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Prayer of the Body: Reflections on Archetypal Divine Feminine Figures in Embodied Spirituality

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**Prayer of the Body: Reflections on Archetypal Divine Feminine Figures in Embodied
Spirituality**

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Reflections on the Archetypal Divine Feminine in Embodiment Experiences

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Abstract

Archetypal figures of divine femininity exist within Judeo-Christian faith traditions, yet their presence has historically been neglected in Western cultures and religions. These feminine archetypes are thought within Jungian theory to bridge the spiritual and physical worlds, thereby unifying bodily and spiritual wisdom. As such, these figures have important implications for furthering current conceptualizations of embodiment. While embodiment research has recently expanded, little has focused on the intersection of spirituality and embodiment. Archetypal divine feminine figures appear to be located at this intersection. Therefore, the present study examines the experiences of individuals participating in Judeo-Christian traditions who have encountered divine feminine archetypes in such a way as to impact their sense of embodiment.

Keywords: spirituality, embodiment, divine feminine, archetypes

Table of Contents

<u>Approval Page</u>	ii
<u>Abstract</u>	iii
<u>Chapter 1</u>	1
<u>Archetypal Divine Feminine</u>	2
<u>Jungian, Post-Jungian, and Archetypal Theory</u>	4
<u>Feminine Motifs in Religious Experience and Judeo-Christian History</u>	7
<u>Emergence of Dualism</u>	10
<u>The Divine Feminine in Judeo-Christian Traditions</u>	14
<u>The Present Study</u>	23
<u>Chapter 2 Methods</u>	25
<u>Participants</u>	25
<u>Instruments</u>	26
<u>Semi-Structured Interview Questions</u>	26
<u>Daily Spiritual Experience Scale</u>	26
<u>Experience of Embodiment Scale</u>	27
<u>Demographic Information</u>	27
<u>Procedure</u>	27
<u>Data Analyses</u>	28
<u>Chapter 3 Results</u>	29
<u>Voices of Devotion</u>	30
<u>Devotion to the Divine Feminine</u>	30
<u>Devotion to the Body</u>	33

<u>Devotion to Earth and Nature</u>	36
<u>Devotion to Relationships and Communities</u>	37
<u>Voices of Defiance</u>	38
<u>Defying Religious Beliefs</u>	39
<u>Defying Patriarchal Views of Femininity</u>	40
<u>Voices of Freedom</u>	41
<u>Emotional Freedom</u>	41
<u>Freedom in Faith</u>	44
<u>The Divine Feminine in Embodied Spirituality</u>	46
<u>Chapter 4 Discussion</u>	48
<u>Embodiment and Divine Feminine Motifs</u>	49
<u>Bodily and Somatic Impacts</u>	49
<u>Psychological Impacts</u>	51
<u>Relational Impacts</u>	52
<u>Embodied Spirituality</u>	52
<u>Divine Feminine Archetypes within Religious Traditions</u>	54
<u>Jungian Implications of the Archetypal Divine Feminine</u>	55
<u>Clinical Implications</u>	58
<u>Study Limitations</u>	61
<u>Future Directions for Research</u>	62
<u>Conclusion</u>	63
<u>References</u>	65
<u>Appendix A: Informed Consent</u>	73

<u>Appendix B: Interview Questions</u>	75
<u>Appendix C: Survey Questions</u>	76

Reflections on the Archetypal Divine Feminine in Embodiment Experiences

Chapter 1

Contemporary interests in figures of the divine feminine (e.g., Eve, Sophia, Virgin Mary, Black Madonna, Mary Magdalene) are flourishing, which may occasion a rapprochement with qualities long associated with feminine archetypes in Western cultures and Judeo-Christian religious traditions (Day, 2012; Ruether, 2005; Woodman, 1985). Among other things, these undervalued, feminine archetypes inform the sacrality of the material world, the feminine, and the body (Woodman, 1982); they supply alternatives to forms of desacralization and dualism in modernity and appear to have significant implications for psychological practice (cf. Bray et al., 2017; Chopra, 2020). Within Jungian theories, intrapsychic figures of the archetypal divine feminine are primarily conceived to function by unifying or integrating spiritual and material realms and thereby inviting unconscious wisdom from the body into conscious awareness. These unique theoretical perspectives (re)sacralize human bodies as important spiritual vessels for experiencing not only the external world but also the immanent divine; disparate aspects of sacred and secular become integrated into a picture of wholeness and unity. Moreover, Jungian theories of the archetypal divine feminine have significant implications for many contemporary perspectives of embodiment, the experience of living in a body within this world.

Whereas research on embodiment in the psychological literature has proliferated during the 21st century, relatively little has focused on its intersection with spirituality. This is both limiting and concerning given aspects of embodiment are linked to positive health outcomes including enhanced relationship to the body, increased agency, reclamation of desire, and improved affective wellbeing (Piran, 2017). Although there exists a robust body of psychological literature linking several aspects of spirituality with positive health outcomes (cf. Miller, 1999; Pargament

et al., 2013), the relationship between spirituality and embodiment is only emerging and deserves further investigation. It consequently seems Jungian conceptions of the archetypal divine feminine may be uniquely situated at this critical intersection of embodiment and spirituality. Furthermore, there is a small but emerging body of evidence that religious traditions incorporating divine feminine figures demonstrate more positive outcomes including increased autonomy, greater assertiveness, healthier relationships to body, and reclamation of sexuality (Santamaria-Davila et al., 2018). These recent findings are encouraging, although the divine feminine remains largely neglected in Western cultures and traditions of Judeo-Christian faith.

Divine feminine figures have historically been eclipsed by masculine expressions of divinity in many Western, Judeo-Christian traditions (Day, 2012). Still, these archetypes appear to be supplied in Biblical literature and Eastern traditions of Judeo-Christian faith (Reuther, 2005; Schaup, 1997). The present study explores the experiences of spirituality among individuals who participate with figures of the archetypal divine feminine, especially as these intersect with experiences of embodiment. Tracing the presence of divine feminine archetypal figures through history and into contemporary religious traditions, the study draws from Jungian theory and calls for the integration of these figures as crucial to psychic and embodied health.

Archetypal Divine Feminine

The archetypal divine feminine, which integrates spiritual and bodily experiences, is relevant to research on sacred experiences and embodiment. In Jungian thought, the archetypal feminine is often associated with matter, earth, and body, while the archetypal masculine is associated with rationality, spirit, and intellect (Sullivan, 1989; Woodman, 1985). Roles of the archetypal divine feminine as bridging matter and spirit are often portrayed in historical and mythological depictions, placing the divine feminine alongside a divine masculine counterpart

(Qualls-Corbett, 1988; Schaup, 1997). Jungian theorists posit that corresponding masculine and feminine polarities must be held in tension in order to achieve psychic wholeness (Ulanov, 1971). Furthermore, depictions of the embodied nature of the divine feminine echo themes of creation stories within prehistoric and Judeo-Christian faith traditions, wherein *Mother Earth* is seen as purveyor of nurturance and earthly life (Gafney, 2017; Reuther, 2005).

Additional divine feminine motifs appear throughout Judeo-Christian history and within Jungian literature, and their forms are often representative of a link between humanity and the sacred (Qualls-Corbett, 1988; Rohr, 2019; Woodman, 1985). In the creation story, for example, Eve comes to represent a complement and counterpart to Adam, and one who links etymologically with Mother Earth (Gafney, 2017). Sophia subsequently joins God in delighting in earthly and human creation (Reuther, 2005), whereas the Virgin Mary represents the experience of mothering the divine within her body (Schipflinger, 1998). Together these divine feminine archetypes appear to integrate the sacrality of earth, body, and creation, which suggest their functions may promote embodiment as a spiritual experience.

Within Jungian theory, the intersection of sacred experiences and embodiment is often conceived as an indelible, irreplaceable aspect of psychic health (Rowland, 2002). Wholeness is thought to result from the unification of opposites, including psyche and matter. Jung and his contemporaries perceived reality as containing a corresponding psychic component (Rowland, 2002), with the *subtle body* acting at the intersection of psyche and matter (Jung & Jarrett, 2012). Additionally, archetypes are viewed as containing both religious and somatic aspects (Rowland, 2002). Some Jungian theorists and feminists (e.g., Stromsted, 2009; Woodman & Dickson, 1996) view the embodiment of sacred experiences afforded by the numinous archetypes as being a

process integral to psychic health. Such processes function to draw the numinous out of the ethereal and into physical reality (cf. Woodman, 1982).

A reemergence of the divine feminine has begun, one with the potential to integrate the feminine into the Western, masculine-oriented world and restore the relationship between body and psyche. Within Jungian theory, the archetypal divine feminine integrates a more holistic picture of the divine, one that creates a rapprochement between both masculine and feminine consciousness, as well as spirit and body (Woodman & Dickson, 1996). Given the central role Jungian theory has in promoting the importance of the divine feminine archetype, it will be necessary to further describe the main principles of Jungian theory.

Jungian, Post-Jungian, and Archetypal Theory

Additional depictions of the archetypal divine feminine require an introduction of several Jungian concepts. The central tenets of Jungian theory are thought to include the importance of psychic polarity between masculine and feminine elements, archetypal images, as well as the collective and personal unconscious (Ulanov, 1971). Post-Jungians and archetypal theorists added to the religious function of the archetypes through the introduction of polytheistic psychology (Hillman, 1972, 1983). Within these archetypal theories, goddess feminists called for the amplification of the archetypal feminine in order to accomplish a rebalancing of masculine and feminine energies (Rowland, 2002; Sullivan, 1989; Woodman, 1985).

Jung (e.g., 1931/1970, 1954/1969) based his theory on the idea of psychic polarity, wherein the psyche was conceived as a homeostatic system and composed of polarities including conscious-unconscious, creative-destructive, rational-irrational, and masculine-feminine forces (Ulanov, 1971). Harmony between these forces was theorized to result in psychic wholeness, whereas any imbalances would result in unhealth (Ulanov, 1971). Jungian theory also promoted

concepts of the collective and personal unconscious. These psychic structures were thought to be composed of archetypal symbols relevant to all cultures but specific to each psyche dependent on individual life experience, history, and societal context (Jung, 1936/1937/1969). Archetypes were theorized as influencing the psyche and could be understood indirectly by the examination of dreams, participation with archetypal images through active imagination, and the study of mythology (Rowland, 2002; Ulanov, 1971). Jung (e.g., 1931/1970, 1954/1969) described archetypes as primordial structures of the psyche, formless in themselves but having the potential for images or emotions whereby they could be recognizable to the consciousness. Jung also believed archetypal images from myths and dreams contained universal wisdom prompting the psyche toward individuation and the archetypal self, through the expression of unity between polarities and psychic wholeness (Ulanov, 1971). Such archetypal images, Jung theorized (e.g., 1931/1970, 1954/1969), were ultimately psychosomatic and contained bodily components (Rowland, 2002).

Some contemporary practitioners of archetypal theory (e.g., Hillman, 1983, 1994; Rowland, 2002) have since expanded Jung's religious function of archetypes, conceiving the divine images and symbols arising from numinous archetypes in a process known as *soul-making*. Hillman (1972, 1983, 1994) viewed this as a life-long journey, undertaken through participation with archetypal images that emerge from the psyche as a religious process, unconfined to any one religion (cf. Rowland, 2002). Drawing on Jungian conceptions about the plurality of archetypes, Hillman (1972, 1983) later introduced the notion of polytheistic psychology. Hillman connected the life of the body with the *feminine principle*, broadly defined by contemporary archetypal practitioners (e.g., Sullivan, 1989; Ulanov, 1971) as a receptive and passive archetypal presence associated with embodied connection to earth (cf. Rowland, 2002).

Drawing from Christian concepts including the immaculate conception, incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, Hillman (1994) posited the importance of the sacred connection between psyche and body. Rather than promoting worship of external deities, Hillman's approach instead endorsed submission of the conscious ego to numinous experiences through archetypal images (Rowland, 2002). These archetypal images, themselves a metaphor of religious symbol, were theorized to integrate both feminine and masculine representations into harmonious union (Rowland, 2002).

Hillman (1972, 1983) introduced the concept of polytheistic psychology, wherein the integration of a host of archetypal images is thought to be a spiritual process in itself. When the archetypal image is viewed as a religious motif, the application of post-Jungian thought toward Judeo-Christian traditions serves to provide a possible alternative to monotheistic representations of the divine and calls for the reincorporation of divine feminine figures. Additionally, such figures are thought by goddess feminists (e.g., Perera, 1981; Qualls-Corbett, 1988; Stromsted, 2009; Woodman, 1982) to aid in the unification of psyche and matter. As Western, Judeo-Christian traditions are full of sacred feminine motifs, it may be that salient spiritual experiences afforded by interactions with these feminine figures on an intrapsychic level may also further a sense of embodiment. The incorporation of an array of archetypal images, including divine feminine archetypes, would be considered central in the role of embodiment among other contemporary archetypal theorists.

Within the contemporary goddess movement, perspectives of several goddess feminists (Rowland, 2002) recently began to emerge from post-Jungian and archetypal schools of thought. These feminist perspectives have addressed patriarchal disruptions to psychic polarity, including the apparent overrepresentation of the archetypal masculine divine found in many Western

cultures and traditions of Judeo-Christian faith. Goddess feminists developed archetypal images of the feminine as found in historical mythologies, cultures, and religions (Rowland, 2002). They further elucidated the concept of archetypal feminine, applying terminology of the *feminine principle* and *masculine principle* to delineate archetypal energetic polarities existing apart from sex and available to all genders (Rowland, 2002; Sullivan, 1989; Woodman, 1985).

Goddess feminists described the feminine principle as lunar consciousness, symbolized by the reflective moon and the receptive womb, and associated with the dark, with being, with the Great Mother and her embodied relationship to the earth (Sullivan, 1989). The masculine principle, described as solar consciousness and symbolized by the radiant sun and penetrative phallus, became associated with light, with doing, and with relationship to the worlds of spirit and intellect (Sullivan, 1989). Through the amplification of the feminine principle, goddess feminists sought to provide a rapprochement between archetypal masculine and feminine polarities, a harmony conceived by Jungians as integral in the creation of psychic wholeness (Rowland, 2002). Within the Western traditions of Judeo-Christian faith, divine feminine figures may provide a similar reconciliation between masculine and feminine motifs.

Feminine Motifs in Religious Experience and Judeo-Christian History

Among many Western cultures and traditions of Judeo-Christian faith, these sacred, feminine motifs now seem repressed or obscured by monotheistic, patriarchal conceptions of divinity (Day, 2012). From Post-Jungian and archetypal perspectives, the degree of feminine repression within these Western cultures and traditions of Judeo-Christian faith is significant and generally results in disorder, theorized in terms of an imbalance or disequilibrium among psychic polarities (Rowland, 2002). Masculine motifs and symbols therefore require a rapprochement with sacralized, feminine symbols; greater inclusion of female expressions of divinity to supply

the intrapsychic landscape with sacred, numinous archetypal figures seems both theoretically consistent and necessary (Hillman, 1994; Rowland, 2002; Woodman, 1985).

Furthermore, significant symbols of archetypal divine femininity are supplied by historic and contemporary religious communities worldwide (Reuther, 2005). Divine feminine motifs and figures can be found across epochs, cultures, and religions (Partridge, 2018) including but not limited to Norse Paganism (e.g., Freya), Druidism (e.g., Brighid), Romuva (e.g., Mother Earth), Hinduism (e.g., Shakti, Divine Mother), Shintoism (e.g., Amaterasu), Incan mythology (e.g., Pachamama), and Apache religion (e.g., Mother Earth, Isanaklesh). These expressions of feminine divinity supply several possible alternatives to Western monotheistic religions.

Goddess motifs are far from new conceptions; evidence of the archetypal divine feminine is found in Prehistoric, Western cultures dating as early as 25,000 BCE (Reuther, 2005). Some feminist scholars, theologians, and archeologists have proposed the existence of matriarchal cultures predating patrilineal rule, whereas others hold the more conservative view that such pre-patriarchal cultures were likely egalitarian and integrated feminine images of divinity with their masculine counterparts (Christ, 1997; Reuther, 2005). Whether or not the rise of the archetypal divine feminine was preexistent or coexistent in these early cultures remains debatable, although scholars generally agree the Great Mother or Mother Goddess symbolized life and the union between humanity and nature (Schaup, 1997; Stone, 1976). The archetypal divine feminine, and especially her relationship to earth, appears prevalent across Prehistoric cultures (Schaup, 1997).

Throughout the Ancient Mediterranean, during the 3rd and 2nd Millennia BCE, the most notable goddess motifs included Inanna/Ishtar in Sumero-Akkadia as well as Demeter and Persephone in Greece (Reuther, 2005). Each of these goddesses relate to earth and matter in a distinct way. When Inanna/Ishtar of Mesopotamia, associated with land and fertility, war, and

sexual love, descends into the underworld to face her sister Erishkegal, all earthly life above ground ceases producing fruit (Perera, 1981). Similarly, in the Greek story of Demeter and Persephone, Persephone's rape and abduction to the underworld drive her mother Demeter, goddess of grain, to strike the land with famine until her daughter's return (Shinoda Bolen, 1984). These examples both serve to link the divine feminine and the physical world, wherein goddess or *mater* influences earth and *matter* (Woodman, 1985). Within a Jungian perspective, these goddesses appear to represent a psychological coniunctio between earth and sky, matter and spirit, and descent and return (Perera, 1981).

With developments of urbanization, military rule, and hierarchical society in the West, goddess figures became associated less with life and increasingly with enactment of sacred marriage, wherein a goddess espoused a king and established his divine right to rule (Reuther, 2005). As a result, the divine feminine became less powerful in her own right as masculine leaders sought to usurp her authority (Reuther, 2005). The development of Yahwism may have further collapsed the feminine aspects of divinity into a concept of a monotheistic, masculine god figure (Reuther, 2005). Thus, rather than shared power with a divine feminine figure, this appears to have occasioned a shift represented by the sacred marriage between Yahweh and his bride, Israel (Reuther, 2005). As a result, it appears that power for the divine feminine was increasingly associated with a sacred marriage and submission to masculinity. Within many Western cultures and traditions of Judeo-Christian faith, the emphasis turned away from the motherly aspects of God, associated with earthly life and bodily matter, and toward aspects of rationality and logic (Reuther, 2005). This shift implicates the devaluation of the feminine and the body within Western, Judeo-Christian traditions, a devaluation that would be extended through the teachings of dualism.

Emergence of Dualism

It appears that dualistic teachings further contributed to the separation of spirit and matter along with its associated devaluation of the earth and the feminine (Reuther, 2005). Two broad strains of thought regarding dualism emerged within Judeo-Christian traditions, one based in Platonic thought, and the other in Aristotelian (Caputo, 2006). Dualism, the separation of the immaterial from the material world, manifested through ancient Greek teachings beginning with Plato (Caputo, 2006). Plato regarded the reality of the temporal world as a shadowy copy of the truer version of a background world (Van Belle, 2013). These teachings brought about a hierarchical order wherein the spiritual existed at a higher level than the material world, therefore containing more value (Reuther, 2005).

Within this Platonic paradigm, the divine feminine so long associated with earth, matter, and instinctual energy was devalued, whereas the masculine, associated with spirit, rationalism, and logic, took on increased significance (Reuther, 2005). Augustine, upon converting to Christianity in the 4th century, drew from Platonic thought in his writings and teachings on Christianity and the material world (Caputo, 2006). Augustine suggested the soul, as the center of rational consciousness, should rule over the corrupted sensual aspects of bodily experience (Caputo, 2006). Augustinian thought then influenced the theology of Anselm and eventually the Franciscan traditions of Christianity. Anselm built upon Augustinian (i.e., Platonic) perspectives and basically asserted that one finds God not from looking to the visible world, but from looking toward the spiritual realm (Caputo, 2006). Such teachings appear to have perpetuated, accelerated the collapse and devaluation of the feminine, given her associated aspects of bodily and earthly matter, separating her further from conceptions of divinity (Reuther, 2005).

Departing from the traditional Platonic perspective, Aristotle viewed the temporal realm as having its own truth (Caputo, 2006). Such teachings impacted Thomistic thinking, wherein the natural world was wounded by sin, rather than completely corrupted by it, and all matter imperfectly, yet still importantly, revealed something of the divine nature (Caputo, 2006). From this perspective, creation demonstrated the laws of nature given by God and reflected God's glory (Caputo, 2006). These Thomistic teachings heavily influenced the Dominican traditions of Christianity, although they largely disappeared from Western Christianity during the Dark Ages such that Augustinian and Anselmian perspectives (i.e., Platonism) went unchallenged (Caputo, 2006). However, Thomistic (i.e., Aristotelian) perspectives of Judeo-Christian faith continued to influence Eastern Orthodox and Islamic traditions throughout the Middle Ages (Caputo, 2006). These perspectives might supply alternatives to dualistic thought pervading much of Western, Judeo-Christian traditions; they offer a possibility that physical matter might reemerge as another important, indelible dimension of spirituality.

These historical, philosophical, and theological divides ostensibly deepened between Dominican and Franciscan traditions after the Roman Catholic Church persecuted Galileo for his positions on heliocentrism during the 17th century (Caputo, 2006). It became a moment that marked a pronounced departure of Western, Judeo-Christian traditions from Thomistic teachings on the laws of nature; rather Augustinian and Anselmian perspectives (i.e., Platonism) would thereafter shape many dominant perspectives on the body, science, medicine, and matter in the West (Caputo, 2006; Sellers, 2017). Whereas faith and religion were dominant players in the culture throughout the Middle Ages, the Age of Reason would bring intellect and logic to the foreground (Caputo, 2006). This shift would reverberate throughout Western faith traditions, and Western culture at large, for centuries to come.

Descartes (e.g., 1637/2007), a seminal figure in the Age of Reason, drew heavily from Platonic thinking in his approach to rationalism (Van Belle, 2013). Entering a world ravaged by loss of life during the bubonic plague and Thirty Years' War, Descartes ostensibly conceived the wanton and widespread death of his time as chaotic and irrational. For him the material world generally, and the physical body in particular, appeared above all to perpetuate this suffering, corruption, and deception (cf. Woodman & Dickson, 1996). As a result, several dominant conceptions of physicality, materiality, and embodiment in the West became conflated with allegorical imprisonment in the shadowy cave. Descartes would devote himself to restoring human knowledge and order by ascending shadowy caves of the material realm and embodiment in order to find the perfect, rational, and divine ideals of the Enlightenment (Piat, 1908). Truth was conceived as distorted and obscured by the physical world; access to true, immaterial reality (i.e., dualism) would require radical methods to overcome deception.

During a period of devastating plagues and military conflicts among Judeo-Christian communities, Descartes leveraged widespread doubt and uncertainty in order to establish truth and knowledge. His epistemological methods of skepticism applied best to the material realm, where they could ostensibly help to discern what might be considered indisputably, objectively true (Newbigin, 1995). Descartes, paraphrasing Augustine (*si fallor, sum* or "If I am deceived, I am"), thus introduced *cogito, ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am") to promote human existence as an immaterial thinking—albeit doubting—presence (Caputo, 2006). These teachings became paramount in reinforcing an idea of the mind and its contents as a world distinctly separate from, and superior to, the material world (Newbigin, 1995). Within this Platonic framework, existence of doubting minds also assumed the existence of a perfect, omniscient mind separate from the shadowy cave (Newbigin, 1995). Descartes conceived that external mind as divine, presiding

with all truth apart from the deceptive material realm. Dismissing or rejecting possibilities for embodied knowledge, Descartes ascended into the immaterial realm of ideas and rationality in order to access this perfect mind of the divine (Newbigin, 1995). Dualism was inescapable.

In the Cartesian paradigm, the mind was made distinct and superior to the body, much like an ethereal God ruled over creation (Woodman & Dickson, 1996). Moreover, irrationality, emotions, bodies, and physical desires became suspect in Cartesian thought (Sellers, 2017). In addition to mind-body dualism, a split between subjective and objective emerged; affective or romantic claims about worth or beauty thus revealed nothing about its true nature (Newbigin, 1995). Subjective claims were therefore to be minimized as much as possible, while only objective truth could be trusted (Newbigin, 1995). Such a paradigm devalued and repressed the feminine principle, along with the associated qualities of earth, body, and matter (Reuther, 2005). As the boundaries between mind and body, subjective and objective, became more clearly delineated, disregard for the bodily and physical components of life began to grow within Western traditions of Christian faith (Migliore, 2004).

Cartesian (i.e., Platonic) perspectives, in effect, served to reconceive the more sensuous, sexual, and physical theaters of the feminine principle; the material realm was thereafter devalued and reconceived as precarious, depraved, and incredulous in the West. The Cartesian framework, with its assumptions of mind-body dualism, supplied a (Platonic) approach to help resolve incoherent and uncontrollable events, although it came at the expense of the material realm and its experiences of embodiment (Woodman & Dickson, 1996). This devaluation of the feminine principle becomes problematic in Jungian thought, wherein the mind and spirit so revered within Cartesian dualism are only made whole when held in tension with the body and matter (Woodman, 1982). Although Cartesian thought was largely adopted by Western Judeo-

Christian traditions, non-Western, non-dominant religious perspectives overcame these dualistic hierarchies by incorporating the feminine principle and divine feminine archetypes (Christ, 1997). These non-Western perspectives offered the perspective that the physical may be an important component of spiritual experience, and that divine feminine figures provide an important rapprochement between masculine and feminine principles (Christ, 1997).

The Divine Feminine in Judeo-Christian Traditions

Despite a significant history of neglect within Western cultures and traditions of Judeo-Christian faith, multiple expressions of the divine feminine exist within Biblical literature and recur throughout history (e.g., Gafney, 2017; Reuther, 2005; Schaup, 1997). Notable figures include Eve, Sophia, the Virgin Mary, Black Madonna, and Mary Magdalene (Bourgeault, 2010; Cleveland, 2022; Gafney, 2017; Reuther, 2005; Schiplflinger, 1998). From a Jungian view, each of these archetypal figures contains a deep wisdom with the potential to engender relationship between the sacred and material worlds (Anderson & Hopkins, 1991; Qualls-Corbett, 1988; Rohr, 2019; Woodman, 1985). From this perspective, the body is conceived as a sacred vessel that becomes instrumental in spirituality, with the archetypal divine feminine acting as a bridge between the worlds of spirit and matter (Woodman, 1982). The following examples offer evidence of prominent divine feminine figures existing alongside masculine counterparts within Western traditions of Judeo-Christian faith. The presence of these figures within contemporary spiritual practice may have important implications in the development of a healthy relationship between spirituality and embodiment.

In the Judeo-Christian creation story from Genesis, feminine figures emerge alongside a masculine counterpart. Elohim, translated generally to be a masculine form of “God,” “created the heavens and the earth,” while Ruach, the feminine “breath” or “wind,” “pulsed over the face

of the waters” (The TANAKH, 1985, Gen 1:1; Gafney, 2017). Although this text clearly presents Ruach alongside Elohim, feminine depictions of the divine were gradually eclipsed by masculine forms (Ruether, 2005). An example of this exists in the filioque controversy, a particularly salient historical occurrence marking an official split between Eastern and Western Judeo-Christian traditions due to the increasingly subservient interpretations of Ruach (Dyrness & Kärkkäinen, 2008). At the Council of Nicea in the 4th century, the Roman Catholic church chose to situate the Holy Spirit as preceding from both the Father and the Son in their formulation of the Trinity (Migliore, 2004). The Eastern Orthodox church rejected this positioning of the Holy Spirit beneath Christ, choosing to remain with the traditional teaching that both Christ and the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father (Migliore, 2004).

The Eastern church maintained a level of equality between the three members of the Trinity, rejecting the notion that the feminine Holy Spirit should be subservient to the masculine Christ (Dyrness & Kärkkäinen, 2008). The responses of the Western and Eastern traditions to the filioque controversy are reflective of the apparent devaluation of the feminine within the Western, Judeo-Christian faiths stemming from Augustinian thought, while the Eastern faiths esteemed divine feminine depictions more highly. Despite historic devaluation in Western, Judeo-Christian traditions, some contemporary theologians conceive of the Holy Spirit as a feminine counterpart to traditional masculine ways of viewing God, even positing that Christ and the Holy Spirit operate alongside one another in their masculine and feminine forms as God’s Son and Daughter (Migliore, 2004).

Masculine and feminine figures appear in human form in the creation story, with Eve appearing alongside Adam as his “mighty-helper” (Gafney, 2017, p. 21). *Adamah* first appears in the creation story as a body transcending gender and translated as “earthling” (Gafney, 2017, p.

29). This human, commonly designated as Adam, is created from the red clay soil (*edom*) and linked etymologically with humus or earth (Gafney, 2017). Adam's first designation as male appears after his female counterpart, *Chavah*, is taken from his body (Gafney, 2017). Chavah can be translated as "giver of life," "mother of life," or "mother earth," and is commonly designated as Eve (Gafney, 2017, p. 62). She is taken from the human or earthling, and is described as his *ezer kenegdo*, meaning a "power" or "strength" that is "equal to" or "corresponding to" him (Freedman, 1983, p. 56). While alternate translations of the text conceive of Eve as a helper subservient to Adam (De Alminana & Olena, 2016), contemporary theologians interpret no hierarchy within their relationship and conceive of their relationship as being a loving reflection of the trinitarian perichoresis, or mutual indwelling (Migliore, 2004). This Biblical scholarship implicates a feminine presence alongside her masculine complement within the Judeo-Christian creation story, and also connects mother with earth in ways not unlike aforementioned prehistoric religious traditions (De Alminana & Olena, 2016; Schaup, 1997).

Sophia is another feminine figure present within sacred texts of Judeo-Christian traditions, appearing as a fundamental archetypal figure of divine feminine wisdom, as well as a feminine compliment to Christ (Migliore, 2004; Raff, 2003; Schaup, 1997). Within Judeo-Christian traditions Sophia is described as one who joined God in creative work as God "marked out the foundations of the earth" (New Revised Standard Version Bible, 1990, Prov. 8:29; Reuther, 2005; Schaup, 1997). She is also depicted as the immanence of the divine, one who "permeates and pervades all things" (New Revised Standard Version Bible, 1990, Wis. 7:24; Reuther, 2005). Within the gospels, the *Logos* is translated as 'word' and is conceived as being a masculine extension of the feminine *Sophia*, suggesting that Christ is the incarnation of both word and wisdom (Deane-Drummond, 2015; Migliore, 2004). As a provisioner of sacred

wisdom and co-creator with God, Sophia's image is conceptualized by theologians, scholars, and Jungian theorists to be symbolic of the union of spirit and matter (Qualls-Corbett, 1988; Schipflinger, 1998; Woodman, 1982). Her role in the unification of the spiritual and physical worlds is usually considered an important component of individuation in Jungian thought (Raff, 2003).

The Virgin Mary plays another essential role in conceptualizing humanity's relation to the divine, demonstrating the indwelling of the divine nature within her physical body (Rohr, 2019). In the Eastern Orthodox church, she is known in part as Container of the Uncontainable, as well as *Theotokos*, or Mother of God (Isar, 2000; Reuther, 2005). Mary, similarly to Sophia, offers humanity a glimpse of how the spiritual and physical worlds can intersect (Schipflinger, 1998). Mary is fully human and therefore in touch with the affective and physical experience of being human, yet in bearing Christ her humanity commingles with divinity (Reuther, 2005). She is usually venerated in Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Russian Sophiology, but her image has been neglected in many Western traditions of Judeo-Christian faith (Schipflinger, 1998). Despite this, Jungian feminists perceive Mary as playing an archetypal role similar to the Sophia in her ability to mediate between humanity and the divine (Qualls-Corbett, 1988).

An alternative to traditional Western depictions of the Virgin Mary exists in the form of Black Madonna figures appearing during the 12th and 13th centuries throughout Europe (Schaup, 1997; Woodman & Dickson, 1996). Critiques of the Virgin Mary offered by Jungian goddess feminists include her often White depictions, her purported virginity, her purity, and resultant limitations on her ability to reflect the entirety of the human experience (Comas-Diaz, 2008; Qualls-Corbett, 1988; Woodman, 1985). The Black Madonna figures are thought to supply an alternative conceptualization to Western depictions of the White, male god and divine figures in

many Western traditions of Judeo-Christian faith (Cleveland, 2022; Comas-Diaz, 2008; Woodman, 1985). From the perspective of both Jungian theorists and womanist theologians, her blackness is a symbol of fecundity and associated with the darkness of rich, fertile soil (Comas-Diaz, 2008; Gafney, 2017). The incorporation of the archetypal Black Madonna within the intrapsychic world is generally associated with a reclamation of sacred sexuality and may even function in the psychotherapeutic space in helping women reclaim relationship to their bodies (Comas-Diaz, 2008).

Another historical and archetypal figure offering a facet of the divine feminine is Mary Magdalene, portrayed in the gnostic gospels as a favored disciple of Christ, and thought to represent the unitive wholeness experienced by those who embody Sophia's wisdom (Bourgeault, 2010). Despite this, her image throughout the majority of history in Roman Catholicism has been portrayed as that of a prostitute, a depiction not reversed until recently (Bourgeault, 2010). In the 6th century, Pope Gregory offered a sermon in which he declared Mary Magdalene a prostitute, conflating several canonical stories involving various 'Mary' figures as well as an unnamed woman who anointed Christ's feet with perfume and was consequently forgiven of her sins (Bourgeault, 2010). Some scholars interpret his sermon as an intentional attempt to devalue the role of the feminine within Roman Catholicism (Bourgeault, 2010). This declaration was not amended until 1969, when the Vatican began to describe Mary Magdalene through the resurrection story in which Mary Magdalene is identified by name as the first to appear to Christ in the garden (Haag, 2016). In this story, Mary Magdalene is depicted not as the penitent prostitute, but rather as a devoted disciple and one who never left Christ's side throughout the crucifixion (Bourgeault, 2010). Furthermore, she is depicted in a leadership role

following the ascension, and is described as ‘Apostle to the Apostles’ and one with whom Christ shared his wisdom (Bourgeault, 2010).

Mary Magdalene’s relationship to Christ is believed by some feminist theologians and scholars to be a possible representation of the sacred marriage, joining together masculine and feminine aspects of the divine while unifying spirit and matter (Beavis, 2012; Bourgeault, 2010; Howe, 2013; Starbird, 1993). Some theologians even speculate her union with Christ could reflect the tantric tradition of sacred sexuality, whereby the sexual encounter gives rise to a numinous experience promoting closeness with the divine (Bourgeault, 2010; Leloup, 2005). Despite the speculative nature of her history, Jungian theorists portray her archetypally as a figure able to establish harmony between the physical and spiritual realms (Qualls-Corbett, 1988).

The Council of Nicea in the 4th century established an official creed of Christianity, after which time the canonical texts were introduced (Bourgeault, 2010). Notably absent from these texts were the stories of women or feminine representations of God. Despite this neglect, figures of divine femininity still are present with Western, Judeo-Christian texts (Reuther, 2005). The archetype of the divine feminine brings together a more holistic picture of the divine, one that includes masculine and feminine consciousness, as well as spirit and body. This perspective holds important implications for current understandings of embodiment. It seems that when matter is viewed as sacred, human bodies become an important spiritual vessel for experiencing not only the world around, but also the immanent divine.

Embodiment and the Divine Feminine

Jungian theorists conceptualize the archetypal feminine as the immanence of the sacred within matter and earth (Perera, 1981; Qualls-Corbett, 1988; Raff, 2003; Woodman, 1985). Her divine

presence in the intrapsychic space is thought to contribute to the restoration of union between psyche and soma (Woodman, 1985). Such a union points to a potential link between embodiment and the divine feminine archetype. With the neglect of the divine feminine and the devaluation of the body, it seems an entire host of experiences have been overlooked in embodiment research. Furthermore, embodiment research tends to focus solely on the bodily aspects of being in the world, with little exploration of how physical experiences are woven within a larger spiritual tapestry.

Philosophers of the 19th and 20th centuries, including Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty, and Foucault, were instrumental in forming current conceptualizations of embodiment (Esbjorn-Hargens, 2004; Piran, 2016). In the West, they were among the first of their time to recognize the value of the body as a source of wisdom (Esbjorn-Hargens, 2004; Piran, 2016). For instance, Nietzsche (1885/1982) posited the idea of the sensory world as an important form of knowledge. Merleau-Ponty (1962) similarly emphasized the interconnectedness of mind and body. Foucault (1979) expanded the sociopolitical context of embodiment, involving an element of power influencing the way one experiences the body. These philosophers challenged the Platonic view of self, viewing the body as the perceiver of sensory input and means by which humans interpret surroundings and derive meaning from the world.

Current definitions of embodiment incorporate Aristotelian thought. Embodiment is generally described as the phenomenon of being a living body in this world, with emphasis on social and contextual factors (Piran & Teall, 2012). By examining the broader social context, embodiment researchers seek to understand how the body is seen and experienced within cultural systems (Piran & Teall, 2012). This definition surpasses body-image and the cognitive evaluations of body appearance, instead viewing the body as integrating physical, mental, and

social elements (Blood, 2005; Piran & Teall, 2012). Beyond these social and cultural aspects, embodiment is also thought of as incorporating aspects of sexuality and pleasure (Piran, 2016; Tolman et al., 2014). In this way, the phenomenon of embodiment engenders pleasure and a connection with the body, whereas disembodiment leads to dissociation and disconnection from the body (Young, 1992). The increased sense of embodiment is linked to health outcomes including increased positive bodily attunement and care, assertiveness and agency, and reclamation of physical desire (Piran, 2017).

Although spirituality seems largely neglected within the psychological literature on embodiment, recent and emerging research demonstrates a link between the experience of embodiment and the promotion of a sense of closeness with the divine among a sample of women identifying as Christian (McBride et al., 2017). Additionally, more thought is being given to embodiment as a spiritual experience (Ferrer, 2008). Stemming from Eastern traditions, such as tantra and other indigenous religions, the theory of embodied spirituality conceives of the body as the home of the person and the dwelling place of the divine (Ferrer, 2008). Themes inherent to this perspective of embodiment include the use of mindfulness and *bodyfulness* exercises in developing increased interoceptive awareness of bodily sensation, the resacralization of sexuality and sensuality, and the healing of the split between mind and body (Ferrer, 2008). Embodiment has an important place in the literature of Western Judeo-Christian traditions as well, with increasing attention given to the importance of the body in genuine Christian spirituality (Van Niekerk & Niemandt, 2019). Within Biblical literature, the body of God is often given metaphorical physical imagery such as topographical or architectural symbols including caves, ravines, mountains, and cities (Smith, 2016). These symbols, often containing a feminine component, are thought to be ways by which humanity organized characteristics of the divine,

giving language and corporeality to the transpersonal (Smith, 2016). Feminist theologian Isherwood (2004) located the power of the incarnation within the body as a source of wisdom and revelation, which can then be voiced and realized within the outer world. Mindfulness and bodyfulness practices such as centering prayer, guided imagery, and communion, when practiced through the perspective of the incarnation, promote embodied presence and awareness of God (Timbers & Hollenberger, 2022).

Within the Jungian perspective, the archetypal divine feminine bridges body and soul (Woodman, 1985). It follows that her archetypal image within the intrapsychic space may alter the experience of being in a body, while promoting psychic wholeness. Imagery and metaphor have been shown potent forms of healing and enrichment when used in the psychotherapeutic space (Faranda, 2014). When worked through in an experiential or embodied way, psychic imagery becomes grounded in the body (Faranda, 2014). Studies focused on the impact of the divine feminine have demonstrated the veneration of her form has allowed women to reclaim their power, relationship to their body, and connections with other women (Christ, 1997). When used in the psychotherapeutic space, use of divine feminine imagery has enabled women to reclaim spirituality and sexuality (Comas-Diaz, 2008). Psychotherapeutic interventions accompanying such work with the archetypal feminine include dream work, guided imagery, yoga practice, and artistic renditions of archetypal figures (Comas-Diaz, 2008).

Studies on the divine feminine and her link to the body suggest positive outcomes, although little research has been conducted in this area. A study of women practicing Christian goddess spirituality demonstrated the incorporation of the divine feminine into spiritual practices honoring the body and earth (Beavis, 2016). Such women reported including Christian figures such as the Virgin Mary, Sophia, and Mary Magdalene (Beavis, 2016). A study of women

participating in ecofeminist spirituality, in which a divine feminine presence is venerated, reported psychosocial health outcomes including increased emotional wellbeing, competence, autonomy, assertiveness, and self-assuredness (Santamaria-Davila et al., 2018). They also reported improved cooperation and mutuality in relationships, and enhanced appreciation for and experience of the body and sexuality (Santamaria-Davila et al., 2018). A study on dance movement therapy demonstrated bodily movement as another way of engaging the physical and divine realms, resulting in improved relationship to the body (Stromsted, 2009).

The divine feminine, with her associations to the sacred and material realms, offers a unique perspective of the intersection of spirituality and embodiment. Divine feminine representations appear throughout history, mythology, and cultures world-wide, including Western traditions of Judeo-Christian faith (Reuther, 2005). As a signifier of the imminent divine within matter, divine feminine motifs have been shown integral to the process of reclaiming relationship to body and sexuality (Comas-Diaz, 2008), with other health outcomes including empowerment and improved interpersonal relationships (Christ, 1997). While embodiment is a growing field of research, the intersection of spiritual and bodily experiences deserves more attention. The archetypal divine feminine may have more to offer this area, because of her perceived ability to unify psyche and soma (Woodman, 1985).

The Present Study

Jungian perspectives of wholeness promote the balance of psychic polarities, between the feminine and masculine principles irrespective of gender identity (Rowland, 2002; Sullivan, 1989; Woodman, 1985). This suggests the integration of archetypal divine feminine, herself a numinous or spiritual figure, is an important factor in developing psychic health (Rowland, 2002). This unique archetype is often linked with matter, earth, and body; theoretically, this

assumes inclusion of the archetypal divine feminine in psychological work may have potential to restore union between spirit and matter (Woodman, 1985). This also suggests several possible links between the divine feminine archetype and embodiment. Embodiment is associated with positive health outcomes including improved attunement to the body, enhanced sense of agency, and reclamation of bodily desire (Piran, 2017). Furthermore, it appears that spiritual traditions incorporating a divine feminine element promote positive outcomes including emotional wellbeing, autonomy, and sexuality (Piran, 2017; Santamaria-Davila, 2018). The current study proposes a possible interaction between divine feminine archetypes and improved embodiment, and seeks to explore themes relating to divine femininity within a Judeo-Christian sample.

While research exists on the nature of the divine feminine and her link to the body, there is limited information about how the experience of the divine feminine may impact embodiment and promote additional health outcomes. Within many Western cultures and traditions of Judeo-Christian faith, divine feminine motifs and their relationship to embodiment deserve more attention. The current study seeks to address this gap by further exploring the experiences of individuals participating in Western, Judeo-Christian traditions who have encountered divine feminine archetypes in a way that influenced their experience of their body. The divine feminine has potential clinical applications of supplying ways of envisioning and experiencing a different way of being in the physical world while maintaining connection to the spiritual world. The mythological significance of the divine feminine may be an important factor in healing the mind-body split, when viewed as a narrative that offers individuals a way to live outside of the traditional dualistic norms present within Western, Judeo-Christian traditions. The experience of a divine feminine presence may offer a way of helping individuals return home to their bodies, and the current study strives to further understand this process.

Through the application of Jungian, post-Jungian, and archetypal perspectives, the present study seeks to examine the intersection of embodiment and spirituality. The archetypal divine feminine, when held in harmonious tension to a masculine counterpart, has the potential to move an individual toward psychic, spiritual, and embodied health. Participation with divine feminine figures offers a way of resacralizing the human body, healing dualistic splits between mind and body, and integrating the sacred and material realms. The current study explores the implications of the archetypal feminine, herself a numinous figure, through the emphasis of her relational role in the unification of opposites including body and psyche. Such thinking holds important implications for the intersection of spirituality and embodiment within Judeo-Christian traditions.

Chapter 2

Methods

Participants

Participants were recruited for this study using posts in social media. Participants were included based on their self-identification of participating in Judeo-Christian faith traditions and having experienced an increased connection to their body through experience with archetypal divine feminine figures. The researcher differentiated participants' involvement in Judeo-Christian faith traditions at the initial contact, through asking participants to self-identify their religious identity. Initial recruits were gathered through personal connections and virtual women's groups using social media announcements including a brief overview of the study and the researcher's contact information. At the end of the interview, recruits were encouraged to refer others to participate in the study. For the purposes of deidentification, participants were invited to choose a name to be called. The researcher completed 24 interviews.

Participants were 21 females, 2 males, and 1 third-gender individual. The majority of participants self-identified as White or Caucasian ($n = 20$), while some identified as another race ($n = 3$), and others identified as Asian or Asian American ($n = 2$). While all participants held high school diplomas, many had attended university classes ($n = 5$), had obtained college degrees ($n = 7$), or had completed or were in the process of graduate degrees ($n = 11$). Ages ranged from 24 to 55 years, with a mean age of 36 years ($SD = 8.50$).

Instruments

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

An informed consent document (Appendix A) and semi-structured interview (Appendix B) were developed by the researchers. Question topics included items on the participant's spiritual background, values placed on the body, and impact of divine feminine figures on spirituality and embodiment. While the interview was designed with open-ended questions to guide participants in giving lengthy responses, additional probes and prompts were given as needed. Interview lengths lasted between 30 to 75 minutes.

Daily Spiritual Experience Scale

In addition to the interview, participants completed an online survey (Appendix C) consisting of 50 questions in three segments. The first section consisted of the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES; Underwood, 2011). The DSES was a 16-item self-report measure assessing spiritual or transcendent experiences in ordinary life (Underwood, 2011). Item topics included measures of awareness of connectedness to a divine presence, peace, awe, gratitude, compassion and love (Underwood, 2011). The DSES is a psychometrically robust measure with stability over time and strong internal consistency shown through high ratings of Cronbach's alpha above 0.89 (Underwood, 2011). Test-retest reliability across 2 days demonstrated a

Pearson correlation of 0.85, further signifying the robustness of this measure. Participants self-identified item responses regarding spiritual experiences using a 6-point Likert-type scale (ranging from *many times a day* to *never or almost never*), and one item regarding closeness to God using a 4-point Likert-type scale (ranging from *not close* to *as close as possible*).

Experience of Embodiment Scale

The second section of this survey consisted of the Experience of Embodiment Scale (EES; Piran et al., 2020), a 34-item self-administered measure assessing different aspects of embodiment. The EES included topics such as body-image, self-esteem, sexual assertiveness, and connection to body, in order to capture individuals' broad experiences of embodiment (Piran et al., 2020). Preliminary psychometric analyses yielded this measure as psychometrically robust. The measure demonstrated strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .94, and high construct and discriminant validity.

Demographic Information

Participants were asked to identify age, gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and education level.

Procedure

The researcher contacted prospective participants using online advertisements through social media. Those expressing interest in participating in the study were contacted through email or direct message to receive more information about the nature of the study. Those who chose to continue with the study were emailed a link to a Google form containing an informed consent and survey questions. One survey, compiled and collected via Google Forms, was shared with participants digitally and typically required 20 minutes to complete. Following completion of the survey, participants were emailed the structured interview questions to allow for time to

reflect thoughtfully on answers. One-hour long interviews were scheduled via email, phone, or direct message.

Interviews were conducted remotely using the Zoom audiovisual conferencing application. Informed consent was received from each participant prior to beginning the interviews. Interviews were recorded using the Zoom recording function and transcribed using Otter.ai transcription service. Transcripts were cleaned and corrected by checking the transcription against the audio recording and correcting any mistakes found.

Data Analyses

Transcripts were analyzed through the method of the Listening Guide, a three-part process for discerning the emerging voices and themes during interviews (Gilligan, 2015). In the first listening, termed by Gilligan (2015) as “Listening for Plot,” the researchers listened with the intent of discerning who the participant is, what themes emerge from their stories, any gaps or missing pieces not disclosed, as well as anything else considered particularly notable. In this stage, it was important for the researcher to notice themes of countertransference, in order to distinguish the participant’s voice from the researcher's experience.

During the second listening, “Listening for the I,” any statement the participant made beginning with the word “I” were listed in order of appearance. These statements were gathered together to create an *I Poem* used to discern patterns and schemas that the participant uses to situate themselves within their world. During the final listening, “Listening for Contrapuntal Voices,” the researcher discerned various voices emerging from within the participants' story, using them to guide the exploration of themes surrounding embodiment and the experience of the divine feminine. Gilligan (2015) describes this stage as the underscoring of different tensions and harmonies found between voices.

Interrater reliability was established in a method demonstrated by Campbell et al. (2013). The primary researcher provided two unitized transcripts to two additional raters. Raters were provided with the list of primary codes with their accompanying secondary codes developed by the primary researcher. Raters then matched the primary codes to each unit in the transcript, achieving an interrater reliability of 81%.

Surveys were analyzed with the intention of exploring descriptive data of participants' spiritual experiences and embodiment experiences. Descriptive statistics of the Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (DSES) and the EES were measured through SPSS. A one-sample *t*-test with bootstrapping was applied to compare the means collected in the present study to norms provided by the creators of the DSES and EES.

Chapter 3

Results

This study traced experiences of spirituality and embodiment among participants encountering divine feminine figures. A one sample *t*-test was performed to compare participants' average level of daily spiritual experiences against norms provided by the creators of the DSES. When compared to a group of women ($n = 233$) who were predominately White and Catholic, the average value ($M = 45.35$, $SD = 12.09$) of the DSES for participants in the present study was not significantly different than the population mean; $t(23) = .63$, $p = .56$. The effect size was negligible (Cohen's $d = .13$). A one sample *t*-test was performed to compare participants' average embodiment experiences against norms provided by the creators of the EES. When compared to a group of women university students and employees ($n = 76$) who were predominately White and heterosexual, the average value ($M = 127.96$, $SD = 14.69$) of the

EES for participants in the present study was not significantly different than the population mean; $t(23) = 1.67, p = .13$. There was a small effect size (Cohen's $d = .34$).

Researchers used The Listening Guide to discern three distinct voices used by participants: voices of devotion, voices of defiance, and voices of freedom. While the study sought to focus on the implications of divine feminine figures within embodiment and spiritual experiences, a variety of other themes accompanied such experiences in ways unique to the narrative of each individual. The main voices and their accompanying harmonic elements are explored in more detail below.

Voices of Devotion

Participants voiced various forms of devotion including devotion to the divine feminine, to the body, to their communities, and to the earth. Voices of devotion emerged from a sense of interconnectedness participants felt within themselves, their physical and relational surroundings, and their spiritual climates. These voices incorporated wonder, awe, and gratitude for how sacred feminine figures impacted participants in a multitude of ways.

Devotion to the Divine Feminine

Participants expressed devotion to the divine feminine in her various forms. While the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene were the most common examples of divine feminine figures recounted by participants, other feminine forms mentioned included the Holy Spirit, the Black Madonna, Eve, and a variety of saints including St. Teresa of Avila and St. Brigid. Additionally, some participants reported encountering feminine figures outside of Judeo-Christian traditions including Hindu goddess Kali, Sumerian goddess Inanna, and Buddhist deity Green Tara. Greek deities included Hecate and Diana. Other participants voiced feeling more familiar with archetypal feminine figures including Maiden, Mother, and Crone. While some voices of

devotion arose spontaneously throughout the interviews, others were linked specifically to salient devotional practices including prayer, meditation, breathwork, yoga, worship, building altars, viewing iconography or other images of the feminine, and being in nature. Additionally, for some, devotion to the feminine was narrated not as a specific practice, but rather as an experience of encountering her presence in some way. Underlying each of these practices or encounters was a theme of love and commitment to the divine feminine.

Such love for the divine feminine was narrated in one participant's story, wherein he described demonstrating his love for Mary through the devotional act of caring for orchids.

I tend to the divine feminine, I buy her flowers.... [I] make sure that that's not for me, but I'm making it an expression and offering. And because it's a live plant right, I have to recommit to that all the time. I will tend to this. And for me that tending and nurturing, that's feminine. So, it brings that divine feminine alive in me more, softens me. I love it. It's the best. - (Hermes)

Other acts of devotion included worship, and one participant described communicating her love for Sophia through song.

I wrote a song called Dear Sophia, which is another way that I pray. And that felt really powerful actually, verbalizing and putting that onto paper. It felt scandalous. It felt like I was definitely pushing the edges of, you know, my faith upbringing. - (Ruth)

Some participants described feeling magnetically pulled or pursued by a divine feminine presence. One described first encountering the feminine through an experience with a painting of Mary Magdalene.

And one day when I came to my friend's place, she had a painting, a huge painting on Mary Magdalene. I was just standing in front of it, and she said, "Oh, by the way, Mary

Magdalene is here for you.” I’m like, “Whatever that means.” But then there was a pull.

The best way I can describe it was like a constant pull towards her, where it would not leave me alone. - (Shalom)

Other participants reported that rather than feeling pursued by the feminine, they had gone out in search of her. In some stories, this search took the form of pilgrimage.

Going on pilgrimage, for example.... that's a very embodied act, right? It's physical, it's psychological, it's meaning-making. I don't like hiking, typically, but the act of going toward Mary Magdalene, for example. The act of seeking and wanting to know her, you know, that compels you to go on a physical journey, and all the physical challenges and emotional challenges that come with that, that's pretty profound. - (Sophia)

Many had devoted themselves to the study and research of divine feminine figures, a process they found meaningful and enriching.

And it was just like this, this wave of one thing after the other and every wave of study and exploration, all it did for me. It was giving me permission to trust. I would spend time doing that really heavily for quite a few years. - (Selah)

Despite their studies, participants were careful to note that they also experienced reverence for mystery and the aspects of the divine feminine that remained inexplicable.

It feels so abstract. So it's like, this very fluid thing... sometimes I look at my Mother Mary statues, and I'm like, I have no idea what we've got going on here. Like, I don't know anything. Who are you? Why have I got statues of you everywhere? Why am I wearing you around my neck? Do I know anything? And like this feeling of like, wow, this just gets to deepen and change, this just gets to deepen through my whole life. I don't need to try and understand what these threads of connection are. - (Maya)

Devotion to the Body

Participants narrated a sense of devotion for the body, and an appreciation for the sacredness inherent in bodily experiences.

Some participants described deepening their bodily awareness through meditation on divine feminine iconography.

You are beholding an icon. There's kind of like [a] darshan moment, where you're embodying the icon. The point of beholding and meditating on the icon is to have that energy imprinted on you, in your body, in your cells, and your being. Not just your mind or your heart. - (Emma)

Several participants described making room for the feminine to speak or relate to them through the practice of stillness and slowing down. They described such experiences as allowing the presence of the feminine to arise from within the body, rather than the experience of her presence as descending from somewhere external.

[It feels] like I'm experiencing a union or a word of wisdom or love, or a word of encouragement from these figures just by slowing down, and by not trying to form a good prayer and not trying to understand the words that I'm reading, but allowing those things just kind of, to bubble up from the depths, so to speak.” - (Magda)

Many participants described mediation with the intention of embodying the qualities of a divine feminine figure as impacting their sense of being grounded and present within their bodies.

The sacred experience of embodying Sophia had the impact of feeling grounded. And almost as if time slowed down, where instead of the racing thoughts, there is a stillness.

But there's a beautiful dynamic quality to the stillness, where it's like, oh, this is what presence feels like to me and my body. - (Emma)

Some participants voiced feeling the presence of the divine feminine in an embodied or physical way.

It's like a current running through your body. It's like the feeling, working with the divine feminine, when the self that I am remembers and realizes on a physical, spiritual, mental and emotional level, that I am everything, that I am earth, that I am creation. And it's that visceral remembering that for me is just the presence, the experience, of the divine feminine, being in matter. - (Laura)

Additionally, female participants related newfound appreciation for the beauty and sacrality of the life-giving potential of feminine bodies.

Being in a female body is absolutely divine. That I look the way I look....That I bleed. That I could literally create and sustain a whole human. - (Laura)

Participants also described reconnecting with the body as fundamental to their healing journey, especially in re-writing the scripts they were conditioned to believe.

When I meditate, I try really hard to listen to my body. When I am upset, or when I am in discernment, when I am thinking, I try really hard to think about what's happening here [in my body]. I try really hard to de-program things that have taught me not to trust my body. And I spent a lot, a lot of time in nature to reset the rhythm of all that. - (John)

Similarly, participants described body-based healing modalities as instrumental in healing past traumas.

I couldn't get a massage. It couldn't last past 12 minutes from somebody that cared, right?
So I do body work. Now I get it.... this [bodily] matter is holy too. It's not unholy
because somebody didn't treat it sacredly, right? - (Hermes)

Participants also described reconnecting with the body as allowing them to regain a sense of self-trust and intuition.

This whole journey has really just helped me find myself and trust myself and trust my intuition and trust that inner guidance that I turned off. - (Hilda)

Many participants described experiencing their bodies as gifts from God and found reconnecting to their bodies as helpful in reconnecting to bodily pleasures.

I feel that everything we can do with our bodies, it's a gift, like, we can taste wonderful tastes, and smells, and what we can hear, wonderful music or words from people we love. And we can experience touch and what does that mean? And I think everything is a gift from God. - (Ana)

Similarly, participants described connecting with divine feminine figures as allowing them to regain a sense of the sacredness of sexuality. One participant described reconnecting with her body through self-pleasure practices in a way that opened her to the idea of sexuality within creation.

I reconnected with my body, I reconnected with pleasuring myself and feeling safe about it.... And I realized that all creation is creative in nature, and so sexual in nature. And so it kind of reconnected me with the sacredness of sexuality in the creation. - (Rosaly)

Another participant described divine feminine figures as being a source of wisdom when discerning sexual healing and celibacy.

[I'm asking], what does my sexuality actually want to look like? And what is that intersection with sacredness, when I've been in spaces where they're using that language, but it hasn't actually felt safe.... Now celibacy has felt like the most deep, rich, beautiful, incredible experience. And then it's like... I've been like in a big prayer around how do I then open again? What does that look like in a new way? And yeah, I feel like Mary Magdalene has been a pillar to help me figure out how to navigate this. – (Maya)

Devotion to Earth and Nature

Often interweaving with a sense of devotion to the body, participants also voiced newfound appreciation and reverence for nature.

I realize more and more and more that my body is sacred. Not only is it sacred, but... when I care about myself, I care about the world also. And so there is this great reverence for my body, because it is mine, yes, but it's also part of the world and the cosmos at large. - (Rosaly)

Some participants described ritualistic devotional practices in nature that helped to link them to a divine feminine presence.

I started interacting more in nature, just going out to spaces and creating mandalas, picking up pine cones and apples falling from the tree and leaves and all that stuff and creating natural mandalas. - (Claudia)

Others recounted mystical experiences that took place among nature, articulating a sense of awe for the natural world.

Most of my big personal, mystical experiences have been very embodied. They've been very physical. And a lot of them, not all of them, a lot of them have been connected to

moments in nature, you know, like watching the sunset over the ocean from the top of the mountain on Big Sur or something. There's a transcendent moment. - (John)

One participant related experiencing nature as a mothering figure, citing fairytales as a source of wisdom regarding earth's provision.

There's a lot of Russian fairytales [with] the image of Mother Earth, and how it gives a lot of energy and power to her sons.... in the fairytale, you need always to take a piece of earth, ground, soil and hold [it] close to you, and [it] helps you to be strong. - (Alex)

Devotion to Relationships and Communities

Participants voiced experiences of enhanced devotion to their communities and families resulting from connecting to divine feminine figures, and named ways that these connections have enriched their lives.

Some participants described participating in devotional acts for the feminine in the midst of community as being impactful.

[My partner] is from a very small village... which is traditionally very, very Catholic, and they had a small chapel. We went there for some holiday, and ended up doing a Hail Mary for 30 minutes, the whole congregation. The whole village came together and did this. It was the first time I had ever experienced something like that. I get goosebumps now talking about it. - (Laura)

Other participants described divine feminine figures as having a direct impact on their personal abilities to see the indwelling of the divine in the people around them.

For me, it's all about oneness. And I can see, even people I'm not fond of, I can see their humanity. I can see that light. I can see their divine essence underneath the surface. - (Hilda).

Some participants named the importance of the divine feminine in experiencing growth in their romantic relationships. For women, this process was often mediated through the experience of reconnecting with an inner feminine presence.

Lean[ing] into my feminine made space for [my husband] to lean into his masculine more. And then, our relationship just shot up from there and it was incredible. I was like, “Oh, my gosh, this is what we've been missing.” - (Elsa)

Some participants narrated the experience of connecting with divine feminine figures as linking them to a sense of purpose in their larger communities.

I truly believe...my role as a woman of faith is to be the divine feminine to the world.... I'm going to be that conduit of love... I'm going to speak a word of life. Or I'm going to actually be the teacher or the healer like Jesus, and I'm not saying I'm perfect, but I get this opportunity to show up and now I can be an embodiment of the divine feminine. - (Selah)

Similarly, participants described increased acceptance of differences between themselves and others through connecting with the divine feminine.

I think the divine feminine has stopped that need for me to make my experience the same as everyone else's. And not putting my expectations on anyone else to experience the same thing or the same way....it's more about connecting with and understanding people more. - (Magda)

Voices of Defiance

Within participants' narratives, there was often a sense of defiance that enabled participants to question previously held religious beliefs and socially constructed gender values. Participants described moving toward religions emphasizing the divine feminine as a result of

turning away from the religious beliefs they no longer resonated with. When participants spoke, their voices often took on a tone of anger or hurt as they recounted their pain with previous religious institutions and beliefs.

Defying Religious Beliefs

Some participants recounted the experience of moving against a masculine-oriented version of a Judeo-Christian tradition, due to its underrepresentation of feminine figures and values.

When speaking of experiences that drew her to connect to the divine feminine, one participant articulated a sense of yearning she felt to resonate with characters in the Bible.

It was just a longing, a real agony, that I didn't see myself in any characters of the Bible.

Like when we were going to church on Sunday and listening to the pastor's sermons, and really wanting to orient myself and resonate, but just not, like authentically not. - (Emma)

Similarly, participants described feeling as though women figures in the bible were not seen as sacred, but rather as models of exemplary behavior.

There were women in the Bible who were held up as sort of ideals of women, but it wasn't women's spirituality. It was how women ought to behave.... The women weren't deities. They were examples of character that I should strive for. - (Claudia)

One participant expressed her dissatisfaction with the religion she was raised in, and how she used her voice to take a stance against the perceived lack of female representation both in church and in expressions of divinity.

I felt that the feminine was very much left out.... God is masculine. All the angels are masculine. All the teachers are masculine, almost. I remember as a student in the

University, I had the possibility to make a speech once and I made the speech with a title, *Is Heaven a Men's Club?* I was rather provoked about that. - (Ana)

Defying Patriarchal Views of Femininity

In addition to defying previously held religious beliefs, many participants also voiced experiences of turning against traditional or patriarchal views of femininity.

For many participants, voices of defiance were used in describing a season of life during which they experienced distress within their faith.

I definitely went through a long period where I was pretty angry with Christianity and was very defiant of engaging at all. - (Magda)

For one participant, a sobering moment in her journey occurred when she realized that her views of the feminine had been influenced by masculine-oriented worldview.

All of these goddess archetypes from every tradition, they're all flawed...they've all been perceived through patriarchal lenses.... I don't know if I've ever had an authentic experience as my own womanhood or femaleness that hasn't been mediated through this male, androcentric lens. – (Sophia)

Other participants noted distress at how messages of femininity are promoted and passed down by women.

[Women are] supposed to be very small.... And then we hand that message over to another woman. And that other woman sends it to a girl... - (Isabel Maria)

One participant described her experience of growing up in a masculine-oriented society as a process of learning to shield her femininity.

Because even secular society, I think, really does tell women that we should kind of be more like men. And so when I look back on my life.... the best metaphor that I can think

of is almost painting yourself with shellac until you have that real nice, hard covering that you just can't break through. – (Mika)

Additionally, female participants described defiance against the objectification of women's bodies.

There's so many societal pressures, one way or another for women. Like, be pretty, but not too pretty. Or, you know, be sexy, but don't be a slut. - (Mara)

Voices of Freedom

Throughout their narratives, participants returned to voices of freedom, wherein they were able to experience divine feminine figures in ways that went beyond defiance, but led to enhanced emotional wellbeing and freedom in faith.

Emotional Freedom

Participants voiced forms of emotional freedom, and greater willingness to enter into painful affective experiences. Moreover, participants voiced finding the presence of the divine feminine within emotions they had formerly dissociated from.

Several participants described the divine feminine as allowing them to surrender to painful emotions, knowing they would experience her love and protection within these states.

I don't feel afraid of myself [anymore]. I feel less afraid of what I'm capable of feeling I guess. Because within that feeling is an invitation to drop down into the heart, and this heart is where she is. Dropping into the painful space is the most healing thing for me. - (Laura)

Similarly, many described feminine figures as being associated with the dark, the depths, and the suffering of humanity.

[It] is a depiction of divine love that I just experience more through feminine figures than I do through masculine figures. It's not about making suffering go away. It's not about empty promises of protection from difficulty in life. It's about meeting us in the depth of all the good and all the bad and giving us the ability to show up for that. So, I think that my faith has become more real and less abstract. – (John)

One participant recounted dreaming of mothering love provided in heaven that allowed her to begin to heal from the grief of miscarriage.

I was in heaven with Jesus.... All of a sudden, there's these children... and all around them were animals too. Jesus said, "These are all of the beloved pets and all of the children that had been lost from earth, but now have place in heaven." There wasn't any grief or heartache. It was just these kids full of joy and wrapped around and safe in the arms of heaven.... What I found so powerful was the mother-nurturing that heaven was doing for all of us mamas that had lost.- (Lily)

For some, emotional freedom came through connecting with divine feminine figures in ways that allowed them to learn to nurture and mother themselves.

[I] found parts of my inner little girl who were so lonely and scared and want[ing] to be seen. And then [I learned] how to work through those emotions. So I think becoming more comfortable with emotions and learning how to express them has also played a huge role in mental health. - (Elsa)

Similarly, other participants noted profound encounters with the unconditional love of divine feminine figures, leading to enhanced emotional wellbeing.

When I allowed her presence to witness me in all of my mental health struggles, all of my anxiety, all of my trauma, all of my shame. And I could feel her love for me. I could feel

that there was no judgment. I could feel that there was full acceptance....And because I felt that intense love and compassion towards me first from her, I was able to soften, soften in prayer, and soften in confession, and then ultimately soften towards myself and have compassion for myself, and no longer judge myself. - (Selah)

One participant described emotional healing through the divine feminine as allowing him to move beyond limiting perfectionistic tendencies.

One of the greatest gifts for me [has been]... the freedom to let go of perfection and let things be what they actually are. - (John)

Other participants described feeling emotional freedom through healing from shame, particularly around sexuality.

There's no reason to feel shame, but yet the shame still lives in the body. So I needed the Divine Feminine to help me feel safe in my body, and let that be a place that was sacred and worthy of existing in and worthy of experiencing pleasure in. - (Emma)

Some participants noted paradoxical increases in anxiety at having let go of previously held religious beliefs that allowed them a sense of certainty in their worldviews.

In some ways, it's uprooted a lot of my mental stability in terms of knowing what I thought, knowing things that I was so certain of before. Now, I think there's more nuance and more gray area than I thought before, and that's both very freeing, and can be challenging. - (Magda)

Other participants expressed increased emotional healing in the ability of the divine feminine to model spontaneity rather than chaos.

One of the things that has been very, very healing for me lately, and why I find myself brought back around to these feminine images of the divine lately, is the alchemy of

transforming the experience of unpredictability and undependability to spontaneous, creative freedom, and mutability, and mystery and adaptability. They look very, very similar, but they could not be more different. - (John)

Freedom in Faith

Participants described connecting to the divine feminine in ways that resulted in expansion, deepening, or broadening of their previously held views of faith.

One participant likened the incorporation of divine feminine figures into spiritual practices as the inclusion of distinct musical notes to create a harmony in a way that enlivened her faith.

And it actually creates, in terms of music, as opposed to just the melody, you have some harmony and some other things going on. And it adds just like a lot of depth that makes it more alive to me. - (Grace)

One participant described less need for logical or rational explanation regarding spirituality and faith.

I think that my faith has become more real and less abstract. And more something that matters, like between heartbeats, and in incarnate reality. And more something that can ride the waves of life's cycles as opposed to obsessing about some formless, perfect notion that doesn't really exist anyway. - (John)

Other participants relayed a similar feeling of relaxation that occurred within them when incorporating divine feminine figures into their faith.

Being able to actually broaden a horizon and see that there was some sort of femininity to what I could call the divine; something just kind of relaxed, a little bit, in my soul. - (Mika)

Women participants frequently reported a sense of feeling that they belonged in the biblical story.

And seeing these archetypes or the attributes of God that were deeply connected to femininity and to a woman's identity, was really healing for me and made me feel like I'm part of the story now. Or like this is a God that represents me as a person, that knows, that can see me in my identity. - (Mara)

Along with this ability to see themselves within the biblical narrative, women participants also described a sense of knowing the sacredness of their bodies.

The identification with a divine feminine kind of helps mirror that back for me of like, there's something divine in my body as well and my being as well. That's not just like, I'm only divine because of my masculine, godly qualities. - (Magda)

Several participants were careful to articulate their belief that images of the divine should go beyond feminine gender, so that all humanity can see themselves belonging in a divine story.

There are still many other people and people groups that don't see themselves in, especially white, evangelical, Western, faith circles. And so I feel like this is just one piece of expanding that picture of who God is and who God can be for people. Where hopefully, it keeps growing to where everybody can see themselves as a part of, and as having access to spirituality that they can see themselves in. - (Mara)

One third gender participant further described an encounter with a gender-neutral divine figure, pointing to the importance of further conceptualizations of divinity that go beyond dualistic masculine or feminine representations.

I remember I saw a fairy in the flower, open to me. This little person, maybe gender-neutral, maybe a woman, I don't know... comes out and just looks at me and tries to

touch me, and this connection- I felt very happy. Very. I had a lot of joy. It was, it's still for me even now... a very intimate, very deep moment. – (Alex)

The Divine Feminine in Embodied Spirituality

The main purpose of this study was to examine the intersection between embodiment and sacred experiences, as mediated by divine feminine figures. Overall, participants voiced views of the inseparability of body and spiritual experiences, and many believed the divine feminine helped them to draw a connection between the bodily and spiritual realms.

One participant described her experience of increasing a sense of embodiment as being intrinsically connected to experiencing the divine feminine.

For me, she played a huge role. Yeah, I can't imagine coming to the same level of embodying that freedom without her.... The phrase that comes to my mind is like, if there's a way to get there without her, I don't want to get there because it's not actually there. - (Emma)

Similarly, one participant described the feminine as allowing her to experience healing on a bodily level, rather than an intellectual level.

Because I think without the feminine aspect, it would have remained in the intellect, but I'm not sure whether I would have been able to drop it into the experiential. - (Shalom)

When describing the role of divine feminine figures in her faith, one participant expressed a deep appreciation for the physical aspect they bring to her spirituality.

This has changed my faith practice. My practice is now so deeply embodied, lived and formed with and through [the] body. And no longer just in my head or praying or thinking. I pray with my body and I work things through with my body. - (Laura)

Another participant described the feminine component of embodiment as being linked to the process of healing mind and body, something he experienced as missing from his psychotherapeutic experiences.

I've had sacred experiences working to heal some real vulgar experiences. I think that's the only way. I talked about it for 15 years right, it didn't do much.... You can talk about it all you want but until you let your body feel it all, it's going to hold on to it and you'll just talk around it. - (Hermes)

In addition to the healing component of divine feminine figures, participants described the process of reclaiming their body in spirituality as one of incarnation.

When you look at the life of Christ, like that was physical form. So I think there's so much reparative work that happens in those exact moments. It's incarnation, right? Like, for me, it's like, oh, I'm becoming aware, not just up here, but in the body of the Incarnation. And therefore I'm the Incarnation, right, because I'm experiencing that transformation. - (Sara)

Another participant described feeling as though the divine feminine was integral to the experience of holding.

I also think about the feminine as a space where things happen in a way, [where] it holds. It holds space for things. It holds space for God incarnate. Like it's the Ark of the Covenant. It's the space. I don't know if I can articulate the importance of that.... it's the holding. Like, that's what I feel like I've been missing in my life. - (Cara)

Chapter 4

Discussion

Drawing on Jungian thought, the present study explored the role of divine feminine figures in experiences of embodiment and spirituality. Across participants, divine feminine archetypes emerged as an irreplaceable aspect of psychic and embodied equilibrium with their ability to restore balance between masculine and feminine polarities, as well as ethereal and earthly realms. While no statistically significant differences were found between participants compared with provided norms, many participants described embodied spirituality as a journey, acknowledging that while they were not yet where they desired to be, they were in the process of becoming more embodied. Such findings might explain why results on the embodiment experiences scale were not statistically significantly different from norms provided. As expected, participants viewed themselves as having enriching daily spiritual experiences. Their levels of daily spiritual experiences were comparable to norms provided, demonstrating that participants considered themselves about as spiritual as other women of various religious identities.

Themes of bodyfulness and embodied spirituality were demonstrated among participants, with divine feminine figures described as having an instrumental impact on the resacralization of physicality and the body. Through the remembrance of such figures, participants appeared to experience a rapprochement between masculine and feminine polarities within the intrapsychic space. The impacts of this rapprochement reverberated with positive somatic, psychological, and relational effects. Participants pulled from Judeo-Christian traditions, with their rich histories and plentiful depictions of divine femininity. Additionally, many participants related to divine feminine figures existing in a variety of religious traditions worldwide. Such findings align with

conceptualizations of Jungian theorists regarding archetypal divine feminine figures as functioning in the integration of spiritual and physical realms.

Embodiment and Divine Feminine Motifs

Pulling from Aristotelian thought, current conceptualizations of embodiment integrate physical, mental, and social facets (Piran & Teall, 2012). The idea of embodied spirituality is emerging, with additional focus placed on the ways spirituality and embodiment experiences intersect (Ferrer, 2008). The findings of this study explore this intersection, depicting divine feminine figures as lending to experiences of embodiment. As participants encountered, studied, and otherwise explored figures of divine femininity, many described these figures as impacting how they lived within or experienced their bodies. Simultaneously, participants described experiencing positive outcomes in psychological and relational areas of functioning. It seemed divine feminine figures fostered a unification of mind and body, thereby promoting intrapsychic, embodied, and interpersonal health.

Bodily and Somatic Impacts

Embodiment definitions go beyond conceptualizations of body-image, rather centering on the lived experience of being in a body (Piran & Teall, 2012). Thus, attuning to the body through interoceptive awareness is a central part of embodiment (Ferrer, 2008). A small body of literature posits that divine feminine figures have the potential to integrate psychic and somatic elements (Santamaria-Davila, 2018). In the present study, participants experienced the bodily impact of divine feminine figures in a variety of ways. While women felt divine feminine figures contributed to a deepening of relationship with their female bodies, people of all genders spoke to the ability of divine feminine figures to heal trauma in an embodied way. Individuals also described the impacts of the divine feminine on their sexuality, sensuality, and desire. Overall,

individuals described a greater sense of connection and rootedness within their bodies as they established a connection to divine feminine figures.

Women participants seemed to uniquely experience divine feminine forms as they re-established connection to their bodies. Notably, women participants described experiencing increased reverence and awe for the cyclical rhythms and life-supporting qualities of their bodies. Some described that as they established relationships with divine feminine figures, they became more compassionate toward their own bodies. For instance, several women described connecting with their menstrual cycles in ways that promoted empowerment, nurturance, and rest. Women also voiced experiencing the possibility of childbirth as something awe-inspiring and sacred. Such findings align with previous explorations of the bodily impacts of divine feminine figures on women (Christ, 1997; Comas-Diaz, 2008; Santamaria-Davila et al., 2018).

For some, archetypal divine feminine figures contributed to the experience of healing bodily disconnection stemming from trauma. Through bodyfulness practices such as breathwork, massage, dance and other forms of bodywork, participants were able to experience greater connectedness and rootedness within their bodies. Participants identified an ability to experience a fuller range of emotions in an increasingly embodied way. With the ability to process and express emotions, many found feelings of guilt and shame regarding trauma lessened and were replaced by a more benevolent compassion for ways they had survived trauma. For some, divine feminine figures served as a witness to this healing process, and in their presence, participants found wholeness.

Sacred sexuality is common within Eastern traditions, including tantra, wherein feminine motifs of divinity exist alongside masculine counterparts (Anand, 1989). Within such traditions, sex and the act of love-making are seen to be an expression of the erotic, or life force (Anand,

1989). For some participants, connecting to their bodies lead to the healing of sexual trauma and shame. Many identified being raised in restrictive religious environments where they received messages about sexuality that led to shame. In connecting to divine feminine figures, healing trauma, and reclaiming relationship with their bodies, participants described experiencing sexual healing as well. Such findings align with conceptualizations of embodiment allowing for a reclamation of physical pleasure and desire (Tolman et al., 2014; Piran, 2017). Moreover, in speaking of their sexuality and sexual experiences, individuals were aware of the sacred within sexuality. Some experienced a divine presence during sex, while others experienced sexual pleasure as being inherently sacred and a point of connection to the sacred. One participant found divine feminine motifs instrumental to a season of celibacy and of reclaiming her sexual narrative.

As participants connected with divine feminine figures, they described feeling more grounded and present within their bodies. With increased embodiment came an ability to be present and still. In this slowing down, participants experienced greater peace within their bodies and greater attunement to the sensuality of the world around them. Participants described being at peace with or at home within their bodies, seeing their bodies as good, beautiful, and sacred.

Psychological Impacts

Divine feminine figures have been shown to have an impact on psychological wellbeing, allowing those who participate with such figures to have greater assertiveness, agency, and empowerment (Santamaria-Davila et al., 2018). Individuals in the present study identified several areas of psychological well-being that developed in response to the healing that came through the presence of archetypal divine figures within their lives. Participants described increases in assertiveness and an ability to question the religious and societal narratives

surrounding femininity and the divine. As participants challenged previously held beliefs and searched for divine feminine figures, they described an individuation process that occurred as they emerged from old communities with a sturdier sense of self. Participants described how they came to trust themselves more, developing a greater appreciation for intuition and self-trust. As they reclaimed their relationship to their bodies, participants also noted increases in a sense of intrapsychic presence and groundedness. Furthermore, participants described an increased ability to experience and express a wider range of emotions, with divine feminine figures acting as witness to these affective experiences.

Relational Impacts

Divine feminine figures are thought to contribute to interpersonal connectivity and relational closeness (Christ, 1997; Santamaria-Davila et al., 2018). Participants described that as they healed trauma, reclaimed sexuality, and restored connection to their bodies, they began to experience deeper levels of intimacy and connectedness within their relationships. Not only were they able to see the divine in others around them, they also became more compassionate and altruistic toward others. Some described finding increased harmony within their marriages and romantic relationships. Ultimately, as participants tended to divine feminine figures and experienced healing, this healing extended out into their relationships.

Embodied Spirituality

Embodied spirituality emerged as an overarching theme of the study. For some, divine feminine figures functioned as anchor points, serving to center and ground participants in periodic moments of time. For others, these figures seemed to weave a thread of the sacred throughout their everyday lives, blurring the boundaries between the holy and mundane through attuning to the divine indwelling. In either case, it appears archetypal divine feminine figures

acted as a unifying presence between previously held dualities of mind and body, sacred and material, and masculine and feminine. Many participants located themselves somewhere along a continuum of embodiment, offering the metaphor of the journey as a way of describing their continued development of relationship to the divine feminine and to the body. While some described themselves as further along the continuum, and others less so, all expressed a desire to continue deepening their relationship to the archetypal divine feminine and to the body.

Through embodied acts of devotion and spiritual practice, participants tended to the archetypal divine feminine within themselves and the world. Participants' practices seemed a way to bring embodied life to the intrapsychic figures of divine femininity, grounding Her presence in the reality of everyday life. Through practices including meditation, prayer, a rosary practice, breathwork, movement, song, and dance, participants found ways to incorporate a bodily element within their spiritual experiences. Participants seemed to draw nurturance and strength from bodily interactions with divine feminine figures, and their presence was made real to participants through the tangible reminders.

Along with embodied spirituality, the theme of interconnectedness appeared. Many participants described an increased ability to recognize aspects of the divine within others, experiencing increased compassion and awareness of the commonalities of humanity. Beyond humanity, some participants were able to extend similar thinking to the natural world, expressing increased awareness of the sacredness inherent within the earth and environment. Many had encountered the healing impacts of nature in a way that helped them to reorient toward the physicality of their bodies. Some had awe-inspiring experiences with divinity in nature. The interconnectedness between humanity, the earthly world, and the transpersonal seemed a way of breaking down binaries and establishing a non-dual way of being.

Divine Feminine Archetypes within Religious Traditions

Though largely neglected within Western cultures and Judeo-Christian faith traditions, divine feminine figures have a rich history within such religions and cultures (Gafney, 2017; Reuther, 2005). Participants in the present study drew from Judeo-Christian traditions in incorporating divine feminine figures into spiritual practice. Most notably, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, and the Holy Spirit emerged as figures interacted with in spiritual practice. The Virgin Mary was often a presence connecting individuals to the heart of the loving cosmic mother. She was especially a salient figure for those women who had given birth, or were entering into pregnancy. Mary Magdalene was often a figure associated with strength and courage. Participants particularly related to how she had been a key figure among the apostles but was until recently misunderstood and outcast from the Catholic church. In this way, she was one who represented empowerment, agency, and assertiveness. Additionally, some considered Mary Magdalene to symbolize empowered feminine sexuality. The Holy Spirit was largely considered to be the feminine aspect of the trinity associated with a tender, compassionate and grounding presence.

Participants also derived strength and meaning from a variety of other figures, including saints. Not only did the saints provide participants with historic examples of women of spiritual significance, they also provided wisdom and reflected qualities of the divine that participants sought to embody for themselves. St. Anne, the grandmother of Jesus, carried a particularly potent grandmother presence for one participant. St. Teresa of Avila was valued by one participant for her teachings on mysticism, while St. Brigid was found to be a source of inspiration and a kindred spirit. St. Claire was valued as a figure whose work with St. Francis

provided a rapprochement between masculine and feminine. Julian of Norwich provided one participant with wisdom concerning the feminine, mothering love of Jesus.

While many participants identified as belonging to a Judeo-Christian tradition, some described their religion as incorporating elements from other traditions as well. Parvati, Kwan-Yin, Kali, and the Green Tara were represented by those who drew from Eastern traditions in addition to Christian traditions in spiritual practice. Additionally, participants drew from ancient mythological figures including Inanna, Isis, and Hecate. Common themes associated with these figures included feminine strength, wisdom, and nurturing.

Through the inclusion of divine feminine figures within spiritual practice, participants were able to illuminate a feminine presence historically eclipsed by masculine representations of divinity. A reconciliation between masculine and feminine figures served to help participants integrate somatic and psychic aspects of their spiritual beliefs and practices. As participants interacted with these feminine figures in embodied ways, matter and body were resacralized. In connecting to these figures, participants were able to find aspects of the divine femininity reflected within themselves.

Jungian Implications of the Archetypal Divine Feminine

Jungian theories predicate the presence of archetypal divine feminine figures as fundamental to psychic and embodied wellbeing (Stromsted, 2009; Woodman & Dickson, 1996). The amplification of archetypal divine feminine figures is a process conceived by some to have the potential to reconcile masculine and feminine polarities, thereby promoting psychic wholeness (Woodman & Dickson, 1996). As feminine figures are also distinctly tied to earth and matter, their presence in the intrapsychic landscape is thought to serve in connecting psyche to embodied being (Woodman, 1982). Symbolized by the reflective moon and receptive womb,

archetypal divine feminine motifs are described as associated with darkness rather than light, with being rather than doing, and with earth rather than spirit (Sullivan, 1989). In essence, they provide a counterbalance for the archetypal masculine polarities that largely dominate many Western societies currently. In the present study, participants experienced archetypal divine feminine figures in ways corresponding to Jungian conceptualizations, with increased appreciation for darkness, being, and earth.

For many participants, archetypal divine feminine figures were distinctly different from masculine representations of divinity because of their perceived ability to companion participants in seasons of darkness. As awareness of divine feminine figures grew, some participants noted increased willingness to surrender to painful emotions and experiences. Some participants described this process as a journey of numinous descent, noting they found solace in the presence of divine feminine figures in the intrapsychic depths and darkness. Such imagery aligns with Jungian representations of the *dark feminine*, portrayed mythologically by figures associated with the underworld, such as Sumerian goddess Inanna (Perera, 1981). Through the presence of dark feminine figures, participants found courage and the ability to make meaning from their experiences as they submitted to processes of intrapsychic death.

Archetypal divine feminine figures are associated with *being*, an energetic polarity existing opposite from the archetypal masculine energy of *doing* (Sullivan, 1981). Many participants narrated that as they connected more deeply with divine feminine figures, they gained a new appreciation for rest and slowness. No longer were they driven to perform, to *do*, but rather were allowed to pause and give themselves permission to *be*. For some, being took the form of starting a meditation practice, spending time in nature, or taking time off of work to tend to the body when sick. Such thinking aligns with Jungian representations of the seasonal and

cyclical nature of archetypal feminine figures, where periods of descent relate to seasons of being (Perera, 1981).

The archetypal Great Mother is a figure prevalent in cultures and religions worldwide (Schaup, 1997). In Jungian theory, the Great Mother is most notable for her embodied connection to earth (Sullivan, 1989). In the present study, increased appreciation for archetypal divine feminine figures came with increased reverence for nature and earth. Many participants implicated divine feminine figures in the process of resacralizing the environmental world. Not only was nature revalued, but it became a source of divine femininity for many. Some spent time in nature to help them reset their nervous systems, participating in an embodied way with a feminine and loving presence found in the natural world. Others experienced mystical encounters and transcendental moments while in nature. One participant described interacting with the divine feminine through studying the properties of flora and fauna she encountered daily. Nature became both symbolic of the inner world, and a source of mothering rejuvenation for participants.

Resonant with Jungian conceptualizations of archetypal divine feminine figures, participants encountered such figures in ways that balanced archetypal masculine forces in their intrapsychic lives. Participants described experiences of increased willingness to surrender to periods of darkness, drawing strength and meaning from divine feminine figures they encountered amid pain and suffering. Participants relinquished the need to perform as they found more value and worth in the process of being. As participants slowed down, they became more aware of the sacredness of the natural world. Such findings implicate divine feminine figures as integral to experiences of psychic and somatic health.

Clinical Implications

Embodiment is a growing area of interest within psychological literature; increased attention is being paid to how bodily connection yields health outcomes including increased bodily pleasure, care of the body, assertiveness and autonomy, and physical desire (Piran, 2017; Young, 1992). While the connection between bodily and spiritual experiences has long been realized in cultures and religious traditions untouched by Cartesian dualism, Western embodiment researchers and theorists are more recently coming to understand how spirituality and embodiment intersect and inform one another (Ferrer, 2008; McBride et al., 2017). Jungian theorists (e.g., Perera, 1981; Qualls-Corbett, 1988; Woodman, 1985) intimate the potential of archetypal divine feminine figures to unify the somatic and psychic domains, thereby suggesting these figures may have clinical applications. Indeed, when incorporated into psychotherapeutic work, divine feminine imagery and accompanied bodyfulness practices are demonstrated to help women reclaim spirituality and sexuality (Comas-Diaz, 2008). The present study further supports these claims and advocates for the inclusion of body and spirituality in clinical practice. For those patients desiring to explore substitutes to Western, monotheistic representations of divinity, archetypal divine feminine figures may supply empowering alternatives. Moreover, greater attention is being given to the clinician's body, as therapy is increasingly thought of as a body-to-body experience (Brothers & Sletvold, 2022). It follows that embodied spirituality may hold personal implications for the clinician as well as the patient. Finally, archetypal divine feminine figures may have unique clinical indications for patients of female-sexed bodies.

Nondual approaches to psychotherapy might incorporate mind, body, and spirit. The present study portrays embodied spirituality as an essential component of psychic wellbeing, with archetypal divine feminine motifs as one avenue of exploring the bodily impacts of

spirituality. The clinical uses of archetypal divine feminine imagery and symbolism could involve mindfulness and bodyfulness exercises to promote embodied awareness and closeness with the divine. For instance, working with images and metaphor in an experiential and embodied way is shown to promote psychic healing grounded within the body (Faranda, 2014). When working with the embodied image, movement within the body may come to symbolize movement of the self toward growth (Faranda, 2014). Such clinical applications align with the Jungian idea of active imagination, the process through which intrapsychic images are meant to be encountered and engaged with, rather than solely interpreted (Hillman, 1972). Additional psychotherapeutic interventions relating to archetypal divine feminine imagery could involve dream work, guided imagery, yoga or bodily movement, and creation of artistic representations of divine feminine imagery (Comas-Diaz, 2008).

Embodiment has implications for the therapist, as more thought is being given to the therapist's body within the therapy room (Brothers & Sletvold, 2022). Such thinking builds on existing conceptualizations of embodiment as the singular experience of living within a body, incorporating the idea of interactions occurring within and between relational, living bodies (Brothers & Sletvold, 2022). In the therapeutic encounter, the therapist's use of body is thought to lend to the shared embodied experience of affective processing (Fosha, 2004). Such body-to-body connectedness is thought to allow for the formation of embodied wholeness (Brothers & Sletvold, 2022). The development of embodied wholeness within the therapeutic space seems to reflect many of the stories shared by participants in the present study concerning their journeys toward embodiment through encounters with archetypal divine feminine motifs. It could be that myths and symbols of divine feminine figures serve as metaphoric examples of the embodied healing taking place within the therapeutic process. When issues of spirituality emerge within the

therapeutic dyad, divine feminine figures may act as guides or sources of strength for the therapist.

The clinical implications of divine feminine motifs on those in female bodies are particularly noteworthy, because of the unique ways they described reconnecting to their bodies through the possibility of pregnancy and childbirth, as well as menstrual rhythms. Balsam (2013) calls for a (re)membering of the neglected female lived body within psychotherapeutic experiences, maintaining that women's pregnancy and birthing experiences are often traumatic or initiatory and therefore deserve more clinical attention than traditionally received. In the present study, female-bodied participants noted that archetypal divine feminine figures allowed them to see their bodies as reflecting something sacred. Such figures might be incorporated in aforementioned psychotherapeutic ways (e.g., imagery, movement, artistic rendition) in order to help women reconnect to their bodies and heal from traumatic birthing and pregnancy experiences.

Through incorporating spirituality and archetypal divine feminine motifs within psychotherapeutic experiences, common conceptualizations of embodiment and bodyfulness interventions are deepened and given a nondual aspect. Such interventions could address not just mind and body, but soul and spirit as well. The clinical implications extend beyond the patient, and the clinician is offered ways of deepening attunement to their own body and to the intersubjective field. For women and those in female-sexed bodies, divine feminine figures could be used to illuminate and restore bodily connection through increased exploration of pregnancy and birthing experiences.

Study Limitations

The present study, with its focus on archetypal divine feminine figures, was limited by binary conceptualizations of gender and sexuality. While Jungian theories advocate for a harmonious balance between masculine and feminine figures for psychic health, queer applications to Jungian theories demonstrate the need for the dissolution of gender binaries to allow for the inclusion of all genders and sexualities (McKenzie, 2006). While many women in the study spoke to the sense of empowerment they felt at being able to see a divine figure as female, it is important to acknowledge that people of other genders could find divine feminine archetypes as still limiting. In the present study, one intersex participant identified having a numinous and transformative experience with a non-gendered sacred figure, pointing to the importance of such non-gendered divine motifs.

While the qualitative interview questions allowed for further exploration into participants' experiences of divine feminine figures, questions were formulated in a way that seemed to advocate for breadth rather than depth. For instance, while one question asked participants to name divine feminine figures they interacted with in spiritual practice, time constraints did not allow for probing into how each figure uniquely contributed to a participant's spirituality. Similarly, several participants voiced anxiousness related to not having time to fully describe their narratives. Qualitative results were additionally limited by a lack of inter-rater reliability, as data coding and the formation of themes was completed by one researcher.

Other study limitations include population and sampling restrictions. Participants in the present study were primarily White, well-educated women. Therefore, results are only representative of a narrow segment of the larger population and should be generalized to other populations with caution. Participants were recruited through social media, and many were in

shared online communities which may not represent the diverse impacts of archetypal divine feminine figures. While few participants knew each other, several had received education through a shared graduate level institution. This may have contributed to some participants having more extensive knowledge in Jungian conceptualizations of the feminine principle, while others approached divine feminine figures through a more spiritual lens.

Future Directions for Research

Given the limitations, future directions of study are ample. Research could explore non-gendered motifs of divinity to allow for the inclusion of all genders and identities. Studies could also be designed to compare groups of participants interacting with predominantly masculine representations of divinity with those engaging with divine feminine or non-gendered figures. Qualitative interview questions could be structured to allow interviewees to dive more deeply into their experiences and narratives, perhaps by focusing the questions on one divine feminine figure at a time. Additional research could incorporate more focused questions on the bodily impacts of divine feminine figures. For instance, while no questions specifically addressed sexuality, participants seemed eager to speak on the impacts of divine feminine figures in this way. Future studies could further explore the impact of divine feminine figures on sexuality, pleasure, and reclamation of desire. When selecting populations to sample, future studies could attempt to be more inclusive of world religions and cultures. Within the present study, many participants alluded to participating in religious practices outside of Judeo-Christian traditions. Future research could examine the ways such alternative religious perspectives incorporate embodied spirituality.

In order to focus more specifically on clinical impacts of divine feminine figures, additional scales such as the Quiet Ego Scale (Wayment et al., 2015). Use of such a scale might

provide a more robust sense of how divine feminine archetypes impact self-identity. This study neglected to incorporate ways spirituality might intersect with embodiment for the clinician and the therapeutic dyad. Future studies could further explore the impact of embodied spirituality on the therapist and the dyadic relationship.

Conclusion

The present study explored experiences of spirituality and embodiment among individuals participating with divine feminine figures in spiritual practice. Drawing from Jungian theories of archetypal divine feminine motifs, as well as a rich history of divine feminine figures within Judeo-Christian traditions, the study sought to explore how such figures might allow for an intersection between spirituality and embodiment. In accordance with such theoretical considerations, participants affirmed archetypal divine feminine motifs as crucial to experiences of embodied spirituality.

Divine feminine figures were portrayed by participants to offer alternatives to dualistic teachings pervasive in some Western, Judeo-Christian traditions. Indeed, many were drawn to explore figures of divine femininity after experiencing religious traditions described as cognitive and lacking a bodily or earthly component. In such cases, divine feminine figures provided individuals with an alternative to previously held images of a masculine divinity. Individuals encountering divine feminine figures described doing so in ways allowing them to question traditional, Western depictions of the devalued feminine and neglected body. In participating with divine feminine figures in spiritual practice, participants seemed to find for themselves alternatives to the traditional, Western sociocultural ways of being. As societal and cultural factors are shown to have a profound impact on embodiment (Piran & Teall, 2012), it is notable that participants encountered divine feminine figures in ways that countered traditional norms

and narratives, softening dualistic separations between spiritual and material. As participants encountered motifs of divine femininity, matter, earth, and body were resacralized.

Such findings suggest that divine feminine figures allow for a reconciliation between archetypal masculine and feminine qualities, including light and dark, as well as intellect and body. Divine feminine figures served to integrate material and spiritual worlds, thereby allowing participants to experience the bodily indwelling of the divine. As the body was resacralized, participants further attuned to the sacred wisdom of the body. These findings build upon existing embodiment literature and call for the inclusion of spirituality into current understandings of embodiment. As divine feminine figures appear poised at the intersection of embodiment and spirituality, the study asserts their presence in the intrapsychic space as integral to psychic and embodied health.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent

Introduction

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study. The purpose of this study is to explore ways that the incorporation of divine feminine figures into spiritual practice informs embodiment, spiritual experience, and overall health.

Your Involvement

Your involvement in this study includes answering survey questions and participating in an interview describing your experiences of embodiment practices and spirituality. Answer each question as honestly as possible to the extent that you are comfortable with. This interview should take approximately one hour to complete, and the survey should take an additional 20 minutes.

Possible Risks and Benefits

Possible risks include answering sensitive questions about the nature of your relationship to your body, and your spiritual or religious practices. Benefits of this study include having a safe place to share your story of embodiment and spirituality, as well as contributing to a growing body of research on embodiment and spirituality. The results of this research will be used to deepen psychologists' understanding of the impact of divine feminine archetypes on spiritual experience and embodiment.

Confidentiality

This interview will be filmed and recorded, and recordings will be stored in a HIPAA-secure server with password protections until they are transcribed. All recordings will be destroyed after transcription is complete. Transcriptions will not include your name, but may include some identifying information including age, gender, and ethnicity. At the end of the interview, you will

be able to identify any elements of your story that you wish to be excluded from the final transcript.

Future Questions or Comments

If you have any questions about this study or the nature of procedures used, you may contact Sarah Bond (sbond19@georgefox.edu), Kathleen Gathercoal (kgatherc@georgefox.edu), Mike Vogel (mvogel@georgefox.edu) or Megan Anna Neff (mneff@georgefox.edu).

Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may refuse to continue participation at any time before the end of data collection. If you withdraw before the time that your video is transcribed, your video will be destroyed and your data will no longer be used. Participation in this survey constitutes your consent to participate.

Yes/no

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Judeo-Christian traditions includes both masculine and feminine representations. Can you begin by naming the divine feminine figures you interact with in your spiritual practice?
2. Can you describe an experience of incorporating divine feminine archetypes into your spiritual practice?
3. Were there experiences that pulled you to begin incorporating divine feminine figures into your faith tradition?
4. Can you describe some ways sacred experiences have impacted your sense of being in your body?
5. Can you tell me about some ways divine feminine figures have impacted your mental health and emotional wellbeing?
6. Can you describe some ways divine feminine figures have impacted your faith?

Appendix C: Survey Questions

Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (DSES)

Instructions: “The list that follows includes items you may or may not experience. Please consider how often you directly have this experience, and try to disregard whether you feel you should or should not have these experiences. A number of items use the word ‘God.’ If this word is not a comfortable one for you, please substitute another word that calls to mind the divine or holy for you.”

- 1) I feel God’s presence.
- 2) I experience a connection to all of life.
- 3) During worship, or at other times when connecting with God, I feel joy which lifts me out of my daily concerns.
- 4) I find strength in my religion or spirituality.
- 5) I find comfort in my religion or spirituality.
- 6) I feel deep inner peace or harmony.
- 7) I ask for God’s help in the midst of daily activities.
- 8) I feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities.
- 9) I feel God’s love for me directly.
- 10) I feel God’s love for me through others.
- 11) I am spiritually touched by the beauty of creation.
- 12) I feel thankful for my blessings.
- 13) I feel a selfless caring for others.
- 14) I accept others even when they do things I think are wrong.

15) I desire to be closer to God or in union with the divine.

16) In general, how close do you feel to God?

Experience of Embodiment Scale (EES)

- 1) I feel in tune with my body
- 2) I feel at one with my body
- 3) I feel “detached” and separate from my body
- 4) I feel depressed/anxious/scared in/about my body
- 5) I care more about how my body feels than about how it looks
- 6) I focus more on what my body can do than on its appearance
- 7) My eating habits are a way for me to manage my emotions or how I have felt about myself
- 8) Generally I feel good/comfortable in my body
- 9) I am proud of what my body can do
- 10) I feel dissatisfied, envious and frustrated when I compare my body to others
- 11) I feel joy in my body
- 12) My body reduces my sense of self worth in the world
- 13) I sometimes tend to blame my body for difficulties I am having
- 14) I am comfortable with my sexual feelings/desires
- 15) I engage in potentially harmful or painful behaviors (e.g., disordered eating, bingeing, purging, denying physical needs, skin cutting, burning, drug use, excessive alcohol consumption)
- 16) I have an eating disorder
- 17) I take good care, and am respectful, of my body

- 18) I ignore the signs my body sends me (e.g., of hunger, stress, fatigue, illness/injury)
- 19) I spend a lot of time/energy/money engaging in activities that I hope make me fit with cultural ideals of beauty (e.g., exercise, clothing, make-up, hair, plastic surgery, skin bleaching)
- 20) I am comfortable voicing my views, opinions and beliefs
- 21) I find it difficult to express my emotions
- 22) I am aware of my needs
- 23) It is hard for me to read/identify my feelings
- 24) I am comfortable with, and proud of, who I am
- 25) I consider myself to be a powerful person
- 26) I am aware of, and confident in, my strengths and abilities
- 27) My dissatisfaction with my body/appearance has a negative effect on my social life
- 28) I feel disconnected from my own sense of sexual desire
- 29) I express what I want and need sexually
- 30) I feel that I cannot express what I want or need in a dating/partnership relationship
- 31) I have difficulty asserting myself with others in the world
- 32) I believe in my ability to accomplish what I desire in the world
- 33) I put a priority on listening to my body and its needs (e.g., stress, fatigue, hunger)
- 34) I constantly think about the way my body fits with cultural standards of beauty

Demographic Information

Age: ____

Gender:

- Male

- Female
- Non-binary/third gender
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self-describe: _____

Ethnicity:

- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Asian American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Another race
- Prefer to self-describe: _____

Years of education: _____

How much do you agree with the following statement: I have a faith that I would locate within a Judeo-Christian tradition. (1-5)

How would you describe your Judeo-Christian tradition? (short answer)

How much would you agree with the following statement: My faith tradition is consistent with current understandings of feminist values (1-5)

How would you describe your current understandings of feminist values?

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Education

Psy.D. Graduate School of Clinical Psychology <i>George Fox University, Newberg, OR</i> <i>APA Accredited Program</i> <i>Dissertation Title: Reflections on the Archetypal Divine Feminine in Embodiment Experiences (Preliminary Defense Date: May 2022)</i>	Anticipated Graduation: 2024
M.A. Graduate School of Clinical Psychology <i>George Fox University, Newberg, OR</i>	May 2021
B.S., Psychology <i>Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR</i>	June 2019

Clinical Experience

Practicum Therapist <i>Oregon State Hospital</i> Supervisor: Danielle Shallcross, Psy.D. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide cognitive assessment, individual therapy, and group therapy using Cognitive-Behavioral and Dialectical-Behavioral orientations for a psychiatric inpatient population. • Participate in interdisciplinary team meetings. • Assist with intervention and positive reinforcement planning. • Observe Forensic Evaluation Service assessments. 	2022-2023
Practicum Therapist <i>George Fox Health and Counseling Center, Newberg, OR</i> Supervisors: Luann Foster, Psy.D., Bill Buhrow, Psy.D. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted clinical interviews with clients. • Provided individual therapy services for a diverse range of community members using Cognitive-Behavioral and Psychodynamic orientations along with spiritual integration. • Created and implemented treatment plans. • Received weekly supervision. 	2021-2022
Practicum Therapist <i>George Fox Behavioral Health Center, Newberg, OR</i> Supervisors: Sally Gildehaus, Psy.D., Megan Anna Neff, Psy.D.	2020-2021

Training Director: Michael Vogel, Psy.D.

- Conducted clinical interviews with clients.
- Provided individual and couples therapy for a diverse range of community members using Person-Centered, Cognitive-Behavioral, and Psychodynamic orientations.
- Provided crisis assessment and intervention services.
- Administered two assessment batteries.
- Administered ORS, SRS, assessments, and other screeners.

Pre-Practicum Pseudo-Therapist

Spring 2020

George Fox University, Newberg, OR

Supervisor: Glena Andrews, Psy.D.

- Met weekly with two undergraduate pseudo-clients to provide therapeutic support in the Person-Centered orientation.
- Created treatment plans and progress notes using Therapy Notes software.
- Received weekly peer supervision and professional supervision.

Group Facilitator

Fall 2019

Newberg Seventh Day Adventist Church, Newberg, OR

- Viewed psychoeducational video on combating depression and anxiety.
- Facilitated discussion related to psychoeducational material presented.

Supervisory Experience

Peer Supervisor

2022-2023

George Fox University, Newberg, OR

Supervisor of Supervision, Nancy Thurston, Psy.D.

- Provided peer supervision of 2nd year student completing practicum training at Cedar Hills Hospital.

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant

Fall 2022

George Fox University, Graduate School of Clinical Psychology

Newberg, OR

Psychodynamic Psychotherapy

- Facilitated weekly clinical lab groups for discussion and Psychodynamic conceptualization of cases.
- Graded papers and provided feedback on assignments.

Teaching Assistant

Fall 2021

George Fox University, Graduate School of Clinical Psychology

Newberg, OR

History and Systems of Psychology

- Graded weekly reflection papers.
- Provided feedback on student questions.

Teaching Assistant

Fall 2020

George Fox University, Graduate School of Clinical Psychology
Newberg, OR

Undergraduate Advanced Counseling Course

- Facilitated weekly group meetings for undergraduate students.
- Reviewed counseling skill-training videos and provided feedback.
- Worked with students in a group setting to develop foundational counseling skills.

Professional Training

Clinical Team

2019- Current

George Fox University, Newberg, OR

- Present two clinical cases to a group of peers.
- Collaborate with other clinical team members on case conceptualization of presented individuals.
- Consult with clinical team members on possible treatment approaches.
- Examined multicultural aspects of cases presented.

Supervisor: Nancy Thurston, Psy.D.

Colloquiums and Grand Rounds Attended

Bourg, W. (2022). Intractable Conflict in Families and Society.

Liebscher, B. & Vaiz, L. (2021) May it be Well With Your Soul: Anti-Racism, Spiritual Freedom, and Wellness

Wilson, E. (2021) Erotic Transcendence: Integrating Faith With What's New in Sex Research

Lee, J. (2020) Examining the Role of Neuropsychology within the Pediatric Cancer Setting

Steward, J. (2020) Complex PTSD: Advanced Case Conceptualization, Assessment, and Treatment Approaches in Trauma Populations.

Stoeber, A. (2020) Child Adverse Events to Adults with Substance Use Problems.

Forster, C. (2019). Intercultural Communication.

Worthington, E. (2019). Promoting Forgiveness.

Research Experience

Dissertation Research

Title: Reflection on the Archetypal Divine Feminine in Embodiment Experiences

Committee: Kathleen Gathercoal, Ph.D. (Chair), Michael Vogel, Psy.D., Megan Anna Neff, Psy.D.

Preliminary Defense: May 2022

Final Defense: TBD

Poster

Stumpf, C., Vogel, M., George, M., Bond, S. & Riedel, A. (2022). *The Dark Night of Grad School: Assessing the Spiritual and Religious Experiences of Doctoral Students in a Clinical Psychology Training Program*. [Poster presentation]. Christian Association for Psychological Studies, Oregon.

Certifications

Trauma Treatment, <i>George Fox University</i>	Fall 2021
Ecopsychology, <i>Pacifica Graduate Institute</i>	Spring 2021
Practicing Psychotherapy Through Telehealth, <i>George Fox University</i>	Fall 2020
Group Psychotherapy, <i>George Fox University</i>	Summer 2020

Assessment and Screeners

Previously Administered or Completed Competency

16 Personality Factors Questionnaire (16PF)

Adaptive Behavior Assessment System, Third Edition, Parent Form (ABAS-3 Parent Form)

Adaptive Behavior Assessment System, Third Edition, Adult Form (ABAS-3 Self Form)

Adolescent/Adult Sensory Profile

Behavior Assessment System for Children, Third Edition, Self-Report Adolescent (BASC-3 SRP-A)

Camouflaging Autistic Traits Questionnaire (CAT-Q)

Conners' Continuous Performance Test 3rd Edition (CPT-3)

Childhood Autism Rating Scale Questionnaire for Parents or Caregivers (CARS-2 QPC)

Childhood Autism Spectrum Test (CAST)

Counseling Center Assessment of Psych Symptoms (CCAPS)

Delis-Kaplan Executive Function System (D-KEFS)

House-Tree-Person (HTP)

Individual Differences Research Autism Spectrum Test (IDR Autism Spectrum Test)

Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-III (MCMI-III)

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-II (MMPI-II)

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-II, Restructured Format (MMPI-II-RF)

Mini-Mental State Examination, 2 nd Edition (MMSE-II)

Outcome Rating Scale (ORS)

Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI)

Ritvo Autism Asperger Diagnostic Scale- Revised (RAADS-R)

Rorschach Performance Assessment System (R-PAS)

Rotters Incomplete Sentences Blank (RISB-2)

Session Rating Scale (SRS)

Social Responsiveness Scale-2 (SRS-2)

Test of Memory Malingering (TOMM)

Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)

Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, Fourth Edition (WAIS-IV)

Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT)

Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fifth Edition (WISC-V)

Wechsler Memory Scale (WMS)

Memberships

American Psychological Association	Fall 2019 - Present
Oregon Friends of Jung	Fall 2021 - Present