THE DREAM IN OTHER CULTURES: ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES OF DREAMS AND DREAMING

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Before the publication of Freud's Interpretation of Dreams, dreams had been considered by anthropologists as a possible source of the development of religion. In the 1920's anthropologists became interested in applying psychoanalytic theory to the study of other cultures and, naturally, to the study of the dreams of other cultures. But, by the 1930's they had begun to question the psychoanalytic assumption that dream symbols had the same meanings across cultures. Since that time, anthropologists have tended to view dreams, in some measure, as reflectors of the culture and, therefore, as vehicles to explore the relationship of culture and personality (d'Andrade, 1961). More recently, even the study of personality and culture has fallen short of its original promise and hence has lost some of its popularity. In any event, the study of any field usually begins with some means of classifying the content, and this has certainly been the case for dreams and dreaming.

Categories, Genres, and Nightmares

In order to discuss or handle dreams in any meaningful way, various cultures have from necessity categorized the amorphous substance of dreams in a myriad of ways. One of the more obvious and ubiquitous methods involves using simply the dream content. This seems to have been true for many other cultures as well as our own where people such as C.S. Hall (1951) have devoted much effort into studying what people dream about. Yet, one can readily categorize according to other attributes as well—the source of the dream, the meaning of the dream, the use of the dream, the solicitation or non-solicitation of the dream, etc. Such categories often become so much a part of the world view of a particular culture that its members would be unable to conceive of other possible classifications. A North American Indian might distinguish between an individual dream and a
culturally patterned dream, whereas a culturally patterned dream is unknown to members of contemporary Western society. Similarly, the importance, and even the reality, of dreams varies along a cultural continuum.

Generally speaking, the division of dreams into "genres" reflects a division by dream content alone (i.e., flying dreams, falling dreams, etc.). On the surface it would seem that these dream genres would most certainly be universal, and a measure of such elements cross-culturally would appear to be relatively easy and straightforward. However, although many studies have claimed to find universal themes or genres of dreams, they have often been unsound methodologically or they compare only two cultures (which may have had many common elements to begin with) and then conclude that dreams with a given content are universal.

A nightmare can be considered as a genre, but it cannot be considered a genre in the same sense that a "falling" dream can, for example. "Falling" refers to the content itself, while "nightmare" is a subjective label placed on the content after the dreamer awakes; hence, it is dependent on the dreamer’s (or, the observer’s) attitude toward the content. With this in mind, it is possible to discuss "nightmares" in other cultures if one uses other labels. These might be labels such as "dreamer’s reaction to dream" or "dreamer’s emotional state on awakening." There have been only a few studies using such an approach.

The frequency of such "bad" dreams has been considered in at least three studies. In her study of one Hopi Indian’s dreams for a six-year period (1939 to 1945), Dorothy Eggon (1952) discovered that he had a negative emotion on awakening to 170 of the dreams he reported, but a positive emotion on awakening to only 46 of the dreams he reported. He described 136 dreams as being "bad" and only 84 as being "good." Among Western cultures, one study done in the 1930’s suggested that as children grow older the frequency of their unpleasant dreams decreases (Foster and Anderson, 1936). Another study, also done in the 1930’s, reported that children are much more likely to have unpleasant dreams than pleasant ones (Jersild, Markey, & Jersild, 1933).

The Mohave, a people often said to have a "dream cult," are reported to distinguish between two kinds of "bad" dreams. One refers to those dreams in which the dreamer fails in his undertakings; the other refers to dreams of illness and death. The latter type can be seen by the culture as a symptom of illness (Devereux, 1966).

There are many and various culture-specific lists of what constitutes a bad dream, usually meaning a dream that portends death or bad luck. For example, an ancient medical work from India contains a long list of dreams that portend death. This includes such dreams as: being swallowed by a fish, entering into one’s mother, seeing a lamp go out, seeing an eye torn out, or losing one’s Brahmman cord (Callois, 1966). Among the Navajo bad dreams require special rites to be performed for one or two nights. Examples of Navajo bad dreams would be dreams of the death of a member of one’s family or dreams of extracting a tooth. Wyman (1970) points out that if a Navajo dreams of having two teeth extracted he must deposit jewel offerings at the base of a pinyon tree in order to avoid death.

One of the first anthropologists to study genres and content categories in other cultures was the Englishman C.G. Seligman. Thus, the following brief historical survey of the study of the dream in other cultures begins with his work.
Historical Aspects

As early as 1923 Seligman suggested the study of “non-European” dreams in an effort to determine whether certain “types” of dreams appeared in other cultures and to assess the significance of dreams to the individual and to the group. He was thus concerned with determining the universality of types of dreams having previously concluded that five were common to Europeans: 1) flying, 2) fire, 3) climbing a tree or going up a hill, 4) loss of a tooth, and 5) having intimate relations with a relative (an Oedipal dream). Furthermore, he suggested a method of recording the dreams of non-Europeans. This method included recording word for word the dream of the informant without interruption on the part of the recorder. Then the dreamer would be asked to explain the dream, and finally, he would be asked to free associate to the events and objects in the dream. After all this information was recorded, the dreamer could be asked to repeat the dream to facilitate recall of any forgotten parts (Seligman, 1923).

Géza Róheim, another anthropologist strongly influenced by psychoanalytic theory, published his “Psycho-analysis of Primitive Cultural Types” in 1932, advocating dream analysis as a means of seeing beyond an informant’s ego-defenses. Róheim proved to have a large influence on many anthropologists for quite some time, although today he is often dismissed for his strict adherence to Freudian doctrine (Eggan, 1961).

Certainly the most ambitious and comprehensive work to emerge from this period of heightened psychoanalytic interest in dreams among anthropologists is Lincoln’s The Dream in Primitive Cultures published in 1935. Using his own fieldwork in addition to library research, Lincoln compiled a large body of descriptive data on the dreams of other culture, principally those of North American Indian tribes. Although heavily influenced by Freud and Jung, Lincoln’s work also contains valuable descriptions of the role and influence of dreams in many societies. This study is also important for the description of the “culture pattern dream” as distinguished from the individual, personal dream. Contemporary researchers still cite Lincoln’s work, in particular the analysis of the culture pattern dream (see d’Andrade, 1961; Eggan, 1961).

Studies of dreams in the 1930’s and 1940’s tended to continue the psychoanalytic tradition, placing an emphasis on latent content in dreams and suggesting that there were universal meanings for such concepts as incestuous attachments, sibling rivalry, castration anxiety, etc. The work of Dorothy Eggan and others in the 1950s, however, utilized the manifest content of dreams rather than the latent content, reasoning that the former was easier to handle, did not involve as many serious difficulties as the latter, and contained information important in itself. Eggan’s now classic work (1949, 1952) involved the collection of over 600 dreams from 20 Hopi Indians from several villages and included more than 200 dreams from a single Hopi informant, the subject of a life study. Coincidentally, her work almost parallels in time the important construction of explicit content categories developed by Hall (1956). More recently, studies of cross-cultural aspects of dreaming have tended to use manifest content characteristics or content analysis almost exclusively. Even “universality” studies have shifted from the once popular emphasis on latent content to that of manifest content and frequency of typical dreams (see Griffith, Miyagi, & Tago, 1958; Giora, Esformes, & Barak, 1972). Eggan remarks that “...in spite of much
subject matter in non-Western dream collections which seems to lend itself to
Freudian symbolic interpretation, we cannot justify 'borrowing' these interpretations
from psychoanalytic theory without confirmation of them through the use of
psychoanalytic techniques with the dreamers” and that there are serious difficulties
involved in the process as well as the application (1961, p. 558).

Characteristic Classifications

It is perhaps unnecessary to state that there are as many views of dreams as there
are cultures. Although Western society tends to perceive the dream in terms of the
psychological reality of the dreamer and his society, other cultures (and our own
history) demonstrate an entirely different perspective, one based on the dream
coming from “outside” the dreamer. Thus, the “source” of the dream could be
used as a factor to separate cultural views of the dream. As von Grunebaum (1966)
explains: “To us, the symptomatic, revelatory, ‘prophetic’ significance of the dream
points inward to the dreamer (and to his society), not outward into areas of reality
inaccessible by rational or ‘natural’ means . . . . The dream explains and reflects, not
the mind of the Prophet . . . , but our own mind; its source is personal or . . . transpersonal, but, in any event, human” (p. 21). There is, then, a cultural
distinction concerning the source of the dream. This is reflected in the language
itself—the ancient Greek was “visited” by a dream; whereas the modern
Frenchman “makes” a dream (j’ai fait un rêve) (Meier, 1961).

As pointed out above, Lincoln drew primarily from Native American cultures to
distinguish between the individual dream and the culture pattern dream. The
individual dream is that dream which is unsought, a “typical” or ordinary dream; it
is not deliberately induced by the culture or the individual. The culture pattern
dream, on the other hand, is actively sought or induced. Often it conforms to a
specific stereotyped pattern prescribed by the culture, and in some cases the
individual may be required to continue dreaming until the required pattern
emerges. Lincoln found culture pattern dreams to be present in Africa, Melanesia,
Polynesia, Australia, and of course, especially well developed in North America.

The culture pattern dream has many features in common with the process of
temple incubation as practiced by the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, and Greeks.
Egyptian kings, for example, went to a temple to appeal to the gods through prayer
for help with a particular problem and then received the solution in a dream in the
temple. The process in Greece was similar, but the exact procedure is described in
interesting detail by Meier (1961):

As a patient you would be readily admitted to the sacred precinct unless you were
moribund or a pregnant woman near confinement, as the sanctuary had to be kept
ritually pure from death and birth. After having performed certain purificatory rites,
ablutions, and preliminary sacrifices you would go to sleep on your kline (couch) in the
abaton or adyton, “the place not to be entered by the unbidden.” To have been bidden
by the god into his temple is a locus communis in many mystery cults . . . . and most
probably depended on the outcome of your preliminary sacrifice. Once admitted, all
will depend upon your having the right dream . . . . This was the actual process of
incubation. Incubare means “sleeping in the sanctuary”. . . . Whether the dream was
the right one was decided by its result; for, if it was the right one, the patient woke
cured. Apparently he was always cured if in his dream he experienced an epiphany of

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Asklepios [a mythical doctor]. The god appeared to him... in the dream... or else "in the waking state" or, "in a vision" in case he was too excited to go to sleep.... In one or another of his aspects he would then touch the stricken part of the patient's body and disappear.... Because of [the sacrifice]... it became customary to stay at the Asklepion until the sacrifice turned favorable.... The place therefore turned eventually into a thriving hotel (p. 315).

Among North American Indians, however, the pattern dream was not generally used for curative purposes, but rather for acquiring a spiritual helper, receiving special instructions on the use of supernatural power, determining a career, etc., depending upon the particular culture. Specific instances include the Crow life vision, the Ojibwa puberty fast dream, and the Yuma myth dream. Lincoln mentions three general types of induction methods for the culture pattern dream: 1. fasting, isolation, or self-torture (practiced by the Crow, Blackfoot, Kwakiutl, and Thompson River tribes); 2. formal suggestion or instruction by a medicine man (practiced by the Yuma and Mohave); 3. formal suggestion from a parent with instruction to keep dreaming until the correct dream occurs (practiced by the Ottawa, Menomini, and Ojibway).

Although it would seem easy for individuals to manufacture the "correct" pattern dream to shorten the process or even invent a tale of the supernatural to attain power and fame, this seems not to have occurred or not to have been recorded if it did. D'Andrade (1961) cites Robert Lovie's (1924) evidence that this did not happen and that some individuals were not able to obtain visions while others decided that they had been misled or deceived by their visions after testing their supposed supernatural powers. However, a dreamer might unconsciously fit his dream experience to the prescribed cultural model. In a 1954 study of Haitian dreams, for example, Bourguigon found that an individual might report the presence of a supernatural being in a dream when, upon close questioning, it was an ordinary person who appeared but who was thought to have been a supernatural in disguise. Bourguigon concluded that dreams "act as channels for the development of idiosyncratic modes of worship and lend support to whatever mythology exists, which itself is largely based on anecdotal material about the gods. This mythological material, in turn, furnishes the basis for dream interpretation and for the manner in which dreams are experienced" (p. 268).

In addition to sources and types of dreams, another classification distinguishes among the kinds of dream materials used for interpretation and other purposes; that is, whether the culture uses the latent or the manifest content of the dream. This, in fact, is another of Lincoln's classifications, and he uses the now-extinct Huron as well as the Navajo as examples of societies which interpreted dreams using manifest content alone. The Ashanti and the Naga, however, seek symbolic meanings in dreams. Of course, the classification cannot be rigid, for there are many cultures which declare only some dream situations to have a given meaning, while others may have meanings opposite to their manifest content.

Cultural Uses of Dreams

Lincoln provides a long catalogue of items used in various cultures whose origins can be traced to dreams. These include religious beliefs; the cultural structure;
totems; sacrifices; cures, charms, and medicines; ceremonies, dances, and songs;
and careers.

"Religious beliefs" include such dream events as trips to the afterworld and
representations of the dead appearing in dreams, both of which would provide
signs of the quality of life hereafter. He finds such uses in the cultures of the Massim
of New Guinea, the Papuans, the ancient Greeks, and the Karens of Burma. Also
the North American Indian Ghost Dance movement of the late Nineteenth century
had its origin in a vision in which the founder, Wovoka, visited the afterworld and
talked with God, who showed him the rewards of uniting his people in a
combination of Christianity and traditional religion.

The dream was extremely important for such tribes as the Yuma and Mohave
who used it as source material for all religious, traditional and ritual practices,
according to Lincoln. Similarly, among the Kiwai of New Guinea dreams shaped
beliefs and practices, became the source of their ideas about the spirit world, and
provided advice for everyday life. Also, the vision quest of the Crow became a
central focus of their culture, thus providing a cultural structure.

Among the societies that make use of totems, there are many which receive the
totems through dreams. Often the first animal dreamt about during a puberty fast
(Ojibway) becomes one's totem. The Kwakiutl acquire individual totems, clan
totems, and secret societies from dreams; and medicine men of the Kurnai of
Australia obtain their personal totems from dreams as well.

Lincoln (1935) gives several examples of sacrifices which were made in
compliance with a dream. The Shilluk of the White Nile, for instance, believe that
when crops begin to fail a dead king will appear in a dream to demand the sacrifice
of a cow. If the Ashanti dream of ancestors coming home followed by a group of
sheep, the sacrifice of a sheep must be made to appease them. Similarly, a dream
of snakes among the Menomini required the sacrifice of dogs or tobacco.

Those cultures which have received cures, charms, or medicines from dreams
include the Andaman Islanders, the Navajo, the Crow, the Paiute, and the Kiwai
Papuans. Handy (1936) describes native Hawaiians using dreams to obtain cures
for specific sicknesses, the cures being prescribed by an ancestor appearing in the
dream. This is similar to the Navajo practice of medicine men dreaming to receive
power over disease. And, in the Andaman Islands the medicine man is known as
"the dreamer."

Tribes making use of dreams to obtain ceremonies, dances, and songs include
the Kwakiutl, Yuma, and Crow, among others. Swanson (1960) tells how, among
the Blackfoot, a man would go to an isolated area and after a period of prayer and
fasting receive a song or dance from a spirit.

Articles to improve the material culture have oftentimes been traced to dreams.
Lincoln (1935) cites examples from the Kiwai Papuans (a new method of spearing
turtles from harpooning platforms), the Melanesians (designs for clubs), and the
Crow (methods of war painting), among others.

"Careers" were also received from dreams by such Plains and Woodlands tribes
as the Crow, Ojibway, and Mononimi. These career visions were very compulsive
and could not be refused. The vision was induced during puberty and required the
appearance of a totem or ancestor in the dream to authorize a specific career
(warrior, hunter, or shaman). D'Andrade (1961) gives an example from the
Pukapuka where an individual desiring to become a member of the priesthood
must have contact in a dream with a supernatural power during his initiation. A
particular variation of this type of vision could even determine one's sex role. Such sexual transformation visions are found among the Sioux, Aleutians, Mohave, Patagonians, and Pelew Islanders, to name a few. The Sioux, for example, believed that a dream of the moon or of a hermaphroditic buffalo required the dreamer to become a *berdache*. (The moon asks the dreamer to choose between a bow and a burden strap. The moon tries to force the dreamer to select the burden strap—the only escape for the man being to awaken before it is forced upon him.) As in the career vision, these dreams were extremely compulsive, and the individual in question would sometimes kill himself to avoid the role. D'Andrade (1961) comments that such dreams may have involved an unconscious choice on the part of the dreamer:

A young man who is required to have a vision and obtain a spirit helper before he may have all the responsibilities and privileges of the adult role may consciously want to assume an adult role, but if on a less conscious level he feels he is not ready to become a man, dreaming the required dream would probably be an impossibility, both because of the unconscious sabotage, and because typically the content of the culture pattern dream in these cases is psychologically sound, symbolizing accurately the resolution of dependency conflicts. Also, where an individual is forced into a deviant role because of his dreams, not only are unconscious factors taken into account, but a culturally legitimate excuse is given for such deviancy (pp. 316-317).

In Brazil Bastide (1966) found dreams incorporated into the game of *bichos*. *Bichos* is a form of lottery which, although illegal, is widely played. Briefly, it depends upon matching certain numbers with certain animals, the selection of the numbers depending upon whether a given animal appeared in the player’s dream.

Although Lincoln and others give many instances of cultural contributions from dreams, some authorities question whether dreams do actually contribute to the culture in such direct ways. It may be that cultural demands upon an individual result in “reworkings” of existing material with a dream providing validation (see d’Andrade, 1961). Devereux (1957) found that Mohave shamans and singers actually learned their special knowledge in waking life, “and then have dreams which condense or allude to this body of knowledge.”

**Role of Dreams in Selected Cultures**

According to Wallace (1958), the 17th-century Iroquois believed that dreams expressed the desires of the soul, desires which must be met to prevent the soul’s taking revenge upon the dreamer. Thus, the manifest content of the dream was extremely important: a dreamt object must be obtained even if it meant traveling long distances. However, before the object could be obtained, it must first have been “guessed” by other villagers. Sickness resulted from the failure of a dream wish to be fulfilled; consequently the whole village attempted to give the sick person his every wish. It was not unusual, therefore, for the stricken person to be surrounded with thousands of scissors, awls, knives, bells, etc. If death resulted, it would be because “his soul wished to eat the flesh of a dog or a man or because a pair of leggings that had been taken from him could not be found” or another such desire impossible to fulfill. If he survived, the last object wished for would be cherished the rest of his life. The most dramatic dreams naturally occurred during
periods of crisis (i.e., among warriors, pubescent youth, and the sick). Wallace hypothesizes that this conceptualization of dreams perhaps reflected the Iroquois culture’s intolerance for externally imposed restraints.

Among the Crow, as mentioned above, the life vision played a prominent role—a lack of success in life indicated a lack of visions. Not all dreams, of course, were culture pattern (life vision) dreams, but individual dreams were deemed of little significance. There were at least three ways of gaining supernatural power through visions: one could receive a revelation without being in hardship; one could be visited by a supernatural in time of hardship; or one could actively seek the power by going in quest of a vision. Methods used to seek the power actively included: 1. fasting on mountain tops; 2. fasting at tobacco gardens; 3. participating in sun dances; 4. dragging a buffalo or bear skull fastened to the pierced skin of one’s back; 5. cutting off a finger and then going to a mountain. The following are examples of Crow sought visions:

Lone-Tree’s Visions
a. He first cut off a strip of flesh. He saw the Dipper who gave him food and said, “What you are eating is human flesh.” He vomited. He saw braided hair on the Dipper and on the long queue, the Seven Stars.
b. He slept in an eagle’s nest and dreamt he saw a bald-headed eagle who told him he was to become a captain. (Lincoln, p. 256)

Visions were obtained or sought by all age groups of the Crow; however, most attempts to obtain visions failed. Those who failed might buy one from one who had been successful.

Unlike the Crow, the Navajo do not have culture pattern dreams. Their dreams are “individual” dreams, often interpreted as warnings. Whether a dream is judged good or bad and whether something ought to be done about it is determined by the affect upon awakening. A mildly disturbing bad dream may only require a simple prayer at the doorway, but a more serious dream requires consultation with a diagnostician being consulted only when the nature of the dreamer’s illness is not known (Morgan, 1932).

Dreams about any form of death or about teeth falling out necessitate a Navajo Blessingway ritual. According to Wyman (1970),

If a dream refers to death of one’s self or of a member of one’s family, it is bad; it will become true within twelve months. Dreaming of extracting a tooth portends death in the family. This belief comes from the story of the Changing Bear Maiden... who replaced her teeth with thorns and ordained that dreaming of teeth is a serious matter. If one dreams of having two teeth extracted, jewel offerings should be deposited at the base of a pinyon tree to avert death. Some practitioners put salt or corn kernels into the mouth of a patient while he prays. After other bad dreams the self-protection prayer taken from Monsterway may be combined with a Blessingway rite for one or two nights (pp. 337-338).

Other bad dreams may also require other ceremonials. Dreams of being badly hurt, of lightning, of snakes, and of dangerous things require a Male Shootingway ceremonial. Dreams of Coyote, being stranded on a rock, or going through a small hole in a rock, require a Star Chant.

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Among the Navajo, gods, dreams, and sickness are thus causally related. The spirits of dead men or animals may act to “put” dreams in one’s mind. Lincoln suggests that the ceremonies act to reintegrate the dreamer into the social structure of the community: “... when the individual is emotionally affected by it, it arouses the culture to interpret it and see where the individual has erred against himself, his family, or his culture, and through ceremony and social communion to restore him to itself.” (p. 194). (Interestingly, Eggan suggests a similar function for Hopi dreams, “to push a demanding self back into the coercive tide of social process” [1966, p. 263].)

Effects of Acculturation

Although opinions are mixed concerning the effects of acculturation on dreams, much of the evidence seems to suggest that acculturation does change the content of dreams, particularly the culture pattern dream. Lincoln presents a dream series of a Yuma Indian taken from different periods in his life, beginning at age 8 or 9 (1873-74) and ending at age 56 (1921). This period of time represented a transition period for Yuma culture, according to Lincoln, “from the time the Indian culture was completely in force, through the stages of breakdown of this culture to the stage of acquisition of white culture or absence of a distinctive culture of any sort” (p. 205). In reading these dreams one becomes aware of the gradual disappearance of the cultural elements and the increase of the individual, personal concerns of the dreamer.

Radin (1936) also presents evidence of the disappearance of the culture pattern dream among the Ojibway as a result of acculturation, the culture pattern dream in this case being the puberty dream. The puberty fast dream was specifically dictated as to form and, to a lesser degree, content; dreams which did not meet the prescribed pattern simply were rejected. Radin gives two dreams collected at the beginning of the 19th century; one dream collected a generation later; 20 dreams from different dreamers collected in the 1920’s; 20 dreams from different dreamers collected in the 1920’s; 20 dreams collected from the same dreamer in 1926; and 32 dreams from another dreamer also collected in 1926. The early 19th century dreams he collected retain the old puberty dream formula in spite of the fact that the social and economic structure of the culture had been “irretrievably shattered and broken up.” The puberty dream had survived, he suggests, merely as ritual. And, in the 20th century dreams, the formulae are present to a limited degree, but the personal aspects are readily apparent. By the 1920’s, however, the Ojibway and Ottawa culture “had ceased to function even in a remotely significant way.” It is interesting that the puberty dream survived even in a fragmentary way long after the culture had broken down (cf. Lee’s study of Zulu dreams below).

An exception to these cases is that cited by King (1943), who describes the culture pattern dreams of a mountain Maidu Indian who had been acculturated into Anglo society. These dreams incorporated elements of Western Culture, and King found the dreamer to be well adapted to Anglo society.

In a study of Zulu dreams Lee (1958) found that dream content changed as a result of culture contact. Better educated Zulu women tended to have dreams incorporating elements of Western society. Whereas traditional dreams incorporated ancestors in manifest content, Christian Zulu dreamers had dreams of “angels” which, upon further examination, proved to be ancestors “dressed in white robes
and with wings attached." Also, dreams in some ways seemed to be repositories of cultural beliefs. For example, informants often confuse the roles of certain mythological characters, thus reflecting the transitional state of the culture; but in dreams these roles are rarely confused. Furthermore, "dream content, for the particular sex, is derived almost exclusively from areas of social experience permitted by the culture in the indigenous system of sanctions of some 50 to 100 years ago" (Lee, 1958). That is, modern women tend to dream of babies and children, not of cattle tending, which is now one of their major roles. In the 19th century, however, cattle tending was taboo for women. Lee suggests that although dream content is beginning to be affected by culture contact, "It seems to be more invariant than verbal accounts of folklore, witchcraft beliefs, etc" (p. 282).

Universality Studies

Universality studies attempt to document similarities in dreams across cultures. Although there are other ways in which dreams may be universal, content seems to be most appealing and perhaps easiest to research. Some universality studies rely on frequency counts of "typical" dreams; others attempt to find universal interpretations to dream symbols. Seligman (1924) claimed to find many examples of universal symbolism, two of which were that feces stand for wealth (reported in the Ashanti, Tikopia, Western Europeans, Thai, Tangerians, Naga, Chinese, and Sinhalese), and that loss of a tooth portends death, illness, or disaster (reported for the Lolo, Araucanians, Chuckchee, Western Europeans, Chiricahua, Cuna, Ashanti, Naga, Malayans, Achelene, Japanese, Chinese, and Navajo).

Griffith et al. (1958) studied the universality of typical dreams in American and Japanese students. Using a questionnaire of 50 items, they asked students such questions as "Have you ever dreamed of falling? fire? trying again and again?" etc. More Japanese reported dreaming of being attacked or pursued, trying again and again to do something, school and teachers, being frozen with fright, fire, flying through the air, and wild beasts. More Americans reported dreaming of arriving too late, being locked up, a loved person to be dead, finding money, being inappropriately dressed, being nude, and lunatics. In general, however, there were greater similarities than there were differences, and as much agreement between the two cultures as between the sexes within the same culture. The problem, of course, with the use of such a questionnaire is that one is not dealing with primary data (the dream reports themselves) and any conclusions are tentative at best.

Sex Differences

Studies concerning differences in manifest content between the sexes seem to have been pioneered by Calvin Hall (1951, 1963), who found that men in our culture dream about men more than twice as often as they dream about women and that women generally dream about both sexes equally.

Two studies in this area which seem more carefully executed than others are those by Grey and Kalshed (1971) and Urbina and Grey (1975). The former examined sex differences in dreams of Asian Indian university students. Using 45 females and 51 males, they collected 941 dreams over a two-week period—averaging 6 dreams per subject. When compared to American dreams, the dreams of
Indian students were found to differ significantly for the sex distribution of characters, but this was explained by the authors to be due to the fact that there is greater sexual segregation in India; furthermore, when the sex ratio of dream characters was correlated with the degree of “traditionalism” of the dreamer a positive relationship was found between amount of dream contact and daily interactions. Their results challenge the assumption of ubiquitous cross-cultural sex differences regarding dream characters’ gender and gender of dreamers.

The Urbina and Grey study involved exploring sex differences in the sex distribution of dream characters also, but here a population of Peruvian students was used. Forty-eight males and 48 females were used from Peruvian and U.S. student populations. Each subject submitted 8 dreams collected over a period of time ranging from 2 weeks to 3 months. The authors note that they have used the dreamer rather than the dream as a unit of analysis; that is, the number of dreams per subject was kept uniform to establish internal consistency within the dream series. They point out that this was not done in Hall’s initial studies. Their results did not support the findings of Hall.

Finally, a study which examines sex differences from another perspective is that of Hall and Brennies (1975), who compared dreams of Anglo and Chicano students for frequency of death-related content. Five dreams per subject were used, and the study initially involved 40 men and 40 women from each culture. An analysis for death-related content showed a significant difference only between Anglo females and Chicano females, with the latter having more dreams with death-related content.

Conclusion

This article has attempted only a brief outline of the dream in other cultures. There are obviously many cultures unrepresented and others given only a cursory sentence or two. In part this imbalance is due to the lack of studies in this area; cross-cultural studies of dreams are scant. Even so, an important element that emerges from this overview is the emphasis on the dream originating outside the dreamer and usually as a communication to him. Our own culture often utilizes the dream as communication as well, but usually this is in terms of communication from self to the self (the use of dreams in psychoanalysis and Gestalt therapy for example). Concomitantly the role (or communication) of the dream seems to increase in importance as its source is perceived as being external to the dreamer. (Even given this, certain North American Indian groups felt that one could “create” a dream even though the source might be external.)

Psychologists would say that our culture is more “inner directed” and that, generally speaking, we have or aspire to have an “internal locus of control.” This, in turn, might make us more responsible for our own behavior, and at least this is the value currently in vogue. This, of course, may be directly tied to the diminishment of the supernatural or sacred (the “external” force) in our lives. Roger Bastide has written that “In our banal, day-to-day life, everything is determined by something other than the sacred, so when we are confronted with the jarring images of the dream, we are startled at their absurdity and we relegate them to magic, myth, and sacred... with us the dream’s images have no relay line in which to join...” (1966, p. 210). Some cultures, however, have used the “external” com-
munication of the dream as a way of strengthening the individual self and perhaps thereby creating an "internal locus of control." At least Hallowell believes that the Ojibwa used the dream fast in this way. "They reinforced a type of personality structure that, functioning primarily with emphasis upon inner control rather than outward coercion was a necessary psychological component in the operation of Ojibwa sociocultural system" (1966, p. 289). Thus the Ojibwa, like other cultures, may have exploited the dream to reinforce the culture itself. We do not utilize the dream or exploit the information contained in it to the extent that the Ojibwa or other cultures have. Yet to conclude that we do not use them at all would certainly be inaccurate, for Delmore Schwartz, the American poet, could have been describing the Ojibwa or his own culture when he wrote: "In dreams begin responsibilities."

References


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