

Exceptional Experiences of Healers: A Survey of Healing Touch Practitioners and Students

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Abstract

Exceptional experiences of healers include unusual sensate phenomena, such as images, bodily feelings and sounds, as well as contact with nonphysical beings and other dimensions. In this study I examine the exceptional experiences of students and practitioners of Healing Touch, an energy-based biofield therapy, using a new survey instrument, the Healer Experience Scale (HES). HES was administered to a convenience sample of HT practitioners and students (n=183). The major finding was that HT practitioners and students feel unusual tactile sensations more often than other sensations, such as visual or auditory, during healing sessions. The majority of respondents “often” feel areas of heaviness, prickly sensations, and/or warmth while moving their hands through the client’s biofield. The most common visual experience was of “light filling” the client’s body or “light dissolving” something within the client’s biofield. Many participants (22% of students; 39% of practitioners) reported seeing and/or interacting with nonphysical beings. As preliminary validation of the HES, I compared the responses of the two groups, which showed strong covariance (Pearson’s coefficient = 0.9118), but the frequency of reported experiences was significantly lower among students as compared to practitioners ($p < 0.05$). By paying attention to preconscious material, such as mental imagery and subtle bodily sensations, healers and students may develop experiential skill in detecting weak sensory and extrasensory cues.

Keywords: biofield, energy healing, tactile sensation, presence of spirit, healer training

Healers are found in all cultural traditions, as represented by shaman, spiritual healers and medicine men, with modern-day counterparts, such as energy healers and biofield practitioners, found in complementary and integrative medicine (Krippner, 1988; Benor, 2001). Many healers believe that some type of energy is involved in the healing process (Irwin, 1994), hence the growing acceptance of ‘energy-based healing’ modalities, such as Reiki, Healing Touch and QiGong (Wisneski and Anderson, 2009; Levin, 2011). Exceptional experiences have long been associated with healing, occurring in both healers and healees (Krippner and Achterberg, 2000; Benor, 2001). Examples of exceptional experiences would include “seeing auras” or lights around a client’s body, interacting with spiritual Guides, and miraculous recoveries. Such strange and unusual experiences are common among gifted healers, but are largely unstudied by the academic community, in part due to the complexity of the healing process, which bridges the fields of medicine, physics, psychology and parapsychology (Heath, 2003; Dossey, 2008).

Recent studies of energy-based healing have sought to organize the diverse healer experiences into various schema and conceptual frameworks (Warber et al., 2004; Helmsley et al., 2006; Engebretson and Wardell, 2012). In interviews with healers, Warber et al. (2004) used a grounded theory approach to identify major themes and dimensions in the practice of energy healing. One of the major themes in the interview transcripts was, “Experience of Energy”, namely, the healer’s experience of energy healing through their five ordinary senses and extrasensory perception. Healers often report unusual tactile sensations, such as heat, cold, pulsations, tingling, or prickliness in their hands or a sensation of a “current” within their body (Cooperstein, 1992; Engebretson, 1996; Benor, 2001). In another recent study, Engebretson and Wardell (2012) categorize healer experiences based

on three domains: circumstances, manifestation and interpretation. Within ‘manifestation’, they include healer experiences involving “sensate phenomena” (e.g., images, sounds, odors), “embodiment” awareness (e.g., visual, tactile, kinesthesia), “noetic” awareness (inner knowing), and “symbolic” (e.g., encounters with discarnate beings). These conceptual frameworks are a step forward, but what is lacking is knowledge of how widespread these phenomena are. How often do these experiences occur? Are some experiences more common than others?

In the present study, I use a new survey instrument, the Healer Experience Scale (HES), to examine the types and prevalence of sensory and extrasensory experiences among Healing Touch practitioners and students during their practice of Healing Touch (HT), an energy-based, biofield therapy. HT education and training is standardized, creating a comparable pool of healers from which to study. There are 5 levels of classes: Levels 1 through 3 are considered HT students; Level 4 are HT apprentices, and completion of Level 5 is HT practitioner. With additional practice, training and documentation, practitioners may become Certified or HT instructors. As preliminary validation of the Healer Experience Scale, I compare student and practitioner responses, based on the comparable training but different levels of experience in the two groups.

Methods

Study Design. A cross-sectional design was used to determine the types and prevalence of sensory and exceptional experiences among HT practitioners and students. The design of the study was approved by the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis Institutional Review Board (IRB#1501320432).

Recruitment. Participants were recruited through ads in Healing Touch newsletters and Energy Magazine, and through emails to Healing Touch groups. Potential participants were directed to a website with information about the study and a hyperlink to the survey.

Survey Instrument. The HES inventory contains both open-ended (qualitative) and close-ended (semi-quantitative, Likert scale) questions about the experiences of participants during their practice of Healing Touch, plus demographic questions regarding the training and practice of the participant. The HES was developed based on the HT experiences of the author, who completed HT training (Level 5), and on published accounts of healer experiences (for review, Benor, 2001).

In the HES, questions regarding the practitioner’s experiences are grouped by sensation: tactile, visual, auditory, olfactory/gustatory, energy movement, and energy release. Close-ended items that ask respondents the frequency with which they have had particular experiences have response items: “Never”, “Rarely”, “Sometimes”, “Often” and “All the time”. The responses are assigned points on a Likert scale, ranging from one (“Never”) to five (“All the time”). Open-ended items are labeled optional, and provide the respondent with the opportunity to describe any unusual experience in their own words.

Procedure. The questionnaire was administered as an online survey compiled using *Qualtrics*™ *Survey Software* (Qualtrics Labs Inc., Provo, UT; see <http://www.qualtrics.com>). Participants completed the survey at a time of their choosing on their own computers. The stated aim of the study was to examine, “the sensory (e.g., visual, auditory, touch) and out-of-ordinary experiences of Healing Touch practitioners during their practice of Healing Touch”, with the long-term goal of determining, “whether energy medicine practitioners have enhanced perception of subtle, but measurable, environmental fields”. To be eligible for the study, individuals had to be 18 years or older, had to have completed one or more HT courses and/or be certified as a HT practitioner or instructor, and had specified HT as their primary practice of energy healing. The responses of individuals not meeting these criteria were excluded from analysis. Participation was anonymous and voluntary, with withdrawal from the study permitted at any time. The Qualtrics software automatically prevented participants from taking the survey more than once. Recruitment was terminated after 5 months.

Analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to explore the sample profile and the Likert scores for each item. Pearson's correlation and Students' *t*-test were used to test any significant association/differences on the item mean scores among the two groups: practitioner (HT level 5 and above) and student (HT levels 1 – 4). Data was analyzed using Microsoft EXCEL and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0. Significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results

Profile of Participants. The survey response rate was 89% (183/205). The survey was completed by a convenience sample of 183 individuals (161 female, 9 male, 13 unspecified). The ages of the participants ranged from 25 – 80 years-old, with a mean age of 58. Participants were located in 8 countries, including the U.S., Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, Ireland, Sweden, Mexico and Chile, with the majority located in the U.S. (90%) and Canada (6%). In the U.S., respondents were located in 37 different states, with concentrations in Minnesota (n=26), Illinois (n=22), California (n=18), Virginia (n=12), Missouri (n=8) and North Carolina (n=8).

The majority of respondents (60%) had completed Level 5 training in Healing Touch, with 43% certified as HT practitioners and 9% as HT instructors. Of the remainder, 25% were Levels 1 – 3 Healing Touch students and 15% were Level 4 HT apprentices. The years of HT practice, and HT hours practiced per month, reported by participants was evenly distributed overall (Table 1). The majority (75%) of HT students (Levels 1 – 4) reported only 0 – 5 years of HT practice, whereas 77% of HT practitioners (Level 5 and above) reported 6 or more years of HT practice. A student-practitioner difference was also noted in the number of HT hours practiced per month, with 77% of HT students reporting 0 – 10 hours, and 56% of HT practitioners reporting more than 11 hours per month.

Participant responses on the HES. The mean Likert responses for the different types of exceptional experiences reported by students and practitioners are listed in Table 1. In the text, student responses are listed first within parentheses.

Visual experiences: The most common visual experiences were: seeing the client's biofield or aura (2.29/2.68), seeing spiritual Guides or discarnate beings (2.18/2.71), and seeing light either dissolving something in the client's body or filling the biofield (2.17/2.75). "Seeing" included both everyday eyesight, as well as mental images within the "mind's eye". Less commonly observed were brief light flashes (1.99/2.34) and seeing light entering the body (e.g., through a chakra) (1.84/2.13). Energetic structures such as the midline chakras and meridians (e.g., acupuncture) were rarely seen (1.62/1.74).

In their written descriptions of exceptional visual experiences, the HT practitioners and students emphasized the visual imagery which they receive during healing sessions, particularly "lots of images related to the client's life". For example, one practitioner saw a clear image of ballet shoes during a Healing Touch session, which was meaningful for her client, who had taken ballet as a child and loved it. Another practitioner saw an image of, "an elderly man carrying what appeared to be a hobo's nap sack". After the session, the client shared a story of her father related to the image. Other mental images reported were "scenes in nature", "symbolic animals", and symbolic images of a client's symptoms. Practitioners also reported "seeing" nonphysical Guides, angels and other spiritual beings, as well as deceased and living relatives of the client. For example, a healer reported seeing a nonphysical being, "in my peripheral vision...I noticed a silhouette to my right...I could tell his height and build, but not see his face...He answered ...to my mind [that] his name was John".

Seeing "different colors" during Healing Touch was reported by a number of healers in their written descriptions. As one healer noted, "I often "see" colors within a client's field, sometimes for a short period, sometimes for an extended period. Sometimes the colors change and/or move." Another healer reported, "Colors and shapes will often appear in areas of energy disturbance". Some visual experiences involved phenomena not covered in the questionnaire, including seeing "orbs" or

sparkles, “blue light streaming from the fingertips”, “waves” of energy similar to heat waves rising from hot objects, and dark energies/shadows moving off of clients or out of their bodies.

Auditory experiences: The most common auditory experience was a telepathic conversation with a Guide or other nonphysical being (2.20/2.99). Some healers seem to actually hear voices, described by one healer as a “disembodied voice”. Other healers report that, “I don’t actually ‘hear’ it...It is more like an intuitive thought”. The content of the communications is generally of two kinds, either instructions of what techniques the healer should use during the client’s session, or messages to be given to the client. For one healer, messages to be shared are musical, as she reports, “I hear songs in my mind’s ear which when sung to the client have a cathartic effect, they cry and release.”

Other types of auditory experiences were less frequently reported, such as hearing unusual sounds (2.00/2.31) or a telepathic conversation with the client (1.89/2.29). Despite their low prevalence, a great variety of unusual sounds were reported by the healers, including, “crackling energy sounds”, humming and buzzing, music, singing, birds, bells/chimes, mumbling/whispers, and “tonal frequencies”. These sounds were localized to the particular healing session and not due to an external source. For example, in a Healing Touch class, a student heard a woman and birds singing along with the music playing in the background. After the session, she discovered that her fellow students had not heard the woman or birds singing; they had only heard instrumental music playing in the room. Sometimes both healer and client heard the sound. For example, “while holding...a client’s heart chakra, I heard a ‘pop’ which sounded like a balloon...exploding. The client also heard this and opened her eyes and asked what that was!”

Telepathic conversations with clients were uncommon, but were significant for both healer and client. For example, one client heard the healer ask her inwardly if she, the healer, could remove a blockage due to a trauma. The client remembers answering in her mind, “yes, it may be removed”.

One HES question addressed whether the student/practitioner could create sound through their fingertips while giving Healing Touch. Only 14% of students/practitioners reported being able to create sound through their fingertips during the Healing Touch intervention/technique called “Ultrasound” (1.71/1.79).

Olfactory/gustatory experiences: Unusual smells and tastes during Healing Touch were reported as rare or infrequent (1.79/2.22), but the unusual nature of these sensations prompted many healers to share their most exceptional experiences. Typically both healer and client smelled the odor during the healing session, with some healers experiencing both taste and smell.

The olfactory/gustatory experiences described most often involved smells and odors associated with deceased relatives/pets of the client. For example, “once I smelled burning car tires – the client’s mother [deceased] had worked at a tire factory.” Other unusual odors related to deceased relatives/pets were: “dog shampoo smell” of a client’s deceased dog, “suitcase smell” of a client’s deceased grandmother who visited often, “cherry pipe tobacco” smoked by a client’s recently deceased cousin who often helped relatives in need, and “sawdust smell” associated with a client’s father who was a carpenter. These experiences were interpreted by healer/client as the presence of the deceased loved one in the room during the healing session.

Unpleasant odors, “the smell of something rotten”, “acrid sour”, “stale” or “smoke”, were noted when healers were clearing “very dense energies” from the client’s biofield. Despite the unpleasantness, one healer reported, “I know I’m done with an intervention when the smell goes away.” Similarly, “the longer I work on a client, the taste and/or smell dissipates”. Several healers noted that, “cancer has a smell”, and that it is “an unpleasant smell somewhat like feces”. If a client has a health history of chemotherapy or anesthesia, the healer may sometimes smell/taste these drugs. For example, “I could smell a heavy metal anesthesia smell after doing a Magnetic Clearing on an older person”.

Pleasant odors such as flower smells and perfumes were also reported: “I’ve smelled roses many times”, “flowers often”, and “strong perfumes when nobody was wearing perfume”. The circumstances under which these smells occurred was not reported. One exception, “I smelled a beautiful scent (indescribable) while working on a client who passed away shortly afterward”.

Touch/tactile experiences: Touch/tactile sensations were the most frequently reported exceptional experience. Healers noted that these sensations occur, 1) when they move their hands through the client's biofield, 2) when they place their hands lightly on the body of the client, and 3) within their own body during the session. The most common touch sensations included: a feeling of heaviness or congestion (3.32/3.44), a prickly sensation (3.38/3.36), warmth or heat in their hands (3.58/3.77), and vibrations/pulsations (3.22/3.51). Less common experiences were painful pricks in their hands (2.21/2.70), a feeling of dust or grit in the biofield (1.77/2.27), and a pressure sensation (2.82/3.23). A feeling of coolness or cold was experienced more often by HT practitioners than by HT students (1.75/3.43). A majority of practitioners/students (87%) "sometimes", "often" or "all the time" feel a sensation of warmth in their heart area (3.23/3.49) when they practice Healing Touch with a client.

In their written accounts, the HT students and practitioners described a great variety of touch sensations, as summed up by one healer, "all kinds of sensations, all the time. Electrical, static sensations. Bubbles. Effervesce. Like my hand is over the top of a glass of soda. Rolling waves of all amplitudes. Vibrations." Several healers noted electrical or static sensations, such as, "an electric current surrounding my hands and moving up to my elbows", "I have received an occasional shock, like a static charge", and, "felt like an electrified brillo pad as my hands passed over the area of the [laser-treated] tumor". Another commonly reported sensation was, "cool air leaks", "energy leaks" or "leaks where a wound needs to be closed. For example, "I was 7 to 8 ft from her body and felt air coming out like a tire that was deflating".

Tactile experiences described as "pressure" typically involved either a pulling/pressing down upon sensation, as in, "a feeling of being pulled into the client", "a very heavy pressure to hold her cheeks" or a pushing away feeling, for example, "feel a pushing [away] from the chakra as it becomes more balanced". Feelings of heaviness or congestion were noted around, "clogged areas" or in areas with energy "blockage". Dense areas in the biofield were experienced by some healers as, "stickiness". For example, "while doing Magnetic Clearing through a client's field who had just had chemotherapy, my fingers felt like they had sticky bread dough on them & were very heavy". Another example, "I felt a sensation of pulling a thick, sticky mucous off of a patient [who was] having trouble clearing their lungs". When clients had areas of physical pain, healers described feeling, "a zap of pain", "pricks", "bumps" or "bubbles" while moving their hands through that area. On rare occasions, healers felt sharp objects in the biofield, such as a, "feeling of broken glass when passing my hands over a client with advanced lung disease".

Energy moving and release: Two sets of questions addressed, 1) how the healer sensed 'energy moving' and 2) how they knew that an emotional or energetic 'release' had occurred. A majority of HT practitioners and students sensed that energy was moving when their hands became warm and/or tingling (4.32/4.35). During a healing session, healers also felt energy or 'energy moving' through their body (3.33/3.38) and/or through their head (2.69/2.81). Some healers felt energy moving up through their feet or legs (2.61/2.90), or their hands trembled as 'energy moved' through them (2.19/2.73). A sensation of light entering their body (2.88/3.21) or their client's body was another sign of 'energy moving'. On occasion, some healers felt their client's symptoms (2.45/2.64). For example, "I have felt uncomfortable sensations in my body related to the client's symptoms - stomach ache, backache - which dissipate as the session progresses."

HT practitioners often have an 'inner knowing' when an energetic release has occurred in a session (3.19/3.97). They also note visible changes in their client indicating an energetic release, such as: facial changes (3.35/3.89), a change in the client's breathing pattern (3.46/3.95) and/or twitching/jerking or other movement of the client's body (3.10/3.55). For example, during a release "the client will take a deep breath and the whole body relaxes upon exhale". Additional signs that a client has had a release include: deep sighs, tears and crying, coughing, twitching or jerking of limbs, and softening/relaxing of the face. There may be, "an intense look on client's face, then shift in expression. A stillness - like zero-point feel permeating from the client."

Some healers feel the release in the environment (2.99/3.05) or within their own body (2.54/2.72). Healers describe feeling a release as, “a rush of energy releasing in my body” and “a sense of heaviness in myself when a big energetic or emotional release is building up” which dissipates after the release. A flash of light as an indicator of an energetic release is an infrequent experience (1.73/1.87). “I saw a flash of light and felt a “release”; at virtually the same time I saw my client’s legs spasm.”

Preliminary validation of the HES. As preliminary validation of the HES, I compared the Likert responses of the two groups, namely, HT practitioners and HT students, both with similar training but different levels of experience. In this comparison, the Pearson’s correlation coefficient was 0.9118, implying a strong degree of correlation between the two groups. In general, the Pearson’s moment-correlation ranges from -1 to 1, with the value of 1 implying a perfect linear relationship between X and Y. A student’s *t*-test comparing the Likert responses of practitioners and students showed a significant difference ($p < 0.05$). Thus, practitioners and students reported similar experiences (Pearson’s = 0.9118), but the frequency of individual experiences was significantly higher in practitioners as compared to students (*t*-test, $p < 0.05$).

Discussion

Hidden aspects of healer abilities. Some recent studies and reviews (e.g., Benor, 2001; Wardell and Engebretson, 2006; Engebretson and Wardell, 2012; Anderson et al., 2016) have emphasized healer experiences as predominantly “spiritual” or “holistic”, while carefully minimizing any “extrasensory” or “paranormal” aspect. My goal in the present phenomenological study was simply to document the wide variety of unusual sensations experienced by healers during healing sessions, and to get some idea of the prevalence of particular experiences. With such an open framework, the overall picture of healer experiences seems more like “High Sense Perception” (as defined by healer/researcher Barbara Brennan, 1987) and “expanded consciousness”, rather than “spiritual” per se, although this may be a result of the particular questions in this survey. Evans (1993) makes the case that the human spiritual dimension has both spiritual (e.g., mystical/unitive) and paranormal (e.g., unusual energies) aspects. In the present study, I use, “exceptional”, as a more neutral, global term (White, 1997). “Exceptional” includes both mystical/unitive and psychic experiences, and may better reflect the wide-range of healer experience. In a similar vein, Murphy (1992) coined the term, “metanormal” for experiences that went beyond ordinary, everyday life. The widespread nature of exceptional/metanormal experiences is evident in the many disciplines and areas of human culture where they have been reported, including healing (Benor, 2001), religious rituals and gatherings (Murphy, 1992; Poloma, 2003), folklore (White, 1997), meditation and mindful practice (Austin, 1998), shamanic journeying (Harner, 2013), classroom teaching (Bache, 2008), Nature (Marshall, 2005), and sport/athletics (Murphy, 1992; Coffey, 2008). What ‘triggers’ these kinds of experiences? Murphy (1992) notes that they typically arise during activities involving mindfulness, conscious intentionality, and/or caring for others. These elements are present in the practice of Healing Touch (Kagel et al., 2014), so it is not surprising that exceptional experiences and metanormal capacities appear during this work.

Some exceptional experiences were reported “often” by HT practitioners and/or students, including: touch sensations of heat, heaviness and vibration; communications/contact with spiritual guides; and using Light to fill areas or dissolve blocks in the client’s body/biofield. Despite their everyday occurrence, there is little, if any, mention of specific healer experiences on HT websites or in HT books. In HT classes, exceptional experiences are only discussed if a student asks about or shares one of their own experiences. There are several reasons for this: One, HT class instructors do not want to influence students with their own experiences. As part of the HT ethos, they emphasize, “Make no comparisons”. Two, exceptional experiences are considered to be “siddhis”, a side-effect of healing practice, and like their counterparts in Hinduism and Buddhism, the student is advised to “do the work”, and not focus on any supernatural abilities or talents. And three, Healing Touch, like other

biofield therapies, strives to be accepted in the medical mainstream. Public discussion of any healer “psychic abilities” would be problematic in the current cultural milieu. In articles geared to the HT student (e.g., Kagel et al., 2014), the practice of HT is carefully framed in everyday terms like “using one’s intuition”, observing the body language of the client, and paying attention to sensations in one’s hands. Students are instructed to feel the dimensions and qualities of the client’s biofield, and to use a pendulum to check the chakra energy centers. For details regarding these techniques, they are directed to non-HT books, such as Brennan (1987). With so much hidden, it was not until I reached the Level 5 class that I began to understand the real importance of exceptional experiences. To prepare for this class, HT students are required to do a minimum of 100 1-hour HT sessions with different clients. In the write-ups of these sessions, students include their “energetic findings”, that is, any unusual perceptions or sensations they experienced during the session. When I presented my write-ups at Level 5, the instructors gave positive feedback on the cases where I had had a significant exceptional experience or extrasensory perception. For example, in a multi-session case with a client who presented with recurring depression, I saw in my mind’s eye an energetic structure like a small octopus attached to the top of the client’s head. This entity, possibly a persistent thought-form, was difficult to remove, and I detailed my efforts to do so in the write-up, resulting in a “Nice!” sticky note attached to this case by one of the instructors. Thus, I discovered that exceptional experiences are an indication of healer development and ability – not the goal of HT, but nevertheless, a sign that the student is learning and experiencing. This is also evident in the present results, where HT practitioners report more frequent exceptional experiences than HT students.

Imagery in healing. There are aspects of the healer experience not touched on in this survey. For example, in my practice as a healer, I found that imagery can often trigger an exceptional experience. The imagery in the HT 6th Level Intervention is particularly powerful, and involves “reaching up for the light...and then let it flow down...into the central brain area of your patient” (Brennan, 1987). During this intervention, I hold my hands together above the third eye of the client, creating a hole with my hands, and then imagine a column of white light moving down through this hole into the third eye and head of the client and spreading throughout their body and field. In one case, involving a woman with an extensive rash of shingles, my imaginary white light suddenly changed to green. It was a powerful flow of green light into her field, which was beyond what I had imagined and, at a conscious level, I did not know this color was needed. In many other cases, my imaginary white light would “illuminate” dark areas and shamanic intrusions that needed to be cleared and/or removed. As an example of a shamanic intrusion, I “saw” two pieces of twisted metal, like pieces of wreckage from a car accident, embedded in the body/field of a woman with multiple sclerosis. In other cases, I “saw” structures in the client’s field that seemed to represent a significant past-life. Each of these unusual experiences began with the imagery of light moving into the client’s third eye, body and field.

Parapsychologists have made a similar observation regarding imagery and psi. Taylor (2005) notes that, “imagery-conducive situations...appear to facilitate psi functioning.” Some gifted psychics enter a psi-conducive state by focusing their attention on an internal image (e.g., yellow rose) or an experience (e.g., peace, joy), and then discarding that image/experience once the mind has become quiet. Then it is a matter of waiting for psi-mediated impressions to emerge in the consciousness (White, 1964). Stanford (1977) notes that this technique is similar to the yogic meditation of Patanjali where ‘stilling of the mind’ is achieved by intense concentration on an image, followed by letting go of the image, with psychic powers developing over time. So it seems possible that Healing Touch practitioners, by concentrating on certain images during healing sessions, are stilling their minds and creating a psi-conducive state, leading to the perception of extrasensory information.

Developing healing power. Janet Mentgen, founder of Healing Touch, observed that beginning students (Level 1), “can’t hold the charge yet” (Wardell, 2000). What is this “charge” and how does it develop? In a landmark study, Green et al. (1991) observed surges in healer body-potential during non-touch energy healing. The authors theorized that energy healing involves a charge buildup in the healer’s body, followed by an emission of charge. In a further analysis of these results, physicist

William Tiller concluded that, “training and practice develop in the healer a somewhat automatic internal power buildup that discharges periodically and generates a very large electrical voltage pulse in the physical body” (Tiller et al., 1995). Some of the sensations reported by the healers in the present study, including prickly sensations in their hands, blue light streaming from their fingertips, and sparks while touching their clients, may be due to electrostatic forces. As further evidence for electrostatic charge buildup during healing sessions, one practitioner who often works with surgical patients during Pre-Op and Post-Op noted that, “my energy work often interferes with the electronic monitoring equipment creating artifacts”. I can reliably detect this healer charge-discharge process during Healing Touch using a sensitive magnetometer placed in the room near to the healer-client pair (Moga, 2014a, b). In my experiments recording magnetic field activity with different levels of HT students and practitioners, it appears that the ability to “hold charge” begins for some students at HT Level 3, and for others, HT Level 4. In HT education, Levels 3 and 4 are the point where students are taught two powerful meditations, namely the Hara Alignment Meditation and the Etheric Vitality Meditation, which are thought to increase healer power and energy flow.

The Hara Alignment Meditation is rather complex. It begins with the healer visualizing a column of light through the central core of their body, opening a channel between Heaven and Earth, and then spinning each of their chakras from Base chakra to Crown chakra, to energize their subtle body, and finally, expanding the Light in the “core star” centrally located within their body outwards to fill their own biofield. The Etheric Vitality Meditation is simpler: Imagining Light of different colors spinning through different chakra regions of the healer’s body, clearing and energizing the healer’s body in preparation for energy flow. With these meditations, the voltage potential of the healer’s body seems to increase, but this has not been directly measured. In one particularly memorable session, I did the Hara Alignment Meditation while giving a client Healing Touch. As I moved my hands from position to position, sparks emitted from my hands to the client’s body. The client, needless to say, was aware of the electrical sparking, and so I inwardly asked for a less painful manifestation of the energy, which then shifted to heat, rather than sparks. More often, I do the Hara Alignment Meditation when I need to “amp up” my energy quickly for an acute condition, such as pain. Many healers are hesitant to do these meditations and the accompanying Level 3 interventions in a first session with a client, precisely because they are powerful – they do not want to move too much energy and/or overwhelm the client. Similar meditations are found in other healing practices and lineages (e.g., Therapeutic Touch, Nervous System Energy Work), with the purpose of building ‘power’ and increasing energy for healing. Light imagery is a common element in these meditations, and may be key to understanding their effectiveness. In support of this possibility, Dotta et al. (2012) observed significant increases in photon emission (“biophotons”) from the brains of volunteers given the instruction to “visualize white light”.

In conclusion, healer exceptional experiences provide a rich foundation for understanding the healing process and healer development. As part of healer development, practitioners and students should be encouraged to pay attention to their mental imagery and subtle bodily sensations (i.e., preconscious material), in order to develop experiential skill in detecting weak sensory and extrasensory cues (Carpenter, 2012). The importance of exceptional experiences also needs to be emphasized in the healer community. According to White (1997), where these experiences are accepted and honored, they become exceptional human experiences (EHes), with the potential for transformative change in the experiencer and realization of one’s true human potential.

Limitations

The findings of this study need to be considered in light of several limitations. Despite widespread recruitment in the HT community, the number of volunteers who participated in this study was relatively few. As this was a convenience sample, participants who volunteered for this study may have been more motivated or confident in their HT practice, and hence, may have had more frequent or different experiences from the average HT practitioner or student. As another possible

limitation, the questions were grouped by type of sensation, which allowed the respondents to make comparisons between particular sensations as they took the survey. An alternative method, interweaving questions about different senses throughout the survey, may have led to a different result. Finally, the Likert responses may not match actual experience frequency, as these responses are based on the memory, deliberation and judgement of the respondent as to which experiences were most frequent. A more time-consuming, but possibly, more accurate appraisal of exceptional experience frequency, would require examining detailed write-ups of actual HT sessions.

Table 1

Mean Likert scores on Healer Experience Scale (n=183)

1=Never, No; 2=Rarely; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often, yes; 5=All the time

	HT Students	HT Practitioners
Visual: Biofield/aura	2.29	2.68
Visual: Chakra/meridians	1.62	1.74
Visual: Light entering body	1.84	2.13
Visual: Brief light flash	1.99	2.34
Visual: Objects in biofield	1.74	2.11
Visual: Spiritual guides	2.18	2.71
Visual: Light dissolving/filling	2.17	2.75
Visual: Remove objects	1.52	2.12
Auditory: heard unusual sounds	2.00	2.31
Auditory: telepathic w/ client	1.89	2.29
Auditory: telepathic w/ Guide	2.20	2.99
Auditory: produce sound	1.71	1.79
Touch sensations: yes or no	3.88	4.00
Touch: heaviness or congestion	3.32	3.44
Touch: prickly sensation	3.38	3.36
Touch: painful pricks	2.21	2.70
Touch: warmth or heat	3.58	3.77
Touch: coolness or cold	1.75	3.43
Touch: grit or feeling of dust	1.77	2.27
Touch: pressure	2.82	3.23
Touch: vibration/pulsation	3.22	3.51
Touch: Warmth in heart area	3.23	3.49
Energy moving: hands warm/tingling	4.32	4.35
Energy moving: tingling feet/legs	2.61	2.90
Energy moving: hands tremble	2.19	2.73
Energy moving: through my head	2.69	2.81
Energy moving: through my body	3.33	3.38
Energy moving: Light entering body	2.88	3.21
Feel client's symptoms	2.45	2.64
Smell/Taste during HT	1.79	2.22
Release: change in client breathing	3.46	3.95
Release: client moves	3.1	3.55
Release: I feel the release	2.99	3.05
Release: I see flash of light	1.73	1.87
Release: I have inner knowing	3.19	3.97
Release: facial changes in client	3.35	3.89
Release: feel release in my body	2.54	2.72

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Biography

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