



# Dream Rebound

## The Return of Suppressed Thoughts in Dreams

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# Abstract

Subjects spent five minutes before sleeping jotting down their thoughts. They were assigned to three conditions: suppression, expression, or mention. The intention of the pre-sleep writing was to prompt subjects to report dreams of the target person. The subjects in the suppression condition were particularly likely to have an increase in dreams involving the target. Dream content was measured by subjects' self-reports and raters' coding of mentions included in written dream reports.

# Intro

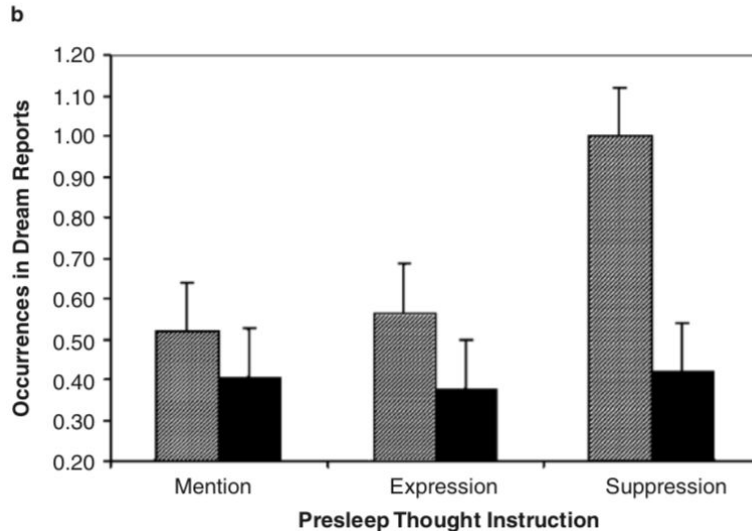
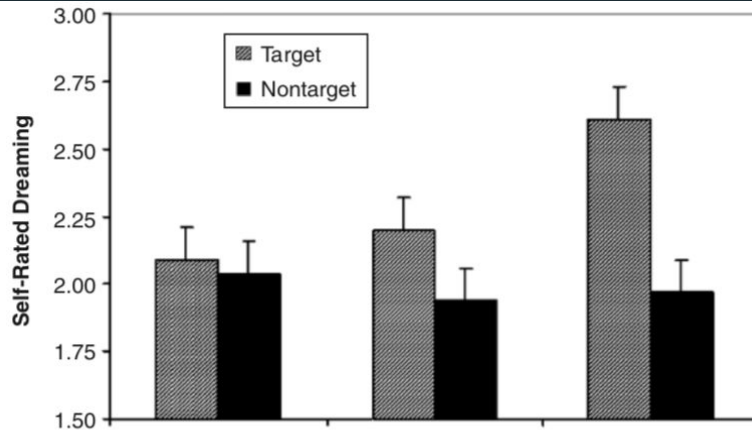
- Freud's theory on dreams and the unconscious
- Suppression while awake. Theory of ironic processes of mental control
- Intentional control of mental state:
  - (a) conscious operating process
  - (b) unconscious automatic ironic process
- Suppressed thoughts become more accessible during dream states because the deactivation of areas in the prefrontal cortex
- Prior evidence includes traumatic memories manifesting in dreams
- People abstaining from substances report dreaming of using
- Emotions and suppression regularly co-occur

# Methods

- Participants: Undergraduates from UT at San Antonio
  - 202 women, 128 men (mean age = 20.36 years)
- Design: Two Way ANOVA
  - Factor 1: 3 levels (suppression, expression, mention)
  - Factor 2: 2 levels (crush, non-crush)
- Procedure: Presleep Task- write all thoughts that pop into their mind for 5 min
  - Suppression task: try not to think about target person
  - Expression: try to focus all thoughts on the target person
  - Mentioning: indicate target person and then write freely
- Post-sleep Task: write down all dreams from that night
- Data Analysis: 1 of 2 blind raters
  - Coded for number of times the crush and non-crush were mentioned, emotional intensity, valence, and eroticism

# Results

- Overall, thought suppression resulted in less unintended thoughts about the target
- Suppressing thoughts about the target increased dreams about the target
- There was no significant difference in frequency of dreams about crushes vs. non-crushes, instead suppression in general seemed to lead to more frequent dreams regardless of the emotional response to targets
- Suppression resulted in 34.1% of dreams about the target, expression resulted in 28.2% of dreams about the target, and mentions resulted in 24.3% of dreams about the target



# Discussion

- Presleep references to a specific person can influence dreaming about that person
- The suppression of thoughts leads to an enhanced accessibility of the thoughts
  - Due to deactivation of prefrontal areas associated with executive control during dreaming
- Emotional attraction had no main effect on dream self-ratings or reports
- Changed previously held beliefs about dreaming
  - Activation-information-mode model
  - Activation-synthesis theory of dreaming

# Reference

Wegner, D. M., Wenzlaff, R. M., & Kozak, M. (2004). Dream Rebound  
The Return of Suppressed Thoughts in Dreams. *Journal of  
Psychological Science, 15*(04), 232-236.