

Integration and Meaning-Making of Peak Experiences in Bonny Method of Guided
Imagery and Music: An Empirical Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

This study is an empirical phenomenological study that investigated the lived experience of meaning-making and integration of peak experiences in the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music. A total of four participants were enrolled in this study: two GIM Fellows and two GIM clients. All participants shared their own lived experiences of the phenomena through semi-structured interviews. Participants shared ways in which they made meaning of their experience, and then integrated it into their daily lives. This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how individuals bring these experiences back into their lifeworlds and whether they experience any life changes. This study found that all participants processed their experience by engaging in a creative process, i.e., drawing, writing, or other consciousness shifting meditations. Once meaning was derived, all participants expressed experiences of increased openness and expansion, as well as a greater awareness of spiritual oneness. All participants shared experiences of change and transformation following their experience, demonstrating the potential benefits of the Bonny Method of GIM for promoting experiences of self-actualization and spiritual wellness.

Keywords: BMGIM, openness, spirituality, integration, meaning making, peak
experience

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Integration and Meaning-Making of Peak Experiences in Bonny Method of Guided
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Peak experiences, also called mystical experiences, have been documented throughout history with varied significance. Evidence of such experiences can be found in poetry, philosophical and psychological works, literature, archived correspondence, autobiographical texts, and religious texts (James, 1902). Peak experiences have been sought and occasioned through several practices, but also triggered spontaneously in everyday waking life (Maslow, 1968). For the purpose of this study, peak experience is defined as an overwhelmingly positive, unitive, and transcendent experience that involves a sense of oneness, wonder, and illumination. These experiences are often ineffable, profoundly transformative, and transcend egocentricity (Abrams, 2002).

Due to the ineffable quality of these events, I have chosen to approach this phenomenon pragmatically by exploring what individuals *do* with their experiences, particularly focusing on the integration and meaning-making experience that follows a peak experience in Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM). James (1902) applied the pragmatic principle to spirituality, claiming:

Only when our thought about a subject has found its rest in belief can our action on the subject firmly and safely begin... our conception of these practical consequences is for us the whole of our conception of the object. (p. 435)

Using an empirical phenomenological approach, I will explore the lived experience of individuals' meaning-making and integration, or the *practical consequences*, of the phenomenon of a peak experience in Bonny Method. As described

by Moustakas (1994), a phenomenological study aims to establish some understanding, or *essence* of a phenomenon.

Helen Bonny's personal knowledge of peak experiences in music led her to explore the field of music therapy and ultimately develop the Bonny Method of GIM (Bonny, 2002). The method was greatly influenced by her early work at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center as a fellow researcher and staff member assisting in conducting psychedelic research trials in the 1970s (Bonny, 2002, p. 9). Following the cessation of the trials, Bonny continued to explore the role of music in altered states of consciousness without mind-altering drugs. By incorporating Leuner's Guided Affective Imagery techniques and Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, as well as the client-centered/humanistic psychotherapeutic models of Rogers and Maslow, Bonny eventually developed her own music therapy method that is now known as Bonny Method of GIM (pp. 12-13). Although modifications of her method have since been developed, traditional Bonny Method maintains the structure and procedures set in place by Bonny. Similar to the peak experiences occasioned in the psychedelic trials with which Bonny assisted, she found that individuals also occasioned peak experiences through Bonny Method of GIM, and she described the experience as "a positive watershed that changed the direction of their lives" (p. 11). This study seeks to better understand the effects of peak experiences in the Bonny Method of GIM in terms of integration and meaning-making, by investigating the lived experience of individuals who have experienced this phenomenon.

Epoché

My initial interest in Bonny Method of GIM was triggered by my curiosity regarding recent findings of psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy trials, particularly those focused on the role of mystical experiences in addressing fear of death with terminally ill patients. I have also always felt very connected to Maslow's writings, preferring a resource-oriented, humanistic, and existential framework as a music therapist, but also as a philosophy for living and relating to others. My preferred clinical setting is music therapy at end-of-life, and existential distress is often a prevalent concern for this population. It is my belief that American culture does not have adequate rituals for death and dying, which often results in existential pain and trauma at end of life.

I was aware of Bonny's role in the psychedelic research of the 1970s, but had never explored her method in depth. To have a better understanding of Bonny Method, I completed the Level 1 training in May of 2018 and am now in the process of completing Level II training. I can honestly say that my experiences in training, while both facilitating and participating in the music experiences, have been extremely resourceful and meaningful. Similar to some of those who have had mystical experiences in psychedelic research studies, I too would rank my imagery experiences as some of the most spiritual and important moments of my life thus far. I personally have had both a peak experience and a death-rebirth imagery experience in Bonny Method that were profoundly healing, transcendent, and illuminating.

Because peak experiences are typically ineffable, I do not necessarily find value in describing the experience itself, but more so in exploring how individuals integrate the experiences and make meaning of them. It is my belief that my operational definition of

peak experience is sufficient enough to establish inclusion criteria, and that participants were able to use this definition to determine whether their experiences fit. I was curious whether there were any common themes relating to how individuals process and integrate these experiences, but also whether there were any themes of transformation and healing.

Literature Review

Peak Experiences

Maslow (1968) described peak experiences as a syndrome, or a collection of symptoms that self-actualized people experience, though he found that individuals do not usually experience *all* of the symptoms (p. 71). Peak experiences go beyond human relevance and therefore transcend into a territory free of everyday concerns (pp. 76-77). Influenced by Eastern philosophers' descriptions of related experiences, Maslow (1968) believed that the peak experience was one of "desireless awareness" (p. 86). He believed that "the truth, the good, the beautiful" were all experienced in perfect union (p. 84). The peak experience is complete and is not a *means*-experience, but an *end*-experience (p. 79). Attempts to describe a peak experience often only reduce its significance, implying its ineffability.

Such experiences as investigated by Maslow were historically reserved for individuals considered *mystics*, but Maslow (1964/1970) found in his phenomenological quests that "the sacred is in the ordinary," meaning all are capable of experiencing these moments (p. 10). In an interview from 1968 with Dr. Everett Shostrom, Maslow shared that as he investigated experiences of self-actualized people, he became fascinated with the discovery that it was not only mystics who have these experiences, but also a significant amount of everyday people (Psychological Films & Shostrom, 1968). Similar

to Jung's belief that access to the collective unconscious is unique to humans, Maslow (1964/1970) believed that "man has a higher and transcendent nature, and this is part of his essence" (p. 15).

Before Maslow, James (1902) described "mystic states" as having four qualities: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity. James described noetic states as revelations of knowledge "unplumbed by the discursive intellect" (p. 371). He described mystical states as profound and life changing. Both Maslow and James used the term *abeyance* when describing responses to a peak experience. Maslow (1968) claimed that all senses of fear "tend to disappear or go into abeyance for the time being" (p. 94). James (1902) suggested the mystic state involves an individual feeling as if "his own will were in abeyance" (p. 372). Bonny (2002) too used this term when describing her own peak experience: "It was as if the violin was not my own; bow arm and fingers were held in abeyance/obedience to a light and wonderful infusion that created a sound I knew I had not ever produced before" (p. 5). The term *abeyance* used in these writings refers to an experience of surrender or submission to the peak experience. Maslow (1968) suggested that peak experiences are passively experienced, stating that peak experiences cannot be summoned, but instead happen *to* us.

Peak experiences have been associated with self-actualization and life changes. Schneeberger (2010) interviewed 160 participants who claimed to have had at least one "unitive/mystical experience", and investigated their life changes. This study found that participants associated the following changes with their peak experience: increased concern for others, spirituality, concern with social and planetary values, self-acceptance, quest for meaning and sense of purpose, and appreciation for life. The data also suggested

that the participants experienced a decreased value in the concern for worldly achievement.

Religious peak experiences. Although peak experiences are not necessarily religious in nature, the deeply religious person may be primed for such experiences. Most religions have practices or rituals that involve seeking union and contact with a divine or superior power through alternative states of consciousness. In Buddhism and Hinduism, *Samadhi* is a state and practice where an individual encounters what feels like a noetic experience, or an illumination of never-before revealed knowledge (James, 1902). James, referencing Guru Vivekananda, described how after this practice, the individual returns “enlightened, a sage, a prophet, a saint, his whole character changed, his life changed, illumined” (p. 392), and defined yoga as a unitive experience with the divine. Peak-like experiences in religious practices such as meditation and yoga tend to be less spontaneous, and part of a lifetime of practice.

There are several documented examples of Christian mystics throughout history experiencing spiritual ecstasies through prayer and meditation. Saint Ignatius of Loyola established “spiritual exercises,” with the aim of “enabling the soul to pursue its goal, which is recognition of and unity with, divine love” (Sluhovsky, 2013, p. 654). Saint Teresa of Avila was greatly influenced by these exercises, and is often associated with the practice of contemplative prayer. She depicted the soul as an “interior castle”, and the “prayer of union” is associated with the “fifth dwellings” of the castle (Anderson, 2006). A modern example of contemplative prayer is “centering prayer.” In a phenomenological study investigating the lived experience of centering prayer,

researchers found that there was a common theme of practitioners reporting that they have had peak and unitive experiences (Fox, Gutierrez, Haas, Braganza & Berger, 2015).

Psychedelic peak experiences. Psychedelic substances, or entheogens, have proven to occasion mystical experiences in the psychotherapeutic setting. Griffiths, Richards, McCann, and Jesse (2006) found that participants given psilocybin, a drug historically used for religious purposes in some cultures, may occasion mystical experiences in the therapeutic setting. In this double-blind study, 67% of participants who received psilocybin reported that their experience was either *the most* meaningful moment of their life, or one of the top five most meaningful moments in their life (p. 276). A follow up study by the same authors showed that these same participants maintained significant ratings of meaningfulness after 14 months, and also reported maintained increases in well-being and life satisfaction (Griffiths, Richards, Johnson, McCann, & Jesse, 2008). Some studies have suggested that mystical experiences occasioned by the use of classic psychedelics in a therapeutic setting can result in an increase of the personality trait of openness (Erritzoe et al., 2018, Lebedev et al., 2016, MacLean, Johnson, & Griffiths, 2011, Wagner et al., 2017). This is particularly curious because previous literature has suggested the personality traits stabilize in adulthood.

Richards (2016) worked with Bonny in the 1970s at the Maryland Psychiatric Center and is currently supporting the newly formed team of psychedelic researchers at Johns Hopkins University. He expressed that individuals tend to “humbly” receive peak experiences and keep them to themselves (p. 17). He also stressed that, as Maslow believed, many people have these experiences in response to a variety of triggers and contexts, yet the humbling rapture and ineffability of such experiences often result in

individuals being afraid that they will be misunderstood should they share their experience.

Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music

Brief history. As previously mentioned, Helen Lindquist Bonny (2002) developed the Bonny Method of GIM in response to being involved in a variety of psychedelic research studies for individuals suffering from terminal illnesses, substance abuse and neuroses. She was given the role of selecting the most appropriate music to accompany each treatment, and discovered that Western classical music was most effective in supporting the individuals in navigating deeper realms of consciousness (Bonny, 2002).

Following the termination of these trials, Bonny began exploring the ability of music and relaxation techniques, without mind-altering drugs, to explore the unconscious and access meaningful imagery for depth work. Bonny incorporated the following theories when developing the Bonny Method: Leuner's Guided Affective Imagery, Maslow's self-actualization, Jung's active imagination and collective unconscious, Rogers' client centered therapy and transpersonal works of both Grof and Wilber (Bonny, 2002).

The Association for Music and Imagery (AMI) (2018) defines Bonny Method of GIM as:

A music-centered, consciousness-expanding therapy developed by Helen Bonny. Therapists trained in the Bonny Method choose classical music sequences that stimulate journeys of the imagination. Experiencing imagery in this way

facilitates clients' integration of mental, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of well-being ("FAQ," para. 1).

Traditional Bonny Method follows set procedures and uses specific music programs. To be a Bonny Method of GIM practitioner, or Fellow of the AMI (FAMI), three levels of advanced training and supervision are required. Fellows undergo a rigorous application and approval process, as well as continued education and adherence to ethics (AMI, 2016-2018).

Procedures of Bonny Method. There are various modifications of Bonny's Method, but traditional Bonny Method involves a set structure and method. Bonny Method is most effective in the individual setting. The treatment process starts with an intake session, aimed at getting a full history of the client and preparing the client for the Bonny Method process. A typical session will begin with the preliminary conversation, or *prelude* (Ventre, 2002). This is used to assess the client's energy level, as well as address what topics or issues may come up in the session. Following this conversation, the therapist will establish a focus image that will be used at the end of the induction. The induction follows is a guided relaxation and "internal focusing" (Ventre, 2002). At the end of the induction, once the client has notably relaxed on the couch or mat, the therapist invites the client to find themselves in a space where they are imaging the focus image. The therapist selects a program of music based on the preliminary conversation, and the music begins.

Each music program is designed to move the client through deeper levels of consciousness and address the "heart" of some internal issue (Ventre, 2002). The therapist acts as the non-directive guide during the music, and the client is to report to the

guide what they are imaging as they are imaging. The therapist acts as a facilitator for the “client’s interaction with the music and his/her own imagery” (Ventre, 2002, p. 33). The role of the therapist is to deepen the imaging experience and aide the client in activating as many senses as possible. When the music program ends, the client is guided to return to a *waking* state, and may be invited to engage in artwork, such as a mandala, or another expressive modality such as poetry or writing. This stage of the session is called the postlude and extends into a non-interpretive conversation discussing the imaging experience.

Theoretical foundations of Bonny Method. Bonny Method is both humanistic and transpersonal, and embraces a “freedom to approach the imagery material when the person’s psyche is ready” (Bonny, 2002, p. 14). As a humanistic client-centered approach, Bonny Method honors the client’s unique wisdom. It is a non-directive form of therapy, where the therapist’s role is to bear witness to the client’s experience and creative process. The music acts as “both the holding environment and the active principle in the therapy” (Clark, 1998, p. 60). Rogers and Maslow both believed in the inner potential of each individual and created holistic approaches to providing individuals with opportunities to access their own resources. A holistic approach accepts the notion of unconscious realms and aims to help integrate information from all states of consciousness. Humanistic psychology tends to be more growth centered and less “illness” or deficiency centered (Bonny, 2002).

Transpersonal psychology is considered the “fourth force,” after humanistic psychology. It applies a humanistic and person-centered framework, and values transcendent and spiritual depth work. Jung’s depiction of the collective unconscious

expanded the field of psychology and made room for spiritual and mythological realms to be honored in the therapeutic setting (Bonny, 2002). Transpersonal psychology aims to explore the human potential, and ultimately integrate *all* states of consciousness.

Transpersonal experiences involve a fading of boundaries into an egoless state, and as Bonny observed, after a few sessions, often times individuals were able to experience transpersonal states in Bonny Method. Peak experiences fall within the realm of transpersonal experiences, as they transcend egocentricity. Lewis (1998-1999) examined 128 Bonny Method sessions and found that 82% of the sessions included at least one transpersonal experience, as defined by Wilbur's *Spectrum of Consciousness* Model. She also found that individuals had a transcendent, unitive, and/or mystical experience in 30% of the Bonny Method sessions.

Transpersonal examples of Bonny Method of GIM. Although not all transpersonal experiences include peak experiences, all peak experiences are transpersonal. Abrams (2002) explored definitions of transpersonal Bonny Method by interviewing Bonny Method of GIM practitioners who had extensive experience in the field. Each participant developed their own defining qualities of a transpersonal Bonny Method experience, and of those qualities, ten themes emerged: body and physicality, healing and wholeness, self, relationship, humanity, life meaning, spirituality, qualities of consciousness, music, and guide. Abrams's findings suggest that there are several qualities of a transpersonal Bonny Method experience, but within these themes it is maintained that the transpersonal experience can be unitive and spiritual, and ultimately have a psychotherapeutic role.

Blom (2011) explored examples of change and growth in terms of intersubjectivity, attention, and mentalization by examining experiences of surrender in transpersonal and spiritual Bonny Method sessions. Blom emphasizes that individuals *receive* transpersonal-spiritual experiences, similar to Maslow's (1968) suggestion that peak experiences happen *to* them. Blom linked this passivity to surrender and examined transcripts of her client's transpersonal-spiritual Bonny Method sessions. In terms of intersubjectivity, Blom (2011) relates surrender to submitting to something greater, or to a *third* "field between us" (p. 191). She shared her own inner dialogue about the challenge of helping clients integrate mystical imagery into their everyday life, which deepened her understanding of these experiences through this study. Blom found that understanding these experiences of surrender as relational can help her support clients in integrating transpersonal-spiritual experiences.

Although a variety of research exists examining transpersonal Bonny Method of GIM experiences, no known studies examine the integration and meaning making of peak experiences in Bonny Method. Transpersonal Bonny Method often refers to a range of experiences involving transcending the ego, but does not specifically imply a peak experience and/or mystical experience. This study aims to add to the body of knowledge regarding transpersonal Bonny Method experiences, specifically focusing on the after effects of peak experiences in an individual's life.

Research Questions

1. How do individuals make meaning of peak experiences occasioned in Bonny Method?
2. How are peak experiences in Bonny Method integrated into daily life?

Method

To better understand the phenomenon of peak experiences, particularly the effects of peak experiences in Bonny Method, I conducted an empirical phenomenological inquiry as described by Jackson (2016, p. 892). The study was modified in that I interviewed a total of four participants rather than the recommended 30 or more, which is a more manageable number for a master's thesis. By interviewing individuals who have experienced a peak experience during a Bonny Method session, as it has been operationally defined, I was able to examine and identify common details and patterns of their lived experiences. After a thorough analysis of the data, I was able to identify common themes that contribute to better understanding how peak experiences in Bonny Method of GIM are integrated into everyday life, as well as how meaning is attributed to them.

Selection of Participants and Recruitment

I operationally defined peak experience as an overwhelmingly positive, unitive, and transcendent experience that involves a sense of oneness, wonder, and illumination. Participants of the study accepted that they have had at least one experience during a Bonny Method session that qualifies as a peak experience as operationally defined. Participants were 18 years of age or older, and due to financial limitations, I did not include non-English speakers, as this would have required translation services. Participants were selected based on their willingness and interest in participating in the study. Moustakas (1994) assigned participants in phenomenological research the title of "co-researcher," emphasizing the participant's passion regarding the topic, as well as the overall collaborative and open-ended nature of the process (p. 110).

My goal was to enlist a total of six participants: three AMI Fellows and/or music therapists, and three referred clients who are not music therapists. I was only able to enlist four participants and was able to maintain the equal balance between AMI Fellow and/or music therapists and clients. This balance aims to add variance to the participants' relationship to the process of Bonny Method of GIM, ultimately limiting bias and adding depth to the data. All participants were asked to share their personal lived experiences of meaning-making and integration, so GIM practitioners were not asked to discuss experiences as therapists guiding a peak experience.

To facilitate recruitment, I sent an email describing the nature and purpose of the study, as well as the criteria, to members of both the Association for Music and Imagery (AMI) and the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) in hopes of enlisting professional participants (Appendix A). Upon the suggestion of the representation of the Association for Music and Imagery representative, I made a post on their Facebook group page to reach both current and past members. I also used a snowball sampling approach, asking colleagues to refer clients they felt may qualify for the study. Of those who responded, a second email was sent asking for referrals of clients (non-music therapists) who have experienced a peak experience in Bonny Method to also potentially enlist in the study. I asked the therapists to send information about the study to their clients so as to protect their confidentiality. In total, only four of the participants who responded also qualified for the study. I received several responses from interested individuals, but not all ultimately qualified for the study.

Participants were provided with a consent form, which explained that they were agreeing to participate in a semi-structured interview describing the lived experience of

integrating and meaning making of a peak experience in Bonny Method of GIM (Appendix B). Participants also consented to audio-recording and my transcribing of the interview (Appendix B). They were made aware of the fact that the data being collected contributes to a larger document and therefore may appear in the final published project.

Data Collection

Moustakas (1994) suggested that researchers open the interview with a meditative centering exercise, inviting the participant to summon and settle in the experience before sharing (p. 114). He also emphasized that the interview be open-ended, ensuring that the participants are provided with an opportunity to describe the whole experience (p. 114).

Interviews were semi-structured and were guided by the following questions:

1. How would you describe your peak experience(s)? Are there any specific aspects of the experience that stand out to you?
2. Have you attributed any meaning to your peak experience? If so, what feelings and/or beliefs have you generated about the significance of the experience?
3. Would you say that you have integrated this experience into your daily life? If so, how?
4. Was anything different about your life after experiencing a peak experience in Bonny Method of GIM? Please describe.
5. Is there anything else that you feel is significant in regards to your integration and meaning making of your peak experience?

Semi-structured interviews of each participant centered around the lived experience of the phenomenon of a peak experience in Bonny Method of GIM, by describing the process of integration and meaning-making of the experience.

Descriptions of how life was before and after the peak experience aid in determining whether the experience was transformative in any way, which ultimately adds a better understanding of the essence of peak experiences in Bonny Method. Descriptions of the peak experiences also help to shed light on how individuals perceive peak experiences and attribute meaning to them. Since peak experiences are most often defined as being ineffable, I did not ask the participants to give a detailed description of their peak experience per se, but more so to describe what was salient to them about the experience (e.g., feelings, sensations, specific imagery, the music). When needed, I used these elements from these descriptions in probing questions to refocus the experience of meaning-making.

Data Analysis

Once all interviews were completed, I transcribed each one. After the data was transcribed, I sent each participant their transcription, giving them an opportunity to clarify and/or add information, if need be, as well as agree or disagree that the information expressed is accurate. None of the participants felt that it was necessary to add and/or clarify information in the transcription, and not all participants responded.

I read each transcription multiple times, making notes and underlining information that seemed worth returning to. Each data source was given equal treatment and analyzed with rigor. I then separated all complete statements related to the participant's lived experience, noted the essence of each, and typed the statements into a table that was organized by participant. Using this document, I then created four separate documents, one for each participant. I printed this document out and physically cut out each statement and read through each several times, adding meaning units and grouping

like-statements together. As I did this, categories emerged. I tested these categories a few times by reading through each statement again, one by one, and grouping like-statements together. Once I found myself no longer identifying new categories, I organized the statements in each category by participant and glued them to blank sheets of paper according to their category. I then recreated each in digital form in a word document. I reflected on each category by making notes for myself regarding my own reactions, and also noted common themes and words within the categories. After immersing myself in the categories, core themes emerged, as well as subthemes. These themes are represented in the results and presented in such a way as to create a composite picture of what the lived experience was like for all participants.

Trustworthiness

In an attempt to be completely transparent and establish trustworthiness, it should be noted that I did not separate the data for therapists and clients because it is my belief that the only noticeable differences in the data were the language used regarding the subject and the setting of the experience (both therapists had their peak experience during Level III GIM training). These details did not result in data that was necessary to separate.

I shared all relevant documents created during my analysis with my advisor and reviewed the data, as well as my process, with her prior to moving forward with my work. Although I did not use a specific procedure for coding and examining my data, I did consult both Saldaña (2016) and Moustakas (1994) to help shape and guide my analysis process.

Results

Following the analysis of the data, the following themes emerged: *meaning-making and processing individually through creativity, life changes, and integration*. *Life changes* had two subthemes: *increased openness and expansion, and greater awareness of spiritual oneness*. The theme of *Integration* had several subthemes: *surrender and letting go; shifts in personality and identity; experiences of healing and peace; resourcefulness of music; ability to recall/recreate the experiences; and affirmation of beliefs and changes*. Though it was not necessarily a complete linear experience, it seemed as though the participants were able to ground themselves and make meaning through creativity. Life changes were realized through these creative processes, and then used to inform the participant's processes of integration. Figure 1 demonstrates this process:

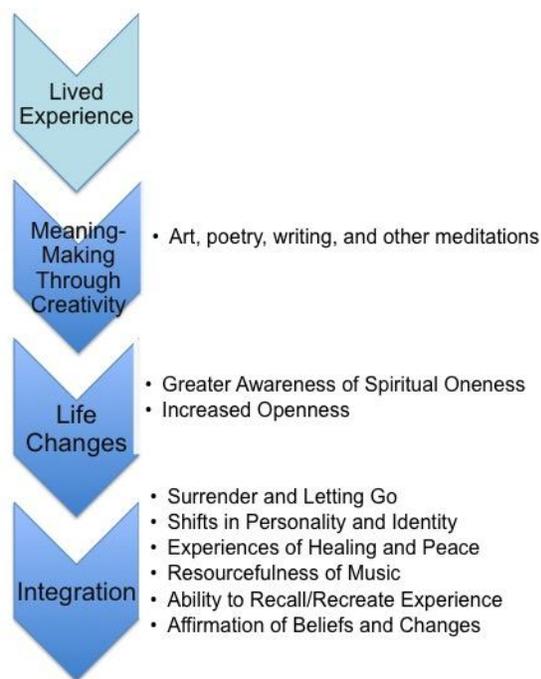


Figure 1. The diagram represents the progression of emergent themes of meaning-making and integration of their peak experience(s) in Bonny Method.

Participants 1 and 2 are GIM Fellows, and Participants 3 and 4 are GIM clients.

All four participants were female. Table 1 located below may be used as a reference:

Table 1

Participant Information for Reference

Participant #	GIM Fellow
1	Yes
2	Yes
3	No
4	No

Theme 1: Meaning-Making and Processing Individually Through Creativity

All four participants engaged in a creative modality individually following their experience. Bonny Method of GIM encourages this as part of the postlude (Bonny, 2002), which participants of this study found to be a helpful and grounding approach for beginning to process the experience. Participants 1, 2 and 3 reported drawing and/or making a mandala. Participant 1 expressed that she had to “grapple with grounding” the experience, and stated “I remember drawing helped, to do the mandala afterwards.”

Participants 2 and 3 shared that engaging in different writing forms in the days following the experience was useful. Participant 2 stated, that “writing a little bit down, it doesn’t have to be a lot, has become important.” This particular participant reported having had several peak experiences since her first, and that although she no longer tends to write poetry, she found it to be helpful in processing earlier peak experiences.

Participant 3 expressed “the poetry for me was the way,” and “that’s part of my way of keeping myself true.” This participant stressed how attempts at interpreting the

experience often activated the “intellect”, which she found can be accompanied by “social, behavioral or psychological” rules and expectations.

When reflecting on the value of engaging in art in the early stages of the meaning making and integration process, Participant 3 said the following:

Well it’s also really a way of keeping it present...because art is something that happens when it happens. ...You can look back at that moment, but it’s only a moment... It reminds you about how temporal and trapped we are with that time thing. A moment doesn’t have to reflect everything, it only reflects a moment.

Peak experiences are often out of body and boundless, and require a gentle return to everyday life. By engaging in creative and imaginative modalities immediately following and days after a peak experience, participants were able to ground themselves, as well as honor and recognize the experience as something meaningful. Participant 2 stated that she then tries to discuss the experience with colleagues a day or two later to “give it some sense of placement, and not just that it was so separate.”

Participant 4 practices a variety of “consciousness shifting experiences,” and has found that it was helpful and enlightening to incorporate experiences in Bonny Method “into other meditations” and imaginative realms. She found that her “experiences through the Bonny Method built on each other, and they continue to build upon my experiences and other consciousness sort of shifting experiences through meditation.”

Theme 2: Life Changes

Two themes emerged in regards to life changes that were common amongst all four participants: *increased openness and expansion*, and *greater awareness of spiritual oneness*. I understood these changes as representations of the beliefs, meaning, and truths

gained from the experience. These expressions seemed to guide and support the participants' processes of integration, as well as construct and elicit new ways of engaging with their lifeworld.

Increased openness and expansion. When asked whether she noticed anything different about her life since having the peak experience, Participant 1 responded by saying the following: "Yes, my life has expanded... I think I understand my relationship with the world more openly. More openly and less with words." In regards to attributing meaning and/or generating beliefs about the experience, Participant 2 said:

I don't know about beliefs...Definitely meaning. Meaning in the sense of, well there's the personal meaning, which is just how I am personally relating to that experience, but I think usually it's about just the process of doing it helps in mind, body and spirit feel more open and less constricted. And, so whatever I'm coming into it with, having an experience like that broadens my capacity for engaging with my life.

Participant 3 expressed that she tries to embody what the experience has represented for her, and shared that:

And it behooves me to be a good example since I've had this experience, and I've gained this insight, I feel that I should be more, I should be someone that when people look at me, they're going to know something is different...and that it's a positive change. And when they realize that you can overcome that immobilizing fear that we create in our own head, which is where it comes from, it's not really that, it's our own creation because we don't know what to do or how to cope with the issue...and that you have options, and that you have potential, and that your

life can be all that you dreamed it would be, you just have to look at it from another perspective.

She later expressed a newfound importance in a more “situational” perspective, rather than the “personal.” As her sessions progressed, she also expressed a new appreciation for light. Before her experiences in Bonny Method, Participant 3 had feared light because it exposed all of the imperfections. After her experience, she no longer feared light, but rather, “I now overjoy at light because it shows what beauty imperfection has to offer.” She then went on to say:

Because our imperfections are our beauty, and people have lost their appreciation of that, for whatever reasons that might be, and I find that very sad because that’s our lesson. To be imperfect is to be perfect. Because there’s no such thing as perfect. It’s a lie. It’s an illusion. Its something foisted upon us for another purpose, not a good one for us. Because it denies us our right to be. To be whole, to be a whole being, not a person and spirit that are separated.

Participant 3 not only expressed a value in being able to see other perspectives, but also a new value of and the found beauty in the imperfections of self and life.

Participant 4 described doors opening in her imagery, and expressed that she now feels that the “freedom of choice and knowledge of open doors,” is “more pervasive” in her life. When asked how her life is different after the experience, she responded:

I see my life with more possibility, with more open doors. That the doors are open. I think it's more that the doors are open all the time and that's how my everyday life feels different...so when there's a small issue or small problem I have a very different sense of, sort of a consciousness expanded sense, of how

much more the world is than the one moment that's there, in that one moment that there is everything that is, but it becomes not the problems but the experience. In a more general sense, she expressed that she has "an awareness that's expanded." Also, similarly to Participant 3, she expressed that she now finds value in "processing things from a more universal level of consciousness rather than a personal level."

Greater awareness of spiritual oneness. When asked whether she had attributed any specific meaning to the experience, Participant 1 stated that the experience acted as "confirmation" for her. She said it confirmed the power of music, but also provided "confirmation of my understanding of the spiritual world and how we are connected to it." She then claimed that the experience ultimately acted as "confirmation of connection." I also asked her whether she felt she had integrated the experience into her daily life, and she responded by saying "Yes, I have. I'd say according to my spiritual beliefs and my spiritual understanding, definitely." The meaning making and integration experience for Participant 1 can be represented as a confirmation of beliefs, or *thoughts at rest*. These beliefs were then integrated into her lifeworld and inform her engagement with it.

As mentioned previously, participants who were GIM Fellows (Participants 1 and 2), occasionally used language that is more clinical and/or informed by the study of Bonny Method of GIM. Participant 2 often referred to the "collective," which refers to Jung's notion of a collective unconscious. For her, this was her higher power. When referring to her peak experiences, she said:

Having many of those experiences has just made me trust that there's something more than me. That I really do have a significantly deeper trust that I don't have

to figure it all out, at least not cognitively, and that there is a way and a process for me to connect with something that might have more clues than my conscious, cognitive mind.

Her peak experiences in Bonny Method confirmed and “deepened” her belief in something larger than herself. She expressed that the process of meaning making and integration of such experiences is, for her, a process that allows her to “connect with something” other than herself.

Participant 3 expressed that her experiences in Bonny Method have “met my need for that spiritual void that I know I had, and that I knew I had, but had no idea how to fill.” She stated that she had explored a variety of different religious practices prior to this, but stated “I found them lacking.” When reflecting on her life prior to her experience in Bonny Method, she shared, “I was so depressed, so hurt and so angry. And now I realize that there’s more to life than just me.” She described her increased awareness of oneness as feeling as though she is “plugged in” to what she described as “that other powerful force of life.” She expressed a greater sense of appreciation for nature and “the inner workings of life,” adding “I feel more connected to everything than I ever have in my entire life.” This greater sense of oneness, as well as the feeling of being ‘plugged in’, have not only filled the “spiritual void” Participant 3 expressed having prior to this experience, but also brought on significant differences in her perception of her lifeworld.

Following her experiences in Bonny Method, Participant 4 expressed that “awareness of oneness that exists in the world is more tangible for me in my everyday life”. She shared that what really stands out to her about the experience is the “the

connection with being connected to the universe, connected to all the Consciousness sort of, that feeling of ‘we are all one’,” and that she associated that experience of connection with the emotion of love. For Participant 4, this sense of “oneness” has informed her process of integration and engagement with her life.

Theme 3: Integration

The third core theme that emerged from the data was the process of integration. Integration refers to *what* the participants did with the experience and *how* they created new habits. For the majority of the participants, it is an ongoing process that is a dialogue between their new-formed meaning and beliefs, and their lifeworld. Examples of integration within the data can often be linked back to the safety created by both sub themes of the lived experience. There were examples of *surrender and letting go, shifts in personality and identity, experiences of healing and peace, resourcefulness of music, recreation of the experience, and affirmation of beliefs and choices.*

Surrender and letting go. It has been suggested that an individual must surrender to a peak experience, and that we must allow the experience to happen *to us* (Maslow, 1968). For some of the participants, the theme of *surrender and letting go* transferred into their lived experience, and also allowed them to move forward.

Participant 2 shared that the experience “solidified” significant career changes in her life:

It got so clear, in being in a space of not just myself and something larger than myself, that I was able to turn it over to that and get a clarity that when I came back and integrated it, it was like “now I know exactly what I need to do.”

Even in terms of processing the experience itself, Participant 2 expressed that she could not over think it or recreate it, but instead she felt that she had to “just let it be part of

what it is.” She learned to allow each peak experience become “part of the fabric of everything.” This refers back to the sense of the collective, or *oneness*.

A significant life change for Participant 3 was the integration of the whole self. In regards to that process she said, “I hadn’t had that because of my fear of letting go of the anger because I thought that was all I had to keep going.” She expressed that she had to let go of anger, because it was “self-destructive.” By letting go of the anger, she was able to be more aware of the “whole self,” or what she called her “true self.”

Shifts in personality and identity. As mentioned above, Participant 3 found herself on a journey of integrating and discovering her whole self. In regards to her life prior to her experiences in Bonny Method, she said, “I was under so much pressure and I felt completely inadequate to the challenges,” and her experiences “just turned my brain on.” She said that she began embracing imperfections. When reflecting on her life after the experience, she said:

I live out loud now. That’s what I call it, I live out loud. I no longer stifle my opinions, although I coach them in much gentler terms than I used to... I want to be me and I want to be alive, and I want to live every minute now and I didn’t feel that before, I felt completely overwhelmed with everything.

She began to seek a “oneness” of self, and stated that she now understood that “the real me is a whole thing, not an intellect and a soul, or spirit, or life, but a whole thing.”

Participant 2 also shared that she felt more connected with her whole self. When reflecting on what she could do with the experience, she said that they “reveal...more of our whole self, because we’re more connected with our whole self.” She felt that peak

experiences allow her to be more aware of different parts of herself, and therefore work towards integrating them into a whole self.

Experiences of healing and peace. Following their peak experiences in Bonny Method, some of the participants shared experiences of healing and peace in their lives. Participant 4 stated that she now has “a feeling of much more peace, and peace when there’s conflict.” She attributed this to her ability to now shift from a personal perspective, to a more universal perspective. She found that when she is confronted with a situation that she does not like, she can consider the person and remember that “we are all one.” She is then able to reflect on what it is about that situation that can be related to something she does not like about herself, and by engaging in the process, she is able to achieve a sense of peace in conflict.

Participant 3 expressed that she no longer feels she has “the corner on the market for ‘wretched misery’,” and therefore she feels that “self-pity is no more.” By experiencing more openness to experience, and oneness with self, she is able to accept that “what will be, will be,” and now believes that if she tries to be her “best,” then “the best will be what will be.” She expressed that after the experience, she felt “lightened” and “relieved.” Following her experience, and her processes of integration, she stated, “no longer am I overburdened by anxiety and grief and loss.” She stated “I’m much happier, and I feel more at rest with my heart.”

Resourcefulness of music. Some of the participants expressed a newly strengthened relationship with music. Participant 1 noted that she is now aware of music’s ability to “transport” her back to a previous experience. She considered, “maybe there’s something transpersonal in every piece of music I hear now.” As mentioned,

Participant 1 is a GIM Fellow, and she mentioned that GIM changed her “listening capacity.” She felt that it “deepened it” and “enhanced it.”

Participant 3, who is not a GIM fellow, also mentioned that her relationship to music has changed since her experience. When reflecting on her changed relationship with music in her everyday life, she shared the following:

I was taking antidepressants, and trying to figure out how to make myself happy, and not having any success at all. And then the music changed everything, and I still use music to change things...I surround myself with sound, because I found it soothing, healing and helping.

She found a resourcefulness in music through her experiences in GIM that she now applies to her everyday life.

Ability to recall/recreate the experience. Not all participants expressed a usefulness in recreating or recalling their experiences, but Participant 1 had a unique experience during the interview process itself. She noticed that just in the process of recalling the experience, “it just comes back.” She had not realized that she could “recall it so easily,” and expressed that it’s “just great to know that.” Although I was not able to follow up with this participant regarding this experience, she expressed a desire to share the following:

What I would like to say is that when I’m in a contracted space myself, for example: anxiety ...If I’m kind of feeling trapped in a situation, or working through something lets say, it would be helpful for me to remember this experience. And I haven’t done that often, so the way that I could make meaning

from it would be to draw from the memory of it, the creation of it... to remind me that expansion is possible.

She again reflected on how the experience of participating in the interview was affecting her in the moment:

Straight away I was able to take myself into an experience...There's a lot to process from the day, and now I'm talking about this, it's like wow, I can just let some of that stuff go, for a bit...it will need to be pressed again, but I'm not feeling anxious and depressed and sad, I'm not. Actually, I've had a fantastic day, it's just been a lot, but reminding me of this is giving me the opportunity to hold both actually.

All participants expressed much interest in the interview topics and thanked me for giving them a space to share their experiences. Although there was much enthusiasm in their expressions, this experience was unique to Participant 1.

Participant 2 actually noted that she does not need to recreate the experience. She shared the following in regards to using her experiences as resources: "I know they're there. I think they live in every cell of my body. They're already there, but I don't necessarily feel a need to re-enact them, because they've already...they're already part of the whole."

Affirmation of beliefs and changes. For three of the participants, experiencing affirmation of beliefs and the changes made since the experience fuel continued integration. When referring to the process of integration, Participant 2 said, "I think you then...sort of come back in and you take that peak and filter that through the collective, back to the personal, and that's what gives it some integrity and some sense of meaning."

She feels that it is helpful to remember “it’s not very unique to me,” and to acknowledge that her experiences “really are archetypal and fit that sort of collective.”

Participant 3 also shared that she now filters more in her life, and described her experience of that process in this quote:

I filter a lot more stuff and people in my life. And in some ways I find it to be limiting, but in some ways I find it more rewarding because the pay back is so intense when you have a realization that you’re doing it, that it’s working, and this little thing that I can control is only my own mind and my own lips. But boy, it sure can be a big difference!

Her experience of affirmation of the process and how it has changed her life informs her continuation of integration in her day to day life.

As mentioned in Theme 1, Participant 4 shared that she processes her experience through other consciousness shifting meditations, and has found that the experiences build on one another. This is also an example of affirmation and the continued experience of integration.

Other significant findings

In addition to the themes and subthemes discussed above, there were some additional findings worth mentioning. Both GIM fellows described peak experiences that happened during their Level 3 training. Participant 2 noted that she has had more peak experiences since, but focused mostly on her very first experience.

Three out of four of the participants expressed that they feel that they have occasioned transpersonal and peak experiences more easily since their first experience. Participant 2 said, “I seem to access the deeper states much more quickly than I would

have when I started.” Participant 1 asked to share the following: “What I think is important to say is that having experienced it once, it becomes easier to experience it again.” Lastly, when Participant 4 reflected on her first peak experience, which was not through Bonny Method, she remarked, “Something must open right?” She expressed that that first experience “opened the door,” and that she “stepped right into” expanded states in Bonny Method with ease.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to better understand the lived experience of meaning making and integrating peak experience in Bonny Method of GIM, and investigate whether there were any common experiences of this process between the participants. According to Van Manen, *lived experience* is the “starting point and end point of phenomenological research” (1990, p. 36). Phenomenological research values the subjectivity of the lived experience, in an attempt to suggest some truth about an individual’s experience in relation to others’ experiences of the same phenomena. Lived experience has been defined as:

a representation and understanding of a researcher or a research subject’s human experiences, choices and options and how those factors influence one’s perception and knowledge. (Given, 2008, p. 489-490)

Given (2008) later suggests that lived experience also has to do with “how people live through and respond to those experiences” (p. 490). Phenomenological research accepts that once we begin to discuss an experience, we are separated from it, therefore we are ultimately attempting to “bring the aspects of meaning that belong to the phenomena of our lifeworld into nearness” (Given, 2008, p. 617). I related the experience of meaning

making and integration to James' (1902) thoughts regarding pragmatic belief formation and attaining "thought at rest":

Thought in movement has for its only conceivable motive the attainment of belief, or thought at rest. Only when our thought about a subject has found its rest in belief can our action on the subject firmly and safely begin. Beliefs, in short, are rules for action; and the whole function of thinking is but one step in the production of active habits. (p. 435)

There is implied movement and process in this notion. I related "thought in motion" to the process of meaning-making, and in the case of this study, meaning-making through creativity. Some of the participants expressed a need for giving the experience "placement" within their lives, which I related to "thought at rest." In phenomenological research, thoughts in motion regarding a phenomena fuel integration, or action, with an end goal of forming new habits.

All four participants used a creative process to immediately process the experience and to derive meaning from it. They also shared expressions that represented lived experiences of increased openness and a greater awareness of spiritual oneness following their experiences of the phenomena. The results of this study are consistent with findings presented in other studies that have investigated peak experiences, sometimes called mystical or spiritual experiences (Fox et al., 2015; Griffiths et al., 2006; Griffiths et al., 2008; Maslow, 1968; Schneeberger, 2010). Following their experience of the phenomena, all four participants shared experiences of transformation through integration of the meaning derived from the peak experience.

Peak experiences are often associated with a sense of oneness with something larger than self, and all four participants reported a greater awareness of spiritual oneness following the experience. These findings are consistent with the findings of Schneeberger (2010), who found that individuals who claimed to have had a “unitive/mystical experience” reported a greater sense of spirituality and sense of purpose. Schneeberger (2010) separated religiousness and spirituality in her study, and suggested that this separation be considered in future related studies. None of the participants in this study referred to a specific deity or religion when discussing spirituality.

The majority of studies investigating the potential benefits of such experiences are related to experiences occasioned through psychedelics, meditation, and prayer. Few studies examine peak experiences in Bonny Method, and the majority of those that do are case studies. To have a better understanding of common ways in which these experiences may be transformative and healing, it is best to enroll a larger sample size and perform a more standardized study. Nonetheless, the findings of this study concerning openness may be related to the studies mentioned previously that also suggested an increase in the personality trait of openness (Erritzoe et al., 2018, Lebedev et al., 2016, MacLean, Johnson, & Griffiths, 2011, Wagner et al., 2017). Continued research in peak experience in Bonny Method may reveal more parallels to current research in psychedelics, prayer and meditation. If aligned, a common language may emerge regarding the therapeutic benefits of peak experiences.

Lastly, it is important to stress that the participants’ relationship to the therapy treatment of Bonny Method of GIM did not present as a significant factor, and therefore

it was not necessary to separate the data and results of GIM practitioners and GIM clients. This speaks to the significance of a peak experience in Bonny Method and its ability to elicit deep healing and transformation, even if an individual has had extensive training in Bonny Method.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study suggests the need for future research. Although it is not possible to predict or summon a peak experience in Bonny Method, it may be helpful to incorporate assessment tools into the intake process of therapy. This would allow therapists to have standardized baseline information of their clients to track and measure change. For example, the results of this study suggest changes in the personality trait of openness, but the results are to be subjectively valued. If these measures were collected when a client begins therapy, measured changes could be recorded. It could also be meaningful to compare measured changes with clients' perceived changes to better understand the client's experience of integration. This could be applied with a mixed-methods research approach.

It could also be beneficial to better understand how these life changes relate to neurological changes. Again, a peak experience cannot be summoned, but it may be worth investigating brain activity over a series of sessions. In this case, should a peak experience happen, a better understanding of the neurological essence of peak experiences in Bonny Method could be gained, and the practitioner could learn more about what is happening neurologically during a GIM session. This information would not only be used to gain a better understanding the potential therapeutic roles of Bonny

Method, but also help inform the practice. Information gained could then be compared to neurological studies from other bodies of research investigating mystical experiences.

In the case of conducting quantitative studies, such as neurological investigations, larger sample sizes would be of interest. It should be noted that recruitment for this study was challenging. If I had more time to recruit participants and schedule interviews, it is possible that I could have had my target number of participants. Even still, out of the several hundreds of emails sent in the recruitment process, only three qualified participants expressed interest. The fourth subject was recruited via snowballing. Lewis' (1998-1999) study suggests that "unitive" experiences in Bonny Method are not rare, therefore examining the potential challenges faced in recruitment would be necessary in determining what methods of recruitment may be most successful.

I did not collect information regarding the music programs used, nor did I investigate common themes in the imagery of the participants. It could be beneficial to collect more information regarding the imagery experience, as well as any significant imagery tracked over a series of sessions surrounding the peak experience. I chose to focus specifically on the process of meaning-making and integration, but to further investigate the phenomena, future studies could also analyze transcripts of the participants.

It should also be noted that I did not collect extensive or formulated demographic information, nor did I gather data regarding the participant's history of Bonny Method treatment. When recruiting participants, I did not control for how much time had passed since the experience occurred. For some of the participants, the experience happened

several years ago, while others had the experience within the past year. In the future, more information regarding the experience could be controlled and/or collected.

Conclusion

Overall, the emergent themes and subthemes of the data are promising and suggest several therapeutic benefits that are both healing and transformative. It is also particularly significant that the data did not need to be separated based on the participant's relationship to Bonny Method. The experience of increased openness is particularly curious, as it aligns with other studies examining mystical experiences. Attempting to collect baseline assessment information as part of the intake process of Bonny Method could aid in gaining a better understanding of these changes and provide a more objective measurement of these changes when conducting research. This could help create a dialogue and common language between related treatment modalities.

This study also depicted a preference for creative processing in the days following the experience of the phenomena as a way of grounding and making meaning. Although Bonny Method is a creative process itself, it is intriguing that all four participants chose to individually process their experiences in this way. Despite the limitations of sample size, the fact that common themes and subthemes emerged from all four participants, suggests the need for further research.

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APPENDIX A

Dear _____ Member,

You are being invited to participate in a research study examining the integration and meaning making of peak experiences in Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (BMGIM). This study is an empirical phenomenological study conducted by Katie Jones, MT-BC, to fulfill her thesis requirements as part of the master's degree program at the State University of New York at New Paltz.

For the purpose of this study, peak experience is defined as: *an overwhelmingly positive, unitive, and transcendent experience that involves a sense of oneness, wonder and illumination.*

Participants must be over the age of 18 years old and primarily English speaking. If you are enrolled in the study, you will complete a semi-structured interview (in person or via web conferencing tool of your choice), describing your lived experience of integrating and the making meaning of a peak experience in BMGIM.

I am also seeking to enroll clients who are not BMGIM practitioners. In order to enroll individuals who fit this criteria, I may respond to interested therapists, asking you to refer any clients who may qualify for this study. You will be asked to share study information with your clients so they can self-refer if interested.

All interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The data will then be coded for themes and meaning-units. Your passion for exploring this topic will be honored, and following my initial analysis of the data, each participant will be given the opportunity to clarify and/or add information, if need be, as well as agree or disagree that the information expressed is accurate.

You will not be paid for taking part in this study. There are no known risks to participating in this study, though you may become uncomfortable answering some of the questions. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Your responses are confidential. All identifiable information about you will be removed, with only a code to identify you. The code that links your name to the data will be kept separate from the study data.

If you have any questions about the study and/or are interested in participating, please feel free to contact me using the information provided below. Thank you in advance for your interest and collaboration!

Sincerely,
Katie Jones, MT-BC
Department of Music Therapy
State University of New York at New Paltz
jonesk20@hawkmail.newpaltz.edu

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT***Integration and Meaning Making of Peak Experiences in BMGIM:
An Empirical Phenomenological Study***

Researcher: **Katie Jones, Graduate Student, SUNY New Paltz**

Department: Music Therapy

Telephone Number: (315)-777-5197

Email: jonesk20@hawkmail.newpaltz.edu

What is this study about?

The purpose of this research study is to better understand the effects of peak experiences in Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (BMGIM) in terms of integration and meaning making, by investigating the lived experience of individuals who have experienced this phenomenon.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria:

You will be one of approximately six participants involved in the study. The goal is to have a balanced number of clients and BMGIM practitioners participating in the study.

You are eligible to participate in this study if you have had a peak experience during a BMGIM session according to the following operational definition: *A peak experience is defined as an overwhelmingly positive, unitive, and transcendent experience that involves a sense of oneness, wonder and illumination.*

Procedures:

You will be contacted by the researcher to schedule an interview either in person or via a web conferencing tool, depending on your location and preference. A semi-structured interview will take place and the audio of the interview will be recorded. After the researcher thoroughly analyzes the data, you will be sent your data set via email and given the opportunity to clarify and/or add information, if need be, as well as agree or disagree that the information expressed is accurate.

Possible Risks, Discomforts and Benefits of participating in this study:

The researcher anticipates minimal risk regarding your participation other than that you may become uncomfortable answering some of the questions.

The possible benefits you may experience from the procedures described in this study include a deeper understanding and enhanced value of your experience fostered by the experience of sharing in the context of this study. Results of this study may contribute to society's understanding of the effects of peak experiences in a therapeutic setting.

Compensation: There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

Confidentiality:

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In addition, the Human Research Ethics Board, the sponsor of the study (e.g. NIH, FDA, etc.), and University or government officials responsible for monitoring this study may inspect these records.

Your research records will be stored in the following manner: All identifiable information about you will be removed, with only a code to identify you. The code that links your name to the data will be kept separate from the study data.

This information will be protected and kept confidential in the following manner: All data stored electronically will be stored on a secure network server, or on portable devices, such as a laptop with encryption (special software) and password protection. Any hard copies will be shredded and disposed. All emails will be deleted following the completion of the study.

If you have any questions:

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research, please email the researcher at: jonesk20@hawkmail.newpaltz.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor Dr. Heather Wagner at: wagnerh@newpaltz.edu.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the State University of New York at New Paltz Human Research Ethics Board (which is a group of people who review the research to protect your rights) at 845-257-3282.

The Human Research Ethics Board of the State University of New York at New Paltz has determined that this research meets the criteria for human subjects according to Federal guidelines.

Voluntary Participation Statement:

Your participation in this project is voluntary. Even after you agree to participate in the research or sign the informed consent document, you may decide to leave the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise have been entitled. I will retain and analyze the information you have provided up until the point you have left the study unless you request that your data be excluded from any analysis and/or destroyed.

One copy of this document will be kept together with the research records of this study. Also, you will be given a copy to keep.

SIGNATURES

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

Signature of participant

Date

Printed name of participant

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits and possible risks associated with participation in this research study have been explained to the above individual and that any questions about this information have been answered. A copy of this document will be given to the subject.

Signature of researcher

Date

Printed name of researcher