assist individual actors, teachers, and training programs in developing modular integrative practices towards sustained access to supernormal capacities in performance.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Oscar Wilde (2013) once said, “I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being” (para. 1). In this quote, Oscar Wilde expresses an almost spiritual reverence for theatre. It is a sentiment shared by many who have come to love acting and theatre. There is something magical and divine about transcendent art, regardless of the form, and acting is no different. Great acting has a luminous quality that awes and inspires audiences; that can liberate upon apprehension. Great actor poses the extreme dichotomy of being able to command a reverence that borders on royalty and sainthood while ever playing the fool.

Acting is an ideal place to study supernormal capacities. Theatre and the art of acting have their roots in spiritual ritual, religious rites, shamanic mask possession, yogic energy anatomies, and esoteric magic and alchemical practices. It could be seen that actors must develop some aspects of supernormal capacities in order to fulfill their function in the collective ritual of theatre. This thesis explores specific ways that actors demonstrate spiritual development; it proposes that supernormal capacities in actors are essentially spiritual abilities and emerge through stages as developmental capacities primarily due to sustained practice.

Supernormal Functioning (SNF)

Murphy (1992) coined the term supernormal functioning and compiled scholarship to catalogue examples of various supernormal capacities primarily from the literature sports, spiritual, and transformative practice. Murphy (Murphy

& Leonard, 2005) concluded that these capacities were developmental in nature and could be cultivated through long term transformative practices of various kinds. He also defined them as exceptionally high levels of ability in any given developmental capacity; in his survey he created twelve categories of normal human functioning and laid out the supernormal versions of each. Supernormal functioning is cultivated through long term conscious practices (Wilber, Patten, Morelli, & Leonard, 2008). Defining “Supernormal Functioning” as various developmental capacities cultivated by long-term transformative practice sets it apart from related terms such as non-ordinary states (Grof, 2006), peak experience (Maslow, 1964), transpersonal experience (Wilber, 1981), and altered states of consciousness (Tart, 1969). Supernormal functioning contains aspects of peak, non-ordinary, or altered states; but over time and with ongoing practice these fleeting experiences can become stabilized as corresponding abilities (Wilber, 2007). If they are to be reliably sustained (Murphy & Leonard, 2005), they must involve long term regular practice and progress through a developmental sequence of stages.

Often supernormal functioning is transpersonal; coming from beyond the self and in a spiritual dimension of reality. These supernormal functions often involve forces or consciousness beyond a personal self-sense and are difficult to metabolize into one’s being without a robust transrational or transpersonal view such as offered by Grof (2006), Wilber (2007), Wade (2004), or Alli (2011).

An exhaustive list of supernormal capacities would be impossible here, but some examples of supernormal functioning include practices of rapture or

bodily ecstasies, extrasensory perceptions, precognition, charismas, shape shifting, out-of-body capacities, psychic abilities, reliable access to flow states, participation with synchronicity, access to past-life memories, non-local or transrational access to knowledge, expressions of a nondual self-sense, extraordinary somatic regulation, and the ability to shift subjective and inter-subjective experiences of time and space (Braud & Anderson, 1998; Murphy, 1992; Wade, 2004; Wilber, 2007). Most compiled knowledge relevant to SNF breaks the abilities into types and subtypes for the sake of cataloguing and defining (Chaudhuri, 2013; Murphy, 1992; Murphy & White, 1995; Myers, 2013; Wade, 2004).

Some categories of SNF are abilities of perception or interior consciousness. Others are more observable behavioral capacities or communal and collectively observable intersubjectively reportable phenomenon. Among the categories and various abilities, it is not clear if they are related to each other; meaning that it's unclear if certain abilities have a causative effect on others or if some are precursors to the emergence of others. There have been various categorizations of supernormal capacities, and although each has come up with similar styles of categorizations, their types, subtypes, and specific definitions vary. This study developed its own (yet similar) categories organically by overlapping SNF literature with relevant acting literature so as to develop distinctions that are relevant specifically to actors needs yet related to the larger field of SNF study.

These supernormal capacities often strike people as magical or miraculous or at least suggestive as revealing a mysterious and awesome dimension of life that leaves people feeling a sense of the sacred; or open to or convinced of spiritual dimensions of our existence. Often when actors are able to demonstrate such capacities they report that their interior states are exalted, connected to (or channeling) impersonal forces larger than themselves: some even report a sense of connection to or identification with the Source of Creation itself. In addition, audiences are often profoundly affected by witnessing such occurrences and flock to see such performers with an almost religious zeal.

Researcher's Bias and Background

This study was inspired by my personal experiences with supernormal functioning as a professional actor. It began when I worked for and studied with Ken Wilber and took up an integral transformative practice in alignment with the views and values of an integral view of the world. I also became interested in pursuing supernormal functioning in my acting. Yet, I found that there was little dialogue among the professionals I work with on the subject. All the same, I knew many of them did in fact experience supernormal functioning in their work on a regular basis; or that they did pursue SNF as an ideal, whether or not they were conscious of doing so or calling what they were pursuing supernormal functioning.

In addition, I have felt as if the acting techniques I studied were less than satisfactory when compared to the size, scope, and sense of human potential present in the literature of Murphy (1992), Wilber (1995), Wade (2004), Grof

(2006), and others that I'd read. After finishing my training at the American Conservatory Theatre and then acting and teaching in San Francisco Bay Area professional theatres, it became my experience that many actors have encountered the same dissatisfaction with the lack of transpersonal context for acting techniques. In addition, many actors, including myself, struggled with how to sustain supernormal functions in a healthy way; often falling prey to drugs, alcohol, or other bacchanalian or lascivious romps in order to fuel creative fires and chase altered states that felt spiritual and profoundly important. The limitations of such an approach and the ubiquity of it became obvious and sad. This research was born of that experience.

My integral bias as a researcher is born of my many years studying and even working for Wilber himself. I try to keep the bias in check, but it seems unavoidable to a certain degree. Wilber is often critiqued in that his theory of everything (his meta-theory) is far too general and broad and because of its scope it makes generalizations that are fallacious and do damage by oversimplifying significant debates in various fields of human knowledge. To whatever degree that may be true, the same may be said of this research. In it, generalizations are made that about various categories of, and topics related to, SNF. They are explored as possibly relating to supernormal functioning in actors. Because this is early mapping of a meta-pedagogical nature and it seeks to find some universal or common patterns that transcend any one tradition or culture of acting technique, it falls into the trap of oversimplifying at times. As a result, it may seem to some readers that terms are vaguely used, and sometimes they are. Occasionally terms

that, to a discerning eye, have important distinctions are herein made to be too closely synonymous. Some of that might be my lack of rigor (or shortcoming as a scholar), but some of those fuzzy boundaries have to do with the generalizing nature and broad scope of the research approach.

Purpose and Vision

The basic motivation for studying supernormal functioning is one of spiritual service to actors and audiences. Supernormal capacities hold, as essentially spiritual events often reveal, or are achieved through, a spiritual reality; they hold the highest, most developed, and thus the most significant dimensions of human potential and human life. A presupposed value of this study is that it is fundamentally good that all people grow to the fullest capacity to satisfy an innate and fundamental evolutionary urge.

In addition, the hope of this effort is that actors can serve audiences by leading by example towards these actualized spiritual vistas. The combined examination of acting and SNF is purposeful and hopefully effective in the following ways. First, it can be seen by the review of the literature, that when great acting is discussed, often supernormal abilities (by any other name) are being referred to, thus a more comprehensive and integrated theory of supernormal functioning in acting could empower actor theory and practice altogether; to help actors understand how to grow towards and sustainably access SNF abilities relevant to the art of acting. Another advantage would be that the study would begin to develop a transpedagogical approach need to address one of the primary challenges facing postmodern acting: the profusion of techniques

from all times, places, and cultures often leave actors with a disjointed uncertainty as to how various techniques are related to each other.

Also, actors are a subpopulation ripe for, and open to, exploration of supernormal capacities (actor training generally deals with the mind and body as an instrument of creative expression already and so lends itself to the integration of transformative practices). In addition, because of the proliferation of film, television, and other media, actors now hold a position of significant cultural influence, not only to disseminate ideas of supernormal functioning towards cultural acceptance, but to actually transmit, through their performative art, the actualization of those abilities to live audiences, or less powerfully but more broadly to larger audiences through recorded medias like television, films, and the internet.

It seems likely that supernormal capacities are already developing in actors and that some aspects of supernormal capacity are what actually make for great acting. In many cases, actors, teachers, and directors don't know how to consciously language what they are experiencing. In this sense, supernormal functioning is a very useful term. Using that term and its associated body of knowledge, a) creates an opportunity to talk about developmental stages, the highest of which are essentially spiritual b) thus allowing for a contribution to both an transpersonal integral theory of acting but also for the possibility to start to see very broad cross-cultural patterns, as a result of a trans-pedagogical aperspectival integral view, that might begin to allow a more relatable and

connected sense of various acting techniques available here in the early twenty first century.

The ultimate vision behind this inquiry is that someday the professional community of actors will be better supported, via theory and practice, in developing a contemporary spiritual yet practical and well integrated approach to their acting work. Some arts have a tradition of sacred context for their work (e.g., Ikebana, Kayudo, Indian temple dance, etc.) and one day there may be a similar detailed tradition for actors to use as a path to God. Supernormal Functioning is an ideal term for the sake of this research because it is meta-pedagogical and allows for the study of common spiritual capacities in actors across many traditions, cultures, and techniques. At best, the rough cartography of SNF in actors developed in this study will contribute to a larger movement towards a transpersonal and integral acting theory and practice. Ideally a school or artistic research institution would be created in the future, to continue this exploration into the topic of supernormal functioning in actors and its application in the professional artistic workplace.

Nature of the Inquiry

The primary question guiding this inquiry is: *Do professional actors experience supernormal functioning in their work?* Relevant subquestions include: (1) “What specific types of supernormal capacities do professional actors develop and use?” (2) “What causes and sustains supernormal functioning in professional actors?” Using these questions to guide the gathering of narrative case studies, this study teased out a rough and general cartography of supernormal

capacities as they manifest in actors and made a few light theoretical distinctions relative to supernormal functioning in actors and as well as some practical proposals for generating sustained access to them.

An integral and developmental epistemological container is held for this research. This general framework is derived from many authors generally called integral and transdisciplinary in nature (Bateson, 2002; Gilligan, 1993; Graves, 2005; Murphy, 1992; Wade, 2004; Wilber 1995). An integral epistemological context seems to have plenty of room for a recursive processes that allow for its own endless evolution, thus assuring that this research has the possibility of not just using an integral lens but also evolving the integral lens itself. Even the department and program in which this study took place had an integral emphasis track and encouraged transdisciplinary (Montuori, in press) and creative inquiry (Montouri, 1998) in the research process. While the epistemological container is integral and transdisciplinary, the attempt was made to hold it lightly and bring in theoretical distinction and context only as it seemed useful while also letting themes and patterns emerge organically from the data collection and analysis process.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review argues for the value and necessity of the current study in light of a significant gap in the literature. Two fields of literature are of primary relevance to this inquiry, the small but burgeoning field of research into supernormal functioning altogether, and the rather large body of literature surrounding the theory and practice of acting. The essential point made herein, is that nobody has as yet applied the lens and distinctions that have emerged in the field of supernormal functioning research directly to their appearance and nature in the subculture of professional actors and that doing so is potentially a major contribution to an emerging transpersonal and integrative technique of acting.

In general, the theory and phenomenon of supernormal functioning is more explicit and developed in the field of SNF, but in acting it is often spoken of incidentally and inexplicitly. Often, as Murphy and White (1995) found in the field of sports, the experiences are happening all the time but the subculture doesn't speak about them openly for one reason or another, and for that reason may be missing an opportunity to cultivate and sustain them towards a good end.

The first half of this literature review briefly reviews the emergence, maturation, and contributions of seminal literature in the field of supernormal functioning. The second half of this literature review looks at seminal works selected from the entire history of cross-cultural cannon on acting theory and praxis and how an integral approach to supernormal functioning will add a distinct and needed new layer to the current landscape of theory and praxis. Auxiliary relevant literature for this inquiry comes from transformative studies,

spiritual practice, studies of supernormal functioning, acting theory and technique, integral psychology, transpersonal psychology, integral theory, actor biographies, actor interviews, drama therapy, and various sacred arts.

SNF Literature

While supernormal functioning as a field, especially and beginning with Mike Murphy's (1992) seminal tome *The Future of the Body*, deals with literature and data from a vast number of cultures and eras. His work drew heavily on the pioneering psychical research of Myers and Gurney (2013), Alan Gauld (2013), Haridas Chaudhuri (2013), and others.

Despite his influences, Murphy (1992) set out on his own, and the term Supernormal Functioning is still a distinct descriptive term and is relatively young. Its proposals as to the nature of supernormal capacities across time and culture are very integrative, transcultural, and arguably revolutionary in their developmental approach. Supernormal functioning has developed as a general umbrella term for a vast array of different sorts of abilities. In *The Future of the Body* Murphy simplified his model into twelve primary categories, each of which had various sub-types of experience and capacity.

In his later book, *In the Zone*, Murphy and White (1995) focused specifically on supernormal capacities as they express themselves in modern sports; the categories that emerged were slightly different and began a precedent of adapting categories slightly to suit the specific field being studied; a precedent which this study followed in adapting categories to fit the needs of focus on professional actors.

Since then, The Esalen Institute's Center for Theory and Research has since been sponsoring ongoing inquiry into SNF and other related subjects. In 1980, Murphy (1980) gave a report on this transformation project citing the vast quantity of research and activity that was coming together to explore the yet to be actualized human potentialities: categories of relevant research included biofeedback, other self-awareness practices, and psychological process.

Now there is a database of over two thousand articles compiled at the Esalen CTR, but only two specifically use terms regarding SNF: "Miracles and the Supernormal" (Crook, 1952) and "How to Elicit Supernormal Capabilities in Athletes" (Hickman, 1979).

A remarkably few studies have touched upon supernormal capacities as they express themselves in various forms of creative play and artistic performance. Murphy and White's (1995) book on SNF in sports could be considered as loosely relating to performance and play, but it is clearly not directly an exploration of artistic process. Alex Gray (1998) could be loosely interpreted as a contributor to the conversation around supernormal functioning in the arts, yet he doesn't use that precise term and his main interest is in long term safe enthenogenically induced state work that leads to transformative stages if well-grounded in consistent exogenic practice. Other than that, while there is great literature on topics relevant to SNF in the arts like Wilber's (2000) essays on integral art and Alli's (2011) paratheatrical manifesto among others, again there are apparently no existing studies specifically on SNF in the arts, let alone actors in specific.

Jenny Wade (2004) has made a vital contribution with her research into transpersonal experience in sexual situations. Oddly, she wanted to emphasize the spontaneous and irrepressible dimension of SNF, whereas this study, partially due to its integral developmental bias, is more focused on stages of development and concerned with passive state experiences in so much as they might be translated to active capacities that emerge from a stage developmental sequence. Wade seemed to follow Murphy's (1995) lead in adapting her categories and descriptions to more precisely fit her subject matter; again, this study did the same in looking for categories and definitions that were specific to the experience of professional actors.

The idea behind this study is akin to Murphy's (1972, 1995) impulse behind *In the Zone* and *Golf in the Kingdom*. These sorts of experiences may be happening all the time, but few people are talking about them in a cohesive way or cataloging them, and so they probably are not nurtured and utilized as much as they could be. Ideally this study will gather many in depth case studies that highlight how supernormal functioning is occurring in the subculture of professional actors, and through this, the subculture will be more empowered to take practical steps to invite and sustain access to supernormal capacities, thus increasing the overall quality and service of the work they do in their communities and professional environments.

Supernormal Functioning as a research focus serves as a trans-pedagogical conceptualization. In terms of acting theory and praxis, the term supernormal functioning is a useful broad definition that allows for a rough meta-mapping of

the developmental culmination of various acting traditions and techniques. Every technique and theory has a value system; it has a highest good in its own context. It works towards some definition of excellence and greatness and excels usually in developing what Wilber (2000) calls discrete lines of development; or said otherwise, in training certain categories of human capacity to supernormal levels while ignoring or being blind to other categories.

This meta-paradigmatic integral perspective can add to the existing literature, in that it is the first of its kind to not try to develop its own approach and technique specifically, but to look at the all current techniques from a trans-pedagogical perspective.

By defining supernormal functioning in an integral lens as the transpersonal stages of any developmental line, it situates supernormal functioning as an essentially spiritual event, and strips the artistic process of any need for dogma or theology in order to conceptualize a very refined and sacred art form. Truly this could aid in supporting a trend that already seems to be happening; the arts becoming a primary vehicle for spiritual experience.

Many efforts have been made at empowering acting techniques by integrating transformative and spiritual practices include many of the greats of the twentieth century, including Peter Brook and Grotowski who both studied Gurdjieff, Chekhov who studied Steiner and Theosophy, and Stanislavski who apparently studied Ramacharaka and many others yogis and spiritual masters. More currently Eric Morris (2000), Larry Moss (2006), Jack Plotnick (2013), and

others are integrating cutting edge psychological and spiritual techniques into acting practices.

Supernormal Functioning in Acting

The literature of acting theory and practice suggests that supernormal functioning is happening all the time in the art and profession of acting; but it has never been overtly labeled or approached as such. In this section, preliminary categories were devised from the seminal literature of acting theory and praxis. In addition, some brief discussion and definition of each is undertaken in an attempt to integrate hints or expressions of SNF from the acting literature to their counterparts already well catalogued in the SNF literature in an attempt to postulate a preliminary cartography of SNF in actors to be tried and shaped through the interview process.

In the following sections, I have created nine general categories of supernormal functioning in actors are proposed, based on what is present in the literature.

Supernormal self-sense.

Realizing or perceiving a supernormal experience of self seems to be a developmental capacity in which the consciousness of the individual expands beyond the ego-centric to identity with a supreme or spiritual Self (Jung, 2009). Specifically in actors, supernormal self-sense as a functional capacity would be when an actor can identify and act from a supreme or “spiritual Self” identity in the moment of performance. Ashley Wain (2005) explores in detail the relationships between several formulations that might loosely be included into this

category; including Stanislavski's true-I, Grotowski's I-I, and Chekhov's higher ego and creative individuality. He examines them all in a larger context of transformative spiritual teachings given by A.H. Almaas, Ramacharaka, Shiva Sutras, and others. Wain explores how each has a slightly different flavor, but he also shows that between the many expressions and levels of the self from which a person or actor can operate there are many useful similarities, especially as it relates to his primary pursuit of an actor's presence. Wain's contribution is invaluable to this study in that it is exploring trans-pedagogical principles and patterns which support the uniquely meta-pedagogical approach of this study.

The sense of self is essential for an actor's work. For each character an actor plays, it is common that they tackle the essential question "Who am I?" as a necessary foundation (Moss, 2006). But "who am I?" is also a spiritual question in many mystical traditions that if pursued far enough can lead to awakening to the Supreme Identity, Divine Self, or Realization of Godhead that many traditions have called by various names (Ernest & Ketcham, 1992). Ashley Wain (2005) showed that many influential acting teachers have pointed to a supernormal sense of identity as a foundational appearance; his study explore various expressions of the notion that pre-expressivity and various stabilized experiences of a spiritual self-sense are a precursor to a wide variety of exceptional and perhaps supernormal abilities in great actors.

An actor can reach the point of Supreme Identity at the root of all characters. Supreme Identity is a when the individual feels the self as without boundary; a sense of being able to feel Space as Self (Wilber, 2004; Worley,

2001). Other literature on supernormal functioning records these as experiences of nothingness (Wade, 2004) and feeling the Immortal self (Murphy & White, 1995). These experiences become supernormal functions in an individual who is able to take the experience and use the power to take actions, thus perform supernormal functions. For example, in this case, Jesus, Joan of Arc, Adi Da, or Ramana Maharshi could arguably be seen to be acting functionally from a supreme spiritual identity. Jesus act of non-violence, divine Self-confession, and complete bodily self-sacrifice could be seen as supernormal capacity for service, love, and self-transcendence. Again, the ability to see and sense and ultimate identity or self is a foundational supernormal capacity from which, quite possibly, other supernormal capacities arise.

Supernormal self-sense is a supernormal capacity which means it is developmental by nature. It is grounded in heightened mature access to an authentic personal self. The mature and autonomous personal self is itself a developmental stage of self-development that is not easy or commonly achieved. Infants have a self that is merged with mother, and adolescents are only just developing a rudimentary self-sense. It takes work, guidance, and very specific practices to develop an emotionally mature, autonomous self. Supernormal functioning as a developed capacity, not a state experience, takes time to mature and develop long beyond just healthy normal functioning. In the case of supernormal self-sense, a normal and mature personality 'self' must first develop well before a transpersonal self-sense begins to emerge and stabilize, developmentally speaking.

Many people either have never grown a mature ego-self, or they have developed a false-self as a coping mechanism due to cultural pressures or trauma. Often actors must heal psychological wounds and develop a stable mature personhood before they can begin to transcend that personal self-sense and experience sustained contact with a transpersonal self-sense. Eric Morris' (2000) work with actors seems to be serving the need in the actor community to do the basic and foundational step of mature personal psychological wholeness in relationship to the work of an actor. As such, he contributes an essential aspect of what actors need to actualize supernormal capacities with regards to self-sense.

It appears that the process of creating a character's self-sense, or identity, also aids in the developmental process of the actor. The objectivity of creating complex characters acts as a means to develop a more complex self (Giannotti, 1995). This is also due to the fact that one must be grounded in one's own story or self-narrative before having the capacity to imagine another self-sense; this is true of adolescents as well as the adolescent, playful, and imaginative sub-personality of every actor, regardless of age. This brings up an ongoing issue in actor training and professional acting process, which is the question of whether one brings one's self to the work or somehow leaves personal matters at the door. In the context of a developmental self-sense, finding a way to include, utilize, and ultimately transcend personal psychological experience may be fundamental to cultivating transpersonal experience and supernormal functioning for actors.

Once an actor has a well-integrated and individuated authentic "self," they apparently need to transcend that self to reach the heights of supernormal

functioning. An expanded transpersonal or supernormal sense of self can include knowledge of one's ancestral identity or even past life experiences (Alli, 2009). Another possible way actors can experience supernormal self-sense is what Murphy (1992) calls transcendent personhood, where an actor experiences an utterly unique personal self that transcends and unifies in essence with all other unique personal selves. Although this sounds circular; it is an old paradoxical aphorism in art and life that the universal comes from the unique, particular, specific, and most personal. When an actor penetrates his utter uniqueness, suddenly his personal psychology and experience can become transcendent and universal.

Tadashi Suzuki, the great Japanese acting teacher, used a physical kata as a means for an actor to observe his own body (Moon, 2008) and thus start to objectify and transcend the patterns of his own body-mind. For Suzuki (1986), this self-observation and self-knowledge was a means to an end wherein an actor can “transcend his individual self and perform, symbolically, for all mankind” (p. 72). Suzuki (as cited in Wylie-Marques, 2003) further propounded that “effacement of the ego” (p. 83); sacrifice of the small self: suggesting that it was necessary for access to the supernormal powers of the spiritual Self. Peter Brook (as cited in Hodge, 2000) also worked towards the possibility that an actor can be “moved beyond ego-driven virtuosity to a kind of psycho-somatic integration that he calls transparency; alive and present in every molecule of their being” (p. 22).

Thus we see that once a small self develops there are potentially several types or levels of ‘self’. Roughly there may be undeveloped self, a false self (due

to trauma or cultural pressure, a mature self which then must be sacrificed through meaningful action to achieve a transcendent self-sense. Thus supernormal self-sense only comes if many other pieces are in place.

In addition, beyond just transcending one's personal self, one can actually begin to call on autonomous sources of energy larger than the personal self. Alli (2009) describe non-dogmatic ritual technology through which transpersonal sources such as Pan, Dionysus, magickal symbols, elements, animals, ancestors, deities, and archetypes can lead to exceptional capacities that are impossible by conventional psychophysical techniques.

Supernormal physical and energetic capacities.

In this category is a variety of capacities and experiences that actors encounter that relate most fundamentally to activation and unification of the physical and energetic bodies. Some of the extraordinary physical transformations that have been catalogued include: capacity for disguise to the point of shape-shifting, physical and vocal transformations, uncanny mimicry, embodiment of non-human forces such as elementals, and channeling/possession that is similar to other recorded transpersonal experiences such as those found spontaneously in sexual activity (Wade, 2004). Many of these transformations match some of what Murphy (1992) recorded as alterations in the bodily structure and also some supernormal physical abilities in sports (Murphy & White, 1995).

The "subtle body" is a catch-all term for various forms of energy that generally includes chi, auras, dream and imaginal dimensions, and psychic phenomena (Wilber, Patten, Morelli, & Leonard, 2008). When an individual

becomes conscious of and able to manipulate or relate to the “subtle body” they begin to demonstrate supernormal functioning similar to magicians, charismatic saints, and great yogis (Murphy, 1992). Michael Chekhov (2003), Viola Spolin (1999), and Pardo (Al-Shamman, 2006) all approach various aspects of the subtle energetic body as relevant to actors work.

Exceptional actors often speak about of the use of subtle energies that radiate in and around the physical body. Suzuki (1986) goes so far as to firmly assert that the use of inert energy in a performance space (i.e. electric lights, electronic sound systems, etc.) actually weakens the actor's craft by acting as a crutch to the development of a strong, supple, and powerful energetic body. The implication is that if actors return to less technologically enhanced contexts that they would more readily develop radiance energy, energetic presence, and various ritual or ecstatic states found in many supernormal states in sports (Murphy & White, 1995). These ecstatic states can be similar to general spiritual raptures that involve bliss, awe, and wonder (Braud & Anderson, 1998). Stanislavski (1949) and later Michael Chekhov (2003) attempted some articulation of the intricacies of the energy bodies for actors. Chekhov (2003) derived some of his ideas from the study of the Hindu yogic understanding of the pranic body, but he called it the invisible body and trained actors to excel in conscious use of it during performance. Peter Brook (as cited in Hodge, 2000) referred to this larger body of energetic connection as an “invisible network that links the actor to self, to partner, to ensemble, to audience” (p.176). Grotowski (as cited in Moon, 2008) also spoke of this unseen energetic web and referred to his pursuit and interest in

“an intense play of presence and reception on the subtlest levels after the course energies of daily encounters are put away” (p. 54). This is a very simple exploration of ‘energy bodies in actor training’ as the theme could serve to be several dissertations on its own.

Lecoq, Decroux, Cupeau, and Diderot all contributed to a strong lineage of theatre training focused on physical actions (Porter, 1996). At best, these intensive physical disciplines release energies within an actor’s body. One core physical practice for activating the energetic system for actors is what Grotowski (as cited in Wylie-Marques, 2003) called verticality: an elevated state of the actor's energy transformed through physical discipline. In Grotowski’s (as cited in Salata, 2007) training of actors and construction of performances he pursued a “framework of action to transform coarse, everyday energy to a level of energy more subtle or even toward the higher connection” (p. 113). This vertical connection can be facilitated by literally putting the body upright, expanded, and relaxed so that energy can cycle between above and below, coursing mostly through the spine. It relates to what some shaman call our ropes to god (Keeney, 2004).

Supernormal play.

Moreno (1983) said that playing with children was what inspired him to choose acting over the priesthood (p. xxi). There are generally two kinds of play that an actor can cultivate. One is personal and regressive in nature, the other transpersonal and supernormal. The personal foundation most actors must go through is to reclaim the inner child. Wilhelm Reich (1942) said that most people accumulate life experience and emotional trauma or blockage in the form of

muscular armor in the muscles and flesh (p. 271). Classes that focus on the Alexander Technique, Middendorf Breath Work, or Feldenkrais Technique have a core aim of relaxing and releasing this tension to reclaim much of the free somatic experience of a child; free of tension and rigidity that commonly comes with aging and socialization.

But there is a transpersonal sense of cosmic play that can emerge as well. This can be represented by the Fool card in tarot (Goddard, 1999). Some actors have an experience of performing while feeling at one with the entire manifest world as what is sometimes called divine play, or in Sanskrit, Lila (Wain, 2005). This study will search for further details on such supernormal capacities in actors. As a researcher my intuition combined with literature on supernormal functioning lead me to expect to find something similar to the following: supernormal play experienced as radical innovation, freedom from fear, identity with the divine child archetype, experiences of beginner's mind, pure emptiness as a field of infinite potentiality, objectivity of self and story, and alignment with the Divine Play. Playfulness is, after all, often seen as a sign of transpersonal stages of development (Braud & Anderson, 1998). This sense of supernormal play might lead to a feeling of boundless freedom (Murphy & White, 1995) or self-existent delight (Murphy, 1992) that is capable of persisting through any adversity; a generative state that transforms any circumstance into a synchronistically perfect opportunity for whatever the artists purposes may be, through creative response.

Supernormal service.

The capacity for service in the work of an actor is potentially unlimited. Great actors in moments of transcendence perform actions consciously in service to a character, script, audience, culture, or even an Ultimate Divine. Antonin Artaud (1958) used a metaphor of spiritual “sacrifice” when he called on the image of Joan of Arc, saying that actors should perform as if “burning at the stake, and signaling through the flames” (p.117). This spiritual act of “self-sacrifice” can be a ritual act of total spiritual transformation.

Theater has its roots in sacred ritual and continues to perform a ritual function even to this day (Turner, 2001). Actors literally offer their body and voice as a vessel for the subtle and archetypal forces; the actor draws on sources of energy far larger than anything personal effort could accumulate. Suzuki (1986) explicitly called for a revised theatre space “on which to perform for the gods” (p. 22).

On a subtle level of collective psyche theatrical presentations can enact collective healing. Often the theory and praxis of theatre is overtly aimed at guardianship of the collective social health (Brecht, 1964). As one actor said to another aware of the supernormal service required at the summit of this artistic work, “This thing that we do requires more presence, more generosity, more humility and, frankly, more love than most of us are capable of in our daily lives. It’s big. But it’s necessary. It’s so necessary.” (Moon, 2008, p. 212)

Starting with Dionysian rites in ancient Greece, many forms of theatre have served or been worked on by various deities, imps, daemons, gods, genies (Moon, 2008). The conscious worship of (or spiritual service involving) specific

deity or god forms are loosely help under the umbrella term “diety mysticism” (Wilber, 2007, p 93). Service is generally seen in the context of easing suffering in some way, which requires what Zeami saw as an actor’s self-cultivation for the sake of compassion (Wylie-Marques, 2003). Decroux (as cited in Leabhart, 2007) was known to command his students to “empty out the apartment so that god could come to live there” (p. 38). Eleanora Dusa was a major influence in actualizing theatre as supernormal service. Dusa was famous as a kind of sainted actress; there was a sense of absolute devotion in her work, which she used to glorify God, and through which she revealed God’s grace, beauty, and passion (Galliene, 1973).

Supernormal will.

Acting is aptly named, in that fundamentally it is the artistic assortment of performed actions. Many have argued that “character” is essentially a function or result of an accumulation of “actions” (Benedetti, 2004; McKee, 1997). The process of understanding “action” goes through developmental stages that lead the artist through a process of developing the will power to choose and execute actions to the final zenith of effortless surrender to a transpersonal will (Giannotti, 1995). Uta Hagen (as cited in Hodge, 2000) describes the “actor’s faith” wherein belief in the poetic reality of the play becomes a spiritual gesture of conviction and the power of “faith” to manifest reality.

When an actor moves from action coming from a highly developed personal will into an experience of “choiceless” surrender to a transpersonal and supernormal experience of the will, they might feel a sense of “instinctive action”

(Murphy & White, 1995). Supernormal Will as a function can also include sensitivity to and cooperation with miraculous synchronicities in casting, preparation, rehearsal, or performance (Giannotti, 1995). This kind of supernormal ability to choose and execute actions with the body, mind, and voice can be seen to parallel Murphy's (1992) catalogue of examples of supernormal volition which he describes as an ability exceeding ordinary will, unification of separate impulses to produce extraordinary action.

As in sports, this sort of "will" or "action" can paradoxically be experienced as uninhibited and energized action and calm, peace, and total stillness at the same moment (Murphy & White, 1995). This supernormal will can also manifest itself as an utter lack of "holding back" or total commitment (Moon, 2008). Sometimes it can even be a sense of being an agent of the will larger than one's self; for example, becoming a pawn to the will of the consciousness of the Earth itself (Alli, 2009).

Artaud (1958) suggests it is possible for this supernormal commitment can be heightened to the point of actualized immortality. This is when action is utterly sacrificial of the small "self" and becomes an action coming from the recognition of the transcendent or ultimate and unified "self." In the moment such an action of spiritual sacrifice is performed, the actor is enacting, transmitting, and truly revealing the immortal Self of all Beings. This is powerfully demonstrated in the practice in "No-theatre" of the continuation of performance even if an actor dies (Suzuki, 1986). A similar move into a transrational and transpersonal space of

being moved is being in perfect control and yet having no idea what will come next (Al-Shamman, 2006).

As Hodge (2000) explains this sort of supernormal will in actors as follows:

At the moment of transparency, as in certain kinds of possession, in which consciousness does not disappear, actors become a site or conduit for the manifestation of the 'spirit' or 'life' of words, song, dance . . . a 'life' that Brook believes exists beneath theatrical forms. At the point of transparency IT speaks/sings'/dances them. (p. 177)

It seems that regardless where one approaches the depths of acting as a craft they arrive at similar descriptions.

Supernormal knowledge.

Like other supernormal functions in actors, supernormal knowledge is an extension of a very normal capacity: in this case, both self-knowledge and book knowledge. Intensive practice of numerous exercises of memory, introspection, and body awareness actors tend to give actors a high level of self-knowledge (Zehavi, 1999). Adler (2000) instructs her actors to constantly study because the ideas of great plays are large and often beyond the boundaries of an individual actor's experience:

You have to get beyond your own precious inner experiences. The actor cannot afford to look only to his own life for all his material nor pull strictly from his own experience to find his acting choices and feelings. The ideas of the great playwrights are almost always larger than the experiences of even the best actors. (p. 82)

This sort of perspective is sometimes called "Adlerian Mysticism" (Hodge, 2000), which came to known as prodigious cosmopolitan knowledge and is the result of passionate, curious, and artistically motivated devotion to learning

over a long period of time. When encyclopedic knowledge is mixed with high cognitive development (Wilber's vision-logic or higher) an individual can develop what Montuori (in press) calls transdisciplinary thinking; taking on patterns of complex thinking that can be seen as a higher developmental stage than normal intellectual capacities; and thus could be categorized as supernormal.

Like ancient shaman and magicians, actors in touch with the supernormal capacities seem to have access to information far beyond anything that can be explained by personal biography (Bates, 1987). Given the literature on supernormal functioning (ESP, remote viewing, past lives, Etc.) there may be a possibility in which actors can have direct access to the experience of different times and places that they have never actually biologically lived and cannot be explained through scholastic research alone. For example, Wade (2004) shares how this sort of supernormal knowledge manifested during sexual experience as consciousness experiencing time travel and past lives (p. 131). An actor plays various characters of many times and places. The capacity to enact such a broad spectrum with authenticity could be related to supernormal experiences of the Akashik records, past lives, or remote viewing.

In Murphy's (1992) work supernormal knowledge can include psychic abilities. In the case of an actor, this is sometimes the ability to feel information beyond their personal space inside and immediately surrounding the body. The transpersonal capacity to sense and feel beyond the personal body space can lead to experiences of telepathy, clairvoyance, empathy, intuition/precognition, and ESP (Murphy & White, 1995). At its height the work of an actor "involves a kind

of divinatory act” (Moon, 2008, p. 57). Supernormal Knowledge can also be in the form of direct insight or “all at once perception” (Murphy, 1995, p. 555).

At its extreme, this knowledge meets the Divine, the shining void that is the essence of every time and place. In the individual actor it might manifest as a kind of divine ignorance: a high level of presence and creative response that comes from having a fundamental ignorance about anything whatsoever (Da, 1991).

Supernormal communication.

Actors communicate inner experiences to an entire room, sometimes filled with thousands of people; sometimes with a live audience of millions across the globe with the help of technology. Sometimes they feel and communicate with an entire room or through special pieces of work they communicate with a culture at large in historical events. Sometimes they communicate between gods and community. Alli (2009) argues that highest purpose of an actor is to go directly to spiritual sources, to be initiated into a gnostic spiritual process, and then to share or communicate their findings to a tribe, community, or audience. Supernormal communication in actors uses a uniquely theatrical language (Brooke, 1968) and can ascend beyond communication to “communion” (Grotowski, 2002).

Many theorists have worked with the language of the theatre. Artaud (1958) wanted to “make metaphysics out of a spoken language” and “to consider language as ‘incantation’” (p. 122). Peter Brook (1968) famously called for a revitalization of the language specific to theatre rather than theater attempting to duplicate film.

But communication is essentially about connection and sharing meaning between and speaker and listener. At least two people must feel and understand each other; it is an intimate event. This supernormal capacity for intimate communication in actors can sometimes resemble a transpersonal experience that Braud and Anderson (1998) call “maximum personal encounter.” (p. 25)

If you really do want to be an actor who can satisfy himself and his audience, you need to be vulnerable. [You must] reach the emotional and intellectual level of ability where you can go out stark naked, emotionally, in front of an audience. (Jack Lemon as cited in Bennett, 2013, para. 5)

This capacity to connect, at its height, is a supernormal and almost shamanic connection with all living things (Murphy & White, 1995). This ability to feel and communicate with a whole audience often has similar qualities to the supernormal capacity to feel unity with Space altogether (Wade, 2004).

Stanislavski and Chekhov speak of communion as requiring the actor to first develop the capacity to in solitude while in the presence of others (Porter, 1996). This can be seen as relating to Grotowski’s search intimacy and self-revelation in his work on the “holy actor” (Salata, 2007). The combination of authenticity and intimacy (allowing one’s deep intimacy to be seen via performance) is partially due to actor’s training themselves to be habitually vulnerable (Seton, 2006). Part of supernormal communication is communication with non-human sentience, including animal, plant, and also subtle beings such as deities, characters, and dead ones (Suzuki, 1986).

Finally, this supernormal communication can take the form of what is sometimes called in spiritual traditions “direct transmission,” which in the theatrical traditions can similarly take place between older actors and younger

actors, in a process that Suzuki (1986) calls, “the transmission of inheritance.” (p. 102) Like a spiritual master, their artistic knowledge is directly transferred. Earned wisdom actually transferred directly allows the recipient to skip the grueling process required to acquire those skills. With actors, like spiritual gurus, the transmission is through the body and the living presence, and coded into the aesthetic selection of aesthetic performed actions. Not just bodily communication but also supernormal capacities for speech, rhetoric, and vocal variation are part of supernormal communication in actors.

Supernormal aesthetics.

One of the best expressions of supernormal aesthetics comes from Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1996) who worked with theatre along with Lee Worley at the Naropa Institute. He says that,

The point of Dharma art is to express through action without any struggle of thoughts and fears, we simply give up aggression, both towards ourselves, that we have to make a special effort to impress people, and towards others, that we can put something over on them. (p. 23)

He goes on to say that elegance really begins as a state of mind, “The main point of dharma art is discovering elegance, and that is a question of a state of mind” (p. 25).

Wilber (2007) defines Aesthetics as a developmental capacity, and says further says that it measures a person's answer to the question, “of all that I'm aware of, what do I find beautiful.” (p. 24) Further he states that if asked this questions over time, the answers always follow a developmental trajectory. Abigail Housen (1992) pioneered research that demonstrated that aesthetics were a developmental capacity and can thus presumably reach supernormal

levels. Aesthetics involves the developmental stages of what one sees as beautiful (Wilber, 2007). When seeing with the eye of spirit it is possible for an actor to enter a synchronistic “flow” of artistic choices that are “just right” (Wilber, 2000). Also, since actors perform all manner of character and story, even the most twisted and tragic of human stories can be elevated to what is called “sacralization of the ordinary” (Braud & Anderson, 1998, p. 21). This study will look for stories of actors with the ability to see—and thus reveal through aesthetic choice—Divine Beauty even in the most unsympathetic characters. In, *To the Actor* Michael Chekhov (2003) articulates a perspective and approach to working on what he calls entirety and beauty. He claims that if tragedy is played well, even the most grotesque and horrific human dramas can be elevated to an artistic and awesome beauty. Such aesthetic capacity can parallel the alchemical spiritual process of turning fecal matter or lead into gold (Metzner, 1998).

At the end of the day, this transforamtion towards supernormal aesthetics is fundamental to human development: “Only through seeing, indeed through seeing with our own eyes, is our inner autonomy established” (Dustin & Ziegler, 2007, p. 22)

Supernormal health and vitality.

Another potential expression of supernormal capacity in actors has to do with exceptionally high levels of health and vitality—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual—simply as a result of devotion to the technical craft and process of working as an actor: the physical demands of diet, movement, breath, voice, and energetic and emotional availability. Many older actors have been known to do

great acrobatic and vocal feats at a very advanced age. Many actors have a very high level of integration of mind and body (Moon, 2008). Granted, many great actors have severe personal issues (drugs, obesity, insanity, narcissism, etc.) but generally speaking, those are inhibitors to their greater yogic, artistic, and spiritual talent; not the source of it (Berger, 1999).

Psychotics are one extreme example of mental dysfunction and one quality that is characteristic to psychotics is their inability to role play (Giannotti, 1995). Schizophrenics on the other hand have been known to be great at improvisation. Much work is yet to be done in the field of mental health and acting as a profession and a therapeutic tool (Emunah, 1994), but generally speaking, increased mental and psychological health leads to great psychic malleability and psychological grounding and foundation by which an actor can draw to continue to work professionally (Zehavi, 1999).

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy stated that the process of making art out of suffering and pain is the only means of transmuting the stagnant places that sink the psyche spiritually (Chaudhuri, 1988). Great actors with long careers tend to be exemplified by the range of characters they can play. In addition, psychological individuation and actualization (both high levels of psychological development) were the fruition of a process suggested in the work of Carl Jung (2009). The words holy, health, and wholeness all share etymological roots. When actors play a variety of characters (which can require high levels of self-honesty, integration, and self-compassion) they can begin to display and maintain a high levels of long

term well-being and superabundant vitality that are often difficult to account for in terms of normal bodily processes (Murphy & White, 1995).

Conclusion

The focus here is on supernormal functioning as relevant to the work of a professional actor. Although there seems to be a strong foundation of literature about supernormal functioning from various disciplinary sources, there is little overt study of how professional actors experience supernormal functioning. This literature review attempted to frame current acting literature in the context of the field of supernormal functioning and outline some possible supernormal functioning in actors that this project explores.

Thus we see the possibility of a contribution by taking the tact of developing even a rudimentary sampling of possible supernormal capacities that are common and useful to professional actors. It can create a new conversation in acting theory as to the spiritual potentialities of inherent in long term practice and it can strengthen the larger field of supernormal functioning by showing instances of how SNF show manifest particularly in one given field. Thus the next step was formulating a study structure to gather useful data relevant to being able to formulate such an early mapping of SNF in actors.

Chapter 3: Method

Rationale

A primary rationale for the use of narrative is that “narrative is ideal for the study of personal transformations of all kinds” (Wells, 2001, p. 18), and supernormal functioning are abilities that are achieved precisely through ‘transformative’ practice (Murphy, 1992). Within narrative studies, “dramatic statements often suggest important themes” (Josselson, Leiblich, & McAdams, 2003, p. 237) and in many ways, as a study of understanding actors in the dramatic arts, narratives were an ideal way to gather their subjective experience as they are potentially very at home in process of constructing and delivering narratives.

This study was done in the context of a doctoral program in ‘transformative studies’ which values scholarship as a transformative process for researcher. Using the principles of creative inquiry (Montouri, 1998), narrative was a valuable method because it kept me as the researcher emotionally, imaginatively, and artistically invested in the process. “The narrative process is a search for meaning so the telling and the told, the listener and the speaker are inextricably linked” (Josselson, Leiblich, & McAdams, 2003, p. 63).

The narratives extracted from the interviews gathering into typography in the analysis of this study will hopefully capture the attention of actors and acting teachers, thus giving them new passion to explore the possibility of supernormal capacities in their own work. Theory and ideas alone, without passionate human narrative, are cold and unlikely to successfully reach the artistic audience it is

intended to serve. Narrative research focuses on how the co-researchers make meaning of experiences they've had, in this case, of supernormal functioning. The fact that narrative research requires openness and receptivity on the part of the researcher collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the stories is vitally important because it challenges theoretical ossification and abstraction and forced me as researcher and theorizer to arrive at my categories and subcategories through collaboration rather than the overuse of will. In order to ensure fidelity to this process, with each interview, the participants were given a chance to edit and approve the transcriptions of their interviews. This structured check-in kept me as a researcher present, accountable, and honest about any overly imposing theoretical or results oriented agenda.

The theory and literature I used as a foundation for the inquiry guided my questions and search, but using narrative as a methodology forced me to open to what was emerging from the co-researchers direct experience. In the spirit of creative inquiry one of my intentions was that the process of eliciting stories would be continually transformative for all involved (Montuori, 1998); and many interviewees did in fact comment at some point in the process how enlightening it had been for them to have the opportunity to tell their stories in such a focused and receptive context.

Research Paradigm

My research paradigm is transdisciplinary and integral. As transdisciplinary qualitative research, this project allowed me to be transparent as a researcher; exposing my personal bias, as well as my emotional and intuitive

engagement in the process, while not attempting to artificially exorcise them. Rather than just attempting to minimize my passion and opinions, instead I utilized my experience and intuition to guide the excavation of raw of narratives and the collaborative crafting of representative and evocative stories. The transdisciplinary perspective allowed me to draw on literature across disciplines and thus actualize an integral epistemological pluralism in research methods.

Interview Protocols

The interview protocol was initially an interview over phone or video chat, followed by transcription and light editing that was then sent to the interviewee for additional light editing, amendments, and approval.

Many of my ideas and perspective were new to co-researchers. So, once a candidate was selected, I often sent them a copy of the literature review presented in this dissertation. Some chose to skim or read it in depth. Having read the material or not seemed to have little effect on the outcome of the interview. I found that my questions during the interview and the quality of our rapport were far more important than if they had read the material I'd sent them or not.

Once in the interview, the protocol emerged that I would gather background for the first half of a 90 minute interview. The background consisted of three narratives: their personal biography as relevant to work as an actor (i.e. earlier formative childhood and early adulthood experiences) followed by a narrative background of the history of their actor training and a history of their transformative practice. The second half of the interview involved looking for an

average of three specific instances that most exemplified their experience of supernormal capacities in their acting.

Following is a representative list of various questions that I posed. I list them here with the caveat that these were not a standardized or rigid set of clarifying questions; but simply representative of the sorts of questions I asked. I allowed natural and appropriate questions to emerge from what I perceived in the stories and story tellers themselves.

- How did your normal capacities act as a ground from which the supernormal functioning emerged?
- What did you identify as the main causes of the supernormal capacity? Was it your psychology state, your physical state, the nature of the material you were working on, or the ensemble of actors with whom you were working, or something else?
- What was the supernormal experience itself? Describe in vivid detail what the supernormal moment was so as to help us better understand how it came to be. How did you know it was supernormal?
- Has this sort of capacity returned to you? Has it been cultivated to the point of being an easily and readily accessible trait in your acting capacities or did it arrive and leave suddenly?
- Have you attempted to attain that capacity since, if so, what worked?
- How did the event change your approach to your work as an actor?

In all qualitative research the researchers is “an instrument of the research” (Josselson, Leiblich, & McAdams, 2003, p. 41) and in this case my

ideas and presence were intimately engaged in collecting and shaping the narrative data.

Research Participants

Ten research participants were selected to have three primary criteria.

1. Professional working actors
2. Formal and intensive actor training
3. Five years or more of transformative practice

Age, race, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, economic status, and other general economic background were not a factor in selection. I sought out as much diversity of the above factors as possible, but technically they were not a factor in selection. The co-researchers relative success in any of these three primary areas was also not a factor.

Rationale for selection.

The rationale for selection of these participants was that people without these three qualifications probably likely would not have any narratives such as the kind I was looking for. I assumed that actors without long-term intensive formal training would not have a foundation by which they could unlock the higher stages of those craft specific developmental capacities. I assumed that actors who had made a career of their artistic work were passionate, persistent, and talented enough to reach supernormal capacities in their work. I also assumed that anyone without some form of long term transformative practice experience in their personal lives would be limited in their ability to unlock, notice, and understand supernormal functioning in their work if and when it happens. This

was a relatively elite group of people I aimed to study and even when participants possessed all three criteria, yet the focus on a specific definition and on particular themes with regard to supernormal functioning was still challenging for participants to report their narratives in that framework.

Recruitment.

I needed a total of eight participants for this study and ended up with ten. I erred on the side of eight to ten as I wanted to leave it open to omitting one or two participants from the final write up if I didn't feel the final narrative didn't effectively articulate or capture something valuable to the inquiry's purpose. As it turned out, all ten were useful to the research. As a professional working actor, I already had a number of co-researchers willing and able to participate in the study. All that remained was the formal request and the working out of logistical details which turned out remarkably easy to achieve.

Human Subject Procedures & Ethical Issues

Consent to be interviewed was in writing (Appendix A). Included in the co-researcher agreement it was made clear that I will retain ownership of the story for the sake of publication in the form of a dissertation and that any use beyond that will be negotiated by a separate agreement. Also, anonymity of the story teller was left up to each person individually; if they desired to change their name; that was up to them. Generally, I encouraged each co-researcher to change names and places in the story to protect those involved, but not loose details that are relevant to conveying the stories meaning. None chose to follow that recommendation. I recommended that they retain the anonymity of anyone else

involved in their story for the sake of legal safety. Again, none felt it necessary. Such aspects of the narratives remained either vague or overtly invented to fill in the gaps and help convey the essence of the story.

Confidentiality was kept between the co-researchers until publication. Similar to telling stories of trauma, these stories are of a ‘light’ shadow. Often, when talking about hidden yet glorious parts of our experience, or of sacred moments, people get quite vulnerable. I kept this level of vulnerability and safety in mind. All stipulations as to confidentiality and ethics were communicated in a statement of confidentiality (Appendix B).

Data Analysis

In the analysis I edited the narratives and organized aspects of each interview into categories suggestive of active or potential supernatural capacities. I then looked at the data thematically with a very light theoretical lens in the discussion. In this project, part of the analysis was woven into the data collection phase. This is typical in more traditional semi-structured interviews wherein a researcher will ask follow up questions. I asked follow up questions but also interpreted the story and hopefully helped the storyteller bring the most authentic and complete version of the story forward. ‘Authentic’ means that the subject has been given autonomous and honest voice to their experience and ‘complete’ means that the subject was asked if they feel the story feels fully expressed before we stop the editing process. Only they could know if the story felt complete and satisfying.

I coded the interviews thematically and created a list of thematic codes that were various supernormal capacities demonstrated by the participants, as well as their causes and blocks) along with the definitions for all of the above.

Thematic analysis is the process of describing and understanding the data around themes that emerge from the study. In this case the themes were categories and subtypes of SNF. As Krathwohl and Smith (2005) confirm, final codes were not known until the study was done. As the researcher, I was the only coder, which ensured consistency during the coding of different participants.

Interpretation of Data

“Stories are often indirect, so you may have to figure out their meaning for yourself” (Riessman, 2008, p. 33), so part of the interpretation of the data was to summarize each interview briefly. Also, “by combining information from different interviews the researcher creates descriptive themes that no individual interviewee mentions” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 235), so in the analysis of the data, the major types and subtypes of SNF are listed and discussed briefly with citations from the interviews and some contextualizing ideas from SNF literature and acting literature. In the final discussion stage, I looked at the group of stories and their analysis as a whole, looking for themes and conclusions that could be drawn from the results of the coding analysis. Since researchers must “go beyond the presentation of a good study to some kind of wider theoretical meanings and implications” (Josselson, Leiblich, & McAdams, 2003, p. 46) the final section of the discussion has some minor theoretical exploration of the implications of an cartography of SNF in actors can have to acting theory and

practice. I draw conclusions as to how other actors might be able to cultivate and sustain supernormal capacities in their work as professional actors as well as what the future might be with regard to this line or inquiry. The full text of each story is not included in the appendices due to their excessive length.

Delimitations and Limitations

As a narrative study, the strength of this study is the particulars of each story in that the specificity of each story, at best, touches a universal theme of transformation and supernormal functioning for professional actors as a whole community. Though it does attempt to draw some thematic and thus theoretical conclusions in relation to its hypothesis, it is a very small corner of a much larger effort needed to thoroughly tackle a comprehensive theory of supernormal functioning in actors.

A limitation of this study is its focus and basis on American professional actors. Although I draw on literature from other cultures in the literature review, I was not able to connect with qualified candidates on other continents and this fact threatens to leave the American cultural biases firmly intact and color all its conclusions.

There may be many actors who don't have formal training, and thus fall outside the criteria for this study, that are experiencing many cases of supernormal functioning in their rehearsal and performance. This inquiry will use a qualitative narrative inquiry, which has limitations with generalizing to a broader population. Patton (2002) offered "social phenomena are too variable and context bound to permit very significant empirical generalizations" (p. 74) I've

tried to be critical enough to focus on the particulars of each case before trying to make generalizations across data gathered (p. 382).

Issues of Validity

While realizing that, with Narrative, "validity cannot be used in the mechanical manner" (Wells, 2001, p. 116), and that "all validity is valid to varying degrees" (p. 114). I will attempt to address a few possible measures of validity here. One primary issue was whether these stories had been too heavily influenced by me and my research agenda (including the categories and definitions from the literature that made up the starting categories for the interviews.). It might be seen that as a researcher, my method, assumptions, and process were too heavy handed, attempting to mold the data to fit my goals. I embrace and freely admit my very active part in the formulation of the themes, the structuring of the gathered data, and the final interpretation but hope that I've been fair and based my assumptions on valid previous scholarly work.

Having clear definitions of supernormal functioning, aiming to find only a few well refined story from each participant, and guiding the co-researchers to reveal (or address) certain domains of causation (personal foundation, spiritual practice, training and technique, social cultural context, etc.) kept the focus tight while allowing for unexpected categories to emerge.

There are, of course, alternative explanations for the data I collected. But, I am drawing my hypothesis, theories, and thematic coding from an integral perspective which tends to be inclusive of many explanations, while still recognizing each explanation as partial. Also, the best this research could

reasonably do is to collect a handful of narratives that are ‘suggestive of’ SNF in actors, not conclusive.

One issue of validity may be that the separation of data and interpretation of data may be too interwoven. In fact, the process of gathering the data is intimately linked in this case to the meaning the data has, due to the fact that there will be several iterations of writing with the co-researchers, in emails back and forth. I hope the gathered narratives have some aesthetic validity (narratives that are persuasive to drawing the reader closer to the actual experience) in addition to pragmatic validity in terms of the application to acting theory and technique I attempt in the theoretical analysis of this study's results. The aesthetic component may invalidate the results in some academic contexts but seems suitable within the context and academic program in which this study was undertaken.

I limited the conclusions I drew from this study. Although I drew some thematic and perhaps theoretical conclusions regarding supernormal functioning in professional actors, I did not attempt a comprehensive theoretical critique of actor theory and training in this country all together. I can, in this context, attempt only in a general way, to weave the results of this study into the larger tapestry of acting theory, technique, and pedagogy. When all was complete, it felt that I was able to draw relevant conclusions from these cases regarding this one corner of actor experiences that could prove valuable for other actors to use in the cultivation of these types of experiences in their work.

Chapter 4: Results

Patrycja Kujawska

Introduction.

Patrycja is a Polish woman, born in 1975. She lives in Bristol England and travels and performs with Vincent Dance Theatre and Kneehigh Theatre Company. Of note in Patrycja's case was her capacity for what might be called, "not knowing". She seemed to have a radical capacity to stand ambiguity, paradox, and complexity. This I believe is a root of her great capacity as a performer. The level of uncertainty she can handle leads to high levels of play, experimentation, and creative response. It also generates an extraordinarily high level of vulnerability.

Relevant background.

Another aspect of her narrative was a strong sense of inclusion and community. She seems to have an inclination to leave nobody out; to thrive on inclusion as a kind of way of loving everyone and everything. She seems to embrace 'error' to such an extent, that she was able to work creatively with any circumstance of life or artistry in a vital and creative way. This too I think aids in the freedom and bravery of her artistic play.

Red shoes.

Two of her stories stood out as strongly suggestive of supernatural functioning in actors. The first is an example of supernatural energetic abilities in her performance of *The Red Shoes* on tour with the Kneehigh Theatre Company

in Manhattan. She explains the intensity of her personal experience and artistic devotion to the character and to each night's performances. Then she related that:

Towards the end of the show The Girl screams. It is a scream of survival and freedom. I remember on few occasions that my scream was not human. The volume and quality of it often scared and surprised me. It thrilled me. I experienced on couple of occasions that the scream was accompanied by the fountain of rays of light shooting out of my belly into the audience.

This story is suggestive of the extraordinary energetic capacities that an actor can develop through devotional exertion.

God of theatre.

Her second example of supernormal functioning was in a 'second wind' experience. She said that the experience came on stage when she was tired and in utter exhaustive despair. She reported:

I was quietly begging "the God of Theatre" . . . to help me, and all of a sudden I felt like a second 'Me' is embraced me from behind, and pushed forward; it was a strange self-embrace. I clearly felt my presence glued to my back and breathing with me, like I became my own angel . . . it was a sensation that lasted for a few minutes.

Although she was unable to recreate the experience it is suggestive of supernormal capacities that could emerge and perhaps be reliably accessed with the right approach. This experience is suggestive of other supernormal capacities including but not limited to 'deity service', 'acting as prayer', 'divine self-sense',

Robert Parsons

Introduction.

Robert Parsons is a professional actor based in the San Francisco Bay Area that works nationally in theatre. At the time of the interview he was 51 years

old, had been meditating for over 15 years, and had been a working professional actor for more than 20.

Relevant background.

Robert had familial support for his artistic and spiritual development. His father was a minister, his mother was an artisan, and his brother was a professor of mysticism and long term tai chi practitioner. A formative trauma experience was the death of Robert's father; this apparently led to a more contemplative search for meaning in life's happenings. Culturally he grew up in Oakland, California in the 60s and 70s which had a very strong spirit of exploration regarding things spiritual and artistic. He also had an 'initiatory' experience; being introduced to poetic sensibilities from a Black Panther who boarded with his mother after his father's death. Also relevant to Bob's background is his life as an athlete. This paved the way for his focus on physical training and sensitivity to energy and flow experiences.

Training.

He did train at a traditional three year MFA Acting program at an American University, so he has at least three years of intensive training. He has also chosen to continue to train as a professional; of note is his training in the Suzuki method. He chose a teacher that had a direct line of "transmissional learning" from the great twentieth Century Master theatre artist, Tadashi Suzuki.

Abe Lincoln at the Ford.

One of the most interesting of Bob's stories was his playing of Abraham Lincoln in a "The Rivalry", a play about the Lincoln Douglas debates. Bob

described the end of the play, where-in he exited the main stage, was given the traditionally recognizable Abe Lincoln beard and top hat, and sent to emerge for the final moments of the play as the older, more recognizable Lincoln. Bob reported a very high level of energy coursing through this his body each night, and not just his body, but his sensations of the whole body of the space or “collective body” of the room. He could feel the “invisible network” of energy connecting and moving through everyone in the space. The context of location (at the actual Ford theatre where Lincoln was shot), the historical context, the nature of the audience that attended (many Washington DC political elite), and the iconic nature of the character (Lincoln) as someone who had actually lived and died in the spot of the performance led to a very large ‘energetic weather system’ to which Bob was at best a catalyst, vessel, and participant. In his closing comments about his experience playing Abe Lincoln, he seems to suggest that these moments of high energy and flow reach the level of ‘sacred’ experiences for many actors; he even speaks to such moments as being the sort of thing that inspires and artist to start on the path, and to keep going.

Like religion, a work of art takes us out of the ordinary selves by reminding us of our connections with larger things – with others, with our society, with history. We should recall too, that actors in many cultures have been considered shamans, magicians, or priests. (Hornby, 1992, p. 223)

Black Rider.

Mr. Parsons said that acting in *Black Rider* was “a tremendously pure and unencumbered form of beauty.” His experience on that show was characterized by the need to submit and fully commit to Robert Wilson’s meticulous direction. In

an odd way, Mr. Parsons achieves this through almost devotional submission; he accepts Robert Wilson's Supernormal Aesthetics by submitting entirely to his God-like perspective as a director. Mr. Parsons says that he had to just "get on board" and "completely commit, to go to the fullest extent" that the play can go. Because of his sensitivity to energies through various kinds of physical training Robert speaks to the invisible networks of energy in the theatre when he says:

Throughout the show there was a deep stratum of connection between the performers . . . that connection created a unique energy that transformed everyone in the building- from performers to audience-which manifested itself in this vast almost non-corporeal world that again had different rules for space and time.

This physical and energetic sensitivity as well as his ability for high levels of physical commitment characterize his personality, his artistic work, and the sorts of supernormal capacities he seemed likely to demonstrate.

Gemma Wilcox

Relevant background.

Gemma Wilcox had a pre-birth experience of what it was like to be an unwanted pregnancy and almost aborted. She has come to the humbling realization that her strong need to "exist" and "be seen" has been a core yet unconscious motivator to her performance work. It makes sense of her particular style of work (multi-character solo shows) and also her primary supernormal capacities which is 'maximum personal encounter' and 'unconditional presence'. As a young girl, she says she "always knew" that she wanted to be an actor but much familial and generational support helped her advance quickly and persist. Due to fortuitous circumstances she was exposed to professional theatre (as an

audience member and as a visitor backstage) at a very early age. These experiences lit a passion within her and continue to fuel her. She started doing multi-character work almost spontaneously; and there was a confluence of natural proclivities and contextual circumstances (high school training, fellow performers backing out and leaving her to perform alone, etc.) that helped her grow along those lines.

Transformative practice.

Her experience with transformative practice was quite remarkable. She was exposed to three pivotal spiritual teachers/ transformative practices that she reports; a training program called “Avatar”, the Guru Gangaji, and David Deida. Avatar seemed to be a program about ‘manifesting’, Gangaji was about pure spirituality, and Deida’s work grounded her in bodily and energetic practices of yogic sexuality. They seem to have come about seven years apart each, starting at 14 years old. In addition she watched lots of theatre in London as a youngster, worked with a small intimate high school theatre program, and studied theatre at university. She also worked extensively with teachers Jonathan Kay and Paul Oertel who helped refine her improvisational, vulnerable, multi-character work in her twenties and thirties.

The show speaks.

One significant story she shared related to the supernatural capacity of ‘deity service” or “deity relations”. She had been performing a show for a long time and had a strange experience while performing that the show itself started to talk to her and interrupting her performance. She heard it say that it was upset that

she was still performing it. It urged her to move on and try something new. This could be seen as projection, or for many artists, it could be contact with the autonomous spirit of the show itself.

Dangerously safe.

One story Gemma told was of her most recent project. She described how she worked with a partner to build a piece to explore spiritual themes of duality and presence. By splitting the room in half, separating the audience and the performers by black curtains and having absolutely no structure other than a process and intention of moment to moment presence and encounter with the audience as expressed in ‘theatrical authenticity’. The result was “intense” for all involved leading many audience members and reviewers to be very unhappy. But the response was quite split. Some were thrilled and opened by it, others angered and shut down. She counted this a good development in that she felt free of the need to ‘please’ an audience and very successful in engaging a truly ‘transformative’ theatrical event that proved as difficult as, for example, a silent meditation of two hours or extended sexual yogic practice might be; infuriating to the ego and burning off any irritation or block to pure presence. This process was filled with a sense of collective ritual, energetic union with the audience, moments of ESP as the performers ‘felt’ into the energy of an audience, a sensation of the invisible network throughout the whole event and many other hints at the presence of SNFs.

Hal Landon

Introduction.

Hal Landon was 70 at the time of our interview. At the time of the interview he'd practiced transcendental meditation as a daily practice for 42 years and had been a company actor at South Coast Repertory for almost as long.

Relevant background.

Hal's parents were professional actors. This can be seen as stimulating "generational development" which is that children, who are raised by other actors or spiritual practitioners, might get a sort of inheritance, and perhaps accelerate through stages of development to supernormal abilities faster as a result of the osmosis that comes from parenting in early years; much like being exposed to a foreign language at an early age. In addition, his participation in sports was striking to me. It seems to me that from early on he was ambitious to make a living at 'play' and 'peak performance'. Theatre and sports both have those elements. He was also attracted to physical approaches and I found over and over that acting related to the common presence of supernormal functioning in sports and sex because of the intense somatic nature of both.

Transformative practice.

His 42 years of daily TM practice seems to have contributed to his 'steadiness' and 'spaciousness' on stage. In addition, Hal is a good example of integral development because he complemented meditation practice with therapy and ADD psycho-pharmacological solutions. These three transformative tools and certain aspects of his actor training led Hal to value "lightness and ease" in his work. Even his 'indirect' approach to acting seems to part of his desire to "ease" in and gently approach overcoming obstacles in his acting. Chekov (2003) said,

“an actor has to burn inside with an outer ease” and these qualities are essentially passion (burning) and the grace of faith (ease).

Training.

Beyond his exposure very early to lots of acting and theatre through his parents, Hal didn't consider being an actor until he had to give up on his dream of professional sports after getting cut from the college basketball team. He needed something to get involved in so he started acting in a few plays. The training there was more academic than artistic, but the department picked great literary plays to produce. The result was that Hal received little technical training but lots of good experience. Through that he found out about the burgeoning regional theatre movement and soon joined South Coast Repertory where he stayed for the rest of his career. He says that working in a repertory theatre was his dream and he achieved it. There was one period when the theatre was expanding that suddenly Hal had to compete with a more competitive talent pool. He had to grow as an actor or else continue to get stuck in the smaller parts; that's when he went back to train in the Chekhov technique with the man who actually was a close friend of Chekhov and helped him formulate his teaching; a true Master Teacher. This training in using the energy body, developing lightness and ease, and especially the tool of the psychological gesture seem to have become central to his work and did allow him to make the developmental leap he needed to in order to maintain his status

Scrooge.

Another subject that came up here was the slow and steadiness of his approach as a whole. Even his peak experiences, two of the three, were very late career and both he described as the culmination of literally decades of work. Most significantly he describes playing on role for over 30 years, year after year. He said that due to his attention to the grosser needs of blocking, lines, costumes, and such were no longer drawing on his energy and attention; he had free energy available to attend to the more subtle aspects of his experience. This speaks to long term practice as the root of supernormal functioning, implying perhaps that action and awareness of the more subtle dimensions and energies become available in a stable way when the more gross realms are well grounded and settled. He valued the ability to be completely absorbed in the dream of the play because of his familiarity. In addition this seems to be a story that highlights the resonance between the essence of a performer and the material they are working on; Hal seems to be by nature a person involved in long term commitment and practice and to have a piece that has the same kind of longevity and stability as his meditation practice, his membership in South Coast Rep, and his essential nature.

The madness of Buffalo Bill.

His experience with a trance like altered state while playing buffalo bill early in his career brought up several issues. First, it was a spontaneous and, for him, quite scary. I believe it reflected the power of trance, ritual energy, and perhaps even an impersonal force of 'Chaos' accessed through the ritual of theater. Unfortunately it terrified him because he was young, untrained, and had no cognitive container for such an experience. Even all these years later he seems

to not be able to find a way to usefully relate to it. The results of this study and others like it could be exactly the kind of information that could help an actor like him at any stage to successfully relate to such experiences.

Jack Plotnick

Introduction.

Jack Plotnick (40-something-year-old) actor and acting teacher that trained at Carnegie Melon University. He has worked and lived in NYC and Los Angeles. His primary transformative practices have been self-help books and workshops and exposure to a course in miracles as taught by Marianne Williamson.

Training.

He always knew he wanted to be an actor; a kind of all at once perception of his life and place in it. Jack grew up performing as a very young child, with a great high school drama teacher (transmission) whom he still speaks with, and attended a Carnegie Melon University's undergraduate actor training program. His 'always already' approach to the magic of acting is reflected when he said that the main lesson he took away from acting school was when one teacher told him "you know more than you think you know". He moved to Los Angeles after finding many successful theatre actors in New York were very unhappy and also realizing he cherished a relationship with a camera as a pure witness; as a way to reveal and know his soul.

Transformative practice.

Jack admits that he had previously experienced the 'block' of "addiction to negative thinking and negative thoughts"; he now calls those thoughts

collectively, his vulture, and recognizes that he must deal with them every day to stay open and available to his life and work. An ‘intervention’ by a friend who told him to read a self-help book called *Way of the Peaceful Warrior* later led to many self-help books and various kinds of new thought practices. Long term exposure to Marianne Williamson’s ‘A Course in Miracles’ inspired teaching was a big part of how he reached such freedom and access to various seemingly miraculous abilities: including his ability to feel the divine self-sense of himself and all people (even saying that everyone is like Jesus). He seems to relate to people he works with from that place of service and mutual Divine Self-Recognition.

Teaching.

And he says that “for ten years I was applying all this new thought or self-help work to my acting” so he started to develop an idiosyncratic approach to his craft that became so refined that now he teaches it. I believe, like many other members of this study this lead him to teach actors as a form of service, in addition to acting as a form of spiritual service. His teaching is a “via negative” approach. His is a way of dropping blocks to miracles which are waiting to happen at any moment. “We can all access it (the magic) any time with no training or with lots of training . . . because it’s who we are as humans.”

Supernormal capacities.

Jack focuses on the physical sensate experience as being essential. He speaks of the moment of performance like a quickening, and even hints that the

psycho-somatic practice of the Alexander Technique was useful in allowing this kind of quickening:

That's why we act; so our heart races and we can touch god or have some magic happen. That's why people want to climb Mount Everest; because intense physical activity makes them feel like they've touched god or experienced magic. What I love about actors is that all we have to do is pick up a script and stand in front of people and we get to touch God or experience magic.

He says that the magic is not "our own" and that the miraculous is always in the air around us if would only participate in it. He says that an actor's number one job is to choose your thoughts not control the scene. Like others he eschews 'knowing' as another kind of control. He is not interested in 'finding the answer' or 'figuring it out' as it kills the work to 'know' how to do it.

Follow the joy.

Jack talks about surrendering to "divine will" by following his joy. He does this by focusing on spiritual principles that allow him to receive rather than chase after. He follows a series of events that led him to being in a film with Ian McKellen and being in Sir Ian's Oscar clip at the Oscar presentation. This would seem like an extraordinary turn of events and seems to be related to his practice of trusting and following his joy. He summed it up by saying "that's an example of what you call magic, but really is just one of the principles of how the universe works".

Crying on cue.

He also told a story about a scene where he had to cry about losing his dog. He worked with his "vulture" (his fearful thoughts) and entered into a state of surrender and trust that lead him to have faith that magic would happen. His

eyes were open and curious, and he discovered clues and ideas in his environment that lead to a spontaneous, thrilling, seemingly magical performance that a more willful method almost always fails to do. We see in this example, that his ability to deliver the depth of emotional honesty needed, on cue, time after time is a result of knowing how to work with his anxious mind. Also to be able to deliver a hilarious, improvisational performance on cue, time after time, almost regardless of circumstances, at will is an extraordinary capacity he has developed from this way of working with his mind.

Wise selfishness.

Finally, he has a very simple response to his relationship to the audience, which is actually about transmission and a bit like the bodhisattva vow, which is simply, if I'm feeling it, then they will. So if he is having fun and enjoying his performance, then they will to. If he is scared and trying to impress them, they will feel the fear and feel scared and probably angry also. In opposition to his focus on the negative thinking that blocks his work, his focus is on experiencing 'joy' in his work. Like many others, he finds that an indirect or via negative approach is actually the best way to get to joy in his work.

Larry Moss

Introduction.

Larry had acted nonstop for 20 years and at the time of the interview had been teaching for almost 40 years. He had an attitude of, "you never stop". Such long term practice leads to the possibility of supernormal capacities emerging. Larry is one of the great acting teachers of the end of the twentieth century and is

often well known for being a celebrity acting coach to Oscar nominated performances.

Relevant background.

He shared over and over how exposure to great shows and great performers of various art forms (starting at an early age) left indelible impressions. His mother was mentally ill and sought mystical paths to help explain her suffering, but to little avail. Larry experienced many traumatic events as a child that left him emotionally ill but highly motivated to heal for years to come.

Transformative practice.

He started therapy at 20 years old and eventually discovered that part of the issue was chemical and needed a psychopharmaceutical solution. He says that looking back, theatre has been his spirituality: the place where he was devoted; where he went to be healed, find hope, hear his higher self, and become renewed. The voice of that higher self sometimes comes as a little voice that says “Larry! Larry! Larry!” which he has understood as implying, ‘Wake up’! He does express a feeling of a force larger than himself at work in other places as well, especially when certain creative projects or directions start to happen.

Teaching.

His sensation of ‘living’ not ‘performing’ is what characterizes his work. His book is called *The Intent to Live* not *The Intent to Act*. He speaks of “the now of now” as a kind of absolute presence in performance; “You are making it up because you are not thinking ahead or behind, you’re exploring it’s in the ‘not

knowing' that makes for great acting. The exploration of the 'now of now' which the audience gets to witness" is what causes people to leave the theater and have a sensation of life's purpose. This quality of presence or of truly and fully living creates a kind of 'direct transmission'. Through contact with the vital "aliveness" of the actors, the audience is revitalized and suddenly is more present to their lives; simple as that. He says, when someone is truly alive on stage "it changes people's lives". This sort of aliveness can be seen as a value and capacity for maximum personal encounter and is present in his teaching work as well. He describes students "clutching and hugging each other and crying" during his classes.

Supernormal capacities.

In particular, Larry's case demonstrates extraordinary "book knowledge" and "self-knowledge" due to a lifetime of voracious reading in the arts and humanities, to insatiable attendance of live theatre, and to a lifetime of work with world class therapist. But oddly, most of Larry's accounts of supernormal functioning in actors were from witnessing performers or from working with student actors; not from recounting his own experiences. Occasionally he told stories of the emergence of his own supernormal capacities although they can be inferred by proxy in that he is able to see and facilitate their development in others. He spoke of Pamela Dean whose work on a solo-show was heightened to the level of a ritual shaman and sometimes demonstrated transformative capacities to the point of uncanny shape-shifting. He shared a story of coaching Michael Clark Duncan in his preparation for the role of John Coffey in *The Green Mile*. In

this case Larry describes how he worked with Duncan to touch the depth of his own personal gratitude and compassion and travel through it to a universal level of compassion energy that he called a “Christ figure”. A third story he told was of a new actress he’s working with to develop a solo-show. The actress has had experiences of non-human communication with spirits since she was a child and in the play, that material is being used. He shared personal experiences of the actress around these non-human communications, but did not share how that manifest in performance specifically. Finally, he talks about witnessing a radiant auric field around certain performers; specifically Vanessa Redgrave in a production of Ghosts. Finally he spoke of how he’d witnessed addictions and self-destructive behaviors block the emergence of these great capacities in actors and how particularly talented actors could actually be destroyed if they couldn’t handle the force of their own raw talents.

Katie Rubin

Introduction.

Katie Rubin is an actress in her mid-thirties, living and working as a teacher, actor, writer, and director in Los Angeles. She was born in Miami attended college and Amherst college and earned an MFA in Acting from UC Davis.

Relevant background.

In her case, early childhood trauma also lead to many experiences that both hindered and drove her work as an actor. Her parents did expose her to lots of art training and put her (as a child) in an adult acting class in which she felt

immediately at home. She reported that as a teenager she experienced of visiting a sculpture exhibition wherein she found a lit up pyramid of light. She said, “I got into the pyramid and just being inside of it I had a profound spiritual experience of expansion. I experienced my being expand and I felt very light and I didn’t feel dense or burdened by troubles. I felt like everything was fine for the first time ever. I felt like this expansion and after that experience I’ve been sort of seeking that again in a variety of ways.”

Training.

Her trauma and addiction led to a feeling of not being in her body and many of her acting issues (blocks) revolve around being seen, being present, and being in her body. But throughout her life she reports an instant knowing or attraction to acting. Also, she felt over and over again an intuitive response to her actor training; feeling she already knew what she was being taught. Her training included a long form improv group in college. She said that her MFA at UC Davis was not great actor training but did prepare her to develop her own material which has become her forte for her, leading to successful touring solo-shows. Being new to Los Angeles and relatively fresh out of Sufi healing school she is feeling a shift of wanting to do dramatic roles. She is also experiencing a need to ‘do less’ which is counter to her previously broad comedic solo theatre style. She is learning to ‘do less’ and to ultimately relinquish a ‘self’ that can take ownership of the work. She also reported that this transition between developmental stages has led her to a reduced need to be seen and that she needs to rediscover her motivations for wanting to act.

Transformative practice.

Spirituality and religion in general were ridiculed and shamed as idiotic in her childhood home. She started looking for a solution to her problems on her own by reading self-help books by age 10. By her teenage years and early twenties she developed addictions to boys, sex, booze, and then various moderate and hard drugs. These blocked her ability to function in life altogether and led to her hitting bottom followed by a fierce spiritual awakening that has fueled her journey through recovery. She said, “Theater then became my transformative place. Writing in particular was a transformational process; it was spiritual for me. It would alter me, settle me, and expand me all at the same time. Once I got sober, then that’s where the whole thing really starts- the transformational seeking.” She searched for a way to go beyond her own experience without drugs and got deeply into various ways of meditation. Then, after an “emotional and spiritual bottom” while in recovery, she took a big leap away from 12-step recovery and into Sufi healing school. The techniques were all about conducting healing energy through her body. She now earns part of her income as an energy healer using the Sufi techniques she learned. She also had experiences with ‘channeling’ previous to healing school that still act as a litmus test for the quality of her performance; she notices if she is open to a creative channel or if she is trying to ‘make something happen’.

Impossible odds and a second wind.

Katie talked quite a bit about what might be considered getting a ‘second wind’ in sports. Usually this has to do with a sense of being utterly overwhelmed

with the difficulty of the task she has set before herself as a performer. She feels certainty of immanent failure but then feels as if something miraculous comes into her and suddenly the energy and ability comes to her. She says, “Something takes over and I become this crazed, highly energetic athlete. Everything just heightens and my system just seems to go onto auto-pilot”. This “dropping in” happens as soon as she gives up trying. She says that there is

Energy motivating or moving me. I almost feel carried around by the force by it. It’s not hyper charged. It’s actually very calm. It’s like a down and in and expanding experience. Calming and grounding but it’s supernatural in that I don’t feel like I’m the originator of the movement. I feel like I’m being moved like a puppet and yet clearly I have control over what my limbs do and what words my mouth says. It’s clearly this interplay of my will and divine will. I can’t take a lot of credit. The only credit I feel like I can take is I usually that hit a point where I finally allow it to occur. Every time I drop and allow this ‘channeling’, [audience response] couldn’t be more positive.”

Matt Mitler

Introduction.

Matt Mitler was fifty seven at the time of this interview. He is a professional actor that lives and works in New York City. He is the director and one of the founders of Theatre Dzieci.

Relevant background.

He was ‘raised’ with comedy; performing as a comedy duo with his mother on the radio and listening to comedy albums. He had early experiences of other arts (sculpture, painting, and drawing) and watched several formative performances that inspired him to move in the direction of acting. Also, in college, he dealt with a terrible physical trauma in part by working with a college

experimental theatre group and the result was that a major turning point in his movement from shy and constrained to rigorous and fearlessly playful.

Training.

In his early professional life he sought out master teachers in both theatre and psychotherapeutic transformations; Jerzy Grotowski and Carl Rogers respectively. In many ways, the transmissions he received from these two men formed the way he now works with Theatre Dzieci. He mentions several performances that formed him as an artist; especially The Polish Theatre Lab's "Apocalypsis Cum Figuris".

Transformative practices.

Matt's started out terrified and stuck in performance. His journey to feeling consistently free and joyous took much transformative work. Matt started exploring the relationship between "art and therapy" very early on. He also became heavily involved in Gurdjieffian inner work and he continues with that community as a core transformative process to this day. As a result, he very consciously approaches his artistic pursuits as transformative practice, and likes "to take [acting] as a meditation" as a way to cultivate "an inner possibility not influenced by outer conditions". This reinforces what was stated earlier, it's possible that supernormal capacities outside the context of acting work can lead to the development of similar capacities in performance. Mitler did share a remarkable and difficult to explain story of telekinetic force during a peyote ritual, but he did not seem to relate that to his acting work. Dzieci does use

chanting and ritual use of Native American rattles in their ensemble work for the sake of energy release and transformation.

Dzieci.

His primary work now is as founder and member of Theatre Dzieci. Groups were always intensely intimate processes wherein he experienced ‘being lifted’, ‘being cradled’, and ‘being allowed to fail’ which led to periods of dramatic development. Dzieci has developed a group practice of encountering spiritual leaders and communities to stimulate their own sense of collective development. He also sees spiritual transmission to an audience as essential to the purpose and nature of the group. “In Dzieci, the message is the work (we do on ourselves), it’s not that play or this play; it’s the way we are together; and the way we are together is what people are experiencing more than anything.” The power of the group is undeniable to Mitler. He says, “I don’t even know what I’m working for anymore, except to be able to function in community for my own salvation . . . for my relationships”

Energy sensitivity.

For Dzieci, development of energy sensitivity is of high importance, and it tends to be grounded in sensate based physical training. Mitler emphasized that (inspired by his own training experiences) long periods of silence were necessary in Dzieci’s work to develop “a corporeal intelligence, a knowledge based on sensation”. Corporeal sensitivity increases as they work and the “aftertaste” of various experiences are evaluated; do they drain or revitalize energy. Energetic attention to harmony leads them to guidance for right action. This energetic

sensitivity starts with personal sensations but then starts to spread beyond the physical body to energy in the atmosphere; including gravity, celestial bodies, group energy, and even abstract forces like space and time.

Presence.

Physical and Energetic sensation starts to lead Dzieci to its highest or ultimate pursuit of cultivating “presence”. Mitler discriminates the difference between ‘changes of state’ and ‘changes of being’. He focuses on changes of being in himself and his ensemble. This change of being included but is not limited to the artistic process . . . it becomes about the way one is being in life, and art is just a place to practice and transform.

Fools Mass.

Dzieci has been performing “Fools Mass” for fifteen years at Christmas and Easter. It is really “an investigation into the meaning of the Mass” performed in churches and sacred spaces. The group plays village idiots whose ‘priest’ just died leaving them to perform the mass by themselves. One of Mitler’s responsibilities during the show is to perform the sermon; but in 15 years he has never once planned what to say. This creates a theatrical structure that demands a high level of surrender to grace. He said, “I usually end up weeping”. It is a feeling of being “drenched by grace, purged of some part of myself” and that “there is a transformation that occurs”. He goes on to say that “the whole performance is like that” and that the experience happens “for the audience” too. He says purification is an ongoing value and purpose of Dzieci’s work. He is looking for theatrical forms to aid the purification of the individual participants.

Makbet.

In Dzieci's piece, Makbet, three people perform an edit version of Shakespeare's Macbeth. The piece is performed as if they are a band of three gypsies and between the three of them they perform all the roles. Mitler says, "The thing with "Makbet" is that there is such a level of unknown, I'm really at the mercy of something [larger than myself]" thus creating an opportunity to experience the mercy of a higher power. He sets up insurmountable circumstances to create an opportunity for deliberate self-transcendence through seemingly impossible challenge. Makbet's structure is also designed to increase the psychic and intuitive abilities between the performers and audience. Developing psychic and intuitive abilities are ongoing themes in the way Dzieci works. This focus has led the group to extraordinary circumstances where it seems as if the group is doing collective remote viewing and able to gather reliable psychic information about important situations. Mitler says that Makbet is also about "doing a different experiment, which is: how far out can I go toward possible possession and still have (presence) to come back to?" which seems to really just be a process of strengthening presence to withstand even the most challenging circumstances.

Collectively purifying ritual.

Mitler also shares the experience of a 'dream' image that manifests as a block in his body and gets worked out through directly through the ritual of performance. He describes how he had a dream where he was shot in the chest. He says he felt a burning pain in the dram and work up to find he still had this

burning pain. And it would not go away for months. When he finally did, it was during a performance piece where he held his hand over a flame while doing a chant and absorbing the pain; suddenly his body and voice started to shake violently with energy and he let out a powerful scream that shoot and released the energy pain from his chest.

Julia Ormond

Introduction.

Julia Ormond is a British born film star that now lives and works in Los Angeles. In addition to acting in major Hollywood films, she has devoted a large portion of her life to charitable work.

Relevant background.

Her grandparents inspired her to paint through most of her adolescence. It wasn't until college that she switched from visual art to acting. Many skills she acquired as a painter turned out to be transferable to her work in the art of acting including learning how to perceive directly rather than project, learning how to silence her analytical mind, learning to improvise, and learning how to calm doubt and panic in favor of simple presence.

Training.

Her training was at a British university and was based on a standard Stanislavski acting technique. The training included lots of voice, movement, speech and dialect work. One of the central goals of her training was to be a neutral and empty vessel so as to allow energy to flow freely through her. She stills aims to completely invite “another physicality to take over” when she is

playing a character; to surrender her ego to a kind of possession. She feels that this relaxation of body and mind really allows her soul to be present and her perception to be free of fixed ideas.

Transformation.

Spiritually she was brought up in the Church of England. Later, she questioned Christian beliefs for various reasons and resorted to meditation based spirituality to provide a sense of ‘connection’. She described her meditation experience as, “sensing my notion of defined physical body disappearing and bleeding into a very freeing state of connectedness, relaxation, and unity.” She used meditation to prepare for performance while doing theatre in London but generally hasn’t had a consistent daily practice. Now her sense of spirituality is that “we are an absolute part of the thing that is around us” that there is “no delineation.” She says, “as I grow older, spirituality is about everybody understanding their connectedness; and love being about respect and not seeing someone as different, as something to fear, or as less than.”

Another major transformative process for her has been the experience of synchronicity: it acts as a “guide” for her and seems to accelerate the more she follows it. She also spoke of energetic blocks in her life and environment; in terms of old possessions or even the Fung Shui of her house or office. She also has found value in astrologers’ guidance, but treats it as a symbolic sounding board to find what she resonates with more than an absolute truth that the medium is reporting.

First Night.

Julia was cast in *First Night* from early on in the process of the film, and although she didn't 'see' why the director was so convinced she'd be perfect for the role, she later found a host of synchronistic connections between the filming, the script, and her ancestral past that transformed her life. First, it turned out the location for Camelot was the valley where her grandparents would go to paint every year: the same paintings that inspired her to become an artist herself. Then she followed hunches to move her lodgings to a place that turned out to be an ancestral family home. She said these experiences "felt like they spiritually had some weight; I had literally felt a 'coming home'..." Turned out her father's ancestors had lived on that land for 800 years. She also began to see how Guinevere was a transformative experience, especially as she looked at her relationship with her father and with Arthur. She says that "My paternal sense of self definitely grew from that point of view, and shifted and changed. Because I also dealt with personal demons through that process, it unlocked something; afterwards I was able to turn my energies to a more useful end; towards social causes."

Legends of the Fall.

Julia had always been interested in Native American traditions and her experience shooting *Legends of the Fall* allowed her to explore some native people, land, and traditions. Part of her experience was heading off to do a sweat lodge and vision quest towards the end of filming. She describes that she remained in silence for 48 hours during the vision quest and entered an altered state where she started to perceive meaning in the 'earthy signals' that came her

way. The actual vision quest itself was, for me, an experience of swaying from moments of peace and being settled to unbelievably discomfort, hunger, and intense anger; I experienced a lot of frustration at not being able to turn off the chatter in my head. Afterwards she discussed her experience with the medicine woman, to interpret the signs. In conclusion she said, “I think the actual ritual of doing that around a very emotionally difficult time was cathartic and releasing and enabled me to really move on.” This story, like the *First Night* story seems to show how her process and her experience altogether transformed her; but neither story seems so much about supernormal capacities in performance itself.

Ancestral offering.

In terms of her actual process as an actor, she did report a ritual gesture that she used before many film takes. She said, “For me, one of the meditations around performance is about ancestral connection through women and men, connecting historically through ancestors and then it is about giving it away. I gather myself through concentration and relaxation. Then for some reason I tap the bridge of my nose and then I offer it up. In the offering it up, it releases me from responsibility of what happens. I say to myself, “I’ve done my preparation, I’ve done my rehearsal. I’ve worked as hard as I could to get to this moment now. Now I have to relax and be free. I hope that it honors my ancestors and I give it out.” This released her from dread or a need to control the outcome. She also shared that generally she keeps this information very private as it feels almost sacred.

Most current.

Since supernormal capacities come from long term practice, it's notable that she mentioned her passion to "always keep learning." She feels she is at her best as an actress today because she has less fear blocking her, has more creative flexibility, and is able to 'forget about herself'; to be free and generous with her fellow actors.

Joan Mankin

Introduction.

Joan Mankin is a 65 year old Bay Area based actress. She was born and raised near Chicago and has lived in San Francisco since 1969. At 3 or 4 years old she did performances for her family. In high school she had a drama teacher that inspired her, but even though she studied theatre at the University of Chicago, she never planned on becoming a professional actor and didn't start working professionally until a family event took her to San Francisco at twenty two years old.

Training.

Her core training in terms of techniques and experiences came from working with the San Francisco Mime Troupe. She fell in love with their work because they weren't "trying to be artistic" but rather "trying to relate to an audience and bring out ideas in a physical way". She auditioned and on her second try, got in. She worked with them for the next five years. She did say that after her time with the Troupe she would occasionally take other acting workshops, but nothing significant. She did study martial arts and yoga

continually and she said, “Those two things really encouraged my approach” to acting.

Transformation.

She says the discipline of her martial arts training has been the most transformative part of her 40 years of studying different styles. She also said that martial arts taught her, not to fight, but to ‘accept’ what was coming at her, which changed her life and her work as an actor: “You don’t guard yourself from it. You take it in and send it back.”

Mind reading.

In a recent production of “Taming of the Shrew” Joan exhibited exceptional sensitivity and clarity in communicating non-verbally with an audience. She played two different men in the production, but in the final scene she played a woman. Each time she came out as a woman, the audience would ‘crack up’. She could tell they weren’t sure whether she was really a woman or not. Due to her extensive experience with audience interaction while on stage, she could feel what they were thinking and eventually started to look at them as if to say “c’mon, I’m a woman....don’t give me a hard time.” Then the entire audience would crack up. She was so accurate in reading them that she was able to totally accept the reality of their response and then find an improvisational way to communicate without violating the text. She said, “[The cast] will always remember that moment as something that allowed the audience to come in.”

Practicing perfection.

Joan demonstrated a capacity for radical acceptance and creativity with a story she shared about “how to use mistakes”. She said,

If you make a mistake on stage, you start to blame yourself and go oh fuck, how do I get out of this, then you’re screwed. But if you take the mistake and go with it, sometimes it takes you to a place that is so much better and so different. I’ve learned so much from this sense of embracing mistakes; from making a lot of mistakes on stage. In a play called *Counter Attack* there was a scene where the manager of the diner was supposed to come in and interrupt a conversation. He just forgot to come in. We just went on with the scene and at the end of the scene, he came in, after I had gone out . . . there was something about it I really loved. It didn’t really matter. It didn’t. That was really fascinating to me and me and the other waitress just went on. It gave the scene a whole different feeling.

This seems to be a very high level of work that borders on the ability to sanctify mistakes which, when witnessed, often seem a miraculous capacity.

Iyengar yoga, Vipassana, and Boom.

Joan shared about a recent production of a show called “Boom” where a meditative process led her to a high level of presence and personalization at the start of each show. She felt her experiences with martial arts, Iyengar Yoga, and Vipassana all contributed to the capacities she explored in this story; the ability to really connect to what’s happening in her mind and body; to just be. Basically the structure of the show planted her on stage thirty minutes before the show started, so she had to sit in waiting, in a dark quiet place for thirty minutes before each show. This forced her into a kind of meditation. She said, “this allowed me to be on stage; to fully acknowledge where my body was in relationship to the other people there and what my thoughts; to not try to push that away, even if I was not thinking things my character would think” This is a uncommonly high level of presence, acceptance, self-awareness, and creative use. She said, “I remember

standing off the stage and thinking of the things I had gone through that day and feeling right then. It was really important for me to take that in before I went out. It made it much realer for me.”

Compassion for the Devil.

Joan also recently played the Devil in Strindberg’s *A Soldiers Tale*. This story relates how she explored the archetype of the Devil and eventually was able to help the audience relate to the Devil within. She spoke of how the Devil was lonely and wanted to get close to the soldier character. She came to understand that his loneliness drove him and the reason he duped the soldier and captured him into hell was to assuage the loneliness. She went on to say that something changed for her during “, the two months “in terms of my recognizing, you know, the Devil inside of me. As we performed it more, the audience started to relate to the Devil more by the end of the play and I felt like they were relating to certain parts of themselves. That really interested me.” We both concluded the conversation by agreeing that such a capacity to have “compassion for the darker parts of ourselves and others” is a high (if not the highest) goal worthy of any great religious or spiritually transformative tradition.

Chapter 5: Analysis of Coding

Coding was begun with the rough categories developed in the literature review as a starting point. Going back and forth, coding and redefining the codes and definitions, a group of categories were developed that came directly from the interviews. Some of them matched the categories found in the literature review section and some new classifications emerged. Some of the categories in the literature review did not show up in the data. This is very early and rough mapping of these capacities as they are particular to the experience of actors and the sampling of the group was quite small, though specialized. With a larger sample, more well-formed research protocols, and greater resources to evaluate the results, it is very likely that many of these definitions would be clarified and expanded. The groupings present in this data and their analysis in context represent a genuinely new but also very rough body of knowledge that could use much additional, well-structured research to flesh out and apply.

In addition, the chunking together of data into categories attempted to be as precise as possible, but many of the boundaries blur and the relationships between the various types of supernatural capacities in actors overlap or are sometimes hard to differentiate.

Each category is briefly defined and relevant specifics about how they occurred as various subtypes within the interviews themselves are presented. In addition, the detailed discussion of each category and subcategory of supernatural functioning in actors is sometimes very briefly contextualized within the larger

context of existing literature, but most of the analysis and integration of the results is saved for the final conclusions of this study.

Supernormal Self-Sense

Supernormal self-sense: No-self.

This no-self sense capacity was defined as the ability to sense, identify with, and act from a self that was essentially empty: this might be parallel in Buddhism to the ability to realize fundamental emptiness. Such abilities were present only one time, in Julia Ormond's interview. For Julia Ormond this larger sense of self came in the form of a kind of emptiness or ultimate loss of self. She started by speaking of forgetting the self by saying, "One of the greatest lessons I learned in acting was to forget about myself by doing my homework and then taking care of the other person on stage." She went on to say that her relaxation techniques and meditation practices before performance brought her to say that,

What fascinates me is that from purely working with relaxation techniques in order to act better; free of tension and anxiety; I experienced that shifting from sensing my notion of defined physical body, into that disappearing and bleeding into a very freeing state of connectedness, relaxation and unity.

It was unclear whether she keeps this disappearing feeling during performance. Further exploration of the literature revealed the oceanic feeling of no-self is perhaps hidden in the literature, although rare. Here, Robert Cohen (1978) hints at the possibility: "This feeling of otherness, this transformation, is of course the essential quality of the acting experience. It is distinctively pleasurable, because it reconnects us with the oceanic feeling, that time when our self was without limit." (p. 191)

Supernormal self-sense: Divine self.

Divine self-sense was a subcategory that came up in the literature review, and was corroborated by experiences that were reported in the interview data.

Divine Self-Sense was defined as the ability to sense, identify with, and act from a divine self. Larry Moss, mentioned this ability but only as he witnessed it in others. The structure of the study didn't exclude second person accounts, so this was kept as valid data. Speaking of a 90 year old performer he witnessed,

Those kind of people that work their whole lives , there is something chemical that happens to their bodies and to their brains that becomes . . . it's hard for me to describe, a spiritual high level of putting together the physical world with the metaphysical world.

Here it can be inferred from what Larry received from this performer, that she was able to feel into the divine or spiritual nature of life and that something had literally changed in her cellular that allowed her to affect a revelatory effect in the audience. Katie Rubin was the only actor the spoke of this experience in first person, albeit with imprecise language that leaves interpretation of it as divine self-sense open to challenge:

I felt this spiritual energy in my being; I had these supernormal experiences a lot in the sense that I had the experiences of feeling transcended and fully present at the same time. Performers talk about this a lot. Being so not here and being here all at once. I understand now that the being is so expanded. Everything is open and I feel bigger than this Earth, and not even of this Earth. That used to happen a lot to me as a performer where I felt so alive at the moment and yet bigger than living.

Supernormal self-sense: Transpersonal or archetypal self.

Another form of supernormal self-sense had to do with identification with archetypal and transpersonal aspects as self; supernormal in that these people felt their self-sense as something greater than the personal self. This ability was

defined as the capacity to sense, identify with, and act from identification with archetypal or transpersonal forces. The number of variations of archetypal forms varies widely because theatre is a ritual and poetic form that has a large amount of time exploring universal forces. Larry Moss said,

There is a heightened, I don't want to use this word but it comes to mind, there is a universal high level of the human condition and understanding in the worst of us, there is also the best of us.

Again, turning briefly back to the literature we find that perhaps Meisner and Longwell (1987) were speaking of a similar experience as necessary for great acting when Meisner said, "Find in yourself those human things which are universal." (p. 48). Sam Raybrun (as cited in Bennett, 2013) said, "The real actor has a direct line to the collective heart" (p. 1). This ability to tap into a universal self-sense of some variation seems to be a supernormal capacity for most people, but for actors, it is essential.

Supernormal self-sense: Ancestor and past life identification.

Moving forward, another major category of extraordinary self-sense was a group of abilities that allowed people to identify with ancestors and/or past life experiences. This ability was defined as the capacity to sense, identify with, and act from membership in the living force of ancestors or from past life memories and knowledge. On one level, this sense of ancestry also speaks to the notion of honoring the tradition of acting as Robert Cohen (1978) does with his students and exhorts his readers when he said, "Don't speak without a sense of your inheritance" (p. 78). Julia Ormond was the most vocal participant regarding the

importance of her connection to ancestors as a vital source of power in being at the peak of her acting abilities.

She even incorporates a meditative practice to connect with her ancestors as a kind of final touch to her preparation as a way to consistently bring the best to her performances.

For me, one of the meditations around performance is about ancestral connection through women and men, connecting historically through ancestors and then it is about giving it away. I gather myself through concentration and relaxation. I've done my preparation, I've done my rehearsal. I've worked as hard as I could to get to this moment now. Now I have to relax and be free. I hope that it honors my ancestors and I give it out.

She went on in her interview to speak about how finding material that aligns with ancestral energy can elevate capacities in performance.

There is something that I think in the genetic coding that shifts or changes based on your lineage. It's something that you will recognize in terms of when you get back to your native habitat in climate and land and blood and culture, but also in terms of characters and scripts and language.

Finally, speaking specifically she spoke of how she was cast in the film first night; how the director was so adamant about casting her because he could see something in her that at first she was not able to see in terms of what she could bring to the part. It later seemed that he intuited the ancestral force she could bring to role. She describes how her ancestral connection only became obvious half way through the film shoot. After being drawn to change hotels that ended up being an ancestral family home, she added:

I then found out from my mother's side of the family that the site the movie was going to use for Camelot in was in Wales and was a nuclear power station that was designed by my mother's side of the family. That felt like another odd coincidence; more than the average coincidences. Then, when I spoke to my Dad, he asked me where I stayed in Wales and I

told him about it. He gave it its proper Welsh pronunciation and said, 'That house used to be in the family. Your grandfather is buried a mile up the road and that's right next to the village where I was born and raised.' Now, some people would right that off as chance or coincidence, but that to me felt like it spiritually had some weight to it; I had literally felt a coming home, before knowing why. Then I found out more recently, that my father's side of the family had been located there for 800 years. And until that point I never really registered to me that my dad was pure Welsh.

Julia went on to affirm that the experience of shooting First Knight had been personally deeply transformational in terms of her fundamental relationship to her ancestors and her father.

Finally, returning briefly to the literature again, we find an expression by Robert Cohen (1978) that perhaps ancestral power can be wielded not only from personal family but from the theatrical tradition and human tradition as a whole.

He says,

You're here to learn a tradition that goes back two millennia. The tradition embraces all the regional and national characteristics, all the languages, all the shifting, changing styles, the different periods of time, the different levels of society, the mores and morals of passing years, the different furniture, the very sound of the music in the air, the evolution that has changed the earthenware mug into a paper drinking cup. (p 128)

These instances in the data provide a few variations on a supernormal self-sense and suggest that experiences of union are not just for mystics in monasteries but are for actors on stage in communion with an audience a space and an energetic weather system.

It is worth expressing one final note on supernormal self-sense and supernormal functioning altogether. It was the aim of this study to establish supernormal capacities, not supernormal experiences. As such, it was hard to discern if these varieties of extraordinary self-sense were capacities or just

experiences. Also it is unclear if they were supernormal functions in and of themselves, or rather if they were precursors to actual performable abilities. This study remains inconclusive on these issues and must leave the question to further exploration and refinement.

Supernormal physical and energetic capacities.

This next grouping of supernormal capacities is a series of abilities related to exceptional physical and energetic abilities. The physical and energetic dynamics are lumped together because most of the expressions of physical prowess and energetic states in the participants and in the literature spoke of to the inextricable connection between the physical body and the energetic capacities that can be wielded through physical action.

It is useful to first speak generally about the umbrella category of supernormal physical and energetic abilities. Robert Parson, who had a sports background and continued to train in a vigorous physical technique with a master Suzuki teacher as a way to keep his anxious mind silent said, “As an actor, it is a different kind of energy flowing through you than when you are an athlete, but it’s similar. I think there’s a parallel.” Matt Mitler was perhaps the most articulate and vocal, not surprising giving the rich detail with which he has dealt with these dynamics within his spiritual lineage as a Gurdjieffian. He said:

The more I can be in touch with finer energies, not just the energies of my being . . . which is a big deal, my heart beat, my pulse, the vibration on my skin, but then the subtle body; the energy that surrounds me, and if I begin to have an attention that can encompass that, now I’m dealing with the energies that don’t just emanate from me but more toward me; so now I have the energy of gravity, I have the energy of the moon and the sun and who knows what . . . the energy of my partner, the energy of a group, the energy of a space, nature . . . and that’s a lot of stuff to work with. I also

have an opening of time because the moment becomes infinite and if I'm acting at this level then I have the capacity for choice, not choice in a mundane intellectual way, but choice in an intuitive, fully participated way, and it's all like "whoosh" we are there . . . being more present, and by being more present, we mean being more present to the available energies.

Among other things, this passage from Mitler's interview suggests stages of unfolding in the sensitivity to or availability of stages of energetic abilities, culminating in extraordinary alterations of time and connection to large sources like the moon and gravity itself. This is supportive of the notion of supernormal functioning which has been established for the purposes of this study as late stages of a developmental sequence. Also relevant to assuring that this is supernormal functioning, not just supernormal experience is that he and his theatre group seem to take specific actions that produce the energetic results intentionally.

Mitler went on to say that his group looks to continually refine their energetic work:

We looked at all different people and communities that we spend time collaborating with and everyone found it very easy to say, 'This is the place that provides the most consistent level of finer energy' and right now, that's this abbey that we go to, The Abbey of Regina Laudis.

One specific type of coded energetic capacity got labeled as presence and verticality. This is the ability to be entirely in one's own body and direct experience. Katie Rubin spoke to how supernormal capacities might spontaneously emerge early on as supernormal experiences that can later be converted to capacities with more conscious practice like what Mitler describes.

When I was even younger, I had this thing I would do privately where I would sit in the bathroom and stare at myself in the mirror. I would be

looking into my own eyes and waiting for this particular experience to happen, and it was the same experience that would happen in that acting class. I would stare at myself and it would be this feeling of vagueness and then all of a sudden something would happen if I just waited long enough in the staring if I would just get present with myself.

Then relating that to her acting work;

[My mother] took me to this acting class. I don't remember the class or the experience very much. What I remember is feeling a suddenly overwhelming seen and existent. I remember that experience as one of my first spiritual experiences. I suddenly was very present when I was on stage speaking and people were watching. It was almost an experience of fully dropping into my body all of a sudden, as if I had never been in my body prior to that moment. At that time, I wouldn't have known to phrase it that way.

Mitler stated that presence was in fact the highest aim he had in his work and that states of possession are part of what he and his theatre groups work.

I had had, up until, I'd say ten years into the Gurdjieff work, only experiences of possession . . . to me that was success . . . tell me what I did . . . And it was only when I saw what the cost of that was, that it did not aid change of being, in fact it depleted me . . . I'd be left . . . I'd do these performances where there was a 2 hour, two act improvised play . . . and they would be fantastic and people would say, you were great, but I would be completely depleted.

Matt expressed the fundamental quality of presence as a foundation for all of an actor's work: "What we're looking for is presence . . . and, presence, being in the moment, is more . . . the more finely attuned I am to the moment, the more there is, the more possibilities I have." He speaks as if presence is a key to unlocking creativity and play and possible actions or choices (abilities) some of them perhaps supernormal abilities/actions. Like, supernormal self-sense, it's not clear from the work done in this study if vertical presence is a precursor to supernormal capacities or is best thought of as a capacity in and of itself.

Some actors, Matt Mitler included, purposefully test and extend the capacity to remain present by using stressful situations that could presence to dissipate if not strong enough. Mitler described developing presence as he works with his theatre troupe:

We're doing a different experiment, which is: how far out can I go toward possible possession and still have something to come back to? So I go out too far and I realize I have nothing to come back to, so I take on ballast and then I go out again. So it's a back and forth, back and forth.

Presence doesn't enervate, it refines and increases an actor's energy. The ability to be completely present as an extremely advanced level of acting came up with Larry Moss as well. "There's a type of non-acting: meaning it's experiential in the now of now as if you are making it up because you are not thinking ahead or behind, you're exploring." Moss goes on to talk about the ineffable nature of great acting in terms that mirror the way some mystics speak of the ineffable nature of god: "In a way that no one can understand where great acting lives because it is the experience of the actor or actress is having in that moment right in front of you. The 'now of now.'"

Joan expresses the power of presence in a personal way by saying that her goal is often to simply,

Be on stage; to fully acknowledge where your body is in relationship to the other people there and what the thoughts are that are going on in your mind; to not try to push that away, even if you're not thinking things your character would think.

Supernormal physical and energetic capacities: Invisible body.

This is a variety of abilities related to being able to feel and manipulate the subtle energetic or imaginal body; it relates in the supernormal functioning

literature to the auric or subtle body, a field of energy that moves through and around the physical body.

Julia Ormond shared that her early experiences of learning to paint introduced her to her imaginal body. She said:

There was a lot of stuff we would do in art school. For example, think of an emotion and paint that emotion in an abstract way. When you are in that emotion, what color does that bring up in you? If you look at someone like Georgia O'Keeffe, she apparently loved music but was tone deaf. When she describes her work in color, there is a whole movement to color; colors evoke music and music evokes certain colors. So she was painting music. That way of seeing is very connected. If I work backwards and conjure up color that I imagine fills my physical body, my physical body will move towards embodying that emotion.

Julia's emotions in this passage begin as something simple as an imagined color, but it turns into an energy that fills her physical body. Another point of interest in this passage is that she described a kind of synesthesia which is consistent with other reports of supernormal experience reported in sexual accounts by Jenny Wade (2004).

Hal Landon was one of the most expressive in terms of his ability to purposefully develop and use his imaginal body due to his extensive training with the techniques of Michael Chekhov, which is an acting technique that excels in developing this capacity in actors.

He talks of being able to use various imaginal dynamics: "the imaginary body, or imaginary center, or imaginary tempo . . . or you know something like that. Usually I get something from that. And sometimes it's not what I was specifically looking for." In saying that he finds something he wasn't looking for he speaks of how to court inspiration, which is an allusive and often spiritual

creative experience. He said that as his mastery of the technique increased what happens is that synchrony between the mental and imagination and the even the emotions and the physical body happens,

because they are both working at the same time in a focused and very intense way. And one of the byproducts for me was that my body, after doing those exercises for many years, became freer . . . after doing these exercises my body was more alive. I actually get people comment that that was something that I had, (which I had considered a weakness before) had developed as a strong point of mine.

The fact that he was able to go from a weakness in his physicalization to it being a strong and integrated aspect of his work bodes well for it trainable supernormal capacity attainable through long term practice. Other aspects of this energy body are covered in other subcategories with more specificity.

Again speaking with more specificity of how he was taught to use physical gesture to create effects in his energy body, Hal said:

We were taught energy movements; one for lightness and ease, one for contact, and most of it was done from psychological gesture. And the one for contact was very simple you just go from a closed position to a very open position . . . and that always helped me, but there have been a couple of times where the response to doing another technique called the psychological gesture was kind of overpowering; really shook me to the core so to speak, in a way that I'm not sure.

Unfortunately he's not terribly articulate in this case, and he admitted that being verbally articulate is a general challenge for partially due to the contours of his adult attention deficit disorder.

Supernormal physical and energetic capacities: Causal body.

One particular and surprising sub-category that arose in one participant was the specific energy of what is sometimes called the causal body in the literature of supernormal functioning. The causal body is a third body that is

sometimes equated with space itself and is an unchanging body of space itself. It is much larger than the egg shaped energy body that might be equated with the invisible body; in fact it is infinite and beyond space. Hal, as a forty two year practitioner of transcendental meditation was the only one to report anything potentially related to this ability. It could be described as a stabilized energetic grounding in stable and unchanging spaciousness or presence; it transmits to an audience a feeling of being grounded and trustable. Hal said, A number of times people have said “you’re so steady. There is a calm that you radiate” that is settling to them. I very seldom get nervous.”

Supernormal physical and energetic capacities: Invisible network.

The next subcategory of supernormal capacities related to the physical and energetic capacities present in an actor’s work are a category that got labeled Invisible Network. This is the ability to feel and work with the subtle energies between individual people, places, and things.

Sometimes an actor is surrounded by a powerful energetic network or context. Robert reported an experience of playing Lincoln in the very theatre where he had been shot. He recalled the experience saying:

Playing Lincoln in *The Rivalry* at Ford’s Theater; that experience was filled with those kinds of moments for me. I do believe it was somehow due the play and the story, but also the environment, the audiences’ involvement in it, and the energy that was flowing around the whole thing. It may be an imagined energy where we think because Lincoln was killed in this building it adds to the experience. Whether it’s real or imagined doesn’t really seem to matter I think.

In some ways this is a piece that is easy to feel the invisible network of energy because the energy was so collectively intense. Perhaps other actors more

sensitively trained to the invisible network in particular could have these sorts of perceptions in less intense contexts. Robert related how he engaged with the experience but he never stated that he worked or trained in any specific way to increase his sensitivity to or participation with the invisible network of energy present in performance events; perhaps if he had then a more lucid example of the higher stages of this ability could have been gleaned.

Jack made sensitivity to this surrounding network of energy a much more consistent part of his work.

In terms of magic in acting, I always say, “the scene exists magically in the air around you and it just waiting for an honest vessel to funnel through. And to provide the scene an honest vessel you just simply have to be free of anxiety for the most part.”

Here we see a sensation of an impersonal energy weather system already extant as an autonomous force of the scene. Also, in this passage we get hints of the borderline shamanic capacity that actors can develop to serve this the scene as a power greater than themselves which relates to the category of capacities called supernormal service that will be explored later. It must be reiterated that many of these categories have blurry boundaries in actual practice and experience. In addition, often several causative factors and capacities seemed to emerge simultaneously and suggest generally being in an exalted, transpersonal, or spiritual consciousness in general in which supernormal capacities of various kinds emerge.

Jack also talked about how this sort of invisible connecting network could affect groups doing theatrical improvisation.

When I do improv, sometimes I do improv at The Groundlings, and when we have an amazing scene that feels like it was written beforehand, that's really just two or three people that are all letting their higher power guide them and the universe is guiding the scene; it just feels joyful and it feels like something else made me say that. I guess you could say this is that we're always totally connected to everyone around us because we're all one. I mean, if there is a piece of God in each of us then that means we are literally all the same person.

Katie, as a professional energy healer and having gone to Sufi energy healing school has a very strong sensation of the invisible network of energy each night she performs.

There's a kind of listening, that I do to an audience when I'm on stage. I'm always hyper tuned to the energy I'm organically getting from the house. It profoundly affects me and it affects me night to night.

And Gemma's sensitivity to the energetic connection to the audience from night to night fundamentally guides the direction of a two person piece she created:

We look for a very very very very pure in the moment authenticity, whatever that might look like. It could be very simple and peaceful or it could be angry or sexual or whatever. And we would try to follow those threads, energetically, based on what we were feeling in the audience . . . which, in this case was sometimes people not even wanting to look at us because it was too intimate.

Supernormal physical and energetic capacities: Second winds.

This is the ability to consciously choose to push beyond impossible odds or exhaustion of personal effort to an experience of effortlessness and being carried by an impossibly miraculous or inexplicable grace. Patrycja explained that sometimes her second wind can come from allowing herself to ride the energy generated by her cast mates: "When I feel weak I just surrender for a moment to the energy the other Players are giving, and surf on it for a while."

Katie too spoke of the surge of energy that can consistently come to her in performance despite exhaustion.

Even if my voice is off or I'm dehydrated, there is a thing that takes over and I don't know what the thing is. Sometimes I think its adrenalin; sometimes I think it's more spiritual. I'm certain it's got to be some combination of both. Something takes over and I become this crazed, highly energetic athlete. Everything just heightens and my system just seems to go onto auto-pilot almost.

Supernormal physical and energetic capacities: Telekinesis.

Based on the literature of supernormal functioning I anticipated that some form of telekinesis in performance was a possibility. Simply it was defined as the ability to move physical objects without physically interacting with them, either with thought or with subtle energy. The only occurrence that did come from the actors in this study was not in an instance of performance. Matt Mitler was an interesting case because he consistently oscillated between spiritual and transformative practice and explorations in his acting technique. Part of his exploration took him to doing Native American rituals that included sweat lodges, peyote, and ritual rattles. He has actually incorporated some of these ritual techniques, in a stripped down format, to his ongoing work with his theatre troupe. So while this example may not speak to SNF in performance, it is part of a composite of SNF as it appears in actors; in this case, in an actor who has thoroughly integrated transformative practice and ritual into his own process of developing himself as an artistic vessel. In this instance he describes an instance in which he was leading a peyote ritual and leading the group by shaking a sacred rattle. He

This guy is talking and I think, I'm really trying to go someplace here . . . and you're pissing me off . . . and I was shaking the rattle with my right hand and my left hand was up at the moon . . . maybe it was the other way around . . . right hand up at the moon . . . then at one point my voice and my body took on something magical, in that it was not my typical state . . . and I felt this connection, this vertical connection, and I took my free hand and I said, 'YAH!' and thrust my hand at him. He flew up in the air about five feet and landed on his back. Everybody saw it. Afterwards at sunrise, I came up to him and said, 'I am so sorry, I don't know what happened, I just got really angry' and he said, 'No. Thank you. It was like a horse kicked my chest and if I hadn't experienced that I never would have believed it was possible.' (Matt Mitler)

Supernormal physical and energetic capacities: Shape shifting.

Shape shifting was an anticipated subcategory but there was nothing more than a suggestion at full fledged shape-shifting as a supernormal capacity. Shape shifting is the uncanny ability to alter one's physical appearance; seemingly a thought induced or energetic phenomenon that causes an actor to change appearance beyond rational explanation; perhaps even eye color changes or shifts in bone structure and metabolism. Hal Landon was the only one that spoke of physical transformations, again partially explicable due to his Chekhov based psycho-somatic techniques. Speaking of what he considers great acting as well as what he pursues an ideal in his own acting he said,

I guess to really break it down one thing that fills me, or moves me when I see a performance, is that the actor is able to transform; they have done a transformation from themselves to this other person. And the more unlike themselves they are the more I am thrilled by the performance. And some of that transformation . . . is can they live in this other body.

The lack of more data for this category was disappointing, yet from the literature of shamanism, ritual, and from many reports of great actors, it's very likely that these abilities reaching supernormal levels are not only possible but a common category among actors.

Supernormal physical and energetic capacities: Auric radiation.

The next physical and energetic ability that the subjects spoke of was generally referred to as auric radiation: The ability to purposefully (or not) radiate an auric glow around oneself during performance. Advanced abilities included willful choice of colors, shapes, and active energetic intentions. Larry reported seeing the ability in someone else:

I had an experience when I went to London and saw Vanessa Redgrave do *Ghosts*. I watched her and it was as if there was a glow around her body, a golden aura. I kept on blinking my eyes. It didn't go away. I thought it was a trick of light, but it wasn't.

Hal, once again, excelled in expressing specifics of energetic dynamics due to his training background. I spoke of how he came to Chekhov training, saying that when his company, south coast repertory, upgrade to a larger space and a more robust budget, he needed to be able to fill the new space energetically and compete with a larger available talent pool due to pay rate increases for actors hired onto projects.

I found that I wasn't playing very good parts anymore. I felt the pressure of this bigger theatre. And I think what happened was I started to push to indicate to you know the worst thing you can do to try to do what I thought was necessary to fill this larger space. And whatever it was; I kind of lost my way and acting was kind of agony for me for a while.

Hal suffered and struggled in such a way until he trained with a master teacher who had actually helped Chekhov write his two seminal books on acting technique. Training under this man, Hal learned specific energetic techniques for auric radiation:

oh, fire . . . we use to have this exercise called fire. We stand around an imaginary fire. And absorb that and then send it out. The idea was to always have that going when you're on stage. So you would imagine the

fire as an imaginary substance around you, you'd absorb it into your body, and then you'd radiate it out. And then there was the ability to just radiate; any chosen quality, not just fire.

Patrycja gave the best excellent example of auric or energetic radiation during an actual performance. Hers was a spontaneous event and so not as well suited for consideration of supernormal functioning, but still instructive. She described her experience performing a touring show called "the red shoes". This eruptive spontaneous energetic experience was preceded by intense personal and artistic ordeals over many months. Ordeal of some form or another often precedes or coincides with occasions of supernormal functioning that emerged in this research. She described the recurring peak moment as follows:

I experienced on couple of occasions that the scream was accompanied by the fountain of rays of light shooting out of my belly into the audience. To this day I wonder if it was a true spiritual experience or just a product of my imagination, internal visualization to help me to finish the show on a peak.

Supernormal physical and energetic capacities: Yogic union.

This ability was defined as the capacity to consciously 'yoke' or 'unite' the self with a text, piece of music, play, song, space, or audience. It seems to be one of the higher capacities that actors can demonstrate and the subject opens a large territory of inquiry into the yogic aspects of performance.

Many of the participants spoke in their interviews about short or long term therapy as part of the maturation as actors. Robert was one such actor, and he described acting in a production of *Equus* wherein he was able successfully to merge a deep personal psychological period of growth with the psychological drama of the character in the play. He made sure to note that using personally

tumultuous material in such a way is a dicey endeavor and one to be very cautious with. In spite of the risk, he reported that the union created both an elevated performance and accelerated personal development. In his own word:

When I was rehearsing and performing *Equus* I was involved in therapy and so playing Dysart, who is a psychiatrist in the play, was synchronistic. If you can use personal experiences to launch your imagination and find a compassionate connection to the character it can certainly be a valuable tool in an actor's toolkit. It can also be a dangerous thing when not used constructively.

Patty demonstrated a cause of supernormal functioning that I came to call 'transferable skills'. She learned to become one with her violin as she worked with a new theatre company and explored new ways of playing; and this coming after long term practice (17 years) and many stages of development. She says:

I was encouraged to explore moving and playing at the same time (sometimes resulting in clever, sometimes in deliciously ridiculous ways; breaking a couple of bows, etc.). Now I can tell that I treat my violin as part of my body. I'm keen to use this instrument to communicate passion, anger, joy and so on, just like as an actor I use the text.

Larry spoke of what might be understood as yogic union when repeating something a master teacher, David Craig, had told him in earlier years. Larry said, "David Craig said, 'When you sing a song correctly, it's as if you wrote it.' You're not performing it. You're living it." There is a sense here that the performer's essence and inner life completely becomes one with the material being performed.

Gemma actually explicitly made yogic and sexual practices a part of her personal and spiritual development in such a way that it became an inextricable part of her performative process. Gemma describes:

I started incorporating more yogic practices and more sexual practices when I started to learn more about masculine and feminine. I was doing a lot of practices at that point in my work, and it worked, it really worked. Around that time, I had a final presentation at university. In our theatre studies degree the final was to create a twenty minute piece of theatre which was a summary of where we were at as theatre practitioners. That, I would say, was when I started to work in a certain way that I would say I'm still working in. I realized I wasn't going to compromise myself and I wasn't going to try to do something that I thought that people would like. It had to absolutely resonate with my heart and spirituality. I had to really stick clear to what I believed in. The performance ended up being pretty "out there". They seemed to like it, but it was intense. It was a two woman show. And the woman I worked with, (I think she was pretty challenged by the process, as I was pretty intense and edgy bare-bones, no hiding kind of theatre) and I remember that the day we had to do the show, she couldn't even look me in the eye. And that was very painful, but that was part of the process.

Here we see her struggle to achieve yogic union with her fellow performer and the audience and with the authenticity of herself as united with the material she generated, that a high level of intensity was generated that was difficult of others to handle. It's possible to see that the yogic techniques that Gemma utilized were an essential aspect of what has become a reputation or intensely intimate and challenging performances that are transformative not only for Gemma, but for the attending audiences as well.

Supernormal physical and energetic capacities: Ecstasies.

This was defined as the capacity to feel ecstatic rapture in performance; the pure joy and fun of entertainment bordering on rapture, ecstasy, and bliss that some long term transformative practice brings about. Robert Cohen (1978) said, "We realize that we are never so filled with other people's presence as when we see them ecstatic." (p. 201)

Jack was in fact the only member of the study group to use language suggestive of ecstatic pleasure when talking about his acting. He said,

I've seen magic in my life . . . and then the other way I'd say, the best way I could talk about experiencing magic while acting would be . . . well . . . every time I act . . . and a line comes out in a way that I didn't expect and I love it and it tickles me or something, that to me is touching god or magic because I felt something bigger than me guiding me to do that, so every time I have a look back at something I filmed and I'm like, oh my god I don't remember doing any of that but uh, but I love it . . . that's the joy of experiencing miracles.

In a certain way, Jack experiences the ordinary as a sacred, joyful, and miraculous moment; a quality often associated with very high spiritual realization. It was surprising and unfortunate that more actors did not use this sort of language to describe their experience while working.

Supernormal physical and energetic capacities: Channeling.

This is the ability to source, serve, and give form to a transpersonal or archetypal source of energy. Only one participant spoke in terms that matched this category which was generated based on the literature review and a much higher level of anticipated response. Unfortunately, Larry was the only actor who spoke in terms of embodying or enacting these larger forces, and even then he was not speaking of direct experience, but about what he saw in a high level student of his. He told the story of working with Michael Clarke Duncan on the movie, the Green Mile, starring tom Hanks. He said,

What I learned working with Michael and Hillary, was the amount of compassion that Michael found in John Coffey based on his love of his mother and what she sacrificed to bring the kids up without a father. When he connected with the love of his mother, the whole part opened up because John Coffey is a Christ figure. I told him that he had to carry all the pain of the world in his eyes. Once he began to talk about the sacrifices

his mother made; his gratitude, love, and compassion for her was so enormous he tapped directly into this greater energy.

Again, the literature was rife with examples using language akin to channeling and possession by larger, transpersonal forces, but it was only in the conversation with Larry that even a second hand account emerged.

Supernormal Play

Supernormal play: Reclaimed inner child.

This ability to reclaim the inner child is the developmental capacity to freely access the sub-personality of the inner child and apply it to the work or rehearsal or performance. Often this takes much psycho-physical work to unlock, reliably access, and sustain.

The impression from Patrycja interview was that she was particularly skilled at remaining accessing this ability consistently. Relating to her experience as an actress, she said,

I heard once that good performers are quite often very vulnerable/fragile and ultra-strong at the same time. I can recognize that cocktail in me a bit. On one level I can stand on the stage with the feeling of transparency, honesty, on the verge of emotional pornography with the child like naivety; like there is no privacy left.

Matt Mitler was an interesting case in this regard with regard to supernormal-play. One ongoing performance piece he does is called, “the fools mass” wherein he and his theatre troupe play town idiots who perform the holy mass because the priest has passed moments before. He said:

I present “Fools Mass” every year . . . at least at Christmas time and maybe other times . . . this year we’re doing it . . . we’ve been doing it at Easter also, usually an Easter vigil performance, and . . . I’ve been doing it for 15 years . . . so I’ve lived in this piece. And it is a ritual, it is not a play. It was never intended to be a play. It was intended to be an

investigation into what might be the meaning of the Mass . . . so we couldn't really even know, but could we begin to at least have an . . . not an *understanding* . . . but can we begin to have a *relationship* with it in a questioning way. And that led us to approach the Mass as innocents, as innocent practitioners, which became village idiots. That was the genesis of the piece.

Here we see that Mitler has designed the piece to be an exploration of the sacred and the holy but using a sense of childlike naivety and playfulness in the very structure of the piece. This sort of childlike play is connected to the next aspect of supernormal play, beginners mind.

Supernormal play: Beginners mind.

This is an actor's ability to maintain radical unknowing, a state sometimes called 'divine ignorance' or 'no-self' that leaves an actor completely open to fresh experience and unhindered exploration and fearless creative experimentation. Beginner's mind is a term first coined by the Zen master, Suzuki Roshi (2011) and also relates closely to a quality of 'not-knowing' or what American guru Adi Da (2006) called divine ignorance. Larry supported this idea his interview when he said, "I talk a lot about the now of now without knowing the answers. It's in the not knowing that makes for great acting."

Many of these performers knew that attempting to capture or repeat a performance led to what Hal called, the 'dreaded anticipation', thus taking them out of the creative mode and into a mode of control; an attempt at knowing. Continuing with Matt's experience of "Fools Mass" he speaks of how he built in an opportunity to practice beginners mind and thus open to the grace of supernormal or 'spiritual' play.

My character is Emmanuel . . . and every time we've done [the Fools Mass], one of my responsibilities is to do the sermon. I go up to say that no one can do the sermon because only Father Jerzy can do the sermon, and he's dead. I enter into it with that. I've made a pledge which I've adhered to, which is to never plan what I'm going to say and I never have, for fifteen years.

Invariably, he reported that he has a moment of terror, of feeling completely incapable of improvising the sermon, and then he surrenders and something comes over him and he says what comes out of his mouth is so full of grace and divine beauty that he weeps every single time. Beginner's mind then becomes the capacity to not know, to open fearlessly to one's experience, and to embrace situations that are out of control. Here is Mitler, in his own words:

Something comes out of me. And I usually end up weeping. And I'm not someone who can cry on cue, I'm not one of those actors who cry, but I always cry during the sermon. And sometimes it's a minute, sometimes it's three minutes, I try not to let it go on too long . . . but usually it ends in way like, "Oh, I think it just ended." (laughter) . . . and it leaves me feeling so, absolutely drenched by grace, and I feel purged of some part of me, cleansed of some part of myself.

Mitler has built a similar type of moment into Dzieci's performance of Macbeth:

In "Makbet", there is text but it's really the same movement. Especially with the Tomorrow speech, we really take that as our sermon as it were. I've said that, "No matter what happens, the Tomorrow speech; find that empty place there, if nowhere else in the whole piece.

The empty place he speaks of is about making contact with the beginner's mind; it is empty and free to experience directly with a fresh approach in the new moment. But more than just particular moments of performance at specific times in a play, Patrycja's attitude towards herself and her work altogether seems ubiquitously resistant to anything but a beginner's mind:

I'm a little bit afraid of any form of fanaticism. Although I don't shy away from digging deep, I lack the desire to get uber-extreme, monastic, chained to anything, serve any religion etc . . . to alienate people and be alienated. Even talking to you I have to be careful not to repeat myself, my old truths . . . because I would be in danger of creating a myth. I'm far too young to do that, and hopefully I have healthy distance from myself. Also naturally I'm inclined to be melancholic, so there's this need in me to fight it and be silly and reckless . . . just to get some bloody balance! (Patrycja)

She speaks of a resistance to naming things and thus killing off the beginner's mind that is open to playful exploration and discovery:

I probably already have everything in my DNA . . . for doing it as long as I have . . . I do it like an animal. I don't like naming. There is a fear of making poetry; making a myth of myself. Of naming things that should never be named; that it would kill it" (Patrycja Kujawska)

Hal spoke of several aspects of the work it takes to stay away from a mental state interested in preconception or excessive knowing:

I know that a lot of the work I do and a lot of what I get out of Chekhov and using those techniques are that kind of indirect way to get at the heart of a character or even a moment. As soon as you try to intellectualize it or figure something out that is a big block for me. So, it's trying to find the subjective; the root to the essence. I guess that every actor's had this moment: that thing where you have a peak moment on stage and you go back the next night and try to repeat it exactly. It's just not there. It's always a surprise. (Hal Landon)

If the best moments are always a surprise, often filled by grace, then it behooves an actor to stay open to them by exercising active practices that lead to a sustained beginner's mind.

Supernormal Service

Supernormal service: Self-sacrifice.

This is the sense of choosing suffering for the sake of higher service, or a willingness to go through great difficulty with a conscious intention for it to serve or liberate others. Julia spoke of this sort of active ability when she spoke of it as:

To strive for an absolute surrender of personal ego, in search of another person's (writer's) articulation of truth around the human experience, in order to illuminate what it is to be human for an audience, under the constraints and pressures of reality (the work environment).

This notion of serving the audience arose again and again in connection to supernormal capacities in actors, as if the act of service actually marshaled supernormal forces to one's aid.

Larry spoke quite extensively about how he saw such abilities in great performers he had watched: especially how service to audiences as a performer could lead, over a lifetime, to a kind of embodied spiritual awakening.

I remember when I saw her in *The Loves of Isadora*; I had the same feeling watching her. There's a thing that happens to actors when they have given their life over to the art. They become transparent. They lived so many lives through their body that in their brain, there is an awakening inside of them.

He also spoke of how a lifetime of service as a performer could lead to extraordinary moments where all of one's individual pain could be transmuted for a collective good.

I remember seeing Lena Horner, her one woman show, *The Lady and her Music*. I saw it twenty-five times because I felt like I'm never going to see anyone do what she's doing at sixty-five years old because she is carrying all the pain with her of being a black woman; the glamour of being a star. The year that her father died, her son died and her husband died. She was standing there with a white gown on Broadway singing "Stormy Weather" that made her famous. She sang it in the first act. That was her big song. She did the arrangement that was done in the movie of *Stormy Weather*. Somewhat of a band arrangement you might call it, the old fashioned band arrangement of that era. Right at the end of the show, she did a song that she said had taken her a lot of years to grow into. She sang Stormy

Weather again with a completely different arrangement; that was so full of pain and so full of love and loss; that I couldn't believe what I was hearing and seeing.

It would be hard to argue that such an ability is not worthy of recognizing and cultivating.

Supernormal service: Deity service.

Deity service is a slightly different form of being of service. Deity service is intentionally being or creating a vessel for a deity force or subtle being to act through resulting in states of possession and heightened ritual trance. Many actors and acting teachers, such as Janet Sonnenberg (2003) have tried to enlist the aid of the gods: "Our hope was that collaboration with the Gods; with the realms of an actor's imagination - would yield inspired results" (p. 25).

Patrycja had one of the most compelling narratives of deity service in her acting. Describing her experience performing the lead role in the Red Shoes, she says,

Towards the end of the show The Girl screams. It is a scream of survival and freedom. I remember on few occasions that my scream was not human. The volume and quality of it often scared and surprised me. It thrilled me. One critic wrote that my performance was mesmerizing, and my eyes will haunt him for a long time . . . hmmm . . . I was sometimes wondering am I making myself mad. Luckily I could always find a way back- and I think that's actor's responsibility.

This example reflects closely some of the descriptions of divine sacred madness experienced in Dionysian cults the world over in ancient times. Such an intense surrender to service of a higher power is perhaps one of the key abilities of an actor engaging and sustaining supernormal functioning in performance.

Another vivid example of relating to some deity force that produced exceptional abilities during performance came from Patrycja:

One example of exceptional sensation I've had was not long ago in *The Wild Bride*. Again, as it was in the *Red Shoes*, this experience came from my tiredness and despair, I was quietly begging "the God Of Theatre" (if the fucker exist) to help me, and all of a sudden I felt like Myself, I don't know . . . a second Me is embracing me from behind, and pushes forward . . . a strange self-embrace. I clearly felt my presence glued to my back and breathing with me, like I became my own angel for a split of a second . . . actually it was a sensation that lasted for few minutes. It felt beautiful and gentle. I actually wanted to recreate that moment, again and again like a child persist with the new favorite game or a toy . . . but it didn't happen again.

There are so many dynamics of supernormal functioning happening all at once in this account. Exhaustion or impossible odds are often the precursor to the emergence of spiritual or supernormal energy or ability and are clearly present here. Also, in this example she speaks of the deity or divine presence as clearly being a form of her own self, thus suggesting a kind identification with the divine as a higher or truer self, but there was clearly an experience of a deity entity of some sort at the core of her report.

Matt Mitler attempts to set up performance situations that will consistently evoke surrender to a divine source of some kind. He says of his company's performance of a *Gypsy Macbeth*,

There is such a level of unknown; I'm really at the mercy of something. I've set the bar at this place where, "Oh my God, what have I done?!" There's something always incredibly daunting about it: and whoosh, this thing happens. In that moment there is something great and powerful. I can't even name it but it is there. And a transformation occurs.

Larry's relationship to a deity form has been with him from a very early age, but again unfortunately, specific examples of when it was present during performance were not gathered. Larry said,

I have a spirit that talks to me sometimes but it only says one thing and it says it the same way every time. It goes, 'Larry! Larry! Larry!' If I ask

myself, what is the subtext of the voice; it says, 'Wake up'. I had it first when I was three years old. Every now and then I hear the voice. I don't know where it comes from.

This could be spoken of as a kind of guardian angel experience, but since it started at age three and has sustained, it would be hard to argue for it as a SNF because there was no developmental process to arrive at it unless one starts to postulate a continuation of past life developmental stages as coming previous to these occurrences. But Larry did speak briefly of giving service in performance to deity forms, specifically Dionysus. He said, "Dionysus is like this orgiastic feeling that can be positive and used for construction but you can lose yourself" which connects quite nicely to Patrycja's account of her performance in the red shoes that created a kind of madness that she wasn't sure she'd come back from.

While Jack spoke generally about how a work of art has it's a life of its own, which we as artists can only serve, Gemma gave a very specific example of an instance wherein she felt a play she had written and performed began to speak with her as if it had a life and consciousness of its own. She recalls:

I was performing my solo-show 'the Honeymoon period is officially over' in Houston . . . and it was a sold out house and I was being completely produced, which was a real luxury, because I could just show up and do my show. But I had the weirdest experience. I've never had this experience before. But literally, I was doing the show . . . and I felt like the *entity* of the show started talking to me, and it literally said something to me like "what the fuck are you doing"? And I'm like trying to do the show! And in my head I started having a conversation with the entity of my play *as* I'm performing it. And I said back to it, 'Can you just let me get on and do the show?' And it's said, 'No. What the fuck are you doing? You need to be doing something else?' It was totally weird! I've never had that experience before. The resolution was, the show said, "Okay you've got to do this other play you've been sitting on: that you've been sitting on for ten plus years. You've got to do it. You've got to take that risk. You are not going to be satisfied just doing what you have been doing", and I

said, “Okay, I’ll do it, I’ll do it! Now can you just let me finish this show as best I can?”

So the deity being served in these sorts of instances can be a more traditional god or goddess from some spiritual or religious tradition, or the divine being can be an aspect of our own self or even an autonomous consciousness that is the work of art itself. There are more examples than were captured in this summation and more variations on this theme than this study could gather. While many of these were personal and individual experiences (IE the audience didn’t know about Gemma’s dialogue or Patrycja’s divine doppelganger) the next type of supernormal capacity often overtly involves both performer and audience.

Supernormal service: Collective ritual.

Alec Guinness (2013) has said, “An actor is at his best a kind of unfrocked priest who, for an hour or two, can call on heaven and hell to mesmerize a group of innocents.” (para. 1) This subcategory of supernormal functioning is defined as the ability to execute a ritual action that harnesses and moves the energy of an entire group or audience so as to produce ritual affects: catharsis, purification, resurrection, etc. Almost everyone in the study mentioned some version of abilities in collective ritual and its many variations were the most common supernormal capacity expressed.

Robert describes how a good production has strong ritual elements and sometimes “all you have to do is jump on the horse and it will take you- that was the case every night doing *The Rivalry* at Ford’s theatre.” He describes the moment that he emerged as Abraham Lincoln, in the last moment of the play,

standing in the actual box seat area where Lincoln was assassinated: he describes it as follows:

I could actually hear a collective intake of air from the audience, almost a gasp, and sometimes I could hear people beginning to cry. That energy was created by the audience and their connection to history and to this iconic figure and it was transferred to me like lightening to a rod- just straight into my body- it was an amazingly charged experience.

Matt said that one of the highest values of consciously enacting the ritual dynamics in the work of an actor includes that theatrical work can help an actor confront fundamental questions of life and death that “a group can experience but without dying . . . hopefully.” Many religious rituals, the Eucharist and the Easter celebration, could also be said to create ritual process of death and rebirth that don’t require an actual confrontation with death. Theatrical practice can work in the same way, and if some Christian mystics have emerged from the tradition of Christian practices, then perhaps we see here another parallel and supportive evidence for SNF in actors.

Returning to Mitler’s description of the Fools Mass performance, he speaks about the collective power that the audience received from his own grace filled experience:

It leaves me feeling so, absolutely drenched by grace, and I feel purged of some part of my self, cleansed of some part of myself . . . and the whole performance is like that, but that one moment does it for the audience usually, too. They are often crying with me. “Fools Mass”, for fifteen years, it’s always a miracle, I’m always surprised by what I say in the sermon, I’m always surprised by the effect the piece has: People are repulsed by us at the beginning and they are hugging us at the end. That’s part of our intention; we want to create a gulf because we know that they’ll be the ones that cross over, so that they do the work. So considering all these things; “Fools Mass” specifically is pure.

Like Matt, Gemma consciously builds theatrical structures in her work that would create a ritual effect on the audiences who attended. Revealing how she discussed the creative process with her co-creator Elizabeth Baron.

It was a constant conversation. We asked ourselves, ‘is this relevant? Can we create something that is definitely arising from the deeply personal and trust that it can be transposed on? Can we create a piece that we can take to a universal level?’

Larry gave a few great examples of actresses that employed the ritual dynamics of performance as an actor to a very high degree:

Pamela Dean was like a shaman. Her technique vocally and physically was so high that she could become a child in one second even though she was in her 30s and then become an old man and a black woman.

He goes on to describe a power performance she gave in Cape Town and how her remarkable abilities led to a collectively powerful ritual:

The transformative moment was when we went into Cape Town and 90% of the audience in this theater was young black people and they were watching a white woman play a black woman. It was scary. They came, but there was a sense of, “You better pull this off!” Pamela was so brilliant in this play and this play was so strong that the black kids stood up and cried. They stood for her and screamed for her and we all cried together. It was the healing and understanding of what connected us all.

At the highest of ritual capability,

The exploration of the now of now which the audience gets to witness is when you leave the theater and know why I am alive or why I exist in this world. That’s the human condition. I just saw it . . . I suspect the expectation of the transformative is that we hope when we sit down in the theater and watch the curtain go up; we don’t know what’s going to happen. We pray that the transformation will happen in front of us. When it does, it changes people’s lives.

Katie reflected on her experience of collective ritual in her work in much detailed:

The things people will write are amazing; they write feedback about how they are amazed I touched upon this theme or this point in the show but I really didn't touch on what they experienced at all. I didn't intend to nor did I write such a thing in the text or performance. When I'm able to be in that open place where I receive, transmit, and channeling if you will. I do find those are the times that people project more personally specific things on to performance when you give them room to do so. The way I know to give people room to do that is to be spiritually open. If I make the choice as a performer to come on with all the answers, the audience can project a certain amount on that performer but you won't get subtleties or the depth of response.

Joan told a story of how she came to develop some compassion for the Devil. She played the character in a play by Strindberg for two months at a high quality small theatre in San Francisco. She explains:

I also think that the audience's attitude toward the Devil changed from the beginning to the end. At the beginning, they were just viewing the Devil as some kind of stereotype figure. By the end, the audience actually related to the Devil more than they thought they would: from the beginning of the two hours to the end of the two hours; also from the beginning to the end of the two months of the run of the show in terms of my recognizing the Devil inside of me. Certain parts of the Devil; especially as I performed it more, the audience started to relate to the Devil more by the end of the play and I felt like they were relating to certain parts of themselves. That really interested me.

Julia was a fascinating case regarding collective ritual in actors. As a celebrity actor, and because of who she is, Julia has spent a large amount of time and money in social causes of various kinds. She speaks eloquently about how her work as a social change agent is intertwined with her acting and her life as a storyteller. She said that the riveting sensation of a good story is what first attracted her to acting, "acting that flows can make your hair stand on end; captivates you in its flow, and when you're captivated in that way you're open to the power of story." She also spoke of how there was a turning point in her growth as a person and as an artist, saying that there comes a time when "you can

take the energy that has been released personally and battle something more communal.”

Julia gathers stories from people in trouble around the world and then tells them to some other population of people who might be able to help. Speaking about how she transmutes the painful stories into solutions she said,

The side I love is to work towards strategic solutions to all this suffering, I have found that the collective pain of those stories that I have contained in me can be transmuted into motivation for finding solutions. It becomes a fabulous turning point.

Julia went on to tell of how people with horrific, secret, or shameful stories will approach her in a various places where she speaks around the world and say,

I’ve never told anyone this; please don’t tell anyone . . . I always respect people’s anonymity, but I’ve found that I need to ask permission to channel this story or let this story pass on, in some form, so that it doesn’t just lock in me, while preserving their anonymity.

Thus she is constantly searching (as an actress and now as a director) to tell stories that will serve a ritual function and enact some sort of healing, which leads us to our next supernormal capacity: healing powers.

Supernormal service: Healing powers.

In the context of this study, healing powers were defined as an actor’s ability to intentionally or unintentionally use performance skills to cause healing in the physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual bodies of themselves, their cast mates, or in an audience. Matt Mitler’s experience in working with healing powers in performance is rare and refined indeed. Talking of his work with Dzieci,

We studied with Laura Day. I worked with her before Dzieci and then the whole of Dzieci worked with her. We studied healing work and intuitive work. And we still practice that. We go into hospitals and we do chants over people. We do chants over people in a coma. There are often miraculous moments in the hospital: these people who seem like they have nothing going on; suddenly a smile comes or a tear comes. And that work in the hospitals then informs the work when performing “Makbet” and the “Fools Mass.”

For Larry, theatre itself, as a force or tradition, had healing power that lifted him above much of his suffering. Larry felt that theatre had actually become a spiritual path to healing for him, wherein he could find his way out of a traumatic childhood and often disturbed adult and professional life:

My spiritual journey is about the fact that I heard the things about therapy, astrology, and the theater; I could hear my higher self. I heard the choices that were going to heal me and give something to the world that was positive, know it was true, and follow it.

This started very early on which is supportive of the emergence of supernormal functioning because it allowed for decades of long term practice to unfold:

I was fifteen; I got a job as an usher and watched the final tour *The Visit*. I remember it to this day; those performances are indelible to my mind. I remember their faces, their bodies, what they were wearing, and the set. I was drawn to it, I went to it, and I found my way to it any way that I could. It spoke to me of healing. It was like a hospital to heal.

Katie turned to theatre as a tool to heal herself first, much like Larry. She said, “Theater became my transformative place...it was spiritual for me. It would alter me, settle me, and expand me all at the same time.” She had a lot to say about the manifestation of healing powers in acting; having gone to a Sufi energy healing school.

I knew I was going to be able to get the healing I was looking for from this particular Sufi process and I did. It was a miracle. I use Sufi processes now and I treat people. I do Sufi healings with people and I also integrate a lot of other things.

In many of the narratives in this study, participants shared about spiritual or transformational experiences that then changed or shifted their artistic process and vice versa. The transformational work and the artistic work seem to be in a recursive relationship, constantly feeding off of and affecting each other. For Katie, the personal transformative experience at healing school may be as a kind of foundation or transferable skill, so that Katie can bring an energetic healing intention to her performative work. But at the time of the interview she was still in a transitional phase, clearly not able to work in her old way, but unsure what the next way of working would be.

After healing school, I was so profoundly altered internally by that process that I find myself just now emerging out of that world and going I'm not sure who I am as a performer anymore because I've changed as a person.

The final story about extraordinary healing powers during performance comes from Matt Mitler. It is quoted here at length and it speaks to many layers of supernormal functioning in actors, including healing powers in performance, but also to the power of dream imagery and is also suggestive of how physical and vocal intensity are a causative factor of supernormal functioning in actors.

I had a dream, and I was one of those disembodied dreams where you're outside looking at yourself. I was shot in the chest, I was on a staircase and someone shot me. I had this pain in my chest, my chest caved in and it hurt horribly. I was sort of awake trying to pull myself out of the dream and when I woke myself up I still had this burning pain like I had really been shot or stabbed in the heart. I had it for months. I was a little freaked out about it and it was also interesting at a certain level. Then I did a performance piece. I had always been interested in exploring things in performance, in other words, whenever possible, I asked myself if I could ritualize some issue arising in my life. So, I did a performance piece where I held my hand over a flame: burning my hand, and sort of eating it, tasting it: first feeling the pain and not capitulating. I worked to not bring my point of attention just to the flame and my hand but to keep a larger

sphere of attention that could absorb the pain and absorb the heat. Again, I didn't totally understand why I was working this way, I was. So, I held my hand over the flame and I did a chant. While I was chanting I started to writhe and my whole chest started to writhe and pulsate and shake and my voice came out in some new way; in an explosion of emotion vocally resonant in new chambers in my body; and my whole body was shaking, and then it was over and my chest just went "whooosh!" and just exploded open and the pain dissolved.

Supernormal service: Participation with synchronicity.

This is the ability to perceive and follow meaningful coincidence resulting in seeming acceleration of grace, evolution, development, or divine life purpose.

If the universe (or a God/Deity of some sort) is organizing a confluence of events, and individual's ability to see, apprehend, and act in alignment with that could be seen as magical, miraculous, or very lucky. In this study, many various instances of synchronicity were described as being a part of what led to or caused

supernormal functioning. This ability was reconceived as an active ability by actors to spot and then actively participate effectively in synchronistic events.

Robert was one excellent example of aligning with synchronistic events when he shared how he came to be in *The Black Rider*, and process which was a profoundly advanced artistic project on many levels.

I came to do *Black Rider*, directed by Robert Wilson at ACT (and then The Sydney Festival and The Amannsohn in LA) by some twist of great fortune. I was cast as an understudy for the show when it came to San Francisco from London and because Marianne Faithful was in the show I got to go on twice a week because she didn't want to do the matinees. When the show moved started to tour, I simply took over the role entirely.

Supernormal Will

Supernormal will: Imperturbability/equanimity.

This is the ability to choose thoughts that lead to imperturbability or equanimity by taking absolute responsibility for one's experience; also related is unconditional joy. Matt Mitler spoke of how his Gurdjieffian training helped him develop an ability to choose equanimity. He said of the training:

It served me, served my needs, and helped me focus very specifically on parts of myself that weren't in balance; and also in terms of finding a way to maintain an inner *possibility* that wouldn't be influenced by outer conditions. At that point, it was a matter of putting together Grotowski, Rogers, and Gurdjieff as a kind of system. That's where I am now.

This was the only incidence of people speaking about imperturbable, spiritual equanimity and although the topic is found in spiritual literature related to supernormal functioning; it seems a capacity that isn't often articulated by actors or in the acting literature.

Supernormal will: Faith actions.

This was defined as the ability to consciously and purposefully take actions accompanied by a belief in a positive yet unseen and unknown resolution. Robert mentioned how long term experience in meditation helped him to develop a useful attitude of faithful action in his acting work:

You know that bumper sticker 'Don't believe everything you think' describes it best. Meditation allows me to not believe everything I think and to trust that everything I have as a unique individual is enough for whatever work I am doing.

These statements of a faith 'attitude' came up again and again in the research. Larry spoke of a different kind of faith in acting which has to do with total belief in the story being told. Larry said, "When I think of the idea of great acting, I shudder because it's so subjective. My great experiences as an audience have been when I have forgotten I was in a theater or film and I was blasted into

the lives of the characters I was watching. This was found in the literature review and was called “Adlerian faith” which recognized that the capacity to choose to utterly believe in the story was an act of faith and belief that affects an audience by being an example of committed belief.

Jack also mentioned faith as a valuable and exceptional tool. “I say that acting is all about trust and faith and so you feel you’re back in a trusting or faithful place.” He says that faith is the key to allowing magic to happen when working as an actor. Jack gave an extensive account of his own experience on the subject of faith.

I was shooting a project and was told I had to sit down on the bed and cry, they needed tears going down my face about my dog, which was lost, and I told myself, I’m not going to do anything planning, we’ll just see what the universe delivers to me, and I was downstairs and they called me upstairs to the room and as I was walking upstairs to the room I realized I was walking away from the door and in the story my character had been out looking for his dog all day and now it was nighttime and he had to just stop looking for his dog and wait till the next day and he’s very sad about that . . . and as I was walking away from the front door the thought that you could say that the universe sent me that . . . because when my heart’s racing I feel like I’m plugged into my higher power and the thoughts that come to me feel like they’re heaven sent but really it’s just that they’re better than thoughts that I might come up with when my heart isn’t racing because more blood is in my brain, so the idea that hit me was this concept of walking away from the front door which meant my dog was out there and I couldn’t look anymore and so I just walked right up to the bedroom, sat down and started crying because that thought was so powerful, the concept that my dog was out there all alone and I couldn’t look for him anymore. And so, to me, having that thought come to me felt like magic and getting to feel that great grief over my dog and feeling those tears come out felt like magic.

It seems his action coming from trust; his positive anticipation is what led him to be able to open to receive synchronistic gifts as well as a kind of all at one perception. He received inspiration in a flash, free of willful hard work. His will

was instead turned to surrender to a higher source of some kind. Jack gave another excellent example of how turning his will towards surrender to a spiritual source can lead to supernormal functioning.

I was acting in a film where the character goes undercover as a skinhead to find a killer. It seemed like every scene they needed me to cry. That shoot was the most thrilling shoot I've ever had because I am really in a place where I just trust that it will happen. They would say, you know, we're running late, you've got five minutes. We need you to cross the street and find your wife's dead body. And I didn't go, oh god, how do I do this. I didn't go, oh my god, is this going to happen? I just went, okay, and I crossed the street and found my wife's dead body and tears were just, you know, flying out of my eyes.

One of the major blocks that came up to supernormal capacities, which were often coming from supernormal transpersonal sources had to do with negativity and a doubting anxious mind. Doubt and negativity seemed to block the grace of supernormal capacities. It seemed that once an attitude of faith and then the execution of some faith based actions were enacted, then often supernormal abilities of one type or another emerged. This was a major theme of the narratives in this research and a useful finding as an overall pattern.

Supernormal will: Enactment of divine will.

This is a sensation of god's will as different from an egoic or personal will, and the ability to align with and surrender the personal will to enactment of divine will, in this case specifically in rehearsal or performance.

Robert spoke of surrendering to the god-like aesthetic sense of the famous theatre director, Bob Wilson. This can be seen as a way of surrendering to a divine will through a trusted leader. Robert said of his experiencing working with Bob:

Bob Wilson says that if you do it exactly the way he tells you- you will find something beautiful and ultimately freeing within the confines of that exacting structure - you will find a sense of the whole that you just won't see until you do it exactly the way he wants you to do it and the detail he demands can appear at first to be in the realm of minutiae - the smallest gesture, the way you raise a finger or the amount that you turn your head.

It was through surrendering to Bob Wilson's extraordinary vision that Robert came to exercise supernormal aesthetic and energetic abilities in his performance. Although it could be easy to give credit to Bob Wilson, it seemed that once Robert took the actions himself, he was in fact the one enacting something extraordinary. Certainly the lines blur a bit in this example.

Larry spoke about surrendering to his sensation of a divine will in his own life. At a point in his teaching career he became fascinated with solo performances. He says "Based on my early work and my observing great singing performers, there was something about the power of one that became very spiritually exciting to me, bigger than me. I waited a month and a month after I gave the exercise, this South African woman came up and her memory was the murder of her grandfather was she was 10 years

He spoke of how guidance from astrological and psychic sources led him to start to explore not only assigning solo performances as teaching tools, but he also ventured into directing productions of them; some quite successful. In one case he wrote of surrendering to spiritual guidance and how it led to extraordinary outcomes:

Working on this show came out of my astrologer saying to work with someone to build a new piece. I didn't know where I was going. Eventually we brought the show to New York City and it won every award which was lovely. We went to the National Theater with it and all

over the world. It became a TV show and Random House wanted to make it a novel and now it's going to be a movie.

Katie also spoke how she got to a point of exhaustion at which point she would surrender to a direction or force of a greater or divine will.

For this show because it's so long, there would come a point of performing it where (it happened every single time I did it) I felt like I can't give anymore. I can't be interesting anymore. I can't be entertaining anymore. I can't push this. Then what I call the "dropping in" would happen. I would give up trying. As soon as that happened, dropping my need to do well to perform, that thing took over again. I think I want to call it like a channeling experience. I drop open, my being opened, and energy is motivating or moving me. I almost feel carried around by the force by it. It's not hyper charged. It's actually very calm. It's like a down and in and expanding experience. Calming and grounding but it's supernatural in that I don't feel like I'm the originator of the movement. I feel like I'm being moved like a puppet and yet clearly I have control over what my limbs do and what words my mouth says. It's clearly this interplay of will and divine will.

She continued to extrapolate on these sorts of experiences:

Every time I drop and allow the channeling if you will to occur, people couldn't be more positive. It's a different kind of positivity. Putting on the funny, as I call my other way of performing before I surrender, doesn't amaze them in the way the divine will thing does. Thankfully, I can't take a lot of credit in it. The only credit I feel like I can take is I usually hit a point where I finally allow it to occur.

One could say that the Divine Will is simply what is; Jack just acts in

alignment with what is, and extraordinary things come to pass:

A friend asked me to perform at his birthday party, and I did. I focused on having fun and had a fantastic time doing it. A big producer was there and saw me. That led to me being cast in a role in *Gods and Monsters* . . . they gave me the role and the next year I was in the Oscar clip opposite Ian McKellen for his Oscar. That's an example of what you call magic, but really it is just one of the principles of how the universe works. I got on the Oscars by doing what I love for the pure love of doing it.

This insight from Jack leaves a nice addition to the notion of enacting or surrendering to divine will, which is that some of what is, has to do with what we

innately love and enjoy doing. He believes, like Joseph Campbell and perhaps many others, that if one can follow the bliss where it may lead, great things will come to pass: that the spiritual nature of the universe is a loving, abundant, and benevolent one.

Supernormal Knowledge (SNK)

Supernormal knowledge: ESP.

The subcategory in actors usually manifests as very high levels of compassion or empathy: it is the capacity to sense and accept or feel what is happening in the emotional interior of another person or group of people. This ability can include highly insightful and psychic capacities (e.g. knowledge of another's internal phenomenon not outwardly reported).

Matt Mitler spoke of the results of the long term work he has done with his theatre company, "there is a lot of psychic communication, which there is in Dzieci now just naturally, it just happens". The work that Dzieci does merges in terms of intention both on and off stage. This next story wasn't a performance based story but could be said to be a direct result of a performance based group working in the intimate and transformative way that Dzieci does. He describes a situation wherein the spouse of a member of the group was in a dangerous psychological state.

The spouse was not in the group. They left home and left a note they were off to kill themselves. We instantly called the group together and we got together. First we sat and meditated and then we practiced our intuitive work, not the intuitive work we practice with "Makbet", or something like, *what's your favorite color?* This was intuitive work about someone where we didn't know where this person would be and we began to work the way we work intuitively. We began to put together a map. Each person with a piece and we began to feel on the same page. We knew it was the woods,

it was upstate New York, we had a lot of specifics, we had a road name; a lot of things. And we saw a cabin. Then we sent a psychic message, as a group, for this person to come home. And the person's spouse, who was a member of the group but not with us at the time, she was at home and she called us after this meeting we'd had. She said, I just got a call from him, he's at this cabin at this place in the woods on this road and he just called and said he'd changed his mind and was coming home. So now, I don't even know what I'm working for anymore, except to be able to function in community for my own salvation; for my relationships but for me too; for whenever I might need urgent and loving help, however that might be.

But we can see the Mitler and Dzieci also used this intense psychic connection in their performance work as well; in fact they intentionally build situations that will demand a high level of functional response (SNF) in order to overcome the performative obstacles and achieve their objective.

I mean *Makbet* was eight people, seven people, six, five, four, and three . . . now it's down to three people. Because that's what supports the greatest level of unknown, the greatest demand, the greatest risk. And it does this consistently; I mean there are times when it's very much a psychic space because in *Makbet* we're really working with intuition. It's built in throughout the piece. In the beginning, with the audience, I'm doing psychic readings. It's not accidental. And the whole group studies intuitive practices. It's part of the study of Dzieci and its part of my study too. So we can see that Dzieci is working at a very high level wherein they are

consciously working towards developing skills that resemble supernormal abilities such as remote viewing and telepathy.

Supernormal knowledge: Self-knowledge.

This is extraordinary and detailed or subtle psychophysical self-awareness that usually results from decades of practicing various kinds of inner work; therapy, recovery, or various awareness meditations. These people tend to have many working moments of precise and effective awareness of how to effectively relate to their own inner make-up and workings. Related to intensive self-knowledge and the self-regulation that comes from it, Stella Adler (2000) use to

tell her students, “Critical seeing, self-awareness, discipline, and self-control – these are the demands we’ll be working on.” (p. 57)

Matt takes each moment of his work as moving forward towards supernormal levels of self-knowledge.

I try to enter my work with Dzieci coming in with already some wish for presence, and while I’m working with Dzieci, to take it as a meditation, as a work of self-knowledge . . . what is there to see here? What does this help me to see? What’s my next barrier to face? And everything is back and forth, but in reality, Dzieci has become such a strong entity for me that the question has become what serves.

In this case Mitler took the self-understanding to such a high level that he seems to consistently ask ‘what serves’ which can be seen in his case, as a spiritual question.

Supernormal self-knowledge, being a supernormal function that unfolds developmentally in stages, must have early stages of its development. Katie shared that she began her journey of self-inquiry and self-knowledge at a fairly advanced level very early in life.

I was the person people came to talk about things and process things. I was always reading self-help books. At age 10, I started reading self-help books to understand myself and to understand how I and other people worked, and how we could become better people. I was always an arm-chair therapist that people came to. I thrived on that.

To be fair, Katie may have been dealing with some of this material prematurely. She expressed a history of early trauma and a battle with several addictions. Related to her struggles to find a healthy functional (let alone superfunctional) life, she reflect that part of the damage she experienced in childhood led to and then again was caused by detrimentally early or premature sexual explorations. Perhaps her exploration into self-help and psychological

principles as well as helping others was of a similar premature quality; perhaps causing trouble rather than aiding her development. Supernormal capacities are tricky in that way; because they are developmental they beg all sorts of questions as to what the nature of the developmental sequence is and how the development is instigated and then sustained in healthy way over a long enough period of time to allow for genuine supernormal capacities to emerge reliably.

Jack spoke of the high levels of self-knowledge in his characteristically provocative way. Throughout the interview he constantly championed ‘selfish’ actors, by which I came to understand as actors how know what they like and are invested in their own pleasure and joy in the creative process. Jack felt that by having a subtlety of self-awareness of this kind, an actor can actually be of best service to an audience, for through this conscious tracking of the interior states of attraction and joy, one can then transmit to an audience sensations of authenticity, joy, and pleasure: all positive and helpful for an audience to receive. Jack clarifies the point in his own words:

I want to point out that when I say selfish, I mean it in a really positive and loving way because an artist, when a painter is painting, he’s not thinking, will they like it if I add yellow here. He’s thinking, what is my higher power guiding me to do, what do I feel good about, so that’s all I mean when I say a selfish actors.

He goes on to talk specifically about how his own self-knowledge as to what he loved and was spontaneously attracted to led him to more film work and thus in some ways to his destiny.

I enjoy a relationship to the camera; which is really essentially your relationship to yourself when you look at it. I like selfish acting. I think that’s the best kind because the more you feel the more the audience feels,

the more your needing the audience's approval, the less you're having a rich selfish emotional experience thereby giving them that, the same.

Here we see his high value of self-knowledge or self-inquiry I would say.

In his case his self-knowledge has developed to the point of divine self-recognition as the root or nature of his personal self; that what gives him joy is what God wants. He seems to value this very highly and has chosen his medium to reflect that ideal inner attraction.

Gemma, like Mitler, constructed theatrical experiences for herself to perform within which would continually grow her levels of subtle self-knowledge. Describing her performance of *Dangerously Safe* she said:

It was pretty potent and confronting and what seemed to come up was this kind of play and exploration of constantly aiming to stay authentic. Which is a bit of a trap really because you can't really *try* to be authentic, you kind of just *are* authentic. So it became this interesting dance of how to come out and be completely transparent and connected and feeling the audience and acting in the moment.

Clearly she must have a high sensitivity to the truth of herself, moment to moment, in order to execute such a performative task and in a recursive process, the practice of the performance itself leads to ever increasing subtle self-knowledge.

Supernormal knowledge: All at once perception.

This is the ability to understand something; a situation, a play, a scene, a character, or a person in an instant; a complete intuitive and immediate grasp; an understanding not subject to rational explanations like long term study or extensive practice and exposure; this also relates to all at once knowing or perception that Murphy (1995) talks about.

Robert spoke of the moment when he really set off on becoming an actor as an out of the blue but all at once perception of truth. He was having lunch with a man who had at one pointed dated his mother, and they had stayed in touch in a friendly way. Over lunch this man suggested that Robert should be in the theatre.

Robert described his response:

It awakened this sort of dormant part of me that had maybe first started blooming many years prior with a man named Don Bolton, a black panther that taught me about poetry in Oakland when I was a child. The suggestion to go into the theatre - it rang a bell for me . . . And so I just started taking classes and there was something that I just attached to immediately. So there you have it. I had done some acting in high school but I had never really thought about it as a possible career or way of life until that moment.

Katie had a similar sort of experience in finding her way to acting:

I did nothing through high school. In high school, I was a writer and a singer. I went to college and almost the first day that I got to campus, I went to see the improv group perform. They happened to be brilliant performers and they were working with really powerful group mind energies. They were really good improvisers. I recognize it now. I watched them and I instantly knew. *I instantly knew*. My thought on the first day on campus was that's what I do and that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to know those people.

Jack Plotnick had something similar, but he always had a sense of knowing what he wanted to do: it didn't have to come to him at some spontaneous moment in life: "Well, I think I'm lucky because I think I always kind of knew. So um, it happened really young, I just remember the first indication was probably fifth grade."

Although these were cases of seemingly all at once perception in that they didn't have to come to it slowly or discover it with a sort of conventional long effort. And it could perhaps be seen as developmental in nature in Roberts's case

because it was a flowering of seeds that had been planted even as far back as childhood, but it would be hard to say that these were supernormal capacities generalizable in terms of what actors experience in performance. Jack gave the one and only example in the study of how all at once perception came to him directly in his work as an actor:

They wanted me to come in and do a character in a web series and just improvise it. Now, when I go back and watch the footage of that that performance, it's like the funniest thing I've ever done. But I didn't prepare at all. I just threw a wig on, put a costume on, and I let character funnel through me, I hadn't given any thought, I hadn't given any thought to the character really before I arrived, but this fully formed character just funneled through me and now I'm obsessed with the character.

Here he follows instinct step by step and it all happens in a flash. All in an instant, he knows what it is and it comes into being. He uses the word funnel, which implies a quality of being a vessel; of actively surrendering to a sense of a divine or creative source.

Supernormal Communication (SNC)

Supernormal communication: Direct transmission.

This category was defined as the ability to transfer wisdom, skill, insight, or experience through direct and intentional energetic contact. This was a difficult category to uncover because although there were hints at conventional learning or transfer of knowledge, there was little mention of transmission in this supernormal sense. Larry spoke of his time with Stella Adler in much the same way that spiritual practitioners speak of transmission from a spiritual lineage teacher.

I was doing *The Upstairs the Downstairs* with Madeline Kahn and Lily Tomlin and then *Political and Social Satire* for 2 years at this very chic

nightclub. I continued to study with Meisner teachers, but I would say the transformative experience was with Stella Adler, which happened later in my 30s.

This passage was from the interview with Larry, but he also speaks more directly the transmission he received from Stella and how strongly he feels the responsibility to carry forward the tradition in his book *The Intent to Live* (2006).

Julia also spoke of how much she had received from direct contact with extraordinary artists and luminaries:

I also want to say, that I've had the true gift of working with astonishing artists like Pinter, who spoke of just rocking up every day, and letting it flow through him; not knowing where it came from, but feeling it was a kind of channeling. All those people affected me profoundly and I'm ever so grateful.

And Joan spoke of how the transformative moment came from simply being in the audience in of a great performance; her first experience of the San Francisco Mime Troupe led her to a long term relationship that created a foundation of training and professional performance experience:

They really weren't trying so hard to be artistic; they were just trying to relate to an audience and bring out ideas and do it in a very physical way. And after I saw them, I said this is what I am going to do and I'm going to get into the mime troop.

She soon after auditioned multiple times before being accepted into the mime troupe and she worked with them for the next five years; an experience that acted as her foundation of training and professional performance experience. Matt Mitler joined the parade of other study participants by telling stories of receiving transmission from some inspirational and pivotal relationship:

I was being influenced away from psychology into what was then being called experimental theatre: and basically it's been this traveling back and forth ever since then. I'd go into experimental theatre for a while and then

I'd go into psychology for a while. And even after working with Grotowski and his company, and being invited to join his company, there was an opportunity to study with Carl Rogers in a professional program in Rome, and I went and did that instead.

So Mitler worked directly with one of the great therapists and one of the great theatre directors of the twentieth century. But after all these stories of receiving, the stories were lacking stories of conscious and supernormal sending transmission. Matt Mitler was one of the only examples. He spoke of his work with Dzieci again:

As I grow with a group, as my attention increases, as my sensitivity increases, as I erode my habits and personality and that which prevents, that which blocks . . . then in a way, that is the message of Dzieci's work. The message is the work we do together: the message is not in the play, it's the way we are together. And the way we are together is what people are experiencing more than anything. They might think it's a play or a workshop, but it really isn't.

Gemma also briefly expressed how difficult it can be if the nature of a show is as intense and transformatively challenging as hers are:

Dangerously Safe in response to her reviews and responses: 'and my experience of work in theatre that is really transformational is that it tends to have that effect on people. It either blows audiences out of the water . . . literally blows them out . . . either they close down or walk out.'

Here she goes through a deep transformative process or has been through enough transformative experiences that she has created a structure to transmit it to an audience and their own fear is often what they are reacting to as they make contact with her fearless and intense passion for excavating her own closure from spiritual grace.

Supernormal communication: Non-human communication.

The ability to skillfully communicate with non-human sentient beings: animals, plants, places, disembodied spirits, and elemental or subtle beings. Larry

shared a story of one of his students who used to have regular visitations by a non-human, perhaps disembodied spirit of some kind:

She kept getting poked. She turned to this young man that was sitting next to her and told him that somebody was poking her. 'Do you know anybody who laughs like this?' 'She did the laugh for this guy and he said that it was his mother. 'Well, she keeps poking me and telling me to tell you to not give up your music.' He started sobbing and she hadn't know he was even involved with music at all; she didn't know this young man she was sitting next to. He said, 'Wow, I was going to give up today because I feel so lost in my career.' She said, 'Well your mother keeps poking me and telling me to tell you to not give it up.'" You hear stories like that and you go oh my fucking god.

Again, this is an extraordinary tale, but there are two problems with it in terms of the aim of this study. First, although it is about an actor, I don't know her experience level because Larry was telling a second hand rather than a firsthand story and he had been selected because based on the selection criteria of the study. Second, this was not a moment in performance. And finally, it's not clear that the woman's abilities were supernormal in terms of having been developed from long term transformative practice: rather they seemed like a spontaneous spiritual gift. Larry did talk about a rehearsal process he was involved with at the time of the interview; rehearsal is definitely acting related activities. But still the event he describes was not his own nor was it happening during performance: instead the performance was about a possibly supernormal incident a person had had in a hospital. He said,

We talk about it every time we work and today we just finished. Today it was about when she was under the anesthetic operated on and she had this vision of angels. She had spirits when she was five years old hounding her. That's how the play starts- with the spirits hounding her. The question is did she make up the spirits out of a desire to survive it or are there spirits?

Supernormal communication: Maximum personal encounter.

This subcategory was defined as the ability to engage in or even facilitate deep intimate communion between two or more people; primarily it is the ability to know and expose or communicate one's inner life with extraordinary detail and subtlety. This leads to the deepest inner experience within the actor being utterly transparent and available to the audience without delay. Stella Adler (2000) spoke of this ability when she pontificated that,

The actor is totally exposed. He stands on the stage. He stands in the spotlight. His every movement is scrutinized. There is no place to hide. If you feel like hiding, you've come to the wrong place. Everything has consequence. There are no "throwaway" lines; every line is laid down like the track of the Orient Express. (p. 164)

Alec Guinness (2013) also spoke of an actor's extraordinary capacity for vulnerable communication: "An actor is totally vulnerable. His total personality is exposed to critical judgment - his intellect, his bearing, his diction, his whole appearance; in short, his ego." (para 21)

Patrycja gave passionate and colorful examples of her experience of engaging an audience with total intimate encounter, but she struggled and even resisted her sacred experience on stage into words:

Perhaps it is something so fragile. But perhaps there is no need to articulate it; it is my sacred place. If people see that sacred place, or feel it in my and through me, that's great. But to articulate it is like raping it. I don't know why; maybe because I don't have the vocabulary. No one has asked me to express this: it's a bit like being asked to talk about my vagina. Where do I start? Should I!? How dare you!?! It is this sort of intimacy for me. It's probably even more so than vagina; that would probably be easier to do that, you know.

Katie was a little more at ease talking about her intimate relationship to an audience and how she works to encounter them:

Performing is different than it was for me. Now it's about how to balance adrenalin with permeability. I'm very aware of the experience of adrenalin in my body. I'm so sensitive now it freaked me out how much adrenalin I had before going on stage. I also feel like I'm not going to be able to be vulnerable in front of these people because there's so much adrenalin. I feel like I'm going to be on fire the whole time.

This passage suggests that there were stages in her work, (ie different than it was) but it's not convincingly supernatural per se. But she does, later in the interview, articulate how her work as an actor has accelerated her work with emotional honesty and presence as a result of the particular dynamics of working on stage. She says,

This brings me back to my notion of being seen. There's something for me as an actor and I wonder if this is common to actors in general, where the pressure of all the people watching actually helps me to drop into the places that are emotionally difficult to drop into. I feel like a lot of people who aren't actors when they feel a pressure; it becomes harder for them to perform or be honest or focus.

Matt went through a radical developmental sequence related to capacity for maximum personal encounter. Part of the reason his journey looked so dramatic was because he told of coming from what seemed to be either innate severe limitation in the abilities surrounding maximum personal encounter in performance, or because he had trauma that needed to be healed as a precursor to advanced developmental growth. Again, in his own words:

I was fairly withdrawn. I was a fairly protected and troubled kid and I began to see that the fine art I was doing was keeping me kind of insular and I wasn't really making contact with people around me, except for when art was a therapeutic agent. Then I was making contact with whomever I was involved with, but theatre seemed to have a further possibility for me.

For Gemma, maximum personal encounter became a kind of modus operandi. A large part of her aesthetic as an artist is aligned with her interest and

message to the world concerning embodied intimacy. She describes here a theatrical structure she devised so she could be in, and offer to an audience, an experience that would highlight and heighten the encounter with own mind, with the other performer and with the audience. She describes:

We split the audience into two sides, with a black curtain down the middle of the space. People who came together we split up onto the two sides. There were elements in the performance itself that came from some trance work I had done with Liz, and there was some mythical stuff in there. And there were these pieces that I called “authentic improvisation” where we would just come out and meet, and be with the audience.

Gemma describes how the audience responds to her extreme intimate encounter:

There were lots of layers going on all at once, and some people were very receptive and open and pretty blown away by it. But some people were like “What the fuck!?” and, hated it. Which actually I felt was a kind of an achievement and it was the first time I didn’t read my reviews for three months. Usually I’m really on that kind of thing. And there were people who either loved it or hated it and that felt really cool. I felt I was onto something. Not that I *wanted* people to hate it, or aim to be that provocative . . . but it just felt like, ‘Oh, I’m riding it into some deep territory here.’

This kind of willingness to fight and argue with an audience is reflective of other types of truly intimate encounters in other forms of relationship. To fight and disagree, yet remain in loving engagement can be seen as a high form of audience relations. Gemma so valued and practiced maximum personal encounter that she spoke of how finding creative collaborators that could meet her in deep intimacy is more important to her than even in a romantic partner: that important. She spoke passionately about her need for daring collaborators:

Abso-fucking-lutely. And I’d say that’s the main reason I’ve done solo pieces so much. I have a very strong desire to work with co-practitioners who I feel very met by and who challenge me and who I can challenge . . .

and I've often said that it is just as if not more important for me to find this quality with other artists than it is to find it with my romantic life partner; definitely as important. And it's been a real yearning. I can't compromise on it. It is so painful if I am not met in that way.

Finally, sometimes maximum personal encounter has a playful and joyful quality. Joan often plays comedic or clown-like characters. She spoke of an intimate moment with an audience wherein she had played several male characters in a Shakespeare play at the end of which she emerged as a female character. She described how the audience laughed and then she started to give them a look that communicated, "Give me a break!" in a playful way. It always got a laugh and was a favorite and magical moment for the entire cast. She described why the moment worked so well due to its honest and immediate communicative encounter between herself as a performer and the audience:

It was like, I'm up here you are down there watching me. I'm performing for you. It's a total acceptance of that. It's not like it demeans it. I think in some ways it takes it to a better level. It's like we're watching this and we see what's going on. We will always remember that moment as something that allowed the audience to come in.

Supernormal Aesthetics (SNA)

This umbrella category of supernormal functioning in actors was defined as the ability to see, evaluate, and arrange beauty in such a way that it reveals or communicates a transpersonal or spiritual vision of reality. Alex Gray (1998) is an example of someone who has an active supernormal or spiritual aesthetic in his painting. The question of in this context became whether or not a similar aesthetic development could be found in professional actors. Robert Parson descriptions of his work under the direction of Robert Wilson had a resounding feeling of

supernormal aesthetics that lead to the simultaneous emergence of many other supernormal theatrical events:

After being with his direction for a while I began to understand what Wilson was getting at which ultimately was a tremendously pure and unencumbered form of beauty. It was remarkable because it's a form of theatre that doesn't rely on text as much as other elements; like light and movement and set and costume and make-up and of course the amazing 'score' that was written by Tom Waits. Of course the text was remarkable as well (written by William Burroughs) but I had the feeling that the story could still be powerfully conveyed without text and it showed how integral things like the way bodies move through space and the speeding up and slowing down of time can be in the way a story is told on stage. Throughout the show there was a deep stratum of connection between the performers that was very powerful even though much of the time people were in their own particular space and their own particular light. That connection created a unique energy that transformed everyone in the building, from performers to audience, which manifest itself in this vast almost non-corporeal world that again had different rules for space and time. It was a wonderful, beautiful, and often times incredibly disorienting theatrical experience that I feel extremely fortunate to have been a part of.

Supernormal aesthetics: Sanctification of the ugly.

Another subset of supernormal aesthetics was a sub-category that was named sanctification of the ugly. Ugly was a simplified term that in practical example in the interviews included various kinds of generally unwanted phenomenon: including failure, mistakes, pain, the grotesque and the like. This ability was defined as the capacity to elevate horrific tragedy or commonly unwanted, repulsive, or ugly experience, through deeply insightful artistic choice and revelation, into sacred or awesome beauty. This can also include a way of working that welcomes mistakes and embraces problems as not only valuable but desirable. At the highest levels, this treatment of celebrating mistakes is the 'always already perfection' that saints and sages talk about; the always already

bliss of reality (Da, 2006); an experience of essentially no-problem or a feeling that all is as it should be in God's world.

Joan spoke briefly about how her acting experience had led her to believe strongly in "how to use mistakes" but it this particular ability was at the very core of Patrycja's way of being in the world and working with her artistic process; really it was a great forte of hers. She began by expressing distaste of attempts at cleaning or scrubbing ourselves or our experiences into some perfect and refined version. She said,

All this self-help and spiritual "super-ising" implies that we are broken, damaged, faulty, imperfect, and average; and fuck yes we are! I find beauty in it. I'm such a fan of human nature and the poetics of being lost. She goes on to celebrate the quality of being lost and celebrating mistakes

in her rehearsal process:

I love the natural freshness and factor of "unknown" at the beginning of a tour, when you make little discoveries, when you are still learning about the show, when little mistakes provides theatrical gold dust, keeping you on your toes . . . I'm drawn to the idea of failure; of failure as a value in theatre. We think of it in pejorative way, but I strongly believe that failure is a useful tool, and there is a place in beauty in it.

And she even spoke briefly to developmentally speaking, how she had only arrived at this attitude towards her work after a long phase of strict, almost militaristic, discipline and striving for technical perfection:

Within organizations (schools) I experienced more a feeling of failure and underachievement (often not related to exam results, which were mostly good); just a constant struggle to achieve . . . to be as close to perfection as I could be. Only after I finished schools, I left for some time classical music, feeling slightly raped by it all, I fearfully allowed myself to use my technic to improvise, to express myself, to play in ugly way, even dared to compose.

It is worth noting that Patrycja had most of her formal training and experience as a musician and only came to theatre later and life and through her music. Music and movement are a huge part of how she works as an actor and in this way she exemplified on aspect that emerged in this study, of transferable skills: her learning in the artistic medium of music did to some degree transfer and apply to her acting; a detailed exploration of how developmental abilities transfer from one to the other is complex and beyond the scope of this study.

To return to supernormal aesthetics, Patrycja's celebration of mistake, failure, and ugliness led also to embracing difficulty in her performance work as an actress:

Our cast mate was having a panic attack. She started hyperventilating and was maybe going to pass out . . . and I kept thinking about the fact that the first 30 minutes of the show belong to her. She is major and we are minors during that stretch. But what happened was that the whole experience made the show so much more special . . . like seeing the finishing line . . . I felt like I was dedicating the show to her so she can make it through; like we were all in it together.

Robert also spoke of a very difficult time in his personal life as it related to his acting as 'manna from heaven'. Through his artistic process he had alchemically, metaphorically, turned the lead of his situation into performance gold.

While working on Equus and doing intensive therapy . . . I was able to transfer the same questions I was asking personally, to my character. It just happened to dovetail like that -which might happen a lot for actors-but at that time it seemed like Manna from Heaven because it allowed me to keep working through stuff I really needed to work through and on multiple levels. I felt more raw than usual after that run because of the intense double whammy that was happening but I ultimately think it helped speed the healing as well as creating a supercharged incubator for the creative process.

And finally, Julia expressed deep gratitude for her participation in the film called “Baby of Macon” precisely because of the way it artistically used nudity to not just exploit or objectify female bodies, but to actually celebrate all human forms: the people who were naked were of all shapes and sizes: a very rare occurrence to someone used to Hollywood films.

Thinking back on my work on Peter Greenaway’s “Baby of Macon”; I’m deeply grateful that that film was a starting point for me; there were heaps of nudity, but for me his honoring of all form, was what protected it from being exploitative.

Supernormal aesthetics: Devotion to art & beauty.

This is the ability to treat art and beauty with a religious devotion; to treat service to beauty as a spiritual path. Larry was the only participant to mention such abilities:

Theater is that you are always constructing the set; you are always constructing the performance, the lights, making decisions that are constructive. My spiritual journey is through theater-working on it, observing it, learning about it, being fascinated by it. I don’t have a religion or spiritual guide. My spiritual guide is the theater.

It seems that his process with acting and theatre has been a devotional relationship that has led to transformation towards his highest self.

Supernormal Health and Vitality

Supernormal health and vitality: Self-existent joy/imperturbable happiness.

These categories may not stand up over time as entirely separate categories and subcategories, but there were a few instances and likely more would come with a greater range of participants. Self-existent joy was defined as the ability to sustain happiness and joy unconditionally in a creative process; radical acceptance. Joan was the only participant that spoke in exactly these terms. She spoke of how her martial arts training had taught her transferable lessons for her acting. She said:

While training I had to figure out how to protect myself and how to take one step back and one step forward. The whole thing about martial arts is your body just accepts what is coming at you. It doesn't train you to really be belligerent. Martial arts trains you to accept the intensity of the physicality and take it in and be able to send it back in.

In the context of her interview, this training in acceptance and utilization could be seen as contributing to her profound compassion and almost spiritual acceptance she was able to develop when playing the character of the Devil in Strindberg's *the Soldiers Tale*.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Thematic Conclusions

Introduction.

In discussing the overall results of this study many themes arise that can be carried forward into practical application by actors and by teachers alike. Not only did patterns arise that suggested the categories listed in the results, but there were larger patterns when considering the study as a whole that start to suggest overarching issues related to accessing and sustaining supernormal functioning in professional actors. Each section that follows explores one of nine themes, and concludes with a few thoughts about practical application and possible further exploration into the particular aspect of the subject of supernormal functioning in actors.

Causes and blocks.

As the interviews unfolded and then were transcribed and coded, I started to notice that the stories that were told, because they were in narrative format, naturally contained plot points or obstacles that each actor encountered as they moved towards moments or periods of supernormal capacity. This was relatively unexpected but seemed natural once it started to happen. I began coding the causes and blocks as well. Although the causes and blocks were not listed in their entirety as part of the results of the study, and were instead lightly included in the discussion of each category and subcategory of supernormal abilities, the theme of causes and blocks to supernormal capacities became an relevant and valuable result of the interview process.

Participants were more or less articulate about the causes and blocks they experienced for several reasons. One reason seemed to be due to the kind of transformative or spiritual practice they were involved with. For example, one of the most articulate in terms of supernormal capacities, Matt Mitler, was also the one who had experienced some of the most intense ‘blocks’ to his growth as an artist. His expertise at specifically identifying and working with blocks in his acting work may well have been partially caused by his devoted spiritual work as a fourth way practitioner. Fourth way spiritual paths, like Gurdjieffian work, are spiritual lineages that do not attempt to transcend or even battle the ego, but instead work with it directly and even transmute or digest the gritty aspects of the ego as a kind of spiritual nourishment. By contrast, Hal Landon, a practitioner of transcendental meditation was not nearly as articulate about the various blocks and causes of supernormal or spiritual abilities in acting, again perhaps due to choice of transformative practice. Transcendental meditation simply goes directly to an unchanging transcendent source and is often critiqued as bypassing the gritty substance of life. For this reason, it may be with further study that actors who engage in particular types of transformative practices do in fact develop supernormal functioning more often and in more sustained and easily articulated ways.

Also, since Mitler’s case seems to demonstrate how developmental stages only proceed through facing and overcoming obstacles and specific, level specific challenges. Wilber (2000) propounds, with his comparison of many developmental systems that each stage of development requires new obstacles,

challenges, and failures in order for a new level of complexity and capacity to emerge of necessity. Mitler's ability to face and overcome so many obstacles to his performing may be precisely why he has come so far, developmentally speaking.

Finally, it started to seem that the blocks were not really obstacles to the long term development that leads to supernormal functioning but rather an integral part. In the extreme cases, as in hitting a bottom in addiction, extreme difficult can actually be a necessary part of the journey beyond seemingly intractable blocks to growth and eventually spiritual demonstrations on the level of charismas and supernormal capacity. This is perhaps why one other category of causes was the presence of exhaustion or impossible odds: in response subjects would surrender or leap to creatively emergent solutions and capacities.

One of the major blocks that almost everyone mentioned was of a negative, fearful, anxious, or busy mind. This was one major concrete result of this study; the potential application of which is hard to minimize, that the real enemy of superior acting and even supernormal capabilities is simply fear. The result of such a conclusion is that acting techniques must integrate transformative or spiritual processes that unearth and resolve fundamental fear and its many variations.

One participant, Jack Plotnick, described his fearful mind as his 'vulture'; squawking away at him and telling constantly attempting to derail even his most modest efforts, let alone his extraordinary capacities. Almost everyone reported something similar; "the dreaded anticipation" Hal Landon, "the chattering mind"

Robert Parsons, “the addict” Katie Rubin, etc. In almost all cases, the participants reported that they had to become painfully aware of this destructive force within themselves before they could start to combat it by exercising the power to choose differently.

What started to emerge was a sense of some ‘transpersonal’ evil force; impersonal in that every person experiences some version of it with very common patterns but calling it by various names. This impersonal force (impersonal like a hurricane) sometimes takes on an apparently personal relationship in human experience. At such times it is sometimes called ‘the addict’ in recovery circles, Satan in Christian circles, Mara in Buddhist circles, “the resistance” by Steven Pressfield (2002): and the list goes on.

Remarkably, upon further examination of the standing literature there is in fact quite a long and interesting tradition of discussing this resistive force. In Stanislavski’s (1936) first book his character Kostya runs into a literal critic character, but in the spirit of drama therapy, the character in the book represents the inner critique that all actors deal with. This notion that is now a popular psychological term, inner critic, possibly first appeared in Stanislavski’s writing. A.H. Almaas (1984) actually cites *Building a Character* in his first book as the source of notions of an inner critic. In addition A.H. Almaas worked with EJ Gold who was a Gurdjieffian that did some theatre explorations into consciousness. Following the Gurdjieffian thread to the supernormal non-acting side of the field, Gurdjieff has a concept called the “kundabuffer” which was defined as a force that kept the kundalini (otherwise known as the energy body) clamped and damped

down. Kundabuffer was what he named the force that blocked the explosive energy of kundalini from erupting, presumably, into supernormal capacities, siddhis, and charismas of various sorts.

The experience people have is that there is some force that is attempting to destroy, derail, or stop them at every turn. Most of their practice and techniques were geared towards arresting or overcoming this force and thus unleashing magnificent innate and latent capacities within themselves. One possible further hypothesis is that this this ‘vulture’ operates as the primary block to access of divine communion or spiritual consciousness that seems to make supernormal functioning possible. Thus a spiritual self or spiritual communion is in fact the true power source behind supernormal capacities; after all charismas (the catholic name for various supernormal capacities) initially meant ‘gifts of the spirit’.

There are some ways to combat the vulture: “The more you concentrate on the circumstances that surround you, the more at ease you’ll be.” (Adler, 2000, p. 78) And Declan Donnellan (2002) reminds us “The world is discovered rather than created, found rather than imposed” (p. 77).

It started to seem that a spiritual experience or consciousness was the essential cause of supernormal capacities. The blocks were various forms of self-centered fear and prideful ‘control’. Trying to control the outcome seemed to be a “kiss of death” to the freedom that characterized the supernormal abilities. Most of the participants sought a kind of ‘via negativa’ approach to their blocks. Patrycja spoke about striving for consistently extraordinary work and how surrender paradoxically is a key:

I don't want to go to the stage and allow myself to do a category "b" show. I'm underneath the role. I'm chasing it. 8 shows. Exhaustion. Makes me feel angry about the set-up of this thing. It's impossible to make a genius show every time . . . perhaps I'm over ambitious. I've tried it all to keep myself interested (oddly enough) and this makes me sad. I was completely not in the show tonight, so I just placed myself in the show; just as a body. I left the stage and was less stressed or frustrated or drained. When I finished the show, a stage hand said, "This show, tonight . . . belonged to you. You were the strongest on the stage". I was surprised and thought to myself, maybe I just try too hard. I know nothing. I wasn't "doing" as much . . . I wasn't "trying" so hard. It couldn't be that 'simple'. But often, it seems it is.

There was a general consensus that if blocks are removed, then the magic and miracles just happen. Plotnick's use of the word 'miracle' or 'magic' is perhaps a bit hyperbolic; but I think it's a general term he's giving to a mix of healthy and supernormal capacities. The solution seemed to be one of a 'faith attitude' rather than 'control delusion'. Faith thoughts and actions seemed to assuage the fear and busy/anxious mind. I define these as just trusting or believing that good things are happening or will happen without any prior knowledge. This is also related to the openness, curiosity, questioning, and exploration that seemed indicative of many who were reporting supernormal abilities on a regular basis.

Remarkably, another approach that seemed to work was taking the 'via negativa' approach of removing these blocks of control and self-centered fear; the end result of removing all these 'blocks' seemed to be a high spiritual experience of 'being and doing nothing'; of no-self. Another solution to the over thinking problem was to 'get into the body' through physical methods (hatha yoga, Suzuki training, yogic sexual practice, breathe, sensation, etc.) Also, Mitler used the solution of 'acting faster than he can think' to override his anxiety mind from hindering him. In a similar vein, another one of his solutions seemed to be

‘rushing’ towards the object of fear; embracing it and thus dispelling the object of fear. It seemed that participants had to become painfully aware of the fearful thoughts and anxious mind before they could start to combat it and choose differently.

Supernormal experiences vs. supernormal capacities.

Throughout the study, one major challenge was attempting to find supernormal functioning in particular, which are the result of long term practice and growth along a developmental sequence, not supernormal experiences which are more passive and can be spontaneous and occur at any stage of development. Yet it seemed that some of these experiences could only be of the receptive and grace-fueled nature.

Some of the stories of extraordinary occurrences seemed like passing states or spontaneous experiences that were actually a glimpse into supernormal capacities that might, over time and through intentional practice, become stabilized capacities that an actor could actually ‘enact’ on a regular basis. Again, refining which are state experiences only and which are part of a developmental sequence will take more research; including longitudinal studies designed to follow people over decades of development.

When looking at supernormal capacities as opposed to supernormal experiences, it is important to speak to context or circumstances as a factor. Many of the actors spoke of a larger context or a powerful circumstance in which they demonstrated supernormal experiences. Some of the actors sought out contexts conducive to supernormal functioning; even constructed them on a regular basis.

For example, Theatre Dzieci and Matt Mitler consistently performed in sacred spaces and sought out retreat time with spiritual communities that they collectively agreed ‘refined’ or ‘lifted’ their energies. They also structured their performances to be conducive to surrender to grace given powers. Other cases, like Robert Parson’s story of playing Black Rider and also in *The Rivalry*, gave the impression that his greatest action was to align with the great convergence of forces. But even in such a case, it is possible to identify the perceptions, attitudes, and actions he took that allowed him to open up to or fully participate if not activate the energy present in each of these extraordinary circumstances.

Given less capable participants than the ones used in this study, it would likely be the case that actors would sabotage various extraordinary opportunities for supernormal functioning because of their various ‘blocks’ and lack of wisdom to spot opportunities to participate in larger contextual circumstances. And even though the subjects of this study were generally very qualified and skilled, still in some of these cases the actors needed exceptional contextual energy in order to sense the invisible network of energy surrounding them and participate in it. Perhaps with more specific training, these actors would be able to sense and participate in the atmospheric energy without needing it to be quite so intense; thus enact the same supernormal capacities even in less than constructive environments.

At the same time, more often than not, the actors describe the power for supernormal functioning coming from beyond themselves; from transpersonal or impersonal sources. This emerged as a key to supernormal experiences in the

actors in this study, yet in almost all cases the actors had ‘actions’ to do consistently which would align them with the available forces; make them available to or wield that larger Force. These actions that align the actor to the larger impersonal or divine force could be seen as the ‘supernormal capacities’ themselves.

Developmentally speaking these actions were about more than just ‘actions’ to take, but rather were developmental and emergent capacities; each level displaying new levels of capacity and complexity. The level of complexity related to supernormal capacities seemed to be transpersonal and came well after pre-personal and personal developmental stages. The issue of how to activate the very highest latent capacities actors possess, and wake those up in others through performance is part and parcel of the more general evolutionary and spiritual purpose of this study.

This shift to transpersonal capacities seems a major shift for most actors. The notion that these moments of transpersonal experience actually have actions or paradigmatic processes that evoke them and can to some degree be actively practiced, thus developing ‘transpersonal or supernormal functions’ and ‘capacities’ rather than just focusing on the ‘transpersonal experience’ is an emergent result of this study. Eventually a series of transpersonal acting techniques may evolve that lead to consistent activation of transpersonal supernormal abilities in actors. This has the potential to be a paradigm shift in the best sense, a shift in ‘paradigmatic action’ and thus new data/experience; and new forms of artistic expression.

In some ways, the supernormal capacities can be seen as a result of personal surrender or alignment with larger than personal energies or actions. So, the supernormal capacities turn out to really be a series of activities that allow an individual body mind to relate to transpersonal forces. This is not about a directive will, but rather doing our part to be open or available to a Greater Circulation or Divine will.

An idea for further consideration that also emerged from the patterns in this data, is that supernormal capacities come unpredictably and appropriately so; so as to maintain our individual humility with relation to these apparent ‘powers’. Perhaps SNF are best as graces that come and go at the whim of a divine and enigmatic will rather than at the will of individual egos and personalities. In the interviews, some participants told stories of trying to repeat or will moments of supernormal functioning, but it doesn’t work. This begs the question, why doesn’t it work? Is it because by their very nature they are not nor should not malleable to personal will, and for good reason, or is it that she just doesn’t have the tools/techniques to consistently access those energies as many have experienced in paratheatrical work. Maybe all actors can do is develop the capacities of surrender, service, discipline, and faith; cultivating fertile soil or a clear vessel for supernormal energies to work through.

This notion that supernormal capacities cannot be directly willed contributes to the additional characteristic that many participants reported; not being able to take credit for the outcome of the supernormal capacities. Many participants have expressed a lack of ownership of their own brilliance or

capacities; even an awkwardness when people try to give them praise for powers that seem beyond themselves. Again, the questions arises, is this because some impersonal force is at work, or do they not identify with the abilities because something in their frontal personality doesn't yet identify with its own transpersonal aspects.

Long Term Practice

Several other significant issues emerged that surrounded the idea of long term practice since, by definition, supernormal capacities emerge as a result of long term transformative (and presumably artistic) practices. One of most glaring commonalities for the participants was an 'early start'. By being exposed to art, acting, and/or various kinds of transformative practice, they were able to qualify as long term practitioners by a fairly early age. Some of the participants were older and earned there long term status just due to age and decades of sustained transformative and artistic practice. In some cases this 'early start' came in the form of what I am calling 'generational development' or transmission from parents to children; sometimes through direct teaching but also sometimes just be being an example or just exposing the child to acting, theatre, meditation, and more through a kind osmosis. In the case of transmission, it was seemed as if the developmental stages the parents had gone through actually were directly transferred to the child, allowing them to accelerate through stages of development artistically or skip stages altogether.

There was also a pattern that came to be called 'generational' developmental growth. Long term development in these interviews was related

many times to family members who had traveled far along the developmental path and were able to transmit that learning to their children, directly or indirectly. Generational development was sometimes synonymous with early exposure, but sometimes not. There were cases where the actor found acting on their own or were lucky to have the intervention of some other caring individual or circumstance to support their early artistic and personal growth.

Another factor that allowed most participants to reach supernormal stages of work was obviously ‘discipline’. Many circumstances arose to intervene and prevent long term practice but a strong discipline made it possible for the higher capacities of performance to emerge.

Another subject relevant to long term practice seemed to be sheer quantity of practice. Rather than thinking of amount of years practicing that mattered, it might be best to frame it as total number of hours practiced. As a result, there were several strategies that seemed to allow for actors to log the needed hours to reach the emergence of supernormal capacities. One strategy was transferable skills. Many of the actors talked about doing other artistic endeavors that resulted in some sort of transferable skill that either advanced their acting or accelerated their work in acting once they got it.

Many of the transferable skills came from transformative practice. Transferable skills could come from a variety of sources but for most participants they came from three categories; other arts, teaching acting, and transformative practice. Often it seemed the spiritual principles or spiritual consciousness were at work in actors who demonstrated supernormal capacities so it began to seem that

the transformative practices could be done for their own sake and transforming the actors' instrument (the conscious body itself) will influence the acting. Conversely, one can adapt the acting itself into the transformative practice by looking to actually alter their acting practices with an infusion of spiritual principles. In terms of increasing the total quantity of practice experience, having prolific phases also seemed to help. This kind of passionate devoted labor can be taken as a sacred feeling towards the work.

One other major factor was a passion for the work. As Adler (2000) reminded her students, "You must study the theatre the way a priest or rabbi studies scripture" (p. 194). All participants expressed some sort of love or attraction to the work. This simple passion for doing the work seemed to make it possible to log the amount of hours needed for supernormal capacities to emerge. Passion often led to a sense of joyful play: The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the objects it loves (Jung, 2013). The same could be said of supernormal capacities: it would be hard to imagine them emerging if there weren't a love for the practice that helped to develop them.

Some of the participants seemed to use micro-practices. If Supernormal Functioning comes from amount of total hours of intentional practice, we can see how little periods of time accumulate. Some participants would talk about small prayers or mental exercises that they would do in all manner of contexts. This could be driving in the car, on a plane flight, etc. For many of the people who showed supernormal capacities, it was almost as if their brains were using every

experience as an opportunity to go to work on their passion. In addition, viewing “great acting” seemed to be a big part of most stories; either as a pivotal and inspiring performance or in some cases, returning to a single ‘great show’ over and over. Wilber (2000) and Kofman (2013) developed theories about how consciousness gets encoded and transferred through artifacts: be they objects or performances. Their theories seemed to match the subjects experience that simply by viewing or encountering great artists, they grew dramatically in their practices.

Another and unexpected way that supernormal capacities emerged was with long term involvement with a single project or piece of material. It became clear that stage conceptions that lead to supernormal capacities could have several dimensions: stages within the developing individual, stages within a group or ensemble, and stages of a particular project or piece of work. A few participants spoke of the most extraordinary experiences only happening after extended periods of work on the same piece; for example Hal Landon’s thirty years of work on *A Christmas Carol* and Patrycja Kujawska’s almost two hundred performances of *The Red Shoes*. There are many possible reasons why supernormal capacities flourished in long term projects and collaborations, but most explanations have a developmental component. One explanation would be that once the more gross issues are handled easily, then energy and attention is free to attend to higher planes or dimensions of the work, thus unleashing higher or more subtle actions. Another is that the repetition and enormous amounts of time seem to be what unleashed the supernormal capacities and experiences; or at least the piece

became developed enough to be a vessel for the depth of the individual's capacities.

As a side note, the supernormal capacities most people spoke of tended to be the most recent, which makes sense because supernormal capacities are developmental and thus their evidence will likely be from the most recent accounts, the activities with the most practice behind them. In addition, when looking at the length and time engaged in a practice, it might be worth considering the contemplation of new action as part of the action of long term practice. From this view we could say that considering or thinking about a transformative practice before taking it up is actually part of the long term practice cycle.

Quality and kind of supernormal capacities.

Another issue that arose was that it seemed that the types of supernormal capacities that emerged were affected by several factors including but not limited to personal proclivity, natural talent, environmental exposure, passion for a particular kind of activity, early exposure, the type of training one received, and even pre-birth events. In Murphy's (1992) work, he often draws on an extensive catalogue of catholic charismatic abilities. The term "charisma" was originally intended to mean a "spiritual gift". So the people catalogued in catholic annals were considered gifted by God in particular ways. As we look at Supernormal Capacities as spiritual gifts it starts to relate to larger issues of an individual soul's purpose and a divine plan for a person's life; both in terms of their innate abilities and the synchronistic events that lead to the emergence of their special gifts. Most

subjects demonstrated one or a few supernormal capacities, not across the board. It was a special gift or ability that emerged within them as a result of their innate personality, synchronicities of life history and experience, the type of training they sought out or received, and the passions they felt for particular types of work. It begs the question, how much of supernormal capacity is simply trainable and how much requires a proclivity, talent, or gift. This sort of issue is not at all foreign to athletes and coaches. The issue definitely arose in this study of actors and is likely an interesting consideration when reflecting on the field of supernormal capacities altogether.

Finally, regarding the types and subtypes of capacities, two other distinctions arose. First, it seemed that certain kinds of training pedagogies might lead to certain kinds of normal and eventually supernormal capacities emerging. For example, someone with Suzuki training would perhaps develop widely different abilities than someone who did a lot of work with multi-character solos shows (Gemma Wilcox) or intuitive and presence based ensemble work (Matt Mitler). Second, that because the focus group was actors, the largest ‘category’ or supernormal capacities seemed to be related to physical and energetic capacities; which leads directly into the next overall theme that emerged from the study.

Sex, sports, and theatre.

“Art is the conversation between lovers.” (Hafiz, 2013, para 1) Acting is no exception. Larry Moss very informally referenced a survey he’d read that stated that sex, sports, and theatre were the top three most enjoyable experiences in people’s lives. Reflecting upon the nature of each of these three as reported by

the subjects of this study, a few connections begin to arise. First off, sex and sports are the two places where supernormal functioning has been most reported and studied (Murphy, 1992; Wade, 2004). Acting can be seen as a sport:

Acting is a sport. On stage you must be ready to move like a tennis player on his toes. Your concentration must be keen, your reflexes sharp; your body and mind are in top gear, and the chase is on. Acting is energy. In the theatre people pay to see energy. (Clive Swift as quoted in Bennett, 2013, para. 10)

Also, both sex and sports share with live theatre the fact that they are intensely physical and center on the encounter or human bodies; live and in space. Some of the participants spoke of continually going to the body sensations, ongoing physical (and vocal) practice, physical actions and gestures, and intense physical ordeal or challenge in order to overcome the primary block of an overactive or anxious mind; even the indirect and instinctual approaches that many of the subjects preferred and sought out were related to trusting a deeply present bodily experience.

Some of the participants mention various somatic practices as part of what released blocks to the free flow of energy and attention which might allow them to cultivate or participate in supernormal capacities; these notions constitute the entire pedagogical backbone of some approaches to the work of acting. Often the supernormal capacities emerge from total exhaustion and intense physical commitment to impossible or near impossible tasks; getting to the place where one is beyond their own capacities. This situation of going beyond one's limits is often where participants would need sources of energy larger than themselves, sources that are by any other name transpersonal or spiritual in nature.

Eight of the actors in this study either came from athletic backgrounds or consciously included ongoing intense athletic exercises or even intentional sexual or yogic practices in order to liberate the body, mind, and energy for performance. All these practices if done well, are create an experience of exhilaration potentially even beyond orgasmic bliss. This seems to be connected to the fact that seeing or experiencing “moments of supernormal functioning” were often reported to be the reason people started to pursue acting or were motivated to continue with the work. Robert Parson’s even says that the desire to function at supernormal levels is perhaps the driving force to continuing to pursue the work. The result of supernormal experience is often what motivates people to start or continue acting or they can be what people consciously or unconsciously pursue in their work; a heightened or magical transcendent experience; of participating in a miraculous universe larger than themselves; a spiritual experience by any other name.

These moments of miraculous ability, for Jack Plotnick, are accompanied by very clear physical signs. He calls them a ‘quickenings’ and they include accelerated heart rate and an increase of blood flow to the brain. Relating this ‘quickenings’ to the motivation or passion behind acting, Jack even says “that’s why we act so our heart races so we can touch god, or we can have magic happen...that’s my belief.”

Finally, many acting techniques are almost like subtle body athletic training; Julia Ormond talks about this extensively, how psychophysical integration is ideal for an actor to be free and available to genuine experience.

Interestingly, a unified and responsive body where energy can flow freely and is responsive to people and the environment is in some cases a kind of enlightenment. Adi Da (1974) speaks of whole body enlightenment as a summation of his entire spiritual way and one of his core technical books of spiritual practice is called *Conscious Exercise and The Transcendental Sun*.

One final connection between sports and theatre work came from Mitler and his emphasis on group dynamics. He compared the intensity and intimate group bonding of theatrical work to both sports and even warfare; people bond under the extraordinarily demanding context of making the work together. The warfare comparison is interesting; there is a notorious list of things most people are afraid of. Public speaking tops the list above death. I think the reason is the fear of obliteration of self that happens when we are witnessed so directly. It is like dying while still alive.

The end result of this in terms of practical application is the possibility of a few new directions particularly relevant to actors in terms of their artistic practice and transferable skills: first that sexual and yogic practices and the lessons learned in that process may be immanently transferable to the process of acting. Second, actors can participate in either some sort of sport or at least somatic practice that can be hugely beneficial and a great source of transferable skills towards supernormal levels of development in acting work. Ideally, an actor can take up an intense physical technique as an actor that trains the physical and energetic body to its optimum.

Ideas of supernormal functioning.

Interestingly, another issue that arose from the interviews related to the emergence of supernormal functioning in professional actors was that some actors (i.e., - Hal Landon) did not have a conscious or epistemological context for supernormal capacities in their work; and as a result they either didn't notice they were happening or didn't have a framework that valued them thus allowing them to consciously cultivate supernormal capacities through targeted artistic practices. Of course, some of the participants (i.e., - Matt Mitler) did have a helpful theoretical framework, and naturally they were the ones who were able to cultivate a more consistent experience; these subjects also reported the most radical examples of supernormal functioning in among the group. So not having an epistemological container could inhibit the development of Supernormal Functions.

In the conversation with Hal Landon was like an archeological process. After a little digging several relevant anecdotes were found that may have been the tip of the iceberg had we continued to dialogue. He seemed to have a lack of conscious conversational awareness about the subject matter, yet he did have some relevant experiences once we got into dialogue. It seemed that perhaps his lack of those sorts of experiences directly reflects that fact that he had not thought about his work within such a conceptual frame; and thus had never explored or pursued those sorts of experiences as valued as some of the other research participants very definitely did.

Also, when talking to Jack Plotnick he said, "I've never put it this way" which is a wonderful affirmation of the intention of this research, which like

Murphy and White's (1995) work on supernormal functioning in sports, is largely about articulating and giving voice to a series of supernormal capacities that actors are constantly experiencing but don't know how to talk about. The hope is that if we can say something about these abilities, then actors can more readily speak of and consciously pursue them. After all, problem formulation is the lion's share of solving a problem. (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974.)

Matt Mitler's case suggests that an artist can have a strong conscious epistemological framework which directs his intention and action during rehearsal and performance. In general, it seemed to me that if cognitive functions and self-sense development are at a high level, then the individual is capable of discovering or consciously enacting the supernormal capacities possible for actors in a more healthy and sustainable manner.

Various energies.

Energy was one of the principle qualities discussed in actor's report of their work. At times the descriptions the actors gave of how they participated or used these 'energies' were suggestive of supernormal capacities. These interviews provided a wide spectrum of energetic experiences and capacities. Matt Mitler described the ability to feel and consciously work with the three primary energy centers of the body: head, heart, and gut. But beyond that, he described how sensitivity to energy eventually was able to move beyond the individual body. He described starting with awareness of personal energy but then moving to sensations of energy in the environment and interpersonal exchanges. He even spoke of supernormal capacities such as the slowing or expanding time,

exchanges with the sun or the moon, and generally of a universal or Greater Circulation of everything. He seems to take actions that produce that produce energetic results on purpose. Hal does too. Hal relates to the energy body as what Chekhov calls the “imaginary body” and is able to utilize elemental energies such as fire to great effect. Robert Parsons told several stories wherein he tapped into an energy field in his environment or with the audience that was much larger than his own body or subtle energy field; what might be called God or The Greater Circulation. It seemed that his physical sensitivity to the energy is connected to his physical training as an actor and athlete; he even refers to the ‘energy flow’ experienced in performance as being ‘similar to sports’.

Fascinatingly, Patrycja Kujawska spoke of a calm and energized second wind coming to her at the point of total commitment and total physical exhaustion. It seemed that ordeal or impossible odds put her in a place of needing some power beyond her own capacity to intervene. This was best exemplified in her story of calling out for the “god of theatre” and suddenly feeling as if she were her own angel, a larger version of herself, standing behind her own body and holding her up. Patrycja also experienced a rush of energy when she was called to be of service to another cast member that was so distressed that the show was in danger of failing. This flux of energy as a result of ‘service’ or connection to the ‘collective ritual’ of theatre for the sake of the audience was expressed in more than one instance. Although, perhaps because the sample was too small, the study did not collect as many examples of supernatural energetic capacities in the interviews as I found in the literature.

Synchronicity.

One notion that arose in almost all of the interviews was the idea of synchronicity; or synonymously: fate, destiny, divine plan. In general this was a sense that the performers had of something being inevitable or somehow directed in their lives. Robert Parsons talks of how his journey as a person converged with certain spectacular creative projects. He gives details of exceptional performances wherein there were synchronistic convergence of his life changes and the artistic themes he was exploring. In his experience with *Black Rider*, the chance sequence of events was particularly apparent. In *Equus*, the material, his life circumstances, and his personal transformation were intimately entwined, and each empowered or enhanced the other.

In Hal Landon's Ebenezer Scrooge character we see how the long term nature of the material matched with his nature as a long term and steady meditation practitioner. As a matter of fact, he has exhibited a long term commitment to almost everything in his life; from family to South Coast Repertory Theatre to his meditation practice and work as an actor. Most of the other projects he worked on professional met the professional standard of a few weeks of rehearsal, which is not resonate with his essence as an artist.

Along with these synchronistic connections eventually came a sensation of a 'calling' or divine plan, fate, or destiny. The sense was that if the artist was where the 'universe' or 'god' wanted them to be, then energy would converge on that event to assist it or elevate it often to the level of the exceptional. This notion

of being in the right place at the right time and of taking ‘right action’ allows the actors to align their personal will with a larger more ineffable and enigmatic Will.

Often as we did the life review included in this interview the artists started to sense a plan unfolding; for example Jack Plotnick has an uninterrupted continuous stream of opportunity as he follows his intuition from one career move to the next; from high school to college and right into working as a represented professional. And Julia Ormond explicitly stated that participation with synchronicities had become a primary form of spirituality for her that had led her to some of her greatest artistic achievements and personal transformations. At best this is suggestive that some of the greater factors in the strength and development of an actor’s work towards its highest and most subtle possible levels come from psychological and spiritual practices which supports the growing notion in a transpersonal theory of acting that personal and spiritual growth, perhaps even full integral practice, is a necessary and irreducible aspect of an actor’s training and development to the heights of their art form.

Transmission.

The issue of transmission arose in several forms in these interviews and ended up being one of the primary causes of supernormal functioning. For the reason, transmission, if understood and consciously sought out, can help actors to move towards these abilities.

Transmission can be defined as the transfer of consciousness, energy, or ideas from one person or object to another person or object. Often, the transmission was of a quality or wisdom from one person, usually a teacher or

master artist, to a student or learning artist. This kind of transmission gives the sensation that something learned or achieved by one person can be directly transferred, allowing the receiver to accelerate their growth process or even seemingly skip steps.

Many of the interviewees spoke about early childhood influences, either from a family member, early exposure to professional shows or experience, or great teachers that changed the course of their lives. In addition many of the actors spoke of being transformed or lifted up by exposure to the artwork of master artists of all kinds; this is transmission through consciousness embedded in artifacts as Wilber (2000) describes it and Kaufmann (2013) develops it. Larry Moss speaks of receiving transmission from master teachers like Stella Adler, great live musicians, and viewing countless works by master artists of stage, screen, and all other art forms.

Many of the actors talk about communication with an audience; that at its highest levels starts to seem like a) communion as a precursor to then b) transmission. These actors seemed to do a lot of work to know the subtleties of their own inner life and then find ways to reach out and connect with an audience. They find a way to connect and commune with an audience in a place where the mutuality of their inner lives can connect. Then many of the actors talked about ‘joy’ in their own acting being paramount. They seem to have discovered or intuitively known that they can’t give away what they haven’t got.

Jack Plotnick was the best example of this; his focus was never on pleasing an audience. He focused on having a lot of fun and joy in his work, as a

result he trust that the audience would experience joy by watching him be joyful. This is similar to a Bodhisattva vow, in that the actor attempts to be free and have fun so that they can liberate an audience to have their own joy. Behind this approach is a conscious or unconscious apprehension of non-separate unity; I-thou as martin Buber (1958) puts it. There is no barrier between any of us. The way we treat ourselves is the way we treat others.

Many of the participants spoke of seeking out transmission from a Master of one kind or another. Dzieci constantly sought out spiritual masters to be with while Robert Parsons found a Suzuki teacher that had a direct lineage to Suzuki himself. With Hal Landon's story we have a direct transmission from Chekhov to Shdanoff, which in itself took a very long time, then a transmission from Shdanoff to Hal Landon over an extended number of years. Here, even the long term transmission requires long term commitment and practice. Many of my interviewees mention this 'direct' line of learning as being vital to their taking large developmental leaps ahead. Assuming that Supernormal Functioning is in fact a developmental capacity that emerges stably only after long term practice, this sort of learning seems to not only make it possible, but the style of training may even determine what kind of supernormal capacities develop.

Why this is useful is because it puts supernormal functioning in a larger evolutionary movement that moves from one generation to the next. Actors can seek out master teachers and master works and be aware that they are actually participating in elevating or refining their own awareness and energy as they do so.

Evaluations of the Study Method and Validity

Introduction.

This study set out to explore what causes and sustains various supernormal capacities in professional actors: In the literature review we established a rudimentary definition of supernormal capacities and then explored what types and subtypes of abilities seemed to be articulated in the literature relevant to supernormal functioning in actors. There was much learned through the study, not just in regards to the thematic content of the interviews, but also in terms of the methodology and the overall validity and usefulness of the research process in this case. Some conclusions and observations can be made such that future research will perhaps be better suited to effectively cataloguing supernormal capacities in actors and how best they can be achieved and sustained.

Literature review.

In the literature review a rudimentary definition of supernormal capacities and nine general categories of supernormal functioning in actors as they seemed to appear in the literature were outlined. This gave us a handful of types of capacities to look for when interviewing the participants. In general the review of the literature was sufficient to begin the study, although the literature review only needed to be a starting point for the formulation of the study and perhaps a more comprehensive scouring and dissection of the literature would add some additional dimension to a broad cartography of supernormal capacities as they appear in acting. Also, the literature review was not meant to serve as a

comprehensive theoretical formulation, only a survey of broad categories based on the seminal literature in the field.

Coding review.

Upon transcribing and coding the interviews many of the types of supernormal capacities established in the literature review were corroborated and some were not found. Also, a handful of new types and subtypes were added to the list, which was finally compiled in the results and analysis sections. Generally, the interviews were too long and were not structured sufficiently enough.

Interview process review.

The study was somewhat limited and perhaps a tad cumbersome. If this exploration were to move forward in a narrative case study format, it would be helpful to supply the interviewees a series of samples of various kinds of supernormal capacities and simply ask if they've ever experienced such a thing and to tell the story of how they actualized these supernormal capacities. Also, if the interviews themselves had been shorter and with more structured questions, then more people could have been interviewed, thus increasing the sampling. Finally, looking back at the transcripts, I realize I spoke way too often. It became more of a philosophical conversation far too often, rather than an interview process where I asked focused questions in order to uncover narratives that were on point.

Also, for the most part the questions asked were consistent; generally searching into relevant childhood or formative experiences relevant to acting and transformative practice, then moving on to training and transformative practice as

separate narratives, and finally looking for specific stories suggestive of supernormal functioning during performance. In review, it might have been useful to cut down on biographical information and get straight to the supernormal abilities. If the abilities/experiences had been more defined prior to the interviews and each interviewee were just asked if they experienced any of the items on the list, and asked to describe them in detail if they had, then the results may have been more detailed and helpful in the process of mapping the various kinds of supernormal functioning in actors.

Also, as a group, it turned out that many of the participants were also acting teachers. In some cases I was aware of this before the interview, in other cases; it became obvious only once we were into the interview. The downside was that sometimes their answers became abstract, theoretical, or even about people other than themselves. This was not ideal. My mistake as a researcher was in not making clear that I needed accounts of direct experience. I also made the mistake of not asking refocusing questions that would keep the responses in the range of usefulness in terms of the topic being researched.

Selection review.

The selection process was too limited. First, the criterion for selection was bit extreme; a high bar for people to be able to qualify. Because it was asking for three very specific qualifications (working professional actor, formal acting training, and a minimum of three to five years of some transformative practice) it was difficult to find qualified participants. Thought to be clear, my subconscious criteria for selection were perhaps a bit higher and there would have been many

more, perhaps less accomplished actors, which could have easily been included in the sample.

In addition the sampling was too small because I did not employ a good strategy for finding participants for the study. In her book Jenny Wade (2004) described in detail the process she had of finding participants for her study of transpersonal experience during sex. Following aspects of her model would perhaps been more effective. For example: crafting an email explaining the project and what kinds of narratives I was looking for and then disseminating that several times throughout my network over a period of six to nine months. I'm sure I could have collected three dozen participants and ended up with better data; more broad and on point data.

In general, the sampling was varied, but could certainly have been broader in terms of ethnicity which could have come with a larger sample group. Age ranges were fairly wide in terms of professionals that had enough experience to have long term practice both artistically and in terms of transformative practice. Since the focus was on supernormal capacities that only emerge from long term practice, even if a candidate started as a child, which many of them did, they would still be in their mid-thirties by the time the benefits of long term practice started to set in. Many were teachers which caused some theorizing an anecdote challenges. This exposed that I have chosen participants based on what qualifications they possessed but didn't think to omit people for qualities which might inhibit the process.

Transcription review.

Due to minor errors with recording and storage I lost some details from one or two interviews but I was able to re-interview in one case and the other didn't significantly hinder the objective of getting stories suggestive of supernormal functioning in professional actors. I did most of the transcriptions myself but hired a transcriber for about half the interviews. In review, if I'd had more focused, shorter interviews, I may have been able to do them all myself, but really, in order for this research to be more comprehensive and generalizable, a much larger sampling (maybe 60 or 80 subjects) would be useful.

Coding review.

In addition to various codes and definitions were kept for causes and blocks of supernormal capacities and integrated into the analysis and the discussion of the findings. This led to some general conclusions about the subject of supernormal capacities in professional actors, the most significant of which were the issues of long term practice, physical and energetic abilities, transmission, collective ritual, somatic practice, and transpersonal dimensions, among others.

The useful narratives for this study tended to come from the actors with the most total experience in both fields of experience; professional acting and transformative practice. Also, the most useful narratives for this study were the most recent and were about direct experiences rather than theory or anecdotal.

Results and analysis review.

There were a few surprises in the results gathered. First, although the interviews involved an brief but comprehensive case study biography, specifically

around three narrative threads (personal biography as relevant to acting, history of transformative practice, and acting experience) it was still difficult to find discernible stages that led up to the supernormal functioning and thus hard to distinguish between abilities that were developmental in nature versus state-based capacities. In the end, narratives ‘suggestive’ of supernormal functioning in actors was all this study could achieve; not conclusive or irrefutable evidence of supernormal functioning in actors.

Also, because of the sheer scope and volume of the phenomenon being studied, it was very difficult to define discrete developmental lines, as might be suggested in the work of Murphy (1992), Wilber (2000), and many others. Again, perhaps this can be attributed to the fact that this study was a pioneering work that could at best achieve data suggestive of so that further research might be done to clarify and refine some broad strokes made here.

Evaluation conclusion.

Overall, the work was successful, not only in collecting a handful of stories suggestive of supernormal functioning in actors, but because it was in a narrative interview format, two aspects emerged that were unexpected: a) many of these accounts started to build details of the interior consciousness of the person exercising the supernormal capacity and b) because the research was done in a narrative format, the subject was able to articulate their perception of cause and effect. This led to many details of what caused and or blocked these supernormal capacities from emerging.

As I started to code the narratives, I not only attempted to name the various ‘types’ and ‘subtypes’ of supernormal capacities, but I also started to notate when the participant made note of what helped or hindered these supernormal abilities. I started to call these ‘causes’ and ‘blocks’.

It seems the study was well formulated to fill a gap in the literature of both acting and supernormal functioning in general and made what could be a useful contribution to both. Though there were shortcomings and lessons learned, it was done on a shoestring budget of time and money and only aimed at beginning a pioneering avenue of research rather than coming to absolutely conclusive evidence of any kind.

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Appendix A: Committee Membership

Allan Combs, PhD

Allan Combs is a consciousness researcher and neuropsychologist at CIIS and Professor *Emeritus* in Psychology at the University of North Carolina-Asheville. He is author of over 200 articles, chapters, and books on consciousness and the brain, including *The Radiance of Being (2ed)*; *Understanding the Grand Integral Vision, Living the Integral Live*, winner of the best-book award of the *Scientific and Medical Network*; *Changing Visions: Human Cognitive Maps Past, Present, and Future* with Ervin Laszlo, Vilmos Csanyi, and Robert Artigiani; *Mind in Time: The Dynamics of Thought, Reality, and Consciousness* with Mark Germiné and Ben Geortzel; *Consciousness Explained Better: An Integral Understanding of Consciousness*; *The Postconventional Personality* co-edited with Angela Pfaffenberger and Paul Marco; *A Victorian's Guide to Consciousness*; and *Dreamer of the Earth: The Relevance of Thomas Berry* with Ervin Laszlo.

Michael Schwartz, PhD

Born in Brooklyn and raised in Northern New Jersey, Michael Schwartz received his Ph.D. from Columbia University. He teaches at GRU courses in art history, philosophy of art and aesthetics, and world humanities. Michael is the co-founder and standing co-lead officer of the Comparative and Continental Philosophy Circle, which holds an international annual conference, publishes a journal twice yearly, and sponsors a book series

on Northwestern University Press (he is founding Associate Editor of both the journal and the book series). He is the Aesthetic Editor for Integral Life. Believing in the value of human growth and transformation, Michael is on the Board of Directors of The Forge Institute and is Director of its Programs in Transformational Development. He has published and lectured widely on Western art, Continental philosophy, and integral theory. He is co-editor/co-author of five books (several in press) on art, philosophy, and trantrism, including *The Gift of Logos* (2010).

Ashley Wain, PhD

Ashley Wain, PhD is an acting teacher living in Melbourne, Australia. He trained in acting at Victorian College of the Arts and with Leonid Verzub (a long-term student of Maria Knebel). He has worked as an actor, director and teacher in professional theatre since 1994, performing many major roles for The Hole in the Wall in Western Australia. He trained for three years with Stanislav Grof, one of the founders and chief theoreticians of transpersonal psychology, and is a long term student of the Ridhwan School. His doctoral thesis explored the spiritual dimensions of 20th century theatre, and specifically how the techniques of the Stanislavski and Copeau traditions of actor training and rehearsal reliably and intentionally evoke experiences of essence, presence and Being. He has taught at many schools and universities in Australia and the US.

Appendix B: Consent Form

James Louis Wagner, a doctoral student at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in San Francisco, CA. is conducting a study examining supernormal functioning in professional actors.

Participation involves one qualifying phone call and three to five drafts of a written personal narrative about your experience of supernormal functioning in your work as a professional actor.

The qualifying phone call is to ascertain if each individual's experience and background qualifies for the study. The participant will provide answers to screening questions to determine eligibility based on three criteria 1) status as a professional actor 2) formal acting training and 3) participation in some form of long term transformative or spiritual practice. Written notes will be taken during the screening interview. These notes will be kept on James' private personal computer and saved on an external back-up drive until the dissertation is published. Notes from the screening interview will be used to guide the first draft of the written narrative.

The next phase is the process of writing and re-writing the narrative of supernormal functioning. The purpose of this process will be to craft a well-written and evocative story of supernormal functioning in the work of a professional actor. The subject of the narrative will arise out of the screening call. After each draft of the narrative is sent to James, you as a participant will receive feedback and additional questions to help revise, refine, or clarify aspects of the narrative. This re-writing process will happen entirely by email and the text of the

emails will be remain on James' personal computer, seen only by James, and saved on the external hard drive as back up until the dissertation is published.

Due to the potentially and intimate self-exposure involved in the telling of personally meaningful, profound, and potentially sacred stories, each participant has the right to refuse to continue or severely edit the story at any time. James Louis Wagner will be available throughout the process to address any participant concerns. He can be contacted at 949.283.4193 or jameslouiswagner@gmail.com. In addition, on the rare chance that writing a narrative of supernormal functioning in acting should trigger adverse psychological response, a professional referral is made available to all participants for consultation: Tom Stern, PhD Psychologist 2142 Sutter St. #2, San Francisco, CA 94115. 415.905.4128.

All information shared by the participant during the interviews will be held in strict confidence within the limits of the law (please see the attached confidentiality statement). Any written notes or emails will be secured at the home of the researcher. Identity of the story teller and the specific details of the story in terms of other relevant characters, circumstances, and/or institutions will all be directly named in the narratives unless the participant choose anonymity of to protect anyone or anything involved in the story by changing their names.

Participants are free to request any specific part of their experience be eliminated from the dissertation. Any additional confidentiality measures requested by participants will be evaluated and considered. All transcripts and/or notes will be destroyed within five years of collection.

No direct benefit, either monetary or resulting from the experience itself, is offered or guaranteed. Your participation in this study will contribute to a greater understanding of supernormal functioning in professional actors.

If you have any concerns or questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel that you have been placed at risk, you may report them directly or anonymously to the CIIS, Human Research Review Committee, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA. 94103, 415-575-6100.

I, _____ (please print name), consent to participate in the study examining supernormal functioning in professional actors being conducted by doctoral student James Louis Wagner from CIIS. I have received a copy of this consent form and the confidentiality statement, and I understand that my confidentiality will be protected within the limits of the law.

Signature Date

If you would like to receive a written summary of the study, please provide an address where you would like the data mailed.

Street City
Zip

Appendix C: Confidentiality Statement

Your privacy with respect to the information you disclose during participation in this study will be protected within the limits of the law. However, there are circumstances where a researcher is required by law to reveal information, usually for the protection of a patient, research participant or others. A report to the police department or to the appropriate protective agency is required in the following cases:

1. If, in the judgment of the researcher, a research participant becomes dangerous to himself or herself or others (or their property), and revealing the information is necessary to prevent danger;
2. If there is suspected child abuse, in other words if a child under 16 has been a victim of a crime or neglect;
3. If there is suspected elder abuse, in other words if a woman or man age 60 or older has been a victim of crime or neglect.

If a report is required, the researcher will discuss the report contents and possible consequences with the research participant.

Appendix D: Participants Bill of Rights

As a participant you have the right to...

1. Be treated with respect
2. Be given clear description of the purpose of the study and what is expected of you as a participant.
3. Be told of any benefits or risks to you that can be expected from participating in the study;
4. Know the researchers training and experiences
5. Ask any question you may have about the study;
6. Decide to participate or not without any pressure from the researcher or his or her assistants;
7. Have your privacy protected within the limits of the law;
8. Refuse to answer any research question, refuse to participate in any part of the study at any time without any negative effects to you;
9. Be given a description of the overall results of the study upon request
10. Discuss any concerns or file a complaint about the study with Human Research Review Committee, Institute of Integral Studies, 1453 Mission St., San Francisco, CA 94103