Social Dreaming in Japan

—Some Thoughts on Sharing Dreams as a Form of Experiential Learning

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Introduction

I was going on a school excursion with other students, but one of them made me upset by saying something unpleasant. I decided not to go with them, but it was stressful to make the decision. I calmed down after a while. Then I changed my mind. I was taking a train to catch up with them. I saw two beautiful, gray-colored trains decorated with a blue line coming slowly into a small station. I thought they were too splendid for the small station. At this moment I understood that other students were in an amusement park. I did not know how to go there. I asked a boy the way to the park. I suddenly noticed that the boy was the student who had teased me. I wondered why he had not gone to the park with the other students. He took me to a station office where a female clerk wearing a uniform opened a thick file and informed me of the route.

From the dream diary of a mature student

Academic teaching often highlights the cognitive aspects of learning and understanding. As an anthropologist whose research involves immersion in a field site over long periods of time, I have often wondered how to recreate part of this experience in the classroom. How can we engage with the experiences of a diverse group of students without reducing them to a simplistic example and without losing sight of learning outcomes? How can a social science course be made experiential (Vince & Reynolds 2007); that is, being based on and addressing the experiences of the participants and offering the tools for mutual understanding and personal growth?

This report describes a pedagogical experiment undertaken at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) from February 10 to February 14, 2020. The course was called "What does Japan dream of? Intensive research seminar on the social science of dreams" and was an open option in the "World Education Programme". Each day consisted of four sessions of ninety minutes. The object of analysis, dreams, was chosen because it provided material that required interpretation and thus was distinct from other forms of experience that often come with interpretative frames attached. The course had three pedagogical aims: 1) to introduce students to an anthropological/social science approach to dreams; 2) to improve their skills in the interpretation of texts, metaphors, intertextual elements, and images; and 3) to reflect on their own dreams, by sharing and interpreting them with the group. Every day of the course started with a ninety-minute dream matrix (see below). This

was followed by an academic lecture, a seminar and either a second seminar session or a dream-related film screening. The lectures addressed broad topics in recent research on dreams. The first lecture, "What Are Dreams? Anthropological and Psychological Dimensions", introduced a social-science approach to dreaming and explored how dreams can be used for research that goes beyond the individual. "The Interpretation of Dreams: Psychoanalytical Approaches" examined how dreams emerged as a site of inquiry in the writings of Freud and Jung, and how this knowledge was received in Japan by Kosawa Heisaku (1897-1968) and Kawai Hayao (1928-2007). "Historical and Social Dimensions of Dreams" looked first at dreams in the context of Japanese history with a special focus on the Buddhist monk Myoe (Kawai 1987; Tanabe 1993) and second at Charlotte Beradt's "The Third Reich of Dreams" (1981), a collection of dreams dreamt under the conditions of Nazi Germany. The fourth lecture, "The Neuroscience of Dreams", addressed recent insights into dreaming from the disciplines of cognitive psychology and neuroscience and how these approaches have shaped new understandings of what happens in the dreaming brain. The films screened were the animated *Paprika* (Papurika, 2006, directed by Kon Satoshi), *Dreams* (Yume, 1990, directed by Kurosawa Akira) and *The Science of Sleep* (2006, directed by Michel Gondry). Instructions for the dream matrix and the methods of interpretation were provided in both Japanese and English; the lectures were delivered in English. About half of the 21 participants were Japanese students who studied languages (Italian, English, Russian, French and Indonesian). The other half was made up from foreign students in either Japanese language or Japan Studies programmes, a diverse group in terms of nationality, ethnicity, gender, and age.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is based on the idea that people learn best from their own experiences. It occurs when an actual experience is reflected upon and the understanding emerging from this reflection changes the ways in which a person thinks about things and acts on them (Fenwick 2001). This is often formulated as a cyclical process constituted by action, reflection, and application (Kolb 1984), and opposed to a model in which accumulation of knowledge is considered to be the goal of learning. In psychoanalytic writing about learning, the mere accumulation of knowledge is considered to be a defence against insecurity: "If knowledge is acquired in the interest of potency rather than insight, that knowledge may function in the psychic economy rather like a material possession" (Waddell 2018: 69). By starting from and giving space to personal experience, experiential learning provides a self-reflected position from which to examine taken-for-granted values such as "objectivity" and "detachment" (Gherardi & Poggio 2007).

Experience, however, is not an unproblematic category. It is never quite as immediate and direct as we want it to be, but always shaped and mediated by concrete social conditions, that are in turn created by political relations. Race/ethnicity, gender, age, and socioeconomic status directly influence how meaning is drawn from experience, a process that Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland call the "politics of the construction of experience" (1999: 387). Experiential pedagogies, therefore, while starting from experience, must also provide analytical frameworks to interrogate experience and to

examine how experiences differ individually and through membership in different social and political categories.

Dreams in this context are a distinct kind of experience: on one hand they are radically subjective as neurological events that occur in the sleeper's brain (Kramer 2007); on the other hand, the manifest content of dreams is intensely social and reflects relationships, remnants of day-time events and cultural narratives. In other words, "the dream is not a personal possession, for it captures the social, political, institutional, and spiritual aspects of the dreamer's social environment" (Lawrence 2005: ix). Like experience, dreams are shaped by the current condition and the historical becoming of the dreamers, but because dreams manifest these elements in indirect visual and symbolic ways, they offer an opportunity to interpret and reflect on these conditions. To work with dreams, thus, is to both engage with and question the private and social dimensions of experience and is conducive to creating a temporary community of interpretation.

The Dream Matrix

The core element of the course was the daily dream matrix. The method of "social dreaming" created a bridge between the academic engagement with questions of the ontology and interpretations of dreams and the personal aspects of dreaming and personality development. The dream matrix allowed for experiential learning and at the same time provided the dream material that could later be used for exercises and interpretations. It also created a shared space in which participants could address and reflect about the ways in which their own and other's dreams were shaped by a collective social world.

This practice of sharing dreams and working with them in a collective setting is called "social dreaming". It was pioneered by Gordon Lawrence at the Tavistock Clinic in London in 1982 as an addition and extension to the work in groups that was inaugurated by the British Psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion (1897-1979). While traditionally psychoanalysis posited the analysis of dreams in the intimate setting between analyst and analysand, Lawrence argued that dream work could be useful beyond meaning-making in individual therapy ("What does the dream mean for me?") and address the individual dreams as expression of collective concerns, anxieties and hopes (Lawrence 2005): "Instead of interpreting the meaning of a dream, a participant in the matrix will either offer another dream that seems somehow (inexplicably perhaps) related, or offer a spontaneous association to another's dream, where the connection might be as implicit as explicit. This is done without attention to rational or logical thought, and with no desire for overt meaning making." (Manley 2019: 29)

To let dreams enter into communication with other dreams and associations creates a web of meanings and images that become detached from individual dreamers and, for the duration of the matrix at least, attain a life in and of themselves. Lawrence hoped that an open engagement with the dream life of a group would lead to new insights in the "unknown known" (Bollas 2017) and help to develop new thoughts and new thinking. The term "matrix" was chosen to incorporate both the meanings of form and process: "as a form, it is a configuration of people that provides a unique space, or 'container' for thinking out of the content of dreams to consider and discover their hidden,

elusive/infinite meaning. As a process, the matrix is the system or web of emotions and thinking that is present in every social relationship, but for the most part unattended and not acknowledged. It can be thought of as mirroring while awake, the infinite, unconscious processes in waking life that give rise to dreaming when asleep" (Lawrence 2005: 14).

From my own experiences[1] with dream matrices, I knew that it was quite difficult to jump into the practice without knowing the other participants. I thus modified the normal format of a dream matrix in two ways: the first one was that I arranged the chairs in a circle but facing outwards. The participants would thus be facing the wall or the view outside the classroom, rather than facing their fellow students. This helped to deal with feelings of embarrassment or shame when sharing dreams. It also sustained concentration on the dreams themselves, rather than on the dreamer and contributed to a non-judgemental atmosphere that made sharing easier. The second modification was to start not with dreams but with a simple word-association exercise. A prolonged silence at the beginning is not unusual in a dream matrix as participants gather their thoughts, but it can create an unpleasant sense of tension when one is unfamiliar with the practice. As a warm-up exercise, the host decided first the direction of circulation (left/right) and then threw in a single word like "cat" or "car". The person to the right or the left of the host then responded with a one-word association that triggered a further association in the next participant and onwards until the circle was closed. In the first session, the associations came hesitantly, but as soon as participants understood that the point was not to censor or interfere with the associations that rose automatically in their minds, the reactions became more spontaneous and picked up speed. This simple exercise turned out to be an excellent preparation for letting dreams and dream fragments emerge in the next step. As the facilitator or host of the dream matrix, it was my task to keep time, to remind people of the rules of confidentiality and to keep a record of the dreams and associations. Over the duration of the course, I recorded 72 dreams that were shared in the matrix.

Confidentiality

In order the protect the privacy of dreamers, the rule is that material from a dream matrix may be re-told outside of the matrix, but not with the name of the dreamer attached. This confidentiality rule makes sure that the dream matrix remains a safe space in which to share personal experiences. In my experience, American and U.K. students often interpret this safety as protection from being exposed to difficult ideas and experiences, while some of the students who come from politically less stable places interestingly understand a safe space to be a place in which dangerous ideas can be discussed without any repercussions. Both evoke a notion of containment, but in the former it is the ideas and experiences themselves that are kept out, while in the later the danger stems from being associated with dangerous ideas.

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[1] I am a member of a monthly Queer Dream Matrix in London and have experienced dream matrices as part of a group relations conference at the Tavistock Institute; I have also organised a dream matrix hosted by Laurie Slade at SOAS in June 2019.

Hypocognition and Methods of Interpretation

In the afternoon seminars, the students worked on the interpretation of dreams in smaller groups. Here the emphasis was on cooperation and emphatic work. The aim was to develop the capacity for careful interpretations and contextualisation of dreams using a range of different methods. Each day we worked with a different paradigm: intertextuality, dream play, and the "selfscape" method. These methods to engage with dream material have been created by the American anthropologist Jeanette Mageo (2011). They are based on the theory of cultural hypocognition that was developed by Levy (1973), who took his cue from the now somewhat old-fashioned "culture and personality" school. Like Ruth Benedict (1934), who argued that each society emphasises and elaborates certain aspects of human cognition and behaviour, and that "culture" is the pattern that these elaborations form against the universal backdrop of human capacities, Levy posits that different languages elaborate certain areas of human existence but not others. Those emotions for example that are difficult to name because there are no words for them (hence the term "hypocognition") are relegated to the non-linguistic realm (Levy 1984): the body, where they appear as somatic symptoms; the arts, where they become manifest as images; and dreams, where they express that which fails to register in culture-bound discourse. The assumption in dream play is thus that "dream images are symbols drawn from a cultural common, blended with personal memory and used to represent experiences inexpressible in everyday discourses—either because of these discourses' representational inadequacy or because, to express these experiences, would violate social norms" (Mageo 2011: 63). The aim of a cultural analysis of dreams is thus to identify the "hole" that the dream represents in oneself and from there to specify the "hole" that it represents in the cultural models it evokes. In what follows, I will briefly describe the three methods used and discuss three examples from different students.

Intertextuality

An intertextual analysis examines dreams through their links with different forms of narratives (Kristeva 1986). First, the immediate links with waking life are explored (most dreams contain fragments of activities and emotions that the dreamer has experienced the day before the dream occurs), then attention is paid to stories and narratives that the dream evokes. These can take a number of forms: a fairy tale or TV drama, a play or simply an anecdote. From there, motifs and images are drawn out and analysed as to their saliency for the dreamer by asking what wish and what anxiety was expressed in the dreams. These dream wishes and dream anxieties can then be linked by the interpreters to culturally shared wishes and anxieties. A Japanese student's dream shall serve as example:

I am walking through a run-down European style mansion corridor. The lights are not working, and the woodwork is falling apart. The walls are smeared with black mold. I think I am either being led or hallucinating a naked white woman with scraggily blonde hair. I walk into the room furthest down the corridor. In the room is a single bed furnished only with a bare mattress. My former high school friend, E., is lying naked on this bed. I understand that she is E. but also not E. This woman's skin is tinged grey, with black spider-like veins running through her. I understand again that she is

dead but also not quite dead. Her eyes are the only things that move. The whites are yellow. I sit down next to her. We have eye contact, and she tells me that she wants to become a dancer. Subsequently, I remember that she isn't dead, because I heard about her high school graduation and her entering university. I wake up.

The student identified a number of intertexts such as horror movies, particularly the recently released remake of *Suspiria* (2018, directed by Luca Guadagnino). She also remembered that her friend was a member of the dancing club at high school (*Suspiria* is a horror film set in a prestigious ballet school in Berlin). She then added this crucial detail: "At this time, I was in an uncertain place with someone. I watched the movie knowing that horror (especially body gore) was their favourite genre. I was anxious to be on good terms with them but somewhere I knew it was probably not going to work out." The image of the dead/not-dead friend on the bed is a dream motif that the student has encountered in other dreams before. She describes it as "a wish that is already dead" in relation to her friend's wish to embark on a career in dancing. The wish expressed in the dream is identified as "wanting to know the future of a relationship"; the anxiety as "fear of not knowing what is going to happen next". The "whish that is already dead", expressed in the image of her friend from high school, is thus used in the dream to refer to the dreamer's and her potential partner's desire for each other's company. In terms of cultural psychodynamics (Mageo 2015), the dream reconstructs in a very literal way the experience of being exposed to something horrible (the horror film turns into an experience of horror) in order to please a friend's/partner's/lover's expectation.

The Selfscape Method

The "selfscape" method looks at dreams through the lens of the body and the self by interpreting what appears in the dream as extensions of oneself. Such extensions can be split from the self, or become detached or re-integrated to different degrees. A Japanese student shared the following dream:

I am falling down into a black hole. There is no end. I see in the dark a luxurious house with a red roof and a large garden. In front of the house are many people. It may be a family. They are smiling in peace, looking at me. I see this vision in a moment, like the flash of a camera.

During the reflection on the dream, the student added that the family looked European and that they were wearing pastoral clothes like in the Middle Ages; she looked to them for help, but "they are smiling at me, a girl falling down". She went on to interpret this dream image of a perfect family as part of her own image and expectations of family life; but this idealised representation has become removed in space (Europe) and time (Middle Ages) and she could no longer look towards them for help. She also associated this dream image with "perfection". The flash of the camera captured a perfect moment that encapsulated the ideal image of a happy family, frozen in time, while the dreamer's fall was ongoing. She concluded from this that the dream represented herself in a state of alienation from "the perfect state" that the family is in and that help for future development could no longer come from there.

Dream Play

In class, we used role play in small groups (3-4 students), with one student being the interviewer, one roleplaying the dream image and the third writing down the questions and answers that emerged from the dialogue between the waking person and the dream image. The person whose dream was being acted out roleplayed the dream image by closing their eyes and imagining they were back in the dream. The dreamer could also interrogate their own dream images by switching back and forth between sitting on two chairs, in one roleplaying the dream image/person/object and in the other being the waking person. In the following example, based on a dream shared by a student from Central Asia, it was the other participants that asked the questions, and the dreamer who roleplayed the different aspects of the dream.

A man holding a chainsaw chased me into an old, abandoned building. I ran and ran to escape from him and fell on my back in the staircase. He caught up with me and attacked me with a knife. One of my friends was there, but I could not help her. I was injured, but I didn't feel any pain.

While the dream self was scared and felt she was being punished for not being able to help her friend, the dialogue with the "man holding a chainsaw" pointed into a different direction:

Q: Why did you chase her? Why did you punish her?

-I am not sure why. I am a part of her. Everyone wants to justify/legitimate themselves.

Q: Was it pleasurable for you or did you have to do it?

-I was smiling, I was rather enjoying it.

Q: If you are a part of her, why does she have to legitimate herself?

-She [needs me to] justify her selfish behaviour of leaving her friend behind.

Q: If you are a part of her, did you punish yourself?

-Yes!

The man holding the chainsaw thus provided quite a different explanation from the dream self. The dreamer drew upon the dream antagonist to express a certain sadistic joy in torturing herself. The ineffectual manner in which this happened—the inflicted wounds did not cause any pain—suggested that there was a ritualistic element to the self-punishment. The dream sequence still did not make sense in its entirety, so the friend was included in the role play and stated:

-I was just there, not feeling anything.

Q: Did the man with the chainsaw [here called "the killer"] not scare you?

-I was like submerged in the water of an aquarium; I did not feel anything.

Q: Did you know that [the dreamer] was there? Didn't you try to ask for her help?

-I didn't try to get out of there. I think I was there to satisfy [the dreamer's] needs.

The dreamer interpreted the core dream conflict to be between her wish to help others and her wish to be left in peace. The selfish wish to be left in peace went against cultural values that emphasised helping others as social virtue, thus creating guilt. This conflict was mainly internal rather than part of her social world, hence the friend's indifference to the threat in the dream. But the three perspectives that the role play provided still did not fit together to form a coherent dream narrative. This points to fragmented aspects of the person that are not easily integrated. The driving force behind

the fragmentation seems to be an aggression directed against the self (the man with the chainsaw) that is "justified" by the dreamer's selfishness of not helping her friend. The fact that the friend appeared in the dream narrative almost as an afterthought suggests that the cycle of selfishness/guilt has taken on a life of itself.

The incoherence of the dream narrative in this case points towards the cultural value that is given to coherence; that is, the importance of presenting a continuous and integrated social persona to the world. Because experiences of fragmentation and discontinuity are difficult to describe in everyday language both in English and Japanese, such experiences are often relegated to dreams.

Conclusion

While this was just a pilot study with a limited number of students and only four full days of learning, the evaluations were positive throughout. More importantly, the students interpreted and acted out other students' dreams and for a brief moment became part of their worlds. Through this, difficult experiences and situations were articulated and analysed: family conflicts, feeling misunderstood, friction with friends and classmates, fears and anxieties, but also the elation of learning and speaking a foreign language, of communicating effortlessly. Emotions, normally banned from the classroom in the paradigm of learning as acquisition of knowledge, took centre stage. By paying close attention to the emotional colouring of experiences and dreams, students were brought into the here and now. Anxiety about the unknown and unease about disclosing personal information with a group of people who did not belong to one's own age group—as exemplified in the dream at the beginning—turned into a sense of curiosity and empathy about others' experiences, positive or negative.

The title of the course, "What does Japan dream of?", was meant to suggest that there are certain cultural elements to dreams and their interpretation. While I still believe that dreams offer material for an analysis of aspects of culture, such as cultural schemata that change only slowly, dreaming and social dreaming are plastic practices: they are highly malleable and open to being shaped by suggestion, context and interaction. When analysing the dream material, I was initially struck by the frequency with which images of Europe showed up in students' dreams. The course was supposed the be about dreams in Japan, about the dreams that students, Japanese or foreign, dreamt in a Japanese context! But of course, many students studied European languages, and my presence as a European scholar who came to collect the students' dreams, set the context of the course and provided a powerful image in its own right.

As this pilot project has shown, social dreaming can articulate a host of different experiences that may otherwise remain hidden. Individual and collective reflection on these experiences can bring new insight about the self and its place in the world. When this new knowledge can be integrated into the ways in which we interact with others in everyday life, then we can truly speak of experiential learning.

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ソーシャル・ドリーミング
体験的学習として「夢の共有」に関する一考察

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キーワード：ソーシャル・ドリーミング、文化人類学、教育学、経験学習理論、
認知的言語的表現の欠如

本報告では東京外国語大学の「世界教養プログラム」の選択科目である集中講義において行われた教育学的実験を取り上げる。社会学・文化人類学の授業では、主に理論的・認識的な知識を学ぶことが目標とされる。この社会学として扱う夢の概論コースは体験的学習を優先し、学生の体験とその体験についての考察を使用しつつ、解釈と分析方法を学び、相互の理解を高めることを目指した。そのために、本コースは三つのパートからなる。授業の冒頭に「夢のマトリックス」を実施し、お互いの夢を共有する空間を作る。2限目は夢の解釈に関する講義を行う。扱ったトピックスは「夢とは何か — 文化人類学的と社会学的アプローチ」、「夢判断 — 精神分析における夢」、「夢の社会的・歴史的様相」と「夢の脳科学」であった。午後の授業ではゼミ形式で自分の夢を素材にし、そして特に夢に登場する文化的様相に注目しながら、少人数のグループで様々な方法で夢の解釈を試みた。最後に夢を扱った映画（黒澤明『夢』から今敏『パプリカ』まで）を鑑賞し、夢は人間の創造性にいかなる影響を与えたかを議論した。参加者は21人、その半分は他言語を学ぶ日本人学生で、他は日本学を勉強している外国人学生だった。

「夢のマトリックス」とはソーシャル・ドリーミングの実践としてロンドンのタビストック・クリニックで開発された。人の夢を個人の精神分析の文脈において意味を持つものとして把握するのではなく、ある人の群にとって集団的意味を持つものとして扱う方法である。セミナーではマトリックスに登場する夢を使用し、三つの分析方法（間テクスト性、セルフスケープ方法、夢の演劇解析）で解釈する。本報告では三つの夢の事例を挙げなら解釈方法を紹介する。

文化人類学の立場から検証される夢は、文化的スキーマと密接に関係している。文化的に認識されていないもの、人類学者ロバート・レビーが「Hypocognition」という概念で表す、つまり「オブジェクトに対する言語あるいは認知表現の欠如」という意味で言語化され難い現象を示す。そういった文化的価値観に反する意図、欲望、行為は抑圧され、夢の中に登場するのである。

四日間、学生たちの様々な体験、例えば家族内での葛藤、友達と同級生との軋轢、自分の居場所に関する不安だけでなく、新しい言語を学ぶ高揚、直ちに解されることなどが夢の語り合いで明確になり、考察の対象になり得た。自分の体験を振り返ってみると、そこに新たな自己に関する知識が生まれる。夢の分析がもたらす理解を更に日常生活の人間関係で活かすことができれば、本当の意味での体験的学習と呼べる。