GESTALT DREAMWORK AS A THERAPEUTIC TOOL:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the effects of Gestalt Dreamwork by looking into the process changes in the counselee during the dreamwork sessions, specifically the a) experiences; b) physical manifestations and paralinguial expressions; c) indicated therapeutic process stages of Expressions, Differentiation, Affirmation, Choices and Integration; and d) techniques used. It also looked into the outcomes of Gestalt Dreamwork, specifically a) the changes shown by the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) inner-directedness; and b) time competence scores as respectively self-support and self-response-ability indicators; c) the view points of the counselees; d) counselor; and e) significant other; f) the personal changes in the other POI categories; and g) the social adjustment results seen through the Mental Health Analysis (MHA) test.

With the idiographic design replicated nine times (9x), 21-30 year old subjects took pre/post-treatment interviews and the POI and MHA tests, while their significant others took the similarly scheduled
interviews about their behaviors.

The findings showed that: 1. the process changes were: a) the re-experiencing of important life events and increased self-awareness; b) some physical manifestations and paralinguial expressions; c) related to the therapeutic stages; and d) through the staying in the feeling; exaggeration, simulated dialogue and role playing of the dream techniques; and 2. the outcomes: a) revealed no change in POI inner-directedness; and b) time competence scores; c) were for the counselees, satisfactory; d) for the counselor, indicative of: self-support in self-autonomy, decision making and risk taking; and self-response-ability in identification with one's experiences and dreams; e) for the significant others, related to expectations; f) were for the personal changes, increases in the POI self-acceptance, self-actualizing value, synergy and acceptance of aggression scores; and g) affirmed adjustment changes in the MHA interpersonal skills and social participation.

The study concluded that Gestalt Dreamwork: 1. is effective for the 21-30 age group; 2. can evoke process changes related to the four therapeutic stages;
3. is effective to help counselees re-own past experiences; 4. has techniques, effective per se and as part of dreamwork; 5. can lead to verifiable outcomes; and 6. has a useful theoretical framework.

The recommendations were for: 1. Counseling practice to: a) consider Gestalt Dreamwork for the 21-30 years old; b) adapt the four Gestalt therapeutic stages to assess client progress; and c) use the techniques, of staying in the feeling, exaggeration, simulated dialogues, and role playing; 2. Further research to: a) find or formulate measures of self-support and self-response-ability; b) study the concept of personal integration; c) increase studies on dreams; and d) replicate this study on other age groups.