



The Dream Precognition Project

Update #2

Sept 2011

This update is going out to everyone who has participated or expressed an interest in our dream precognition research programme. Funded by the Perrott-Warrick Fund, this is a three-year programme of research into the psychology and parapsychology of precognitive dream experiences. It is led by Perrott-Warrick Senior Researcher Dr Caroline Watt, assisted by Milan Valášek.

Online Dream Precognition Study

We have just completed our first online dream precognition study, and will present a preliminary report on this study here. A full write-up of the study will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal for publication. *Please note that this report is for your personal use only; please do not circulate it because that could jeopardise its chances of being published.* Also, study results are regarded as provisional until they have undergone peer review.

First of all, we'd like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who took part in this study. Without you, we simply couldn't investigate this fascinating topic.

Study Method

In this study, we asked participants to dream about a target video clip that they would view at the end of the week. They were asked to send us a weekly summary of their dreams, which an independent judge then rated as to how similar the dreams were to each of four randomly-chosen video clips (= target pool). So, the judge made his ratings before the target was known by anyone, even the participant. This is because the study was testing for precognition - the idea that the participants' dreams can contain information about a *future* event. Milan then used the RNG (=random number generator) to

randomly select the 'target' video which was then sent to the participant as feedback. The participant never saw the other three 'decoy' clips in that week's target pool.

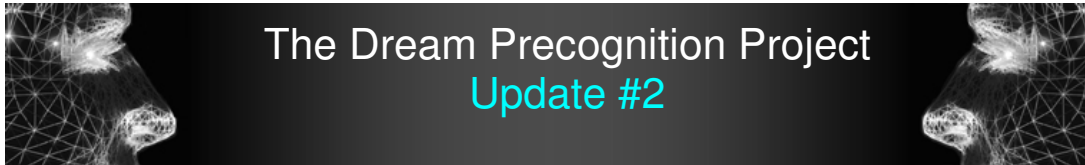
Study Hypotheses

The study had two hypotheses:

1. We tested the prediction that those with lower levels of ambiguity tolerance would be more likely to see a similarity between their dream reports and the target video clips. This hypothesis explored the role of the psychological factor ambiguity tolerance in people's precognitive dream experiences.
 2. We tested the hypothesis that the judges would give higher similarity ratings to the randomly-selected future target video clip compared to the decoy clips. Correctly identifying the future target is a 'hit'. By chance alone, the judges would obtain a 25% hit-rate. This hypothesis suggests a paranormal explanation for precognitive dream experiences.
- The study was pre-planned to end once 50 participants had each completed four 'trials' - that is, they had sent in four weekly dream summaries and been sent four target videos in return. So the study had 200 trials in total and we would expect 50 hits just by chance. 77 individuals took part in the study, which ended after the pre-specified 200 trials had been achieved.

Participants

The 50 participants who had each completed 4 trials consisted of 30 males and 20 females, average age 49 years. 66% believed in precognitive dreams, 72% had had at least one prior precognitive dream experience, and 88% said they could remember their dreams at least once a week.



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Results for the psychological variables

Hypothesis 1 was not supported: there was no relationship between ambiguity tolerance and participants' similarity ratings.

As might be expected, older participants tended to report having had greater numbers of precognitive experiences than younger participants. Also as one might expect, there was a significant tendency for participants reporting greater numbers of prior precognitive experiences to give higher ratings of confidence that their dream reports would contain material relating to the future target video.

After receiving feedback of the target video identity and giving it ratings for similarity to their previously-submitted dream report, participants who had previously given higher confidence ratings tended also to give higher similarity ratings. However, there was little relationship between these ratings and actual psi performance. No relationship was found between prior dream recall, precognitive experience, confidence ratings, similarity ratings, or hit-rate.

Results of the test of the dream precognition hypothesis

The study obtained 64 hits out of 200 trials, representing a 32% hitrate. This was significantly greater than we would expect by chance. While this looks like evidence for precognition, we first have to rule out possible normal explanations before we can draw this conclusion.

Exploring alternative explanations

The careful design of the study meant that we could rule out the possibility of deliberate or accidental leakage of information about the target video. However, when we looked at the pattern of responding, we found that the hitrate was unusually large for just the fourth clip in each target pool (46.5%). We also found that the RNG had a tendency to assign the fourth clip more often as target. We conducted a statistical test to see whether the judges only preferred the fourth clip when it was a target, not a decoy, and this showed that the judges had an overall preference for the fourth clips. This analysis supports the idea that the judges had a bias in favour of these clips whether or not they were chosen as a target.

Summary

These results mean we cannot conclude that the participants' dream summaries predicted the target video clips.

So what happens next?

We will investigate whether the factors underlying the significant results were just coincidence, or whether the RNG was behaving anomalously since its behaviour matched the judges' biases. We are also planning research to look at the role of some psychological factors (memory, creativity) in people's precognitive dream experiences. We would also like to investigate precognitive dream experiences in a more 'real world' setting. We hope we can keep you informed of all this work and that you might be interested to take part in some of it.

How can I find out more about the Koestler Parapsychology Unit?

Check out our website, here:

<http://www.koestler-parapsychology.psy.ed.ac.uk/>