



UCL

Pandemic Dreams: Exploring the social and emotional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through analysis of dreams reported under lockdown

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated social disruption has given rise to many reports of striking and unusually vivid dreams. These, alongside other phenomena which have exacerbated existing socio-political tensions, indicate the profoundly disruptive and unsettling impact the pandemic is having upon individuals and upon society more broadly.

The value of systematic exploration of the meaning of dreams is a founding assumption of psychoanalysis. In this spirit, we hypothesise that analysis of the content of contemporary dreams will reveal relationships between the threat and anxiety levels manifest in the dreams and subjects' reports of their experience of lockdown.

What are the aims of the project?

Our study will explore the relationships between the imagistic and emotional content of people's dreams and their self-reported experience of the pandemic and its impact on their mood. It will aim to find patterns in the dreams submitted and to infer meaning from those patterns. We tentatively hope that the insight offered by the analysis of this data-set may be of value to mental health practitioners working with patients whose disturbances are relatable to the pandemic. Our study will also aim to compile an archive of the data gathered to capture the present extraordinary moment for future reflection and public engagement.

What will taking part involve?

Participants will be invited to anonymously submit descriptions of the dreams they have experienced during the pandemic via Microsoft Forms. They will then be asked to complete the PHQ-9 and GAD-7 (measuring depression and anxiety respectively) as well as providing some basic demographic data; these submissions will be optional. Textual analysis will be used to determine the frequency of emotion words and the level of threat conveyed in the dream narratives. Dreams will be independently rated by two coders.

What will you ask and what will happen to the information I give you?

You will be asked questions about yourself, your mental and physical health, as well as providing your dream material, and affective responses associated to it. Some of these questions are considered sensitive data, such as questions on your mental health – all the data is completely anonymised, and the majority of questions asked are optional. We have included these as it gives us a better insight into the various factors that can affect the content of the dream itself, although you're under no obligation to do so.

Your anonymous data will then be analysed by researchers from University College London (UCL) and will be used to inform research outcomes at a later date – nobody will be able to identify you from the anonymous data we analyse, and only researchers named on the project will have access. It is anticipated that data collected may be subject to further anonymisation and preserved in a public archive.

How can I find out the results?

The results will be disseminated in the form of a co-authored outcome paper detailing perceived trends in the data-set and offering a discipline-specific, psychoanalytic commentary on those trends. Individual data-items (i.e. participant's dreams) may be cited in part or in full. There may be further, topic-specific outcome papers further concerned with the link between these trends, the commentary, and the effects of COVID-19 and its social consequences on mental health.

Statement of Consent

By taking part, you are agreeing that you have read and understood the information about the study above. Please ensure you have read and understood this information before you participate in the Pandemic Dreams project.

If you have any further questions about the project, please contact Jake Roberts (jake.roberts.19@ucl.ac.uk).

Project Supervisor — Elizabeth Allison e: e.allison@ucl.ac.uk

Data Protection Officer — Alex Potts e: a.potts@ucl.ac.uk

Ethics Supervision — UCL Central Ethics Committee (ID: 18409.001) e: ethics@ucl.ac.uk