

Journal Writing for Life Development

Dorothy M. Epple

Abstract: *Journal writing can be a creative adjunct to psychotherapy. This article will describe a qualitative study of the experiences of journal writers. Each participant's narrative illustrates the integration of Winnicott's transitional phenomena, Freeman's four stages of epiphanies, and Kegan's adult developmental stages through journal writing. The central findings of this research are that the experience of the participants can be identified in the following three categories: therapeutic experience, meditative experience, and a transformative experience. Journal writing can be adapted by psychotherapists, as an adjunct to therapy, to aid clients in elaborating their stories, listening within, identifying epiphanies, and moving forward in the change process. This article will present a case study of one of the narratives from this research.*

Keywords: *Journal writing, narrative, interpretive interactionism, ethnography, transitional phenomena, transitional space, epiphany*

INTRODUCTION

Psychotherapy is regarded as a talking cure that relies on a clinical relationship between a client and a therapist based on conceptual understandings from ego psychology, object relations, self-psychology, systems theory, and narrative theory. Through the use of language and storytelling, the client develops a narrative that is representative of his/her world. A relationship develops in which the therapist honors the client's self-determination, the client's inner knowledge of self, and the client's interpretation of meaning of the events of his or her life. The therapist relays to the client a belief in the client's strengths and value and helps to empower the client to tap his/her potential. The process begins by accepting the client's current experience of his or her own life and providing a structure within sessions to enable the client to begin a self-discovery process.

This study on journal writing indicates that journal writing may be an adjunctive method that complements the therapy process. Journal writing is mediated through language, writing, and storytelling. It enriches and aids the client in the self-discovery process by drawing out of the client knowledge he or she already possesses but does not know he or she has. Journal writing has the potential to

Dorothea Marie Epple, Ph.D., LCSW, BCD, is assistant professor in the social work program at the University of St. Francis, Joliet, IL 60435.

Copyright © 2007 *Advances in Social Work* Vol. 8 No. 2 (Fall 2007) 288-304.
Indiana University School of Social Work.

become a dynamic self-realization. The journal starts where the client chooses to begin. At the heart of journal writing is a narrative that is consistent with that of the therapeutic encounter. Journal writing is a non-analytical, non-judgmental method that helps clients crystallize issues in their lives, identify changes needed, and move forward to enact the change.

The purpose of this paper is to present the process of the Progoff (1992) journal writing, its relationship to personal growth, and its parallels to psychotherapy. Both therapy and journal writing focus on a process of quieting one's self, reflecting within, identifying ideas, epiphanies, strengths, potentials, and living these potentials in the world. This paper will: 1) review the literature on journal writing and psychotherapy; 2) report the process and findings conducted on a study of Progoff journal writing; 3) present one of the research participant's experiences of journal writing that illustrates the process and findings in the research; and 4) examine journal writing as an adjunct to psychotherapy.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of the literature will document: 1) journal writing as a means to personal growth, creativity, and use in treatment, 2) studies that document the therapeutic effects of journal writing, and 3) the Progoff journal method and theory.

Journal Writing as a Means to Personal Growth

Journal writing has been a springboard for personal growth and the creative process. Psychoanalysts and psychotherapists, including Freud (1935, 1965), Jung (1965), Milner (1936/1981), and Progoff (1992) have utilized journal writing, autobiography, and diaries or letter writing for personal insights, creativity, and the development of their own theories. Freud (1935, p. 36) referred to his own autobiographical study as follows: "Two themes run through these pages: the story of my life and the history of psychoanalysis. They are intimately interwoven." Marion Milner (1981, p. 219), an English psychoanalyst, wrote "I was so astonished at what my diary keeping had shown about the power of the unconscious aspects of one's mind, both for good and for ill, that I eventually became a psychoanalyst." Jung recorded in his journal dreams, images, fantasies, imaginary conversations with his anima, and drew mandalas. Jung used his diary as a springboard for his theory of the collective unconscious. Jung (1965) states, "All my works, all my creative activity, have come from those initial fantasies and dreams." Germain (1991) has utilized and researched journal writing in Social Work HBSE courses to develop students' writing, analytic, and integrative skills.

Psychotherapists have noted the professional use of journals for treatment (Freud, 1919; Blos, 1962; Horney, 1980; Dalsimer, 1982; and Hymer, 1991). Freud (1919, p. 341) discussed the importance of Hermine Von Hug-Hellmuth's diary stating, "The diary is a little gem. I believe it has never before been possible to obtain such a clear and truthful view of the mental processes that characterize the development of a girl in our social and cultural stratum during the years before puberty." Blos (1962, p. 94) states, "The diary stands between daydream and object world, between make believe and reality, and its content and form change with the times." Dalsimer (1982) critiqued the *Diary of Anne Frank* and viewed the

diary as analogous to the clinical situation in content and in associative sequence. Dalsimer (1982) and Blos (1962) view the diary as being endowed with attributes of an object with which the writer develops an intimate relationship. Hymer (1991) states, for some, the diary becomes a "constant object" helping to ground the writer. Laird (1989), utilizing women's personal stories, writes of the importance of narrative, story telling, and myth. "Stories and myths help us to order the world, to sort out, explain, and integrate events in a striving for continuity and coherence" (Laird, 1989, p. 435). Psychotherapists who have utilized journal writing as an adjunct to therapy have found it to be a form of self-expression, self-reflection, a mirror, an object, a confidant, and a bridge from past to present and future.

Studies That Document the Therapeutic Effects of Journal Writing

Studies document the therapeutic effects of journal writing (Nichols, 1973; Pennebaker, 1990; Wiener & Rosenwald, 1993). Nichols (1973) exploratory study of journal keeping revealed the most frequently reported benefits of the journal included an increase in self-awareness and acceptance, the ability to express feelings, and help in centering the individual, as well as fostering a relationship of friendship to oneself. Wiener and Rosenwald (1993) found developmental and integrative benefits associated with keeping a diary. Pennebaker (1990) conducted controlled clinical research on the mind-body connection and demonstrated that individuals who wrote about their traumas experienced greater well-being, both psychologically and physically, and significantly bolstered their immune functions, compared with those who did not keep a journal.

Multiple methods of journal writing have emerged in the 20th century (Rainer, 1978; Cameron, 1992; Capacchione, 1979, 1989; Phillips, 1997; Neubauer, 1995; Keen & Valley-Fox, 1989; Nelson, 1991; Kelsey, 1980; Dorff, 1998). Ira Progoff's (1992) journal techniques are reflected in many of the current journal methods (Bender, 1997; Dorff, 1998; Kelsey, 1980; Nelson, 1991; Rainer, 1978). Progoff (1992, p.12) states: "Once you have learned how to use it, the Intensive Journal method becomes like a musical instrument you can play; and its melodies are the themes and the intimations of meaning in your life." Progoff refers to his journal as an intensive, structured method of writing for personal and spiritual growth. It is a dynamic way to record one's life rather than the traditional diary, which tends to be a chronological ordering of experience. The journal becomes a continual confrontation of oneself in the midst of one's own life.

Ira Progoff Journal Method—Development and Research

Progoff (1956, 1959, 1963) published a trilogy of books that reflect the development of his theoretical view that underpins the methodology of the journal process. Progoff's (1956) first book is written from a historical perspective, crystallizing the evolving insights of Freud, Adler, Jung, and Rank, which represent a transformation from the repressed to an awareness of the inner self and a creative wholeness. Each theory brought new insights, and a unity of development unfolded, which transcended any one individual school of thought and reached beyond to a science to which they all contributed. But, Progoff saw these theories "Build a psychological hedge around the realities of man's creative and spiritual

experiences" (p. 81). The theories stifled creativity in their analytical, intellectual, and rationalizations of the self. Progoff's (1959, 1963) second and third books in his trilogy present his new view of the magnitude of human personality. Progoff saw the primary task of depth psychology as developing a capacity of perceiving the inward process of one's growth. As one becomes sensitive and attuned to one's growth inwardly, one is able to draw one's potentialities forward. Symbols appear as spontaneous images from the depth of the person and are a vehicle that the potentiality latent within can be brought forth. Symbols should not be approached in an analytical way, because, if they are reduced to experiences of the past, they are deprived of their potentiality. To break a symbol apart and analyze it deprives it of its power of life. Instead, one works affirmatively, encouraging, nurturing, and drawing forward a symbol (Progoff, 1963). Progoff (1959) used the term "organic psyche" to emphasize the close relationship between the psyche and natural evolution. He sees the psyche as the directive principle in the human that guides its growth from the moment of conception forward. The psyche is a unitary principle. It is not conscious, as opposed to unconscious, nor is it unconscious, as opposed to conscious. It is both. The inherent process of growth takes place with awareness and direction, as though it were consciously guided toward a certain purpose. It begins on a level of intuition as a non-conscious intimation of things to come. Neither the goal nor the manner of its fulfillment is thought out in advance. The pattern discloses itself as it acts itself out. In the course of the enactment, the person discovers the nature of the goal the person is truly seeking.

Progoff created the journal method in 1966 to help individuals become in touch with the dynamic aspect or potential that their life is trying to become. He uses the image of the acorn having the potential to become an oak tree. The journal helps individuals become in tune with this potential within. Progoff (1992) believes there is a specific process working at the depth of a person. This process can be evoked with the use of a journal. This process is the movement of the psyche in the life of an individual. It is purposeful, elusive, and reflected in dreams or images, which are often transient. Recordings in a journal of one's dreams or images can preserve the process and become an image or mirror of the psyche. Progoff's journal method was an attempt at a tool to help individuals open to the core of self and lead beyond the self. In the journal experience, one is asked to suspend any critical judgments and allow whatever emerges to emerge.

Progoff's journal workbook is a loose-leaf binder with dividers. The four main sections of the workbook are the lifetime dimension (historical data), the dialogue dimension (relational aspects of life), the depth dimension (symbolic dreams and images), and the meaning dimension (inner experiences and spiritual aspects of life). Each of these dimensions is divided into several subsections. There is a section for a traditional daily log and for a period log. The process begins with recording factual data in the journal log sections. These data are then expanded and worked with in other dimensions or sections of the journal. Working with material in one section of the journal has the tendency to stimulate material to work with in another section of the journal. As one follows the leads from one section of the journal to another section, new awareness, connections,

and integration of one's life can take place. The process of working with one's own experience by writing in the journal activates a creative energy. Through dialogue in the journal, one speaks of conscious plans and experiences, but hears the symbolic messages, the wisdom, the intuitions, and the inherent possibilities that life reflects from the written page. The journal method utilizes meditation, images, and dreams to explore the symbolic messages beneath the everyday experiences. The process of personal growth often begins with an image that previsions the achievement. It is on the level of intuition and it is a non-conscious intimation of things to come. Images do not state meaning in specific logical terms but portray meaning. When an emotion is felt, imagery conveys that emotion. The journal helps one link the conscious and unconscious in an integral unity, bringing a new awareness that restructures the prior conscious view and moves one forward in life.

Janet Loyd (1991) completed her thesis at Seattle University on "Journal Keeper's Experiences." This clinical, qualitative approach of the Progoff journal method involved identifying subjective attitudes through three cumulative stages, namely, the pre-pilot, the pilot, and the survey. In the survey stage, a formal questionnaire of agree/disagree statements was sent to 50 different people nationally, all of whom were obtained from the mailing list of advanced studies students at Dialogue House in New York City. Seventy-six percent of the questionnaires were completed and returned. Some of the results from this survey included reports that:

- 1) Journal writers maintained the journaling process on their own, apart from the workshop—86%.
- 2) They conferred that they had developed from their journal work a sense of their life as an ongoing process, which needs to be respected and allowed to unfold—97%.
- 3) They reported becoming more conscious of their own worth as an individual—95%.
- 4) Of those 58% who reported working with a therapist, they felt the journal was helpful in the course of receiving psychotherapy—91%.
- 5) They have found meaning in images and symbols—94%.
- 6) They reported a sense of connection with God or the divine when working with the exercises in the process meditation sections of the journal—92%.

This survey indicates that specific exercises in the journal were helpful for particular needs. This study indicates that, for those who utilize the Progoff journal method, they get significant benefits.

In February 1971, an 18-month on-the-job training program was sponsored by the New York State Department of Labor, applying the Progoff Journal, in addition to 20 weeks of on-the-job training and remedial education. The trainees had earned less than \$3,000 a year in their former employment and 50% had formerly received state welfare. One year after initiation of the program, 249 of the 286 trainees had completed the program and were employed. Transcribed taped

interviews with the trainees indicated that the journal aspect of the training empowered the participants to make changes from within.

"The ultimate poverty is a person's lack of feeling for the reality of his own inner being. People in poverty situations tend to feel they are powerless to change their circumstances because their individuality is submerged by the group situation. Thus, they do not feel they are persons and, therefore, that they have no power to redirect their lives. The answer to poverty lies in making it tangibly possible for a person to experience the fact that he is a person. We do that in our program by using the journal in such a way that it becomes the outer embodiment of the inner life of the individual." (Sealy & Duffy, 1977, p. 5)

A pilot Target Prison Program was conducted at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in Bedford Hills, New York, utilizing the Progoff journal. This is a maximum-security facility for women. Twenty-eight inmates, who later narrowed to a core nucleus of 15, attended three core workshops, totaling 50 hours of instruction, followed by ongoing sessions and consultations. The women had been incarcerated primarily due to substance abuse violations, theft, or murder. Racial and ethnic backgrounds varied. The age of the group ranged from 25 to 45, with one inmate being over 60 years of age. The inmates were literate and interested in writing about their life experiences. The study included evaluations with the inmates, who provided feedback on how they were using the method and its benefits related to their self-development. The prison officials were consulted regarding the progress of the inmates. The inmates commented that the journal helped their ongoing growth and rehabilitation process by self-empowerment, release of feelings of anger and frustration, increased self-understanding, heightened sense of inner peace, more self-control, and greater awareness of creative abilities. Visible results of changed behavior were documented by feedback from the prison officials (McNair, 1999).

Other studies of the Progoff journal include the dissertation work of Gerard Werckle (1990); a phenomenological study of the experiences of persons who consider the Progoff journal important in their lives; and Walter Hopkins (1997), a non-analytic qualitative study of dreams and symbolic material. Theresa Craig (1991) utilized the Progoff journal to keep a personal record of responses to her field log notes of her dissertation.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study is twofold: 1) to provide a window into the personal experience of how people use the Progoff journal method to tell their stories, make sense of their experience, and identify whether the writing has provided a change process; 2) to examine the utility of journal writing as an adjunct to psychotherapy. The Ira Progoff journal method was selected for study based on the understanding that many of the journal techniques in other current methods of writing are encompassed in the Progoff method. Also, the Progoff method makes claim to a dynamic form of writing that moves one forward in

their life, rather than making a chronological ordering of experience that is often reflected in other methods. This continual confrontation of oneself in the midst of one's own life has the potential to tap creative energy that will continue with a life of its own.

Paradigm for Inquiry

Qualitative methods were used to explore the process, meaning, and subjective understanding of participants' experiences with the Progoff journal. Qualitative methods provide depth and detail by preserving the individual's story through direct quotation. "Knowledge of the realm of meaning is gained through interpretive or hermeneutic procedures" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p.159). The qualitative design in this study includes an integration of Narrative Methodology (Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorn, 1988; Riessman, 1988, 1993; Schwandt, 1997), Ethnographic methods (Van Maanen, 1988; Denzin, 1997), and Interpretive Interactionism (Denzin, 1989).

Denzin's (1989) Interpretive Interactionism was utilized as an overarching method of inquiry. Embedded in the bracketing process was an examination of each participant's writing related to Freeman's (1993) four stages of an epiphany.

Deconstruction

Capture

Bracketing

Freeman's (1993) four states of an epiphany

Recognition

Distanciation

Articulation

Appropriation

Construction

Contextualization

The Interpretive Interactionism process included a five-step process as indicated above. Deconstruction was an analysis of prior studies and a review of the literature of the phenomenon of journal writing. Capture included semi-structured recorded interviews of the experiences of 14 participants who had used the Progoff journal method for eight years or longer. Bracketing isolated the key features of the journal process. Embedded in the bracketing process, Freeman's (1993) four phases of an epiphany were examined for each participant's story. This four-phase process includes: recognition of a disjunction between one's life and one's potential, distanciation or separation of oneself from the disjunction, articulation of the old self and the new self being projected in the future, and appropriation or transforming the new knowledge into action. The last two steps of the Interpretive Interactionism allowed for a construction of each participant's process of journal writing over time and a contextualization or locating of the phenomenon in the worlds of lived experience. This narrative approach allowed for a rich, thick description of the experiences of each participant and allowed

various levels of themes and categories to emerge from the data. An expanded analysis of the narrative then developed the context of stories within stories. Validity is measured in verisimilitude, related to how this project captures the experiences of the participants so that others can share, vicariously, in their experience and resonate with it.

Participants

Participants were recruited from a mailing list provided by journal leaders in the Midwest. The 14 participants included nine women and five men, ranging in age from 44 to 68. The participants included three married men, two men never married and committed to the clergy, five married women, one divorced woman, two lesbian women, and one nun. Five participants had children. Employment for five of the participants was in the social service field (MSW, psychotherapist, hospital chaplain, director of volunteers, RN), three were employed in a writing profession (teacher of creative writing, editor, freelance writer), three were in religious life (parish priest, monk, nun/retreat director), one was a political science professor, one was an executive owning his own company, and one was a systems programmer. Four participants had earned a bachelor's degree, seven earned a master's degree, and three had a Ph.D. Faith backgrounds identified by the participants included Catholic, Buddhist, Taoist, Wicca, Tibetan Buddhist, Jewish/Buddhist, and United Church of Christ. Participants had utilized the Progoff journal method for eight to 30 years. Ten participants had practiced diary writing before they were introduced to the Progoff method. Four of these had kept a diary since their teen years. The participants were asked to describe their experience of the Progoff journal writing over time and how the writing had affected their life. The participants were allowed to let their stories unfold in a semi-structured interview. Those participants who were willing also shared quotes from their journal that exemplified their experience of journal writing. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The participants read the transcribed interviews and the analyzed interviews for the purpose of member checking.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed using Denzin's (1989) Interpretive Interactionism and Freeman's (1993) four phases of epiphanies. Each epiphany is illustrated in the participant's narrative by exploring the "recognition" of a disjunction between one's life and one's potential; "distanciation," or separation of oneself from the disjunction; "articulation" of the old self and the new self being projected in the future; and "appropriation" or transforming the new knowledge into action. Winnicott's (1951) concepts of potential space in the intermediate area of experience were also examined. Winnicott describes transitional phenomena as a third part of life: "An intermediate area of experience, to which inner reality and external life both contribute . . . It shall exist as a resting place for the individual keeping inner and outer reality separate yet inter-related . . . the substance of illusion" (1951, p. 30). This potential space lies between the inner world and the external reality, while both are joining and separating the two. Winnicott widens his concept of transitional phenomena to play, art, religion, and dreaming. The journal process of quieting one's self, meditating, and writing allows one's experience in

this intermediate area to be written in the journal. The containing of one's story in the potential space of the journal is attuned to the illusive process of imagery and its symbolism that is below the surface of conscious awareness.

Limitations

This qualitative study was exploratory in nature and specific to the experience of the 14 participants who used the Progoff method for eight years or longer. Other journal methods were not examined. As a qualitative research project, there are limitations inherent in this design. All narratives of an experience are representations of an experience but are not the complete true experience itself. The teller of a narrative selects aspects of his or her experience to tell and interprets aspects of the experience in the telling. Telling is limited by language and by the awareness of the teller. Narratives about the subject's narratives are a creation of the researcher, as a result of the interaction with the subjects of research. There is a co-construction process between the researcher and the participant. Meaning is fluid and contextual. Meaning is not fixed and universal. Objective science discovers facts. The notion of an objective reality will not be applicable in this project.

FINDINGS

The experiences of the journal writers were identified in the following three categories: therapeutic experience, meditative experience, and the integration of the journal methodology into other disciplines. The vignettes reveal a journey to the creative inner voice that leads to self-discovery and wisdom (therapeutic), transcendence (meditation and creativity), and transformation (the methodology of the journal is owned, integrated with another theory, and transformed). Selected participant comments related to each theme are listed below:

Therapeutic Experience

"The journal was saying to me, 'You are not here to do bookkeeping. You are here to be a midwife of souls. You are here to evoke from within other people what is there.' Today I get great joy out of seeing other people blossom and grow and find their path in life."

"I had this absolutely mind-breaking, totally un-grounding experience that just opened up all kinds of new things."

"Progoff has helped me to realize my value system and I want to live my value system."

"The journal gave me a voice."

"The journal has been a factor in my having the courage to believe in myself."

Meditative/Transcendent Experience

"The journal has taken me beyond one religion in the sense that I have become very active in inter-religious dialogues and in learning about the spiritual and mystical sides of other religions . . . It opened me beyond the rigid structures of any system. It opened me to seeing the truth wherever it is, without totally leaving my roots."

"The journal has given me a place in which to experience myself and to discover my existence."

"It is a way of making contact with strengths or powers within myself which I may tend to habitually over look or minimize."

"I accessed my inner wisdom and, after that, I knew that everyone has inner wisdom."

Application and Transformation of the Methodology

Four participants in the study learned the journal method, made the method their own, then transformed the method by integrating it with their own discipline or career and, in turn, creatively came up with something new. These new inspirations included writing books; giving retreats, one-act plays, and journal methods for businessmen and companies; and counseling techniques.

"All I did is take the language that Ira Progoff is using and translate it into business. . . . I've used it in corporations to answer strategic questions or vision questions."

"I'm an intuitive thinker with rational training, so what happens is I get an image of either a change in my life or a change in society and then rationally construct the means to have that happen. Getting the original vision of where I'm headed is important and the journal certainly helps in that."

The author's analysis of the vignettes demonstrates that epiphanies that emerge in journal writing have the potential to bring a new view of life and a new action in the world. Rather than just an intellectual understanding, this epiphany often appears for the participants as a result of an image or a series of images that convey meaning at a symbolic level. The imagery process entails leaving behind the logical mind and creating a space where an image can emerge. The image carries the seed for future action and taps a developmental unfolding. The process of journal writing produces images, symbolic meanings of the images, and the initiation of a developmental process or spiritual deepening. Each participant's narrative illustrates the integration of Winnicott's transitional phenomena, Freeman's four stages of epiphanies, and Kegan's adult developmental stages through journal writing.

SIGNIFICANCE TO SOCIAL WORK

The narrative in the journal is parallel to the narrative the client brings to case management or therapy. The journal as a potential adjunct to therapy could facilitate the narrative process and the construction of a coherent story. This could increase the progress made in each therapy session and continue the therapeutic process between sessions by harnessing and organizing the person's thoughts. The potential of the journal to initiate the developmental process, tap intuitive abilities, broaden the perspective of the client, approach life situations from new perspectives, create a bridge between past memory and future intimations or hopes, would all move the process of the therapy forward. Narrative theory and journal writing could be integrated with any other therapeutic theory to form a foundation, to assist in the process of narrative construction toward therapeutic

means related to the client's presenting problem. In psychotherapy, the journal has the potential to facilitate the process of bringing to the surface the not yet conscious aspects of life. As an aspect in short-term therapy, the journal can make the course of therapy briefer and give the client a method to continue the therapeutic process and enhance self-development following treatment. The therapeutic atmosphere of the journal is a means to a continued therapeutic process within the self after therapy has ended. A goal, in therapy, is to help the client develop a means with which to be present to themselves and to find within themselves their own answers and their own authority.

The journal experience of one participant was chosen to present, because her experience was illustrative of the three findings of the study, and it also demonstrated the integration of the transitional phenomena, epiphanies, and the tapping of the developmental process through the journal writing. This methodology was a narrative study (as opposed to a grounded theory study), which kept the integrity of each participant's story intact. It allows for the rich breadth and depth of the experience to be realized.

LILIANA—JOURNAL WRITING: BEYOND THE TWELVE STEPS

Liliana was a 64 year-old Caucasian of German/Irish/American background. She was a published poet and fiction writer. Her full-time employment was at a university as an instructor in creative writing. Liliana has earned a master's degree in literature and the teaching of writing. She was raised a Roman Catholic, but, at the time of the study, was a Taoist and a practitioner of Religious Science.

I met with Liliana at her home. Liliana's energy and exuberance overshadowed her facial lines of aging, bringing her a natural glow. I immediately felt at home with her warm welcome.

The desire to write began as early as five years of age, when Liliana dictated a "novel" to her mother, while waiting for doctors' appointments to address a serious early-childhood illness. Liliana had been a lifelong journal writer, beginning at age eight. Liliana described her mother as an alcoholic. She remembered being lonely and feeling her parents did not know her or see her unique qualities. Liliana became her mother's confidant, creating a cycle of intimacy, dependency, confusion, rejection, and loneliness.

Liliana appeared to have been born with creative capacities, but her early life experience discouraged a belief in her own talent:

"I used to play in my bedroom closet when I was quite young . . . I would stage plays . . . I have this image in which I say to little Liliana 'I have to leave for a minute. I'll be right back.' Then, I didn't come back. That is when I lost touch with my authentic self. . . . When I graduated from college, I remember, putting things back in that same closet, thinking, I have to stop writing because I am not good enough and I don't have the right to put my life into something that I am not going to be successful with."

Liliana abandoned herself and her talent to marry and support the talent of her husband, who was a performing musician. Many years later, she embarked on a midlife change that included recovery from addictions, divorce, relocating to

another part of the country, and obtaining a master's degree in Creative Writing. Liliana also began Progoff journal writing.

"Taking me back to that first workshop, I remember checking in and getting this huge book and thinking, 'Oh My God! What is it that they are going to expect of me here?' At that time I had been in a Twelve Step Program for eight years. The Twelve Steps demand that you look at yourself and the way you are functioning and be open to change. Those of us who are in that process are a fruitful field for plowing. I don't think that there was any specific thing that I was working on but I was anxiously trying to get deeper into myself.

Progoff refers to the journal, especially the Life History Log, as "loosening the soil of our life," which is similar to the Twelve Step self-examination process that Liliana calls a "fruitful field for plowing." Both allow for an opening of the channels in the inner space of one's life. With eight years of Twelve Step reflection in the AA program, Liliana came to the journal workshop ready to freely explore her inner life. Liliana described the first weekend:

"I mostly remember the psychological movement that happened that I just thought was fabulous! It told me that I had more rooms inside myself than I had been in consciously. They were accessible. They were willing to open the doors, if I was willing to keep writing. That was very exciting to me . . . I remember that experience the way you remember psychological milestones . . . I learned to trust myself in a way that I hadn't been known to do before . . . What that moment told me was that my insides were a trustworthy geography . . . Wow! I'm getting emotional now! The thing that I got when I came into AA was that I realized that I was getting a second chance in life. It was a new arena in which to discover who I was and become who I wanted to be. This is a very similar thing. This process told me that there were a lot of riches within me waiting for discovery and that they were mine. It was reclaiming myself . . . But it's more than that because it moves you forward in life. You're not just reclaiming the past . . . it has messages to . . . reveal your past to you."

Ira Progoff (1992) describes his journal method as having a feedback process in which the feedback generates an energy that thrusts forward, in the form of new experiences, new recognitions or new ideas, connecting one to an inner-self or inner-movement in life. Liliana describes the energy in her journal as helping her to become aware of "more rooms inside" herself that she had not "been in consciously" and that were "accessible" if she was "willing to keep writing." She described this movement as being a "psychological milestone" in which she learned that her insides were a "trustworthy geography." She came to realize that she had many "riches within" that were "waiting for discovery" and that she was being given another chance to "reclaim" herself by allowing the journal to reveal her past to her. This process, as described, is similar to Winnicott's (1971) transitional phenomena, or intermediate area of experience, in which a person searching for self requires a new experience in a specialized setting. The journal provided a space for Liliana to do a ticking-over of the un-integrated aspects of her personality and realize sensations that had been beyond detection and defied

description. Lillian's first epiphany in this transitional space was a recognition (Freeman's term) that she could trust her insides. She describes this process:

"Images are not always visual but they are in the body and so sometimes they are felt, and they are very specific. They have all the characteristics of a visual image in that they have parameters, scope and roundness or flatness. They have texture . . . a sense of color, a sense of flavor . . . The recognition of trust within came . . . It was like an explosion of opening. Sometimes, when you see a film and it fast forwards, like the opening of a flower—it just opens just like that . . . The space opened. It was an opening of a space within me . . . I was holding myself. I was bigger then I usually thought of myself. Wiser, all of that was present . . . I felt this underlying structure that had been present . . . It was buried down there, it was active and it was alive. That told me a great deal about myself . . . What I found was that these were things that were alive, that were actively functioning in me, even though I wasn't conscious of them and that they were accessible and that I could make decisions about them. That is a lot of power."

Liliana described the sensation of trust within as "an explosion of opening," like the "opening of a flower," and a "space within me" that allowed for a "holding myself." This instant explosion had parameters, scope, roundness, flatness, texture, color, flavor, and layers, without being visual. This moment in time, an epiphany of inner knowing and trust, gradually changed the future internal and external life for Liliana. The holding of the infant by the mother, termed as the environment, is seen by Winnicott (1965) as providing a transition from an "unintegrated state to a structured integration." Liliana's movement from awareness of a "trustworthy geography within," to the felt "underlying structure that had been present and was active and alive," resembles Winnicott's early mother-infant holding environment. The journal provided a space for transitional phenomenon to occur that reconnected Liliana to that early mother-infant relationship that was "present" and "buried" within her. This made available the "power" to enact the epiphany of inner trust. Liliana reports the early journal writing exercises that brought about this epiphany experience were a sequence of childhood writings that included Steppingstones, Life History Log and Enlargement, Dream Enlargement, Twilight Imagery, and Dialogue with individual family members. Liliana states, "What the journal did for me was reconfirm the path I had chosen." Liliana's new path had included divorce, relocation, and a career change. She knew she could trust these changes, because they emanated from a sense of knowing herself. Rather than leaving home, Liliana was finding a home within herself, a home that had been there but had been unknown. This recognition of inner trust was the beginning of the four steps of her epiphany. The disjunction and the distancing phase of Liliana's epiphany of gaining inner trust was not one of separating herself, but rather, one of embracing herself. Liliana describes how the journal epiphany led to the articulation and appropriation of inner trust through fiction writing:

"The journaling process gave me a vocabulary for talking about my inner-life, which I had never had . . . For instance, the Entrance Meditations have a vocabulary that matches my insides right away . . . I could then talk about

it to myself and to other people . . . I think something I didn't have before was a sense of respecting my own sacred language. There are images that are specific to me that are sacred and are just as loaded as any image in the Bible . . . Another thing Progoff gave me was language for a sense of connectedness with something larger than myself . . . Progoff does assume that every human being has a spiritual dimension . . . I think that what the Progoff journaling has done for my writing process is to deepen me into that spiritual connection and give me more language so that I could write from that place. Most of what I write about in my fiction is about how people come to a moment of change. I think those turning points in our lives are the story of our life. They're the most interesting things that happen and how you get there and how you negotiate it."

Liliana described the journal as giving her a "vocabulary" for her inner life, an experience that resembled "turning a light on over a terrain that had been in semi-darkness." This experience is parallel to Helen Keller's acquisition of language, as told by Freeman (1993). Helen Keller's loss of sight and hearing had resulted in an experience in which she "forgot that it had ever been different" until the teacher came, "who was to set my spirit free" with the acquisition of language. As humans, we are immersed in language. It is only through language that we can describe our memories and our inner experience, allowing for meaning. The journal provides a space, a playground, where one can listen to and feel the movement of the words as they tell and retell the experiences of life, while rewriting the self.

A respect for her own sacred images brought a connectedness to the larger than personal. This connection to the larger than personal gave Liliana a language to write about the spiritual dimension of life, of "how people come to a moment of change" in her fiction. Liliana's writing was a concrete expression of the articulation and appropriation of her epiphany of inner trust. The development of a small performing arts group that integrates poetry reading and music was another concrete example of appropriation of this inner trust.

Liliana's epiphany in the journal writing took her beyond the AA program and beyond what therapy provided to a spiritual substratum. From this she developed an inner trust to act out of her knowledge of herself. The language of Progoff was evocative in allowing Liliana to find metaphors, rich descriptions, and words to describe her internal space. The journal exercise of Steppingstones, Life History Log, Dream Enlargement, Twilight Imagery, and Dialogue were used to examine childhood experiences with a therapeutic result. The journal process provided a space for transitional phenomenon that reconnected Liliana to an inner trust and an active, underlying structure that she had been disconnected from since childhood. The connection to a "trustworthy inner geography" was mediated by language. Multiple layers of meaning flowed from her experience of inner trust and resulted in reclaiming her artistic and spiritual inclinations. Outward activity of fiction writing, poetry writing, and performing arts was propelled from within, the now trusted interior terrain of her life. The central findings of the research are evident in her narrative. The journal writing provided a therapeutic experience, a spiritual or meditative experience, and a transformative experience in which her

personal journal writing became integrated with her professional work as an author, teacher of creative writing, and a co-founder of a performing arts group.

DISCUSSION

This experience of journal writing, as exhibited by Liliana, illustrates a process of change that includes Winnicott's transitional phenomena, Freeman's four stages of epiphanies, and Kegan's adult developmental stages through journal writing. Vignettes, in Liliana's own voice, demonstrate the epiphanies, metaphors, and themes as they emerge in the journal writing. These vignettes illustrate a developmental process through the journal writing. The author's analysis of the vignettes demonstrates that epiphanies that emerge in journal writing have the potential to bring participants a new view of life and new possibilities for action in the world. The imagery process entails leaving behind the logical mind and creating a space where an image can emerge. The image carries the seed for future action and taps a developmental unfolding. The process of journal writing produces images, symbolic meanings of the images, and the initiation of a developmental process or spiritual deepening. All of these themes in journal writing are the clinical process.

Parallels exist between Winnicott's transitional phenomena, transitional space, illusion, play, and creativity, and the process of journal writing. The meditative state, when using the journal, is a transitional space that creates the illusion of transitional phenomena, while the journal itself is an objective object that is highly personal and used in play, providing a form of transitional experience. One knows the journal is a notebook filled with paper and writing but is deeply moved by it, as though it were much more than a notebook. Through illusion, the participant plays with words, symbols in dreams, or twilight imagery. The participant is able to distinguish between fantasy and fact, inner, and outer, but through illusion, allows the outer and inner reality to speak to each other, finding a journey through remembering and reliving fantasy and dreams and integrating past and present and future.

Winnicott states, the person searching for self requires "A new experience in a specialized setting. The experience is one of a non-purposive state, as one might say a sort of ticking over of the unintegrated personality" (1971, p. 55). Winnicott also states the therapeutic procedure must "afford opportunity for formless experience, and for creative impulses, motor and sensory which are the stuff of playing" (1971, p. 64). He refers to this state as one of "formlessness." He goes on to state the person must be allowed to "communicate a succession of ideas, thoughts, impulses, sensations that are not linked" (p. 55). The journal parallels this source of playing and manifests itself in its choice of words, humor, analogy, metaphor, and symbols. It relies on both the conscious and unconscious cooperation utilizing dreams, twilight images, and the connections of dream state images with factual events. This dynamic use of journal writing can be adopted by psychotherapists as an adjunct to therapy to aid clients in elaborating on their stories, listening within, identifying epiphanies, and moving forward in the change process.

References

- Bender, S. (1997). *The writer's journal: 40 contemporary authors and their journals*. New York: Dell.
- Blos, P. (1962). *On adolescence*. New York: Free Press.
- Bruner, E.M. (1986). Ethnography as narrative. In V.W. Turner & E.M. Bruner (Eds.). *The anthropology of experience*. (pp. 29-42). Chicago: University of Illinois.
- Cameron, J. (1992). *The artist's way: The spiritual path to higher creativity*. New York: Penguin Putnam.
- Capacchione, L. (1979). *The creative journal: The art of finding yourself*. Columbus, OH: Swallow Press.
- Capacchione, L. (1989). *The creative journal for children: A guide for parents, teachers, and counselors*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Craig, T. (1991). Qualitative research and the Intensive Journal method. *Intensive Journal Studies*, 9, 19-23.
- Dalsimer, K. (1982). Female adolescent development: A study of the diary of Anne Frank. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 37, 487-524.
- Denzin, N.K. (1989a). *Interpretive biography*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. (1989b). *Interpretive interactionism*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. (1997). *Interpretive ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Dorff, F. (1998). *Simply soul stirring: Writing as a meditative practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Freeman, M. (1993). *Rewriting the self*. New York: Routledge.
- Freud, S. (1919). *Letter to Dr. Hermine von Hug-Helmuth*. S.E. 14:341. (Original work published 1915.)
- Freud, S. (1935). *An autobiographical study*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Freud, S. (1965). *The interpretation of dreams*. New York: Avon Books.
- Germain C.B. (1991). An instructor's story about students' life stories. In R.R. Middleman & G. Goldberg Wood (Eds.). *Teaching secrets: The technology in social work education*. The Haworth Press, Inc. New York.
- Hopkins, W. (1997). A qualitative study in using non-analytic methodology as embodied in Ira Progoff's Intensive Journal process for dealing with dreams and other symbolic material. *Dissertation information service*. Ann Arbor, MI.
- Horney, Karen. (1980). *The adolescent diaries of Karen Horney*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hymer, S. (1991). The diary as therapy: The diary as adjunct to therapy. *Psychotherapy in Private Practice*, 9(4), 13-30.
- Jung, C.G. (1965). *Memories, dreams, reflections*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Keen, S., & Valley-Fox, A. (1989). *Your mythic journey: Finding meaning in your life through writing and storytelling*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher Inc.
- Kegan, R. (1980). Religious dimensions. In J. Fowler & S. Vergole (Eds.), *Toward moral and religious maturity: International conference on moral and religious development*. Morristown, NJ: Silver Bercllett.
- Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Kegan, R. (1994). *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Kelsey, M. (1980). *Adventure inward: Christian growth through personal journal writing*. Minneapolis: Augsburg.
- Laird, Joan. (1989). Women and stories: Restorying women's self-constructions. In M. McGoldrick, C.M. Anderson & F. Walsh (Eds.). *Women in families: A framework for family therapy*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc.
- Lloyd, J. (1992). Journal keepers' experiences, from subjective report in using the Progoff Intensive Journal. *Intensive Journal Studies*, 10, 8-16.
- McNair, T. (1999). *Intensive journal target prison program*. New York: Dialogue House Associates.
- Milner, J. (1981). *A life of one's own*. Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher.

- Nelson, L. (1991). *Writing and being: Taking back our lives through the power of language*. San Diego: Lura Media.
- Neubauer, J.R. (1995). *Dear diary: The art and craft of writing a creative journal*. Salt Lake City: Ancestry.
- Nichols, S.S. (1973). *The personal journal: A mental health proposal*. Dissertation Information Service, Ann Arbor, MI.
- Pennebaker, J.W. (1990). *Opening up: The healing power of expressing emotions*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Phillips, J. (1997). *Marry your muse: Making a lasting commitment to your creativity*. Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1983). *Methodology for the human sciences*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Progoff, I. (1956). *The death and rebirth of psychology*. New York, McGraw-Hill.
- Progoff, I. (1959). *Depth psychology and modern man*. New York, McGraw-Hill.
- Progoff, I. (1963). *The symbolic and the real*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Progoff, I. (1992). *At a journal workshop*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc.
- Rainer, T. (1978). *The new diary*. Los Angeles: Tarcher.
- Riessman, C.K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Riessman, C.K. (1994). *Qualitative studies in social work research*. London: Sage.
- Sealy, S.A., & Duffy, T.F. (1977). *Job-training program applying the Intensive Journal method*. New York: Dialogue House Associates.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Van Maanen, J.V. (1988). *Tales of the field; On writing ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Werckle, G.J. (1990). Progoff's Intensive Journal method: A Phenomenological study. *Dissertation Information Service*. Ann Arbor, MI.
- Wiener, W., & Rosenwald, G. (1993). A moment's monument: The psychology of keeping a diary. In R. Josselson & A. Lieblich (Eds.). *The narrative studies of lives* (Vol. 1., pp. 30-57). London: Sage Publications.
- Winnicott, D.W. (1951). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena (pp. 229-242). *Collected papers*. Madison: International University Press.
- Winnicott, D.W. (1958). The capacity to be alone. (pp. 29-36). *Collected papers*. Madison: International Universities Press.
- Winnicott, D.W. (1962). The aims of psychoanalytical treatment (pp. 166-170) *Collected papers*. Madison: International Universities Press.
- Winnicott, D.W. (1971). *Playing and reality*. London: Routledge.
- Winnicott, D.W. (1992). *Through pediatrics to psycho-analysis. Collected papers*. New York: Brunner Mazel.
- Winnicott, D.W. (1996). The maturational processes and the facilitating environment. *Collected papers*. Madison: International Universities Press.

Author's Note:

Address correspondence to: Dorothea Epple, Ph.D., assistant professor, Social Work Program, University of St. Francis, 500 Wilcox Street, Joliet, IL 60435, USA. e-mail: depple@stfrancis.edu.