

Running Head: Teaching a Dream Work Methodology

Teaching a New Method of Dream Analysis Congruent with
Contemporary Counseling Approaches

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Abstract

Teaching dream analysis to counselors in training, or to therapists already in practice, can be justified given the research that supports its efficacy. However, while dream sharing appears to deepen and accelerate the psychotherapeutic process, it is not widely employed in modern practice. This may be due, in part, to the belief that the value of a dream lies in the analysis of its visual content, and that reflective awareness, volition, and personal responsibility—qualities valued highly by a variety of contemporary counseling approaches—are presumed to be lacking in most dreams. This chapter treats the apparent absence of reflectivity and volition in ordinary dreams as a problem in recalling, reporting, and perceiving dreams, and cites research that supports this view. It then presents a view of ordinary dreaming as an interactive process between the dreamer and the dream imagery, and views the dream outcome as a co-created experience. By shifting the focus onto the dreamer's self-awareness and self-directed responses, a counselor educator can foster analytical skills congruent with the ideals and methods of a diverse array of modern schools of psychotherapy, and facilitate the widespread adoption of dream analysis. A systematic approach to dream analysis based on co-creative dream theory is introduced and demonstrated.

Keywords: co-creative dream theory, dream analysis, counselor education, psychotherapy, Five Star Method

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Introduction

Teaching dream analysis to graduate counseling students, who aspire to careers as school counselors or as licensed professional counselors, is ever a matter of finding a place for it within a curriculum increasingly proscribed by a variety of accrediting, certifying, and/or licensing authorities. Fortunately, every counseling program must include courses on individual techniques and group counseling methods, thus creating natural contexts for introducing dream analysis and other ancillary methods.

In my role as a counselor educator at the University of Texas-Pan American, I regularly include dream analysis training as part of my group counseling classes. For a topic that is optional, dream analysis is by far the most popular subject that I cover during the semester. Students eagerly participate in our sessions of in-class dream work, and then readily apply the methods in their own small groups, which convene for an hour at the end of each of our classes. Given the enthusiasm expressed by these graduate students, one might think that training future counselors in dream analysis is a straightforward process of introducing the best traditional methods. But it's not that easy. Indeed, there is a fundamental mismatch between the philosophy and goals of contemporary counselor education, and the assumptions and methods of traditional content-oriented dream analysis.

The Problems Inherent in Teaching Traditional Dream Work to Counselors in Training

Dream analysis has been used in psychotherapy since Freud declared that dreams were “the royal road to a knowledge of the activities of the unconscious” (1900/1965). As for its effectiveness in the therapeutic process, studies have shown that dream analysis increases self-disclosure and exploration (Provost, 1999), results in deeper work in the early sessions of therapy (Diemer, et. al, 1998), and produces superior client outcome measures when compared when self-esteem and insight work (Falk & Hill, 1995), and fosters intimacy among couples (Duffey, Wooten, Lumadue, & Comstock, 2004). And yet only a small percentage of practicing psychotherapists actively solicit dream reports from their clients. In one study, 83 percent of the respondents reported discussing dreams at least occasionally, but only 13 percent of the therapists employed dream analysis on a regular basis (Keller, et. al, 1995). Another survey (Schredl, et. al, 2000) of German psychotherapists indicated that while respondents used dreams in 28 percent of their sessions, their clients initiated the dream work two-thirds of the time. And in a more recent study (Crook & Hill, 2004), 92 percent of therapists surveyed reported that they worked with dreams at least occasionally, but only 15 percent had worked with client dreams during the previous year.

The lack of utilization may be attributable to the perception that dreams are synonymous with their visual content, and that dream analysis properly involves the interpretation of the imagery. Contemporary counselors who practice within an existential or client-centered framework, and accept this traditional definition of dreams, might find dream interpretation to distract from the qualities of self-awareness and personal responsibility that they hope to foster in their clients. In this vein, William Glasser, founder of Reality Therapy asserts that dreams are entirely without value in the therapeutic process (citation and quote to be added). Similarly, cognitive-behavioral therapists would find dreams—if defined as content alone—deficient in the qualities of thinking and acting which are central to their paradigm. Meanwhile, therapists who practice systemic or relational

therapies, and who favor an analysis of relational process over content, might be deterred from exploring dreams because of the presumed absence of any relationship to consider. Regardless of the particular theoretical rationale embraced by the practitioner, Egan's description of the modern counseling process as to "help clients manage their problems in living more effectively and develop unused or underused opportunities more fully" (Egan, 2007) shifts the focus in counseling away from interpreting content—the goal of traditional dream analysis—toward activating latent capabilities and resources.

Unless we can revise our view of dreaming in general—from an exclusive content orientation toward an exploration of client capabilities—it is unlikely that dream analysis will have a place in curricula designed to prepare future counselors. Fortunately, there is good reason to challenge the traditional view that dreams are only their visual content, and deficient in reflective awareness. Indeed, a fresh consideration of the dream experience reveals that self-awareness, intentionality, and behavior regulation—once deemed lacking in dreams—can be found in ordinary dreams (Kahan, 2001; Kahan and LaBerge, 2010). In this chapter, we review theoretical factors that can account for the perceived absence of reflective awareness, volition and responsiveness in dream reports. In addition, we review some empirical findings that support the idea that dream and waking mentation is remarkably similar. On the basis of this theoretical and empirical foundation, we will treat the dream as an interactive, reciprocal exchange between a reflective and active dreamer, and the dream content. When viewed in this way, dreams are *indeterminate from the outset, and co-created through the interplay between the dreamer and the emergent dream content*. This orientation allows for the autonomous character of dream content, but permits an analysis and troubleshooting of the dreamer's responses to the dream—and by implication, to waking life, as well. This dreamer-focused methodology

maps seamlessly onto a therapeutic process that intends to promote greater self-awareness, responsiveness and accountability. After reviewing the basis for a co-creative dream theory (CDT), we will outline an approach to clinical dream analysis based on this model.

The Dream as an Interactive, Constructed Process

Approaching the dream as an interactive or constructed experience requires that we treat the dreamer and the dream content as independent contributors to the experience. Instead of asking content-oriented questions such as, “What does this image mean,” or “What is this dream saying to you?” we would track the dreamer’s interaction with the imagery through the course of the dream. We would ask process questions (Bowen, 1978) such as, “What feelings or thoughts prompted your reactions?” or “How did you respond to what was presented?” and/or “What do think would have happened if you had responded differently?”

This shift in perspective does not come easily to novice dream facilitators. Thus, before I (Sparrow) introduce dream work methods to my graduate students, I ask them to list the questions that a counselor might ask of a client who has just reported a dream. Predictably, they list, “What does this dream mean to you?” “What do you think this dream is telling you?” and “What does this symbol mean to you?”

I go on to ask my students to list the questions that a counselor would ask of a client who has just reported a significant *waking* experience. They predictably list such questions as, “What did you feel when...?” “What did you think about...?” “What did you want to do?” and “What happened when you...?”

After they make this list, I point out the differences between the two approaches, and ask them if they would customarily encourage a client to *interpret* a recent experience, or try to figure out another person’s thoughts or motives. They agree that such an approach

would distract the client away from his own capabilities and resources. I then ask them, “What is the most common error of a novice counselor?” Knowing that most of them have previously studied Young’s introductory text on counseling methods (2008), many of them remember that it is *focusing on someone other than the client!* I close my introduction by suggesting to them that we would do well to undertake a similar dreamer-centered approach to dreams if we want clients to benefit from the results of our dream work, but that we need a method that will help us in this endeavor.

The Immediate Advantages of a Dreamer-Focused Approach

While a dreamer-focused inquiry represents a significant departure from the traditional content-oriented approach, it generates a dynamic approach to dream analysis that is congruent with contemporary counseling objectives. Specifically, it:

- ◆ Focuses on the relationship between the dreamer and the dream imagery, which involves an exploration of the dreamer's subjectivity, including awarenesses, choices, and responses.
- ◆ Analyzes the dreamer's responses for evidence of chronic patterns and/or emerging competencies, an approach which mirrors the existential-humanistic emphasis on choice and responsibility, as well as Solution-Focused Brief Therapy's (de Schazer, 1988; de Shazer, Dolan, Korman, Trepper, Berg, & McCollum, 2007) emphasis on unacknowledged competencies that may serve as solutions for presenting problems.
- ◆ Examines dreamer responses and content changes in light of “circular causality” or reciprocity (Bertalanffy, 1968; Weiner, 1948), which honors the relational emphasis in systemic therapies.

- ◆ Maps the interactive process onto general waking scenarios in order to formulate a plan of action that respects the emphasis in action-oriented therapies for actual behavior change as the principal fruit of the therapeutic process.
- ◆ Enhances the client/dreamer's capacity to relate inwardly and outwardly with a greater sense of agency and resiliency, and fosters authenticity and relational competence as described by relational-cultural theory (Jordan, 1999).

A systematic approach to clinical dream analysis that treats the dreamer and the dream as separate interacting systems, and addresses each of the above objectives, has recently been introduced (Sparrow, 2006, 2007), even though the theoretical foundation for such an approach has been in development for some time.

Antecedents to a Cocreative Theory of Dreams

Some dream theorists have ventured to say that the dreamer plays a more active role in the dream's construction, giving rise to a view of the dream as an indeterminate, interactive process. For instance, Jung cited the dreamer's direct participation in the co-creation of the manifest dream when he said,

This constellation [dream image] is the result of the spontaneous activity of the unconscious on one hand and of momentary conscious situation on the other. The interpretation of its meaning, therefore, can start neither from the conscious alone nor from the unconscious alone, but only from their reciprocal relationship (Jung, 1966; p. 386).

Jung's statement promotes a view of the dream image as a moment-to-moment vectoring of conscious and unconscious influences—a mutable interface between the observer and the unseen. In retrospect, Jung's well-known preoccupation with the archetypal elements in dreams in practice (Delaney, 1993b, p. 206) may have neglected the dreamer's unique contributions to the dream's creation and the "reciprocal relationship" to which he once alluded.

Boss (1977) implicitly affirmed the co-created nature of at least some dreams, when he asserted that people can exercise volition while dreaming:

Again and again it happens that a dreamer purposefully decides to intervene in the dream events, then carries out his decision to the letter. Even people who don't quite know what is happening to them in their waking lives, allowing themselves to be driven by their momentary moods, often show astounding strength of will while dreaming (p. 184).

While Boss acknowledged the dreamer's capacity to exercise volition, he did not emphasize this dimension in his approach to dreams, perhaps because a theoretically driven analysis of the dreamer's influence as a general practice is inconsistent with a purely phenomenological orientation of accepting the dream "as it is."

Perls viewed the dream as co-created—or even largely self-created—when he argued that the experience of the dream's "happening to us" is a fiction born of our unwillingness to take responsibility for the dream. Speaking of the dream's frustrating qualities, Perls says, "You prevent yourself from achieving what you want to achieve. But you don't experience this as your doing it. You experience this as some other power that is preventing you" (1973, p. 178). For Perls, the dream depicts our alienation from parts of ourselves, the solution to which is a here-and-now dialoguing with the various dream characters and objects. Thus a co-created view of the manifest dream, while implied by Perls' words, is unimportant within the exclusively present-oriented Gestalt method.

Rossi (1972) was the first to articulate an encompassing theory around the dreamer's capacity to reflect upon and freely interact with the dream imagery. In his "co-creative" view of dreaming, the synthesis of new identity takes place through the interaction and dialogue between the dreamer and dream imagery. According to Rossi, dreamer self-awareness manifests to some extent—sometimes minimally—in virtually every dream, such that there is "a continuum of all possi-

ble balances of control between the autonomous process and the dreamer's self-awareness and consciously directed effort" (1972, p. 163).

Lucid Dream Research

In his initial work, Rossi (1972) never mentioned the term lucid dreaming, which is not surprising given the fact that it was not until the late 60s that Van Eeden's work (1913) was brought into public awareness (Green, 1968; Tart, 1968). Subsequent writers (Gackenbach & LaBerge, 1988; Kelzer, 1987; LaBerge, 1980, 1985; Sparrow, 1976) demonstrated that some dreamers, at least, were capable of becoming fully conscious in the dream and influencing its outcome. LaBerge's *Lucid Dreaming* (1985) has been hailed as "one of the most influential books on modern dream research since Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*," and "a major turning point in twentieth-century dream study" (Bulkeley, 1994, p. 59). And yet, lucid dreaming has not influenced the practice of dream analysis to any significant extent. Delaney's (1993a) review of contemporary approaches to dream interpretation includes only a single passing reference to lucid dreaming as synonymous with dream control, which is a common misconception (Flowers, 1993, p. 251). While Delaney's work is dated, it appeared over a decade after lucid dreaming was established as a REM-correlated phenomenon (Hearne, 1978; LaBerge, 1982), and two decades after Rossi (1972) introduced his co-creative dream theory. Hill's more recent work (1996) on the use of dreams in psychotherapy mentions lucid dreaming briefly in the larger context of various strategies for changing unpleasant dream endings (p. 110-120), but stops short of incorporating a co-created view of the dream's formation.

Lucid dream researchers may have undermined lucid dreaming's broader impact on dream analysis by minimizing the importance of the dream imagery in favor of emphasizing the lucid dreamer's virtually unlimited powers. While this emphasis on the dreamer's powers may compensate for the traditional neglect of the dreamer, it overlooks the possibility that the dream can be seen

as an interactive process between functionally independent systems, both of which may deserve equal consideration in the analysis of dreams. In contrast to these one-sided perspectives, cocreative dream theory (CDT) acknowledges the role of dreamer awareness and responsiveness, while maintaining a view of the dream imagery as a somewhat autonomous creation. By regarding the dream as an interactive process, CDT preserves a relational orientation to the dream experience.

The Crucial Question

Lucid dream researchers, by placing so much emphasis on lucidity per se, may have inadvertently overlooked the presence of non-lucid reflective awareness in ordinary dreams, leaving open the important question: Can the ordinary dream be regarded as an interactive process between a somewhat reflective, freely choosing agent and the dream content?

The validity of CDT ultimately depends on the answer to this question. If the answer is "yes," then researchers and dream work facilitators can legitimately turn their attention to the analysis of the dreamer-dream interactive process. If, however, the answer is "no," then CDT cannot reasonably apply to the vast majority of dreams reported, and an approach to dream analysis based on CDT would have to be reserved for those dreams in which the dreamer is clearly reflecting on alternative, and exercising free will. Rechtschaffen believed that the answer was "no" when he said:

Only when we can see the possibility of the lucid dream do we fully realize what a massively non-reflective state dreaming usually is—what a truly distinctive psychological experience it is. In fact, I can think of no other single state short of severe and chronic psychosis in which there is such a persistent, massive, regular loss of reflectiveness ... (Rechtschaffen, 1978)

Some researchers assert that reflective awareness is temporarily withheld in dreaming (Cicogna & Bosinelli, 2001) to allow for the consolidation of new information into long-term memory. Weinstein, et al. (1988) find support for this hypothesis in the discussion of

their research. However, other studies have found evidence of significant measurable reflective awareness in ordinary dreams (Snyder, 1970; Kosmova & Wolman, 2006; Kahan and LaBerge, 2010). In addressing why it has taken us so long to realize this, the authors point to the fact that most of the scales used previously to measure dreams, most notably the Hall-Van de Castle scale, focus on objective or content dimensions, and thus overlook subjective states entirely. The development of the MACE (Metacognitive, Affective, Cognitive Experiences) scale (Kahan & LaBerge, 1996; Kahan & LaBerge, 2010), as well as earlier efforts to measure dreamer reflectiveness (Purcell, 1987; Rossi, 2000; Sparrow, 1983) have shifted the analysis of dream reports to previously unreported dimensions of dreamer mentation, including emotion, reflective awareness, interaction, choice, sudden attention, and focused attention.

What accounts for the historic preoccupation with dream content?

We believe that there are at least three factors that account for the apparent absence of reflective awareness in dream reports.

The Deficiency Model of Dreaming

Philosophers and dream researchers have long assumed that dreams were deficient of higher thought processes. William James believed that dreams were dissociated from the waking state, and were deficient of self-consciousness. Freud, in turn, believed that the ego was suppressed during dreaming, and that consciousness regressed to a more primitive, primary process mode of operation. The deficiency viewpoint persisted until very recently, and in the absence of any empirical support (Kahan, 2001). Starting with Snyder (1970), various researchers have begun employing new methodologies designed to measure self-reflectiveness and other higher order thought processes in dreams, and have seriously undermined the deficiency model (Kosmova & Wolman, 2006; Kahan and LaBerge, 2010). For

a thorough review of the deficiency model, and the evidence to the contrary, see Kahan (2001).

The Theory of Mimesis

One might ask, Why has the deficiency model persisted for so long in the absence of empirical support? It is likely that it has survived so long because it is consistent with a prevailing paradigm (Kuhn, 1966). The traditional practice of dream interpretation treats the dream "as a product drawn from sleeping into waking, to be worked with by the application of various waking techniques" (Moffitt, 2000, p. 162). Whether one believes the dream is a clever disguise for an unacceptable truth (Freud, 1900/1965), the message itself (Jung, 1984, 1986), a part of ourselves from which we are alienated (Perls, 1968, 1973), or another experience in the life of the individual (Boss, 1958, 1977), there is an assumption embedded in the Western view of dreaming—that the dream is a product whose value lies in the consideration of its visual content.

The assumption that the dream content refers to the objects, persons, and concerns of waking life can be traced to ancient Greece and the theory of mimesis. Plato believed that the physical world was a mere shadow of the divine realm, and that dreams and art, in turn, mirrored the physical world. From this premise, dream content came to be seen as representative of the world we knew. This belief is so deeply embedded in the Western worldview that most of us are unaware of its influence. Sontag puts it this way:

The fact is, all Western consciousness of and reflection upon art, have remained within the confines staked out by the Greek theory of art as mimesis or representation . . . it is still assumed that a work of art is its content. Or, as it's usually put today, that a work of art by definition says something" (1966, p. 4).

The Talmudic saying, “A dream unexamined is like a letter unopened” expresses the same idea—that the dream contains information about our waking lives that has to be translated to be of any value. This approach has time-tested usefulness, and was enshrined in Freud's belief that every dream image refers to something or someone in the patient's waking life—but when a dream can apparently unfold in a number of directions on the basis of the dreamer's *responses* to it, treating the content as a fixed, interpretable commentary on the waking life overlooks the indeterminate nature of the dream imagery from the outset, and the influence of the dreamer on the dream outcome.

Consider, for example, a series of dreams in which a young man dreamt that a deceased friend kept appearing and attacking him. During the first several instances of this dream, the dreamer did what most dreamers do: He tried to get away. But in one dream that took place several months after the series began, he decided to fight back when his old friend cornered him and attacked him with a knife. To the dreamer's surprise, he managed to disarm the assailant. Shortly afterward, he dreamt again that his friend attacked him, pinned him the ground, and proceeded to pummel the dreamer's face. The dreamer believed that the man would soon kill him. The dreamer struggled for his life, and managed to free one arm. However, instead of hitting the attacker, the dreamer simply rubbed the man's shoulder. The crazed assailant immediately stopped hitting him and began to cry, saying over and over again, “I only want to be loved” (Sparrow, 1997).

It is likely that interpreting the content would have produced useful information about the dreamer's repressed "shadow" nature (Jung, 1974; 1984). However, the value from a developmental or therapeutic standpoint can be seen in the dreamer's *responses* to the dream content, as well as the *reciprocal transformations* in the dream content.

This is no different than the way that new counselors are educated to treat most waking experiences that their clients will disclose in therapy. Within counselor education students are taught that upon receiving an account of a waking experience, they are to listen for feelings, thoughts, assumptions, interpretations, and behaviors that may have influenced the direction or quality of the experience. This sensitivity to the subjective, constructed nature of a person's narrative allows us to communicate an empathic understanding of how these subjective influences interact with the environment to co-create one's experience of the world. Such an orientation mirrors the shift away from realism with its emphasis on the independent existence of the world toward idealism with its focus on subjective and phenomenological knowledge. Idealism's postmodern expression of social constructionism (Gergen, 1985, 1999) stresses the client's reality without disputing whether it is accurate or rational (Weishaar, 1993), and has deeply influenced modern psychotherapy (Berger & Luckman, 1967) by challenging the role of the expert and objective assessment methods, and by mandating a multicultural approach. Similarly, if the dream is constructed through the interaction between the dreamer and the dream content, then effective counselor education will emphasize that dream analysis can proceed only on the basis of a method that reflects a constructionistic orientation.

The Role of Nonreflective Awareness in Memory

The apparent presence or absence of reflective awareness in non-lucid dreams may also be a function, at least in part, of how dreamers remember their dreams. Kahan & LaBerge have noted the way that dreamers tend to report only the concrete attributes of the dream, such as where, when, what, and who (1996, p. 237), and that “this concentration on recounting the story of the dream does not allow researchers to discern how the dreamers recognize their own experiencing and doing” (Kozmova & Wolman, 2006, p. 201). While

one might expect a person to recall "their own experiencing and doing" during the original dream, this subjective dimension may be left out in the recounting of the experience, if not also in the consolidation of the experience in memory. Along these lines, Rossman (1991) theorizes that memory—as well as an enduring, continuous sense of self—is sustained principally by nonreflective awareness. Further, he suggests that reflective awareness—while being a function of higher intelligence—destabilizes one's sense of continuity, and is thus left out of the consolidation of memory. Accordingly, the absence of reflective awareness in dream reports should come as no surprise, since memory itself is a largely non-reflective record. From a practical standpoint, Rossman's view makes sense. After all, during an actual experience, we may actively reflect upon what is happening, review the options open to us, and anticipate the possible consequences of various courses of action. However, in the retelling of the experience, we are more likely to report only what we ended up doing, and what actually happened. The consolidation of the experience in memory thus omits a complex review of what one *could* have done, or considered doing, in favor of "just the facts." This economical and stabilizing reduction of information presumably leaves the individual with a sense of continuity and an enduring sense of self at the expense of the whole picture.

Overcoming the Barriers to Reporting Reflective Awareness in Dreams

Significantly, Kozmova & Wolman (2006) used a style of inquiry in their study which effectively elicited what the dreamer had originally experienced, but had not recorded. They

". . . investigated experiential features and self-knowledge that are a) not directly observable and retrievable during dreaming, b) probably would not appear in spontaneous dream reports, and c) might nevertheless be retrievable after a certain period of time" (p. 201).

As a step toward counteracting the potential suppression of reflective awareness, counselors-in-training can be taught to encourage their clients towards this kind of retrospective inquiry. Until the preoccupation with dream content is more widely challenged, however, it is likely that researchers and therapists who accept CDT will have to alter their instructions for recording dreams, and/or retroactively tease out instances of reflective awareness and volition that were not included in the dreamer's initial report. The development of new instruments designed to assess the dreamer's subjective states have already begun facilitate this shift of emphasis. Most notably, the development of the MACE scale (Kahan & LaBerge, 1996; Kahan et al., 1997) now offers an alternative to traditional content-oriented analyses (Hall and Van de Castle, 1966).

A Dream Work Methodology Based on Co-Created Dream Theory

The Five Star Method (FSM) is a dream analysis methodology based on CDT that has been developed by Sparrow in the course of his academic teaching, research, and clinical practice. It includes or accommodates aspects of well-known dream work approaches (Jung, 1974; 1984; Perls; 1969; 1973; Taylor, 1992; Ullman & Zimmerman, 1985; Ullman, 1996). However, the FSM features original interventions and perspectives based on CDT, and can be used flexibly in individual, conjoint, family, and group therapy. The dream work sample that is described in the following sections illustrates the application of the FSM to small group work. Except for having to monitor the group's contributions for precipitous or invasive statements, the application of the FSM to group follows the same steps as its use in individual counseling.

Establishing the Context for Dream Work

The Five Star Method commences by sharing the dream in the first person, present tense (Perls, 1969, 1973). This enables the dreamer to relive the original experience and its

attendant emotions and thoughts, and for the facilitator(s) to vicariously appropriate the dream—that is, to experience the dream as if it were one’s own—as advocated by Taylor (1992) and Ullman (1996). This shared exchange converts a private experience into a here-and-now, shared experience to which the dreamer and facilitator(s) alike can relate directly. Also, by reliving the dream in the present tense from beginning to end, the dreamer is better able to experience the dream's initial indeterminacy as well as the dreamer's moment-to-moment influence on its unfoldment.

Jerry's dream . A 51-year-old man, whom we will refer to as Jerry, volunteered to work with a dream in front of a graduate class in group counseling that I (Sparrow) taught at the University of Texas-Pan American. As background to the event, he had previously shared with the class the most significant wounding experience of his life. Having married overseas while in the military, he had brought his pregnant Asian wife home to meet his family. When his father saw his Asian wife for the first time, he yelled, “Why the hell did you bring that ... into my house?!” The shocked son did what he thought he needed to do to protect his wife and future family: He left abruptly and broke off all contact with his father. Years passed without any further contact, and his father eventually died. The student reported experiencing a complete absence of grief about his father’s death. The student had, however, become aware that he had walked away from several other situations that had not warranted such a reaction. He was intent on rectifying this reflexive behavior, but had never really questioned his original decision to terminate his relationship with his father.

Before the man shared the dream in the present tense, I encouraged the group members to join me in listening to the dream as if it was our own, as recommended by Taylor (1992) and Ullman (1996). The student then related the following brief dream.

I am sitting at my desk with my back to the sliding glass doors on the patio. I am working on the group paper that we have to do for this class, and I am feeling anxious about completing it. I hear a knock on the door, and turn around to see my father dressed in a suit standing outside the sliding glass door, obviously wanting to be let in. I think to myself, "I've got work to do," and turn back around. He keeps knocking for a while, and then leaves.

Step One: Sharing Feelings Aroused by the Dream Sharing

The idea of initially examining the feelings is consistent with Hartmann's theory that dreams function principally to "contextualize" emotion for the purpose of its integration through associative neural nets (Hartmann, 1998). By having the dreamer and the dream helpers share the feelings that arise when experiencing the dream narrative, this initial step may provide an affective context congruent with the contextualized affect of the dream itself. However, the dreamer may not be able or willing to experience the full range of emotion contextualized or implied in a given dream—either in the original experience, or in a recollected version. Thus, as the dreamer and the dream helpers compare their emotional reactions to the dream narrative, they often discover differences in their feelings. This sharing often sets up a subtle "ordeal" in which the dreamer may be exposed to a variety of emotional responses that differ from his or her own feelings. If, as Taylor (1992) and Delaney (1993) assert, a dream rarely comes to tell us what we already know, then it is also makes sense that the dreamer is not always in touch with the full range of feelings contextualized, or pictured, in the dream imagery.

Various dream work methods include an assessment of the dreamer's feelings (Gendlin, 1986; Hill, 1996; Mahrer, 1990; Ullman, 1996; Ullman & Zimmerman, 1979). However, CDT posits that the dreamer's feelings, thoughts, assumptions, and behaviors work together

to codetermine the dream's outcome. With this in mind, the dreamer's and facilitator's feelings provide an initial entry into the dreamer's co-creative response set.

Jerry's dream : I asked the dreamer about his feelings in the dream, and he said that he had felt anxious about his assignment, and mildly irritated about his father's interruption throughout the dream. He went on to reiterate that his goal was not to be distracted from the task at hand. I asked each member of the group to share whatever feelings had arisen in the course of experiencing the dream. Without exception, the other students reported having intense feelings such as sadness, fear, regret, affection, and anger. The dreamer was surprised at the range of the group members' reactions, and a bit defensive that his experience of the dream had been so relatively emotionless.

Step Two: Formulating the Process Narrative, Theme, or Story Line

In the mid-70s, as we worked on formulating effective approaches to dream analysis, we faced a challenge, the solution of which became what we termed the Dream Theme Method—the second step in FSM (Sparrow, 1978; Thurston, 1978). We were employed by the Association for Research and Enlightenment in Virginia Beach, and were intrigued by the daunting task of making sense of the late Edgar Cayce's approach to dream analysis. The "Sleeping Prophet" had interpreted over 600 dreams in the course of his clairvoyant career, and no one as far as we knew could discern any consistent method in his interpretations. Many of his dream "readings" were exceedingly brief and failed to mention most of the dream's details. We finally realized that the dream "interpretations" were often restatements of the basic theme or structure of the dream without regard to its content. Cayce would extract the theme and present it to the dreamer as a life pattern to be understood and worked with, thus bypassing an analysis of the specific imagery.

Some dream analysts have formulated lists of “themes” that typically occur in dreams (Garfield, 2001; Gongloff, 2006). However, such an approach runs the risk of fitting the dream into pre-established categories. We have taken a purely phenomenological approach to summarizing the dream’s underlying structure (Sparrow, 1978; Thurston, 1978; 1988) and prefer the phrase "process narrative" to describe the objective of this second step, even though “simple story line” (Thurston, 1988) represents an excellent way to describe this step to client/dreamers.

To formulate the process narrative, all one has to do is to restate, as succinctly as possible, the dream’s essential action while removing the specific names of characters, colors, places, and objects. All interpretive and evaluative statements are discouraged during this step. The following statements are examples of correctly formulated process narratives: "Someone is relieved to find that something that he thought was lost is still possible to locate," and "Someone is trying to decide between two courses of action, one apparently easy and the other more difficult and challenging."

Systems-oriented family therapists, and group leaders familiar with Lewin’s concept of field theory (1951), will recognize the importance of observing and describing how the dreamer and the dream imagery are relating without reference to what is being communicated. This content-free description highlights the relationship dynamics that perpetuate or alleviate distress, and pave the way for interventions that can restructure problematic interactional patterns without trying to resolve the problem on the level of content alone.

Some dream work facilitators believe that it is important to obtain the dreamer’s explanation of the characters and situations early in the dream work process (Delaney, 1993b; Ullman, 1996), so that the helper(s) may make contributions that are congruent with the dreamer’s own understanding of who’s who and what’s what in the dream. In contrast,

the FSM postpones any consideration of the imagery, including the dreamer's explanatory associations, until after the third step. While this may seem to encourage irrelevant associations, it frees the leader and the group to associate to the dream without having to factor in the dreamer's own views. The dreamer, in turn, is encouraged to examine the dream without regard to the imagery, so that any subsequent "allusion" (Craig & Walsh, 1993) or "bridge" (Delaney, 1993b) to waking experiences will be thoroughly informed by an exploration of the non-visual dimensions of the dream. Delaying consideration of the imagery minimizes the tendency to engage in symbol substitution and a precipitous search for a single interpretation predicated on obvious content parallels.

Jerry's dream : One of the students suggested that the theme of the Jerry's dream was, "Someone is aware of someone who wants his attention, but refuses to give it because he considers something more important." Jerry and the other group members concurred with this assessment, and we moved to the next step.

Step Three: Analyzing the Dreamer's Responses to the Dream

This step is the heart of FSM, and is a pure outgrowth of CDT. Helping the dreamer see the places where his or her responses may have made a difference represents a significant departure from traditional dream analysis. Because of its novelty, it may pose somewhat of a challenge with clients who are new to this way of thinking. But once the dreamer becomes aware of his or her responses in the dream, dream analysis takes on a new dimension of troubleshooting the dreamer's responses and imagining new outcomes in future dreams and parallel life situations.

To accomplish this step, the facilitator and the dreamer look for points in the dream where the dreamer responded—emotionally, cognitively, and/or behaviorally—in such ways that could have affected the course of the dream from thereon. As we have stated, some of

these responses may be entirely unstated in the dreamer's initial recollection, so it may take some practice to elicit the more subtle dimensions of the dreamer's responses. Subtle or otherwise, these response points are like forks in the path where the dreamer effectively determines which way to go by his or her reactions to the visual imagery.

Then, the facilitator and dreamer work together to critique the dreamer's responses to the dream encounters, and to imagine what else the dreamer might have done differently at the obvious choice points in the dream. Following this freewheeling consideration of alternatives, the facilitator engages the dreamer in determining whether the dreamer's responses were predictable, or a departure from his or her usual reaction to such situations. As a final measure, the facilitator may ask the dreamer what he or she would have preferred to do in the dream, as well as what he or she would like to do differently in future dreams with similar situations.

This consideration of diverse responses to the dream has a way of challenging old patterns of relating to the world, discerning emerging competencies, and introducing alternatives for future consideration.

Of course, the dreamer sets the standard for the direction of desirable change. What is considered "better" has more to do with what deviates constructively from a person's chronic patterns of relating. This criterion helps the facilitator and dreamer evaluate the dreamer's responses against a customary or habitual style of relating, which may become clearer over time as the person shares further dreams and/or waking experiences in which the customary style becomes evident.

It is not unusual for a highly significant response in the dream to seem entirely natural to the dreamer, especially if it reflects the dreamer's habitual style in responding to similar situation.

Jerry's dream : When we considered the dreamer's responses alongside group's vicarious responses, the dreamer was again struck by the contrast between what he did, and what the dream group members had imagined doing. One member imagined opening the door to let his father in, and then going back to work. Another member was a little afraid—after all, the man was dead—and wanted to ask the father what he wanted before opening the door. Another imagined hugging his dad and hearing his father's sincere and tearful apologies as well as expressing his own remorse. Unlike the dreamer's cool, business-like attitude, the group members' responses were intense and engaging.

Step Three helps dreamers become more aware of chronic dysfunctional responses and emergent competencies, both of which are easily overlooked in the context of the often-distressing circumstances depicted by the dream content. To put it simply, the interpersonal exchange between the facilitator and client in Step Three helps to offset the tendency of dreamers to disavow responsibility for the outcome of the dream. While this step can provoke defensiveness by raising questions about the dreamer's unexamined assumptions and reactions—especially when the dreamer's responses seem counterproductive—it represents the kind of cognitive-behavioral inquiry that characterizes contemporary action-oriented therapies—such as Cognitive Therapy, Rational-Emotive Behavioral Therapy, and Reality Therapy. Further, by highlighting emergent competencies, Step Three comes into alignment with the philosophy and objectives of competency-based therapies such as Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (de Schazer, 1988; de Shazer, et. al, 2007). In this regard, Jerry's ability to remain committed to his task at hand was clearly a quality that had helped him excel as a student and in his military career. Pointing out how the avoidance of his father was both a strength and a weakness helped the dreamer to see how he had used his formidable personality strength in positive and negative ways.

Jerry benefitted from the diverse feedback that only a group can provide. In individual counseling, the therapist and the client collaborate in trouble-shooting the dreamer's responses. Group members will often communicate their own values by suggesting alternative responses, and such diversity is both a benefit and drawback of group work. With effective leadership, however, the benefits of a free-wheeling exchange between a group and the dreamer far outweigh the costs.

Step Four: Analysis of the Imagery

In this step of FSM, the facilitator assists the dreamer in exploring how imagery and scene transformations are related to dreamer's responses. This contingent relationship may not be evident to the dreamer, who may experience the changes as unrelated to his or her responses at the time. However, by emphasizing the impact of the dreamer's freely chosen responses, the facilitator draws a contingent relationship between dreamer response and outer change, thus supporting a sense of personal responsibility and an awareness of emergent competencies.

While standard nonintrusive approaches to imagery analysis—such as Jung's amplification method, and the Gestalt practice of dialoguing with the images—can be introduced in Step Four, a nontraditional approach to the imagery proceeds from the principles of CDT. Just as the dreamer's responses are no longer considered a given in CDT, the imagery itself is no longer considered static: Both can change in the course of a single dream's unfolding process. Indeed, changes in the dreamer's responses and the dream content are viewed as reciprocally related, such that a change in one will usually mirror a change in the other.

Of course, few dreams reveal such bold responses and dramatic reversals. But regardless, the facilitator engages the dreamer in examining any changes in dream imagery that might relate to, or mirror the dreamer's changes in response. Just as systems-oriented

therapists will teach family members to see their problem as a function of circular causality or reciprocity (Nichols & Schwartz, 2004, p. 8), a dream work facilitator using FSM will encourage the dreamer to learn to see the impact of his or her reactions on the dream imagery itself, and to extrapolate on possible changes that may have occurred if the responses would have been different. Even if the dreamer and the dream imagery are "locked" into a relationship of escalating tension—as Jerry and his father had been—the facilitator can assist the dreamer in imagining what could have happened if the dreamer's stance had been different. Counselors-in-training are taught to employ *process questions* in relational therapy (Bowen, 1978), such as "What do you think would have happened if . . . ?" or "What do you wish you could have done differently?" Such inquiry encourages clients to become aware of the circular or reciprocal nature of a relationship dynamic, and to accept one's capacity to take personal responsibility and make a difference in a relationship.

At this stage in the dream work, the facilitator also asks the dreamer to imagine what the culmination of such an encounter would look like—in future dreams or parallel waking scenarios. Such a consideration leads naturally to the idea of identifying contexts in which to apply the fruits of the dream work process.

How To Do It. In practice, the dream work facilitator works with the dreamer to evaluate any changes in dream imagery that occur and explores how these changes might relate to, or mirror the dreamer's attitudes and actions. Just as systems-oriented family therapists will teach family members to see their problem as a reciprocal relationship dynamic, a dream work facilitator using the FSM will encourage the dreamer to learn to see the impact of his or her reactions on the dream imagery itself, and to extrapolate on possible changes that may have occurred if the responses would have been different. Questions such as "What do you think would have happened if you'd stood your ground?" are called process questions in family therapy (Bowen, 1978), and encourage

clients to become aware of the circular nature of a relationship dynamic. Process questions serve to discourage blaming and the disavowal of one's ability to make a difference in a relationship.

Inferring a contingent relationship between a dreamer's response and a subsequent change in dream content, is what I call "dream logic." This contingent relationship is usually not evident to the dreamer, who typically experiences the changes as unrelated to his or her responses at the time. Consequently, instances of dream logic must be pointed out by the facilitator. By emphasizing the impact of the dreamer's responses, the facilitator draws a contingent relationship between inner response and outer change, thus supporting an emergent sense of agency in the dreamer's life.

Obviously, when imagery is considered a fluctuating reality that maintains a circular relationship with the dreamer's responses, questions such as "What does this symbol mean?" has limited value. Instead, the dreamer learns to ask alternative questions such as, "How is my response affecting my relationship with the dream image?" Such questions respect the complexity of a dynamic reciprocal process which, if honored and kept alive, may foster a rich interchange between conscious perspectives and unrealized potentials.

Jerry's dream : In considering the dream imagery, the dream helpers were all impressed with his father's suit. Everyone felt that his father had "dressed for the occasion," or was "hoping to make a good impression." One member suggested that it reminded him of burial clothes. The sliding glass doors provided an opening through which things could be clearly seen, and people were allowed to come and go, but this openness was behind the dreamer and ignored, not something he was facing directly. The paper that the student was working on was one of many tasks in his life—always undertaken with serious and undistracted resolve. The student contributed to and supported these various associations.

We also engaged the dreamer in considering what would have happened if he had gone to door and engaged his father. Since it was clear that the dreamer had considerable resistance to this idea, we focused on what he could have said to his father that would have finally given voice to his anger and hurt. By focusing on how he could have expressed his deep anger, the group effectively accepted the dreamer where he was at, without precluding the possibility of eventual reconciliation and healing.

Step Five: Applying the Dream Work

Since the FSM is founded on the dreamer's capacity to enact a variety of responses to the dream—and correspondingly, to parallel waking scenarios—the final step of the dream work process involves identifying areas of one's life where new responses might precipitate positive changes. If the dreamer can see a parallel between the dream issue and some waking situation, then the facilitator may encourage the dreamer to practice new, contextually appropriate responses that can be made in that waking life scenario.

Applying the dream work can also take the form of preparing for future dreams. A simple pre-sleep reverie exercise called Dream Reliving (Sparrow, 1983) can be used as a way to increase the likelihood that one will be able to implement the changes in future dreams. Dream Reliving consists of asking the dreamer 1) to relive the original dream in fantasy while enacting new responses, and then 2) to observe and record how the new responses altered the dream's outcome. This imaginative process, which has been effective (Sparrow, 1983) in increasing dream lucidity and enhancing other measures of dreamer development as described by Rossi (1972, 2000) can serve as a fitting addendum to the dream work process, and lay the groundwork for future sessions.

Jerry's dream : While the dreamer was sobered by the group process, the group did nothing that could have been construed as invasive. Remaining true to their own feelings, imaginary

responses, and associations to the imagery, the group members nonetheless left the dreamer wondering out loud if his decision to walk away from his father had left some significant unresolved feelings that now could be explored, even though his father was no longer alive.

While our overall stance should always remain respectful of the dreamer's boundaries, our responsibility also impels us to examine and reflect upon the dreamer's responses from the context of his or her own goals and values. Such a values-centered orientation arises within the knowledge of the person's stated ideals, not from the standpoint of some independent moral authority (Doherty, 1995). Not only does this approach put constructive pressure on where a dreamer might be failing to acknowledge a counterproductive approach to relationships, but it also identifies emerging competencies and values-congruent attitudes that may assist the dreamer in resolving significant unresolved conflicts.

Conclusions

From our experience, dream analysis is a popular topic among counselors-in-training, and the benefits justify its inclusion in counseling curricula. However, the traditional content-focused approach departs from the objectives of most nonpsychodynamic therapy by treating the dream as a fixed narrative and the dreamer as a passive witness, and proceeding to analyze the visual content for its presumed meaning. Add to that the object-oriented language that characterizes the traditional consideration of dream "symbols" and "content" apart from the dreamer, and dream interpretation arguably violates the constructionistic flavor of contemporary psychotherapy. The content-oriented approach owes its dominance to a pervasive belief rooted in our cultural foundations, as well as to the erroneous assumption that dreamers are largely incapable of reflecting upon, and interacting with their dreams. The alternative model that we have proposed as a basis for training contempo-

rary psychotherapists enjoys considerable theoretical support, and some empirical validation.

Unlike traditional content-oriented approaches, a co-created approach to dream analysis comes into alignment with a variety of themes in contemporary psychotherapy, including the centrality of choice, freedom, and personal responsibility in existential therapies; the constructed nature of personal reality in social constructionism and postmodern therapies; and the reciprocal nature of human relationships in family systems. As such, cocreative dream analysis can be seen as a supportive, supplementary practice in a diverse array of modern therapies, and thus incorporated seamlessly into contemporary counselor training.

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