

THE QUESTIONNAIRE MEASUREMENT OF SPIRITUAL EMERGENCY

Monika Goretzki, Ph.D.
Adelaide, South Australia

Michael A. Thalbourne, Ph.D.
Adelaide, South Australia

Lance Storm, Ph.D.
Adelaide, South Australia

ABSTRACT: Ten questionnaire subscales with a grand total of 84 items were developed to measure 10 different types of spiritual emergency. Also developed was an Experience of Psychotic Symptoms Scale (EPSS). One hundred and nine persons from the general public in Australia were administered an omnibus questionnaire, together with the EPSS, three validity questions relevant to psychosis, and a lie scale. Psychometric properties for the EPSS and the 10 Spiritual Emergency Subscales were calculated. All 10 Subscales correlated significantly positively and highly with the EPSS. The Subscales inter-correlated positively and mostly highly, and a factor analysis showed that there was a single underlying factor that we may call “spiritual emergency.” This factor correlated .76 with experience of psychotic symptoms. There is clearly, as previously suspected, a close link between psychosis and spiritual emergency: it may be suggested that either spiritual emergency is nothing but psychosis, or psychosis is nothing but spiritual emergency.

INTRODUCTION

The term “spiritual emergency”—which was probably coined by Christina Grof in the late 1970s—has been defined as a critical and experientially difficult stage of profound psychological transformation that involves one’s entire being. Spiritual emergencies “take the form of nonordinary states of consciousness and involve intense emotions, visions and other sensory changes, and unusual thoughts, as well as various physical manifestations. These episodes often revolve around spiritual themes; they include sequences of psychological death and rebirth, experiences that seem to be memories from previous lifetimes, feelings of oneness with the universe, encounters with various mythological beings, and other similar motifs” (Grof & Grof, 1990, p. 31).

The notion that some psychiatric states are opportunities for spiritual growth, rather than intrinsically destructive psychopathologies, has been proposed by a number of earlier researchers: Grof (1985) highlights Assagioli, Jung, and Maslow. Robert Assagioli regarded spirituality as a “vital force in human life,”

E-mail: transpsy@gmail.com

Copyright © 2009 Transpersonal Institute

and he considered many psychopathological manifestations to be “concomitants of spiritual opening” (p. 367). Jung (1968) was of a similar opinion, and he sought to bridge the gap between psychology and religion. Many studies by Maslow (1971, 1986) led him to conclude that there is a relationship between mysticism and human personality. So-called “peak experiences” should not be equated with psychosis, but a radical form of psychology was necessary to speak to that issue, so that mystical experiences, for example, might not be considered pathological. As Grof states: “self-actualization [involving mystical experience] can occur in otherwise normal and well-adjusted individuals” (p. 367).

At least 10 distinct spiritual emergencies are described in the literature (see Grof & Grof, 1985, 1990). A complete description of these spiritual emergencies is beyond the scope of this paper, but we give here a few sentences that encapsulate the essence of each. We repeatedly quote from Grof and Grof (1990). These emergencies include (a) Dark Night of the Soul (feelings of fear, a sense of loneliness, experiences of insanity, and a preoccupation with death); (b) Awakening of Kundalini (powerful sensations of heat and energy streaming up the spine, associated with tremors, spasms, violent shaking, and complex twisting movements); (c) Shamanic Crisis (an emergency which bears a deep resemblance to the initiatory crises of shamans—healers and spiritual leaders of many aboriginal peoples); (d) Episodes of Unitive Consciousness (Peak Experiences: an emergency may occur when a person has a mystical experience but lacks real spiritual understanding); (e) Psychic Opening (e.g., awakening of extrasensory perception: the frequent occurrence and accumulation of psychic events such as precognition and telepathy can be very frightening and disturbing, since they seriously undermine the notion of reality prevalent in industrial societies); (f) “Past-Life” Experience (an emergency occurs when a strong karmic experience begins emerging into consciousness in the middle of everyday life and profoundly disturbs normal functioning); (g) Near-Death Experience (an emergency involves an unusually abrupt and profound shift in the experience of reality in people who are entirely unprepared for this event); (h) So-called “Possession” States (in these, the demonic archetype that causes the experiences is by its very nature transpersonal and represents a necessary counterpoint to the Divine); (i) Activation of the Central Archetype (also known as “Psychological Renewal Through Return to the Center”: dramatic experiential sequences that involve enormous energies and occur on a scale that makes these individuals feel they are at the center of events that have global or even cosmic significance); and (j) Experiences of Close Encounters with UFOs (such experiences and apparent abductions can often precipitate serious emotional, intellectual, and spiritual crises).

The purpose of the work described in this article was to use the literature on spiritual emergency (primarily published by the Grofs 1985, 1990) to construct questionnaire subscales to measure each of these 10 spiritual emergencies. Moreover, since conventional psychiatric thinking would describe these emergencies as nothing more than psychosis, a 15-item experience of psychotic symptoms scale (the EPSS) was also constructed¹, in order to see what correlation there was between it and the Spiritual Emergency Subscales,

particularly given a recent revival of interest in the relationship between psychosis and spirituality (e.g., Clarke, 2001).

The 10 Spiritual Emergency Subscales consisted of between 5 and 13 yes/no items, for a grand total of 84 items. Summary statistics for the EPSS and the 10 Spiritual Emergency Subscales will be presented in the Results section. Since the EPSS is an experimental scale we shall also present data bearing on its criterion validity.

We will suggest that, where the data are available, persons who score more than one and one half standard deviations above the mean of the given subscale be *tentatively* classified as having definitely experienced the relevant spiritual emergency. The appropriate cut-off point was therefore calculated, and the mean EPSS score for persons *at or above* the cut-off was compared with the mean EPSS score for persons *below* the cut-off.

The inter-correlations between the 10 Spiritual Emergency Subscales were examined, and subjected to factor analysis, to determine how distinct the various spiritual emergencies are.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 109 persons completed the experimental questionnaire. They ranged in age from 11 to 86 (age missing for 3 persons); mean age = 45 yrs. ($SD = 15$ yrs.). There were 45 males and 64 females. Most participants were members of the local community; they were invited to participate via a newspaper article about the first author's research. All were volunteers, and showed an interest in the area of inquiry.

Materials

The experimental questionnaire was compiled by the first author (M. G.) as a result of extensive study of the literature on psychosis and on spiritual emergency. It consists of two parts. Section I consists of demographic variables, which include self-report measures of religious and spiritual beliefs and practice, namely, (a) self-reported religiosity (reported by few), (b) self-reported spirituality (reported by the majority), (c) method of spiritual practice (meditation, awareness, prayer, yoga, various and other), (d) frequency of engagement in this practice, and (e) number of years the participants had been on their spiritual path, as well as (f) history of psychosis, (g) medication usage, and (h) consultation with a mental health professional.

In Section II were 108 yes/no² questions derived from 84 randomly positioned items from the 10 Spiritual Emergency Subscales, as well as the 15-item Experience of Psychotic Symptoms Scale (EPSS) composed for this study, and

a 9-item Lie Scale (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1964). The ten Spiritual Emergency Subscales were intended to measure (a) Dark Night of the Soul (7 items), (b) Awakening of Kundalini (11 items), (c) Shamanic Crisis (10 items), (d) Episodes of Unitive Consciousness (Peak Experiences: 7 items), (e) Psychic Opening (e.g., awakening of extrasensory perception: 13 items), (f) "Past-Life" Experience (5 items), (g) Near-Death Experience (8 items), (h) so-called "Possession" States (8 items), (i) Activation of the Central Archetype (9 items), and (j) Experiences of Close Encounters with UFOs (6 items). There was no necessity felt to have the same number of items in each subscale; the number of items in each tended to reflect the amount of literature available.

The position of the subscale item within the larger Questionnaire, the wording of the items of these subscales, together with corrected item-total correlations, may be found in the Appendix. These items were examined independently of M. G., and approved by M. A. T. as appropriate to their respective scales. A copy of the complete questionnaire may be obtained from M. A. T. upon request.

Procedure

Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee. In order to recruit participants, an article outlining the research was published in a local newspaper, and the majority of participants contacted the principal researcher, M. G., directly via the article. The remaining participants were recruited by word of mouth through the principal researcher or other participants in the study. The participants were informed that the study was an investigation into a variety of extraordinary physical, mental and spiritual experiences. The questionnaires were posted to participants through the mail or sent via email, with the majority being returned within a month. The sample was thus largely self-selected.

The questionnaire was sent a second time to, and completed by, 41 of the initial participants (38% of the total), between eight and twelve months after the questionnaire was first completed, in order to obtain estimates of test-retest reliability.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics for the scales

Descriptive statistics for the EPSS and the 10 Spiritual Emergency Subscales may be found in Table 1.

Due to limitations of space we do not show the frequency distributions here, but they are available upon request. Inspection of them shows that only the Near-death Experience Subscale approximates a normal distribution, with

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics for the Experience of Psychotic Symptoms Scale and the 10 Spiritual Emergency Subscales (N = 109)

Scale	# of Items	Theoretical range	Actual range	M	SD	Mdn	Cronbach's alpha	Re-test reliability	Skewness	Kurtosis
Experience of Psychotic Symptoms	15	0-15	1-15	6.75	3.77	7.00	.82	.84	.319	-.873
Dark Night	7	0-7	0-7	3.78	1.89	4.00	.67	.75	.031	-.704
Kundalini	11	0-11	0-11	4.36	2.87	4.00	.77	.88	.426	-.596
Shamanic crisis	10	0-10	0-10	4.72	2.70	5.00	.78	.85	-.003	-1.057*
Peak experience	7	0-7	0-7	5.14	2.11	6.00	.84	.67	-1.004*	-.067
Psychic opening	13	0-13	1-13	8.09	3.37	9.00	.83	.88	-.527*	-.753
Past-Life	5	0-5	0-5	2.24	1.73	2.00	.78	.88	.256	-1.137*
Near-death experience	8	0-8	0-8	3.94	1.98	4.00	.71	.83	.207	-.484
"Possession" states	8	0-8	0-8	1.75	2.00	1.00	.76	.85	1.189*	.680
Central Archetype	9	0-9	0-9	3.50	2.50	3.00	.72	.85	.404	-.812
Encounters with UFOs	6	0-6	0-5	0.91	1.10	1.00	.53	.86	1.624*	2.934*

* $p \leq .05$

TABLE 2
Comparison of Scores on Experience of Psychotic Symptoms Scale for Three Psychosis Indicators

Category	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i> (1, 98)	<i>p</i>	partial η^2
Reported psychosis	20	10.75	2.71			
Did not report psychosis	80	5.96	3.33	35.42	< .001	.27
Prescribed medication	15	9.93	3.85			
Not prescribed medication	82	6.24	3.42	14.18	< .001	.13
Took medication	20	9.35	3.57			
Took no medication	80	6.31	3.54	11.73	.001	.11

several subscales showing significant skewness and/or kurtosis. One must bear in mind that persons thought to have had a spiritual emergency were specifically invited to participate in this questionnaire study, and so, if the subscales are valid, the subscale means may be somewhat higher than for a sample drawn at random from the population.

Although we consider that our attempt to construct apparently appropriate and face valid measures of ten spiritual emergencies has been largely successful, we must emphasize that, with the exception of the EPSS (see below), we have not evaluated the empirical validity of these ten scales. For example, is it indeed the case that persons who have experienced a near-death experience actually score higher than a nonexperient on the Near-death Experience Subscale? Our research thus far does not address such questions, and for that reason the results must be regarded as tentative. We consider the empirical validity question to be very important, but beyond the scope of this study. In the meantime, it is concluded that self-reports of spiritual emergency phenomena have been successfully measured.

Preliminary validation of the EPSS

It was possible to test, in a preliminary way, the criterion validity of the EPSS by examining its scores in relation to three measured variables: (a) Have you ever experienced what is commonly known as a psychotic episode?³ (b) Were you prescribed any kind of medication? and (c) Were you actually *taking* any medication? If the EPSS is in fact measuring such experiences, we would expect scores to be higher in people who report having had a psychotic episode, who were prescribed medication, and who were actually taking medication. Statistics for these three variables may be found in Table 2.

It may be concluded from the results in this table that scores on the EPSS are significantly higher in persons who report having experienced psychosis, having been prescribed medication, and who actually took medication. It should be noted that the amount of variance explained by these three indicators is between 11% and 26%, and is therefore moderate to large. We conclude that the EPSS shows some criterion validity, but we emphasize that further efforts are needed to validate the scale.

TABLE 3
Comparison of Mean Score for Experience of Psychotic Symptoms Scale, for Persons At or Above Cutoff and for Persons Below Cutoff, for 8 Spiritual Emergency Subscales

Scale	N		M_{above}	SD_{above}	M_{below}	SD_{below}	$F(1, 107)$	p	Partial η^2
	Cutoff	above below							
Dark Night	6.62	12 97	10.92	2.84	6.24	3.55	19.27	< .001	.15
Kundalini	8.67	10 99	10.70	2.67	6.35	3.64	13.49	< .001	.11
Shamanic crisis	8.77	10 99	10.80	3.58	6.34	3.55	14.28	< .001	.12
Past-Life	4.84	18 91	9.72	3.46	6.16	3.56	15.16	< .001	.12
Near-death experience	6.91	16 93	10.19	3.08	6.16	3.56	18.06	< .001	.14
“Possession” states	4.75	12 97	12.00	2.70	6.10	3.36	34.23	< .001	.24
Central Archetype	7.30	8 101	10.00	3.34	6.50	3.69	6.76	.011	.06
Encounters with UFOs	2.56	10 99	10.90	3.48	6.33	3.55	15.09	< .001	.12

Cut-off analyses for the Spiritual Emergency Subscales

Our next question was: What is the relationship between the EPSS and each of the Spiritual Emergency Subscales? One way of approaching these relationships is to calculate the cut-off points of the latter at one and a half standard deviations above the mean and compare the mean EPSS scores for those participants scoring *below* the cut-off with those for participants scoring *at or above* that cut-off. This comparison was possible in the case of 8 out of 10 of the Spiritual Emergency Subscales, and the results are shown in Table 3.

It can be seen that, in every case, the mean EPSS score for those participants scoring above the cut-off of the Spiritual Emergency Subscale was significantly higher than the mean for participants scoring below the cut-off, with generally moderate to high effect sizes.

Results of a Pearson Correlation Analysis

A second way of examining the relationships between the EPSS and each of the Spiritual Emergency Subscales is via bivariate correlation analysis. Table 4 contains the inter-correlations between the ten Spiritual Emergency Subscales together with their correlations with the EPSS and the Lie Scale.

Considering first the Lie Scale, in order to see whether our data are contaminated by social desirability responding, we observe that 10 of the 11 coefficients were nonsignificant. It seems likely that the sole significance in this list (with UFO experience) is probably due to multiple analysis artifact or psychometric problems with the subscale. We conclude that social desirability appears not to have influenced the great majority of subscale-scores.

We next consider the correlations with the EPSS. Inspection of Table 4 shows that all 10 correlations are positive and significant, ranging from a low of .33

TABLE 4
Inter-correlations for the 10 Spiritual Emergency Subscales Plus Experience of Psychotic Symptoms and the Lie Scale

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1. Dark Night	–	.54	.53	.51	.56	.35	.36	.55	.53	.21	.68	–.14
2. Kundalini		–	.73	.57	.65	.58	.61	.67	.72	.39	.68	.08
3. Shaman			–	.79	.80	.62	.72	.64	.80	.41	.66	.01
4. Peak				–	.76	.45	.63	.44	.64	.28	.50	.07
5. Psychic					–	.64	.67	.54	.71	.32	.67	.01
6. Past-Life						–	.58	.50	.62	.36	.48	.10
7. NDE							–	.43	.58	.52	.52	.12
8. Possession								–	.71	.34	.71	–.02
9. Central									–	.38	.69	.05
10. UFO										–	.33	.20
11. Psychotic											–	–.09
12. Lie Scale												–

Note: Correlations $> .20$ are significant at better than $p = .05$, $> .31$ are significant at better than $p = .001$.

with UFO experience, to .71 for “Possession.” In general the relationships between the Spiritual Emergency Subscales and the EPSS are rather strong.

Finally we consider the 10×10 matrix of correlations for the 10 Spiritual Emergency Subscales. Again we note that all the correlations are positive and most of them are high, ranging from a low of .21 ($p = .027$), between UFO experience and Dark Night, to .80 between Shamanic Crisis and both Psychic Opening and the Activation of the Central Archetype. All 45 correlations were significant at $p < .001$ except a handful (3 with the UFO subscale), which were not significant at the .001 level but only at the .05 level.

Factor Analysis

Because of the high degree of interrelatedness of the ten Spiritual Emergency Subscales, it was thought appropriate to subject them to (principal axis) factor analysis. Since the ratio of participants to variables was larger than 10 to 1 we deemed the sample size adequate for the analysis.

The analysis yielded just a single factor underlying the ten Spiritual Emergency Subscales, with an Eigenvalue of 5.72 that accounted for 57.22% of the variance. We may call this single factor simply “Spiritual Emergency.” The factor loadings and extraction communalities can be found in Table 5, where it can be seen that the greatest contribution was made by the Shamanic Crisis Subscale and the least by the Experience of UFO Encounters.

Note that each participant was assigned a factor score representing his or her position in the distribution of factor scores ($M = 0.00$, $SD = 0.98$, minimum = -1.75 , maximum = 2.14). These factor scores were correlated with the Experience of Psychotic Symptoms Scale, resulting in $r(107) = .76$, $p < .001$, indicating a very strong relationship between the two.

TABLE 5
Factor Loadings and Extraction Communalities for the Ten Spiritual Emergency Subscales

Subscale	Factor loading	Communality
Shamanic Crisis	.928	.860
Central Archetype	.860	.739
Psychic Opening	.859	.738
Kundalini	.817	.667
Peak Experience	.766	.587
Near-Death Experience	.753	.566
Possession	.711	.505
Past-Life Recall	.694	.482
Dark Night	.607	.368
UFO Experience	.457	.209

Relationship between the Spiritual Emergency Subscales, Religiosity and Spirituality

Descriptive data were obtained on five additional variables: (a) self-reported religiosity (17% yes, 83% no); (b) self-reported spirituality (88% yes, 12% no); (c) method of spiritual practice (44% meditation, 12% awareness, 5% prayer, 5% yoga, 16% “various,” 18% “other”); (d) frequency of spiritual practice (12% all the time, 65% daily, 8% more than one a week, 5% weekly, 10% occasionally); and (f) number of years reported on the spiritual path (6% 0–2 years, 10% 3–5 years, 16% 6–10 years, 68% more than 10 years).

The EPPS was examined in relation to these five variables. In the case of all five variables, Univariate Analysis of Variance indicated that they were not significantly related to level of scoring on the EPSS.

The scores on the ten Spiritual Emergency Subscales, the EPSS, and the Lie Scale were examined in relation to self-reported religiosity and self-reported spirituality.

First, just 19 persons out of the total of 109 reported themselves to be religious. A comparison with the 90 self-reported nonreligious persons yielded not a single significant difference. Self-reported religiosity appears to be unable to predict (or prevent) the experience of a spiritual emergency.

Second, 96 people self-reported as spiritual, just 13 saying they were not. Out of 12 comparisons, five were clearly significant, and one (Kundalini) was marginally significant. The results for these six subscales may be found in Table 6.

Spiritual persons scored significantly higher than nonspiritual persons on Shamanic Crisis, Peak Experience, Psychic Opening, Past-Life Experience, and the Central Archetype, and marginally higher on Kundalini. The amount of variance explained is in most cases moderate. A caution is that we do not know whether spirituality leads to the experiencing of spiritual emergency, or whether experience of spiritual emergency leads to spirituality, or both. Future studies of spiritual emergency might ask the person whether there appeared to be a pronounced *increase* in spirituality following the emergency.

TABLE 6
Comparison of Spiritual Versus Nonspiritual Participants for Six Spiritual Emergency Subscales

	Spiritual (<i>N</i> = 96)		Nonspiritual (<i>N</i> = 13)		<i>F</i> (1, 107)	<i>p</i>	Partial η^2
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Kundalini	4.55	2.81	2.92	2.96	3.80	.054	.034
Shaman	5.03	2.54	2.46	2.88	11.36	.001	.096
Peak	5.36	1.95	3.46	2.57	10.10	.002	.086
Psychic	8.49	3.15	5.15	3.63	12.42	.001	.104
Past-Life	2.43	1.70	0.85	1.28	10.37	.002	.088
Central	3.74	2.39	1.77	2.68	7.56	.007	.066

Potential protective factors and spiritual emergency

Finally, we considered the possibility that the presence of self-reported religiosity or spirituality in a person might act to protect them from experiencing a spiritual emergency that was psychotic-like. The sample was therefore divided into four groups: (a) religious and spiritual (*n* = 17); (b) religious but not spiritual (*n* = 2); (c) not religious but spiritual (*n* = 79); and (d) neither religious nor spiritual (*n* = 11). Pearson correlations were calculated between the EPSS and the ten Spiritual Emergency Subscales for three of the four groups (group 2 was too small for such an analysis).

The differences between the three groups were analyzed using Friedman Analysis of Variance, supplemented by Wilcoxon tests: group 3 (spiritual but not religious) gave the lowest average correlation (viz., 0.544), whereas group 1 (religious and spiritual) gave a rather higher average correlation (viz., 0.674), and group 4 (neither religious nor spiritual) gave the highest mean correlation (viz., 0.764), comparison of which gave a significant difference, $\chi^2(2, N = 10) = 9.80, p = .007$. The Wilcoxon test yielded significant differences between all three means taken as pairs.

Thus, for group 4 (neither religious nor spiritual) the correlations between the EPSS and the ten Spiritual Emergency Subscales are the highest, and suggest that the various spiritual emergencies tend to be very good predictors of number of psychotic symptoms, and vice versa. However, members of group 1 (religious and spiritual) and of group 3 (spiritual and not religious) who score highly on number of psychotic symptoms are not as likely to score high on the ten Spiritual Emergency Subscales. These results suggest that self-reported spirituality (and to a lesser extent religiosity) may exert a somewhat protective effect on the person, and that there is less likely to be a connection between score on spiritual emergency and number of psychotic symptoms.

DISCUSSION

The initial aim of this research was to compile questionnaire measures of experience of psychotic symptoms and ten spiritual emergencies. In general this exercise was successful, as shown by a number of statistical indicators. The one subscale that had poor psychometric properties was the Experience of UFO

Encounters Subscale, to which almost no one gave affirmative responses. We pointed out that the ten subscales now need to be validated using appropriate samples and criterion groups.

However, the clear conclusion even at this early stage is that there is a strong relationship between self-report of experience of many psychotic symptoms, self-report of psychosis, and spiritual emergency, to an extent that suggests that they may be different aspects of the same thing. Some might therefore argue that spiritual emergency is nothing more than psychosis, whereas others might equally argue that psychosis is nothing more than spiritual emergency. It seems to us that, in clinical practice, rather little attention tends to be paid to the *content* of the psychosis; rather, most of the content is coarsely classified (e.g., as “delusions of grandeur”) and attempts are then made to administer anti-psychotic medication as quickly as possible. We suggest that there may instead be benefits if the clinician probes the detail of the ideational and affective content of the psychosis, on the grounds that, rather than being simply the random products of a dysfunctional brain, the content may conform to one of the patterns displayed by spiritual emergency. This approach was successfully taken by one of the authors (Thalbourne, 2003) in regard to the Activation of the Central Archetype (Grof & Grof, 1985; Perry, 1974). Psychosis—so often dismissed as useless—might then be seen as the brain’s attempt to heal itself. It seems to us that the clinician’s role is to help that attempt to heal, and not simply by administering medication but also by trying to descry whether there is a pattern to the psychosis, which, once discerned, may respond rather better to talk therapy than it does at present.

We have endeavored to make it easier for the mental health professional by providing cut-off scores for 8 of the spiritual emergencies, at or above which a person may be said definitely to have experienced such an emergency, and also to provide an indicator of the presence of psychotic symptoms.

Finally, we have had difficulty in distinguishing between psychosis and spiritual emergency. We suggest for future research the hypothesis that people with psychosis are a sub-group of those experiencing spiritual emergency. The rest of these people would not be suffering from psychopathology. An important way of drawing out a distinction between these two sub-groups would be to test them for the presence of protective factors—factors that might provide a buffer for the non-pathological group from the pathological effects of psychosis that require medication and other clinical treatment. There are many possible protective factors, each of which could serve as possible predictors of a difference between people having psychosis and people having only spiritual emergency: the latter may have what Jung would call a “strong ego-complex,” and/or strong social support, such as family, or spiritual community, as well as innate and learned resilience factors, which may or may not include a capacity to draw symbolic insights from psychosis as opposed to acting on them literally. Such support and resilience may help channel the powerful archetypal forces that swamp the victim, so much so that they would have otherwise been considered psychotic. We may reasonably conclude that spiritual emergency is present to varying degrees in reasonably large

proportions of the population, but not psychosis, because the experiences of emergency—to whatever degree—are ‘managed’.

NOTES

¹ The only other measure of psychoticism of which we were aware at the time was the Eysenck P scale (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991), but that was unsuitable because it is thought to measure merely unconventionality.

² It has been suggested that in future research a Likert scale be considered for the responses.

³ We should emphasize that this measure is a self-report one and we cannot be sure that these people did in fact experience clinical psychosis.

REFERENCES

- CLARKE, I. (2001). *Psychosis and spirituality. Exploring the new frontier*. London: Whurr.
- EYSENCK, H. J., & EYSENCK, S. B. G. (1964). *Eysenck Personality Inventory*. Hawthorn, Victoria: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- EYSENCK, H. J., & EYSENCK, S. B. G. (1991). *Manual of the Eysenck Personality Scales (EPS Adult)*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- GROF, S. (1985). *Beyond the brain*. New York: SUNY.
- GROF, S., & GROF, C. (1985). Forms of spiritual emergency. *The Spiritual Emergency Network Newsletter*, Spring, 1–2.
- GROF, C., & GROF, S. (1990). *The stormy search for the self*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher.
- JUNG, C. G. (1968). *The archetypes and the collective unconscious*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- MASLOW, A. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. New York: Viking Press.
- MASLOW, A. (1986). *Religions, values, and peak-experiences*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- PERRY, J. W. (1974). *The far side of madness*. Dallas, TX: Spring Publications.
- THALBOURNE, M. A. (2003). Why I climbed over the White House fence. *Emergence*, 6(3), 11–14.

Appendix

Text of Subscale items, and corrected item-total correlations

Experience Of Psychotic Symptoms Scale

2.	Have you ever found that the familiar boundaries between people, events, time and space were blurred or not as accessible as they once were?	.47
11.	Have you ever experienced distressing voices inside your head that didn't seem to belong to you?	.43
13.	Have you ever experienced a time when your sentences were unclear or didn't make sense?	.45
17.	Have you ever felt strange and cut off from the world with everything moving in slow motion?	.58
26.	Have you ever been really convinced of something being real even though others did not share the same belief?	.21
34.	Have you ever found yourself desperately trying to make sense of an unfamiliar environment?	.41
40.	Have you ever experienced someone outside of yourself controlling your body or actions?	.47
43.	Have you ever heard voices as distinct from your own coming from inside your head?	.47
49.	Have you ever experienced significant difficulties in keeping up with social and/or occupational obligations?	.26
54.	Have you ever believed that your thoughts were being interfered with in some way?	.51
77.	Have you ever felt that your internal world was being played out in the external communication of those around you?	.36
80.	Have you ever found your everyday thoughts becoming confused or not joining up properly?	.51
87.	Have you ever experienced seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling or tasting something that no one else could?	.38
95.	Have you ever experienced great difficulty in organizing your thoughts?	.43
107.	Have you ever found yourself laughing inappropriately or becoming angry or upset without a reason?	.53

I. Dark Night Of The Soul Subscale

5.	Have you ever experienced feelings of pressure, claustrophobia or restlessness along with the feeling that part of you is dying?	.36
18.	Have you ever lost your sense of reference as your outer and inner worlds dissolved?	.45
39.	Have you ever experienced difficulty in separating powerful, vivid inner experiences from occurrences in the outer world?	.49
59.	Have you ever felt cut off from the deeper self, higher power, God, or whatever source you depend on for your strength and inspiration?	.42
60.	Have you ever experienced a growing discrepancy between your inner spiritual needs and the widespread materialistic emphasis of our society?	.35
63.	Have you ever felt like you were "stuck in a meaningless cycle of life"?	.25
96.	Have you ever experienced the parts of your physical body expanding and/or dissolving?	.36

II. Kundalini Subscale

1.	Have you ever experienced spontaneous visions of brilliant or flashing lights?	.46
10.	Have you ever experienced visions of deities, saints, or mythological beings?	.31
21.	Have you ever experienced the spontaneous production of complex visual geometrical images or chants inside your head?	.40
32.	Have you ever experienced intense involuntary body movements such as shaking, vibrations or jerking for no apparent reason?	.46
51.	Have you ever experienced sensations such as smelling the scent of sandalwood, perfume or incense without knowing where it's coming from?	.37
55.	Have you ever experienced yourself performing involuntary, previously unknown, yogic postures or hand positions (mudras)?	.38
71.	Have you ever found yourself spontaneously producing previously unknown words or sounds?	.48
75.	Have you ever heard voices, music or the repetition of mantras, without knowing where they're coming from?	.50
81.	Have you ever experienced intense sensations of energy and/or heat streaming along your spine?	.54
97.	Have you ever experienced powerful waves of emotion, such as anxiety, anger, sadness or joy, for no apparent reason?	.36
105.	Have you ever experienced marked differences in your breathing pattern for no apparent reason?	.36

III. Shamanic Crisis Subscale

22.	Have you ever experienced visions and/or vivid dreams which seemed real even after you woke up?	.22
29.	Have you ever experienced the spontaneous desire to create rituals?	.45
41.	Have you ever spontaneously burst into sacred songs and dances?	.41
45.	Have you ever been attacked by demons, exposing you to torture, death and/or annihilation while in an alternative state of consciousness?	.27
52.	Have you ever undertaken a powerful inner experience that involved a journey into another world?	.57
56.	Have you ever had the ability to move into and out of non-ordinary states of consciousness at will?	.53
67.	Have you ever developed a deep change in consciousness during which you lost contact with everyday reality?	.45
79.	Have you ever experienced insights and/or visions, in which you received secret or sacred teachings and healing powers to take back to the "ordinary" world?	.56
85.	Have you ever spontaneously attained profound insights into the nature or reality?	.49
90.	Have you ever experienced an increased connection with animals and plants and the elemental forces of nature?	.55

IV. Peak/Mystical/Unitive Experiences

3.	Have you ever had the experience of dealing with something that has a divine nature and is radically different from your ordinary perception of the everyday world?	.56
28.	Have you ever experienced the sense of becoming one with humanity, nature, the creative energy of the universe and/or God?	.64
48.	Have you ever experienced a state of profound peace and beauty?	.50
50.	Have you ever spontaneously attained profound insights into the nature of reality?	.71
69.	Have you ever felt a sense of overcoming the usual divisions of the body and mind and reaching a state of complete inner unity and wholeness?	.67
74.	Have you ever experienced going beyond your normal understanding of time and space and entered a timeless realm where these categories no longer apply?	.53
82.	Have you ever experienced sensations of deep peace, tranquility, joy, and overwhelming waves of bliss?	.58

V. Psychic Opening Subscale

6.	Have you ever experienced a greater awareness of your own potential?	.47
16.	Have you ever been aware of the presence of spiritual entities?	.48
44.	Have you ever experienced precognition, knowing of an event before it actually occurred?	.45
46.	Have you ever witnessed physical disturbances such as movements in a house with no apparent physical cause?	.15
57.	Have you ever spontaneously received accurate information about things in the past, present or future, by extra-sensory means?	.54
66.	Have you ever been "so in touch with the inner processes" of another that you can tell what they're thinking?	.39
72.	Have you ever spontaneously gained a greater understanding of the cosmos?	.60
76.	Have you ever experienced a precognitive dream providing you with formerly unknown information?	.49
83.	Have you ever spontaneously lost your sense of identity?	.43
86.	Have you ever experienced strong instructive intuition?	.44
89.	Have you ever been able to see auras around people, animals, plants or other living things?	.50
93.	Have you ever experienced a string of events that "seemed to be connected" at some deeper level?	.53
106.	Have you ever experienced a greater awareness of the interconnectedness of all things?	.70

VI. "Past Life" Experiences Subscale

31.	Have you ever been overwhelmed by powerful emotions and physical sensations, concerning yourself and others in various circumstances and historical settings?	.53
61.	Have you ever experienced living what seemed to be another life, in another time and place, in great detail?	.59
84.	Have you ever felt like you have personally witnessed detailed sequences of events taking place in other historical periods and/or cultures that you have had no previous exposure to?	.61
94.	Do you believe that you have lived in another lifetime before this present one?	.49
102.	Do you believe that some of the difficulties you have in your life may be due to unresolved conflicts from a previous lifetime?	.57

VII. Near-Death Experience Subscale

35.	Have you ever experienced a review of your entire life within moments of ordinary time?	.48
36.	Have you ever found yourself out of your physical body, passing through some kind of dark tunnel?	.40
64.	Have you ever had an extraordinary experience that has fundamentally challenged your understanding of reality?	.41
65.	Have you ever received the help of an "other worldly" in order to gain a deeper understanding about life and/or universal laws?	.50
91.	Have you ever had an extraordinary experience that has prompted you to change the way you live in a more positive and loving way?	.37
99.	Have you ever found yourself outside of your physical body?	.40
101.	Have you ever experienced a sense of complete and unconditional acceptance, love and forgiveness?	.23
108.	Have you ever found yourself out of your physical body, moving toward a light of supernatural brilliance?	.43

VIII. "Possession" States Subscale

7.	Have you ever experienced your eyes and face spontaneously taking on wild and/or terrifying expressions?	.42
12.	Have you ever had the need to fight off or try to control the actions of a negative being or entity?	.55
19.	Have you ever experienced your voice spontaneously taking on a deep and otherworldly quality?	.36
38.	Have you ever entered an altered state of consciousness where a spirit, power, deity or other being assumed control over your mind and body?	.48
78.	Have you ever experienced your hands or body taking on strange contortions or making involuntary movements?	.54
92.	Have you ever experienced dramatic episodes of choking, projectile vomiting and/or frantic physical activity?	.40
98.	Has your body ever been "invaded" by a hostile and disturbing energy or entity?	.48
104.	Have you ever felt like you were being controlled by an entity or energy with different personal characteristics than your own?	.47

IX. Central Archetype Subscale

14.	Have you ever experienced rich connections with mythological symbols from ancient history?	.43
20.	Have you ever experienced a 'sacred marriage' or a blissful union with an imaginary mythological figure or an idealized person from your own life?	.34
25.	Have you ever experienced a connection with the afterlife or communication with your ancestors?	.26
62.	Have you ever felt that you were in the centre of huge events that had cosmic relevance and were important for the future of the world?	.48
68.	Have you ever experienced a visionary state taking you back through your own history and that of mankind to creation?	.37
70.	Have you ever experienced yourself as the chosen one with an important message on a mission to help all of mankind?	.40
88.	Have you ever been preoccupied with the theme of death, ritual killing, sacrifice, martyrdom and/or the afterlife?	.29
100.	Have you ever been aware of a cosmic battle being played out between the forces of good and evil or light and darkness?	.48
103.	Have you ever experienced the destruction of an old sense of identity followed by rebirth and a renewed purpose for living?	.50

X. Experience of close encounters with UFOs Subscale

8.	Have you ever been led or taken away by someone who appeared to be an extraterrestrial being?	.56
24.	Have you ever been taken to a distant land or an "otherworldly" landscape, unlike anything you have seen on earth?	.27
30.	Have you ever made contact with someone whom you believed to be an extraterrestrial being?	.46
37.	Have you ever seen something that you believed to be a UFO?	.13
58.	Have you ever been led or taken away by what you believed to be an extraterrestrial spacecraft?	.36
73.	Have you ever undergone a scientific or medical examination by someone who you believed to be an extraterrestrial being?	.12

The Authors

Monika Goretzki, Ph.D., is a registered psychologist currently working as a counselor at the University of South Australia. She has worked with adults in a psychiatric clinic, children and families in a community health center and youth in a community organization, using client-centered, mindfulness based therapy. She gained a B.Sci. (Hons) in Psychophysiology and Psychology from Swinburne University, Melbourne and a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Adelaide. Her long-standing interest in alternative states of consciousness and work with people experiencing psychosis, led her to pursue a Ph.D. investigating the differentiation of psychosis and spiritual emergency. She can be reached at transpsy@gmail.com

Michael Thalbourne, Ph.D., studied classics, philosophy and psychology and for his undergraduate degree, obtained an Honours degree in psychology (both at the University of Adelaide), and gained his Ph.D. in experimental parapsychology from the University of Edinburgh. He has had an interest in the topic of spiritual emergency ever since experiencing such an emergency in 1989. He now works as an independent researcher. He can be reached at m.maitreya@virginbroadband.com.au

Lance Storm, Ph.D., is a Research Fellow at the School of Psychology, University of Adelaide, where he also completed his Post-graduate studies in 2002. He has published in many journals including *Psychological Bulletin*, *Journal of Parapsychology*, and *Journal of Scientific Exploration*. He has edited or co-edited three books including *Synchronicity* (2008), and he is author of the Jungian-influenced book *The Enigma of Numbers* (2008). His interest in spiritual emergency stems from over 25 years studying Jung's Analytical Psychology in order to understand the nature of the self, human development, and the differences and similarities between the manifestations of our spiritual nature and the strivings and sufferings of the human soul, both of which are very often mistaken for psychopathology. He can be reached at lance.storm@adelaide.edu.au