

# CAN DREAMS TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT COUNSELLORS-IN-TRAINING? EXPLORING DREAM THEMES OF COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY MA STUDENTS

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## AIMS AND PURPOSE

Dreams contain clues of the problems experienced, emotional concerns about past, present or future and act as a mirror of individuals' waking life experiences. Most of the studies have shown that particular dream themes can be seen by particular group of people sharing similar life stages, events or psychological problems.

The purpose of this study was to explore the dream themes of first-year MA counselling and psychotherapy students who were in similar experiential processes in terms of career development.

## DESIGN / METHODOLOGY

- ⇒ The participants of this study consisted of 32 first year MA counselling students.
- ⇒ The thematic analysis method based on the interpretive qualitative paradigm was employed and the underlying meaning themes of the 78 written dream reports were examined with an inductive approach.
- ⇒ This study was approved by the University of Leeds Ethics Committee.

## RESULTS / FINDINGS

As a result of the thematic analysis, the contents of the dreams were grouped under eight themes.

The themes are named as follows:

THEMES	SUBTHEMES
<b><i>Feeling of Insecurity</i></b>	- <b><i>Under Attack</i></b> - <b><i>Trying to Escape</i></b> - <b><i>Internal Attack</i></b>
<b><i>Fear of Failure</i></b>	- <b><i>Missing Important Things</i></b> - <b><i>Juggling Responsibilities</i></b> - <b><i>Sense of Inadequacy</i></b>
<b><i>Feeling Blocked</i></b>	
<b><i>Efforts to Overcome</i></b>	- <b><i>Positive Results</i></b> - <b><i>Feeling of Helplessness</i></b>
<b><i>Exposure</i></b>	
<b><i>Feeling of Worthless</i></b>	
<b><i>Worries About Loved People</i></b>	
<b><i>Sense of Belonging</i></b>	

## LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study is suitable for in-depth explorations than broad generalisations because of the qualitative nature. Most of the common main feelings of the participants seen from their dream themes were unpleasant and challenging emotions or situations. One of the main sources of this common mood seems to be especially related to the intense anxiety and feeling of insecurity in face of the perceived external or internal threats. Another source contained fear of failure related to meeting representative responsibilities and making a balance between different life roles such as student, parent, etc. Sense of inadequacy about their abilities was another important theme.

The themes that are commonly encountered by students could be used to inform educators and students what to expect during this process and to normalise the concurrent anxieties arising from such an experience. The findings of this study have parallels with the results of the studies that examined counselling students' beginning experiences through directly collected data by using surveys, etc. Based on the findings of the current study, it may be said that students' dreams have also carried some clues about the initial common psychological concerns of the students.

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