

THE ROLE OF DREAM ANALYSIS FOR EXPLORING EMOTIONAL CONTENT DURING EARLY ADOLESCENCE

Anita C Jones

M Ed Student

Salomé Schulze

D Ed

Professor, Department of Further Teacher Education, Unisa

Corresponding author: schuls@unisa.ac.za

Inge Sonnekus

D Ed

Educational Psychologist

Associate Professor, Department of Further Teacher Education, Unisa

Keywords: dreams; dream analysis; emotional problems; female, adolescent

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study reported in this article was to determine whether dream analysis can provide insight into the emotional problems of female adolescents. A number of classical and contemporary theories on dreams and dream analysis were used to design guidelines for dream analysis. This was followed by a qualitative study of five purposefully selected adolescent girls with emotional problems. Data gathering included the following: recorded dreams, interviews, diaries, a personality test, (the Emotions Profile Index), a projection medium (Three Wishes) and the above-mentioned guidelines for dream analysis. Findings indicated that insights may be gained into adolescent emotional problems by means of dream analysis, revealing the intrapsychic world of the individual. Emotional problems that were revealed by the dream analysis, include(d) anxiety, aggression, negative self-concepts, feelings of social isolation and depression. These were revealed by means of manifest dream content such as being chased, falling, biting, fighting and stabbing. The emotional problems were often caused by fear, conflict, lack of confidence or trauma. Compensatory and regulatory functions were revealed by the investigation.

OPSOMMING

Die doel met hierdie studie was om te bepaal of droomontleding insig in die emosionele probleme van adolessente dogters kan verleen. Verskeie klassieke en kontemporêre teorieë oor drome en droomontleding is gebruik om riglyne vir droomontleding te ontwerp. Dit is gevolg deur 'n kwalitatiewe studie met vyf adolessente dogters met emosionele probleme. In die studie is die genoemde riglyne vir droomontleding saam met data-insamelingstegnieke gebruik, wat die volgende ingesluit het: droomverslae, onderhoudvoering, dagboeke, 'n persoonlikheidstoets (die Emotions Profile Index) en 'n projeksiemedium (Drie Wense). Die bevindinge het getoon dat droomontleding insig in adolessente emosionele probleme verleen deurdat dit die intrapsigiese wêreld van die individu blootlê. Emosionele probleme wat deur droomontleding na vore gekom het, het angs, aggressie, negatiewe selfkonsepte, beleving van sosiale isolasie en depressie ingesluit. Dit is getoon deur die manifeste droominhoud, byvoorbeeld val, byt, baklei, steek en om gejaag te word. Die emosionele probleme is dikwels veroorsaak deur vrees, konflik, trauma of gebrek aan selfvertroue. Kompenserende sowel as regulerende funksies van drome het tydens die empiriese ondersoek na vore gekom.

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Adolescence is often characterised by a heightened experience of stress and emotionality (Cooper, 1999:44). For this there may be many reasons. During adolescence boys and girls are overly concerned with their physical appearance and social relationships, especially those with peers. Connor (1994:214) found that unpopular adolescents often had emotional problems, were obsessed by themselves and had negative self-concepts. This is in accordance with other studies. For example, O'Dea and Abraham (1999:77-78) determined that adolescents experienced relationships with peers, academic achievement and attraction by the opposite sex as the most important determinants of self-concept. Sue, Sue and Sue (1997:487-488) concluded that if adolescents could not handle social relationships and other demands of society, feelings of inadequacy were often experienced which led to depression, self-blaming and self-criticism. As regards parents, Aydin and Öztütüncü (2001:78-79) found that lack of endearment and/or emotional support and too high control and expectations, positively correlated with depression.

Emotional problems may manifest differently in boys and girls. For example, Richards and Larson (1993:145-169), found that adolescents were more inclined than younger children to experience extreme negative rather than positive emotions and that this was especially true of girls. Gordon and Grant (1997:1) found that depression in girls aged 15 and 16 in their sample was twice that of the boys. A negative self-concept, envy, lack of self-confidence and moodiness were identified more frequently in girls whereas boys were more irritable and aggressive than girls. Girls tend to internalise emotional problems while boys tend to externalise problems (Verhulst, Achenbach, Althaus & Akkerhuis, 1998:879-895). Van Niekerk (2001:44-45) lists examples of externalised emotional problems. These include aggression, hostility, rudeness, swearing, rage and absence from school. Internalised emotional problems include withdrawal, isolation, lack of communication, lack of physical care, apathy, lack of appetite, psychosomatic illnesses, passive aggression and indifference. Similarly, Crijnen, Achenbach and Verhulst (1999:569-574) found the boys in their study to be more aggressive and the girls to be more anxious and depressed.

This study indicated that stressors like examinations, unrealistic parental expectations and troublesome relationships with peers were precursors of depression, anxiety and behavioural problems. Such emotional problems can inhibit adolescents' development into emotionally stable and well adapted adults. As educators who were or had been involved with adolescents, we were aware of the emotional problems many of these learners experience. Not only were aggression, depression, anxiousness and eating disorders observed or sometimes confessed, but parents acknowledged that they had their own obligations and could not always give their children the required support.

Emotional problems register in the subconscious of the person (adolescent) and can be revealed by dreams. According to Fontana (2001:66), anxiety is the emotion that most often manifests in dreams. This not only indicates how deep rooted the anxiety or fear is, but also focuses the dreamer's attention on identifying and confronting the source of the anxiety. This is in agreement with Freud's theories on dreams. Freud maintained that dreams were the *via regia* to the subconscious. Knowledge and understanding of emotions may be obtained by listening to what the subconscious communicates via dreams. Hence, this article reports on an investigation of the following research problem: *To what extent could dream analysis be used for eliciting emotional content during adolescence?* In answer to this, adolescence can be defined as the developmental stage from puberty to adulthood; from about 12 to 18 years for females and 13 to 21 years for males (Plug, Louw, Gouws & Meyer, 1997:7). Other authors pinpoint the age group of adolescence from 12 or 14 to 21 years (Odendal & Gouws, 2000:17) or up to 22 years (Vrey, 1979:175). However, in this investigation the focus was on adolescents of secondary school age (12 to 18 years), also described as "early" adolescents. Dream analysis is described as a process which attempts to interpret the content of which one is aware with the aim of understanding the latent dream content (Plug *et al.* 1997:135).

The specific research objectives of the investigation were to determine: (a) how emotional problems of adolescents manifest in their dreams; (b) how analysis of the dreams can help adolescents gain greater self-understanding and (c) how the aforementioned can assist clinical and educational psychologists, among others,

to plan their intervention. Ultimately, adolescents can be supported to develop into emotionally stable and well-adapted adults.

ADOLESCENT DREAMS

In reference to dreams, Jung (*in* Fordham, 1953:70) states: "A dream is an involuntary and spontaneous psychic product, a voice of nature; and is usually obscure and difficult to understand, because it expresses itself as symbols and pictures, like the most ancient writings, or the complicated letters which children sometimes enjoy producing with drawings replacing important words." Hobson (1994:34) found that during Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep, the brain moves away from the inhibition that characterises wakefulness. When sleep starts, the brain comes under the influence of chemicals (cholinergic neurochemical acetylcholine) that predispose the brain for easy activation. Although dreams generally occur during REM sleep, they can also occur during Slow Wave Sleep (SWS) (Hobson, 1994:34). SWS dreams are similar to wakeful awareness. Hobson and his colleagues found significant differences in the dream content of these two phases. REM dreams have more emotional intensity. The characteristics of non-REM dreams were somewhere between REM dreams and daydreams (Hobson, Pace-Schott, Stickgold & Kahn, 1998:243-244).

Foulkes (1999) made an extensive longitudinal study of children's dreams over a period of 20 years. For the age groups 11 to 13 and 13 to 15 years, Foulkes (1999:110) found that as adolescents grow older there are fewer concrete images of physical activity, less social interaction, more distortion of characters and background, more unknown characters and people mentioned and less self-initiated activities involved. Foulkes (1999:112) attributes this to the cognitive development of adolescents and their ability to think abstractly. He found that cognitive ability is the greatest predictor of emotionally laden dreams of the age group 13 to 15 years (Foulkes, 1999:115).

In their description of dreams, adolescents use the nouns "house" and "mother" most often. Verbs with the highest frequencies are "go" and "do". The many references made to family and friends are an indication of the importance of social relations to adolescents (Azzone, Salvatore, Freni, Maggiolini, Provantini &

Viganó, 1998:238). Foulkes (1999:108) found that female adolescent dreams have more activities that centre around the house, while male adolescent dreams have more negative affect and aggression. Similarly, Winegar and Levin (1997:511-512) found more objects, human movement and intimate human relationships in the dreams of female adolescents than in the dreams of male adolescents – their dreams are more action oriented with externally focused aggression.

As already indicated, the aim of this study was to explore the viability of dream analysis for eliciting emotional content during adolescence. Although a number of classical and contemporary theories of dream analysis were studied, the classical theories of dream interpretation of Freud, Jung and Adler were found to be most significant for this study. They are subsequently briefly explained, followed by the research design of this investigation.

THEORIES OF DREAMS AND DREAM ANALYSIS

According to Freud (1971:135) dreams have a manifest content which is remembered and a latent content which is related to unfulfilled wishes. These wishes comprise unacceptable content of the subconscious that is satisfied during sleep. Thus, Freud proposed the idea of a censored wish (Maree, 1998:33). Freud called the process by means of which unacceptable content is replaced by more acceptable content, "dream labour". The modification of latent content is done by condensation (synthesis of numerous ideas into one symbol); substitution (where an unsettling idea is replaced by a related but more acceptable idea); symbolisation (where an everyday image represents something else) and presentation (where dream thoughts are changed to visual images). To interpret dreams, Freud (1971:101) used the technique of free association. During free association the person is allowed to think whatever he or she wants to regarding the dream. Thus, a whole network of associations are built, which can help to interpret the dream (Plug *et al.* 1997:409). Although Freud emphasised the role played by repressed sexual desires, he conceded that not all dreams have a sexual meaning.

Jung (1986) regarded dreams as creative, spontaneous expressions of the subconscious to show what is

truthful. According to Lukeman (2001:4), "We dream because we must, for physiological reasons and because dreams tell us things we need to know about ourselves". This indicates that dreams uncover rather than conceal (Maree, 1998:34). Van den Deale (1992:99) claims, "The premise that the dream aims to communicate and not to disguise is a technical principle embraced by a large and eclectic group of analysts". Jung believed that dreams have an important function: they compensate for the one-sidedness of the conscious (Jung, 1986:30). He therefore believed that the aim of dreams is to help the individual obtain a spiritual balance of the psyche (Jung, 1986:36). To understand a dream, Jung used the method of amplification. When using this method, the analyst forms associations with each item in the dream (words, objects, people). The dreamer relates what each item suggests or which memories are evoked by each item. In addition, Jung worked with a series of dreams, not with each dream individually.

According to Adler's theory, the content of a dream was derived from emotionally laden thought processes and experiences on the day just before the dream. Adler did not agree with Freud's view that dreams are a way of fulfilling wishes. He saw dreams as an expression of problems that could not be resolved during wakefulness. The function of dreams was therefore to help dreamers fulfil their aims in life. Thus, Adler (1969:145) believed that dreams are essentially directed towards the future.

Using the above-mentioned and other theories of dream analysis in psychotherapy can prove useful. Angel (1999:41) points out that there are three main areas in the use of dream analysis: the use of the manifest dream content in its own right, the acknowledgement of counter-transference dreams as capturing a certain aspect of the intrapsychic life of the dreamer and the usefulness of self-state dreams to enable insight into the vicissitudes of the self. Widen (2000:3) believes that a dream is an expression of that which people experience in relation to themselves. In accordance, Eiznitz (1987:72) believes that the visual content of a dream is always a representation of oneself. He sees dreams as a reflection of self-perception, an expression of tension within oneself.

The research done by Punamäki (1998) is also signifi-

cant. She found that dreams have two functions: *mastering* and *compensation* (Punamäki, 1998:581). If aimed at mastering, dreams incorporate repetition of disturbing incidents to vent intense emotions. According to the compensation model, dreams lead to mental health if they are surrogates for disappointments that were experienced during wakefulness. Among other things, such dreams have bizarre and camouflaged characters, but happy endings. This confirms the beliefs of Cartwright and Lloyd (1994:253) that dreams regulate emotions and facilitate mental health. Research results indicate that there is less negative affect after a night of having dreamt about problems, conflict and stress. Zadra and Donderi (2000:279) found that repetitive nightmares indicate the intensity of the trauma which was incorporated into the dreams. Dreamers with few nightmares have high levels of mental health.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Approach

A qualitative research approach was considered suitable since we aimed at an in-depth understanding of how dream analysis enhances understanding of adolescent emotional problems. Sampling, data collection, and data analysis were simultaneous and interactive rather than discrete sequential steps. Use was made of a case study design, meaning that "the data analysis focuses on *one* phenomenon, which the researcher selects to understand in depth regardless of the number of sites, participants, or documents for a study" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:394). In such a design, the *context* of each participant's dreams is important in its analysis.

Ethical measures

The following ethical measures were adhered to during the research: informed consent was obtained from all participants. According to Strydom (1998:25), informed consent ensures that participants are provided with adequate information regarding the goals of the investigation, possible advantages and disadvantages of participating and the credibility of the researcher/s. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. For example, alphabetical codes were assigned to diaries that the participants kept to ensure privacy. Consent for tape recording interviews was obtained. The

researchers also had the required research skills (for example, to conduct interviews) to embark on the investigation and the adolescents were interviewed with sensitivity.

Trustworthiness

Guba's model for trustworthiness addresses ways of reducing biases in the results (Poggenpoel, 1998:349-351). Within this model the tactics that were used are similar to those listed by McMillan and Schumacher (1997:405 & 408) for validity of qualitative designs as follows: (a) A lengthy data gathering period of six months was used. This allowed for interim analysis and corroboration to ensure the match between findings and participant reality; (b) Analysing dreams was not the only method employed. Data from the dream analysis were validated by means of interviews, diaries, a projection medium and the Emotions Profile Index (EPI); (c) Disciplined subjectivity involved self-monitoring and noting all personal biases when writing to prevent these from influencing the findings; (d) A tape recorder was used to record interview data of which verbatim transcriptions were made. Thus, the influence of researcher bias was diminished; (e) Participant review involved asking feedback from participants to clarify and validate meanings; (f) Analysis of the raw data by one researcher was checked by another to ensure intercoder and intracoder reliability.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used (Schurink, 1998:255). A small, distinct group of white, female adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 years were selected. Different ages of secondary school adolescents were included for the advantage this would have for educational psychologists affiliated to secondary schools. The decision to involve white, female adolescents only was motivated by the fact that the researchers were white females and it was envisaged that this could encourage the participants to share their dreams and stories readily. Moreover, since girls more often than boys internalise emotional problems, it was envisaged that girls would be more inclined to dream (Verhulst *et al.* 1998:879-895).

Five adolescents who presented themselves with emotional problems to the one researcher who was affil-

ated to the school as an educational psychologist, participated in the research. The girls indicated that they often dreamt and were therefore seen as information-rich. They all indicated their willingness to participate.

Data collection

At the first meeting with the adolescents unstructured interviews were conducted to explore the problems with which they presented. Thereafter, the Emotions Profile Index (EPI) was administered. According to the EPI, eight basic dimensions of emotions can indicate underlying affective attitudes such as acceptance, fear, sadness, rejection, anger, happiness, expectation and impulsiveness. Participants were requested to record their dreams for a period of six months. According to Fontana (2001:157), such records enable researchers to get a detailed impression of a person's dream world. In addition, participants were asked to keep diaries of everyday occurrences and their own feelings. Creswell (1994:150-151) sees such diaries as well thought through data because time and attention are required to compile them. It was also agreed that meetings with the researcher would take place at regular intervals of three weeks. Although the meetings were pre-arranged for six months or until data saturation, telephonic or personal reminders ensured that the meetings were kept from the second meeting onwards. Dreams were told in the present tense. Thus the narrator was put directly within the dream experience. The dreams were then analysed by the interviewer and the participant together by means of guidelines derived from the theories of Freud, Jung and Adler, among others. For example, the adolescent would be requested to form associations with elements of the dream. One adolescent who dreamt that she was a tribe's prisoner in a forest was asked: "*Let us see what associations can be formed with forest. What does it remind you of?*" She was also invited to recount the feelings she experienced during her dreams.

All of the above interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The diaries provided additional textual data.

Data analysis

Data gathering and data analysis occurred simultane-

ously during the six-month period. The main focus was on the dreams that were written down during each three-week period. Additional data from diaries, the EPI and Three Wishes were used to verify interpretations.

Each adolescent recorded an average of 30 to 40 dreams during the six months. To enable dream analysis, the following guidelines which were derived from the literature, were used:

- The adolescent was requested to recount her dreams in the present tense.
- Dreams were interpreted in the context of a series of dreams. Jung (1970:150) stated, "An obscure dream, taken in isolation, can hardly ever be interpreted with any certainty. For this reason I attach little importance to the interpretation of single dreams. A relative degree of certainty is reached only in the interpretation of a series of dreams".
- The focus was on: manifest content, since the "... 'manifest' dream-picture is the dream itself and contains the whole meaning of the dream" (Jung, 1970:149), the *detail* of the dream and the *emotion* that the dream awakened.
- In conforming to the methods of Freud and Jung, the participant was asked to freely form associations with each dream symbol.
- The focus was on detail. The most pronounced or bizarre elements of the dreams were explored. These included sudden, unexpected changes in the course of a dream (Bulkeley, 2000:98-99).
- The dream's past roots were examined in conformity with Freud and Jung's views.
- In accordance with Jung (1986:41) and Adler

(1969:145) the vision of the dream for the future was investigated.

FINDINGS

Since it is not possible to report on all the dreams in the scope of one article, examples only of dream content that emerged as most significant for understanding the emotional problems of the adolescents are included. For each of the five participants, background characteristics of the participant will be followed by examples of important dream content. Where meaningful, diary content will also be reported. Finally, the usefulness of the EPI and the Three Wishes to aid understanding of the emotional problems of the adolescent will be indicated.

Participant A reported a series of dreams. In one dream, she saw white clothes with brown marks as the most prominent elements. The participant could associate the image of white clothes with "*clean*" and brown marks with "*dirty*". The most prominent feelings associated with the dream were the following: "*I am cross with myself! I am happy with my white clothes! How could I do this?*" This was interpreted as feeling dirty (related to being raped) which was confirmed by interviews. In her dream, she "*shudders*" with disgust at the dirty clothes. As noted in her diary, she experienced feelings of fear, interpreted by her that she was afraid of what her friend might think of her or a fear of rejection.

The most pronounced part of a second dream was that of herself being left in the lurch by a friend when approached by "*savage-looking*" people. This was associated with "*rejection*" or being "*unsupported*". The dream

Table 1: Background characteristics of Participant A

Age (years)	18
Problem reported	Depression
Home background	Eldest of three children. Good relationships with siblings and parents – experiences mother as cold. Raped by two boys at age four. Similar experience at age 16 – resulted in depression.
EPI	Low count on depressed dimension (percentile 26) – possible denial
Three Wishes	A boy to love; to some day be successful; to grow strong in her beliefs so that she may become less naive.

awakened feelings of “fear” (of cruelty) and “shock” (at being raped). Thus, negative feelings which resulted from being raped, were vented in her dreams. This confirms Punamäki’s (1998) views that dreams that aim at mastering disturbing events, incorporate repetition of the incidents to vent intense emotions.

In one dream Participant A felt safer after having called her mother. Since she experienced her mother as cold and distant, this dream was probably triggered by her wish to be closer to her mother, which is in accordance to Freud’s (1971) theory.

In another dream, she was at a nightclub and was injected by someone. Her father then said, “Leave it alone! So what!” This could be related to her father’s response on being told that she was raped, since the incident evoked a similar reaction. The father did not want to discuss the rape. The past roots of the dream was clearly the fact that she was raped. The vision for the future indicates a fear of being rejected. The fact that she did not experience support from her parents concerning the rape, caused depression. The fact that she scored low on the depression dimension of the EPI, probably indicates denial. Her Three Wishes did not cast any additional light on her emotional problems, other than her wish for a boy to love which is in accordance with her fear of rejection.

A repetitive theme in the dreams of Participant B was that of a girl being rescued by others. She recounts one dream as follows: “I am in this wood. It is not really a wood – it is more ... sort of ... a ‘magical’ wood. I am sort of dressed as an Indian and I am in this tribe. I owe my life to another tribe’s god because he saved

my life. I am caught by the other tribe. This warrior comes and saves me. I sort of fall in love with him”.

The participant’s free associations with wood were “home”, “the place where I stayed” and “as if I belonged there”. Feelings that were prominent were: “caught”, “threatened” and “powerlessness”. “In love” was associated with “excitement” and “happiness”. In agreement with Jung (1986) this could be interpreted as the subconscious wanting to communicate a message to the consciousness of the dreamer. The message may have been that Participant B felt powerless to develop social relationships, although she wanted these badly. The warrior in her dream may have been herself: she wished she was a warrior that could actively rescue herself from her own loneliness. Her diary notes also reflected her loneliness. In one diary entrance she wrote: “Again a day of walking around alone. How boring.” In another entry she noted how she felt “the odd one out”.

After having watched a video that featured vampires, Participant B dreamt the following: “I am standing at the steps of our school. I see a tombstone with an inscription ... but I cannot understand what is written on it. Where the door is, two vampires suddenly appear, a man and a woman. I can see in the greyness of their faces and in the dark that their eyes are not normal. The female attacks me and then the male attacks the female”.

Participant B stated how she woke up with a jolt. She experienced being attacked by the female vampire and rescued by the male vampire as the most bizarre element of the dream. The dream somewhat confirms Adler’s (1969) theory that dream content is derived from

Table 2: Background characteristics of Participant B

Age (years)	14
Problem reported	Social isolation
Home background	Adopted. Two older brothers. Parents have relationship problems and financial difficulties. B has better relationship with stepfather than with stepmother. Isolates herself – low self-worth.
EPI	Very high count on control dimension (percentile 95) – shy and introspective Very low on dyscontrol dimension (percentile 5) – lonely, quiet, reserved.
Three Wishes	More friends, prettier hair, her own pet.

emotionally-laden experiences (watching a disturbing video) the day before a dream. However, the same theme appeared in most of her dreams: that of being rescued by someone of the opposite sex. This male vampire could depict the more aggressive side of her personality that came to the rescue, since Eiznitz (1987) believes that the visual content of a dream is always a representation of oneself. This can be compared to the Jungian theory where the animus is seen as the male part of the female psyche (Jung, 1970:296).

In reference to her dreams of being rescued Participant B said, *"This was rather peculiar since the dream is rather something that I would daydream about to escape from the world when I feel sad"*. This seems to indicate that the adolescent was not in the REM-sleep phase, but in a SWS phase as determined by Hobson *et al.* (1998:243-244).

In another dream, Participant B dreamt of sitting next to one of the *"cool"* girls, *"giggling and acting totally insane"*. She associated this with *"happiness"*. This dream was rooted in the social isolation she experienced. The dream had a compensatory function in the sense that the atmosphere is pleasant and light in contrast to what she experienced in actual life. The most bizarre element of the dream was that she giggled so much. Her association with *"giggle"*, was *"happiness"* and *"joy"*. Her view of being *"cool"* was related to the attention of boys. Thus, the girl wished to be attractive to the opposite sex and this was probably the vision of her dream for the future.

For Participant B, the above is confirmed by her EPI

which indicates that she is shy and lonely. In her Three Wishes she also wished for more friends and for prettier hair so that she could be more attractive to boys.

Participant C's dreams showed how her subconsciousness registered the rejection she experienced from her peers. She described one of her dreams as follows: *"In the bus the children steal my school satchel the whole time. I get off the bus. There is a sign: Wind 150km/h. The wind blows me up in the air. I fall on the ground and am chased by a car. When I round the corner, the car is suddenly gone"*.

The clearest moment was when her briefcase was stolen. She associated the briefcase with *"letters in a bag"*, *"private"* and *"personal matters"*. The adolescents who stole her personal matters were associated with those who violated her privacy by spreading gossip about her in real life. According to her, the strangest part of the dream was being swept up into the air by the wind. She associated this with *"up"*, *"above"* and *"upwards"*. In other words, the wind lifted her from the rejection she experienced in the bus. Free associations of the participant with chase were with *"fear"* and *"anxiety"*. When the car suddenly disappeared, this was associated with *"surprise"* and *"relief"*. Thus, the dream was rooted in the rejection she experienced. She needed to re-evaluate her relationships with her peers.

Another dream was as follows: *"I am at a girl party. K and the other girls are rude to me. I run away and land in front of a car. My body parts are flung everywhere"*.

Free associations were with *"powerless"* and *"vulner-*

Table 3: Background characteristics of Participant C

Age (years)	13
Problem reported	Depression and negative self-concept
Home background	Middle child of three. Poor relationships with siblings. Financial difficulties. Poor relationships between parents. Poor social relationships in general. Rejected by peers.
EPI	High sombre dimension (percentile 82); high aggression (percentile 90); high dyscontrol (percentile 98); low trustful (percentile 3); low gregarious (percentile 3); low bias (percentile 5).
Three Wishes	Peace; financial security for the family; a pleasant future.

able". She felt powerless to improve her relationships with her peers. Her diary notes state that *"today my emotions run high. The children still shout at me and each other about J and M's stories."* This dream helped the participant to vent her feelings which is in accordance to the theory that we often dream to regulate moods (Cartwright & Lloyd, 1994:253). Such dreams have a healing function.

Feelings of aggression were also revealed in the participant's dreams when she repetitively dreamt that she fought others physically – fights that she generally won. These dreams revealed themes such as to *"explode"*, *"scold"* and *"hit"*. Thus, the dreams reflected the conflict she experienced with her peers and served to vent pent-up aggression. In this way the dreams had a regulatory function. The aggression that was revealed by the dream analysis was confirmed by the participant's EPI results. Her Three Wishes did not add any significant information other than the fact that she wished for peace.

Repetitive themes occurred in the dreams of Participant D to illustrate her feelings of loneliness and rejection by her peers. She recounts two of her dreams as follows: *"It is my birthday. I am very excited. However, nobody mentions my birthday. I do not receive any gifts or calls. My mother organises a birthday party for me since it is my birthday. I have invited many friends, but nobody pitches"*.

The facts that nobody mentioned her birthday and that nobody attended were the most pronounced part of the two dreams. The emotions associated with the dreams

were *"disappointment"*, *"sadness"* and *"isolation"*. Thus, the dreams revealed her fear of rejection by peers.

The dreams of Participant D revealed subconscious anxiety. This was illustrated by a dream in which she was riding a bicycle down a slope and suddenly found herself without brakes. The clearest moment of the dream was when *"I rolled and rolled and felt as if I would roll forever"*. The emotions associated with this was *"fear"*, *"anxiety"* and *"helplessness"*. An interview indicated the possibility that this dream was rooted in her powerlessness to achieve sufficiently to please her parents. This confirms the theory of Crijnen, Achenbach and Verhust (1999) that a stressor like unrealistic parental expectations is a precursor of anxiety.

In another example of several similar dreams, Participant D dreamt that she was being chased by a lion but was trapped by a wall. The question was, what chased her in real life? The lion was associated with *"anger"* and *"wants to kill"*. The wall was associated with *"helplessness"* and *"inadequacy"*. If the dream is seen as a reflection of herself, the lion may depict the aggressive part of her personality that desired action and liberation from feelings of helplessness. Hence, the dream may have communicated that she underestimated her potential. Another possibility was the she was *"chased"* by parental expectations to achieve better.

Another dream can be linked to those mentioned above: *"Someone fastened me to train tracks. The train comes nearer and nearer and passes right over me. This is terrible!"*

Table 4: Background characteristics of Participant D

Age (years)	15
Problem reported	Low self-worth
Home background	Elder of two children. Poor relationship with father. High academic expectations of parents cause stress. Rejected by peers.
EPI	High in obedience and cautiousness (99 and 77 percentile respectively); high in social (99 percentile); high in prejudice (percentile 98); low in sombre (percentile 18)
Three Wishes	To achieve well in the examinations; to have improved relationships with parents; to do well at school and get a good job.

Thus, rejection by peers and parental pressure manifested as anxiety in Participant D's subconscious. Her dreams communicated a need to break loose from feelings of inadequacy. She needed to obtain the insight that she underestimated herself and needed to set realistic goals for the future. After a number of sessions she declared, *"Now I understand better how dreams help you and tell you things"*.

Participant D's low EPI count on sombreness is probably denial since her dreams and subsequent interviews reveal sadness. In addition, her high count on the social dimension can be interpreted as a desperate need to be more social. Interviews confirmed this. The inability to meet the parents' expectations that was revealed by her dreams, causing low self-worth, was confirmed by her Three Wishes. She wished to do well at school, improve her relationships with her parents and get a good job (the reason her parents wanted her to do well).

Participant E's dreams were mostly nightmares with repetitive themes in which she was chased by people who aimed to kill. She then woke with a jolt and was filled with fear, indicating her emotional distress (Zadra & Donderi, 2000). Her dreams had recurring themes of *"chasing"*, *"falling"*, *"biting"* and sharp objects with which people wanted to hurt her.

"Falling" was often associated with loss of control and a sense of helplessness. She described one of her dreams as follows: *"A man on a skateboard is chasing me down a dark and never-ending alley. I grow tired, but keep on running. I am overcome with exhaustion ... I fall and he catches me. I see something glittering in his bag"*.

In a similar dream she was chased by a man with a baseball bat. He kept hitting at her and just missed her until he cornered her. As he hit at her, she woke up. When her dreams were analysed, the overpowering feelings were those of fear and anxiety. She stated, *"I was afraid ... I couldn't breathe"*. When the manifest content of the dreams was analysed, it seemed that Participant E experienced inner conflict. She felt vulnerable. Since the man was unfamiliar, it seemed to indicate that she was afraid of the unfamiliar that awaited her on starting secondary school.

In addition, it appeared that something was gnawing at her subconsciously. A significant number of her dreams had *"biting"* as a theme, for example: *"I am in a shop. Suddenly a little monkey jumps on me. He sneers at me and bites my arm. He doesn't want to stop. He bites all over my body"*.

In another dream she is a surfer. While surfing she is bitten in the foot by a crocodile that eventually rips off her foot.

The crocodile seemed to be associated with males that would hurt her. She indicated her fears of being harmed when walking in the street or by boys when going to secondary school. She said: *"I am scared that if I go to high school the matric boys will grab me. (Sigh) It causes stress. I don't want to go to high school, because I am scared. They can inject me with stuff"*.

Her diary notes confirmed that she believed all boys would harm her. Thus, the dreams of Participant E revealed her irrational fears. These fears may have been an indication of underlying insecurity about going to secondary school and her dawning concerns about her

Table 5: Background characteristics of Participant E

Age (years)	13
Problem reported	Anxiety and stress
Home background	Elder of two children. Positive relationship with mother – less positive with father. Highly intelligent. Indicates her irritation and impatience in class. Clearly tense.
EPI	Low in sombre (percentile 4); low in aggression (percentile 39)
Three Wishes	Boys should be less rude to girls; everybody is happier; illness and everything similar should disappear.

developing sexuality. Her dreams, therefore, indicated emotional problems of which she was not consciously aware.

The other theme of her dreams involved sharp tools with which people wanted to harm her. In one example she described her dream as follows: *"I am in hospital and someone grabs me and cuts off my leg. The person wears a mask, but the eyes look familiar. I cannot see who it is."*

Such sharp tools were associated with "cut", "harm" and "kill". This could indicate how threatened she felt because of the realisation that a part of her life was over since she was starting secondary school. This may be related to repressed anger because a particular phase of her life has passed. The latter fact is not confirmed by the participant's low EPI count on aggression. When asked about this she said, *"I think it should be higher, because I become cross with people, but I do not have the guts to show it ... it stays inside"*. Her Three Wishes did not add any useful information although her wish that boys should be less rude to girls may relate to her fear of growing up and her emerging sexuality, as revealed by her dreams.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings indicate that dream analysis by means of the guidelines listed was useful for obtaining insight into the emotional problems of female adolescents. Especially useful was focusing on dreams with repetitive themes. One example is Participant D who repeatedly had "chase" dreams, possibly indicating feeling chased by parental pressures to perform better. The use of free associations was particularly valuable in revealing underlying causes of emotional distress. In one instance, Participant E had dreams with "fall" as the theme which she associated with feeling helpless. In all instances of dream analysis, it was important to focus on the detail of the dream and associated emotions. When A dreamt that her "white" clothes had "brown" marks, this was associated with "clean" and "dirty" and feeling personally tarnished. Focusing on the most pronounced aspect of a dream was a practical starting point for uncovering meaning. In the previous example, the white clothes with the brown spots were the most prominent elements of the participant's dream. By using this as a starting point, the past roots of the dream were revealed,

namely that she had not yet worked through being raped at an earlier age. Possible visions of the dream for the future could be a useful tool in therapy. In one example, Participant B dreamt that she was popular with her peers, even though she experienced rejection. Her dreams also offered practical advice: she dreamt about vampires after watching a vampire movie indicating the importance of avoiding stressful experiences just before bedtime.

When the recorded dreams were discussed and analysed by means of the above-mentioned guidelines, emotions such as anxiety, aggression, social isolation, negative self-concepts and depression were revealed as follows.

Anxiety: In accordance with Fontana (2001:66), anxiety was the most frequently manifested emotion in the girls' dreams. A number of emotional problems were at the root of this, including: fear of rejection, (especially by peers), fear of failing, feelings of inadequacy and other irrational fears, such as those exhibited by Participant E. Themes that manifested in the content of the dreams included being "chased", "cornered" or "stabbed with a knife" or "falling". Within the latter theme, the dreams of Participant D were associated with feelings of inadequacy or helplessness and the dreams of Participant E reflected irrational anxiety or terror.

Aggression: In contrast to Foulkes's (1999:108-110) finding that the dreams of female adolescents usually reflect social problems while aggression is more prevalent in the dreams of boys, the dreams of the girls in the sample reflected a high level of aggression. An example arose from the dreams of Participant C. Themes in her dreams included: "exploding", "scolding", "hitting" and "fighting". In accordance with Foulkes, this aggression was generally caused by negative social relationships. Another cause was the experiencing of conflicting emotions or repressed anger. The regulatory function of dreams was apparent since it seemed that the dreams facilitated the venting of feelings. It also seemed that the level of aggression of dreams was indicative of the level of aggression in the psyche.

Negative self-concept: Female adolescents' self-concepts are particularly vulnerable to problems with relations with peers. Related to a negative self-concept are

lack of confidence, shyness and low self-esteem. Dreams of female adolescents with a negative self-concept reflected rejection by the peer group as well as by themselves. The dreams of Participant D is a point in case. The repetitive theme of isolation reflected the rejection by her peers, while the dreams of Participant A illustrated self-rejection. This confirms findings of O'Dea and Abraham (1999:77-78) on the significant influence of peer relationships on the self-concept.

Social isolation: Unpopular adolescent females isolate themselves from their peers so that their self-confidence decline further. This confirms the findings of Connor (1994:214). Examples were Participants B and C. Conflicting relations with peers (Participant C) and a negative body image (Participant B) were factors contributing to social isolation. The compensatory function of dreams was illustrated by their dreams. For example, Participant B compensated for the social isolation she experienced by dreaming she was socialising with the popular girls at school. In Participant C's dreams the wind lifted her from the rejection by peers which she experienced when travelling on a bus.

Depression: Emotional problems, such as a negative self-concept, social isolation and anxiety, resulted in feelings of melancholy and helplessness. If adolescent females could not handle the emotional problems they experienced, depression resulted. The adolescents in the sample who were depressed, "escaped" in their dreams. Examples are Participants A, B and D. Participant D felt that she could not meet the high academic expectations of her parents. This resulted in helplessness and depression and was reflected in her dreams. This is in accordance with the findings of Aydin and Öztütüncü (2001:78-79) that unduly high parental control and expectations, correlate positively with depression.

The revealed emotions were sometimes in contrast to the EPI results. For example, although Participant A was depressed she had a low score on the depression dimension, indicating denial. Moreover, Participant D had a high score on the social dimension even though she was rejected by her peers. This score actually indicated her wish to be popular with her peers. For others, the EPI results confirmed the findings from the dream analysis. In general, the Three Wishes did not make any significant contribution to the investigation,

other than they sometimes confirmed dream analysis data. One example of this is that all three wishes of Participant D confirmed that she felt helpless about pleasing her parents. This caused depression.

CONCLUSION

The study is limited by the fact that only a small number of white, female adolescents participated. Conclusions are thus limited to this small group and do not make any claims at generalisation. It is recommended that the study be replicated with boys as well as other cultural and age groups. However, a number of recommendations to psychologists and educational psychologists follow logically from the conclusions.

The most important conclusion is the fact that dream analysis by means of the guidelines listed, is extremely useful to educational psychologists and psychologists for exploring the emotional problems of female adolescents. Although other techniques may also be implemented, (for example, the EPI or Three Wishes), this is not imperative. EPI results may be misleading because of the natural inclination of some participants to give "agreeable" answers or to be in denial. Regular meetings with clients to discuss and analyse dream content from written records with reference to the guidelines listed, are required.

In all instances, the emotional problems of the female adolescents in the sample were revealed by recurring themes in their dreams. For example, the theme of "falling" could be associated with helplessness and anxiety. Aggression, social isolation, negative self-concepts and depression were also uncovered and possible causes could be explored. Dreams reveal emotional problems of which adolescents are unaware or which they deny. Examples include feelings of helplessness or irrational fears. These emotions are revealed by focusing on the manifest content of the dream as well as the detail and affective aspects thereof. By means of associations, the past roots of the emotional problems are uncovered. These include interpersonal problems, (especially with peers), traumatic experiences or fear. When exploring the meaning of dreams, participants became aware of how their dreams compensated for emotional problems (for example, social isolation) or regulated their feelings (for example, by venting repressed anger). Dreams also communicated future

possibilities.

The research mentioned in this article has led to greater self-understanding on the part of the adolescents and has thus improved their mental wellbeing. Lukeman (2001:12) states that "if you get an idea of the meaning, [of your dreams], you get two good results: you won't have to have the dream again and you have practical advice for your real outer life". He adds, "Nightmares can open the door to love and healing ... They are a gift from your unconscious mind".

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ADLER, A 1969: Understanding human nature. New York: Fawcett.
- ANGEL, VT 1999: The dream unbound. **International Forum of Psychoanalysis**, 8:41-48.
- AYDIN, B & ÖZTÜTÜNCÜ, F 2001: Examination of adolescents' negative thoughts, depressive mood and family environment. **Adolescence**, 36(141):78-82.
- AZZONE, P; SALVATORE, F; FRENI, F; MAGGIOLINI, A; PROVANTINI, K & VIGANÒ, D 1998: How early adolescents describe their dreams: a quantitative analysis. **Adolescence**, 33(29):229-244.
- BULKELEY, K 2000: Dream interpretation: Practical methods for pastoral care and counselling. **Pastoral Psychology**, 49(2):95-104.
- CARTWRIGHT, RD & LLOYD, SR 1994: Early REM sleep: A compensatory change in depression? **Psychiatry Research**, 51:245-253.
- CONNOR, L 1994: Peer relations and peer pressure. **Educational Psychology in Practice**, 9:207-215.
- COOPER, P 1999: Understanding and supporting children with emotional and behavioral difficulties. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- CRESWELL, JW 1994: Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches. London: Sage.
- CRIJNEN, AA; ACHENBACH, TM & VERHULST, FC 1999: Problems reported by parents of children in multiple cultures: The Child Behavior Checklist syndrome constructs. **American Journal of Psychiatry**, 156:569-574.
- EIZNITZ, A 1987: The perspective of self-representation in dreams. Madison: IUP.
- FONTANA, D 2001: The secret language of dreams. London: Duncan Baird.
- FORDHAM, F 1953: An introduction to Jung's psychology. Suffolk: Richard Clay.
- FOULKES, D 1999: Children's dreaming and the development of consciousness. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- FREUD, S 1971: The interpretation of dreams. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- GORDON, J & GRANT, G 1997: How we feel. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- HOBSON, JA 1994: The chemistry of consciousness: How the brain changes its mind. New York: Little Brown.
- HOBSON, JA; PACE-SCHOTT, EF; STICKGOLD, R & KAHN, D 1998: To dream or not to dream: relevant data from neuroimaging and electrophysiological studies. **Current Opinion in Neurobiology**, 8:239-244.
- JUNG, CG 1970: Dreams. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- JUNG, CG 1986: Volume sixteen: The practice of psychotherapy; 2nd edition. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- LUKEMAN, A 2001: Nightmares: How to make sense of our darkest dreams. Dublin: Newleaf.
- MAREE, JG 1998: Kennis van die taal van drome as kritiese aspek van droomontleding: Enkele gevallestudies. **Journal of Education and Training**, 19(1):31-45.
- MCMILLAN, JH & SCHUMACHER, S 1997: Research in education: A conceptual framework; 4th edition. New York: Longman.
- O'DEA, A & ABRAHAM, SM 1999: Association between self-concept and body weight, gender and pubertal development among male and female adolescents. **Adolescence**, 34(133):69-79.
- ODENDAL, FF & GOUWS, RH 2000: HAT, Verklarende Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse taal; 4de uitgawe. Midrand: Perskor.
- PLUG, C; LOUW, DAP; GOUWS, LA & MEYER, WF 1997: Verklarende en vertalende Silekundewoordeboek; 3de uitgawe. Johannesburg: Heinemann.
- POGGENPOEL, M 1998: Data analysis in qualitative research. (In: DE VOS, AS; STRYDOM, H; FOUCHÉ, CB; POGGENPOEL, M; SCHURINK, E & W 1998: Research at grass roots: A primer for the caring professions. Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp 334-353.)
- PUNAMÄKI, RL 1998: The role of dreams in protecting psychological well-being in traumatic conditions. **International Journal of Behavioral Development**, 22(3):559-588.
- RICHARDS, MH & LARSEN, R 1993: Pubertal development and the daily subjective states of young adolescents. **Journal of Research on Adolescence**, 3:145-169.
- SCHURINK, EM 1998: The methodology of unstructured face-to-face interviewing. (In: DE VOS, AS; STRYDOM, H; FOUCHÉ, CB; POGGENPOEL, M; SCHURINK, E & W 1998: Research at grass roots: A primer for the caring professions. Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp 297-312.)
- STRYDOM, H 1998: Ethical aspects of research in the caring professions. (In: DE VOS, AS; STRYDOM, H; FOUCHÉ, CB; POGGENPOEL, M; SCHURINK, E & W 1998: Research at grass roots: a primer for the caring professions. Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp 23-36.)

-
- SUE, D; SUE, D & SUE, S 1997: Understanding abnormal behavior; 5th edition. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- VAN DEN DEALE, D 1992: Direct interpretation of dreams: some basic principles and technical rules. **American Journal of Psychoanalysis**, 52(2):99-118.
- VAN NIEKERK, M 2001: Monster busting. Pretoria: Unisa.
- VERHULST, FC; ACHENBACH, TM; ALTHAUS, M & AKKERHUIS, GW 1998: A comparison of syndromes derived from the Child Behavior Checklist for American and Dutch girls aged 6-11 and 12-16. **Journal of Child Psychology**, 29:879-895.
- VREY, JD 1979: The self-actualising educand. Pretoria: Unisa.
- WIDEN, HA 2000: Using dreams in brief therapy. **Psychoanalytic Social Work**, 7(2):1-24.
- WINEGAR, R & LEVIN, R 1997: Sex differences in the object representations in the dreams of adolescents. **Sex Roles**, 36(718):503-516.
- ZADRA, A & DONDERI, DC 2000: Nightmares and bad dreams: Their prevalence and relationship to well-being. **Journal of Abnormal Psychology**, 109(2):273-281.