

# Ruoqi xu

Psychology



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Ruoqi Xu Psychology Professor Dude 11/22/12 Dream and Its Meaning Dream can be happy, delightful, absurd or even fearful. Dream is what we experience when we sleep; it " involves an integration of perceptual, emotional, motivational, and cognitive processes performed by various brain modules" (Passer and Ronald193). However, the content of the dream and the reason why we dream specific content still remain a mystery till today. Although many scientists have been attempting to find the answers for decades, none of them was able to do so. In this paper, I will analyze what a dream consists of and how the content of a dream relates to the real life. I developed a theory based on my own experience and conducted experiments based on it. It will begin with the description of my own dream journal, and then the citation of several famous theories. Moreover, I will apply the cited theories to my experiences to test their credibility. Lastly, I will conclude my own theory about the dream and execute an experiment to test its credibility. To begin with the dream journal, I recorded my dream for a week from November 12th to November 19th. During that period, I had four dreams. Unfortunately, even though I tried as hard as I could, I could not remember every detail of the dream I had the night before. I could only remember the main story line and a few images from the dreams. Dream happens while we are sleeping. Each dream has its own story to tell; the story might stimulate our feelings and emotions and motivate us to wonder: if a dream has a meaning, then what does it intend to express and how can it be interpreted in our real lives. Freud states that " the main purpose of dreaming is wish fulfillment, the gratification of our unconscious desires and needs" (Passer and Ronald192). In other words, what we dream is what we desire from our unconscious mind, or our deepest thinking; the idea does not

<https://assignbuster.com/ruoqi-xu/>

show up in reality or rather, it is repressed when we are conscious. What we wish may be impossible, or not permissible by the reality, or it is a desire that "include[s] sexual and aggressive urges that are too unacceptable to be consciously acknowledged and fulfilled in real life" (Passer and Ronald192). When Freud interprets dreams between the "manifest content", "the surface story that the dreamer reports", and "latent content", "disguised psychological meaning", he correlates the desire as intercourse and aggressiveness since they argue that urges for sex and violence are the basic needs and the ultimate way of pleasure for human beings (Passer and Ronald192). However, the theory has an obvious flaw: the theory mostly only applies to males, but becomes vulnerable when it comes to females since females do not desire for sex or aggressiveness most of the time. Thus, his theory is only partially true. For instance, this winter I am not going back to China; instead I will be spending the break traveling around Europe, for which I am extremely excited. Nevertheless, the thought of going back home in China may have flashed through my mind. Since I already bought the ticket and got my visa to Europe, I stopped thinking about going back to China and never thought of it again. However, in my dream, I suddenly traveled back home. As I was dreaming, I remember clearly that I was listening and singing to my favorite songs from Youtube while packing for my massive amount of clothing. I even started thinking about my to-go-list of all the restaurants back in Shanghai, China (I definitely miss the Shanghai food). I do wish I could to go back to China; and in my dream this hope came true. However this desire is neither sexual nor aggressive. Thus, Freud's argument that dream is driven by sexual and aggressive desire is flawed. Apart from Freud's idea, Foulkes' idea "focus[es] on the process of how we dream and

<https://assignbuster.com/ruoqi-xu/>

propose that dreaming and waking thought are produced by the same mental systems in the brain". Foulkes believes that our brains work in such high function and efficiency that we shift attention rapidly and change different stories in our dreams (Passer and Ronald192). It is true that the stories of our dreams alter one after another one swiftly, but that is not always the case. Besides, sometimes, the seemingly different stories may be connected with one and another. Most importantly, the theory cannot be standardized and be applied to all dreams. For instance, as far as I can recall, only one of the four dreams I had had a shift in focus. That night, my dream had two stories; however they were somehow related, considering that the same characters were involved and the two stories connected. In the first dream, I was playing cards with my friends, holding perfect cards on hand. Then the scene suddenly changed to my friends and me playing Mahjong. There was a change from playing poker to playing Mahjong; but the people involved were same and even the background remained the same. Most importantly, the dreams reflected exactly what we did in real life. After playing poker, we continued with Mahjong. Thus, Foulkes' argument is right about how we change attention rapidly in our dream, while the stories are still connected. As a result, the two presented theories could not explain the dreams completely and each has its own flaws. So I came up with a theory of dream, consisted of three parts from my experience, assumption and prediction, since dream is a profound topic and hard to cover. First, dream sets free the ideas and the thoughts that have been repressed in the reality. Dream will remind us to recognize what we really desire in our deepest mind. However, the desire would be far more than sex as Freud stated. It could be unrevealed idea or thought of a wishful thing that the conscious mind, which

<https://assignbuster.com/ruoqi-xu/>

" contains thoughts and perceptions of which we are currently aware", characterizes as unrealistic then suppresses the idea (Passer and Ronald176). The idea will not diminish but rather appear in our dream. Besides, Freud calls dreams " the royal road to the unconscious"; thus we get to live our forgotten ideas, repressed thoughts or even the unrevealed desire in our dreams (Kahn 29). One of my dreams can help prove that we dream about what we want for pleasure even if the reality may disapprove. For instance, I love playing an online poker game from China. However, due to the heavy workload from Babson and time difference between the two countries, I had not played any poker game with my friends for a long time. Somehow one of my friends posted a pictures of the game on Facebook recently and it reminded me of that game; meanwhile, I rejected her propose to play the game. The idea of playing that game shimmered in my mind for seconds but was then suppressed by my recognition of the reality immediately when my consciousness exhorted me to study and rest instead. Nevertheless, I did play the poker game with my friends in my dream. We were joking around and playing cards really happily. Therefore, the dream can remind us of what we really want even though our desire may violate the law of consciousness in reality. Other contents that might show up in dreams are the images, objects or the characters that arouse strong emotions in real life. While we are asleep, our capability to memorize information is enhanced by heightening " memory consolidation, a gradual process by which the brain transfers information into long-term memory" (Passer and Ronald188). Moreover, the information that our minds define as " important memory" are based on that emotionally enhanced " autobiographical memories, recollections of personally experienced evens that make up the stories our

<https://assignbuster.com/ruoqi-xu/>

lives" (Passer and Ronald 188, 268). Thus, dreams will comprise with images, objects and the characters that have caused our emotional feelings recently. For instance, chicken breast and corns appeared in one of the four dreams. In the dream my grandmother was preparing to cook for me and then suddenly she requested me to get her the chicken breast and corns. Why these two specific foods emerged in my dream: I had thrown away the rotten chicken breast that I put in the fridge long time ago and forgot to cook it. Wasting the food made me feel guilty. As for the corns, I cooked too much of them that night that I had to eat three more corns even when I was too full; I regret overestimating my stomach. Therefore, these two foods left me a deep impression and stimulated my guilt and regret, then showed up in my dream as I stored the information of what happened into the long-term memory during the sleep. Another interesting fact I discovered about dreams is that there is no logic between what is going on and sometimes what we dream cannot be explained by laws of physics. When we are sleeping, we are not consciousness; our brains are manipulated by the unconsciousness. The knowledge we learnt from reality has not been brought into dream; dream is pure creation. As Freud states that "in this realm (dream) there is no concept of mutual contradiction or mutual exclusion... the laws of reality and logic being so loose, strange associations can exist" (Kahn 21). Dream could be abnormal, and even overthrow all the laws and principles of reality. For example, the movie "Inception" describes how people can plant an idea by entering the human mind through dream invasion. There is a scene when Cobb teaches Ariadne how to create a dream: she literally starts to "mess with the physical law" in the dream. She turns half of the city upside down and folds it, placing it on top of other one — the two halves of the city

connected as one part is on the ground and the other part is the sky. This concept may sound impossible in real life but can exist and be displayed in dream or in our unconsciousness when the mind is not controlled by the knowledge and recognition of the reality. For instance, I had a really interesting dream. Continued with the story before, when my grandma required me to bring her corns, I could not find any left. Then, she requested me to pick some corns from the tree outside. I went out and found there was one corn tree and all the corns were growing on the tree like an apple tree in the garden. I started to choose, grabbed two of the biggest ones, and then brought them back to my grandma. The idea, that corn growing on trees, made me laughing so badly when I recalled the dream the next morning; it was so absurd because it is a common sense that corns grow on the ground. In conclusion, dream can be as creative as overturning all the knowledge we learned in the reality. After explaining my theory, I would like to run an experiment to test the credibility. Because the theory consists of three hypotheses, so there are three questions related to each part (Chart 1). The controlled group is of 4 males (number 1, 2, 3, and 6 in the chart) and 4 females (number 4, 5, 7, and 8 in the chart). They are all the students from Babson College and lived on campus. All of them are in a stable mood neither in depression nor pressure; and no one has happened serious accidents recently. Thus, they are all mentally healthy, and their dreams will not be influenced by major emotional events. The independent variable for the experiment, "the factor that is manipulated or controlled by the experimenter", is to make sure good quality of sleep and could recall the dreams for the two recent weeks (Passer and Ronald50). The dependent variable, "factor that is measure by the experimenter and that may be

<https://assignbuster.com/ruoqi-xu/>

influenced by the independent variable", is whether their dreams can apply to the three hypotheses of the theory (Passer and Ronald50). There are three questions; two of them emphasize on what components compose in their dreams and the other one concerns about how the dream functions and organizes. As for the personal privacy, I did not request them to share their dreams to me nor any detailed information. Thus some answers might be simply as yes, no, or I do not know; some of them are more willingly to talk details about their dreams. In the Chart 1, you will see the questions and the responses by each member. As the result of the experiment, one out of nine disagrees with the hypothesis one; and one states an idea I do not know. The figures show that the credibility is relatively high for the hypothesis one. And there is an interesting argument proposed by one person that dream not only reflects what we desire, but also shows what we are fear of. As for the hypothesis two, all people agree with that we dream shares similarity within the reality, which proves the validity of this hypothesis. To the last question, people are hesitating to answer; or it can be argued that people have different standards of being ridiculous or logic. Nevertheless, mostly they agree that dream does not operate in the same way as reality does. Overall, my theory is comparatively valid based on my own experience and the experiment. The theory of the dream will be: dream contains our wishful thinking, constructs certain part from real life, and operates in a non-realistic way. Exhibition Chart 1 | Hypothesis Part 1 | Hypothesis Part 2 | Hypothesis Part 3 | Questions/ Answers | Have you dreamed what you desire to do or to have but cannot do in the real life? | Does you dream sometimes share similarity to reality, eg. your room, a friend or a familiar setting appear in you dream? | Does your dream compose in a logic way, rather it is

sometimes ridiculous and impossible? | 1 | yes | YesAugmented with the reality | YesWas chasing by an extremely big bear and killed it bare-hand | 2 | I don't not know | YesDreamed about having class in a long-absent class | YesFeel stupid sometimes when wake up the next day about the dreams | 3 | No, but once dreamed about fear | YesDreamed about falling down from the bed in his current room | YesMost times, the dream shifts into one and another. | 4 | YesDreamed about something he really wants to have | yes | Do not know | 5 | yes | yes | Not sure | 6 | YesDesire to be violent and aggressive; killed zombie in his dream | yes | YesJump on a person's neck and cut the head with his Dad's scissor | 7 | YesDreamed about her boyfriend who is in Italy now | YesDreamed about a Concert she has watched in Thanksgiving | Not really; Does fully logic to her | 8 | Yes | Yes | Not completely logic but does make sense to her | Work Cited Kahn, Michael. Basic Freud: Psychoanalytic Thought for the Twenty First Century. New York: Basic, 2002. Print. Passer, Michael W., and Ronald Edward Smith. Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behavior. Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2007. Print. Christopher Nolan. Inception. Warner Bros. Picture, 2010.