Typical Dreams of “Being Chased”: A Cross-Cultural Comparison Between Tibetan and Han Chinese Dreamers

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The present study is a cross-cultural comparison of typical dreams of “being chased” between Tibetan and Han Chinese dreamers. The research is based on 208 interviews combined with responses to a Dream Questionnaire. In total 569 subjects were involved in the research project: 278 Tibetan and 291 Han undergraduate college students. Results show an overall occurrence of a being-chased dream in 90% of the sample population. Moreover, the results also revealed that when being chased in dreams, there is a significant difference on the chasing agents. In addition, more than 95% of all participants experienced negative feelings while in the dream, especially fearful feelings. Also there were significant differences between Tibetan and Han Chinese on the feelings of anger and other (unspecified feelings). For the first reactions in the dreams, Tibetan and Han Chinese showed a significant difference on running away and seeking help. In addition, even though petrified then waking up is the most common final outcome in both groups, there were significant differences on not being caught and petrified then waking up between the two groups. Tibetan and Han Chinese take significantly different approaches, especially on the way of telling others, chanting and praying, self-interpretation, and ignoring and forgetting. The significance of these differences is analyzed in relation to the living environment.
Typical dreams are dreams which the majority of people experience at least once in their life time. Schredl, Ciric, Götz and Wittmann (2004) established two criteria for typical dreams: one is similarity in content and the other one is frequency in occurrence. Typical dreams are not only a common experience in daily lives, but also a major subject of scientific research. More than 100 years ago, Freud (1900/1996) introduced common themes found in typical dreams, such as being naked or inappropriately dressed, the death of loved ones, flying or falling, facing examinations, being chased or threatened, missing trains, losing teeth and so on. According to Freud’s interpretation, these dreams can be traced back to recollections of experiences and desires experienced during early childhood. Whether typical dreams reflect similar emotional concerns or personal meanings is open to debate. However, contemporary studies have repeatedly demonstrated the prominence of typical dream themes (Yu, 2008a).

One area of typical dream research focuses on a particular theme. For example, Griffith (1951) studied the theme of “searching for money”; Darlington (1942) and Lorand and Feldman (1955) focused on “losing teeth” and the particular meaning of teeth in dreams. Schredl (2007) studied “flying,” Yu (2008b) researched the theme of sexual orientation, including traditional Chinese sexual symbols. Another area of typical dream research focuses on all themes in a particular group with an emphasis on universality. This research method is also often applied to cross-cultural comparative studies. For instance, Griffith, Miyagi, and Tago (1958) compared Japanese and American typical dreams. This classic research differentiated 34 Typical Dreams themes, and then developed a Typical Dream Questionnaire (TDQ), which has been widely applied in later studies. In our study, cultural differences were also found. Zadra and Nielsen (1997) extended the original Griffith TDQ to 55 questions and tested it on 444 Canadian graduate students. TDQ has been widely tested in different cultures and populations. Schredl applied it to German graduate students (Schredl et al., 2004) and Yu used the TDQ with Hong Kong graduate students (Yu, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). Numerous research studies on typical dreams have found universality between cultures, but with gender difference on occasion (e.g., Griffith et al., 1958; Nielsen et al., 2003; Ward et al., 1961).

Among university students, typical dreams occurred with a number of themes. However, some themes have significant similarities, in which “being chased” has been one of the most recurrent ones. In Griffith et al. (1958) research has shown that “being chased or attacked” has the highest occurrence rate at 83.5%; Nielsen et al. (2003) also found that among Canadian university students being chased also had the highest frequency at 81.5%, and it was the first theme recalled by participants. In German populations Schredl et al. (2004) found being chased, with 88.7% frequency, was the second most dreamed theme. In research with university students in Hong Kong, Yu (2008a) found
that being chased was in second place with 92.2% recurrence. For mainland Chinese university students, being chased was also found to be the most frequent dreams in 71.5% participants (Chen et al., 2010). Although being-chased dreams show a high recurrence rate, there is to date surprisingly little research published on the phenomenon.

In these typical dreams of being chased what agent is doing the chasing? What is the meaning of these dreams for the dreamer, and how does the dreamer feel and react to being chased? What are the final outcomes in the dreams of this chasing, and what approach does the dreamer take upon awakening? These important psychological questions will be addressed in the following research.

Our research will attempt to place these psychological questions within a larger cultural context. To so, we will conduct our study on two different, but related cultures: the Tibetan and the Chinese cultures. Tibetan and Chinese people have a long, yet extremely different cultural background and living environment. During the past three decades, the fast-growing economic situation in China has highlighted the differences between living environments in Tibet and China. Deep-rooted Tibetan Buddhism affects every aspect of the Tibetan peoples’ daily life. This is in sharp contrast to the relatively nonreligious Han Chinese. Does such a contrast in cultures, living environments, and religious attitudes manifest on an unconscious psychological level in the high frequency of being-chased typical dreams and their specific content.

In this study, the focus will be on whether the cultural differences between Tibetan and Han Chinese would also be present in being-chased typical dreams. The following hypotheses are testified in current study:

Hypothesis 1: Being-chased dreams have a high recurrence among all students.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference between Tibetan and Han Chinese in the chasing agents.

Hypothesis 3: During being-chased dreams, negative feelings dominate the experience of the dreamers in both groups.

Hypothesis 4: There are differences between two cultural groups on first reactions in the dream of being chased.

Hypothesis 5: There are also differences on final outcomes in those dreams between Tibetan and Han.

Hypothesis 6: Once the dreamer awakens, there is also a cultural difference between approaches used by dreamers to deal with being-chased dreams.

METHOD

Participants

The research uses a stratified sampling principle for data collection. University level students from Tibet and south China were selected for participation. A sample population of undergraduate university students was selected for the following reasons: (1) the questionnaire was written in
Mandarin Chinese, and for the Tibetan population, the comprehensive level of Mandarin Chinese can be guaranteed at the university level; and (2) university students are a special group of young people, new in both societies, and represent a new generational mode of thinking.

A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed. Half of them were distributed in Tibet: 150 of them at Tibet University and 150 at Lhasa Normal School. Both educational institutions are located in Lhasa, Tibet. The other 300 questionnaires were distributed in Guangzhou Province, in South China: 150 of them at Zhong Shan Torch Polytechnic and the other 150 at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies and Xinghai Conservatory of Music. In total there were 569 (94.8%) valid questionnaires returned: 278 Tibetan (66 male, 212 female) and 291 Han Chinese (196 male, 95 female) (Table 1). The subjects’ ages ranged from 17 to 25 years old.

Questionnaire Administration

Prior to distributing the questionnaires, interviews were conducted with both populations to collect basic information on being-chased dreams. A total of 208 participants were interviewed: 106 Tibetan and 102 Han Chinese. The interviews focused on the key elements listed below: the chasing agents, emotions and reactions of the dreamer when being chased, outcomes of such chasing, and what the participants would do when they wake up. Based on raw data, five graduate students majoring in psychoanalysis and five nonpsychology major graduate students conducted the postinterview analyzing and coding. The chasing agents were most frequently human, animals, demons, and unknown. Human includes bad person, bandit, enemies, and WWII Japanese soldiers. Animals include snake, dog, cattle(yak), scorpion, tiger, lion, and crocodile; Demons include zombies, ghosts, monsters, and evil creatures; and Unknown means the dreamer is not sure what he or she is chased by, only reports the presence of a strong feeling of being chased. Feelings during being chased in dreams used basic emotions: happy, sad, angry and fearful, commonly accepted in the Chinese academic field. A fifth category, others, is also included for complicated emotions not included as above or difficult to specify. The first reactions when being chased in dreams are classified in the following four categories: (1) running away, (2) hiding, (3) fighting back, and (4) seeking help. The final outcomes of chasing are classified in the following categories: (1) being caught, (2) not being caught, and (3) petrified then waking up. The approaches once awakening are divided into six categories: (1) telling others, (2) chanting and praying, (3) special ceremony, (4) seeking professional help, (5) self-interpretation, and (6) ignoring and forgetting. A sample of the being-chased TDQ can be found in the Appendix.

RESULTS

Frequency of the Being-Chased Typical Dream

Previous researches consistently show that being chased is one of the top themes with high recurrence. This finding is reaffirmed by the current study.
Among the 569 subjects, only 6.7% report they have never dreamed about being chased. For those being chased in their dreams, Tibetan participants have a slightly lower percentage (89.2%) than Han Chinese (97.3%) (Table 2).

### Chasing Agents in Being-Chased Dreams

The highest reoccurring chasing agents for Tibetan undergraduates are *animals* (31.9%), and the lowest are *demons* (19.8%). In comparison, *humans* are the most frequently reported chasing agents with (34.3%), and *animals* are the least frequent with 9.9%. In addition, the chasing animals for Tibetans are more likely to be either dogs or yaks, but for Han Chinese they are more likely to be snakes. Taking each option of the item as a variable, scoring 1 if subject choose the option, scoring 0 if not, the independent-samples *t* test was used, and the results indicate that there is a significant difference between Tibetan and Han Chinese on *animals* (*t* = −6.35, *Sig.* = .000) and *demons* (*t* = −3.03, *Sig.* = .003) (Table 3).

### Feelings Experienced When Being Chased in Dreams

Both Tibetan and Han Chinese show strong negative feelings when they are being chased in dreams, namely *sad*, *fearful*, and *angry*. The most experienced feeling is *fearful*, 79.8% in Tibetan undergraduates and 79.2% in Han Chinese. In contrast, *happy* is the least experienced feeling in this case, only 2.8% for Tibetan and 4.6% for Han Chinese. Moreover, the *t* test shows there is a significant difference between Tibetan and Han Chinese on *angry* (*t* = 3.00, *Sig.* = .003) and *others* (*t* = −3.15, *Sig.* = .002) (Table 4).

### Table 1. Sample Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid samples</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>No. of samples</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan (N = 278)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han (N = 291)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>196</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing samples</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. valid samples</td>
<td></td>
<td>569</td>
<td>94.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. distributed questionnaires</td>
<td></td>
<td>600</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *N* = total number of samples.

### Table 2. Occurrence of a Being-Chased Typical Dream in Tibetan and Han Chinese Undergraduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whether being chased in dreams?</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Han</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>89.2</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First Reactions During Being-Chased Typical Dreams

When being chased in their dreams, most Tibetan and Han undergraduates run away. The Han undergraduates run away 72.4% of the time, whereas Tibetans 59.7%. The difference between Tibetan and Han Chinese on this reaction is significant ($t = -3.11$, Sig. = .002). In addition, both groups least frequent choice is seeking help. The rate of Han Chinese undergraduates is much lower (6.0%) compared with Tibetans (11.29%). The $t$ test shows a significant difference between the two groups on seeking help ($t = 2.15$, Sig. = .032) (Table 5).

Final Outcomes of the Being-Chased Dream

The majority of Tibetan (67.7%) and Han (49.8%) Chinese undergraduates report the final outcomes of their being-chased dreams are being petrified then waking up in great anxiety, and the $t$ test shows a significant difference between the two groups on this outcome ($t = 4.26$, Sig. = .000). The second tier outcome is not being caught, with 19.4% Tibetan and 39.2% Han Chinese, showing a significant difference between the two groups ($t = -5.17$, Sig. = .000). Only 12.9% of the Tibetans and 11% of the Han Chinese undergraduates were caught in their dreams (Table 6).

Approaches on Waking up From the Being-Chased Dreams

Regarding the approaches on waking up from being-chased dreams, most Tibetans (64.1%) chose to tell others, whereas only 20.1% of the Han Chinese did

Table 3. Comparison of Chasing Agents in Being-Chased Typical Dreams Between Tibetan and Han Chinese Undergraduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chasing agents</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Han</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>-1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6.35***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demons</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>-3.03**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>-1.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** $p < .01$.  *** $p < .001$.

Table 4. Comparison of Feelings During Being-Chased Typical Dreams Between Tibetan and Han Chinese Undergraduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotions in dreams</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Han</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearful</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-3.15**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** $p < .01$. 
the same. The $t$ test shows there is a significant difference between Tibetan and Han Chinese on this approach ($t = 11.35$, Sig. = .000). Also, Tibetan and Han Chinese show a significant difference on chanting and praying ($t = -4.61$, Sig. = .000), self-interpretation ($t = -2.79$, Sig. = .005), and ignoring and forgetting ($t = -13.22$, Sig. = .000). In contrast, most Han Chinese (61.1%) chose to ignore and forget the dream, whereas significantly fewer Tibetans (13.3%) did the same. The least recurrent option for Han Chinese upon waking up is chanting and praying at 1.1%, whereas for Tibetans this is their third choice at 10.5% (Table 7).

**DISCUSSION**

The overall results of the study show that being-chased typical dreams have a number of similarities between Tibetan and Han Chinese. Both Tibetan and Han Chinese show a very high occurrence of being chased, 93.3% for the combined subject pool. This finding supports previous studies (Chen et al., 2010; Griffith et al., 1958; Nielsen et al., 2003; Schredl et al., 2004; Yu, 2008a). The feelings experienced in being-chased dreams for both Tibetan and Han undergraduates are mainly negative, especially feelings of being fearful and scared. This finding is in line with Cartwright and Romanek’s research (1978), in which they found more than 50%–60% of such dreams were associated with negative feelings, as if dreamers were reviewing past traumatic experiences (Domhoff, 1996). When being chased in dreams, both Tibetan and Han undergraduates chose running away as the most frequent first reaction, and the final outcome was more likely to be petrified then waking up with great anxiety.

Relatively speaking, however, there are more differences found in the current study between Tibetan and Han Chinese undergraduates than similarities. All five

### Table 5. Comparison of First Reactions in Being-Chased Typical Dreams Between Tibetan and Han Chinese Undergraduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First reactions in dreams</th>
<th>Tibetan Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Han Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Running away</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>-3.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiding</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting back</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking help</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2.15*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

### Table 6. Comparison of Final Outcomes in the Being-Chased Typical Dream Between Tibetan and Han Chinese Undergraduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The outcome</th>
<th>Tibetan Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Han Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being caught</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not being caught</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>-5.17***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petrified, waking up</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>4.26***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** $p < .001$. ** ** **
aspects were tested, including (1) chasing agents, (2) feelings, (3) first reactions and (4) final outcomes in being-chased dreams, and (5) approaches on waking up. All show significant differences and each aspect shall be discussed in detail below.

The first aspect to be considered is chasing agents. For Tibetan undergraduates the most frequently occurring subgroup of chasing agent is animals (31.9%), in contrast to demons (19.8%), which are least frequent. In comparison, for Han undergraduates humans (34.3%) are most frequent and animals least frequent at 9.9%. Interestingly enough, during the interviews prior to the current study, researchers found Tibetan undergraduates report the chasing animals most frequently to be dogs and yaks. For Han Chinese undergraduates animals are much less often mentioned; however, when mentioned, the animals are most likely to be snakes. This major difference might be understood as a reflection of the different living environments. Tibetans believe nature should not be disturbed, so their way of living is very close to nature. As nomads, they normally have dogs, yaks, and sheep around. The relationship between Tibetans and animals are native and intimate. Therefore, animals, especially yaks and dogs, have a greater possibility of appearing in their dreams. In sharp contrast, Han undergraduates in the current study mostly live in cities. They have little or no first-hand experience with animals, which would reduce the possibilities of dreaming about animals. However, for those few who report dreaming of animals, in most cases the animals are snakes. This is an interesting finding that would be worthy of future research.

The difference between chasing agents in Tibetan and Han undergraduates’ dreams could indicate that the two groups may have slightly different symbolic representational systems, each with different internal conflicts and anxieties. Because Tibetan undergraduates grow up in a dense and rich Tibetan Buddhist environment, they are less likely to be frightened by demons. In most, if not all, Tibetan temples, many gods are shown as fearsome, frightening figures, the protectors of faithful believers. This may contribute to the finding that Tibetan undergraduates are less likely to dream of being chased by demons. Another point worth noting is that Tibetan undergraduates face less pressure than Han undergraduates once they complete their studies. Tibetans are part of a national minority, and graduates from universities are considered as part of the elite in Tibet. The Chinese government has had preferential policies for Tibetan graduates. Up until 2009, Tibetan undergraduates were guaranteed a job once they had successfully completed their university level studies. This policy had been discontinued for Han

### Table 7. Comparison of Approaches on Waking Up Between Tibetan and Han Chinese Undergraduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches on waking up</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th></th>
<th>Han</th>
<th></th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telling others</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>11.35***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanting and praying</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>4.61***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special ceremony</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking professional help</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self interpretation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>-2.79**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignoring and forgetting</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>-13.22***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** * p < .01. *** p < .001.
undergraduates 10 years earlier, in 1999. Consequently, Han university students are currently under greater pressure upon graduation. This increased stress may be reflected in the higher frequency of being-chased dreams of the Han Chinese participants (97.3%) in relation to the Tibetans (89.2%). Han university students are facing much more social pressures, especially in the current social and educational system. Understandably for them, the meaning and joy of studying are greatly weakened under the pressure of reality; they have to compete with others for the relatively few jobs available. Hence, interpersonal conflicts become the major conflicts and anxieties of Han university students, and in their dreams, humans are the most frequent agents who chase them.

The feelings that are experienced during being-chased dreams in the current study fall into the following categories: (1) happiness, (2) sadness, (3) fear, and (4) anger. In order to be more precise, a fifth category, others, has also been added for unspecified feelings, which are complicated or difficult to specify. The difference between Tibetan and Han undergraduates in the category of feelings lay mainly between angry and others. There are 8.5% Tibetan undergraduates who report that they feel angry while being chased in dreams, but only 2.5% Han undergraduates claim the same feeling. Contrarily, Han undergraduates show more frequency in the emotional category others, with 7.8%. This is much higher than the Tibetan frequency (2.0%). Tibetans feel more anger when being chased in dreams. Perhaps this is related to their natural history and the culture of Tibet, close to nature and spontaneous reactions. Han Chinese undergraduates, on the other hand, grow up in the ancient tradition of the Confucian way of thinking and behaving, which encourages hiding or suppressing all emotions in order to show maturity. The greater frequency of other feelings in this case might reflect that Han Chinese undergraduates are unsure of their complicated feelings when being chased in dreams. These feelings could not be easily classified in one of the above four basic emotion categories. This may indicate different types of mental development between Tibetan and Han Chinese undergraduates. For Tibetans, they are closer to the natural world, but less developed in more complex urban social aspects. However, there are few academic studies that focus on native Tibetans’ mental development. The few available studies are mostly, if not all, focused on overseas Tibetans, particularly in India. Further studies are needed to better understand the people who live in this mystic land.

The next aspects to be considered are first reactions when being chased in dreams. The differences could be interpreted as the individual dreamer’s attitude and way of reacting when confronted with being chased. Although there are numerous differences between the two groups, in the current study all subjects are undergraduates who are undergoing a developing and conflicting period of life. To run away and escape from what is chasing them is the most natural and main reaction. Running away is a negative way of dealing with confrontation, but it has been the most frequent first reaction of both Tibetan (59.7%) and Han (72.4%) undergraduates. The Han students show a much stronger tendency toward running away than their Tibetan peers. If running away to escape danger is one of the most basic patterns of behavior that we have inherited from our ancestors, then the more dangerous or stressful the situation, the greater the tendency is to run away. Han Chinese undergraduates seem to produce more dangerous and stressful situations in their dreams than their Tibetan peers.
Seeking help is another reaction to being chased in dreams. This is, relatively speaking, a better path for psychological development. Unfortunately, it is often ignored or overlooked in today’s modern society. This is particularly the case for Han undergraduates living in urban industrial environments. For both Tibetan (11.3%) and Han (6.0%) undergraduates, the least used first reaction is seeking help.

For the final outcomes of being-chased dreams, results show some evidence to support an evolutionary psychology hypotheses. Being-chased dreams seem to relate to human survival advantages— our early ancestors had to run for their lives from deadly attacks of animals. This basic human pattern of behavior has genetically evolved to reduce the frequency of being caught; for both groups being caught as the dream’s final outcome has the lowest score (Tibetan 12.9%; Han 11%). Most subjects in the being-chased dreams end up petrified then waking up in great anxiety (Tibetan 67.7%; Han 49.8%). This choice is related to self-protection. In order to protect oneself, especially when emotions are becoming extreme, dreamers wake up automatically, and the negative feelings are released.

Finally, approaches upon waking up show significant differences between Tibetan and Han undergraduates. There are 4.4% Tibetan undergraduates who choose to follow local customs or elder generations’ instructions to make a special ceremony, 10.5% Tibetan participants choose to chant and pray, and most Tibetans (64.1%) choose to tell others. In contrast, only 2.1% Han undergraduates would do some kind of ceremony, whereas only 1.1% Han would chant and pray, and 20.1% would prefer to tell others. During interviews researchers found that Tibetans believe that the effects of nightmares or disturbing dreams would fade away by telling others and speaking about the dream. Interestingly, different regions of Tibet have their own unique way of “telling” disturbing dreams. Some regions believe that this kind of telling is not to be done to a person, but to a thing or some place, for example, telling the dream to a old shoe or telling the dream to a dirty, disgusting place, like a toilet. The bad effects of the disturbing dream then would be taken away. Other regions have the belief that the disturbing dream has to be told to some person, anyone, whereas still other regions have the custom of retelling the disturbing dream only to a Lama in a temple. The Lama would then either do chant or fortune telling to remove the dreamer’s sense of uneasiness. Tibetans have long traditions of predicting and analyzing dreams. Lamas and monks also practice so-called “Tibetan Yoga of Dreams and Sleep,” which is a special practice to achieve enlightenment. It requires dreamers to remain conscious while dreaming. From the contents of their dreams, Masters of the dreamers would give specific instruction on what and how to develop further in order to reach enlightenment (Rinpoche, 1998). This may be significantly related to the frequency of the Tibetan undergraduates deciding to tell others their dreams.

In contrast to the Tibetan attitude, 61.1% of Han Chinese undergraduates pick the approach of ignoring or forgetting the dream as if it is not important. This is in sharp contrast to only 13.3% of Tibetan peers doing the same. This also shows the differing attitudes of Tibetan and Han undergraduates toward dreams in general. During interviews, researchers found that Tibetans treat dreams in a more positive manner, believing dreams have a special meaning. However, when someone believes dreams have no meaning, then naturally he or she will tend to ignore, rather than value them. As mentioned earlier, Tibetans have their own unique culture and living environment, and they have developed a unique national consciousness and cultural consciousness.
that encourages telling others about their dreams, chanting and praying, or making a special ceremony once they wake up in order to share their dreams with the Greatness of Nature. In return dreamers obtain wisdom from their dream world. Tibetans have a great respect for nature, having learned how to live in harmony with it at an altitude of more than 3000 m. Generally speaking, Tibetans show greater respect for ancient wisdom. They live closer to their inner psyche and the essence of the outer world. Han undergraduates in general have lost their connection to their psyche and nature as they have moved into the modern industrialized world. Han Chinese students are more likely to choose what they can grasp with their hands, rather than what they can feel with their hearts. They are less related to the significance of their dreaming experience. Researchers of the current study have observed in their own clinical practice more and more Han undergraduates are starting to pay attention to their own dreams and are trying to understand the meaning of their dreams in relation to their inner and outer worlds.

The present research has a number of areas that need to be improved. The first area is about the being-chased TDQ. Instructions should be more precise and use positive phrases. Although all participants select only one opinion for each question, which does not affect the final results, precise instruction at the beginning for a single choice would be more professional. The second area of improvement is the angle of analyzing. The first author of the current study (Yin Fang) had been teaching at Lhasa Normal School for 2 years and has consulted several Tibetan scholars, yet as being Han Chinese herself, this article is mainly built up based on a Han nationality’s understanding and then compares it with Tibetan nationality. Apart from further in-depth study on Tibetan culture and traditions to gain more objectivity and nurture discussion, it would be even better to invite a Tibetan researcher to take part in future studies. Lastly, authors have to give up referencing some related researchers because the languages used in those studies are not based on pure scientific research discussions. Therefore, authors have to exclude all that research involved with any political position on some sensitive historical events, which is a great regret. Meanwhile, current research focus on the descriptive research about the characteristics of being-chased typical dreams. Hence correlation researches will be the orientation in future studies.

Conclusions

1. Being-chased typical dreams have a very high occurrence rate of 93.3% in Tibetan and Han undergraduates.

2. Tibetan and Han undergraduates show significant differences on chasing agents, especially on the agents animals and demons. For Tibetans the highest occurrence agent is animal, and the lowest is demon; for Han Chinese, the most frequent chasing object is human, and the lowest is animal.

3. Regardless whether Tibetan or Han undergraduates, when they are chased in dreams, they all report negative feelings, especially fearful feeling (Tibetan with 79.8% and Han with 79.2%). There are also significant differences in the occurrence of anger and others between the two groups.

4. When being chased in dreams, both Tibetan and Han undergraduates’ first reactions are mainly to choose running away (Tibetan 59.7%, Han 72.4%).
contrast, seeking help is the choice with the lowest rate (Tibetan 11.3%, Han 6.0%). Moreover, Tibetan and Han Chinese show significant differences in the above two reactions. There are also significant differences in final outcomes of not being caught and petrified then waking up between the two groups, although petrified then waking up are the most common outcomes in both groups.

5. Approaches on how to deal with being-chased dreams upon awakening also show significant differences between Tibetan and Han undergraduates. The main difference is on Telling others, Chanting and praying, Self-interpretation, and Ignoring and forgetting. There are 64.1% Tibetans who chose to tell others, but 61.1% Han undergraduates ignored and forgot the dream soon afterward.

The above research findings provide evidence on how cultural differences between Tibetan and Han Chinese undergraduates affect being-chased typical dreams. In addition, the research finding demonstrates the subtle psychological differences between these two groups. The current study also indicates that the being-chased typical dream also has a high frequency among Tibetan and Han Chinese undergraduates. Our research finding reaffirms the cross-cultural existence of typical dreams (Griffith et al., 1958; Nielsen et al., 2003; Yu, 2008a).

REFERENCES


(Appendix follows)
Appendix

“Being-Chased” Typical Dreams Questionnaire

Instructions: Please read the questions below carefully, then select the answer that suits you best. DO NOT MISS ANY QUESTIONS. This questionnaire will only be used for research purposes. You can be assured that all answers and data are strictly confidential. Thank you.

Sex____________ Nationality____________ Age____________

1. Have you ever experienced being chased in dreams?
   A: Yes; B: No

2. In those being-chased dreams, what is chasing you?
   A: Human (i.e., villain, brigand, enemies, WWII Japanese soldiers, etc.)
   B: Animal (i.e., snake, dog, scorpion, tiger, lion, crocodile, etc.)
   C: Demons (i.e., zombie, ghost, monster, evil creature, etc.)
   D: Unknown (I have no idea what is chasing me; I only know that I am chased)
   E: Others: ____________

3. How do you feel when you are chased in dreams?
   A: Happy; B: Sad; C: Fearful; D: Angry; E: Others ____________

4. What is your first reaction when you are chased in dreams?
   A: Running away
   B: Hiding
   C: Fighting back
   D: Seeking for help from others
   E: Others ____________

(Appendix continues)
5. What is the final outcome of those being-chased dreams?
   A: Being caught
   B: Not being caught
   C: Petrified then waking up in great anxiety
   E: Others____________

6. Once you wake up, which of following approaches would you choose?
   A: Telling others (friends or family members)
   B: Chanting and praying (all religious activities)
   C: Making a special ceremony based on old people’s instructions or local customs
   D: Seeking professional help (counseling or others)
   E: Doing self-interpretation, trying to understand the hidden messages
   F: Ignoring as it is not that important, and soon forgetting it
   G: Others____________

7. When was the most recent time you dreamed of being chased?

8. What is your opinion on being-chased dreams. What could they mean?