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The Relational Interpretation of Dreams: A Book Proposal

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The Relational Interpretation of Dreams: A Book Proposal

by

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B.A., Albertus Magnus College, 2014
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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of
Doctor of Psychology in the Department of Clinical Psychology
at Antioch University New England, 2020

Keene, New Hampshire



Department of Clinical Psychology
DISSERTATION COMMITTEE PAGE

The undersigned have examined the dissertation entitled:

**THE RELATIONAL INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS:
A BOOK PROPOSAL**

presented on April 3, 2020

by

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4/3/2020

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Dedication

To my grandparents and Aunt Rita, whose love made this all possible.

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Some things cannot be expressed in words. Some things are just internalized. They are embodied and expressed through action—through living to your full potential. That is my intention. While words will do no justice for the gratitude and appreciation I have for those listed below, every single day I am reminded of the priceless gifts each has given me as I find myself passing these gifts to others.

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your beliefs and have encouraged me to do the same. You are not afraid to let others know what you stand behind, thus showing me that being and having a *self* in professional practice is valued, respected, and frankly—badass. You’ve entrusted me with tasks and roles that spoke to your unwavering confidence in me and reflected a deep understanding of me as a *person* rather than just a *student*. Thank you, Gina, for giving me space to be me, and reassuring me that there is nothing better I could be.

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My parents—For making me who I am and shaping my experiences of the world in a way that allows me to connect with and help others. You have given me an understanding of life and human connection that cannot be attained through any other means.

My clients—Because *every* relationship is a life-changing relationship. Thank you.

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Abstract

Dream interpretation has been a widely recognized component of psychological practice since the publication of Sigmund Freud's (1900/2010) *The Interpretation of Dreams*. By providing initial conceptualizations of the dream's function, Freud created the foundation for the numerous iterations of dream work to follow. What these modalities of dream work all have in common is the utilization of dream interpretation to uncover information, or the engagement in research and empirical practice to search for answers regarding the how and why of dreaming phenomenon. Dreams, however, have yet to be considered within the context of relationship. This dissertation, in the format of a book proposal, explored the synergistic qualities between dreams and relationships and how that synergy generates biographically, professionally, and psychotherapeutically formative experiences. Through examining individual interviews with four eminent dream researchers and scholars, I delineated the ways in which dreams provide a foundation for relating, provide a container (Bion, 1967/1993) for the un-thought known (Bollas, 1987), create meaning through relationships, and ultimately foster mass dispersion of relational dynamics originating from the culture of the times, race, ethnicity, and more. From a relational psychoanalytic perspective, this book aims to describe the utility of dreams in creating and maintaining various types of relationships that then shape the lives of others.

This dissertation is available in open access at AURA, Antioch University Repository and Archive, <http://aura.antioch.edu/> and OhioLINK ETD Center, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/etd>

Keywords: dreams, relational psychoanalysis, relationships,
history of psychology, autoethnography

Chapter 1: Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation was to create a formal book proposal for submission to a publishing company. The contents of this dissertation are in accordance with standard book proposal guidelines. A delineation of the main themes and objectives addressed throughout the book, a description of the intended audience, an explanation of differences between the proposed book and pre-existing books as well as how the proposed manuscript differs from established texts is a requirement of formal book proposals. Guidelines also require a summary of the proposed book as a whole, summaries of each individual proposed chapter, a proposed abstract, an outline for the logistical components of the book such as intended word-count, and proposed table of contents. If applicable, the author may also submit a sample chapter in conjunction with the book proposal. Below are the contents of a formal book proposal submitted as part of this dissertation.

Chapter 2: Aim of Proposed Manuscript

Themes

Main themes addressed in the proposed book include

- a relational psychoanalytic approach to understanding that dreams create and maintain relationships and how those relationships then shape lives;
- dreams provide a foundation for relating;
- dreams provide a container (Bion, 1967/1993) for the un-thought known (Bollas, 1987);
- we have multiple relationships: relationships with ourselves, families, others, our work, our ethnicity, our culture, time and more. Each of these relationships influence the dynamics of other relationships;
- psychotherapy is a relationship and dreams can help establish, maintain, and stimulate the progress of the relationship for therapeutic purposes;
- dreams help meaning-make through relationship, not only interpretation;
- careers unfold first and foremost through relationship.

Objectives

The main objectives of this proposed manuscript aim to

- provide a relational psychoanalytic conceptualization of the utility of dreams in establishing relationships that then shape lives;
- demonstrate the ability of dreams to provide a common space for relating;
- explain how dreams contain (Bion, 1967/1993) experiences that are mutually perplexing, thus allowing for the self-growth and self-preservation components of relating to transpire;

- using personal interviews of four individuals with eminence in the field of dream research and scholarship, illustrate the ways in which dreams foster relationships and how those relationships then shape lives;
- illustrate the utility of dreams in progressing therapeutic treatment;
- illustrate the use of dreams to create meaning through relationship rather than interpretation.

Proposed Book Content Summary

This book begins by explaining the use of dreams as a tool in psychotherapy to provide meaning, establish and maintain a therapeutic relationship, and thus enhance and progress treatment. The beginning of the book sets the context for the remaining chapters, as it serves to highlight the synergy between dreams and relationships. The subsequent four chapters are each allocated to an interview with an eminent dream researcher or scholar. Each chapter contains an introduction to the individual discussed, his role in dream work, and an analysis of the formative experiences of his career. Each chapter closes with an exploration of the synergistic qualities between dreams and relationships and how that synergy enhanced the formative experiences of these individuals, and accordingly impacted the lives of others. The book closes with a synthesis of the aforementioned phenomenon as a means of providing an explication of the utility of dreams in facilitating relationships that provide the foundation for formative experiences such as self-development, self-preservation, career development, and ultimately a dedication to progress in psychotherapy.

What I am Doing Differently than Other Books

The current literature on dreams includes using dreams clinically, exploring dreams scientifically, and theorizing dream utility. Topics embody (a) dream interpretation (Freud,

1900/2010), (b) the use of the dream as a tool to access unconscious fantasies and drives (Conigliaro, 1997), (c) patient perceptions of dream usefulness in psychotherapy sessions (Hill, Diemer, Hess, Hillyer, & Seeman, 1993), (d) neuroscientific explanations for dreaming processes (Hobson, 2015), (e) theoretical explanations of dream purpose and function (Lippmann 2000; Blechner, 2018), (f) empirical studies on the neural correlates of dream content (Domhoff, 2018), and (g) research investigations of the relationship between sleep and waking neurocognitive processes (Antrobus, 1991). No literature to date has explored the synergistic qualities between dreams and relationships from a relational psychoanalytic perspective via interviewing eminent scholars or researchers whom have dedicated their careers to working with dreams. This book aims to address the ways in which the synergy between dreams and relationships promotes formative experiences and enhances psychotherapy, science, professional lives, professional development, and professional identity.

Proposed Book Abstract

Dream interpretation has been a widely recognized component of psychological practice since the publication of Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900/2010). By providing initial conceptualizations of the dream's function, Freud created the foundation for the numerous iterations of dream work to follow. What these modalities of dream work all have in common is the utilization of dream interpretation to uncover information, or the engagement in research and empirical practice to search for answers regarding the how and why of dreaming phenomenon. Dreams, however, have yet to be considered within the context of relationship. This book explores the synergistic qualities between dreams and relationships and how that synergy generates biographically, professionally, and psychotherapeutically formative experiences. Through examining individual interviews with four eminent dream researchers and

scholars, the author delineates the ways in which dreams provide a foundation for relating, provide a container (Bion, 1967/1993) for the un-thought known (Bollas, 1987), create meaning through relationships, and ultimately foster mass dispersion of relational dynamics originating from the culture of the times, race, ethnicity and more. From a relational psychoanalytic perspective, this book aims to describe the utility of dreams in creating and maintaining various types of relationships that then shape the lives of others.

Chapter 2: Detailed Overview

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One Paragraph Explanation of Content Covered in Each Chapter

The following section includes proposed chapter headings for each chapter. This section also includes a summary of each chapter.

Setting the context: using dreams to enhance psychotherapy. This is content for the proposed first chapter.

Chapter heading. Setting the Context

Summary. In this chapter, the purpose of the book is stated. The purpose of the book is an exploration of the symbiosis between relationships and dreaming. Arguments made by researchers and experts in the field of dream work that support the use of dreams in psychotherapy are addressed. A relational psychoanalytic framework for using dreams in psychotherapy for enhancing treatment and promoting client self-growth is provided. Finally, an overview of the various forms of relationships that manifest through dreams is offered.

John S. Antrobus: keep asking better questions and getting better answers. This is content for the proposed second chapter.

Chapter heading. John S. Antrobus

Summary. In this chapter, an introduction of cognitive neuroscience researcher John S. Antrobus is given. The author narrates an interview conducted with him in which dreams, mind-wandering, sleep research, and the importance of continually asking questions was discussed. The author offers lessons learned from her discussion with Antrobus which include greater insight regarding the importance of continually asking questions to attain better answers. She provides an analysis of the interaction to explicate the ways in which various types of relationships (i.e., relationships to the culture of the times) influence relationships to other people. Finally, the author provides a description of the formative experiences brought about by the synergistic quality of relationships and dreams.

G. William Domhoff: share information. This is content for the proposed third chapter.

Chapter heading. G. William Domhoff

Summary. This chapter begins with an introduction of dream researcher G. William Domhoff. The author provides a review of a telephone interview in which Domhoff's professional journey is discussed. Interviewer and interviewee spoke of formative relationships in Domhoff's life, as well as professional endeavors that produced relationships. Domhoff shared information and relayed the importance of distributing and assimilating evidence and data. He described key historical events and the influence of these events on his professional identity. The author then provides an analysis of key components of the interview, including the relational quality of conducting research, an overview of key constructive relationships and events, and

lastly, the indissoluble nature of relationships and dreams in both Domhoff's life, and the lives of those he has influenced.

Mark J. Blechner: having the privilege of enter others' lives. This is content for the proposed fourth chapter.

Chapter heading. Mark J. Blechner

Summary. This chapter provides a professional development timeline of Mark J. Blechner, a psychologist and psychoanalyst who works clinically with, teaches courses about, and has published extensively on, dreams. This chapter contains a report of a virtual interview conducted with Blechner. Topics discussed include work with patients, work with colleagues, and the significance of dreams in providing an opportunity for deep connection and understanding. Blechner reports on formative events and experiences within his own career, and proposed questions that could shape the careers of others. This chapter also contains an analysis of this interview which implements a relational psychoanalytic understanding of the interactional style between interviewer and interviewee, as well as the formative elements of this particular interface. A consideration of containing experiences that prompted this relational phenomenon is cited. Finally, the chapter provides a written image of the lives Blechner has touched through his work with dreams.

J. Allan Hobson: recognizing the person behind the scientific discovery. This is content for the proposed fifth chapter.

Chapter heading. J. Allan Hobson

Summary. This chapter contains the interviewer's/author's story of J. Allan Hobson, a renowned psychiatrist and scientist who has dedicated his life to the study of dreams. The author provides an overview of Hobson's prominent accomplishments, as well as a narration of the

interviewer and interviewee's time together during an in-person interview. This chapter contains an overview of topics discussed and a depiction of the author's first-hand experience of visiting Hobson's dream-museum. An analysis of the relationships between Hobson and colleagues in the field is given through a relational psychoanalytic framework. An assessment of the interviewer's own interaction with Hobson is also provided. The author continues to offer an assessment of Hobson's influence on the field of dreams. Further, an analysis of the relational components of Hobson's career development is also presented. Lastly, this chapter is ripe with commentary on how Hobson's polymath and mensch qualities have served as formative experiences for, and have shaped the lives of, others.

Pulling it all together: shaping lives through the synergistic quality of dreams and relationships. This is content for the proposed sixth chapter.

Chapter heading. Pulling it all Together

Summary. This chapter synthesizes information and key points made throughout the book, which include: (a) the ability of dreams to maintain and create relationships; (b) the ability of dreams to provide a foundation for learning that in-turn serves as an influential event in the lives of others; (c) the acknowledgment that careers develop first and foremost through relationship; (d) the ways dreams make meaning through relationship; (e) how dreams provide a container (Bion, 1967/1993) for the unthought known (Bollas, 1987); (f) an assimilation of the relational phenomenon that transpires through dreams. This chapter also provides a theory regarding the lack of difference in gender expression across the professionals represented in this book. The chapter ends with summarizing statements regarding the synergy between relationships and dreams.

Chapter 3: Intended Audience Description

The proposed text is intended for practitioners and scholars in the field of psychology, psychiatry, and social work. The proposed text is applicable to journals such as *Psychological Review*, *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* as well as to organizations such as American Psychological Association Division 39—Division of Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Psychology, American Psychoanalytic Association and the International Association for the Study of Dreams. The proposed text will have international appeal to regions where psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory and technique is supported and practiced such as in European countries. The importance of relationship within psychotherapy is widely taught, as studies have shown that the therapeutic alliance is the second most contributing factor to treatment outcome (Lambert & Barley, 2001), following only variables outside of therapy such as life events and social support. Therefore, this proposed text would be relevant to advanced students in graduate training programs such as psychology, social work, or psychoanalytic training programs, who are looking for a framework for enhancing therapeutic relationships (i.e., advanced psychoanalytic seminars, intervention courses, case conferences, professional seminars).

Chapter 4: An Analysis of Competing Texts

The following is a list of three competing texts. Text strengths and weaknesses are listed in addition to average selling price of text, and distinguishing features between listed text and proposed text of this document.

Blechner 2018

The first competing title is Blechner's *The Mindbrain and Dreams: An Exploration of Dreaming, Thinking, and Artistic Creation* (2018).

Average price of this title. Paperback, \$44.95. Hardback, \$140.00.

Strengths. Blechner provides an in-depth exploration of the utility of dreams as a tool to enhance psychotherapy. He does this through explaining how dreams assist with understanding intricate mental processes. Blechner gives language to pre-linguistic phenomenon and provides a thorough explanation of the mental processes behind common clinical presentations as a means of explaining the seemingly bizarre nature of dreams. Blechner utilizes a mixture of research and psychoanalytic theory to explicate the way the brain and mind work as a single entity to make sense of the world through dreams, how to work with this phenomenon clinically, and how this phenomenon contributes to common experiences that have no evidentiary explanation.

Weaknesses. Blechner's book is positioned as an approach to understanding various mental processes and phenomenon rather than provide an in-depth explanation of the mechanisms of one single phenomenon. This requires the reader to hold many ideas and explanations at once in order to follow the plot and understand concepts that build on one another. This book also requires pre-existing knowledge of psychoanalytic concepts which can limit accessibility to scholars learning psychoanalytic theory or psychoanalytic perspectives on

dreams. Blechner also does not address the relational elements of dreaming or the relational elements of his and other scholars' relationship to dreaming.

Distinguishing features. Blechner does not address the relational components of discussing dreams in professional environments. Blechner does not utilize a relational psychoanalytic framework for understanding or explaining topics covered throughout his book. Blechner explores the utility of dreams in providing an understanding of mental processes rather than proposing that dreams and relationship are inextricably linked. Blechner discusses eminent researchers and scholars who work with dreams but does not utilize personal interviews with these professionals to support arguments made throughout his book. He also does not address how working with dreams informs the aforementioned relationships.

Bromberg 2011

The second competing title is Bromberg's *Awakening the Dreamer Clinical Journeys* (2011).

Average price of this title. Paperback, \$49.95. Hardback, \$86.95.

Strengths. Bromberg emphasizes the importance of the relationship between therapist and patient in psychotherapy. Bromberg provides a thorough description and clarifying examples of the utility of employing a relational psychoanalytic approach to clinical issues. Bromberg also proposes dreams as a way for any individual to attain an understanding of him/herself as a whole person with different self-states—including, but not limited to, sleeping and waking self-states.

Weaknesses. Bromberg's book requires advanced knowledge of psychoanalytic concepts and terminology to understand described differences between relational psychoanalytic approaches and traditional psychoanalytic approaches to clinical material. By utilizing advanced psychoanalytic concepts and terminology as a means of arguing for the importance of

implementing a relational psychoanalytic approach, this book is less accessible to scholars who wish to attain an understanding of the complex concepts within psychoanalytic theory.

Distinguishing features. Bromberg does not address the ways relationships, manifested through dreams, foster formative experiences. Bromberg also does not address the ways in which the synergy between dreams and relationships change lives via the promotion of career development. While Bromberg explains how dreams can be used as a tool within psychotherapy, he does not position the dream as a relational phenomenon. Additionally, Bromberg is more accessible to those with advanced pre-existing knowledge of psychoanalytic theory, whereas the proposed title is accessible to students and those with rudimentary knowledge of psychoanalytic concepts as well as those with expertise in alternate therapeutic modalities. Further, Bromberg supports his arguments via clinical examples whereas the proposed text utilizes interviews with experts in the field to illustrate dreams as a relational phenomenon and support key arguments.

Domhoff 2018

The third competing title is Domhoff's *The Emergence of Dreaming: Mind-Wandering, Embodied Simulation and the Default Network* (2018).

Average price of this title: Hardback, \$79.00.

Strengths. Domhoff presents a new theory on dreams through a neurocognitive perspective of the relationship between dreaming and mind-wandering. Domhoff provides an extensive review of dream research over multiple decades, critiques current theories of dreams, and supports his new theory with empirical evidence from multiple laboratory and Non-laboratory studies. Domhoff also addresses developmental components of dreaming.

Weaknesses. Domhoff denies that dreams have an adaptive function. This view is based primarily on reports from research studies and not on clinical observation. Domhoff only briefly

discusses potential clinical utility of dreams in psychotherapy. Domhoff does not provide a framework for working with dreams clinically to enhance psychotherapeutic progress.

Distinguishing features. Domhoff provides a neurocognitive perspective of dreaming that does not address the relational components of dreaming. Domhoff references works by colleagues in the field to support his arguments but does not interview with eminent dream researchers and scholars directly regarding work they have published as is done in this proposed text. Domhoff does not address the ability of dreams to promote formative experiences or foster relationships. Domhoff does not provide an explanation for the function of his work in psychotherapy sessions. Domhoff presents dreams solely as a cognitive function, not a relational phenomenon.

Chapter 5: Manuscript Timeline

The final manuscript will be submitted by September 20, 2020. This book will be 24,815 words in length. There is no third-party material within the proposal document or draft manuscript.

Relevant Information

The draft manuscript has been completed and was submitted in conjunction with this book proposal. This proposal will not be simultaneously submitted to other publishers. It will be submitted to Routledge.

Chapter 6: Sample Introduction

I had a dream last night. A humorous dream at that. I do not typically dream of my extended family members, but last night, I dreamt of my younger cousin Gregory, whom I feel particularly protective of. Gregory and I were in a local mall together and decided to go into the cafeteria to grab a bite to eat. Upon entering, we came across some of Gregory's classmates with whom he has a tempestuous relationship. I took a step back as I watched Gregory interact with his peers and, in the blink of an eye (or in this case, the changing of the context of the dream), Gregory was on a miniature red bicycle, fleeing from his classmates who were pursuing him in wooden go-karts. Gregory was frightened, knowing that if his peers caught him, they would beat him up. So, together, Gregory and I ran through the mall—he on his miniature red bicycle and I on foot. To our misfortune, Gregory's peers were gaining on us, we desperately needed a diversion to slow them down, something to buy Gregory and I some time. As soon as we thought all was lost, my very best friend in this world appeared on a Zamboni. My friend wore a bright friendly smile accompanied with warm yet mischievous eyes, knowing that he was about to engage in some drama and save the day. My friend drove the Zamboni into the path of the go-karts which gave Gregory and I time to ditch the red bicycle, run out of the exit of the mall, and disappear into the parking lot unscathed.

I woke from my dream and chuckled to myself. I instantly turned over in bed to reach for my phone and message my friend about the dream. We shared a laugh, pondered over the meaning of my friend appearing on a Zamboni as neither of us have "ice-legs" or attend sporting events involving skates or a Zamboni, and then continued to share our plans for the day ahead.

Any therapist or dream enthusiast reading this book has just formed about 50 different associations to the manifest content of my mind's creation. They have uncovered themes, made

interpretations, identified key archetypal images and more—and that is perfectly reasonable. In fact, I will admit that I am a bit upset that I am missing out on hearing these insights! However, that is not the point of my sharing this dream. The point lies within the story that the dream facilitates, not the content that the dream possesses. Upon waking, the very first thing I did, even before using the restroom to relieve myself of the bottle of water I had guzzled down the night before, was message my best friend. The relationships I have in my life influenced the dream content, and the dream content influenced my reaching out to relate. Ultimately, the point I mean to make here, is to highlight the synergistic quality that exists between relationships and dreams.

Introduction to Setting the Context

As implied above, this book highlights the symbiosis between relationships and dreaming, and explicates the various implications of this synergistic phenomenon. The implications discussed throughout this book came to fruition through relating, as I embarked on a journey to interview four eminent researchers and scholars within the field of dreams—pun intended (Gordon & Gordon, 1989). As an organizing framework, I first discuss what research, and experts, say about the influence of dreams on the relationship within psychotherapy. I then discuss how, through a relational psychoanalytic approach to using dreams, therapy sessions can be enhanced as a means to promoting self-growth for patients. To further complicate things, I reflect on the various kinds of relationships people have in their lives and suggest ways dreams are inextricably influential in each of these relationships. Finally, I synthesize the aforementioned topics and the roles they play in fostering formative life experiences and enhancing psychotherapy.

What Research and Experts Say About Dreams' Influence on Psychotherapy

The clinical utility of discussing dreams in therapy sessions has been vastly explored. Research supports that talking about dreams in psychotherapy benefits clients (Schredl, Bohusch, Kahl, Mader, & Somesan, 2000). Cartwright, Tipton, and Wicklund (1980) showed that discussing dreams in therapy has been associated with an increased commitment to therapy. Clients who discuss dreams in therapy report better understandings of interpersonal relationships than those who do not discuss dreams in therapy (Hill et al., 2000), and have an increased willingness to share difficult content (Brink & Allan, 1992; Hill et al., 2013). Brink and Allan found that dreams can serve as an alternative approach to working with difficult populations, while Diemer, Leslie, Vivino, and Hill (1996) found that dream discussion sessions resulted in reduced symptomatology in a distressed adult population. Clients who discuss dreams in therapy share more with their therapists, become more involved in therapy at a faster rate, have higher overall ratings of the psychotherapy process, and are more likely to enjoy the structure of therapy than those who do not discuss dreams (Hill et al., 2000). These clients also report an increased level of depth of therapeutic sessions (Hill, Diemer, Hess, Hillyer, & Seeman, 1993).

While Domhoff (2018), proposes a neurocognitive theory of dreams, he maintains support of the notion that dreams help clients talk about difficult events in psychotherapy. Dreams have the ability to drive conversations, influence topics, and produce movement based off of the essential topics of the internal world (Lippmann, 2000). For a client who cannot actively access internal emotions to drive psychotherapy where it needs to go, accessing dreams may be able to do that for them. As stated by Mark Blechner (2018), “the dream guides its own analysis” (p. 219) and thus, tells us what the client needs from us in that moment.

Evidence of the utility of discussing dreams in sessions is abundant. By simply gleaning over the limited review above, it is clear that dreams have an influence on treatment. What all of these studies have in common, however, is a framework that does not pay sufficient attention to the bond between dreaming and relating. While some studies (Hill et al., 2013) examined the impact of dreaming on therapeutic alliance, these studies maintain a lack of appreciation for the symbiosis of dreams and relationships while simultaneously failing to acknowledge the formative experiences fostered through this interdependent phenomenon.

Relational Psychoanalytic Use of Dreams for Enhancing Therapy and Self-growth

To understand the use of dreams via a relational psychoanalytic approach, one must first have an understanding of relational psychoanalytic theory. Relational psychoanalytic psychotherapy, also referred to as *relational theory*, emphasizes the importance of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and personal relationships (Aron, 1996; Barsness, 2018). Relational theory has its own school of thought and perspective but draws heavily from interpersonal theory, object relations theory, feminist theory, and self-psychology (Barsness, 2018; Benjamin, 1995). Relational theory suggests that humans crave relationships and develop the capacity to relate effectively through a cohesive sense of self (Benjamin, 2010, 2017; Mitchell, 1988). A cohesive sense of self develops via key relationships through processes such as recognition (Benjamin, 1995, 2010, 2017). The process of recognition constitutes that the other in the relationship, such as the mother in a mother–infant relationship, responds to the individual in such a way that confirms for the individual that he revealed an intention, created meaning, and thus has had an impact on the other (Benjamin, 1995, 2010, 2017). In a mother–infant relationship, the responsiveness of the mother to the infant is the basis of the infant’s development of his own sense of self and self-agency (Benjamin, 1995, 2017).

Principles of change from a relational psychoanalytic psychotherapy lens are dependent upon the ability to relate intersubjectively (Bromberg, 2008a, 2008b), or to relate through mutual recognition (Benjamin, 1995, 2010, 2017). To relate in this way, however, an individual must have a cohesive sense of self (Benjamin, 1995, 2010, 2017; Mitchell, 1988). Having a cohesive self means the self is not comprised of dissociated self-states (Bromberg, 2012). Instead, a cohesive sense of self is comprised of the integration of self-states, which ultimately enables the ability to share subjectivities with another and the ability to participate in reciprocal recognition (Bromberg 2012).

Distilled to its simplest components, a relational framework posits that the therapeutic relationship serves as a template for the practice and development of relational capacities (Safran, 2002). Through the collaborative exploration of the relational patterns within the therapeutic relationship, the client can develop generalizable skills for managing interpersonal relationships outside of psychotherapy (Safran, 2002). Given this, anything that impacts the relationship in session becomes extremely important to attend to within the therapy hour. While relational theory posits that even negative transferences are important in session, there is strong evidence to support the benefits of a positive transference. The quality of the therapeutic relationship between client and therapist is a key contributor to, and predictor of, favorable treatment prognosis (Ardito & Rabellino, 2011). Client–therapist relationships with stronger alliances have lengthier treatments than those with weaker alliances, and those with weaker alliances are also more prone to therapy drop out (Sharf, Primavera, & Diener, 2010). The therapeutic relationship influences clients' time in treatment, session quality, and overall improvement (Kivlighan, Hill, Gelso, & Baumann, 2016). Given this evidence, we should be

paying particularly close attention to factors that enhance the therapeutic relationship. This is where dreams come in (though they were there all along).

Research supports that discussing dreams in psychotherapy increases feelings of connectedness to the therapist (Hill et al., 2013). From a relational psychoanalytic perspective, however, I argue that the key component of dreams enhancing feelings of connectedness lies within the approach utilized for discussing dreams. It is imperative that the dream discussion is a *conversation* between client and therapist, rather than an interpretation. As the therapist and client discuss the dream together in this way, they are participating in a dialogue. The therapist is not superior to the client; rather, the therapist is equal to the client and engaging in a mutual curiosity of the presented dream and its manifest content. By approaching dreams in this fashion, the client becomes an active participant in the process of understanding her internal world more deeply and allows for feelings of connectedness rather than otherness towards the therapist. This form of dream work in psychotherapy sessions is different than other more traditional forms of working with dreams.

Traditional dream work does not employ the client as an active participant in the dream discussion process. For example, in classical psychoanalytic dream interpretation (Freud, 1900/2010), the therapist is the only active participant. After describing the dream, the client takes a passive role for the remainder of the dream interpretation process. The therapist reveals the hidden meanings of different components of the dream, typically without feedback from the client and without providing an opportunity for the client to participate in the construction of meaning of their own internal world (Freud, 1900/2010). The use of dreams from this perspective is concerned with revealing the unconscious content of dreams (Freud, 1900/2010) rather than having a conversation or building a relationship. This type of dream work forces the

dreamer into a passive rather than active position, depriving her of the opportunity to be a contributing member to the relationship.

Clients create meaning by being actively involved in the meaning-making process (Mahoney, 1991). Thus, it is important that the use of dreams in psychotherapy is a collaborative experience between client and therapist, rather than a hierarchical representation of an expert therapist constructing interpretations of a client's internal world. As argued by Paul Lipmann, from a relational perspective we do not discuss dreams to look for meaning, rather, we discuss dreams in order to make meaning. It is the role of the therapist, then, to participate in a collaborative process with the client in order to make meaning of the dream (Lippmann, 2000). I propose that in a relational approach to dream work, the client actively participating in the dream discussion enables the development of a positive therapeutic relationship (Safran, 2002). By journeying and considering multiple perspectives together, the client and therapist can increase intersubjective competence, or the ability to create a unified experience from two subjective experiences (Benjamin, 2004). Through engaging in mutual dialogue around dreams, the client gets a formative experience for intersubjective relating that then generalizes to relationships outside of the therapeutic encounter (Safran, 2002).

Clients who talk about dreams in therapy have reported gaining insight about their interpersonal relationships (Hill et al., 2000). They have been shown to have enhanced views of self (Mikulincer, Shaver, & Avihou-Kanza, 2011), increased connectedness with emotions (Hill et al., 2013), and improved interpersonal functioning and event insight (Diemer et al., 1996). Due to the synergistic quality between dreams and relationships, clients are able to discuss dreams in therapy while simultaneously building a relationship. In doing so, the client learns how to relate to an *other*, how a respectful other relates to them and how to exist in a co-created,

intersubjective space. These new skills translate well to job searches, academic pursuits, relationship construction and repair, and more. The skills are hard to teach and are therefore, primarily (and best) learned through experience. Ultimately, these lessons become the foundation for self-promotion—self-growth.

The Intimate Connection Between Dreams and Different Kinds of Relationships

There is a plethora of relationships in our lives that we do not think of as relationships. We become so enamored with the obvious types of relating—such as relating with our peers, colleagues, family, friends, teachers, advisors, and even pets—that we do not pay attention to arguably some of the most influential relationships we have. Such connections—our relationship with the culture of the times, our culture in general, society and historical contexts and events, diversity, social justice, therapy, and our careers as a whole rather than those we interact with through our careers—influence us deeply and become integrated into who we are.

From a relational psychoanalytic framework, *every* relationship is an important relationship. Therefore, I would do an injustice to neglect the ways dreams are intimately connected to, formulate because of, and are of interest due to, the relationships we have with these indispensable factors of our being. In the content to follow, I illustrate the inextricable nature of dreams and *all* of our relationships. Whether we like it or not, humans are relational beings, and therefore, have relationships with *everything*.

Summary

In this chapter, I have stated the purpose of this book as being an exploration of the symbiosis between relationships and dreaming. I have addressed arguments made by researchers and experts in the field of dream work that support the use of dreams in psychotherapy. I have provided a relational psychoanalytic framework to using dreams in psychotherapy for enhancing

treatment and promoting self-growth of clients. Finally, I have provided an overview of the various forms of relationships that manifest through, with, and because of dreams. In the contents to follow, I refer to the notions presented within this initial chapter. I use these concepts as a framework for illuminating the ways relationships, and consequently multiple lives, are shaped through, within, between, and because of dreams.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Antioch Dissertation Research

Hello, my name is Alicia MacDougall. I am a third-year doctoral student in Antioch University New England's Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology (Psy.D), conducting my dissertation research under the supervision of Theodore Ellenhorn, Ph.D., ABPP. I am interviewing psychologists and psychoanalysts who have published clinical and/or empirical work on dreams. I am interested in exploring what makes dreams so valuable and meaningful that some people have dedicated significant portions of their lives and careers to scholarly, academic, and therapeutic activity to dreams and dreaming. I am wondering if you would be willing to participate in my research study by meeting with me at a time of your convenience for 1-3 hours for an interview in which I will ask questions regarding the influence of dreams on your life and the value and meaning they hold for you and in your work. The interview can be in person or virtual, whichever is easiest for you, and we can take breaks whenever needed throughout the interview.

If you would be willing to participate in my study, or if you have any questions at all about the study, please let me know via a response to this email, and I will send a consent form so we can decide a date and time for an interview, as well as decide if the interview will be conducted in person or virtually.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email. I look forward to your response.

Very Best,

Alicia MacDougall

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Researcher: Alicia MacDougall, BA

Supervisor of Research: Theodore Ellenhorn, Ph.D., ABPP

Thank you for your participation in this project. Providing your signature below indicates that you understand the following:

- 1) This project will consist of a 1–3-hour interview. Interviews will be in person, or virtual through Zoom, an online meeting platform, at your convenience. You may take a break at any time during the interview. During the interview, I will ask you questions regarding the influence of dreams on your life and your views of their value and meaning. At the completion of my dissertation, I will contact you with the final product to share results.
- 2) Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to enter it or may withdraw at any time without consequence.
- 3) Your name will be used for this research project.
- 4) The interview will be audio-recorded. The recording will only be listened to by the researcher for purposes of transcription. You may request a copy of the final interview transcription or a copy of the original recording. At the completion of this study, the audio-recording of the interview will be deleted.
- 5) Though the purpose of this study is primarily to fulfill the researcher’s requirement to complete a formal research project as a dissertation at Antioch University New England, the researcher also intends to include information provided for this study in future scholarly publications and presentations. Therefore, sections of the interview may be printed in the researcher’s doctoral dissertation and future scholarly publications and presentations. If there is any section of the interview that you do not want included in the dissertation or subsequent works, you may inform the researcher during or following the interview and the sections will not be included in any works.
- 6) Benefits to participation in this study include a potentially interesting and enjoyable conversation between you and the researcher as well as a contribution to an understanding of the value and meaning of dreams.
- 7) You will not be provided any monetary incentive to take part in this research project.
- 8) This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Antioch University New England.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the instructions and limitations of participation described above. Moreover, I am indicating that I would like to participate in this study as a volunteer. If I do not wish to be interviewed, or am hesitant about participating in this study, I will not sign my name.

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____ Day/month/year

For questions or concerns about the study:

Alicia MacDougall, B.A

Dissertation Chairperson:

Theodore Ellenhorn, Ph.D., ABPP

For questions about your rights as a research participant:

Kevin Lyness, Chair of the Antioch University New England IRB

Shawn M Fitzgerald, Ph.D., Provost of Antioch University New England

Please return this form to Alicia MacDougall at [information redacted].

Thank you.