

Flying Dreams and Lucidity: An Empirical Study of Their Relationship

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A common observation in the lucidity literature is an association between lucid dreams and flying dreams. In Van Eeden's paper in which he introduced the term "lucid dream", he wrote, "Flying or floating in all forms of dreams...is generally an indication that lucid dreams are coming" (p. 449; Van Eeden, 1913). Patricia Garfield also noticed that flying dreams tended to occur in close proximity to lucid dreams and suggested that one can make use of this relationship to cultivate lucidity: "Induce dreams of flying and you are on your way to lucid dreams" (p. 133; Garfield, 1974).

Celia Green reported that all her lucid dreamers refer to flying dreams, several of them describing that the flying prompted lucidity, while one intentionally used the occurrence of lucidity to initiate flight (Green, 1968). Other lucid dream accounts seem to have a high rate of flying (Sparrow, 1976; LaBerge, 1985).

The purpose of the present study was to determine in a general college population of dreamers: 1) what was the rate of lucid and flying dreams, 2) whether they occurred in some relationship to each other, 3) if they were related, whether the two elements occurred to the same dreamers on the same nights, and/or within the same dreams, and 4) when they occurred in the same dream, which element preceded the other. A large number of dreams ($n = 1180$) compiled from 3 previous experiments were examined. These experiments had involved asking fifty-six volunteer undergraduates to keep dream diaries for periods of time ranging from two to six weeks. Two readers rated the dreams as to whether they contained content of flying or floating, whether they were lucid, and whether they fell into two lucidity related categories--"prelucid" dreams and false awakenings.



There were 11 dreams of flying and floating from 9 subjects. There were 7 lucid dreams, 16 prelucid dreams and 8 false awakenings from 10 subjects. Six of these ten subjects with lucidity-related dreams were among those also dreaming of flying or floating. This was a statistically greater than chance overlap between the subjects to

whom these categories of dreams occurred. For the subjects who had both categories of dreams, there was also a greater than chance overlap of the nights on which they occurred. On a given night, they were even likelier to occur within the same dream. In the dreams in which both flying and lucidity occurred, the lucid state preceded the flight. These results support most of the suggestions about relationships between lucidity and flying dreams except one: there was no support in the present study for the idea that the act of flying will commonly trigger lucidity. This empirical relationship between flying and lucid dreams will be discussed in terms of several possible explanations: 1) that lucid dreamers may have a higher rate of all unusual, supernormal events in their dream content, 2) that flying and lucidity share some psychological theme, such as freedom, in common, 3) suggestions such as Ellis' (1913) that sensations of flying are initiated by greater awareness than in ordinary dreams leading to noting lack of pressure of the soles of the feet and high activation in balance and movement centers; this greater awareness might share something in common physiologically with that manifested in the lucid dream.



References

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