

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor:

We would like to bring to the attention of the readership of the *Journal of Parapsychology* that a webpage for registering parapsychological experiments has been implemented by the Koestler Parapsychology Unit (KPU) at the University of Edinburgh, with Jim Kennedy advising on the development of the registry. The value of study registration for a controversial area such as parapsychology has been mentioned many times over the years. Prospective registration of experiments provides a database for research synthesis that is not subject to possible reporting or publication biases. Registration also increases confidence by providing clear evidence that the key hypotheses and analyses were planned prior to conducting the experiment. Among other benefits, registration should be of value to editors and reviewers during the publication process. Registration of experiments is a well-established practice in medical research and enhances the credibility of a study. The KPU registry webpage is listed below.

<http://www.koestler-parapsychology.psy.ed.ac.uk/TrialRegistry.html>

We expect that other options for study registration will become available in the future. Our intention is for the KPU registry webpage to also serve as a resource that provides information about other registration options as they become available.

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To the Editor:

In the Fall 2010 issue, in the editorial by Edwin May, there is a discussion about bending normal spoons by hand and that shock deformation is the simple secret to the trick. Shock deformation in metallurgy refers to explosive shaping of metal, a process far more violent than anything one could possibly accomplish by hand. Permanent deformation of a metal occurs only when the stress exceeds the elastic limit or yield point. The yield point for steel and nickel and similar alloys is

greater than anyone could accomplish by hand with normal spoons. One could argue that the PK is at work in the spoon bending, but that is just what Mr. May denies.

Alternative explanations include special low-yield point alloys, of which there are several. Another possibility is having a very small cross section at the neck of the spoon so that it is basically quite weak. Another is prebending in a vise with concealment and legerdemain. But shock deformation—no. If such hand-type deformation were possible then most of our bridges, metal supports, and buildings would be in grave danger of collapse, since the yield point becomes extremely and miraculously low when brought to the hand of talented performers such as Mr. May and others familiar with the purported bending process.

I suggest we be provided with more evidence with unimpeachable witnesses present, so we can save our infrastructure from collapse by this amazing manually-produced shock deformation.

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To the Editor:

R. W. Lowrie's argument against shock deformation as a possible explanation for metal bending PK sounds good at first blush. However, there are some rather deep problems with his assertion that the only kind of shock deformation is the explosive kind. A hint of the process involving local problems in metal because of weak shocks can be found at the following site:

http://jap.aip.org/resource/1/japiau/v70/i8/p4248_s1?isAuthorized=no

However, he is correct in that the preponderance of the literature is for huge shocks. (Later, he talks about bridges and buildings, and it is exactly concern about these large structures that most all the research is focused upon at the high end of the scale.)

However, there are problems with this as a rebuttal of my contention that shock deformation cannot be ruled out in the usual PK metal bending parties that provide most of the evidence for spoon bending.

1. Targ and Puthoff could not confirm Mr. Uri Geller's claim of metal bending under laboratory conditions.
2. As I said in the editorial, a metallurgist at SRI with whom I consulted bent a heavy soup spoon that I was

unable to bend mechanically. He was the one who mentioned a weak form (compared to most of what is online) of shock deformation. My colleague makes no psychic claim nor do I when I also learned to do the “trick.” His and my ability later mimicked, exactly, the spoon I had watched the instructor bend in the PK weekend.

3. As with any inelastic deformation of metal, the shock strength is related to the properties of the metal under consideration. Any explosives expert knows this. It takes a considerable shock to bend a bridge girder, but a coat hanger? Not so much. Thus, shock deformation of spoons cannot be compared to the shock deformations in the literature or to bridges.
4. Lastly, I appreciate how seductive the variations on the theme “If one cannot think of a way something was done by normal means then it must have been accomplished by paranormal means.” I too have fallen and still fall into this seductive trap from time to time, but so far it has always been the case of a lack of my knowledge of the original claimant rather than support of the cherished hypothesis.

So in my view the issue remains as to the cause of the observables of metal bending.

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