

“I don’t like Mondays”: Weekdays in a long dream series

Michael Schredl

Central Institute of Mental Health, Medical Faculty Mannheim/Heidelberg University, Germany

Summary. Whereas many dream studies focus on topics like dream characters and social interaction, the present analysis of a long dream series (N = 14,233 dreams) analyzed the occurrence of weekdays in dreams. Interestingly, there was a clear preference of weekend days (Saturday, Sunday) compared to workdays (hence the title of the article). Moreover, work-related topics were significant more likely to occur in dreams with workday references compared to dreams with weekend references. The high occurrence of weekend days in dream might be associated with a higher salience of weekend-related activities. To summarize, studying “mundane” dream aspects like time of the day, weekdays, seasons and so on might be helpful in developing a more elaborated version of the continuity hypothesis.

Keywords: Dream series, weekdays, work-related dreams, hobby-related dreams, continuity hypothesis

1. Introduction

Dream content analytic studies often focused on dream characters (e.g., partners, friends), interactions (aggression, friendliness, sexual), and settings (indoors, outdoors) (Domhoff, 1996; Hall & Van de Castle, 1966; Schredl, 2018). More formal aspects of dream content were less often studied. For example, Schredl (2004) studied the occurrence of summer and winter references in dreams and could demonstrated that dreams recorded in the winter included more winter-related topics like skiing, snow, Christmas etc. In the same dream sample (N = 1,612 dreams reported by 425 students), Schredl and Knoth (2012) found that nighttime scenarios in dreams are characterized on average by more negative emotions compared to daytime dream scenarios. These findings would be in line with the continuity hypothesis of dreaming stating that dreams reflect waking life (Schredl, 2018) as it has been shown for topics like music (König et al., 2018), media consumption (Moverley, Schredl, & Göritz, 2018), pets (Schredl, Bailer, Weigel, & Welt, 2020; Schredl, Bailer, Weigel, & Welt, 2021), or sports (Erlacher & Schredl, 2004; Schredl & Erlacher, 2008). However, Schredl and Knoth (2012) and Schredl (2024) who could replicated the more frequent winter topics in winter dreams were not able to show that summer topics (sunshine, swimming) were more common in summer dreams compared to winter dreams. One explanation might be that people think about summer during the winter time, e.g., remember last summer holiday or planning an upcoming summer holiday. This would indicate that dreams not only reflect the season present in waking life but also season-related thoughts (Schredl, 2004). For clarifying whether this idea is valid, the frequency

of daydreaming about summer during the wintertime have to be studied in detail. That fantasies and not actual behavior was related to dream content could be demonstrated for erotic dreams (Schredl, Desch, Röming, & Spachmann, 2009). Another weather-related topic that was reflected in dreams was global warming as dreams recorded from 1984 to 2015 included less and less snow, ice, and hail over the years – In parallel with the decrease of “ice” days (days below 0° Celsius) in Germany (Schredl, 2021). These studies indicate that such characteristics also show some continuity with waking life. Schredl (2024) analyzed the references to weekdays in dreams and found that Saturdays and Sundays were more common in dreams compared to working days. One speculation that was presented hypothesized that emotional salience of the weekend activities was higher compared to the more mundane work-related themes occurring in workday dreams (Schredl, 2024). However, the hypothesis that workday dreams indeed include more often work-related topics was not tested.

The present study is an extension of the Schredl (2024) analysis that included a subsample of the current dream series. It was hypothesized that dreams with references to workdays (Monday to Friday) include more often work-related topics compared to dreams with references to the weekend. On the other hand, hobby-related topics should occur more often in weekend dreams compared to workday dreams.

2. Method

2.1. Participant and dream diary

The male participant kept an unstructured dream diary from the age of 22, beginning in September, 1984 through April 2019. During this time, he recorded 14,233 dreams. The mean dream length was 140.24 ± 85.86 words (range: 3 to 760 words). The number of dream that were recorded on each weekday are depicted in Table 1. Out of the total number of 14,233 dreams, 1,104 dreams were recorded during naps during the day with the maximum of 247 dreams recorded on Sunday and 217 dreams on Saturday. The number of nap dreams on workdays ranged from 108 to 150.

Corresponding address:

M. Schredl, Dr., Schlaflabor, Zentralinstitut für Seelische Gesundheit, Postfach 12 21 20, 68072 Mannheim, Germany.
Email: Michael.Schredl@zi-mannheim.de

Submitted for publication: February 2025

Accepted for publication: March 2025

DOI: 10.11588/ijodr.2025.1.109195

Table 1. Weekdays in dreams for dreams recorded on a weekday.

Weekday dream was recorded	Dreams	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	
Monday	2,134	0.52%	0.28%	0.05%	0.05%	0.33%	0.52%	0.75%	
Tuesday	1,970	0.20%	0.15%	0.15%	0.05%	0.05%	0.56%	0.96%	
Wednesday	1,972	0.15%	0.10%	0.05%	0.05%	0.05%	0.56%	0.46%	
Thursday	1,847	0.00%	0.05%	0.05%	0.54%	0.32%	0.38%	0.54%	
Friday	1,868	0.27%	0.05%	0.11%	0.32%	0.64%	0.32%	0.80%	
Saturday	2,069	0.29%	0.00%	0.19%	0.14%	0.39%	0.92%	0.53%	
Sunday	2,376	0.13%	0.17%	0.04%	0.17%	0.17%	0.55%	1.26%	
Chi ² -Test (df = 6)		X ² = 96.7 p < .0001	X ² = 14.3 p = .0267	X ² = 9.2 p = .1624	X ² = 4.9 p = .5516	X ² = 21.1 p = .0018	X ² = 18.0 p = .0045	X ² = 8.0 p = .2391	X ² = 13.9 p = .0309

The dreamer studied electrical engineering till 1986, then studied psychology till 1991. After that, he did a PhD in dream research, finished in 1998, and worked in the sleep laboratory of the Central Institute of Mental Health. The weekdays associated with work are typically from Monday to Friday, with some exceptions working weekends (at least Saturday).

2.2. Procedure

Nightmare Frequency. To obtain an estimate of nightmare The dream reports were originally hand-written and were later – by the dreamer himself – typed and entered into a

database, Alchera 3.72, created by Harry Bosma (www.mythwell.com). This database allows assigning keywords to the dreams, also a task carried out by the dreamer. Each dream was coded for the occurrence of work-related and hobby-related topics (see Tables 2 and 3). It was possible that a dream can include several work-related and/or hobby-related topics. For the analysis, each dream was coded as work-related if at least one of the work-related topics was present and as hobby-related if one of the hobby-related topics were present. Weekdays were indexed if it was explicitly mentioned in the dream.

The Alchera software also provides a word count for each dream report. Dream reports did not include redundancies or words not related to the dream experience itself. The analysis unit was a single dream report. The data were

Table 2. Work-related topics in dreams (1,404 dreams with at least one work-related topic).

Topic	Frequency
Work-related topics (not specified)	236
Work-related topics (CIMH)	178
Instructor (Autogenic Training)	50
Promotion	1
Meeting	103
Supervisor (students)	12
Lecturer job	88
Do not find my office	10
Research-related topic (not specified)	138
Job as a student (research)	14
Engineer	14
Neuroscience	1
Parapsychology	2
Pharmaceutical industry	1
Internship	12
Being an examiner	4
Psychiatry	2
Psychotherapist	51
Work-related conversation	5
Sleep research	76
Sleep medicine	117
Nightmare counselling	4
Studying	186
Testing another person	3
Dream research	224
Negative work-related topic	10
Attending a lecture	29

Table 3. Hobby-related topics in dreams (1,644 dreams with at least one hobby-related topic).

Topic	Frequency
Fishing	12
Visiting an exhibition	20
Handicrafts	146
Archery	12
Party/informal gathering	537
Gardening	12
Cinema	65
Funfair	40
Art	3
Painting	22
Paddling	4
Sauna	1
Swimming pool	154
Personal growth seminar	50
Show event	29
Sightseeing	33
Sport event (spectator)	35
Surfing	1
Diving	14
Tennis	6
Theatre	159
Listing to talks/attending seminars (not work-related topics)	297
Hiking	29
Zoo	3



Figure 1. Distribution of weekdays in a long dream series (N = 14,233).

exported into an Excel spreadsheet (Microsoft) and data analysis was carried out using the SAS 9.4 software package for Windows. For the linear trend across the 35-yr. diary period, Spearman rank correlations were computed. The statistical tests for the comparison between workday dreams and weekend dreams followed the algorithm published by Klingenberg (2008). This approach was developed for binary outcome variables and time series with gaps. Using the SAS 9.4 for Windows software package, the statistician (second author of Schredl & Reinhard, 2012) used the GLIMMIX procedure with a power covariance structure to implement an autoregressive Generalized Linear Mixed Model (AR-GLMM) with a logit link and serial correlation according to the formula presented in Klingenberg (2008).

3. Results

Overall, the dream series included 315 references to weekdays. The most common weekdays were Sunday and Saturday; whereas Tuesday and Wednesday were the rarest weekdays in this series (see Figure 1). The weekdays were grouped into workdays (N = 125 dreams; 0.88% of all dreams) and weekends (N = 182; 1.28% of all dreams). The slight reduction in sample size occurred because in rare cases, two references to weekdays occurred in one dream, e.g., Saturday and Sunday. The percentages of workday dreams and weekend dreams per year are depicted in Figure 2. There was a small negative linear trend over the 35-yr. period for the percentage of workday dreams ($r = -.174$, $p = .318$) and a small positive linear trend for the weekend dreams ($r = .232$, $p = .180$). The difference between the correlation coefficients was marginally significant ($z = -1.9$, $p = .0536$).

Whereas 29 dreams with a reference to work-related topic were found in workday dreams, only 13 weekend dreams included a reference to work (see Figure 3). The difference was statistical significant ($t = 3.72$, $p = .0001$). Although the percentage of the hobby-related dreams (N = 24) was slightly higher for the weekend dreams compared to the workday dreams (N = 11 with hobby-related topics) (see Figure 3), the difference was not statistically significant ($t = -1.3$, $p = .1061$).

As the number of dreams recorded on different weekday differed significantly (see Table 1), it was tested whether the day the dream was recorded is related to percentage of work-related and/or hobby-related dreams. Unfortunately, the algorithm of Klingenberg (2008) can not handle the large sample size (total dream sample) and, thus, the inter-

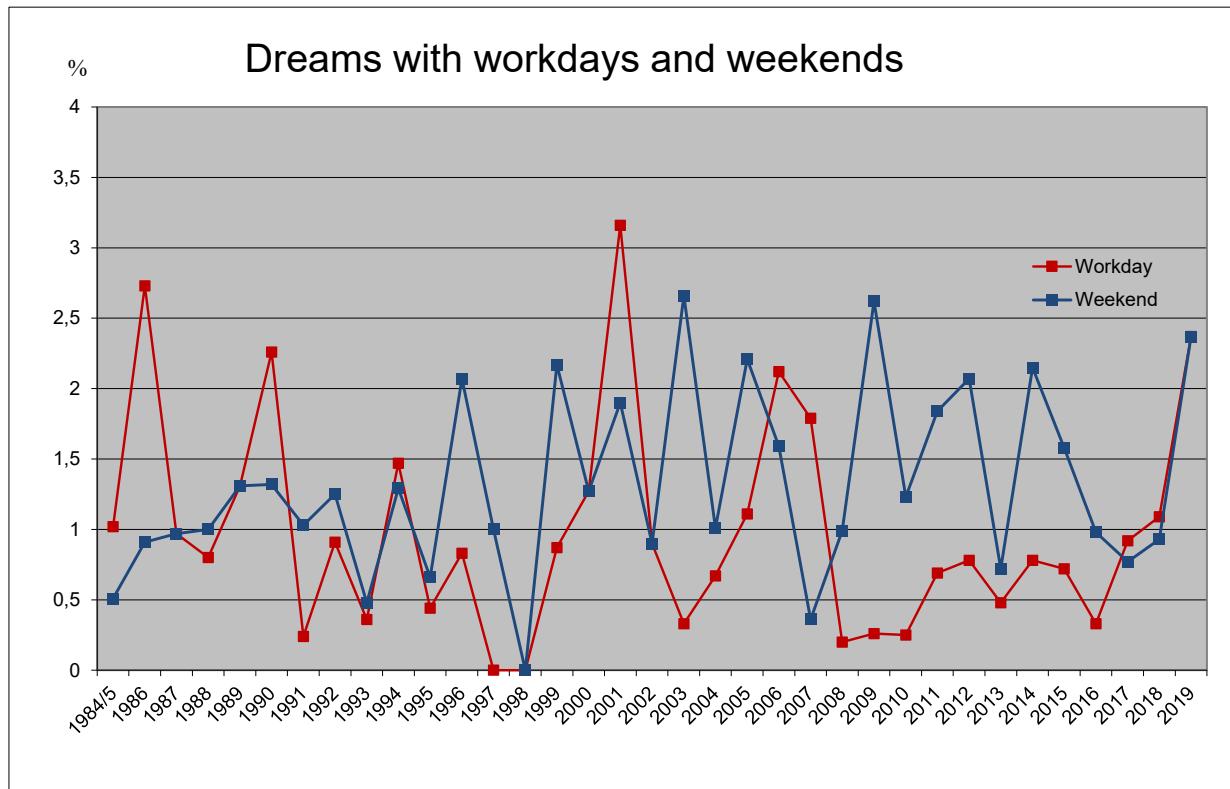


Figure 2. Workday and weekend dreams per year.

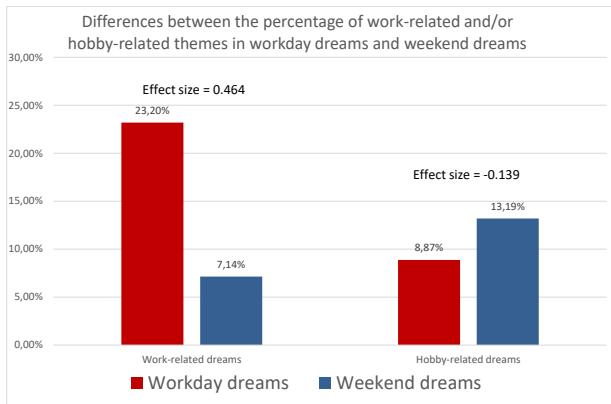


Figure 3. Differences between the percentage of work-related and/or hobby-related themes in workday dreams and weekend dreams.

dependence of the data could not be considered using the Chi²-Test. Even though, there were slight variations in the percentages of work-related and hobby-related dreams for the seven weekdays (see Figure 4), the tests showed no significant differences: $\chi^2 = 7.4$, df = 6, $p = .2806$ (work-related topics) and $\chi^2 = 3.5$, df = 6, $p = .7420$ (hobby-related topics).

We also looked – in an exploratory way – whether weekdays in dreams correspond with the weekdays the dream was recorded (see Table 1). Interestingly, there was effect for four weekdays (Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays), that is, the weekend day shows more often up if the dream was recorded on that specific weekday. Due to the small number of dreams with references to weekdays, this analysis could not be carried out for the subgroup of nap dreams. Subtracting the nap dreams from the total sample yielded almost identical results compared to the analyses including all dreams of the series.

Dream examples

Dream 1 (workday, work-related): “I’m in the Central Institute of Mental Health. Someone has given me a couple of suit jackets that belong to Mr. V. (colleague). I meet him by chance and he already has a few items of clothing in his hand. He is friendly and takes the three or four jackets from me. A cardigan with a shirt does not belong to him, but to Mr. S. (another colleague). He is just passing by and I give Harry his jacket. There is a lot going on in the hall, people are going home; it is Friday afternoon. Among others, Mr. M. (another colleague) and other people from the administration are there. I’m going to stay a little longer.”

Dream 2 (weekend, work-related): “I go to a corner store on Sunday morning, where I’ve arranged to meet one of my student groups (experimental psychology with the topic of subliminal perception and dreams) at 9:30. When I get there, I see that there is a lot going on.”

4. Discussion

The present findings indicate that weekdays are not equally distributed in dreams; Saturday and Sundays are more common in this dream series compared to workdays. Whereas

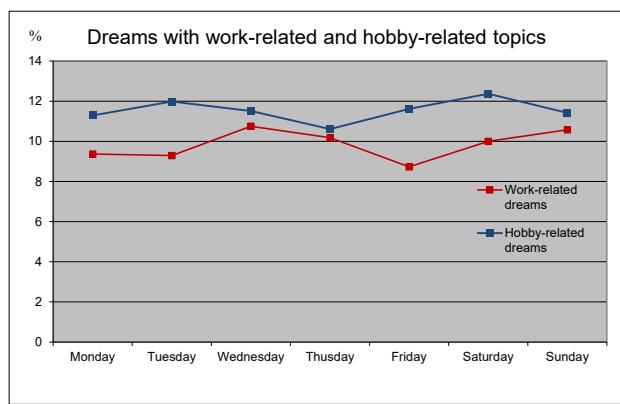


Figure 4. Dream with work-related and hobby-related topics for weekdays on which the dreams were recorded.

work-related themes are more common in dreams with references to workdays compared to dreams with references to weekends, the difference between the percentage of hobby-related dreams between workday and weekend dreams did not reach statistical significance. This finding could not be explained by the number of dreams recorded on each weekday.

From a methodological viewpoint, it is obvious that the findings cannot be generalized as the analyses were based on one dreamer. For example, it would be very interesting to study whether commitment to work or other work-related variables might affect the association between weekdays in dream and work-related topics (in addition of affecting the percentage of work-related dreams). Nevertheless, the present findings can inform large-scaled studies looking into the distribution of weekdays within dreams and their relationship with contents that are associated with workdays and/or weekends. The coding of the dreams was performed by the dreamer himself. Whereas the coding of weekdays is fairly simple and not error-prone as only explicitly mentioned references to weekdays were coded, the coding of work-related and hobby-related activities is more complex (cf. Tables 2 and 3). However, an interrater reliability study (Schredl, Burchert, & Grabatin, 2004) indicated that simple scales (a specific topic is present or not present) typically showed high interrater reliabilities. Therefore, a possibly biasing effect of the coding method on the results seems very unlikely.

Based on the continuity hypothesis (Schredl, 2018), an equal distribution of weekdays was expected but not found. There was a clear preference for weekend days. This difference was not explained by the slightly higher number of dreams recorded on Sundays. Interestingly, a re-analysis of 1,612 dreams reported by 425 students (for details see: König & Schredl, 2021), references to workdays from Monday to Friday were found in 2 to 4 dreams each, whereas dreams with references for weekend days were more common (Saturday 3 dreams, Sunday 7 dreams, “weekend” not specified whether Saturday or Sunday 17 dreams). For students, this seems plausible, as weekends are associated with going home (most students studied not in their hometown) meeting family, friends, and partners. Schredl (2024) also analyzing the present dream series (N = 12,697 dreams) hypothesized that the preference of weekend days in dreams might be explained along the lines that week-

end activities are more salient to the dreamer than mundane work-related activities and, thus, show up more often in dreams. The present study indeed support the idea that dreams with workday references include more often work-related topics. Fitting within this line of thought, previous research (Malinowski & Horton, 2014; Schredl, 2006) supported the idea that emotionally relevant waking-life experiences have a higher chance to be incorporated into subsequent dreams compared to more mundane topics. Overall, the unequal distribution of weekdays in dreams support the idea that the continuity between waking and dreaming might be affected by specific variables like emotional intensity (cf. Schredl, 2003). It would be very interesting to study whether dreams with references to workdays are not as intense as the weekend dreams. Unfortunately, the codings performed by the dreamer for this dream series did not include intensity ratings.

The difference between the time courses of workdays and weekend days over the years was not significant. As the dreamer was working a lot at the beginning of the dream series period, e.g., during his Ph.D. studies and research indicates that working a lot of hours and stressful work is related to more frequent work-related dreams (Schredl, Anderson, Kahlert, & Kumpf, 2020) the marginally significant difference in linear trends of dreams with references to workdays (slight decrease) and dreams with references to weekends (slight increase) seems plausible. Having a permanent research position (not worrying about the future) and a decrease of work-related stress would allow more time for weekend activities and, therefore, increase the frequency of weekend dreams. This is again in line with the findings that the amount of time spent with hobbies is related to the frequency of hobby-related dreams (Schredl, Coors, Anderson, Kahlert, & Kumpf, 2023). Thus, an interesting hypothesis would be to study whether the ratio of workdays to weekend days in dreams reflect the work-life balance of the dreamer.

The finding that dreams with references to workdays feature more often work-related topics (see dream example 1) is perfectly in agreement with the continuity hypothesis of dreaming (Schredl, 2018). However, dream example 2 clearly indicate that there are dreams that are discontinuous to the waking life of the dreamer who never had meetings with students on Sundays. It is still an open question why dreams can also be discontinuous to waking life; for a discussion see: Hobson and Schredl (2011). The relationship between hobby-related dream topics and weekdays was not as clear-cut as the increased occurrence of work-related topics within workday dreams. One might speculate that the dichotomy regarding hobby-related themes is not as rigid as for work-related themes: Partying, attending a concert, visiting an art exhibition can also be done on weekdays, typically less often compared to weekends. As, on the other hand, work-related stuff was done relatively rarely on weekends, e.g., teaching; this might explain that only the work-related themes showed the expected difference clearly but not the hobby-related themes.

The explanatory analysis showed a relationship between the weekday the dream was recorded and the weekday within in the dreams. The day-residue effect (the events of the previous day have the highest chance to be incorporated into dreams; see Schredl, 2018) would predict that the dreams that were recorded, for example, on Sundays should include most often references to Saturdays. The

data suggest that the same days (Sunday in dreams recorded on Sunday etc.) are more common. This might support the idea that dreams might reflect thoughts about the next day that occurred the day before or even directly prior to sleep onset. However, analyzing weekdays in dreams is not providing clear evidence for this hypothesis as one might also postulate that it is a dream-lag effect of almost a week; this have been reported in several studies (Blagrove, Henley-Einion, Barnett, Edwards, & Seage, 2011; Eichenlaub et al., 2019; Nielsen & Powell, 1989). To study a possible dream-lag effect, one has to look at non-recurring events/experiences to make meaningful links between a specific day the waking-life experience occurred and the occurrence of the dream (cf. Schredl, 2018).

To summarize, analyzing the occurrence of weekdays in a long dream series provided clues regarding possible factors that might affect the continuity between waking and dreams. Studying “mundane” dream aspects like time of the day, weekdays, seasons and so on are, thus, helpful in developing a more elaborated version of the continuity hypothesis (cf. Schredl, 2003). Specifically for the workday/weekend topic, it would be interesting to study the emotional intensity of those dreams, similar to the study comparing the emotional tone of nighttime dream setting (more often negatively toned) and daytime dreams setting (Schredl & Knoth, 2012).

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Harry Bosma for programming the tool used to convert the Alchera database into the Excel spreadsheet format.

AI Statement

For the translation of the German dream reports into English DeepL was used. Otherwise, no AI tools or AI assistants were used for literature search, data analyses, writing, and grammar.

References

- Blagrove, M., Henley-Einion, J., Barnett, A., Edwards, D., & Seage, C. H. (2011). A replication of the 5-7 day dream-lag effect with comparison of dreams to future events as control for baseline matching. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 20(2), 384-391.
- Domhoff, G. W. (1996). *Finding meaning in dreams: A quantitative approach*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Eichenlaub, J. B., van Rijn, E., Phelan, M., Ryder, L., Gaskell, M. G., Lewis, P. A., Walker, M. P., & Blagrove, M. (2019). The nature of delayed dream incorporation ('dream lag effect'): Personally significant events persist, but not major daily activities or concerns. *Journal of Sleep Research*, 28(1), 1-8.
- Erlacher, D., & Schredl, M. (2004). Dreams reflecting waking sport activities: a comparison of sport and psychology students. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 35, 301-308.
- Hall, C. S., & Van de Castle, R. L. (1966). *The content analysis of dreams*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Hobson, J. A., & Schredl, M. (2011). The continuity and discontinuity between waking and dreaming: A Dialogue between Michael Schredl and Allan Hobson concerning

the adequacy and completeness of these notions. *International Journal of Dream Research*, 4, 3-7.

Klingenberg, B. (2008). Regression models for binary time series with gaps. *Computational Statistics and Data Analysis*, 52(8), 4076-4090.

König, N., Fischer, N., Friedemann, M., Pfeiffer, T., Göritz, A. S., & Schredl, M. (2018). Music in dreams and music in waking: An online study. *Psychomusicology: Music, Mind, and Brain*, 28(2), 65-70.

König, N., & Schredl, M. (2021). Music in dreams: A diary study. *Psychology of Music*, 49(3), 351-359.

Malinowski, J. E., & Horton, C. L. (2014). Evidence for the preferential incorporation of emotional waking-life experiences into dreams. *Dreaming*, 24(1), 18-31.

Moverley, M., Schredl, M., & Göritz, A. S. (2018). Media dreaming and media consumption – An online study. *International Journal of Dream Research*, 11(2), 127-134.

Nielsen, T. A., & Powell, R. A. (1989). The 'dream-lag' effect: A 6-day temporal delay in dream content incorporation. *Psychiatric Journal of the University of Ottawa*, 14, 561-565.

Schredl, M. (2003). Continuity between waking and dreaming: A proposal for a mathematical model. *Sleep and Hypnosis*, 5(1), 38-52.

Schredl, M. (2004). Seasons in dreams. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 98, 1438-1440.

Schredl, M. (2006). Factors affecting the continuity between waking and dreaming: Emotional intensity and emotional tone of the waking-life event. *Sleep and Hypnosis*, 8, 1-5.

Schredl, M. (2018). *Researching dreams: The fundamentals*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Schredl, M. (2021). Does global warming affect dream content? Analyzing a 30-yr. dream series. *International Journal of Dream Research*, 14(1), 144-146.

Schredl, M. (2024). *Analyzing a long dream series - What can we learn about how dreaming works?* Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Schredl, M., Anderson, L. M., Kahlert, L. K., & Kumpf, C. S. (2020). Work-Related Dreams: An Online Survey. *Clocks & Sleep*, 2(3), 273-281.

Schredl, M., Bailer, C., Weigel, M. S., & Welt, M. S. (2020). Dreaming about Dogs: An Online Survey. *Animals*, 10(10), 1915.

Schredl, M., Bailer, C., Weigel, M. S., & Welt, M. S. (2021). Dreaming about cats: An online survey. *Dreaming*, 31(3), 279-288.

Schredl, M., Burchert, N., & Grabatin, Y. (2004). The effect of training on interrater reliability in dream content analysis. *Sleep and Hypnosis*, 6, 139-144.

Schredl, M., Coors, J., Anderson, L. M., Kahlert, L. K., & Kumpf, C. S. (2023). Work-life balance in dreams: Frequency and emotional tone of work-related and hobby-related dreams. *Journal of Sleep Research*, 32(2), e13674.

Schredl, M., Desch, S., Röming, F., & Spachmann, A. (2009). Erotic dreams and their relationship to waking-life sexuality. *Sexologies*, 18, 38-43.

Schredl, M., & Erlacher, D. (2008). Relationship between waking sport activities, reading and dream content in sport and psychology students. *Journal of Psychology*, 142(3), 267-275.

Schredl, M., & Knoth, I. S. (2012). Nighttime in dreams. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 114, 457-460.

Schredl, M., & Reinhard, I. (2012). Frequency of a romantic partner in a dream series. *Dreaming*, 22(4), 223-229.