

# Assessing dream work: Conceptualizing dream work as an intervention in dream life

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*Summary.* How can we gauge the effectiveness of dream work? The question is especially difficult when we try to encompass the various theories of dreams such as those of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and the many current forms of dream work. A rationale is offered for why this has proved so difficult. A schematic approach to depicting dream work is described that illuminates some of the issues and a novel approach to assessing dream work is offered. Typically, the measures used for effective dream work are self-assessments by the dreamer (e.g. DeCicco, 2007, Hill & Knox, 2010, Taylor, 1998, Ullman, 1994). A different approach is possible if we conceptualize dream work as an intervention in the dreamer's dream life. The dream work can then be judged by its influence on the next dream. This is of value to the dream worker as it provides feedback that allows her to adjust her work. It has the benefit that it allows for an independent assessment rather than relying on the self-assessment of the dreamer. It is an approach that potentially offers a rigorous methodology without causing damage to the intent of the many varieties of dream work.

*Keywords:* Interpretation, Assessment, Intervention, IRT, Montague Ullman, Jeremy Taylor, Aha moment, Barry Krakow

Within dream work – i.e. the discussion, analysis or expression of a dream to elicit a further understanding of the dream -- there is a general consensus that the dreamer's own assessment of the dream work is critical: If the dreamer considers that the work produced something worthwhile, then that is taken as successful dream work. There are many sound reasons for this but, as a measure of successful dream work, it lacks an external perspective that might provide independent confirmation or feedback to both the dreamer and the dream analyst.

This paper introduces a way of considering dream work that allows for a quite different assessment that can be applied outside the dyad of dreamer and dream worker. It offers a "non-invasive" approach that in no way restricts the dream work.

The criteria for good dream work are typically subjective and intuitive. For Montague Ullman, "Only he/she (the dreamer) is the final arbiter as to whether or not it is done successfully." (1994). Jeremy Taylor's "Aha" moment is similar:

*Only the dreamer can say with any certainty what meanings his or her dream may have. This certainty usually comes in the form of a wordless "aha!" of recognition. This "aha" is a function of memory, and is the only reliable touchstone of dream work. (2013)*

The idea of assessing dream work presents obvious problems. A dream interview is unique; you cannot tell the same dream twice; you cannot hear the same dream twice. Attempts to find behavioral correlates rarely make sense since

the product of the dream work is usually not behavioral at all. Consequently, most types of validation involve a structured interview followed by a variety of self-assessment measures by the dreamer (for example, DeCicco, 2007, Hill and O'Brien, 2004). These have shown measurable benefits to clients, typically in therapy, from dream work.

The issue of how to assess dream work has been present, at least in the background, since the beginning of psychoanalysis. Freud formulated criteria for a "complete" interpretation of a dream: that it "makes sense, is coherent and throws light upon every element of the dream's content" (1900/1953, p. 525): in effect that it possesses internal consistency. In this approach, the response of the dreamer is a separate matter. In the 1970s, therapists, notably Montague Ullman, and especially group therapists, made the socially important shift so that the dreamer, not the analyst decided the interpretation. Ullman also distinguished two factors in group dream work – safety and discovery:

*Safety is the necessary precondition for meeting a second need of the dreamer—namely, to be stimulated by the group to make discoveries about the dream that are difficult to make by oneself (the discovery factor). (1996, p. 7).*

Nevertheless, the issue of what might constitute effective dream work is not quite addressed. This paper proposes that the next dream can be used to judge the effectiveness of the dream work: If the dream work has produced a significant change in the dreamer, we can expect that change to be confirmed by a change in the dream theme in the near future. The issue is clear in the case of a nightmare: No matter how much the dreamer and the dream analyst agree upon the success of their conversation, if the nightmare continues, it is hard to count the dream work as successful. If successful, one would expect the nightmare to diminish in intensity or disappear altogether.

We are conceptualizing the dream work as an intervention in dream life rather than as a tool to inform us about waking life. The notion of an intervention necessarily assumes that

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waking life has some continuity with dream life (Domhoff, 1996 Ch. 8) but continuity theory, as with dream interpretation, more usually addresses the ways in which dream life can be connected back to waking life.

Before we attempt to explain this proposal, it is instructive to consider the products of dream work and to show representations of dream work in terms of general structural components.

### The meaning of the dream

Although “meaning” can be used in very specific ways by dream theorists, we are here loosely addressing the term as it is used by the dreamer. (In contrast to, for example, States’ formulation: “meaning is not something arrived at, or produced, and above all it is not something that is translatable into terms other than those of the original experience”, 1997). During the conversation about the dream something new (“discovery” in Ullman’s terminology) is generated and hence is, in some respect, a product of the dream work. In the everyday world, dreamers typically assign something from the dream to something else, usually somewhere and somewhere else and call it the meaning of the dream. It could also be termed the “output”, “result” or “product” of the dream work since it is what will remain after the dream work session is over: it is what the “work” of dream work produces. Not all dream work has a specific product. For example, someone could perform a dance based upon the dream and the dreamer might feel different without there being any identifiable meaning or overt product of the dream work.

In western culture, i.e. dream analysis beginning with Freud, this kind of meaning of dream work is typically a being statement – a subjective statement about the mind of the dreamer—rather than a statement about the external world or an objective statement about their state of mind. I see that as the core reason why dream work is generally closed to objective evaluation: This is, by intent, an exploration of the subjective and there is no object to be evaluated. Ullman described his work as “designed to help the dreamer move more deeply into the connections between dream and waking reality” (1996, p. 7). For example, in a detailed account of a group’s work on a dream, the dreamer concluded the discussion by saying “I knew what this dream was about when I came in here, but now I see it with more richness and much greater clarity” (p. 17).

An interpretation usually links the dream to waking life. It often refers to an event: a specific interaction with another person. The meaning can apply to the person rather than any particular event and it can apply to some external object. Having said that, there are no absolute limits on the range of subject matter: Dream conversations will sometimes revolve around current events, the body, the solution to puzzles or the location of missing objects; the conversation about a dream can go anywhere.

The temporal sequence is often relevant but sometimes deceptive. A dream might be interpreted as “My father really loved me (when he locked me out of the house)” and is thus a statement about, and a reassessment of, the past. It might be a statement about the future: “I no longer wish to go to the dance on Saturday (because I am not ready to see my ex-boyfriend).” It can make a being statement about the present “I am loved (because a butterfly landed on my shoulder in the dream)”. Even when the dream work produces a

behavioral change in the future, the dream work is still not available for validation. The dreamer who decided not to go to the dance made a choice rather than asserted a fact. If, as is rarely the case, the dream interpretation is about a well-defined external event in the future, “I do not wish to go to the dance on Saturday (because I believe the dream predicts there will be a fire in the dance hall that night)” that prediction can be evaluated. If the dream is taken as a statement about the body (“You may have cancer because the dream symbolically described your cells by showing a damaged cellphone”), it produces a verifiable statement (and there are accounts of successful predictions). Nonetheless, with exceptions, Western dream work rarely makes statements about the objective world.

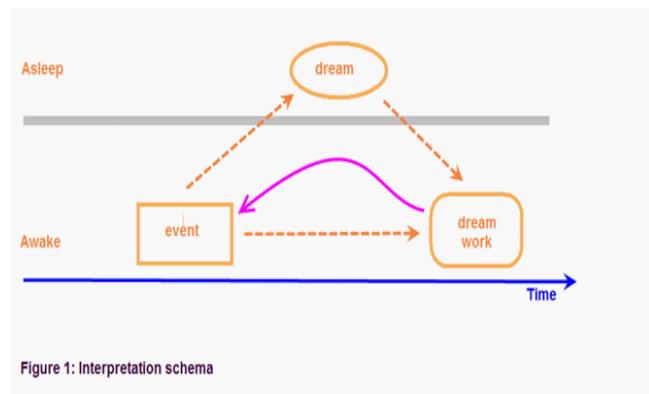
### Representations of dream work

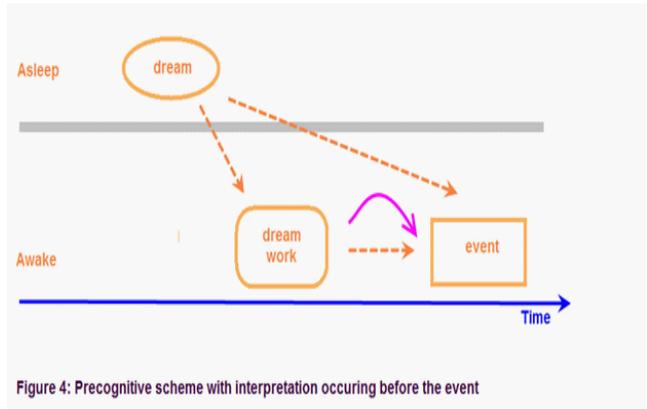
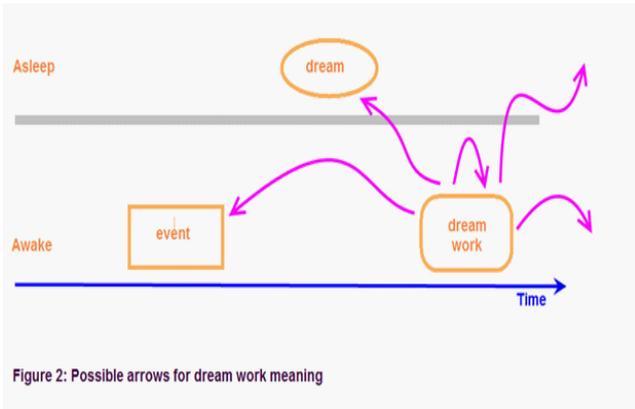
Schematically, we can represent dream work with a few symbols. For example, a dream interpretation that refers to a past event can be depicted in the following way:

In figure 1 the square denotes an event in waking life; the oval denotes a dream; a square with rounded corners denotes dream work. There are two horizontal lines: The blue line represents time moving to the right (the event occurred before the dream), the thick gray line separates dreaming events from waking events. The arrows are used to indicate connections: The event influenced the dream; both the dream and the event influenced the dream work. The curved purple line indicates that the dream work modified the meaning of the event. Thus, the event is now – at the time of the dream work – understood differently. The purple arrow points backward in time.

The purple arrow addresses the result/output/product/ or meaning of the dream work showing when it occurred and the event or circumstance to which it applies. The purple arrow can point in many directions. There are approaches, such as Gestalt and the expressive arts, that only refer to the present. For example, Fritz Perls used the dream to create an inner dialogue in the present moment (1973, p. 186). Many interpretations, by the use of association, address previous incidents. Some dream work refers back to the dream itself (e.g. Sparrow, 2013). Thus the product of the dream work can be expressed in a variety of ways, as in figure 2.

This schematic approach can express a range of dream work. Some extensions would be necessary to encompass other kinds of dream work. For example, Gendlin’s Focus-





ing method would probably require a horizontal dimension to represent the body. Lucid dreaming could be represented as a meeting of an awake timeline and an asleep timeline.

**Precognition**

As a further illustration of these schemata, consider precognitive dreams. A precognitive dream makes a statement about an event in the future rather than the state of mind of the dreamer. It appears to make a disprovable forecast, although when we see it schematically, it actually has two possible configurations. In figure 3, the schema possesses a structure similar to an interpretation: The precognitive interpretation still occurs after the event even though the dream here occurs before the event.

If however the dream work precedes the event, figure 4, then a radically different schema ensues:

Here the dream work is predictive rather than retrospective. The purple arrow points forward to indicate that a prediction about the future event first occurred during the dream work. The claim could be either that the dream work interpreted the dream and thereby predicted the event or that the dream itself predicted the event, which would produce a slightly different schema. Such cases are, of course, much harder to document than the interpretive kind of precognitive dream. For example, after 9/11 there were numerous dreams from before the event that could be seen as predictive. There were few, if any, such dreams that were understood as such before the event.

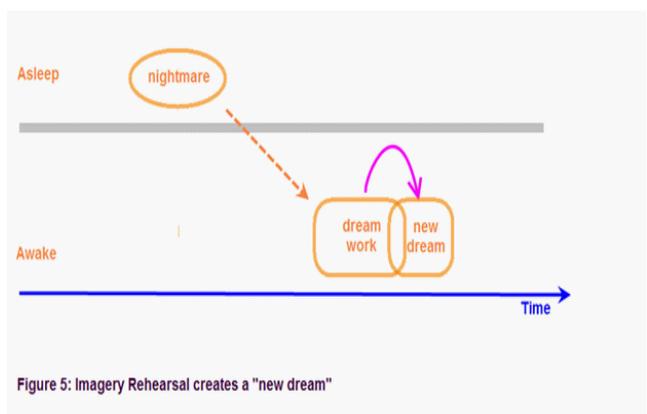
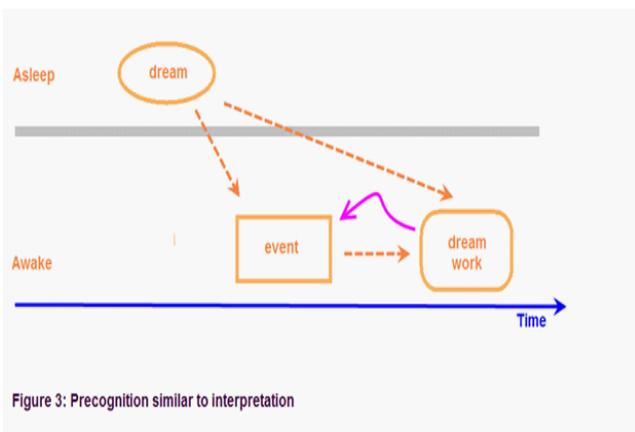
**Imagery Rehearsal Therapy**

In Imagery Rehearsal Therapy (IRT, Krakow 2004) the dream work produces, among other things, a “new dream,” figure 5, which is an alternate reading of the issues of the nightmare. It is not exactly a “meaning” of the dream work but is clearly a product. It is important to note that the “precipitating” event is not represented in the schema; IRT discourages exploration of this waking life event. In the next dream, if the new dream has been more influential than the nightmare, then the next dream will be an improvement on the nightmare, otherwise we expect the nightmarish quality to continue.

**Assessing the dream work**

Provided the dreams have some particular matter in common, we can compare two dreams by looking at their differences (Jenkins, 2001). If I dream about a dog on Monday and about another dog on Tuesday, we can decide that dogs are a theme in my dream life and consider my relationship to dogs in the two dreams. If the dog bites me on Monday and on Tuesday licks my hand, we could say that there is a change for the better. If the reverse happens then there has been, in my dream life, a change for the worse.

We can also judge the changes to be insignificant with respect to the theme. If I am locked out of my house in Monday’s dream and on Tuesday I dream that I cannot find my keys and on Wednesday that the door is stuck then there has been no substantial change: In all three dreams, I am unable to enter my house. While it can be called an interpretation, such a comparison is a dream-dream evaluation,



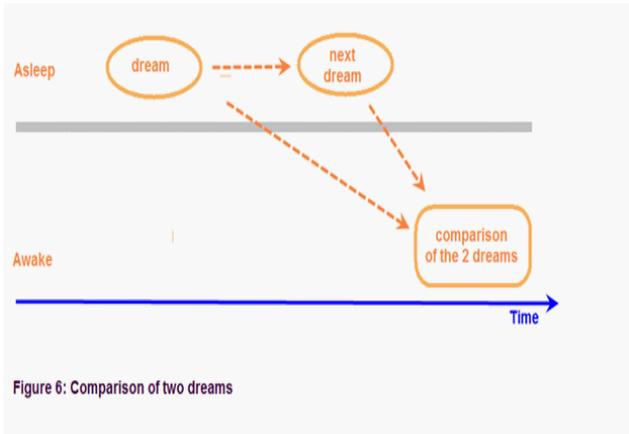


Figure 6: Comparison of two dreams

figure 6, in contrast to a conventional interpretation which connects the dream to waking life.

The comparison of two dreams in a series simply requires that they have something important in common. If we were considering the intervening dream work session, then it could be shown as follows:

The dream work can be seen as producing a hypothesis that the next dream will be significantly different from the current dream. This can be evaluated in the comparison after the second dream.

If we include all elements, figure 8, we have a seemingly complex schema. Nevertheless, the comparison of the two dreams takes place separately and after the dream work. It is not part of the dream work and can even be undertaken by a different party at any time after the second dream. Any meaning created during the dream work is not under consideration. Instead, we are judging whether the dream work effected a noticeable change in the dreamer's dream life.

We have separated the assessment of the dream work from the dream work itself. The task is separated from the initial subjective assessment of the dreamer. Judging the dream work by its effects is independent of the belief system of the dream worker. We do not have to establish the veracity of what happened in the dreamer's childhood; we need not prove or disprove the presence of oedipal complexes, archetypes or compensation in the dream; we do not need to involve ourselves in testing the untestable. The theory, embodied in the performance of its dream worker, only needs to possess sufficient influence to affect the dream life of the dreamer.

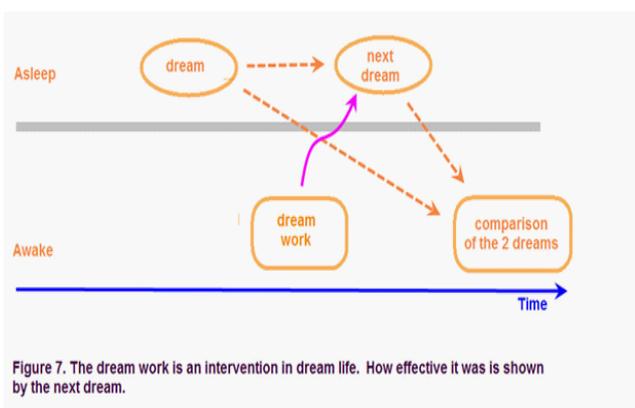


Figure 7. The dream work is an intervention in dream life. How effective it is shown by the next dream.

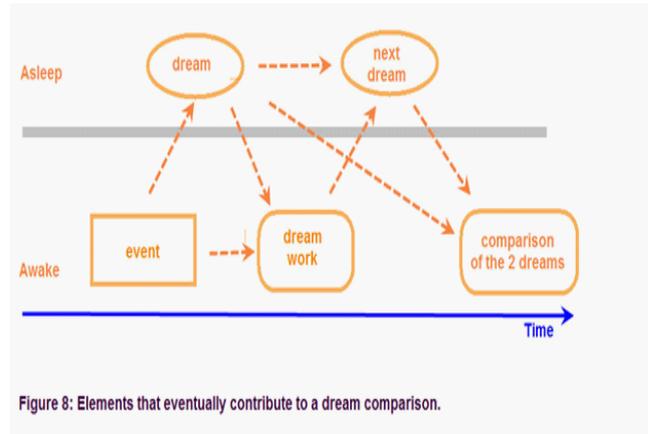


Figure 8: Elements that eventually contribute to a dream comparison.

### Examples of next dream changes

Here is an example in which the dream work can be deemed a success.

#### Who's in control?

The first dream was a nightmare. It occurred to a young woman who was living in New York.

*Dream 1. I am in the back seat of a car. I am alone. No one is driving. I am terrified. I wake up.*

The theme is the not-uncommon one of being in a car that is out of control, and there are innumerable ways to work with this issue. In this case, a precise waking life interpretation of the dream was never determined, but the crucial part of the dream work was to ask the dreamer: "If they were making a movie of your dream, who would play you?" The dreamer chose Julia Roberts with a smile that was probably an Aha moment. We then explored the movie as Hollywood would make it. In this version of the nightmare, the bad guys have drugged Julia and her boyfriend and are trying to fake an accident. Her boyfriend is in the trunk. Julia manages to open the trunk from inside, get the boyfriend out and together they jump from the car: She has achieved a certain mastery of the nightmare (Jenkins, 2012). The dreamer enjoyed creating this fantasy rewriting of her dream.

The next dream:

*Dream 2. My boyfriend is driving the car. I am in the passenger seat. We are having an argument.*

Even though this was an unpleasant dream, it was not a nightmare. When we compare the two dreams we find that the car is not out of control. The dreamer is no longer in

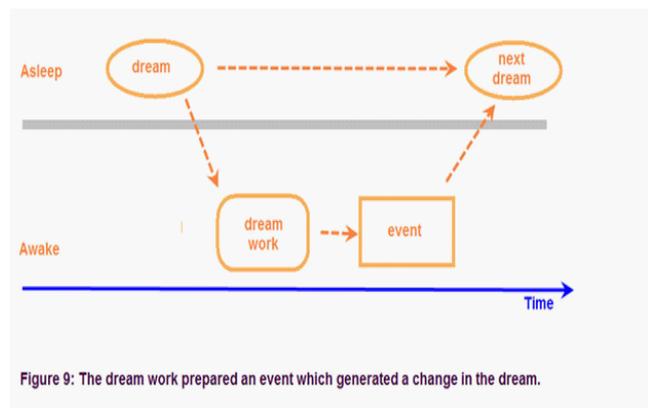


Figure 9: The dream work prepared an event which generated a change in the dream.

the back of the car. Her boyfriend is not hidden away in the trunk. Her relationship with her boyfriend, while contentious, is not dangerous; the boyfriend is driving safely. All these reasons suggest that the dream work in the last session had the desired effect on her dream life.

The hypothesis is only that the next dream will be less stressful for the dream ego. There is no necessity that any aspect of the new dream will be integrated into the next dream even though it is quite common that the next dream will validate some aspects of the dream work but not others. If, instead, she had had another dream about an out of control car, there would be no reason to suppose that we have properly addressed the issue in the nightmare.

The final dream happened a few days later:

*Dream 3. I am in Manhattan. I need to go somewhere. I flag down a taxi.*

This time there is no negativity in the dream. Her boyfriend is not in the dream although, as in the second dream, the driver was a man. She is in control and has opted to have someone else drive the car under her instructions. She is now, so to speak, on her journey.

In this micro-series, all three dreams involve a car and we can see a development. Her affect has changed from panicked to contentious and is, by the third dream, no longer problematic. She can go on with her dream life. After her third dream, the theme of cars and control was replaced by other matters.

### Preparing to meet the anima

Not all dream series require a dream analyst and the dreams to be compared do not need to be sequential. Here are summaries of three dreams from the 1743-44 dream journal of Emanuel Swedenborg, the Swedish scientist turned mystic. They occurred over a period of time and there were intervening dreams that did not involve the issue of his relationship with women.

*Dream 1. A woman laid down by my side ... I wished to know who it was. She said that she was pure, but that I smelled ill.*

*Dream 2. Saw a little creeping thing which I dropped on a white linen cloth beside a woman.*

*Dream 3. Then the queen entered ... I went out, for I was very meanly dressed, having just come off a journey.*

The theme is preparing for a meeting with a woman. In the first dream he has to be told that he is not ready. The second dream shows an intermediary stage in which he places the bug next to the woman: The "problem" is neither in him nor in the woman. In the third dream he is aware of his own deficiencies. By the third dream, the dreamer is aware that he is not prepared for this meeting. The dreams that followed showed Swedenborg wrestling, sometimes literally, with the women in his dreams. But here he is being prepared for these encounters.

### The key dream can be much later

Here is a dream that had recurred in many variations over the years for a 50-year-old man.

*I am in my high school. I cannot find the way to the gates to get out. I am stuck.*

In the dream work, the dreamer was asked to imagine walking through the gates and waving goodbye to the school. He did so and there was what appeared to be an Aha moment. Nevertheless, the dream continued to repeat with little if any change. About six months later the dreamer had reason to go back to his home town. He went to his high school, walked out of the gates, turned around and waved goodbye. That resolved the high school theme, but there was then a curious dream that, so to speak, took its place. In it, he is stuck in his home town and cannot get to San Francisco.

The dream work inadvertently prepared for an event which can be said to have changed the dream theme as shown in figure 9.

### What is the theme?

Sometimes the theme is not obvious from the initial dream and succeeding dreams clarify the first dream. Here are three dreams of mine in which the first dream made no sense to me at the time; it was only after the third dream that I had an Aha moment and understood the waking life significance of the series.

*Dream 1. I am surrounded by steel plate. I am in a tank. There is an opening which I could look through but do not. I cannot tell whether this is a water tank or a battle tank.*

I remained quite mystified as to why this dream had occurred.

The next dream:

*Dream 2. I am a spy in a war.*

At least I can now presume that the tank in the first dream was not a water tank. The next dream has, at the time of the comparison, established an issue in the first dream, figure 10.

Finally there was a third dream:

*Dream 3. A battle is over. Our side has won. I am on a hillside. I am saying goodbye to a woman.*

Without really participating in this war, somehow I now know that the battle is over; there has been a resolution; I am saying goodbye to a woman. At that point all three dreams made sense: the first two had occurred before the death of a family member in England, the third after the funeral.

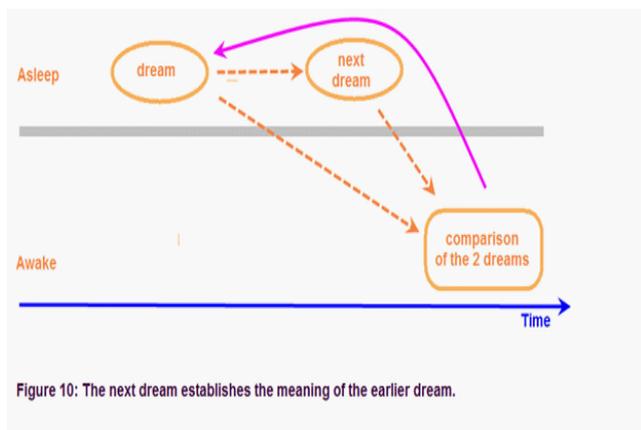


Figure 10: The next dream establishes the meaning of the earlier dream.

## A cautionary tale

The next dream is in essence information gathering: We can reassess our effectiveness. If the next dream “fails” to change, that too is feedback. Here is an example from one of the first dream groups I did in public. The dreamer told a dream and we worked on it to her apparent satisfaction. I was very proud of my abilities and was sure it had transformed the dreamer. However the dreamer returned to the group a week later with the following dream.

*I am married to Prince Charles. He is an amazing catch and the prestige is wonderful but I can't believe what a jerk he is. He is so pleased with himself.*

This dream had no thematic relationship to the previous dream. However, since I am English, as is Prince Charles, I saw myself depicted as the jerk who was excessively pleased with himself. I understood the dream as failing the next dream assessment. It told me that the dreamer did not like my dream work— certainly not my self-satisfaction with it. In this case, the next dream is a very blunt commentary on the dream work rather than on the previous dream. I took the dream to mean that I needed to show more respect for her understanding of her dreams. Here, figure 11, the comparison addresses the dream work. It compensates for her nominal agreement that I had done a good job. As Jung said: “One explains dreams on a certain theory, and if the interpretation is absolutely wrong, the effect on the patient will show it, the unconscious will react in the next dream, and so the interpretation will be corrected” (1984, p. 18).

## Independence from the belief system

In Krakow's IRT and some of the examples offered here, there is the deliberate intention to intervene in dream life. The question then arises: What are the consequences to dream life for systems of dream work that pay little or no attention to series of dreams? In orthodox psychoanalysis the coherence of the manifest dream is irrelevant, even “mendacious” (LaPlanche & Pontalis, 1973, p. 235). The dream's meaning comes from the latent content which is derived from associations to the elements of the dream. As such, there is no attempt to influence the next dream -- as is explicit in IRT. There is also little if any systematic examination of the dream series as such -- as could happen in a Jungian analysis.

As evidence that the dream series is not dependent on the belief system involved, we consider a well-respected psychoanalytic paper from the 1960s. The subject of Richard

Yazmajian's 1964 paper is the appearance of the analyst in the dreams of the patient. It is an account of his beginning phase of work with a patient who had a number of dreams about him. In this case history, Yazmajian follows the series of dreams which come to a well-defined completion.

It is basic to psychoanalysis that the work takes place through the transference: The analyst is the recipient of projections and only exists in the patient's life as a substitute for others. It is critical that the analyst is not in an ordinary relationship with the analysand, and a misunderstanding of this perspective gives a poor prognosis for the work. Yazmajian has stated elsewhere that it was important to understand dreams in terms of “the patient's past and the current transference situation, as well as the type of neurosis” (quoted in Brauer, 1965/2013).

In the initial dream of this series, the patient is in the countryside with Yazmajian and another man. The analyst is accurately represented with the exception that he speaks with a German accent. There is no interaction with the dream analyst.

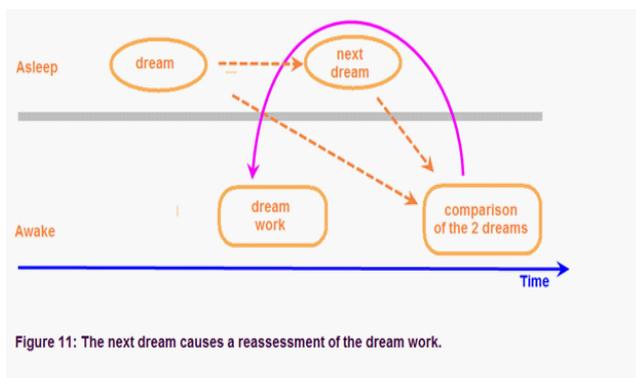
In the next set of dreams, they interact but not in their roles as patient and analyst. They meet on the street, where they say hello, and then she is in his office acting in a “bizarre and mocking manner.”

Following that, the dreams changed somewhat, the analyst and patient were depicted more closely to their roles but never with complete accuracy. In the first part of the dream, Yazmajian was represented in a professional setting. In the second part, she is in the office advising him (and thus the inequality is expressed but reversed). In the third part, she attends a lecture he gives and so sees him in a professional setting with consistent roles although Yazmajian is not in his role as her analyst.

In her last dream of the analyst, she has come for a treatment session to a house which is shabby, dirty and muddy. In this dream, both are accurately represented in their roles. “After this,” Yazmajian remarks “I never again appeared in the dreams without disguise. ... Since I had become a true transference object, the incest taboo prohibited dreaming of me directly” (p. 543). (A longer version of these dreams can be found in Appendix C at <http://dreamreplay.com/davidjenkinsdissertation.pdf>)

Curiously, in the manner of an IRT New Dream, after the last dream about the analyst, the patient twice retold the initial dream to Yazmajian with considerable alterations. In the first reworking, the analyst was replaced by an unrecognized psychiatrist. Thus the analyst was rewritten into something further from reality. In the second retelling, the analyst figure was replaced by an old man with a long, gray beard, placing him even further from a realistic depiction. Yazmajian saw the rewriting as being similar to screen memories that protect the person from the original event.

The dreams fall roughly into three phases according to the portrayal of their roles: non-professional and equal, professional and unequal but not analytic and finally analyst and analysand. The dreams begin with a realistic portrayal of the analyst in an unrealistic situation as though they were friends. In other words, she saw him accurately but misconstrued their roles – a matter of great importance to Yazmajian. The relationship with her analyst becomes somewhat more realistic as the dreams explore their roles and, as it were, can finally disappear when their analytic roles are fully acknowledged at the dream level (and the symbolic truth of a shabby, dirty situation is left to be addressed).



The elimination of the direct portrayal of the analyst took place in steps. It was far from as linear or unequivocal as in the previous examples in this paper. Nevertheless, graded changes can be discerned. The dreams show a sequence of transitions leading to Yazmajian's understanding of their roles.

In essence, Yazmajian had a requirement of the patient's dream life but lacked any direct approach. He was constrained by his belief system which held the dream as a passive reflection of waking life: He could not simply say to her, "Tell your dream ego that I am your analyst, not your friend." We can accept that the dream work intervened in her dream life and effectively changed the patient's dream relationship with her analyst. We do not need to judge psychoanalysis's theory of the transference, its diagnostic categories or the incest taboo to concur that his work with this analysand was effective in his own terms. Most importantly, we do not need to intrude into the analysis to ask the dreamer her opinion. In this case, there is no verbal confirmation that could be as reassuring as the responses of her dreams.

### Benefits and limitations

We have proposed a method of judging dream work that is structurally quite different to the methods currently in use. The dream work is treated as an intervention in the dreamer's dream life. It can be used in conjunction with, or separately from, the Aha method and any other approaches to assessing dream work. The method has multiple uses.

For the practitioner, the next dream is a way of checking their own work and, especially in the early stages, confirming their rapport with clients. The combination of related dreams can give a different assessment of the waking life context than when each dream is considered individually. A succeeding dream may show partial success and hint at strategies to complete a certain dream task. Taking a short series of dreams into consideration gives more information to the dream worker as Jung often noted (Jung, CW 12 para. 45, CW 16 para. 53, 1984, p.99, reviewed in Jenkins, 2001, pp. 26-30). The series may also show different aspects of a problem (e.g. Jung, 1984, p. 316).

The next dream assessment is independent of the two people involved. It is independent of the context of the dream work – whether it occurred in self-analysis, individual work or group work. It is also independent of the belief system of the dream worker and her theory. The assessment has a certain kind of objectivity, since reasons can be articulated and considered on their merit and it is not dependent on the possibly biased assertions of either participant. The method relieves the researcher of any Procrustean desire to standardize protocols for dream analysis: The dream analyst is not required to constrain her work to accommodate the needs of the research.

There are numerous caveats that should be made to these tentative claims for the next dream assessment. This is a proposal for a research structure and any formal research is subject to the many qualifications about rigorous qualitative dream research discussed, for example in Hoffman (2013), Kramer (2010), Schredl (2013) and elsewhere. Additionally, there are specific issues with the next dream assessment. In many circumstances a change in the dream theme cannot necessarily be attributed to the intervention because there is a natural fluctuation in themes. If a single dream is extreme in some way, one might expect the next

dream to naturally "improve" without any formal intervention; clearly the assessment is most powerful when applied to a recurring unpleasant dream of long standing. The issue of the assessment of the dream work remains; identifying themes and determining improvement are subjective tasks even when performed by a researcher. Thus, for many reasons, this is not an approach that can be applied to every single dream and dream work session: Not all dreams identify a clear problem and not all pairs of dreams could offer a clear comparison. Sometimes a dream appears in isolation and no obvious second dream occurs. How the information gleaned from the next dream can be used to assess the dream worker's performance remains an open question: Most cases are not so black and white as to indicate clear success or clear failure. Nevertheless, many ongoing dream themes do pose clearly unfavorable situations for the dreamer that could conceivably be transformed into positive situations – this would represent an appropriate context for a next dream assessment. Frequently recurring negative dreams are obvious candidates.

It is possible that this approach may work better for dream methods that directly address the needs of the dream ego (e.g., Jenkins, 2013, Krakow, 2004, Sparrow, 2013) but it clearly works for other approaches. The method is consistent with Jung's approach to dream series (Jung 1928/1984). Indeed, it is a natural extension of Jung's work with dream series (Jenkins, 2001). It relies upon the assumption that, in the manner of Isaac Newton's first law of motion the dream theme will continue unchanged unless an effective intervention occurs. The core value for the next dream assessment is that it offers the dream analyst additional feedback on her own work. It adds another perspective to the Aha's immediate response to the dream work.

It seems natural and reasonable, albeit unconventional, to expect that a dream theory should justify itself in terms of its impact upon dreaming rather than upon waking life. If dream life is ignored, then the approach is more like engineering: the application of dreams to waking life rather than a genuine theory of dreams. If dream work cannot assist the dreamer in her dream life, what is the purpose of dream work?

### Author Note

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