



# Dreaming and personality: Wake-dream continuity, thought suppression, and the Big Five Inventory



Josie E. Malinowski

Department of Psychology, University of Bedfordshire, University Square, Luton, Bedfordshire LU1 3JU, UK

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 8 July 2015

Revised 8 October 2015

Accepted 11 October 2015

### Keywords:

Dreaming

Wake-dream continuity

Thought suppression

Big Five Inventory

Personality

Compensation

Ironic process theory

## ABSTRACT

Studies have found relationships between dream content and personality traits, but there are still many traits that have been underexplored or have had questionable conclusions drawn about them. Experimental work has found a 'rebound' effect in dreams when thoughts are suppressed prior to sleep, but the effect of trait thought suppression on dream content has not yet been researched. In the present study participants ( $N = 106$ ) reported their Most Recent Dream, answered questions about the content of the dream, and completed questionnaires measuring trait thought suppression and the 'Big Five' personality traits. Of these, 83 were suitably recent for analyses. A significant positive correlation was found between trait thought suppression and participants' ratings of dreaming of waking-life emotions, and high suppressors reported dreaming more of their waking-life emotions than low suppressors did. The results may lend support to the compensation theory of dreams, and/or the ironic process theory of mental control.

© 2015 Published by Elsevier Inc.

## 1. Introduction

Many studies have investigated the concept of a relationship between traits and dream content. For example, researchers have investigated dream content and dominant personality types (Foulkes, 1970), field-dependence (Goodenough, 1976; Witkin, 1969), type A–B personality (Nesca & Koulack, 1991), self-regulation (Busby & de Koninck, 1980); and more. Reviews of the relationship between dreaming and personality traits have indicated mixed results (Blagrove, 2007; Blagrove & Pace-Schott, 2010; Domhoff, 1996). However, some traits have received more attention than others, and have been the subject of many studies; as such, more is known about them. For example, the personality trait 'boundariness' consistently produces relationships with aspects of dream content: individuals with thin boundaries have dreams that are more lengthy, emotional, vivid, and nightmare-like than those with thick boundaries (e.g. Hartmann, Elgin, & Garg, 1991; Hartmann & Kunzendorf, 2006–7). Similarly the construct of psychological well-being (PWB) has received a large amount of attention. This construct encompasses a range of dimensions such as the extent to which one is depressed and anxious, and it has been found that those with low PWB tend to have more recurrent dreams, more nightmares, and more unpleasant dreams than those with higher PWB (Belicki, 1992; Blagrove, Farmer, & Williams, 2004; Brown & Donderi, 1986; Zadra & Donderi, 2000).

Thought suppression, which can be measured by the White Bear Suppression Inventory (Wegner & Zanakos, 1994), is a trait in which an individual tends towards trying to suppress their thoughts. There is some evidence that thought suppression during waking life may be related to a 'rebound' effect during dreaming: that is, the return of the suppressed waking thought when one is asleep and dreaming. Wegner, Wenzlaff, and Kozak (2004) found that suppressing the thought of a

E-mail address: [josie.malinowski@beds.ac.uk](mailto:josie.malinowski@beds.ac.uk)

person increased dream references to that person, more than freely thinking about the person or simply mentioning them once. Bryant, Wyzenbeek, and Weinstein (2011) found that this rebound effect was increased by cognitive load. Similarly Kröner-Borowik et al. (2013) found that thought suppression immediately before sleep led to greater incidences of dreaming of the unwanted thought, and Taylor and Bryant (2007) found that this effect is particularly strong in individuals who are high suppressors. Another line of evidence for the rebound effect comes from Delorme, Lortie-Lussier, and de Koninck's (2002) study with students undergoing examinations: students who used inappropriate coping strategies during waking life, such as positive reappraisal (reframing the problem without actually solving it), rather than problem-solving, went on to have problem-solving dreams. Taken together, the evidence suggests that thought suppression is related to dreaming of the to-be-forgotten thought. However, it remains to be discovered whether trait suppression, as measured by the WBSI, is related to dream content more generally.

Several studies have also been dedicated to investigating whether the 'Big Five' personality traits of extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness, as measured by the Big Five Inventory (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991; John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008; John & Srivastava, 1999) are related to types of dreaming, with a particular focus on neuroticism. Two studies (Cohen & Cox, 1975; Samson & De Koninck, 1986) found evidence that neurotic individuals have more wake-dream continuity in their dreams, and dreams that are more set in the future or past than the present. Further evidence of the connection between neuroticism and wake-dream continuity comes from Aumann, Lahl, and Pietrowsky (2012), who found that neuroticism was positively related to the 'incorporation' factor (e.g. "I dream of people I met the preceding day") of their unpublished 'Düsseldorf Dream Inventory'. It was also related to dream bizarreness, but the correlation was small. Additionally, neuroticism has been shown to relate to nightmare frequency and/or distress (Schredl, 2003; Schredl, Landgraf, & Zeiler, 2003), and negative dream content (Pesant & Zadra, 2006), suggesting an emotional continuity, since neuroticism involves emotional lability (John et al., 2008). In terms of the other four traits, Aumann et al. (2012) found that extraversion related positively to wake-dream incorporation and negatively to dream bizarreness; openness related positively both to incorporation and bizarreness; conscientiousness related negatively to bizarreness; and agreeableness to neither. However, many of these correlations were very small – for example, incorporation and extraversion had a significant correlation of just .07 – and may have reached significance due to the large number of correlations having been performed without an appropriate statistical method of correction applied, so further research is needed.

In this study the relationship between dream content and personality traits, as measured by the White Bear Suppression Inventory (Wegner & Zanakos, 1994), and the Big Five Inventory of personality traits (John & Srivastava, 1999; John et al., 1991, 2008) was investigated using the 'Most Recent Dream' method of collecting dream reports. It was hypothesised that trait thought suppression would relate to dreaming more of waking-life concerns and emotions, as trait suppressors may deliberately try to suppress these thoughts during wakefulness. It was further hypothesised that neuroticism would relate to wake-dream continuity in general, and to dreaming of waking-life emotions, since neuroticism is an emotionally labile trait. Other correlations were performed as exploratory analyses and no hypotheses were formulated for these.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

106 (85 female) participants completed the full online questionnaire and consented to have their data used in the analyses, with an age range of 18–56 ( $M = 24.03$ ,  $SD = 7.72$ ). 18 participants did not provide their age. The majority of participants ( $N = 71$ ) were second-year undergraduate psychology students at the University of Bedfordshire who participated in the questionnaire as part of a class on dreaming and were given the option of refusing their data to be used in the analysis. The remainder were recruited via the website Reddit on the subreddit/dreams/ ( $N = 27$ ), and via word of mouth ( $N = 7$ ). One participant did not report how they heard about the study.

### 2.2. Materials

Participants were asked a series of three questionnaires, all hosted in one weblink via the online questionnaire resource Qualtrics.

The first questionnaire asked them to report their most recent dream. They were instructed as follows (as adapted from the 'Most Recent Dream' form at [http://www2.ucsc.edu/dreams/Forms/most\\_recent\\_dreams.html](http://www2.ucsc.edu/dreams/Forms/most_recent_dreams.html)):

"Please write down the last dream you remember having, i.e. your most recent dream. This could be as recent as last night or from as far back as childhood, but should be the most recent one you can remember having, no matter how long or short it is. Please describe this dream exactly and as fully as you remember it. Your report should contain, whenever possible: a description of the setting of the dream, whether it was familiar to you or not; a description of the people, their age, sex, and relationship to you; any animals that appeared in the dream. If possible, describe your feelings during the dream and whether it was pleasant or unpleasant. Be sure to tell exactly what happened during the dream to you and the other characters."

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7288767>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7288767>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)