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Spiritual and Nonspiritual Approaches to Dream Work: Effects on Clients' Well-Being

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Fifty-one spiritually oriented volunteer clients completed 2 sessions of waking life dream interpretation or 2 sessions of spiritual dream interpretation. Volunteer clients in both conditions increased in insight into their dreams and rated sessions favorably, but volunteer clients in the spiritual condition experienced greater increases in spiritual insight into their dreams and experienced greater increases in existential well-being. The results suggest the benefits of incorporating spirituality into dream interpretation for spiritually oriented clients.

From antiquity to the present, some people have viewed dreams as possible links to spiritual realms and sacred forces (Van de Castle, 1994; Wollmering, 1997). Virtually every religious tradition throughout history has sought spiritual guidance, divine revelation, and creative inspiration from dreams (Bulkeley, 1999). This point is illustrated by the 98 specific references to dreams and dreaming in the Old Testament (Wollmering, 1997).

William James (1900/1958) philosophized that dreams may come from the nonrational part of our psyche that is the source of deep religious experience. Jung (1964) also believed that dreams were linked to spiritual life, even proposing the possibility that dreams are inspired by transcendental forces outside the dreamer, *somnia a Deo missa* (dreams sent by God):

We are so captivated by and entangled in our subjective consciousness that we have forgotten the age-old fact that God speaks chiefly through dreams and visions. . . . If a theologian really believes in God by what authority does he suggest that God is unable to speak through dreams? (Jung, 1964, pp. 92-93)

Jung elaborated on this assertion by explaining that prejudices, errors, and fantasies influence conscious life, but the unconscious is unnumbered by such distortions. This immunity to such "psychic noise" is perhaps the basis for the belief that the unconscious is receptive to spiritual communication. The unconscious, finding expression in dreams, may be the only part of the psyche pure enough to hear the voice of a transcendent power. Bulkeley (1994) proposed that this potential for religious significance is present in all people's dreams, "we will discover that *all* people's dreams, not just the dreams of churchgoers and the formally 'religious' people, have this potential for religious meaning. We will find that a religious dimension

is potentially present in *all* people's dreaming" (p. 21). According to Bulkeley (1999), looking at dreams from a purely psychological perspective or in purely religious terms artificially restricts dream interpretation. Rather, Bulkeley (1999) suggested that dream interpretation can be enhanced by exploring both emotional and spiritual aspects of dreams, thereby promoting psychological integration and fostering spiritual and religious well-being.

Although many theoreticians have proposed an association between spiritual phenomena and dreams, no research has been conducted on the effects of helping clients explore their dreams from a spiritual perspective. If dreams have the potential for spiritual guidance or revelation, then it is possible that helping clients explore their dreams from their own spiritual perspective could provide a therapeutically rich experience. This study investigated whether helping volunteer clients use their spiritual beliefs to explore and interpret their dreams is therapeutically beneficial.

To study a subject as abstract as *spirituality*, we first needed to define it. Several authors have conceptualized spirituality as being closely related to transcendence (extending beyond human or material existence) without making specific reference to formal religious doctrine. For example, Ellison (1983) defined it existentially as "the capacity to find purpose and meaning beyond one's self and the immediate" (p. 338). Miller and Martin (1988) described spirituality more traditionally as the inner experience of "acknowledging a transcendent being, power, or reality greater than ourselves" (p. 200). In a biography of Carl Jung, Jaffe (1970) described an overlap between spirituality and existentialism: "The experience of meaning depends on the awareness of a transcendental or spiritual reality that complements the empirical reality of life and together with it forms a whole" (p. 21).

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It is difficult to define spirituality without also discussing its relationship to *religiosity*. Religiosity connotes allegiance to a particular system of faith and worship. Religious beliefs are characterized by adherence to a set of sacred doctrines and behaviors or membership in a body of people who share similar beliefs about God, holy observance, and morality (*Webster's New World Dictionary*, 1984). Religiosity adds an element of theological structure and formality not always present in spirituality. While several authors endorse the idea that spirituality and religion are separate constructs, others suggest that the two are conceptually similar (Worthington & Sandage, 2001). In the view of P. C. Hill and Hood (1999), there is a great deal of overlap between spirituality and religion: Both can be understood as "a search for or experience of the sacred, as defined by the individual" (p. 1020). In this context, the term *sacred* is understood as the perception of either an ultimate truth, ultimate reality, or perception of a transcendent being that has divine attributes (P. C. Hill & Hood, 1998). Furthermore, given that many people express their experience of the sacred in conventional religious terminology, it is possible that the defining criteria of spirituality overlap with those of religion (P. C. Hill & Hood, 1998). In fact, the Latin root of the word *religion* or "religio" is defined in terms that are very similar to current conceptualizations of spirituality: "a bond between humanity and some greater-than-human power" (P. C. Hill et al., 1998, p. 14). Therefore, for the purposes of this study we will use the term *spiritual* as representing both religious and spiritual beliefs and practices.

For this study, we used C. E. Hill's (1996) Cognitive-Experiential Dream Interpretation Model. The model consists of three stages (exploration, insight, and action) in which counselors and clients work collaboratively to explore the images of the dream, figure out the meaning of the dream, and then creatively come up with ideas for incorporating dream insights into the client's waking life. Several studies have now been conducted on the C. E. Hill (1996) Cognitive-Experiential Dream Interpretation Model, with one of the most impressive and consistent outcomes being that volunteer clients report higher session quality and gain more insight from dream interpretation than from other forms of talk therapy (Cogar & Hill, 1992; Diemer, Lobell, Vvino, & Hill, 1996; Heaton, Hill, Hess, Hoffman, & Leotta, 1998; Heaton, Hill, Petersen, Rochlen, & Zack, 1998; C. E. Hill, Diemer, & Heaton, 1997; C. E. Hill et al., 2001; C. E. Hill et al., 2000; Zack & Hill, 1998).

C. E. Hill et al. (2001) investigated the question of whether using different types of dream interpretation in the insight stage would produce different results. Volunteer clients completed a single session of dream interpretation using the C. E. Hill (1996) model. Half of the volunteer clients were randomly assigned to waking life insight (in which counselors worked with clients to understand their dreams from the perspective of events in their waking life) and the other half were assigned to parts-of-self insight (in which counselors worked with clients work to un-

derstand their dreams as representing various parts of their personality). No differences were found between the two types of interpretation, suggesting that counselors can use either type of interpretation and achieve similar results.

We were intrigued by the finding of no difference between types of interpretation in the C. E. Hill et al. (2001) study and wondered whether using a spiritual level of interpretation in the insight stage might produce added benefits for spiritually oriented individuals. In this study, we compared two versions of the C. E. Hill (1996) Cognitive-Experiential Dream Interpretation Model, one using waking life interpretation in the insight stage and the other using clients' spirituality as an aid in the interpretation process during the insight stage. More specifically, spiritually oriented volunteer clients completed either two sessions of waking life dream interpretation or two sessions of spiritual dream interpretation.

Given the very positive ratings on session depth and insight for dream interpretation sessions in past research, it was not expected that the added spiritual component would enhance these ratings. Therefore, our first hypothesis was that session outcome and general insight would be rated equally by volunteer clients for the two conditions. The second hypothesis was that volunteer clients in the spiritual condition would achieve more spiritual insight and existential well-being than clients in the waking life condition. Given Bulkeley's (1994) theory that the spiritual and religious significance of dreams is found in the existential metaphors often present in dreams, existential well-being was the construct of interest, rather than religious well-being.

Method

Design

We used an experimental, pretest–posttest comparison group design. Volunteer clients were randomly assigned to either two sessions of waking life dream interpretation or two sessions of spiritual dream interpretation.

Participants

Volunteer clients. Sixty-four adults from the community completed measures prior to their sessions (58 women, 6 men; 47 White, 9 African American, 5 Asian/Pacific Islander, 2 Hispanic, and 1 unspecified race/ethnicity) and served as clients. All clients were either members of churches or religious organizations or considered themselves to be "spiritual" individuals (28 Protestant, 20 Catholic, 4 Baha'i, 6 other affiliations, and 6 with no religious affiliation). Ages ranged from 24 to 72 years ($M = 44.65$, $SD = 11.91$). Most (67%) indicated they had previously been in counseling (number of sessions $M = 40.20$, $SD = 65.93$).

Fifty-one volunteer clients completed both sessions (47 women, 4 men; 40 White, 5 African American, 5 Asian/Pacific Islander, 1 Hispanic; 23 Protestant, 15 Catholic, 5 other, 4 Baha'i, and 4 with no religious affiliation). Ages ranged

from 24 to 66 years ($M = 44.84$, $SD = 11.57$). Most (71%) indicated that they had previously been in counseling (number of sessions $M = 27.38$, $SD = 60.71$).

Counselors. Twenty-nine counselors (20 women, 9 men; 22 White, 4 Asian/Pacific Islander, 1 African American, 1 Hispanic, and 1 mixed race participant), including the authors, participated in this study. Twenty-seven of the counselors were graduate students in counseling-related fields, 1 was a postdoctoral-level counseling psychologist, and 1 was a post-master's-level counselor. All counselors had been trained in using the C. E. Hill (1996) dream interpretation model. Twenty-four of the counselors had experience using the C. E. Hill model prior to the training sessions for this study (number of previous dream sessions $M = 13.54$, $SD = 21.10$). The number of direct client hours (nondream interpretation) ranged from 5 to 2,500 ($M = 243.52$, $SD = 466.13$). Their ages ranged from 22 to 52 years ($M = 28.48$, $SD = 6.63$). Twenty-one of the counselors were affiliated with a religion (8 Protestant, 6 Catholic, 3 Jewish, 2 Mormon, and 2 Hindu), and 8 were not religiously affiliated (although 7 of the 8 counselors considered themselves to be spiritual individuals). Counselors described themselves as primarily psychodynamic ($n = 8$) or humanistic ($n = 8$), equally humanistic and cognitive ($n = 6$), equally humanistic and psychodynamic ($n = 4$), and primarily cognitive ($n = 3$).

Judges. Eight undergraduate students (7 women, 1 man; age $M = 24.38$, $SD = 5.93$) served as judges for this study. All judges rated both adherence and insight.

Session Outcome Measures

The Exploration-Insight Gains (E-I). E-I Gains is a subscale of the Gains from Dream Interpretation (GDI; Heaton, Hill, Petersen, et al., 1998). The GDI was developed on the basis of responses to open-ended questions about the helpful aspects of dream interpretation sessions in the C. E. Hill et al. (1997) study. E-I Gains consists of seven items rated on a 9-point Likert scale (9 = *agree strongly*; $\alpha = .83$, e.g., "I was able to explore my dream thoroughly during the session," "I learned more from the session about how past events influence my present behavior"). Zack and Hill (1998) reported that the E-I Gains was correlated .69 with the Session Impact Scale-Understanding (Elliott & Wexler, 1994) and .53 with the Mastery-Insight Scale of the Therapeutic Realizations Scale (Kolden, 1991), suggesting evidence of concurrent validity. Internal consistencies (Cronbach's α) for the present study were .82.

Depth Scale of the Session Evaluation Questionnaire-Form 4 (SEQ-D). Siles & Snow (1984). The SEQ-D is a five-item, bipolar, adjective-anchored, self-report measure designed to evaluate the quality of therapy. An example of an adjective set is "shallow" versus "deep." Siles et al. (1994) reported correlations between the SEQ-D and the Understanding, Problem Solving, and Relationship subscales of the Session Impacts Scale (Elliott & Wexler, 1994), hence providing evidence of the concurrent validity of these mea-

sures of session impact. Internal consistency (Cronbach's α) of .91 (Siles & Snow, 1984) and .90 (Siles et al., 1994) have been reported. Internal consistency (Cronbach's α) for the present study was .88.

Insight into dream. Following procedures established in Falk and Hill (1995), volunteer clients are asked to write down a dream and their interpretation of their dream in response to the question, "What do you think this dream means to you? How would you interpret it?" Trained judges then independently rate the general insight of the interpretation using a 9-point Likert scale (9 = *high waking life insight*), using the following definition of general insight:

Client expresses an understanding of something about himself or herself and can articulate patterns or reasons for behaviors, thought, or feelings. Insight usually involves an "aha" experience in which the client perceives self or world in a new way. The client takes appropriate responsibility rather than blaming others, using "shoulds" imposed from the outside world or rationalizing.

In previous studies, interrater reliability (Cronbach's α) between judges ranged from .91 to .97 (Diemer et al., 1996; Falk & Hill, 1995; C. E. Hill, Nakayama, & Wonnell, 1998). Interrater reliability (Cronbach's α) for the four judges rating general insight in the present study was .90.

Trained judges also independently rate the spiritual insight of the interpretation using a 9-point Likert scale (9 = *high spiritual insight*) using the following definition of spiritual insight developed for this study:

Client expresses an understanding about self or life that incorporates a subjective reality beyond immediate and verifiable reality. He or she describes an awareness of the sacred through contemplation of purpose in life, a transcendent reality (i.e., a reality beyond the material universe), deep personal values, a higher power in his or her life, morality and post-death experience, organization and creation of the universe, meaning in suffering, ultimate truth, or reflection on religious beliefs and practices.

Intrater reliability (Cronbach's α) for the judges rating spiritual insight was .96.

Treatment Outcome Measures

Existential Well-Being subscale of The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS). Ellison & Smith (1991). The SWBS is the most extensively researched measure of subjective and spiritual well-being. It is based on the conceptualization of spiritual well-being as having both religious and existential components. The SWBS consists of 20 items responded to on a 6-point Likert-type scale (7 = *strongly disagree*). Ten items measure Religious Well-Being (e.g., "I believe God loves me and cares about me") and 10 measure Existential Well-

Spiritual and Nonspiritual Approaches to Dream Work

Being (e.g., "I believe there is some real purpose for my life"). Total Existential Well-Being scores can range from 10 to 60, with higher scores indicating greater existential well-being. With regard to validity, Spiritual Well-Being scores have been positively correlated with religious affiliation (Carson, Soeken, Shamy, & Terry, 1990), intrinsic religious orientation, the Purpose in Life Test and self-esteem (Paloutzian's symposium as cited in Ellison, 1983) and negatively correlated with state-trait anxiety (Davis, Kerr, & Robinson Kurpius, 2004; Kaczorowski, 1989) and depression (Fehring, Brennan, & Keller's study as cited in Ellison & Smith, 1991).

Ellison (1983) reported test-retest reliability of .86 and internal consistency (Cronbach's α) of .78. The coefficient alpha was also acceptable for Existential Well-Being (.78). These coefficients suggest high test-retest reliability and internal consistency for the Existential Well-Being subscale of the SWBS. Internal consistency (Cronbach's α) for the present study for Existential Well-Being was .84.

Measures of Adherence

Counselor self-rated adherence. The counselors rated the extent to which they competently followed the structure of their assigned model using a version of the measure developed for the Heaton, Hill, Petersen, et al. (1998) study. The items, rated on a 9-point scale (9 = *high*), included "How completely did you do the exploration stage?" "How completely did you do the insight stage?" and "How completely did you do the action stage?" Counselors were also asked to indicate length of the session in minutes.

Judges' indication of insight condition. Judges listened to the first 10 minutes of the insight stage after the counselor's description of the stage and used a 5-point scale to indicate which of the two insight conditions (spiritual insight model or nonspiritual insight model) the counselor was implementing (1 = *definitely spiritual condition*, 2 = *maybe spiritual condition*, 3 = *not sure*, 4 = *maybe nonspiritual condition*, 5 = *definitely nonspiritual condition*). To facilitate determination of which condition was being implemented, judges counted the number of references to religious or spiritual terms (e.g., God, sacred, soul) as well as the number of references to waking life terms (e.g., a recent trip, conflict at work). Interrater reliability (Cronbach's α) for the three teams (two judges each) were .99, .98, and .99, respectively.

Procedure

Pilot study. The first author conducted spiritual dream interpretation sessions with three volunteer undergraduates prior to the start of the actual study. Refinements to the procedures were made based on these sessions and feedback from the volunteer clients.

Counselor recruitment/training. Counselors were asked by the first author to participate in the study. They chose which of the two conditions they most preferred and believed in and used that condition with all volunteer clients

(1 to 4 clients per counselor). Depending on their experience with the C. E. Hill (1996) model, counselors completed additional training and readings. To address the potential issue of trainers communicating advocacy for one condition over the other, counselors in each condition were trained separately by trainers who expressed a stronger allegiance to their assigned condition.

Client recruitment. Clients were recruited from the community via church newsletters and bulletins, in-person announcements at church-group meetings, windshield fliers placed on cars in church parking lots, an ad in a local religious newspaper, and an e-mail announcement sent to a university staff directory. Potential participants were unaware of the goals and hypotheses of this study and were not informed that any of the sessions would contain a spiritual component. They were simply told that they would participate in two sessions of dream interpretation with a trained counselor.

Seventy-seven volunteers expressed an interest in the study. The first author called all volunteers to screen out prospective clients who (a) were dealing with serious mental illness, (b) were currently on psychiatric medication and had been on the medication for less than the last 2 months, or (c) were currently in ongoing therapy (and if so, had been in the therapy for less than the last 2 months). In addition, participants must have been affiliated with a church or religious organization or considered themselves to be "spiritual" individuals. If accepted, volunteer clients were randomly assigned to one of two conditions, either the waking life model or the spiritual model, and were scheduled for their first session. For each dream interpretation session, participants were asked to bring in a typed copy of "one of the most memorable dreams you've ever had, whether it occurred a week ago, a month ago, many years ago, or whether it occurs between now and one of your dream interpretation sessions." They were also informed that they would be required to keep a dream journal for the 2 weeks between their two sessions. Last, they were informed about audiotaping and confidentiality of the sessions and tapes.

Of the 77 people who expressed an interest, 8 were referred to another dream interpretation study because the current study was filled by the time they signed up, 3 volunteer clients did not show up for their first session, 2 were not eligible to participate because they were not affiliated with a religious group and did not consider themselves to be "spiritual." Of the 64 volunteer clients who participated, 51 completed both dream interpretation sessions.

Pre-session testing. When volunteer clients showed up for the first dream interpretation session, they were given a consent form to read and sign. The SWBS (Ellison, 1983) was administered prior to the first session. Before both sessions, participants were asked for a copy of their typed dream. If they had not brought in a typed copy of a dream, they were asked to write out a memorable dream at that point. Volunteer clients were then asked to write an interpretation of their

dream in response to the following questions: "What do you think this dream means to you? How would you interpret it?"

Sessions. Each client was scheduled to attend two sessions of dream interpretation with the same counselor in each session. Each session was focused on a different dream. Sessions lasted from 40 to 130 minutes ($M = 80.64$, $SD = 17.42$). All sessions were audiotaped. Counselors used their assigned insight condition (spiritual or waking life) with all volunteer clients assigned to them. To begin the sessions, counselors informed clients that they would be working collaboratively with the client to figure out the meaning of the dream. They then briefly outlined the three-stage model that they would be using (exploration, insight, and action).

Stage 1 (the exploration stage) was the same in both conditions. Volunteer clients were asked to tell their dream in the first-person present tense. Counselors wrote down the major images and chose from 5 to 15 images (e.g., objects, people, feelings) from the dream to explore sequentially in-depth. After asking the volunteer clients to describe their major feelings upon awakening from the dream, counselors asked clients to describe the first image in detail, encouraging the clients to enter into the experiential moment as they described the details. Volunteer clients were then asked to associate to the image, talking about whatever thoughts or images came to mind as they thought about the image. Counselors asked about triggers to the dream image from any current or past events in their lives. The exploration stage lasted approximately 20 to 45 minutes.

Stage 2, the insight stage, is the point at which the two conditions diverged. In the spiritual condition, counselors began by saying "Next we are going to explore your dream from your own spiritual perspective. But first, I'd like to ask you a little bit about your spiritual values. What does 'spirituality' mean for you personally?" Counselors then explored, for 5 to 10 minutes, the principles, values, or ideals that have guided the client's life. Counselors in the spiritual condition then introduced the remainder of the insight stage saying,

Some psychologists and theologians believe that dreams can be spiritual in nature—reflecting issues that go beyond our daily activities and touch on our deepest hopes, values, and beliefs. Some people also believe that dreams can provide guidance from sources outside the dreamer or from deeper levels within the dreamer—like the soul or the unconscious. What do you think your dream might mean from your own spiritual perspective?

Counselors then worked with their clients to understand how the clients' spiritual or religious beliefs might aid them in interpreting the dream and how the spiritual beliefs might be reflected in the dream content.

In the insight stage of the waking life condition, counselors provided a brief rationale for exploring waking life insights, saying something like the following:

What we would like to do now is try to understand your dream from the perspective of events that might be going on in your current waking life. Research has shown that dreams are related to waking life events and are a barometer of what is going on inside ourselves. What do you think your dream might mean in terms of your current waking life?

Counselors then worked with volunteer clients to understand how parts of the dream fit with what was going on in the client's life at the time that the dream occurred. The insight stage in both conditions lasted 20 to 45 minutes.

Stage 3, the action stage, was the same in both conditions. Counselors first asked the client how he or she would like to change the dream. Then they asked how the client might translate the changes in the dream to changes in his or her current waking life. At the end of the action stage, which lasted approximately 15 minutes, counselors asked the client to summarize what was learned about the dream and what the client was going to do about what he or she had learned.

At the conclusion of the first session in both conditions, the counselor told the client to keep a dream journal during the 2 weeks prior to his or her next dream interpretation session. Volunteer clients in the nonspiritual condition were asked to record their dreams and write waking life interpretations. Volunteer clients in the spiritual condition were asked to write spiritual interpretations.

Postsession measures. Immediately after both sessions, volunteer clients completed, in random order, the E-1 Gains and SEQ-D and wrote an interpretation of their dream. Also following both sessions, counselors completed the adherence measure and indicated the length of the session. Following the second session, volunteer clients also completed the SWBS.

Approximately 4 weeks following the second dream interpretation session, volunteer clients were mailed copies of the SWBS and a postage-paid addressed envelope in which to return completed copies of the measures. A debriefing form in a sealed envelope marked "Do not open until you have completed all three measures in this packet" was also included in the mailed packet. As an incentive to return the completed measures, a gold dollar coin was included with the materials. The response rate for the follow-up questionnaires was 98%. The mean number of days in which the follow-up questionnaires were returned was 34 days (ranging from 13 to 85 days).

Adherence checks. After both sessions, counselors reviewed the audiotapes to the point immediately after they described what they were going to be doing in the insight stage. Two judges listened to the first 10 minutes of the insight stage and indicated which condition (spiritual or waking life) was being implemented. If the two judges were in agreement and accurate about which condition was being implemented, the case was included in the analysis. In the sessions in which the two judges were in disagreement or one judge indicated "not sure" about which condition was

being implemented, a second set of two judges listened to the first 15 minutes of the insight stage of that tape.

For sessions to be retained in the analyses, two independent judges had to agree and be accurate on which condition was being implemented (spiritual or waking life). Eight cases had to be rerated; in all 8 sessions, the second set of judges rated the sessions as being in the direction of the correct condition (i.e., the actual condition that the counselor attempted to implement), so all were included in the analysis. All cases in the spiritual condition met these adherence requirements. One case in the waking life condition did not meet adherence requirements and was dropped from the analysis. This was similar to the adherence rates of other past dream interpretation research (C. E. Hill et al., 2001).

Insight ratings: Four undergraduate judges were trained to rate general insight into dreams and a different set of four judges were trained to rate spiritual insight using data from a previous study (C. E. Hill et al., 2001). They practiced rating insight until they reached high interrater reliability ($> .70$). After training, the first author read copies of volunteer clients' dreams and corresponding interpretations to the judges. One set of judges then rated the amount of spiritual insight in each dream interpretation, and the other set of judges rated the amount of general insight. To avoid possible order effects, judges did not know which interpretations were possession and which were possession, and dreams from the same client were rated at different times.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Adherence. Counselors had to rate themselves as adequately completing the three dream interpretation stages within each session (at least a "4" on a 9-point scale for two of the three stages). No differences between conditions were found for counselor-rated adherence to the exploration stage, insight stage, or action stage. For this study, counselor adherence ratings on the exploration stage for the first session ($M = 7.21$, $SD = 1.31$) and second session ($M = 7.59$, $SD = 1.42$), on the insight stage for first session ($M = 7.03$, $SD = 1.33$) and second session ($M = 7.37$, $SD = 1.22$), and on the action stage for the first session ($M = 6.48$, $SD = 1.50$) and second session ($M = 6.37$, $SD = 1.77$) were all within one standard deviation of scores reported for counselors in other studies (C. E. Hill et al., 1997; C. E. Hill et al., 2001; Rochlien, Ligiero, Hill, & Heaton, 1999). Hence, counselors conducted all three stages of the dream model in each session and adhered to each of the stages about the same as counselors had in previous dream interpretation studies.

Comparisons with norms. Client scores on SEQ-D in both conditions were more than one standard deviation above the means presented by Stiles et al. (1994, $M = 5.16$, $SD = .91$) for regular psychotherapy. Client scores on SEQ-D and EI-Gains in both conditions were within one standard deviation of scores for dream interpretation sessions with undergraduate

clients reported by Heaton, Hill, Petersen, et al. (1998), C. E. Hill et al. (2001), and Wonnell and Hill (2000). Scores on judge-rated insight before and after both sessions in both conditions were within one standard deviation of scores for clients reported by Diemer et al. (1996) for dream interpretation sessions. Thus, it can be concluded that this sample was similar to previous dream interpretation samples on all measures of session outcome; however, as with other dream interpretation studies, this sample was more than one standard deviation above non-dream-oriented psychotherapy on depth.

Correlations among session outcome measures. Because the SEQ-D and EI-Gains session outcome measures were highly correlated and measure theoretically similar constructs, the scores on these measures were standardized and averaged to form an index of session outcome. The internal consistency (Cronbach's α) with these two measures combined was .81. General insight and spiritual insight were not highly correlated with each other or with the other two measures; therefore, the scores on these measures were kept separate.

Equivalence of conditions. No differences were found between those who were assigned to the two conditions for age, $t(60) = .29$, $p = .77$; gender, $\chi^2(1, N = 63) = .67$, $p = .67$; race, $\chi^2(3, N = 62) = .60$, $p = .90$; marital status, $\chi^2(5, N = 63) = 4.30$, $p = .51$; religious denomination, $\chi^2(4, N = 63) = 4.51$, $p = .34$; previous participation in counseling, $\chi^2(1, N = 63) = .21$, $p = .65$; or education level, $\chi^2(4, N = 63) = 7.72$, $p = .10$. Hence, random assignment resulted in two conditions that did not differ on the measured client demographic variables. Furthermore, one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) found no effects for client age, gender, race, marital status, religious denomination, previous participation in counseling, or education level on session outcome (SEQ-D and EI-Gains combined) or change in spiritual or general insight. Hence, gender and race were not considered in subsequent analyses.

No significant differences were found between conditions for length of the first session (spiritual condition, $M = 84.53$, $SD = 20.29$; waking life condition, $M = 77.93$, $SD = 15.84$), $t(59) = 1.41$, $p = .17$; or second session (spiritual condition, $M = 80.39$, $SD = 17.19$; waking life condition, $M = 78.86$, $SD = 15.19$), $t(48) = .33$, $p = .74$.

Significantly more volunteer clients in the spiritual condition (29 out of 32 or 91%) returned for the second session than did clients in the waking life condition (22 out of 31 or 71%), $z = 2.02$, $p = .05$. Analyses indicated that those clients who did not return for the second session did not differ from the volunteer clients who did return for the second session on possession measures (session outcome index, change in general insight into their dreams, and change in spiritual insight into their dreams) or the possession measure (spiritual well-being).

Counselor effects. Counselors saw from 1 to 4 volunteer clients each. To examine the effect of counselor variables on session outcome and well-being data, all but one of the counselors was entered into several linear regressions as dummy variables for each condition separately. None of the regression

equations were significant for the session outcome index, change in general insight, change in spiritual insight, changes pre-session to post-session, and changes pre-session to 1-month follow-up for spiritual well-being. There were no effects of the authors serving as counselors (one in each condition) in the study.

Counselors used the same dream interpretation approach (either spiritual or waking life) with all of their volunteer clients. Therefore, it was a concern that counselor demographics might not be similar across conditions. Results did not differ across condition on counselor age, $t(26) = -.29, p = .77$; race, $\chi^2(4, N = 28) = 2.92, p = .57$; religious denomination, $\chi^2(5, N = 28) = 6.20, p = .29$; level of formal training/education, $\chi^2(3, N = 28) = 3.39, p = .34$; degree of psychodynamic theoretical orientation, $t(26) = 1.85, p = .08$; degree of cognitive-behavioral theoretical orientation, $t(26) = -1.80, p = .08$; degree of humanistic/experiential theoretical orientation $t(26) = .73, p = .47$; number of dream sessions previously conducted, $t(26) = -1.26, p = .22$; number of previous direct client contact hours, $t(26) = -.60, p = .55$; composite index of spirituality, $t(26) = 1.34, p = .19$; and spiritual well-being, $t(26) = 1.35, p = .19$. However, results did differ across condition on gender, $\chi^2(1, N = 28) = 6.65, p = .01$, with more female counselors in the waking life condition (12 of the 13 counselors were women) than in the spiritual condition (7 out of the 15 counselors were women). Counselor gender differences could not be examined further because there were not enough men in the waking life condition to make comparisons between conditions. However, a t test was conducted to determine if there was a counselor gender difference on spirituality, which yielded no gender difference, $t(26) = .55, p = .66$, indicating that counselor gender probably did not have a differential effect on the condition in terms of counselor spirituality. Previous literature on counselor gender differences in psychotherapy is inconclusive; therefore, counselor gender differences were not considered further in this study.

Tests of Hypotheses

Prior to testing hypotheses, all dependent variables were plotted and visually checked for violations of normality. All appeared to be normally distributed. An alpha level of .05 was used for significance testing, except where otherwise specified. Bonferroni adjustments (to control for Type I er-

ror) were made on an analysis-by-analysis basis, rather than on an experiment-wide basis. Although there is no definitively established guideline for using one approach over the other, using experiment-wide Bonferroni adjustments may be overly conservative (Myers & Well, 1995).

Eta squared, which describes the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by differences among groups, will be used to describe effect sizes. According to Thompson (1999), r^2 effect sizes (including η^2), can be interpreted according to the following guidelines: low = .01, medium = .06, and large = .14.

Comparison Between Conditions

An independent sample t test of the session outcome index (averaged across Sessions 1 and 2) between the waking life and spiritual conditions revealed no differences between conditions, $t(48) = .12, p = .91, \eta^2 = .00$. Hence, the conditions were rated equally for session outcome.

Table 1 shows means and standard deviations for general insight and spiritual insight for the spiritual and waking life conditions. A 2×2 (Condition \times Time) repeated-measures ANOVA on general insight (averaged across sessions) indicated no interaction between condition and time (average of the two pre-sessions to the average of the two post-sessions), $F(1, 49) = .43, p = .52$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$, and no main effect for condition, $F(1, 49) = .41, p = .53$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$; however, there was a main effect for time, $F(1, 49) = 50.28, p = .00$, partial $\eta^2 = .51$. To further test the main effect for time, univariate repeated-measures t tests were run with a Bonferroni adjustment (Myers & Well, 1995) to the alpha (.05/2 = .025), indicating a large effect size for general insight increases in both conditions—spiritual condition: $t(28) = -5.68, p = .00, \eta^2 = .54$; waking life condition: $t(21) = -4.50, p = .00, \eta^2 = .49$; that is, clients in both conditions increased in general insight into their dreams.

A separate 2×2 (Condition \times Time) repeated-measures ANOVA on spiritual insight (averaged across sessions) indicated that there was an interaction between condition and time (average of the two pre-sessions to the average of the two post-sessions), $F(1, 49) = 20.93, p = .00$, partial $\eta^2 = .30$, a main effect for time, $F(1, 49) = 19.16, p = .00$, partial $\eta^2 = .28$, and a main effect for condition, $F(1, 49) = 10.36, p = .00$, partial $\eta^2 = .17$. To further test the interaction between condition and

TABLE 1
Dream Insight and Existential Well-Being for the Spiritual and Waking Life Conditions

Variable	Spiritual Condition (<i>n</i> = 29)				Waking Life Condition (<i>n</i> = 22)							
	Pre-session	SD	Post-session	SD	Follow-Up	SD	Pre-session	SD	Post-session	SD	Follow-Up	SD
General insight	3.97	1.22	5.25	1.35			4.27	1.10	5.34	1.26		
Spiritual insight	2.17	1.16	4.06	1.90			2.09	1.19	2.05	0.85		
Existential well-being	47.18	8.30	51.85	7.22	50.11	9.36	49.22	6.28	49.27	5.86	50.50	5.65

time, univariate repeated-measures *t* tests were run with a Bonferroni adjustment to the alpha (.05/2 = .025), indicating that spiritual insight increased in the spiritual condition, $t(28) = -6.13, p = .00, \eta^2 = .57$, but not in the waking life condition, $t(21) = .16, p = .88, \eta^2 = .00$. Therefore, although volunteer clients in both conditions increased in general insight into their dreams, only volunteer clients in the spiritual condition increased in spiritual insight.

A 2×3 (Condition \times Time; pre-session to post-session to 1-month follow-up) repeated-measures ANOVA on existential well-being indicated that there was an interaction between condition and time, $F(1, 48) = 10.58, p = .00$, partial $\eta^2 = .18$, and a main effect for time, $F(1, 48) = 5.02, p = .03$, partial $\eta^2 = .09$; however, there was no main effect for condition, $F(1, 48) = .00, p = .98$, partial $\eta^2 = .00$. To further test the interaction between condition and time, univariate repeated-measures *t* tests were run with a Bonferroni adjustment (Myers & Well, 1995) to the alpha of (.05/2 = .025), indicating that existential well-being increased in the spiritual condition pre-session to post-session, $t(28) = -4.77, p = .00, \eta^2 = .45$, and did not change from post-session to 1-month follow-up, $t(27) = 1.59, p = .12, \eta^2 = .09$. In the waking life condition, existential well-being did not change pre-session to post-session, $t(21) = -.05, p = .96, \eta^2 = .00$, and did not change post-session to 1-month follow-up, $t(21) = -1.59, p = .13, \eta^2 = .11$. Hence, volunteer clients in the spiritual condition increased in existential well-being after two sessions of dream interpretation and maintained that increase 1 month later. However, volunteer clients in the waking life condition did not increase in existential well-being.

Discussion

In this study of 51 spiritually oriented volunteer clients who completed two sessions of either spiritual or waking life dream interpretation based on the C. E. Hill (1996) Cognitive-Experiential Dream Interpretation Model, volunteer clients in the spiritual condition gained more spiritual insight into their dreams and gained more existential well-being than volunteer clients in the waking life condition. No differences between conditions were found for ratings of session outcome or general insight into dreams. Hence, adding a spiritual component to the C. E. Hill model seems to be particularly effective for spiritually and existentially related outcomes. These results are discussed individually.

Effects of Dream Interpretation on Spiritually and Existentially Related Outcomes

Volunteer clients in the spiritual condition showed more increases in spiritual insight than did volunteer clients in the waking life condition (Figure 1). This finding indicates that the volunteer clients in the spiritual condition gained more

understanding about self or life that incorporates a subjective reality beyond immediate and verifiable reality . . . and (greater)

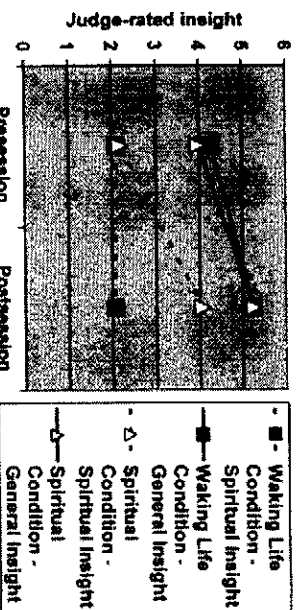


FIGURE 1

Judges' Ratings of General and Spiritual Insight for the Waking Life and Spiritual Conditions

awareness of the sacred through contemplation of: purpose in life, a transcendent reality (i.e., a reality beyond the material universe), deep personal values, a higher power in his or her life, mortality and post-death experience, organization and creation of the universe, meaning in suffering, ultimate truth, or reflection on religious beliefs and practices. (from the definition of spiritual insight used by judges in this study)

Examples of spiritual insight from the current study include one woman's realization that her life had become too routine and predictable—that God wanted a more meaningful life for her (based on her dream about endlessly chewing bland, flavorless bubble gum). Another woman gained vocational clarity, deciding that pursuit of her talents as a classical musician was more spiritually congruent for her than her current occupation (based on her dream of performing in an orchestra for a kind and "father-like" conductor). A young man found previously unconsidered harmony between his Catholic faith and his identity as a gay man (based on his dream about two streams that merged together to form one large flowing river).

The finding that clients can find spiritual insight and meaning in their dreams provides some evidence for the theories of scholars who believe that dreams can be spiritually laden phenomena (Bulkeley, 1994, 1999; James, 1900/1958; Johnson, 1986; Jung, 1964; Van De Castle, 1994; Wollmings, 1997). Throughout history, people have looked to their dreams for insights about the soul, the afterlife, and the ultimate meaning of human existence. They have drawn upon their dreams for spiritual understanding and guidance to heal their suffering and overcome trials (Bulkeley, 1994). If dreams do contain spiritual material, whether from deep within the dreamer or from realms outside the dreamer, then it makes sense that helping clients use their own sense of spirituality to explore and understand their dreams resulted in gains in spiritual insight on their dreams and themselves.

In addition, volunteer clients in the spiritual condition experienced greater increases in existential well-being than volunteer clients in the waking life condition after two sessions of dream interpretation (Figure 2). Perhaps more im-

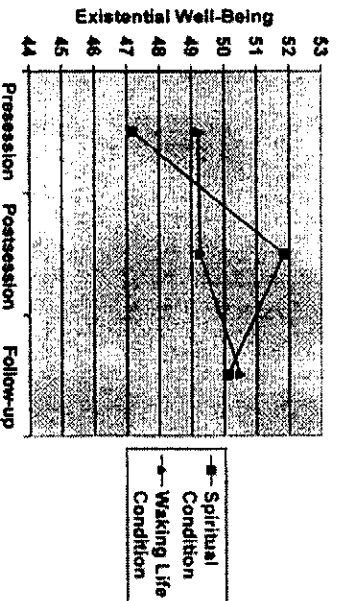


FIGURE 2

Existential Well-Being as Measured in the Pre-session, Post-session, and Follow-Up Phases in the Spiritual and Waking Life Conditions

pressive is the fact that this increase was still present 1 month later. Although an increase in existential well-being was hypothesized, it was not expected that it would hold up after 1 month. Two sessions of spiritual dream work seemed too brief to expect more than very short-term changes. Nonetheless, clients in the spiritual condition were still experiencing benefits of the experience 1 month later. We speculate that their dream sessions provided these clients with existentially meaningful experiences from which they continued to benefit over the subsequent month.

The finding that existential well-being increased for volunteer clients in the spiritual condition is consistent with the speculations of Bulkeley (1999) and Johnson (1986) that exploring the spiritual concerns expressed in dreams can foster psychological integration and spiritual health. This finding should be examined in the context of Bulkeley's (1994, 1999) proposition that the spiritual or religious significance of dreams lies in the existential concerns that find expression in people's dream life. For Bulkeley (1994), the term *religious* refers to the ultimate existential concerns of human life. These ultimate concerns are often manifested in dreams as "root metaphors" (p. 20). Root metaphors help us understand fundamental questions of human existence that have been asked in one form or another by all cultures throughout history. These root metaphors include ultimate questions of human existence: Why are we born? Why do we suffer, and why do we die? What happens to us after we die? Is there some kind of order and harmony in the universe, or is it as aimless and chaotic as it sometimes seems to be? Is there a God? People respond to these ultimate concerns with metaphors, symbols, and images that are often expressed in dreams. It appears that clients' exploration of these symbols, images, and "root metaphors" in the spiritual condition contributed to enhanced existential well-being.

So why did volunteer clients in the waking life condition not experience the same increases in existential well-being as clients in the spiritual condition? Given that volunteer

clients in the waking life condition were "spiritual" people and that they were working with "among the most memorable dreams" in their lives, it might have been reasonable to expect the same increases in existential well-being as volunteer clients in the spiritual condition, but this was not the case. This finding indicates that merely doing dream interpretation with spiritual clients does not result in enhanced existential well-being. Rather, it appears that counselors need to inquire about clients' spiritual beliefs and deliberately work to understand the dreams from that spiritual perspective to enhance existential well-being.

A factor that may have contributed to the finding that volunteer clients in the spiritual condition experienced more gains in existential well-being than did clients in the waking life condition was the perceived credibility of the spiritually based approach by church-going volunteer clients. Because most of the sample was composed of church-goers and many of these volunteers were recruited for the study through church-based meetings, they may have perceived the spiritual condition to be more credible and appealing than the waking life condition. In addition, the spiritual measures that all volunteer clients filled out prior to their first session could have primed clients in the spiritual condition for their sessions. Once volunteer clients in the spiritual condition filled out the spiritual measures, they may have begun thinking about their dream in spiritual terms. Hence, volunteer clients in the spiritual condition may have been better prepared for spiritual dream interpretations than clients in the waking life condition were prepared for waking life interpretations. In contrast, clients in the waking life condition might have been disappointed not to focus on spirituality after completing such measures.

The finding that volunteer clients in the spiritual condition experienced more gains in existential well-being than did clients in the waking life condition might help to explain the fact that more people in the spiritual condition returned for their second session than did people in the waking life condition. If volunteer clients in the spiritual condition were experiencing greater increases in existential well-being after their first session, they may have been more motivated to return for their second session. Another explanation might lie in the fact that volunteer clients in the spiritual condition were asked to share a deeply personal subject—their spirituality. Perhaps discussion about such a personal topic fostered a more intimate relationship with their counselor during the first session. As a result, volunteer clients in the spiritual condition may have felt more committed to keeping their second appointment.

Effects of Dream Interpretation on Session Outcome

Volunteer clients in both the spiritual and the waking life conditions rated their sessions more than one standard deviation above the norm for session depth in regular therapy,

Spiritual and Nonspiritual Approaches to Dream Work

indicating that volunteer clients in both conditions thought their sessions were very meaningful and worthwhile. This is the latest of many studies in which clients rated dream interpretation sessions approximately one standard deviation above the norm for depth (Diemer et al., 1996; Heaton, Hill, Hess, et al., 1998; Heaton, Hill, Petersen, et al., 1998; C. E. Hill et al., 1997; C. E. Hill, Diemer, Hess, Hillyer, & Seaman, 1993; C. E. Hill et al., 2000; Rochlen et al., 1999; Wonnell & Hill, 2000; Zack & Hill, 1998). It appears that counselors in both conditions were able to use the dream material to help volunteer clients explore and understand themselves at a deeper level. As speculated by C. E. Hill et al. (2000), using clients' dream material may help them open up and engage in the therapeutic process more quickly than in other types of therapy. Although counselors in each condition were using somewhat different procedures (spiritual insight vs. waking life insight), the session outcome measures used in this study did not tap into the uniqueness of each approach. Rather, it appears that the instruments measured the common strengths of both dream interpretation approaches.

The fact that volunteer clients in both conditions increased in general insight into their dreams is consistent with other dream studies in which clients came away from their sessions with a better understanding of what their dreams might mean (Cogar & Hill, 1992; Falk & Hill, 1995; C. E. Hill et al., 1993; C. E. Hill et al., 2001). This finding speaks to the effectiveness of both approaches (spiritual and waking life) in helping clients.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. First, although most of these participants had been in counseling previously, they may have been less distressed than actual psychotherapy clients. Many of these participants were merely curious about their dreams and interested in learning something about themselves. Hence, they may have responded differently to dream interpretation and spiritual exploration than actual psychotherapy clients would have responded. Therefore, generalizations to client populations should be made with caution. In addition, participants only received two sessions of dream interpretation. Thus, it would be difficult to generalize the results of this study to the effectiveness of dream interpretation work in the context of longer term psychotherapy. Last, because the sample was primarily composed of women, generalizations to men cannot be made.

It is also important to note that the sample was composed entirely of church-goers or people who answered "yes" to the question "Do you consider yourself to be spiritual?" Although most of these participants responded positively to spiritually oriented dream interpretation, it is possible that nonspiritual individuals might not react as favorably. In fact, given the sometimes-sensitive nature of religious discussion, nonspiritual individuals may even have a negative reaction to spiritually oriented dream interpretation.

Hence, generalizations of these findings to nonspiritual people should be made cautiously.

Another limitation is that we were unable to determine whether the increases in well-being for volunteer clients in the spiritual condition were due to spiritual dream interpretation or due to the fact that spirituality was addressed at all. In other words, it is unclear whether we were comparing waking life dream interpretation to spiritual dream interpretation or to spiritually oriented counseling. It is possible that volunteer clients in the spiritual condition may have experienced the same increases in existential well-being if counselors had asked them about their spiritual beliefs and helped them use their spiritual perspective to explore issues in their lives. Hence, we are left with the question of whether the benefits of spiritual dream interpretation were due to the blending of dream interpretation and spiritual exploration or due to the fact that spirituality was addressed, independent of the dream interpretation intervention.

It is also worth considering that both conditions were somewhat artificially constrained regarding the counselors' use of spiritual or waking life insight. Clearly, some dreams in the waking life condition were probably a better fit for the spiritual approach. One counselor in the waking life condition commented on the difficulty of using the waking life approach with a client who perceived her dream to be spiritually important. In this client's dream, a long-lost friend, with whom she had not spoken in many years, appeared to her as a skeleton. The next day she saw the friend's obituary in the newspaper. This dream and the events of the next day aroused spiritual curiosity in this client, yet the counselor had to stay focused on what the dream meant in terms of the client's current waking life. Thus, the client may have felt frustrated that her spirituality was not explored further as it pertained to the dream.

Similarly, some dreams in the spiritual condition were probably a better fit for the waking life approach. One counselor in the spiritual condition reflected on the difficulty of using the spiritual approach with a client whose dream was clearly reflecting waking life content. This client shared a dream that was a nearly exact replication of a circumstantial conversation that he had 1 day earlier. In the words of this client's counselor, looking for spiritual insight in that dream was like "looking for water in a dry creek bed." Perhaps the strength of both the spiritual and the waking life approaches lies in the "fit" between a particular dream and a particular level of insight. Allowing the counselors and volunteer clients to determine, together, which approach is most appropriate would likely maximize the effectiveness of both approaches in achieving dream insight.

Implications for Practice

The findings point to the value of addressing the spiritual and existential dimensions of the human experience in psychotherapy. These counselors' caring attention to spirituality seemed to open a dimension of being, thinking, and feel-

ing that was highly valued by many volunteer clients in the spiritual condition. Hence, it appears that counselors can enhance the existential well-being of clients by helping them to explore their spiritual beliefs and values in therapy.

Of course, we do not know if some types of clients are more likely than others to benefit from spiritual work in psychotherapy. Encouraging the exploration of spiritual concerns in dreams might be ineffective and inappropriate with clients who do not consider themselves to be at all spiritual. However, spiritually oriented dream interpretation would probably be appropriate for a majority of individuals, given that approximately 95% of the population profess a belief in God (Greeley, 1989). Accordingly, counselors should not assume that spiritual dream interpretation is suitable only for a small, distinctive subset of the population. Rather, it is probably a minority of clients for whom this approach would not be appropriate.

Another implication of this study's findings is that dreams can provide counselors with a conducive framework for helping clients explore spiritual issues in psychotherapy. Although this idea may seem avant-garde to many psychologists, the concept of dreams as conduits of spiritual insight and inspiration has been fundamental to many religions throughout history. Al Razi, a medieval Islamic dream authority, expressed the belief that dreaming permits the soul to travel to the realms of angels and gain knowledge of things concealed from our waking minds (Bland, 1856). The Christian Bishop Synetos professed a similar conviction that in dreaming the soul is "disengaged from the tumult of the senses, which only bring it to troubles . . . from without" (Lewis, 1976, p. 84) and is thereby able to perceive God's truths with special clarity (Bulkeley, 1994).

Frequent overlap between spiritual, existential, and psychological concerns may present opportunities for psychologists to facilitate clients' well-being by working with spiritual issues in psychotherapy. Dream interpretation provides an excellent framework for such spiritually attuned psychotherapy. By helping clients use their dreams to contemplate spiritual issues such as purpose in life, the existence of God, mortality and post-death experience, or the value of suffering, counselors can facilitate the discovery of meaning, purpose, and well-being.

Counselors should also bear in mind that a spiritual level of dream interpretation is by no means the only suitable level of interpretation for spiritual individuals. As shown in this study, spiritually oriented volunteer clients in the waking life (nonspiritual) condition rated their sessions very favorably. Spiritual well-being is only one dimension of psychological health. Hence, spiritual clients are likely to benefit from other levels of interpretation as well. These other approaches include looking at dreams from the perspective of events in current waking life, early childhood experiences, parts of one's personality, the dream experience in and of itself (C. E. Hill, 1996), and interpersonal dynamics (Kolchakian & Hill, 2000). Dream interpretation is perhaps best used when one of these interpretive perspectives is allowed to emerge from the dream itself, rather than predetermining a set level of interpretation.

It is also advisable to get the client's input on which interpretive perspective he or she would like to use.

Implications for Research

Future studies should also include a control condition consisting of spiritually attuned counseling that does not include dream interpretation. This will help answer the question of whether the benefits of spiritual dream interpretation in this study were due to the blending together of dream interpretation and spiritual exploration or due to the fact that spirituality was addressed at all.

Last, we suggest that researchers investigate trait characteristics that might influence the outcome of spiritual dream interpretation sessions. Future studies might also include measures of religious experience (Hood, 1970), mystical orientation (Hood, 1975), and absorption or openness to experience (Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974).

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