Cross-cultural Dream Use in Hawaii

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Cultural variations in the narrative content of dreams have been reported in many studies[1,2]. This basic cultural difference in dream language and representations has been used to support psychoanalytic theories of dreaming, especially that of the Jungian-based schools[3,4]. Others have postulated that such variations reflect the cultural differences that each individual experiences during waking life. This "continuity" hypothesis proposes that a high correlation exists between an individual's waking life and his or her dream content[5,6].

The biologic framework of dreams, sleep/dream-state physiology, is cross-culturally consistent, and the incidence of dream related pathology also is remarkedly similiar between differing cultures[7,8].

Recent research suggests that significant age and gender variations exist in another dream-related variable, dream use, which is defined as the incorporation of dream mentation into waking behavior[9]. Our study attempts to document whether variations in reported dream use occur in an ethnically heterogeneous Hawaiian population. It is postulated that cross-cultural variations in reported dream use would occur if incorporation of dreams into waking life is culturally learned behavior.

Methodology

A questionnaire on dream use was distributed in the waiting room of a family practice medical clinic in Eleele, Kauai, Hawaii, over a 2-month period. Of 280 forms distributed, only those including appropriate demographic data were retained for analysis. Three questionnaires were excluded because the respondents did not remember their dreams.

The final sample consisted of 265 completed questionnaires. The average age of respondents was 37.9 years. Twenty-seven percent were men (N=72) and 72% were women (N=192). There was no significant age difference between the 2 sexes.

The questionnaire consisted of 23 questions designed to assess the effect of dreams on waking behavior and whether dreams caused stress. The response categories were in Likert-scale format and were coded for analysis into 6 graduated categories from 0=never to 5-=always.

Factor analysis, a statistical technique used to identify a relatively small number of factors that can be used to represent relationships among sets of interrelated variables, was performed on the dream-use items and the stress-associated items. Composite measures (DREAMUSE and STRESCOR) resulted from this analysis.

Questionnaire responses were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SpSSx). Chi-square, t-test and Pearson correlation techniques were utilized to determine the associations between gender, age, race and the dream-use variables.

Results

The statistical evaluation of responses to individual dream remembering and dream-use items (Table 1) revealed that significant age and sex variation occurred. However, no significant cross-cultural variation was found in dream remembering, incidence of dream description to others, or to any of the questions designed to assess the affects of dream mentation on waking behavior. This result was found to be consistent for age-and sex-matched samples. Evaluation of the composite variables, DREAMUSE and STRESCOR (Table 2), also showed no significant ethnic variability.

Discussion

In our study of reported dream use in a heterogeneous Hawaiian population, no significant ethnic variation was found for dream remembering, dream description to others, dream use, or dream association with stressful life events. These findings suggest that the significant gender and age variations in reported dream use do not reflect culturally learned differences in attitudes toward dreams and dream use.

(Tables continued on page 46) ➤

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Table 1. Pearson Correlation Coefficients Showing Association between Age, Sex, Race, and Dream Utilization

	AGE	SEX	RACE	REMEM	DESCR	ACTIV	OTHRS	SELF	WORK	EMOT	REL	DEC
AGE	1.00											
SEX	-.01	1.00										
RACE	-.06	.17***	1.00									
REMEM	-.15*	.12*	-.00	1.00								
DESCR	-.14	.24***	.05	.40***	1.00							
ACTIV	-.23***	.12*	.04	.21***	.33***	1.00						
OTHERS	-.24***	.14*	.07	.27***	.28***	.36***	1.00					
SELF	-.17**	.15**	.03	.23***	.32***	.40***	.54***	1.00				
WORK	-.15**	.10	-.03	.12*	.17**	.37***	.46***	.52***	1.00			
EMOT	-.24***	.19**	-.02	.32***	.29***	.41***	.50***	.60***	.57***	1.00		
RELA	-.23***	.15**	.01	.31***	.29***	.35***	.56***	.53***	.53***	.68***	1.00	
DEC	-.25***	.13*	-.01	.17**	.25***	.36***	.47***	.40***	.35***	.44***	.48***	1.00

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

KEY-
REMEM - Remembers dreams
DESCR - Describes dreams to others
ACTIV - Uses dreams in daily activities
OTHRS - Dreams affect attitudes toward others
SELF - Dreams affect attitudes toward self
WORK - Uses dream in work
EMOT - Dreams affect emotions
RELA - Dreams affect relationships
DEC - Uses dreams in making decisions

Table 2. Mean Values of Composity Variables DREAMUSE and STRESCOR, by Race

DREAMUSE Race	Mean	SD	N
Caucasian	10.5	3.3	44
Filipino	10.6	3.4	79
Japanese	9.4	3.0	39
Asian	10.0	2.7	11
Hawaiian	10.9	2.7	29

STRESCOR Race	Mean	SD	N
Caucasian	10.2	2.6	46
Filipino	9.8	2.8	77
Japanese	8.5	2.3	38
Asian	9.5	2.1	11
Hawaiian	10.2	3.1	28