

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**THE IMPACT OF POST DEATH
COMMUNICATION [PDC] ON
BEREAVEMENT**

Brigid McCormick, B.A.

Thesis completed to fulfill the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

May 2014.

“There are universal reports of these post-mortem phenomena . . . They are based in the main on psychic facts which cannot be dismissed out of hand. Very often the fear of superstition, which strangely enough, is the concomitant of universal enlightenment, is responsible for the hasty suppression of extremely interesting reports which are then lost to science”

(Jung, 1964b, p. 316).

Abstract

Post Death Communication (i.e. perceived communication from someone who has died), has been part of the human experience since the earliest recorded history, and it is now known to be highly beneficial to almost all bereaved individuals who experience it. Despite the fact that PDC appears to be common to all cultures and is usually very welcome and very healing, it has been judged by Western society in a negative way and as a result, fear of negative judgment has meant that experiencers are hesitant to discuss it.

Using Thematic Analysis, this study conducted a small qualitative investigation into the experience of PDC among New Zealand and North American populations. In a semi-structured interview, conducted face to face where possible, and by Skype where necessary, 14 participants aged between 52 and 80 years were asked about the nature of their PDC experience, how they felt about it, and how it impacted their bereavement.

Results showed conclusively that PDC is welcome and beneficial, and that experiencers are wary of discussing it for fear of being judged negatively. Thematic analysis revealed a meta-theme of Affirmation – participants were unanimous in believing PDC to be beneficial. Within this meta-theme were the three themes of Comfort - PDC brings comfort to the bereaved; Continuity – PDC brings a sense of personal and relational continuation, and Growth - PDC brings a sense of personal growth and a change in values. A fourth theme arising from the analysis was Negativity. Participants expressed fear of being judged in a pejorative way for having experienced PDC.

Since 2000 it has been possible to induce PDC in a clinical setting, thereby elevating what had been a serendipitous, random occurrence into a powerful therapeutic tool. The protocol of Induced PDC is practiced on five continents, yet few people in the healing professions are aware of it. In New Zealand, Induced PDC appears to be unknown. This means that grieving Kiwis are going without the therapeutic benefits of PDC. The findings of this thesis indicate spontaneous PDC as experienced by the sample is overwhelmingly beneficial, and they support the use of Induced PDC in therapeutic settings. The findings have implications for raising awareness about and the use of Induced PDC by New Zealand clinicians.

Acknowledgements

“being true to the data is the heart and soul of science”
(Schwarz, 2002, p. 276).

I would, first and foremost, like to thank my wise, patient, and oh so fey mentor and role model Ann St Cartmail, for her support and inspiration. This thesis was not only Ann’s idea she was its most enthusiastic participant. Ann died during the course of this thesis and true to her promise given in the participant interview, she returned to give PDC. Thus, Ann is in this study twice: once as a participant and once discarnately, giving PDC.

And, I would also like to thank my supervisor, Natasha Tassell-Matamua, PhD, for her willingness to oversee such an unusual thesis as this and for her help and patient direction during the course of it.

I also owe a very big debt of thanks to the highly skilled librarians at Massey, who were enormously skilled in the treacherous grimoire of APA and without whom this work would be much less precise.

And lastly, I would like to thank the people who shared their stories with me. Almost all of the stories came with a good deal of emotion, and I am eternally indebted to these people for their trust in sharing such deeply personal experiences with me.

Personal Rationale

“I am attacked by two very opposite sects – the scientists and the know-nothings. Both laugh at me, calling me “the frogs” dancing master.” Yet I know I have discovered one of the greatest forces in nature”

(Galvani, as cited in Verkhatsky, Krishtal, & Petersen, 2006, p. 233).

My mother was Irish and a believer in all things ‘spooky’. She sensed presences, she had esoteric books lying around the house, and she took me to the Spiritualist Church. This openness and curiosity formed my mindset and later led to an interest in consciousness and the nature of the soul.

Then, about two years ago, I met celebrated physicist Dr. Russell Targ who told me point blank: “Yes, you can communicate with the dead”. He had had communication from his deceased daughter, Dr. Elizabeth Targ. Coming as it did, from the world’s foremost laser research scientist, and someone who had worked for the CIA for 25 years, and later for NASA, I took the words very seriously.

In recent years, I have had a series of friends lose loved ones and have seen close up the anguish that they have experienced. I also saw how much pleasure they took from having post-death communication (PDC) from their dead loved one. The event was meaningful and soothing to each and every one of them.

Then recently I met, by chance one night out walking, a 19 year old man in a very distressed state. He was drunk and crying and his story was awful: aged 15 and behind the wheel, he had killed his girlfriend who was aged only 14. He had had counseling and found it “useless”, and since then had been without support of any kind. He admitted to being suicidal, and was doing Community Service for dangerous driving.

I tried to find him professional help in the form of a support group, but soon realized there was nothing available for him. What was more, grief workers in New Zealand seemed to have no knowledge whatsoever of the fact that it is possible to induce PDC in a clinical setting, often with excellent therapeutic results.

In the literature, there are cases of PDC transforming grief that has been complicated by the toxicity of guilt. It saddens me that this person’s life is being

poisoned by his guilt, and that although a therapy that could potentially transform his attitude and therefore his life exists, it is not available to him nor does it seem to be even recognized in New Zealand.

I hope in this thesis to present evidence and an argument that in its own small way will chip away at the paradigm of scientific materialism that, despite voluminous and contradictory research in hard science disciplines such as physics, still dominates Western culture.

Writing this thesis has changed me as a person, not only for the knowledge I have gained, but also for facilitating my own PDC.

Early in 2013, I got my maternal grandmother's death certificate and that led me to confront, in a deeply painful way, my relationship with my own mother. Late in 2013, over the course of two weeks, I had three experiences of PDC from my mother. Each time it was late, I was tired, and I had been crying.

During the first PDC experience, I was imagining my parents when they first met and fell in love, and suddenly my entire body was suffused with love. From tears, I suddenly found myself laughing and smiling.

The second time I experienced PDC, a statement that was very meaningful to me, arrived fully formed, in my mind.

The third time I smelled my mother's face cream. These events, which were very real and totally unexpected, mean for me, that despite everything, our relationship is mended.

As a result of that experience and of the experience of writing this thesis, I no longer have any doubt about life after death and I have no doubt about the meaning of life; we are here to learn to love unconditionally.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Personal Rationale	v
Table of Contents	vii
Thesis Introduction	1
Chapter One: An Overview of Post Death Communication	6
1.1 Definition.....	6
1.2 Characteristics.....	7
1.3 Prevalence.....	10
1.4 Veridicality.....	11
1.4.1 Evidential PDCs.....	12
1.4.2 Shared PDCs.....	12
1.5 Summary.....	13
Chapter Two: The Post Death Communication Experient	14
2.1 Grief Status.....	14
2.2 Relationship to the Deceased.....	15
2.2.1 Bereaved Parents.....	15
2.2.2 Widows and Widowers.....	16
2.3 Death Trauma.....	16
2.4 Gender.....	17
2.5 Age.....	17
2.6 Race and Culture.....	18
2.7 Education Level.....	19
2.8 Individual Differences.....	20
2.9 Summary.....	20
Chapter Three: The Therapeutic Nature of PDC	22
3.1 PDC is Beneficial.....	22
3.2 Why Beneficial?.....	24
3.2.1 Problem Resolution.....	25
3.2.2 Spiritual Connection.....	26
3.2.3 Continuing Bonds.....	27
3.3 PDC in Health Care Settings.....	27
3.3.1 Lack of Knowledge by Health Care Professionals.....	28
3.3.2 Impact of Limited Knowledge on Disclosure.....	28
3.4 Induced After Death Communication.....	29
3.5 Summary.....	31
Chapter Four: Methodology	32
4.1 Qualitative Methodology.....	32
4.2 Thematic Analysis.....	33
4.2.1 Isolating the Data Set.....	33
4.3 Participants.....	34
4.3.1 Recruitment.....	34

4.3.2 Informing the Participant.....	34
4.3.3 Participant Demographics.....	35
4.4 Procedure.....	37
4.4.1 Ethics.....	37
4.4.2 Data Analysis.....	37
Chapter Five: Results.....	38
5.1 General Overview of the PDC Experience.....	38
5.1.1 Decedent Relationships.....	38
5.1.2 PDC Type.....	38
5.2 Analysis of Interviews.....	41
5.2.1 Meta-Theme: Affirmation.....	41
5.2.1.1 Comfort.....	41
5.2.1.2 Continuation.....	42
5.2.1.3 Growth.....	44
5.2.1.4 Veridicality.....	46
5.2.2 Negativity.....	48
5.2.2.2 Fear of Negative Judgment.....	48
5.3 Summary.....	49
Chapter Six: Discussion.....	51
6.1 The PDC Experient.....	51
6.2 The PDC Experience.....	52
6.3 PDC in Grief Relief.....	55
6.3.1 Comfort.....	55
6.3.2. Continuity.....	57
6.3.3 Growth.....	59
6.3.4 Veridicality.....	60
6.4 Fear of Negativity.....	61
6.5 Limitations of the Present Research.....	62
6.6 Possible Future Research Endeavours.....	63
6.7 Summary.....	65
Chapter Seven: Conclusion.....	66
References.....	68
Appendix One: Two Examples of Evidential PDC.....	82
Appendix Two: Two Examples of Shared PDC.....	84
Appendix Three: Information Sheet.....	86
Appendix Four: Participant Consent Form.....	89
Appendix Five: Interview Schedule.....	90
Appendix Six: Transcript Release Authority.....	91
Appendix Seven: Example of Veridical PDC.....	92
Appendix Eight: The Psychomanteum.....	93