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Final Project: The Conscious Mind Unconscious

PY-101 Psychology

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What exactly is the conscious mind? The conscious mind by definition, is all the thoughts, feelings, memories, and wishes that we are aware of at any given moment in time. For my final project I am going to take us way back, back to chapter four. This chapter was on the states of consciousness. The parts of this chapter that really stood out to me are the topics of sleep, what is it? Why do we sleep to begin with? But I don't just want to talk about sleep, in this paper you will be reading about sleep paralysis and what comes with sleep? Dreams. Dreams have always been so fascinating to me and now there are studies on why we dream, when we do it, and what exactly do these dreams mean? Furthermore, I would like to touch on hypnosis, a different level of awareness in comparison to the normal state of consciousness. Along with this discuss we will be venturing into how psychedelics can alter our states of consciousness. (Spielman et al., 2014)

Consciousness and the unconsciousness. What is it? Why do we have them? Psychoanalytic researchers show that we not only have consciousness and the unconsciousness, but that we also have a preconsciousness. Our consciousness, it makes up about 10% to 20% of the human mind, its responsibilities include logic, reasoning, and how we recognize and understand the everyday stimuli around us. However, the unconscious mind makes up over 80% of our mind, its functions are to control deep thoughts such as dreams, reflexive or automatic thoughts, inspirations, unconscious emotions, and of our fears. Then there is the preconscious, this is the "gatekeeper" so to speak, it monitors and controls what information is allowed to be transferred from the subconscious to the consciousness. Freudians, those who were influenced by Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalysis believed that the subconscious mind is reconstructed first, into a dream, then the pre-consciousness screens this dream to which it enters into the consciousness and is then experienced or seen by the dreamer. (Spielman et al., 2014)

What is a dream you ask? In essence, dreams are stories or images our mind creates while we are in a state of sleep. Dreams can be good, they can be scary, or weird even. Sometimes we cannot remember our dreams, it may seem that you just had the dream but that moment you wake up it disappears from your mind. However, we can also have vivid dreams. Vivid dreams occur in a stage of sleep called REM sleep. During REM sleep or Rapid Eye Movement our bodies are at its most restful state but our minds are at their most active state. Experts go on to say that an individual can experience anywhere from four to six dreams a night and can last up to twenty minutes. How many of those dreams do you actually remember? Sometimes none. In fact, 95% of people forget their dreams. This brings me to lucid dreaming. Fredrick Van Eeden developed the term lucid dreaming. Eeden transcribed his most vivid dreams in a dream diary which consisted of the dreams he thought most memorable. 352 of them were placed in the category lucid dreaming. Lucid dreaming or lucid dreamers are individuals who are totally aware that they are dreaming, even though they know that is exactly what is happening. Lucid dreaming occurs when the parts of the brain, that are normally sleeping during this state, get a boost of activity. The brain during lucid dreaming is in a state between REM sleep and being awake. Some lucid dreams have the ability to influence what goes on in those dreams.

Controversial statements argue that it is better to let your dreams occur naturally in a natural state although it wouldn't be a bad idea to learn to alter one's nightmares. (DerSarkissian, 2019)

Nightmares happen in both children and adults; they are what we consider "a bad dream". Nightmares can occur through a multitude of factors stress, illness, overwhelming emotions, and trauma. Some consider nightmares as a normal way of coping with the changes in our lives. Nightmares can draw fear, despair, anxiety or sadness out of our minds and there is typically a state of discomfort, and psychological or physical terror. Some researchers argue there is a huge

difference between bad dreams; where you remain asleep, nightmares; where your body and mind awakens, and what we call a night terror. Night terror also known as pavor nocturnes or sleep terrors, is a sleep disorder that cause severe panic and fear in the dreamer. It is classified that there are two types of night terrors, REM related parasomnias and other parasomnias.

Parasomnias usually have undesirable or frightening events occur to them when one falls asleep, or awakens from sleep and can often lead to a condition known as sleep paralysis.

(DerSarkissian, 2019)

Sleep paralysis is the feeling of being conscious but the inability to move your body. This event occurs when the mind is trying to pass between either sleep to wakefulness or wakefulness to sleep. Some individuals describe sleep paralysis as being unable to move or speak and often the feeling or sensation of being choked. As I said before, sleep paralysis transpires during one of two times, from sleep to wakefulness or vice versa. If you experience a night terror while trying to fall asleep, this is known as hypnagogic or predormital sleep paralysis. In hypnagogic, as your body begins to fall asleep, you tend to be less aware of sleep paralysis transpiring. If you are aware, then you may notice some of the symptoms mentioned above. If it comes to pass while you are trying to wake up, this is known as hypnopompic or postdormital sleep paralysis. Typically, NREM sleep and REM sleep cycles last anywhere up to 90 minutes and they persist through the night. During this stage your eyes move quickly producing dreams while your body stays rested and your muscles are inactive or turned off. If your mind becomes aware of wakefulness before it comes out of the REM stage and the body hasn't had a chance to catch up this is often when sleep paralysis occurs. Sleep paralysis doesn't seem too terrible if you can manage the not being able to move or speak. However, many individuals associate sleep paralysis with evil. In many cultures such as China, Newfoundland, Mexico, and even the United

States have long come to believe that sleep paralysis is caused by demons, witches, or other supernatural beings sitting on their chest or even in some cases trying to have intercourse. This can be accompanied by noises or even the sensation of being dragged out of bed, and breathing difficulties. According to WebMD, there are even some researchers who believe that this is what occurs when we are being abducted by aliens. Though the symptoms like difficulty breathing, and the inability to move or speak can be frightful, researchers have gone to explain that sleep paralysis can be caused by a number of factors. Lack of sleep and sleeping patterns that are continuously changing are two big factors, other factors include, mental conditions such as stress or bipolar disorder, sleep disorders, certain medications, or sleeping on your back can intensify the sensations of sleep paralysis. (Felson, 2020)

With nightmares, night terrors, lucid and vivid dreams, it's hard to really understand still why we have them. Some experts would suggest that we dream in order to help solve the problems within our lives, to incorporate memories, and a way for individuals to process their emotions. Dreams may even be a way for us to process the day's thoughts and events. However, controversy states that dreams could be just a natural activity within the brain that may mean absolutely little to nothing. Dream interpreters would tell you that dreams mean a whole lot more than nothing. They would argue that some dreams have symbols and those symbols, when analyzed, can show us our deepest desires and hidden feelings. There are several computer or phone apps, and books that allow us to see how our dreams are analyzed and interpreted. If you're interested in what your hidden feelings and deepest desires are, check them out. Here are just a few. It has been shown that experiencing localized pain in your dream signifies reduced sleep, and more nightmares. It also suggests these individuals suffer more pain during medical procedures. If you have dreams where death is involved it can show your attachment to a

relationship specified person in your life and also signify past history of suicidality that had been hidden. (Ambardekar, 2019)

So, what is sleep? Sleep is a condition of the body that generally occurs every night in which the body hits a state of homeostasis and the nervous system is almost completely inactive. Essentially, sleep is the absence of wakefulness. Consciousness and sleep can be looked at linearly. On one end you have consciousness, and on the other you have sleep, somewhere in the middle you have hypnosis and meditation. Hypnosis, a shift of awareness into sleep without being asleep. This type of mindful meditation in specific can help us disconnect from our surroundings, relax the body, and enhance our capacity to receive and respond to the power of suggestion. Hypnosis can assist individuals in kicking the hardest of habits, cure pains, or even help curbed phobias. Hypnosis takes over the subconscious mind and like when it is transformed into a dream, you can also look at it as in hypnosis transforms the subconscious into a suggestion. Hypnosis can have an impact on physical and psychological pain and even our sensations, perceptions, thoughts, and behaviors too. Some say it can even help you remember a past life. Though I wouldn't know whether to agree with that or not, there is still a huge list of benefits that can help you feel happier, calmer, and more empowered. Amongst those benefits, hypnosis can also allow you to sleep better. Hypnosis can also be acquired in a therapeutic setting to help an individual undergo a surgical procedure without the use of anesthetics. In previous practices, therapist attempted to use hypnosis on clients to help them unlock the true details of traumatic events however, this practice has come to a halt due to the risk of false memory syndrome, which refers to individuals having memories of a traumatic experience such as sexual abuse when no such even has actually taken place, and the misinformation effect. It is also wise to point out that hypnosis can only be used if the suggestion made to the client is in

good nature to their moral code, if you tell someone to go rob a bank while under the influence of hypnosis it will come to fail. (Marko, 2017)

Meditation is also another alternate state of consciousness. Meditation consists of deepening the body and minds state of relaxation, this is often considered mindfulness. It is unlike hypnosis as it does not include the power of suggestion, however, you can learn a lot about oneself and enhancing self-awareness, there are a multitude of benefits such as, reducing stress and anxieties, and promoting emotional health. In one show I recently watch on unlocking the minds capabilities, a researcher goes on to say how mindful meditation can also unlock the powers and abilities of memory. I don't mean memory's that we experienced. I mean memory with school or like in this case; these women remember roughly 500 numbers. With find self-control, quitting habits, and learning self-awareness through hypnosis and mediation, there is also another way individuals have sought out to open up their mind and levels of consciousness. (Marko, 2017)

Psychedelics, a term coined by the psychiatrist Humphrey Osmond and have been insinuated to open an expand the mind by reducing the brains activity. But, exactly how true is this? Aldous Huxley, and English author, came to believe that the brain has a valve that reduces conscious awareness. Huxley proposed that hallucinogens inhibit the activity in the brain, other former researches including Dr. Robin-Carhart, Harris, and Nutt ran an experiment where they injected 2mg of psilocybin into the patient and on a functional magnetic resonance imaging began a reduction in the neuronal activity. In conclusion this study showed that psychedelics reduce activity in specific hubs and brain regions of the brain that are responsible constraining consciousness within the normal waking state. (Halberstadt, 2012)

## References

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