

# Impacts of the Covid-19 context on the oneiric dimension: an exploratory analysis from the sociology of dreams<sup>1</sup>

Impactos do contexto da Covid-19 na dimensão onírica: uma análise exploratória a partir da sociologia dos sonhos

Impactos del contexto de la Covid-19 en la dimensión onírica: un análisis exploratorio desde la sociología de los sueños

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## ABSTRACT

This article seeks, fundamentally, to fulfill two connected objectives: a) to present a typology regarding the sociological studies of dreams, a relatively neglected area within sociology, which has had a varied approach since its beginnings; and then, b) to position within such classification a quantitative study aimed at investigating possible relationships between a set of social belonging during the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil, and the oneiric dimension. The analysis' findings point to a significant association between the attribution of negative feelings to dreams and people with lower income; they also demonstrate that such feelings are slightly related to the female gender and young people.

**Keywords:** sociology of dreams, dream life, pandemic, Covid-19, pandemic context.

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<sup>1</sup> This article was translated into English by Ana Karina Borges Braun.

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## RESUMO

Este artigo procura, fundamentalmente, cumprir dois objetivos articulados: a) apresentar uma tipologia acerca dos estudos sociológicos dos sonhos, uma área relativamente escanteada no interior da sociologia, que possui variada abordagem desde os seus primórdios; e, em seguida, b) posicionar a realização de um estudo quantitativo frente a tal classificação, o qual objetivou investigar possíveis relações entre um conjunto de pertencimentos sociais durante a pandemia da Covid-19 no Brasil e a dimensão onírica. Os resultados encontrados pela análise apontam para uma associação significativa entre a atribuição de sentimentos negativos aos sonhos e pessoas de menor renda; também demonstram que tais sentimentos estão ligeiramente relacionados ao gênero feminino e aos jovens.

**Palavras-chave:** sociologia dos sonhos, vida onírica, pandemia, Covid-19, contexto pandêmico.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo busca, fundamentalmente, cumplir dos objetivos vinculados: a) presentar una tipología sobre los estudios sociológicos de los sueños, un área relativamente descuidada dentro de la sociología, que ha tenido un abordaje variado desde sus inicios; y luego b) posicionar frente a dicha clasificación un estudio cuantitativo que tuvo como objetivo investigar posibles relaciones entre un conjunto de pertenencias sociales durante la pandemia de Covid-19 en Brasil y la dimensión onírica. Los resultados encontrados por el análisis apuntan a una asociación significativa entre la atribución de sentimientos negativos a los sueños y las personas con menores ingresos, también demuestra que dichos sentimientos están ligeramente relacionados con el género femenino y los jóvenes.

**Palabras clave:** sociología de los sueños, vida onírica, pandemia, Covid-19, contexto pandémico.

## Introduction

The first cases of Covid-19 recorded in December 2019 in China quickly became a global crisis, a worldwide pandemic, whose effects overcame the sanitary and public health spheres, reaching the political, economic, and cultural spheres (Birman, 2020). The interruption of ordinary daily life, the impediment to people's mobility, and the painful disruption to social behavior produced a general climate of concern and fear, accompanied by the objective and subjective consequences of the pandemic. In this context, various investigations have established the oneiric dimension, an object little explored by sociology as a subject of study (Barrett, 2020a; 2020b; Iorio *et al.*, 2020; MacKay & DeCicco, 2020; Schredl & Bulkeley, 2020; Guerrero-Gomez *et al.*, 2021; Solomonova *et al.*, 2021; Margherita & Caffieri, 2022).

Although this object is somewhat marginalized in sociological research, it has relevant potential for the field. Considering that individual experiences are crossed by social belongings that impact emotions and affections and precipitate into dream content and that there is no radical break between waking and dreaming life, it is plausible to develop a research agenda on the social roots of dreams (Ullman, 1960; 2001) through a sociological lens that aims to investigate the impact of the social context on the subjectivity of dream thoughts (Bastide, 2003). The sociology that tracked and highlighted the importance of objective conditions of existence for the production of cultural preferences (Bourdieu, 2010) comes close to offers a perspective a perspective able to notice the existing continuities and relations between social structures of waking life and the complexity of oneiric life (Bastide, 2003; Duvignaud *et al.*, 1979; Lahire, 2021).

Thus, this article proposes an investigative effort that moves between two levels: the first, on a theoretical level, seeks to develop, discuss, and establish a typology of conceptions regarding a sociology of dreams, both to delimit and stress this subfield of sociology and to position this study theoretically. The second is an empirical study that aims to investigate the dimension of dreams in the reality of the pandemic in southern Brazil, based on a survey that sought to understand the relationship between individual characteristics, the material conditions of individuals and dream life through an exploratory sample. Therefore, this article presents the initial results of a descriptive analysis based on some simple cross-checks.

We intend to continue this work in future publications that explore multivariate analysis and collaborate with other advances. From now on, this study is divided into five interconnected argumentative structures: the first introduces the explicitly more theoretical discussion on the sociology of dreams; the second discusses some of the consequences of the pandemic in Brazil; the third outlines the design and theoretical-methodological approach of the empirical research; the fourth presents the profile of the sample, establishes the results found, as well as their discussion; finally, the fifth presents the final considerations.

## Sociologies of dreams: a brief introduction

According to Montague Ullman (2001), dreams contain social referents that metaphorically represent how some social issues affect our lives. The metaphors that make up and are expressed by dream imagery, according to Ullman (2001), are fundamentally social in their origin, as they are part of a cultural repertoire socially and historically constituted, providing dreamers with a vast collection of images; dreams also link individual and social life, telling us something about society's unresolved problems, while at the same time intertwining the dreamer's unresolved issues, thus linking social and personal life (Ullman, 2001, p. 3; Martins, 1996).

This link between the individual and social dimensions of life, as well as the social content of dreams, had already preoccupied Gabriel Tarde, an author who would become a central reference in sociological studies. Almost three decades before the publication of Freud's seminal *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Tarde, between 1870 and 1872, wrote and published the pioneering book *Sur le sommeil. Ou plutôt sur le rêves*, in which he took his dreams as an object of scientific reflection for the first time, and from them tried to understand his sexual and amorous preoccupations, as well as the impact of the Franco-Prussian War on his life.

Since Tarde, for reasons not worth discussing here, dreams as an object of research have been pushed to the periphery of the sociological field, only being taken up tangentially or occasionally. Throughout the history of the sociology of dreams, we can see how the approaches developed allow us to draw up, in our opinion, a typology of such studies, which we present below.

## Around the sociology of dreams

Two sociologists who approached dreams somewhat marginally, developing a sociology that remained on the periphery of a proper sociology of dreams, were Maurice Halbwachs (1923) and Alfred Schutz (2003).

The former, more concerned with researching memory as a social fact/phenomenon, approaches dreams and their memory images by asking whether they consist of a kind of reconstruction of our memory. According to him (1923), in a position contrary to Freud's, we are incapable of reliving our past during dreams, as they are limited to implementing images that have the appearance of memories in the form of fragments, displaced portions of scenes lived, places visited, and people met, introduced into the dream world.

For Halbwachs (1923), dreams are often too inaccurate or incomplete to make sense of them. In other cases, it is assumed that between the event and the dream, the "spirit" (or consciousness) acted and worked on the memories, and by having evoked them once or several times, transformed them into images. Halbwachs (1923) promotes the separation between consciousness and unconsciousness, between the waking state and dreams, with consciousness and wakefulness responsible for evoking memories. Remembrance can only occur after sleep, when you wake up because consciousness acts on a set of confused images and memory is activated. In Halbwachs' view, dreams provide the raw material on which the spirit acts, and only then will the images make up the memory.

Another author who remains somewhat on the fringes of a sociology of dreams is Alfred Schutz (2003), who is more interested in understanding the endowment of meaning in our daily lives. In summary, for Schutz: i) the dream world, as one of the possible types of multiple realities, presents a peculiar cognoscitive style; ii) all experiences in the dream world are, concerning to such a cognoscitive style, coherent in themselves and compatible with each other; iii) the dream world thus possesses its own, specific accent of reality; iv) the coherence and compatibility of experience concerning the peculiar cognoscitive style subsists exclusively within the limits of that "particular sphere of meaning"; vi) if there is specific tension, there is also a specific form of experience and a specific form of sociality;

vii) the world of dreams represents a modification of the world of everyday performance, which is that of wakefulness, and establishes itself as a type of archetype about all the other “finite spheres of meaning”.

Real volitions, projects, and intentions can be found in dreams, but they don't originate in them; in other words, the world of performance, or at least fragments of it, are preserved in dreams as memories and retentions, and, furthermore, in dreams what is incompatible in the waking world appears to be compatible, and vice versa.

Schutz's phenomenological sociology is anchored in a philosophy of consciousness that advocates that the starting point for the subjects' reflection is their present condition based on lived experience; it is their being-in-the-world, their being-there that is the condition of consciousness, so, like Halbwachs, Schutz does not fail to attribute a certain preponderance of the waking world over the dream world and perhaps that is why both authors were unable to develop the sociology of dreams properly speaking, but limited themselves to its margins, only tangentially.

### *A stricto sensu* sociology of dreams

The case we are using here to exemplify what is a strictly sociological proposal for dreams comes from Brazil: while conducting a collective study on dreams collected among dreamers from the upper strata of the middle classes in São Paulo, the richest city in Brazil, Prof. José Souza Martins (1996), a former professor and researcher at the University of São Paulo (USP), instructed his students not to use any psychoanalytic literature, basically for two reasons: one, not to get carried away by the psychoanalytic orientation and misuse it; and, secondly, to respect and develop the methodological strategy adopted, namely to let the dreamer legitimately produce their key to dream interpretation.

In other words, the dreamer himself produces primary knowledge about his dreams - even if the memory of the dream is a restricted memory of what was dreamt. The sociologist's job, in this case, is to get to know this knowledge, placing this sociology within the scope of a sociology of common-sense knowledge, which mobilizes a set of collective representations in its interpretation.

For Martins (1996), dreams correspond to documents about the state of the social relationship between us and ourselves and between us and the otherness that mediates our transformation into social beings. For him, dreams are not restricted to mere deformed repetitions of what happens in wakefulness but constitute “unsubmissive residues of rationality” (1996, p. 16, our translation into English), in other words, dreams consist of the mediation of concrete social experiences; in this sense, it is possible to think of the differentiation of dreams in association with the social differentiation of dreamers.

Therefore, dreams are a way of knowing our experiences, a form of awareness of what we can hardly notice and recognize during waking hours. It's as if dreams reveal the truth that cannot reach consciousness. The dream presents as a form of critical consciousness with the power to liberate individuals from extreme alienation and subordination imposed by contemporary capitalism.

## A sociology of dreams in dialogue with Psychoanalysis

If, on the one hand, José de Souza Martins proposes a sociology of dreams that avoids any contact with psychoanalysis, Roger Bastide (2003), on the other hand, adopts the opposite approach and tries to incorporate, as far as possible, the contributions of Freudian psychoanalysis.

Bastide began to dedicate himself to dreams after researching race relations in São Paulo in 1950, where he devoted himself, among other themes and problems, to studying the dreams of black people. For him, a study dedicated to life stories wouldn't seem complete if it didn't look at the fragments of nocturnal life, since the integral life of humanity is constituted by the intertwining of day and night. Bastide had noticed that there was more continuity than rupture between the concerns of the waking state and those of the sleeping person, and the “social” was kind of hidden in what we could call subjectivity.

For Bastide (2003), the drastic separation between dreams and wakefulness in Western societies is a result of another artificial separation made by Western rationalism between “nature” and “culture”: it is as if the realm of dreams belongs to our nature and therefore “needs” to be tamed and pushed into silence; and “culture” which in theory is what defines us,

determines our humanity. According to the author, dreams are part of nature and culture, standing at the crossroads between them. So much so that the symbols that populate oneiric scenarios are provided by a kind of cultural stock or repertoire of old magics, ancient mythologies, cults, traditions, folklore, etc., which, Bastide warns, we imagined were dead some time ago.

Dreams, in this sense, would be a recourse to collective materials, to the symbols that signify our social experiences. It's as if within dreams we could discover (and analyze) the social frameworks of our imagination, both individual and social at the same time. In the same way, the unconscious and affective life are not separate from the social environment; on the contrary, they are strongly influenced by social data. Two observations should be made in this regard: 1) Bastide follows Freudian psychoanalysis in refusing to radically separate nightlife from the waking world; on the contrary, he tries to reconnect the waking world, which is fundamentally the world of work, to the oneiric; 2) affective life is a structuring element of our lives - here again, Freudian echoes can be seen.

If Bastide believes that the dream consists of this mysterious realm that hides our desires and even our most distant human past, then it seems clear to us that the sociologist shares something of Freud's psychoanalytic method since psychoanalytic interpretation is not limited to the manifest content of dreams but digs into their latent content. Accessing these depths that hark back to past eras or the repertoire of symbols that we mobilize to find a possible meaning for the dream material - and day-to-day life - requires, says Bastide, undertaking rigorous research into the relationship between dreams and social environments. The dream, says Bastide, is inscribed in the framework of a civilization and a social system: if Freud personalizes and individualizes the dream, it is up to sociology to re-socialize it, says the French sociologist.

## A sociology with and against Psychoanalysis

Duvignaud and his team (1979), in their research, are looking for what the dream work hides and what is not reduced to desire. Duvignaud *et al.* acknowledge a debt to Freud because they admit that dreams conceal something, and at the same time they try to offer a way out because they



demonstrate that what is concealed is not reduced to sexual desire. As well sexuality, death, work, and violence affect everyday life and find expression in dreams, with dreamers finding ways of dealing with and resolving the conflicts that plague such life. It is as if in dreams, say the authors, the socialization of individuals also takes place, in the sense that there is no refusal of social life, even though dreams manifest a revolt against this life.

In their wide-ranging research, they deal not only with individuals from the bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie, like those analyzed by Freud, but people from various professional strata, consequently, from several socioeconomic backgrounds, immersed in everyday triviality, seeking to offer a more comprehensive and inclusive sociological interpretation of dreams, attentive to a wide range of social experiences.

The authors make it clear that they don't want to establish a mechanical relationship between dream classes and social classes but rather to establish correlations between various nocturnal experiences and the different insertions of men and women in their everyday, trivial social practices, especially in their professions and ways of working. The proposal is to discover the "intentionality" of dreams or, in more sociological terms, their objectified character, which is to say researchers strive to objectify subjective experiences to reveal the also social character of such experiences - in this case, dream life.

The comparisons and correlations established between social situations and dreams show that the nocturnal experience is not homogeneous, nor is it universal - as the Freudian interpretation of dreams suggests. The authors point out the limits of the psychoanalytic clinic, which, according to them, tends to isolate the individual, separating them from contact with other people. The sociological research by Duvignaud *et al.* (1979) shows that common, shared life also exists in dreams.

Heavily influenced by Halbwachs, Bastide, and Duvignaud, the French sociologist Bernard Lahire develops, in our opinion, the most well-founded sociology of dreams in a critical dialog with Freudian psychoanalysis that doesn't completely deny it but emphatically demarcates the position and contributions of sociology in this field of study.

Lahire (2021) argues that dreams are an individual and intimate phenomenon and, at the same time, intrinsically social since the dream world is structured socially. So much so, argues the author, that we meet

and reconnect in dreams with people who share our social life, present and past, and make us relive/remember experiences and social situations that we don't fully understand, forcing us to see what we do in our daily lives that we are not aware of.

Dreams, for Lahire, are not just the expression of unsatisfied desires, as in Freud, but mainly correspond to the effort to solve the problems that plague us in our waking lives. These problems are particular to each individual but also specific to a whole category of people (such as the professional categories studied by Duvignaud and his team) because they are related to the structures of our social life.

Dreams, in Lahire's sociological interpretation (2020, 2021), dramatize and exaggerate the moments of discomfort, shame, fear, and humiliation that we experience when we are awake in a broad and complex web of social interactions, allowing us to confront these moments once again and deal with them, attributing meaning to them and offering the opportunity to exercise some control over them, to become their masters and not their slaves. In this sense, Lahire (2021) concludes that no censorship deforms dream thoughts and returns them to darkness, hiding them, as Freud imagined. Conversely, dreams establish a form of awareness about everyday life that, when awake, we paradoxically don't have.

## An overview of the pandemic scenario in Brazil

Between the beginning of 2020 and the end of 2022, Brazil had 36.331 million confirmed cases of Covid-19, with a total of 693,853 thousand deaths caused by the infection (Brasil, 2024). In the first year of the pandemic, Brazil accounted for more victims than 89.3% of the other countries whose data WHO had registered. Still within this sample, when considering the demographic composition, Brazil achieved the 10th highest crude death rate per 100,000 population (Ipea, 2022).

These numbers reflect the way the Brazilian federal government dealt with the pandemic. Its failure to treat the pandemic as a priority and its lack of political coordination in applying effective public policies impacted the increase of cases and deaths caused by the disease (Soares & Menezes, 2021). If the Brazilian government had taken non-pharmacological measures aiming

at the decrease of Covid-19 transmission, besides preparing and qualifying the health system to face the pandemic from March 2020 to March 2021, it could have avoided about 120,000 deaths. (Idec/Oxfam Brasil, 2021).

Meanwhile, the president at the time, Jair Bolsonaro, justified his actions in the face of the pandemic by exploiting public controversies about science, questioning the WHO's recommendations on containing the disease (Duarte & Benetti, 2022). By encouraging the government itself at the time not to comply with social isolation measures, spreading fake news, and minimizing the seriousness of Covid-19, we can see a biopolitical strategy for managing the health crisis, which strengthened the neoliberal logic that exposed the population to illness and death (Caponi *et al.*, 2021).

Considering this, various studies, from different moments of the pandemic, allow us to identify the multiple facets of this "necropolitics" (Caponi *et al.*, 2021, p. 97) managed by the Brazilian government. This is the case of Bega and Souza (2021), who show the presence of intra-urban inequalities among municipalities with a high Gross Domestic Product and Human Development Index, in which the infection affected the poorest regions to a greater extent. Fariar *et al.*'s (2022) study about children and teenagers' mortality rates reinforces this evidence when it verifies the unequal distribution of deaths from Covid-19 throughout Brazilian territories, age, and race/color groups

In the same vein, Baqui *et al.* (2020) also point to the variable race as a risk factor from the observation that brown-skinned and black-skinned people hospitalized due to infections had a higher chance of mortality, at the same time that individuals occupying the worst socioeconomic status, in situations of social vulnerability, recorded the highest lethality rates in the first 100 days of the pandemic (Santos *et al.*, 2022). According to Santos *et al.* (2023), in 2020, the Covid-19 mortality rate in Brazilian states was higher among non-white people, except for the Federal District, but overall, this group accounted for a higher percentage than expected.

In addition to the thousands of people infected and killed as a result of the health crisis and the government's bio/necropolitical management, the country saw the growth of inequalities and vulnerabilities inherent in its social fabric, which had been intensifying since the period before the pandemic (Bógus & Magalhães, 2022), which, in this context, reached indices such as 125.2 million Brazilians in a situation of food insecurity, with 33.1 million people having nothing to eat (Rede Penssan, 2022). It is understood that the Brazilian

pandemic scenario has further highlighted the objective impact of the conditions of existence on the reality of the subjects. It is from this perspective and based on the literature on the continuity between daytime and dream life that this study establishes, as a sociological object, the problematization concerning the extent and impact of the social context of Covid-19 on the subjectivity of individuals.

## The development of a sociology of dreams in southern Brazil

From now on, based on this delimited panorama of possible strands of dream sociology to explore, we position the empirical investigation carried out in this study on the borderline of what we could classify as a strictly sociological approach, in other words, without any dialog with Psychoanalysis. The topic of dreams and society and, more recently, the relationship with the pandemic, is still a research agenda in consolidation. This is why there are no population parameters that could delineate a probabilistic sample design, especially for the Brazilian reality. Moreover, due to the pandemic of Covid-19 and the need for social isolation, it was necessary to collect data virtually.

However, unlike other global regions, online research in Brazil still deals with the fact that stable internet access and digital inclusion is not yet largely widespread, especially in non-central regions and among lower-income classes, thus creating, from the start, a sampling bias. Given these conditioning factors and operational limitations, the exploratory sample was formed mainly by university students from the south of Brazil. Between August 2021 and January 2022, digital channels and networks disclosed a not validated yet 39-questions questionnaire via Google Forms.

We developed the survey instrument mainly based on two interconnected axes: 1) the formulation of questions based on research carried out abroad, which identified some types of recurring dreams, feelings associated with dreams, and possible contextual elements linked to them; 2) and the incorporation of theoretical perspectives in the questions, which highlighted the importance of feelings in describing dream production and the influence of the everyday environment, such as the work of Duvignaud *et al.*, Bastide

and Lahire. Before applying the survey, we tested the instrument using the snowball sampling technique.

The survey instrument used is exploratory in nature and therefore not validated. It was formulated considering international debates, with a view to possible comparisons of the results obtained with similar research. The questionnaire searched for information about individual attributes, socioeconomic conditions, and reports of dreams and feelings during the pandemic in Brazil. A total of 611 people answered the questionnaire. The presentation of the results is mainly descriptive, however analyzed through simple crossings and/or bivariate analysis.

## An exploratory analysis of the pandemic scenario

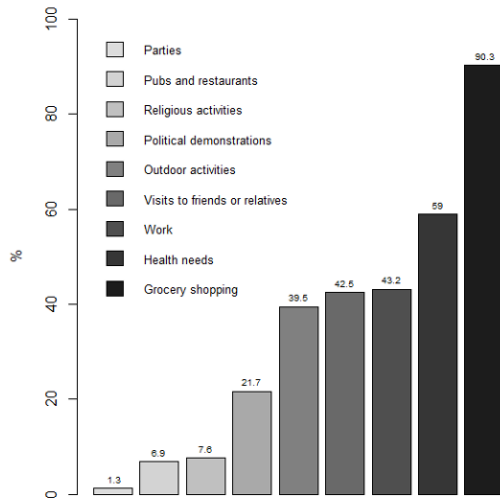
Most of the respondents of this research are university students. Gender distribution is the following: 68.4% females, 30.1% males, and 1.5% as others; 54% are aged between 14 and 29, and 78.6% are white. These are characteristics of the Brazilian university profile, especially in the south of the country, where most of the students are young, white, and comprised by higher percentage of females, according to the *Censo da Educação Superior do Brasil* (Inep, 2022).

Furthermore, other socioeconomic characteristics confirm this particularity. Regarding religion, 45.8% of the respondents are agnostic or atheist, while most Brazilians declare themselves religious and confessional. There is also the predominance of people who have at least reached higher education (8.5%), while Brazil's current net enrollment rate of people aged 18 to 24 in higher education is 25.5% (Inep, 2020).

Our sample also presents income conditions above the Brazilian population average: only 7% of the respondents have family income up to one minimum wage (MW), 17.2% up to two minimum wages, 25.5% from two to four minimum wages, and 50.2% more than four minimum wages. According to the National Household Sample Survey, the average income of the Brazilian population in 2019 was mostly between two and three minimum wages (IPEA, 2022). Finally, regarding socio-professional status, almost most of the people are students (46.3%), followed by professionals and public servants (23.7%), and self-employed professionals (20.6%), among others.

These characteristics converge into a public that has reported minimally suitable conditions to deal with the setbacks imposed by the pandemic, since only 11.9% have declared precarious or inappropriate social conditions during the pandemic. Social isolation has resulted in an abrupt reduction of collective activities and on-site work. In our sample, the major activities outside the home are related to essential activities such as shopping for groceries, going out for medical or work needs, visiting close people, and doing outdoor activities, as it is shown in Chart 1.

Chart 1 – Multiple distribution of reasons for going out



Source: Prepared by the authors

Regarding dreams, questions regarding their occurrence and their relation or not to the context of the pandemic were asked -- as in Table 1.

Although not totally preponderant, there is a considerable percentage of people in the sample reporting more dreams and, at some level, related to the pandemic context. To a certain extent, this result is like the overview of studies on the subject by Margherita and Caffieri (2022), which points to factors such as a greater intensity of dream life during confinement and the emergence of the so-called pandemic dream scenario. Given the above, our research instrument also explored dreams related to specific situations in this scenario.

Table 1 – Occurrence of dreams and their relationship with the pandemic

Question	Answer		
	Yes	<i>I don't remember/ know</i>	No
“Do you have more dreams?”	<b>40.3</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>41.2</b>
“Do you recall more your dreams when you wake up?”	<b>48.4</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>39.8</b>
“Do you think you've had dreams associated to the context of the Covid-19 pandemic?”	<b>48.9</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>34.7</b>

Note: Valid percentage. Total per row: 100%.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Based on Barrett's work (2020a), we asked whether the respondents had dreamed about wearing masks, being vaccinated, getting infected by Covid-19, being hospitalized, seeing relatives dying, facing natural disasters and monsters - as in Table 2.

Table 2 – Dreams related to specific situations of the pandemic scenario

Question	Answer		
	Yes	<i>I don't remember</i>	No
Use/non-use of masks	43.4	10.8	45.8
Vaccination	24.1	13.7	62.2
Possibility of contracting Covid-19	13.1	11.5	75.5
Hospitalization	13.3	9.8	76.9
Potential death of family members/acquaintances	30.4	8.8	60.7
Natural disasters	42.4	13.7	43.9
Insects and/or monsters	29.8	12.4	57.8

Note: Valid percentage. Total per row: 100%.

Source: Prepared by the authors

Dreams related to the use of masks, natural disasters, and the potential death of family members or acquaintances stand out. The first two behaved as a constant in the framework of pandemic dreams, scenarios initially identified by Barrett (2020a) and proved to be strongly present in our

sample. Therefore, considering the contribution of Guo and Shen (2021), we asked about information consumption habits through a question about the consumption of newspapers and newscasts. This showed that our sample, possibly due to its economic and educational background, has a predominant habit of following the news, including the pandemic context at the time, as seen in Table 3.

Table 3 - Distribution of newspaper and news consumption

Answer	% valid
Yes. because I'm in the habit of following it	36.7
Yes. to keep up to date with the political and health context	38.6
Yes. but I avoid news about the pandemic and politics	5.9
No. because I'm not in the habit of consuming this content	10.5
Não. pois tenho evitado notícias	8.3

Note: Valid percentage. Total: 100%.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Guo and Shen (2021) identified a significant relationship between the subject's exposure to the media and the frequency of dreams perceived as threatening. However, in the cross-checks carried out in this research between the information consumption variable and those related to frequent pandemic dreams, we could not identify any relational pattern, so there was no positive or negative relationship between the variables.

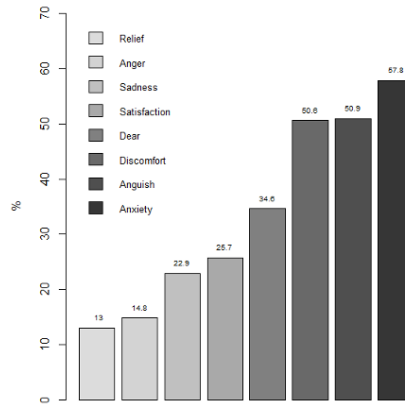
To move forward in the study of the impacts of the Covid-19 context on the dimension under investigation, we mobilized the factor of feelings associated with dreams. It has been known since Freud (1919) that there is an important link between the feelings involved in dream production and the meaning that can be uncovered through the work of interpretation. Although the psychoanalytical content was not explored in depth, the link between feelings/emotions and the dream instance was considered an issue to be explored.

Especially when we look at evidence such as that of Guerrero-Gomez *et al.* (2021), who show that, during quarantine, subjective emotional reactions showed a stronger correlation with dreams than with objective suffering. Or those of Conte *et al.* (2022), who point out that the increase in the negative



emotionality of dreams, during the total or partial lockdowns imposed by quarantine, directly affected the quality of sleep. Chart 2 shows that the negative feelings most reported by the participants in our survey when asked about their dreams during the pandemic were anxiety, anguish, and discomfort.

Chart 2 – Multiple distribution of feelings associated with dreams



Fonte: Elaboração própria.

In general, the respondents offer a significant report that reflects the influence of the pandemic on their dreams, both in terms of quality and specific aspects and feelings triggered by the complex pandemic scenario. Beforehand, it can be noticed that the pandemic and the related situations and consequences could cause, to a certain extent, changes in the oneiric routine of our respondents. However, it also sought the existence of some relational level of such reports and feelings with the socioeconomic characteristics of the subjects to understand, to some extent, the effects that the social conditions of existence have on the production of dreams (Duvignaud *et al.*, 1979; Bastide, 2002; Lahire, 2020, 2021).

Despite the sample having latent socioeconomic advantages in relation to the Brazilian population, it was tried to carry out bivariate analyses among the levels of the reports, types of feelings with socio-individual attributes (gender, age, and color/race), and other conditions (education and income). In general, the data show a statistically significant relation only among gender, age, education, and income both with the number of dreams reports

and some groups of feelings related to them. Females, younger people, and people with lower income and education tend to report more dreams associated with the pandemic in general and with higher prevalence of negative feelings, such as discomfort, sadness, fear, and anger. Next, a series of crossings indicating this relational picture is presented.

When the variable gender was crossed with pandemic-related dreams, as shown in Table 4, it can be noticed a higher proportion of females, 77.4%, who informed having dreamed something related to the Covid-19 pandemic versus 22.6% among males. Among females, 66.0% indicated having dreamed about something related to the pandemic, versus 42.9% among males.

Table 4 – Crossing between gender per pandemic-related dream reports

Gender	Dreaming about something related to the Covid-19 pandemic		Total
	No	Yes	
Female	<i>34.0</i>	<i>66.0</i>	<i>69.0</i>
	57.0	77.4	
Male	<i>57.1</i>	<i>42.9</i>	<i>31.0</i>
	43.0	22.6	
Total	41.2	58.8	100

Note: Proportion per row (italics) and proportion per column (without italics).  $\chi^2$  p-value < 0.00.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

When the variables age (in ranges) and dreams report related to the use or non-use of masks and vaccination were crossed, it was noticed a higher proportion of younger people claiming they had more dreams: 48.6% of those who claimed to have dreamed about the use or non-use of masks are up to 24 years of age, 29.1% are up to 34 years old, and 30.2% are 35 or older. Regarding vaccination, 33.6% of those up to 24 years of age, 25.2% of those up to 34 years old, and 26.5% who are 35 or older claimed they dreamed about it, according to the data presented in Table 5.

When some types of worrying dreams about income (in minimum wage ranges) were crossed, it was also observed a higher proportion, in general, of lower income people to have this type of report. For the three types of dreams, the highest proportion of those who have reported not having

such dreams is the proportion of those whose income is higher than four minimum wages , 55.8%, 56.0%, and 54.7%, respectively, according to the order presented in Table 6.

Table 5 – Crossing between age (in ranges) per dreams report related to the use of masks and vaccination

Age	Use/non-use of masks		Total	On vaccination		Total
	No	Yes		No	Yes	
Up to 24	<i>51.4</i>	<i>48.6</i>	<i>40.7</i>	<i>66.4</i>	<i>33.6</i>	<i>40.0</i>
	40.7	40.8		36.8	48.3	
>24 to 34	36.4	63.6	22.2	69.1	31.9	22.0
	15.7	29.1		20.8	25.2	
35 or more	<i>60.4</i>	<i>39.6</i>	<i>37.1</i>	<i>80.5</i>	<i>19.5</i>	<i>38.0</i>
	43.6	30.2		42.4	26.5	
Total	51.4	48.6	100	72.1	27.9	100

Note: Proportion per row (italics) and proportion per column (without italics).  $X^2$  p-values = 0.00.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Table 6 – Crossing between income (in minimum wage ranges) and topic of dream

Income	I		Total	II		Total	III		Total
	No	Yes		No	Yes		No	Yes	
Up to 1 MWa	<i>61.5</i>	<i>38.5</i>	<i>7.0</i>	<i>36.6</i>	<i>63.4</i>	<i>7.8</i>	<i>51.4</i>	<i>48.6</i>	<i>6.9</i>
	6.5	8.1		5.6	10.0		5.4	9.9	
>1-4 MW	<i>59.8</i>	<i>40.2</i>	<i>42.0</i>	<i>46.8</i>	<i>53.2</i>	<i>41.7</i>	<i>62.7</i>	<i>37.3</i>	<i>42.1</i>
	37.7	50.5		38.4	45.2		39.9	46.2	
> 4 MW	<i>72.9</i>	<i>27.1</i>	<i>51.0</i>	<i>56.4</i>	<i>43.6</i>	<i>50.5</i>	<i>70.7</i>	<i>29.3</i>	<i>51.0</i>
	55.8	41.4		56.0	44.8		54.7	44.0	
Total	66.6	33.4	100	50.9	49.1	100	66.0	34.0	100

Subtitle: I – Dreams related to the death of family members or acquaintances.

II – Dreams related to natural disasters.

III – Dreams related to insects or monsters.

Note: Proportion per row (italics) and proportion per column (without italics). All  $X^2$  p-values < 0.03.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

It was noticed the same evidence by crossing income with the report of negative feelings related to recent dreams. The highest proportions of those who claimed not having had dreams related to discomfort, fear, sadness, and anger are the ones whose income is higher than four minimum wages, 55.8%, 55.0%, 52.7%, and 51.8%, respectively, as in Table 7.

Table 7 – Income (in ranges) per negative feeling related to dreams

Income	I		Total	II		Total	III		Total	IV		Total
	No	Yes		No	Yes		No	Yes		No	Yes	
Up to 1 MWa	34.9	65.1	7.0	58.1	41.9	7.0	53.5	46.5	7.0	74.4	25.6	7.0
	5.0	9.0		6.3	8.5		4.9	14.3		6.2	12.0	
>1-4 MW	45.2	54.8	42.7	59.0	41.0	42.7	76.6	23.4	42.7	83.5	16.5	42.7
	39.2	46.1		38.7	50.2		42.5	43.6		42.0	46.7	
> 4 MW	54.7	45.3	50.2	71.3	28.7	50.2	80.8	19.2	50.2	87.6	12.4	50.2
	55.8	44.8		55.0	41.3		52.7	42.1		51.8	41.3	
<b>Total</b>	49.3	50.7	100	65.1	34.9	100	77.1	22.9	100	84.9	15.1	100

Subtitle: MW (minimum wage). Discomfort (I). Fear (II). Sadness (III) e Anger (IV).

Note: Proportion per row (italics) and proportion per column (without italics). X<sup>2</sup> p-values between 0.01 and 0.05.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Therefore, when it was analyzed the relationship between reports of positive feelings related to dreams by gender and education, it was noticed that males proportionally reported more positive feelings than females, 14.1% versus 6.2% respectively, when considering two positive feelings together. Among the respondents who did not report positive feelings, 76.6% were females and 23.4% were males, according to the data presented in Table 07.

Among those who do not have higher education, 11.4% reported having had at least two positive feelings related to dreams against 6.4% of those who have higher education. However, among those who reported no positive feelings, 44.6% do not have higher education, and 55.4% do, according to data in Table 8. This divergence can be understood by the possibility of collinearity between education and gender, since the sample shows a high correlation between these two variables, especially because of the predominance of females with higher education.

Table 8 – Gender and education by report of dreams related to positive feelings (number of feelings reported)

Gender	Number of positive feelings reported			Total
	0	1	2	
Female	<i>76.8</i>	<i>17.0</i>	<i>6.2</i>	<i>69.4</i>
	76.6	54.2	50.0	
Male	<i>53.3</i>	<i>32.6</i>	<i>14.1</i>	<i>30.6</i>
	23.4	45.8	50.0	
<b>Total</b>	69.6	21.8	8.6	100
Education	0	1	2	Total
Without higher education	<i>63.8</i>	<i>24.8</i>	<i>11.4</i>	<i>48.8</i>
	44.6	56.5	63.0	
With higher education	<i>75.4</i>	<i>18.2</i>	<i>6.4</i>	<i>51.2</i>
	55.4	43.5	37.0	
<b>Total</b>	69.7	21.4	8.8	100

Note: Proportion per row (italics) and proportion per column (without italics).

$\chi^2$  p-values = 0.00.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The results presented here are partly in line with some of the studies in the international literature on the subject. The high incidence of negative feelings and effects associated with the dreams of women, as opposed to the dreams of men, is a constant in research into the dream dimension during the pandemic (Barrett, 2020b; Iorio *et al.*, 2020; Schredl & Bulkeley, 2020). The article by Barret (2020b), carried out with a sample from several countries, works with the hypothesis that some factors, such as more women doing unpaid care work, influence this result. Based on this result, we believe this impact is linked to women's social position in society, which is often subordinate (Beauvoir, 1970; Davis, 2016), thus reinforcing the need for a contextual analysis to advance knowledge of the facts that motivate these consequences.

In addition, Schredl and Bulkeley (2020) found that, in the case of the United States, individuals strongly affected by the pandemic showed more significant effects on dreams. However, it is noteworthy that subjects with

higher levels of education also show this setback, which contrasts with the evidence found in the reality of southern Brazil, which points to a stronger impact on people with less education. It is worth noting that MacKay and DeCicco (2020) suggest that daytime worry about COVID-19 may affect the subject's dream images; at the same time, Solomonova *et al.* (2021) point out that the frequency of nightmares and dreams about the pandemic is associated with individuals with higher levels of stress. In this way, we suggest that the difference between the results of Schredl and Bulkeley (2020) and those found in the Brazilian reality may be associated with a different impact of the "social class" category (Bourdieu, 2017), especially when we consider the indicators that show the risk suffered by people in situations of social vulnerability in the face of the Brazilian pandemic situation.

Perhaps due to the homogeneity of the sample, as well as the limitation of the simple crossing and Chi-square technique, it is not possible to verify a clear relation between these socio-individual attributes and socioeconomic conditions both concerning the level of dream reports related to the pandemic and the types of feelings triggered by dreams. It was presented in this paper partial results that indicate the existing relationship, but they are still exploratory.

However, consistency was observed between negative feelings and income, especially more reports of discomfort, fear, sadness, and anger among lower income people. The data also have shown that these feelings are slightly related to being female and younger. This way, it is possible to reflect on a relational cut between gender, age, and mainly income, variables that articulate dreams associated with negative feelings, indicating the pertinence of a social analysis of the oneiric life.

Although this research is exploratory in nature, its findings corroborate previous research and provide elements for the more consistent theoretical development of a sociology of dreams. As in Duvignaud *et al.* (1979), Martins (1996), and Bastide (2003), this research also showed a relationship between dreams and the social difference of the dreamers, even demonstrating a consistent association between people on lower incomes and the expression of negative feelings in their dreams, thus corroborating the links between the material conditions of existence and subjective life - and if social situations are multiple, then night-time experiences are not homogeneous and universal either.

The sociology of dreamlike scenarios and landscapes can show the objectified character of dreams (Duvignaud *et al.*, 1979), i.e., sociological research proves that it is possible to objectify subjective experiences to reveal the social character of such experiences or, more simply, the point that there is more continuity than rupture between people's preoccupations during the waking state and when asleep, with the social at the same time concealing and revealing itself in something imagined as belonging purely to the domain of subjectivity.

This study highlights the presence of threatening dreams, such as natural disasters and the possible death of family members and friends among dreamers in a pandemic context, thus observing, as already mentioned, negative emotions in their dream experiences. In this respect, the dreams did not fail to reveal the mismatch between their individual, personal experiences and the absurdity of everyday social life ravaged by the pandemic. The empirical findings of this research suggest that dreams are both a symptom and a reaction to this tearing apart of the individual, as they reveal a fundamental and daily traumatic social experience. In other words, it is possible to articulate or perhaps unfold a sociology of trauma from a sociology of dreams.

If, on the one hand, studies in the field of psychoanalysis attest to the traumatic nature of pandemic dreams (Birman, 2020; Mezan, 2021; Ribeiro & Carvalho, 2021), on the other hand, our work, based fundamentally on the sociological ground, it is worth emphasizing, also demonstrates how dreams during Covid-19 were traumatic, but not in a psychoanalytical sense. It is, in essence, a sociocultural trauma, in the terms proposed by Alexander (2004, 2012) and Smelser (2004). According to these authors, sociocultural trauma occurs when members of a community feel that they are subjected to an event so terrible that it leaves indelible marks on their group consciousness and collective memory, irrevocably affecting their future identity.

However, as Alexander (2004, 2012) and Smelser (2004) warn, an event is not intrinsically and ontologically traumatic, despite its brutal nature, but depends on how the affected populations represent and signify this event through their cultural repertoire. The attribution of meaning reveals how moral values are considered sacred by a desecrated community, how the social bonds of that group have been affected, and how their history was altered by an event from the point of view of that community, which

is why it is considered traumatic. Dreams related to the wearing of masks, natural disasters, and the death of family members and acquaintances suggest, in our opinion, the fear and anguish of individuals regarding the possible breakdown of social bonds, suggesting there is a latent dream content beyond the fear of the consequences associated with contamination and illness. The representation of the mask in dreams, for example, an item that has become central to the socio-political debate in Brazil, shows that oneiric life reveals social experiences that have been deeply affected during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Conclusions

This study proposed an investigative effort that moved between two levels. A theoretical level, that discusses and develops the concepts of the sociology of dreams and the other on an empirical level, based on a survey with an exploratory sample in the pandemic context of southern Brazil, defining the first stage of our research. In the future, in a second phase, we will dedicate ourselves to the description and sociological interpretation of the pandemic dreams collected in critical dialogue with the psychoanalytic perspective, incorporating discoveries, findings, and categories, but also pointing out its limits, updating it from the social sciences, demarcating the place of the sociology of dreams and pointing out its contribution to the development of interdisciplinary and holistic knowledge about the dream world. Therefore, the sequence of our research will lead us to another theoretical and methodological stance, which is to perfect a sociology of dreams with and against psychoanalysis.

At the empirical level of this work, it was possible to observe, in general, a certain similarity between the results found by research on the subject and those verified in the context of the Brazilian pandemic. The most interesting evidence this investigation has presented may be the significant relationship between the attribution of negative feelings to the dreams of lower income people, even more so when they are female and younger. In this sense, our research corroborates classical studies of the sociology of dreams that had already pointed out the correlation between material conditions of existence



and subjective life, particularly the oneiric life (Duvignaud *et al.*, 1979; Bastide, 2002; Lahire, 2020, 2021).

As seen, the Brazilian pandemic scenario intensified the existing social inequalities, directly impacting the subject's experience with Covid-19, which caused more victims among those in greater social vulnerability. Thus, the result demonstrates the extension of the impact of social existence conditions on the individual subjectivity. This way, it reveals another trigger of the social phenomenon caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and reinforces the postulates of the theoretical perspectives that point to the link of the continuity between the waking life and the oneiric life (Freud, 2019; Duvignaud *et al.*, 1979; Bastide, 2003; Lahire, 2021). We point out that it is impossible to generalize the empirical results due to the sociodemographic homogeneity of the respondents' profiles associated with the data collection strategy. However, as discussed in the body of the article, generalization was not the aim of the study, given the exploratory nature of the methodological design.

Our understanding is that in future research, both with a probabilistic sample and with validated questionnaires, it will be possible to deepen these findings and possible relational contexts towards a socially grounded explanation of the dreams, when exploring more rigorously variables that demonstrate being significant to the sociological research, such as the position of women in society and the impact of the of social class as a category. By way of conclusion, we understand that besides the traditional variables related to the fields of psychology and neuroscience, there is a need for a sociological understanding of this apparently individual and psychological event that is the oneiric thought, to investigate and disentangle the social roots of dreams (Ullman, 1960; 2001) through an approach that considers the importance of social conditions of existence, aiming to understand the continuity and the impact of social structures on the dimension of the oneiric production, as well as understanding the traumatic experiences produced in the face of the risk of disintegration of these same structures.

## Acknowledgements

This article was written during collective discussions within the Culture, Communication, and Art Studies Group (Gecca-Sul), and the authors would like to thank each member of the Group for their collaboration in the construction of this research and the debate on the sociology of dreams in Brazil. We would also like to thank the article reviewers, whose comments and suggestions were fundamental to improving this text.

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Received: Feb. 6, 2023.

Approved: June 12, 2024.