

# Dreaming in Auschwitz



# Dreaming in Auschwitz:

*The Concentration Camp  
in the Prisoners' Dreams*

By

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**Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing**



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This book first published 2023

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-9040-2

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-9040-3

This study was financed by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education within the frame of the National Programme for the Development of Humanities in the years 2016-2019

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## INTRODUCTION

Among various kinds of testimonies on the Holocaust there is one which has never attracted much attention: the world of dreams. Researchers are now increasingly interested in subjective experiences of the victims and survivors. They explore the witnesses' secret memoirs, intimate narratives and artistic expressions. They study the memories inherited by the second and third generation. But, strangely enough, they very rarely appreciate dreams. And yet dreams appear to provide a perfect occasion to look into the survivors' inner worlds. Dreams can reveal the truth that remains unconscious, incomprehensible and unspeakable for the dreamers themselves.

This book provides a deep insight into the dreams of those who survived the Auschwitz concentration camp. I do hope that it will enable the reader to look at the prisoners' lives from a new perspective.

\*\*\*

In 1973, Stanisław Kłodziński, a Polish physician from the Kraków Medical Academy, sent a questionnaire about dreams to 561 former prisoners of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. 147 people replied in 1973-1974. Kłodziński, a former Auschwitz inmate himself, after the war dealt with medical treatment of survivors. Many of the respondents knew him personally, and almost all of them were aware of his engagement in the resistance movement in the camp and his devotion to his patients, so they tried to make their responses honest, informative and often very extensive.

In 2015, I received all the respondents' answers from the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum. They were then translated into English.

The responses to the questionnaire constitute a trove of immensely rich and diverse material, which inspires multiple interpretations. The former Auschwitz inmates describe the dreams they had before the war, during the Nazi occupation, in prisons, in the camp, after liberation, as well as later in life. They report nightmares and enchanting visions. They write about their attitudes towards dreams. They give accounts of the daily camp ritual of dream interpretation. Charlotte Beradt in her famous book *The Third Reich of Dreams* presented the dreams and nightmares of the Germans dreamt during the Nazi regime before 1939—"a reality that was just on the verge of becoming a nightmare" (Beradt, 1985, p.9). The Auschwitz inmates'

reports can be treated as testimonies from the other side—from a time when all the worst nightmares had come true.

In 2016, Piotr Cywiński, the director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, published a book consisting of a number of excerpts from the responses (Cywiński, 2016), along with a short introduction containing some general comments on the dream content.

This unique material has never been interpreted as profoundly as it deserves. In 1977, Kłodziński and two co-authors published an extensive article on this topic (Jagoda, Kłodziński & Masłowski, 1977). Although significant and interesting, the article contains mainly quotations of the responses, basic information about the sample, and some general comments on the dream content and on the survivors' hallmarks of "KZ syndrome". The authors' strategy was to give a voice to the survivors. "The former inmates' attitude towards this problem can be best expressed only with their own words" (p.30) wrote the authors, who proceeded to quote the responses. Obviously such an approach is insufficient today. The reports should be investigated in accordance with the new discoveries in the field of dream studies, which have been extensively developed since the seventies. As Kelly Bulkeley demonstrates in his numerous books and articles,

the twenty-first-century study of dreams has moved beyond the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung to encompass a variety of new empirical methods that can reliably identify connections between patterns of dream content and a person's most important thoughts, concerns, and preoccupations in waking life. By studying the images and emotions in people's dreams we discover a window into their deepest beliefs, darkest fears, and most inspiring ideals. (Bulkeley, 2008a, pp.7-8)

A first step in this direction can be found in Monica Bergman and co-authors' recently published article (Bergman et al., 2020), in which the reports of Kłodziński's informants are presented in light of Antti Revonsuo's (2000) Threat Simulation Theory of dreaming. This theory assumes that the evolutionary function of dreams consists in simulating dangerous events, so that the dreamer can rehearse the most proper reactions while dreaming and become prepared for such events in his or her waking life.

In my book, I study the former Auschwitz inmates' dream reports from a broad, interdisciplinary perspective. I investigate them quantitatively and qualitatively, using several methods and referring to numerous dream theories. I am interested in the content, as well as in the possible meaning and functions of the dreams. I pay special attention to the cultural aspects of the manner in which the respondents experienced, understood and

described their dreams. I analyse the psychological, social, anthropological, narrative and even artistic dimensions of the reports.

Barbara Engelking, one of the most prominent Polish experts in the field of Holocaust studies, in her article *Dreams as a source for Holocaust research* wrote: "In order to understand the broadly defined psychological aspects of the Shoah experience, we need sources different from 'objective' documents presenting the course of events. Dreams are among such sources" (Engelking, 2013, p.45). Oddly enough, dreams of the Holocaust survivors have been very rarely investigated in both dream and Holocaust studies (although post-traumatic dreaming is a very popular subject of interest among researchers). In 1976, Maria Susułowska published a short article about the dreams of 55 former prisoners of the Nazi concentration camps (the material was different from that obtained by Kłodziński). She concluded that "those dreams should be considered symptoms of anxiety neurosis" (Susułowska, 1976, p.16). In the nineties, two Israeli researchers, Hanna Kaminer and Peretz Lavie, in their three articles on the dreams of 23 Holocaust survivors (Lavie & Kaminer, 1991; 2001; Kaminer & Lavie, 1991) demonstrated that well-adjusted survivors recalled their dreams much less often than the less-adjusted, so the authors proposed that the trauma sufferers should be persuaded to repress their bad dreams. Some remarks on nightmares experienced by Holocaust survivors are to be found also in Jules Rosen and his colleagues' text on sleep disturbances (Rosen et al., 1991). (Studies on sleep disorders among the survivors have been summarised by Ido Lurie, 2017). More recently, Ioana Cosman investigated the impact of traumatic events on the dreams of 22 Holocaust survivors from Northern Transylvania (Cosman, 2013). Last year, Christiane Solte-Gresser (2021) published a book on literary and autobiographical dreams of the Holocaust as narrative processes.

Engelking in her above-mentioned article, based on testimonies containing dream reports of 66 Jewish people, convincingly reconstructed the mental and emotional states of the Jews in the ghettos and of those who hid on the "Aryan" side in Poland, but not of those who were in the concentration camps. In my book, I explore the dreams of the Auschwitz camp inmates, although the majority were ethnically Polish. Hence, a question arises as to whether or not my research really concerns the Holocaust.

Cywiński claims that the respondents were "almost exceptionally Poles ... at the time of the rigours of the communist iron curtain this questionnaire could involve only Polish prisoners" (Cywiński, 2016, p.7). It seems impossible to verify the nationality of the respondents today. Cywiński uses the word "almost". We know that many Jews who stayed in Poland after the war had changed their names into Polish ones, as they were afraid of Polish

anti-Semitism, and that they tried to “assimilate, hiding their true roots even from their loved ones” (Stankowski, 2000, p. 145). On the other hand, thousands of Jewish people left Poland, especially in 1946 after the Kielce pogrom, in the late fifties and after the 1968 anti-Semitic actions of the Polish government. In the early seventies, the number of Jewish Auschwitz survivors in Poland was not sizeable, but some of them remained, so it is not impossible that some of the Kłodziński’s addressees were Polish Jews.

Besides, many of the reports concerned the camp’s social life (for instant those in which the ritual of dream sharing was described), so they must have also mirrored Jewish experiences. The Poles in the camp were not isolated from the Jewish and especially Polish-Jewish inmates, although until 1942 the Jewish population in Auschwitz was small. On the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum’s website one can read:

Auschwitz Concentration Camp was set up for Poles, and Poles were the first political prisoners there. The number of prisoners grew steadily as a result of the constant arrival of new transports. In 1940, nearly 8 thousand people were registered in the camp. Almost all of them were Poles. There were also small numbers of Jews and Germans in the camp. ... In 1941, over 26 thousand people were registered in Auschwitz (about 15 thousand Poles, 10 thousand Soviet POWs, and more than 1 thousand Jews). As a result of the inclusion of Auschwitz in the process of the mass extermination of the Jews, the number of deportees began to soar. About 197 thousand Jews were deported there in 1942, about 270 thousand the following year, and over 600 thousand in 1944, for a total of almost 1.1 million. Among them, about 200 thousand people were selected as capable of labor and registered as prisoners in the camp. In this same period, from 1942 to 1944, about 160 thousand Poles, Gypsies, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, French, and others were registered as prisoners and given numbers. There were also more than 10 thousand people, mostly Poles, Soviet POWs, and Gypsies, not entered in the camp records or given numbers. The mass deportation of Jews to Auschwitz that began in 1942 radically changed the makeup of the prisoner population. After three months of deportation, in mid-1942, Jews already made up the most numerous ethnic group, and their share of the population rose steadily from about 46% in June 1942 to about 68% at the peak of the camp’s population, in August 1944. A total of about 400 thousand prisoners were registered: 195 thousand non-Jews and 205 thousand Jews. (Auschwitz, 2017)

I recall these numbers in order to stress that in the Auschwitz camp different ethnic groups shared their experiences. In spite of this, there can be no doubt that for Jews the camp life was much more difficult than for any other inmates. As Cywiński puts it,

the psychological state of the Jewish inmates in Auschwitz was different [from that of the Polish inmates]. While a Polish prisoner longed for his family who lived in freedom, ... a Jewish prisoner most often had nobody to long for—his loved ones perished in a ghetto or were selected for the gas chambers immediately upon their arrival at the camp.” (Cywiński, 2016, p.7)

Moreover, as Peter Hayes reminds us, the Jews “were at the bottom of the social pyramid” (Hayes, 2017, p.204) in the world of the concentration camps.

The differences between Jewish and Polish modes of experiencing the Nazi crimes are well recognised. Engelking explains the main difference in the following way:

For the Polish people, the [German] occupation was a situation of a dyad, it was a problem of the relations between the Poles and the Germans. ... For the Jewish people ..., it was not a dyad but a triad—it was a conflict between them, the Poles, and the Germans. ... The Poles did not need the Jews for fighting the war with the Germans, while the Jews would not manage to avoid the inevitable death from the Germans without the help from the Poles. They were dependent on the Poles' charity, mercy, decency, hatred, indifference, or greed. (Engelking, 2001, p.23-24)

Hayes stresses the difference in the Nazi's attitudes towards the two nations:

Jews in occupied Poland were fifteen times more likely to be killed than non-Jews. And an ideological reason accounts for the difference: In the Nazi New Order, the Jews were destined for swift death, the Poles for enslavement and exploitation, but for extinction only when the time came that Germany no longer needed their labor. (Hayes, 2017, p.258)

These and many other factors prove that during the war, the situation of the Jews was much worse than the Poles'—both inside and outside the concentration camps. However, the Polish inmates of Auschwitz suffered severely enough to become traumatised and to consider their camp experiences as arduous. Laurence Rees in his recent book *The Holocaust: A New History* demonstrates “how the suffering of non-Jewish Poles became linked in the gas chambers of Birkenau with that of the Jews” (Rees, 2017, p.361). I would by no means like to continue the “rivalry for martyrdom” (Engelking, 2001, p.68.). Nor do I want to deny that the camp situation of the Jews was exceptional and outstandingly hard. I would only suggest that the testimonies of the respondents to the Kłodziński's questionnaire may represent the—very broadly understood—Holocaust experience. I decided not to separate these testimonies from the context of the Holocaust, but I am

perfectly aware that each time the term “Holocaust” appears in this book, it functions in its extended rather than precise meaning. (On the discussion about “the uniqueness and universality of the Holocaust”, and particularly on the different conceptions of this term proposed by its inventor, Elie Wiesel, and by the “Nazi hunter”, Simon Wiesenthal, see Berenbaum, 1981).

My research on the Auschwitz survivors’ dreams will contribute, I hope, to the development of knowledge about the Holocaust as well as about dreaming (I summarise the most important implications of my work for the two areas of studies in the last, concluding chapter). The dream reports seem to be an exceptional and unique source of information on the inmates’ life in the camp and up to some thirty years after liberation, and especially on their psychological condition and socio-cultural situation. At the same time, such a vast and consistent collection of dreams from hell should be of great interest for dream researchers as it illustrates dreaming in unbelievable and prolonged stress. Life in a Nazi concentration camp was an extreme experience for the prisoners, hardly comparable to anything in the history of humankind. (A meta-analysis of the consequences of the Holocaust for the survivors, based on hundreds of articles, provide Barel et al., 2010). Their trauma was profound, their behaviour could not be comprehended in relation to any common “norms” or expectations, their cultural identity was destroyed and re-shaped in the completely new social situation in the camp. So their dreams were also far from “normal” patterns. My aim was to explore those dreams as extensively as possible.

In order to make the reader familiar with the material studied in this book, I will present a brief outline of the sample in question. The letter sent by Kłodziński to the former Auschwitz inmates read as follows:

Stanisław Kłodziński, PhD  
Editorial Team of the Journal of Medicine-Auschwitz  
Kraków, October 1973

Dear Mr/Ms .....

The Journal of Medicine-Auschwitz is gathering materials for a scientific study on the psychological and physiological topic of sleep and dreams experienced in the camps. Consequently, we kindly ask you to submit your observations on this subject, in particular as regards the following:

- What were your sleeping and resting patterns like before your imprisonment in the camp, while in prison, in the camp and after the release (deep sleep, relaxing, calm, without memorable dreams, restless sleep, light, attentive, insomnia)?

- Can you recall any dream, either sporadic or recurrent, which you had during your lifetime? If so, what was it about?
  - What kind of dreams about war, camps or occupation did you have during your imprisonment and the investigation, during the adjustment period in the camp, later on in the camp, immediately after the war and at present?
  - Do you associate those dreams with specific events from 1939-1945?
  - Have you noticed any factors which stimulate dreams about the camp (e.g. films and plays, melodies, songs, conversations, texts about the war and occupation, specific sounds and noises, the sound of the German language)?
  - Do these dreams cause you any health problems (heart palpitations, sweating, shivers, headaches, anxiety, fear, dyspnoea, apathy, depression)?
  - Do you attach any particular importance to the content of your dreams (especially the ones about the war, camp and occupation)? Do you find those dreams particular? Do you read books about dreams or try to interpret them? If so, how? (what is the symbolism of your dreams, what are the predictions, etc.)
  - What can you say about life in the camp and afterwards (fortune telling in prison and camps, etc.)?
  - Do you have any other comments?
- Please provide full and complete answers, especially detailed, factual and unembellished descriptions of dreams and experiences and feelings related to them. Please list your profession, hobbies, etc., as well as a detailed address and camp number.
- The contributions published in the scientific journal will be signed with your name and camp number. At your request, the letters can be made anonymous.

With kind regards,  
Stanisław Kłodziński

As can be seen, the addressees were asked to describe not only their dreams, but also their beliefs and experiences connected with them. They were also asked to reveal some personal details. Unfortunately, this request was formulated in a very general and non-committal manner ("please list your profession, hobbies, etc."), so the respondents probably did not feel obliged to pay attention to it. As a result, many of them did not provide such details at all, while others mentioned their profession or sometimes a hobby, and only a minority included the full information about their age, education, profession, and marital status. Therefore, the respondents' personal details remained incomplete, so I was not able to divide the whole sample into subsamples with regard to the dreamers' characteristics (except for their division into men and women). I regret this very much, because it would be fascinating to know if there were any differences in dreaming connected with the dreamers' age, social or educational background, family situation etc.

What we know is that “the majority of the respondents [were] on average 21-25 years old when arrested, so at the time of answering the questionnaire they were mainly 56-65 years old. The oldest respondent in 1974 was 92 years old, while the youngest was 51” (Jagoda, Kłodziński & Masłowski, 1977, p.28). From their reports one can see that they represented a variety of professions and educational backgrounds—from labourers to university professors. Many of them had spouses and children.

147 people replied to the questionnaire sent by Kłodziński—101 men and 46 women. It is impossible to say precisely how many dreams they described. Many of the reports were detailed and long (sometimes extremely protracted—several pages of manuscripts), but quite often the testimonies only contained very short statements, such as “I dreamt about my family”. I had to make many difficult decisions on what to qualify as a dream. For instance, one of the respondents wrote: “After the camp, I had several nightmares, always about being arrested, getting into the camp, thinking there is no coming back—loss of freedom.” How many dreams did she recount? I decided it was one recurring dream, but this could easily be false. So, the process of identifying dreams in the respondents’ narratives sometimes ended up being arbitrary. Eventually I identified 651 dreams. 504 of them were dreams experienced after the dreamer was arrested and, as such, are of special interest for me in this book.



## **PART I**

# **THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS OF DREAMS**

## CHAPTER ONE

# QUANTITATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FORMER AUSCHWITZ INMATES' DREAMS

Quantitative dream content analysis is a very popular and useful method of investigating the meaning of dreams, especially when one is dealing with large dream sets (collections of dreams from members of a society, age group, minority etc.) or dream series (collections of dreams from one person). The statistics of selected dream elements, such as characters, settings, emotions, activities or social interactions, give the researcher an insight into the dreamers' psychological, social and cultural traits. Hence, at the beginning of my attempts to understand the specificity of Auschwitz prisoners' dreams, I decided to undertake a quantitative analysis of their content.

### **Method**

From the total of 651 dreams reported by the former inmates of the Auschwitz concentration camp, I isolated 504 dreams not experienced before the dreamers were arrested. This sample was analysed quantitatively in accordance with the Calvin Hall and Robert Van de Castle's (1966) coding system, slightly modified by William Domhoff (1996). This system is still one of the most popular methods for dream content research, used by many contemporary academics around the globe (see, for instance, Nikles, Stiefel & Bourquin, 2017; Tartz & Krippner, 2017).

The main advantage of using this system is the possibility of comparing new data with the dream content norms established by Hall and Van de Castle. However, these norms "were obtained from a content analysis of 1,000 dreams collected from undergraduate students at Western Reserve University and Baldwin Wallace College during the years 1947-1950" (Hall & Van de Castle, 1966, p.158), and they do not seem to be the perfect control group for comparisons with Holocaust survivors in Poland. The authors of the system were aware that "these norms should be appropriate for dream series collected in a similar fashion from college students" (Hall

& Van de Castle, 1966, pp.158-159). Domhoff also warns:

Despite the numerous commonalities of dream reports across societies on many of our coding categories, there is enough variability that the American norms must be used with extreme caution beyond Anglophone Canada and Western Europe. (Domhoff, 1996, p.128)

On the other hand, however, these norms function in cross-cultural studies (see Domhoff, 1996, pp.99-129) and seem to be universal enough, so tracing the differences between them and the Auschwitz prisoners' dreams is not completely without sense. The more that these differences are so great that they cannot be caused exclusively by the cultural distance, but also (and probably mainly) by the inmates' specific life situation.

In order to avoid the possible false conclusions caused by comparing the Polish prisoners' dreams with those of the American college students, I decided to establish first the Polish norms. In 2017, a 300-person representative sample of Polish adults were asked to describe their most recent dream, in a manner consistent with the Hall, Van de Castle and Domhoff's procedure for obtaining such dreams (Domhoff, 1996, pp.309-310). The oral dream accounts were recorded and then transcribed. The transcripts were coded according to Hall/Van de Castle rules.

The dream reports of both the Auschwitz inmates and the contemporary group of Poles were coded by three doctoral level students involved in our research project. We had all previously discussed the coding procedure in detail, and I supervised the coding process (by comparing 30% of each student's codes with the dream reports and by consulting with them whenever any doubts arose regarding coding method) in order to achieve the highest possible inter-code reliability. The dream reports were coded separately for men and for women.

It should be stressed that the process of collecting dreams from the Auschwitz inmates differed considerably from the method used by Hall (and by our research team). While Hall insisted on collecting only the most recent dreams (in order to avoid receiving the most significant dreams in the respondents' life), the former Auschwitz prisoners were asked to describe any dreams from the war and post-war period, so they very often recounted dreams that were best remembered, most impressive, most recurrent etc. This difference may be considered one of the major limitations of my quantitative study. Another drawback is the time lapse between when most of the dreams occurred and when they were reported. In fact, my statistics are based not on the actual frequencies of the dream motifs, but on what the respondents were able and wanted to share with the authors of the questionnaire many years after their liberation from the camp. On the other

hand, it is a well-recognised fact that we never have access to “real” dreams, even to the most recent ones, and all we can deal with are dream descriptions. For this reason Hall and Van de Castle defined the term “dream” as “that which a person reports when he is asked to relate a dream” (Hall & Van de Castle, 1966, p.18). In addition, I paid greater attention to comparing the whole Auschwitz sample with some particular subsamples than with the American and Polish norms.

Among the whole sample of the Auschwitz prisoners’ dreams, three subsamples were isolated: camp dreams (CD), i.e. dreams experienced in the camp, dreams about the camp (DAC), i.e. dreams with camp as a setting, and “comeback” dreams (CBD) where the dreamer is aware that he/she has returned to the camp for the second, third (or more) time (this phenomenon will be clarified in chapter four). Comparisons of all the subsamples and the whole sample serve to illustrate various aspects of the inmates’ dreams.

## **Results**

The most significant results occurred in four Hall/Van de Castle categories: aggression, friendliness, emotions, and characters.

### **1. Aggression**

Aggression, together with friendliness and sexuality, belongs to a broader category called “social interactions” by Hall and Van de Castle. As sexuality is virtually absent in the inmates’ reports, I did not take it into consideration in my study.

The statistics concerning aggressive behaviour in dreams are presented in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1. Aggression in dreams (in %)**

Dream content category	Men						Women					
	WS	CD	DAC	CBD	Polish Norm	H/V Norm	WS	CD	DAC	CBD	Polish Norm	H/V Norm
Dreams in which aggression occurs	38	31	49	12	<b>33</b>	<b>47</b>	30	15	36	0	<b>38</b>	<b>44</b>
Dreamer-involved aggression	83	79	78	100	<b>85</b>	<b>80</b>	79	50	73	0	<b>76</b>	<b>81</b>
Witnessed aggression	17	21	22	0	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>	21	50	27	0	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>
Dreamer as aggressor	7	11	4	0	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	2	0	12	0	<b>22</b>	<b>28</b>
Dreamer as victim	87	85	92	100	<b>61</b>	<b>48</b>	98	100	88	0	<b>75</b>	<b>57</b>
Dreamer reciprocal	1	0	2	0	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>
Dreamer mutual	4	2	0	0	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
Dreamer self-aggression	1	2	2	0	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Victimisation percent	93	88	96	100	<b>66</b>	<b>60</b>	98	100	88	---	<b>77</b>	<b>67</b>

WS—whole sample, CD—camp dreams (dreams experienced in the camp), DAC—dreams about the camp (with the camp as a setting), CBD—“comeback” dreams (dreams in which the dreamer is aware that he/she has returned to the camp for the second, third, or more, time), H/V Norm—norm established by Hall and Van de Castle. The victimisation percent is obtained by dividing the number of situations in which the dreamer is the victim by the number of situations in which the dreamer is the victim or aggressor.

As one might observe, aggression is not an enormously frequent social interaction in the Auschwitz inmates' dreams. Men reported less dreams with aggression than in the Hall/Van de Castle norm (38% versus 47%), but slightly more than in the Polish norm (33%). In the case of women (30%), it was significantly lower than in both the American (44%) and Polish (38%) norms. Interestingly, the numbers are even lower in the subsample of dreams experienced in the camp, at the time of imprisonment (CD): men reported 31% of dreams with aggression, and women only 15%. One can suppose that while in the camp, the inmates were depressed and debilitated, so they rarely dreamt about aggressive interactions. Rosalind Cartwright and Lynne Lamberg report that "stimulating depressed people to take charge of their lives by teaching them to play an active role in their dreams improved their outlook toward the future" (Cartwright & Lamberg, 2000, p.153). However, it seems that the dreams from the camp period were generally more optimistic and less devastating than the post-war dreams (as I will discuss in detail in chapters two and four), and the lower percentage of aggression in the camp dreams supports this hypothesis.

In the subsample of camp dreams (CD), women were just as frequently involved in aggressive interactions as they were merely witnessing them. This is very far from the norms (81%/19% and 76%/24% for the American and Polish norms respectively), from the entire women's sample (79%/21%), and from the men's CD percentage (79%/21%). One can suppose that women were less predisposed than men to cope with the camp reality, so they were less often able to engage in aggressive behaviour in their dreams. But more witnessed aggressions in dream accounts can also indicate that the women were less egocentric than the men who, while answering the questionnaire, did not remember or were not interested in dreams in which aggression did not concern them directly.

Although women in their camp dreams (CD) did not experience aggression frequently, each time they did so they were the victim rather than the aggressor. For Hall and Van de Castle the so-called "victimisation percent" was a very important indicator of the dreamers' personality traits and mental health condition. In the case of women's camp dreams, the victimisation percent is 100%, slightly more than in the whole women's sample (98%) and much more than in the Polish and American norms for women (77% and 67% respectively). It means that women in the camp relatively seldom dreamt about drastic, violent scenes, but in dreams with aggression they were completely helpless and victimised. The situation was quite opposite in the case of the men. In the camp, they dreamt about aggression more often than the women, but were less victimised—the

victimisation percent (88%) is lower than in the overall men's sample (93%).

Generally, the victimisation percent—in the whole sample as well as in the subsamples—is substantially high, much greater than in the norms. There is nothing surprising in this, as the prisoners must have felt extremely victimised, both in the camp and after their liberation. It has been proven that people with depression or anxiety disorders are more often victims in their dreams than others (Bollea et al., 1978; Gentil & Lader, 1978). Anyway, the gender differences may be of some interest: women were the most victimised (100%) in their camp dreams (CD) and the least victimised (88%) in their dreams with the camp as a setting (DAC) which came mainly from the post-war period, while for men the opposite was the case (88% for CD and 96% for DAC). It can be supposed that the men's camp dreams were more compensatory in character than the women's, but the latter's post-war dreams were more adaptive than former's. When a prisoner of Auschwitz dreams that he or she is the aggressor rather than the victim, it is a kind of compensation for his or her actual reality. (The "compensatory hypothesis" of dreaming originates from Carl Jung's dream theory—see Jung, 1974; 1989; 1995; 2008). Being an aggressor means being active and, in a sense, successful in resisting the perpetrators. In this aspect, men seemed to be more active and successful in their camp dreams, and women in their dreams from the later periods. (The adaptive or therapeutic effects of the respondents' dreams will be explained in chapters two and four).

Apart from gender differences, the quantitative data with regard to aggression suggest that camp dreams—the dreams from the midst of the Auschwitz hell—were the mildest in comparison with the whole sample and with the dreams about the camp (DAC): camp dreams were simply the "calmest", which might be regarded as counterintuitive. Expectedly, the "worst" were the (mainly post-war) dreams about the camp. The latter subsample, together with its very specific variation—the "comeback" dreams—will be discussed in chapter four.

## **2. Friendliness**

Findings on friendly social interactions suggest that the Auschwitz inmates were generally passive in their dreams. They much more often received friendliness from others (and therefore were "befriended" in the Hall and Van de Castle's terms) than initiated it ("befriender"). The so-called "befriender percent" is significantly lower in the whole sample and in the subsamples than in the norms. The statistics are presented in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2. Friendliness in dreams (in %)**

Dream content category	Men						Women					
	WS	CD	DAC	CBD	Polish Norm	H/V Norm	WS	CD	DAC	CBD	Polish Norm	H/V Norm
Dreams in which friendliness occurs	12	19	9	24	<b>32</b>	<b>38</b>	13	27	11	0	<b>38</b>	<b>42</b>
Dreamer-involved friendliness	96	94	100	100	<b>91</b>	<b>90</b>	85	89	67	0	<b>97</b>	<b>84</b>
Witnessed friendliness	4	6	0	0	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	15	11	33	0	<b>3</b>	<b>16</b>
Dreamer as befriender	13	7	17	29	<b>28</b>	<b>45</b>	12	6	0	0	<b>22</b>	<b>41</b>
Dreamer as befriended	77	86	67	71	<b>40</b>	<b>45</b>	82	88	100	0	<b>45</b>	<b>46</b>
Dreamer reciprocal	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Dreamer mutual	10	7	17	0	<b>32</b>	<b>7</b>	6	6	0	0	<b>33</b>	<b>4</b>
Dreamer self-friendliness	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Befriender percent	14	7	20	29	<b>41</b>	<b>50</b>	12	7	0	---	<b>32</b>	<b>47</b>

WS—whole sample, CD—camp dreams (dreams experienced in the camp), DAC—dreams about the camp (with the camp as a setting), CBD—“comeback” dreams (dreams in which the dreamer is aware that he/she has returned to the camp for the second, third, or more, time), H/V Norm—norm established by Hall and Van de Castle. The befriender percent is obtained by dividing the number of situations in which the dreamer is befriended by the number of situations in which the dreamer is the befriender or is befriended.



Before I comment on them, I would like to explain the differences regarding befriender percent in the Polish and American norms. At first sight it seems that Polish people are less friendly in their dreams than American people, as the befriender percent for Polish men (41%) is lower than for American men (50%), and for Polish women (32%) it is even more significantly lower than for American women (47%). Indeed, in the Polish norm men are more rarely the “befrienders” than in the American norm (28% versus 45%), and also in the case of women the difference is similar (22% versus 41%). However, the Poles in their dreams are much more often involved in mutual friendly interactions than the Americans (the ratio for men is 32% versus 7%, and for women—33% versus 4%). This means that Polish people are definitely more active in initiating friendliness in dreams than it could be supposed on the basis of the befriender percent in which the mutual friendliness category is not taken into consideration.

Returning to the dreams of the Auschwitz inmates, it is evident that they were rarely the “befrienders”. For men the befriender percent is 14% (in comparison with 41% in the Polish norm and 50% in the American norm), and for women—12% (in comparison with 32% and 47% in the Polish and American norms respectively). This is not very surprising, for the camp prisoners and the traumatised camp survivors needed friendliness and help from others, so their dreams compensated them for these needs. In the subsample of camp dreams (CD) the befriender percent is much lower—7% for both men and women. In those dreams the dreamers were the most passive and the most supported by others, as in the real camp situation they were the most helpless and the most eager for support. These quantitative findings go in line with my qualitative analysis of the therapeutic effects of camp dreams (presented in chapter two). In particular, the so-called “caring” dreams involved the dreamer receiving friendliness from others.

The subsample of camp dreams also contains the highest percentage of dreams in which friendliness occurs: 19% for men (versus 12% across the entire sample and 9% in DAC), and 27% for women (versus 13% in the whole sample and 11% in DAC). It turns out again that camp dreams were of a relatively positive nature in comparison with dreams from the post-war period.

The least friendliness is to be found in (both the male and female) dreams about the camp (DAC), which is absolutely understandable as 57% of them were nightmares<sup>1</sup>. (A lack of friendly interactions is characteristic

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<sup>1</sup> There is no agreement among researchers as to the definition of a nightmare. According to the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), “nightmares are repeated occurrences of extended, extremely

of dreams experienced in depression and anxiety—see Kramer & Roth, 1973; Gentil & Lader, 1978). In this subsample, however, there are interesting gender differences. The percentage of dreamer-involved friendliness is 100% for men and only 67% for women. Men did not account witnessed friendliness, maybe because—similarly as in the case of aggression—they were not preoccupied with the issues of other people. What is more important, the befriender percent for women is 0, while for men (20%) it is the highest in comparison with the whole sample and with camp dreams. This may suggest that the men's strategy for coping with their post-camp trauma in dreams consisted in being actively engaged in friendly social interactions, whereas women remained completely passive and received friendliness from others. Which one of those strategies was more useful? It is impossible to answer such a question based on the data available from the inmates' reports. However, one can suppose that in the case of the Holocaust survivors, the passive form of experiencing friendly interactions in dreams can perhaps be interpreted as a sign of openness to accepting help from the external world and, therefore, as a positive phenomenon in the process of recovering from trauma.

### 3. Emotions

Emotions constitute highly significant categories in dream content analysis as they play a crucial role in our psychological life. Hall and Van de Castle, for the purpose of their coding system, isolated five kinds of emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, confusion and apprehension. Only one of them—happiness—is a positive emotion. The other four are regarded as negative. In order to characterise the dreamers' psychological and social state, the dreamers' own emotions are more important than those witnessed.

Before proceeding with the inmates' dreams, I ought to point out the differences between the Polish and American norms. The statistics are presented in Table 1.3.

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dysphoric and well-remembered dreams that usually involve efforts to avoid threats to survival, security, or physical integrity" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). I follow this definition in my book. Some researchers differentiate nightmares from "bad dreams" and state that the former contain negative emotions and lead to an awaking, whereas the latter contain negative emotions as well but do not wake the dreamer (Zadra, Pilon & Donderi, 2006). Nils Sandman convincingly argues that "the difference between bad dreams and nightmares appears to be that of a degree not of kind: Nightmares may represent the extreme end of dreams with intense negative emotions, but they are part of the same basic phenomenon as bad dreams. Therefore, it is somewhat arbitrary to define only those dreams that wake the dreamer as nightmares" (Sandman, 2019, p.232).

**Table 1.3. Emotions in dreams (in %)**

Total number of emotions expressed	Men						Women					
	WS	CD	DAC	CBD	Polish Norm	H/V Norm	WS	CD	DAC	CBD	Polish Norm	H/V Norm
Total happy	13	33	2	0	25	20	9	23	0	0	28	20
Total sad	8	12	4	25	9	9	19	23	11	33	9	13
Total anger	1	0	2	0	9	16	2	3	11	0	13	13
Total confusion	3	4	4	12	13	22	5	6	0	0	11	18
Total apprehension	75	52	87	62	44	34	66	45	79	67	39	37
<b>Dreamer's own emotions:</b>												
Happy	13	35	2	0	18	21	9	22	0	0	26	18
Sad	6	9	4	29	7	19	15	15	11	33	7	13
Anger	1	0	2	0	10	12	3	4	11	0	13	9
Confusion	3	2	4	14	15	23	5	7	0	0	11	20
Apprehension	77	54	87	57	50	35	68	52	79	67	43	40

WS—whole sample, CD—camp dreams (dreams experienced in the camp), DAC—dreams about the camp (with the camp as a setting), CBD—“comeback” dreams (dreams in which the dreamer is aware that he/she has returned to the camp for the second, third, or more, time), H/V Norm—norm established by Hall and Van de Castle.

When the dreamer's own emotions are concerned, Polish women seem to be more happy than American women (26% versus 18%) and than Polish men (18%). (In the Hall/Van de Castle norm, men are slightly more happy than women). Polish men are significantly less sad than American men (7% versus 19%), and Polish women are also quite visibly less sad than American women (7% versus 13%). Polish men are slightly less angry than American men (10% versus 12%), but Polish women are more angry (13%) than American women (9%) and than Polish men (while in the American norm, men are more angry than women). Poles are evidently less confused than Americans (15% versus 23% in the case of men and 11% versus 20% in the case of women), and more apprehensive—men much more (50% versus 35%) and women slightly more (43% versus 40%).

The statistics of emotions in the Auschwitz inmates' dreams again confirm that the dreams experienced in the camp were "better"—more pleasant and less stressful—than those from the post-war period. It is not surprising at all that there is less happiness and more apprehension in the respondents' dreams than in the norms. (Some studies confirm a higher percentage of negative emotions in the dreams of those suffering from depression—see Bollea et al., 1978; Riemann et al., 1990). Nevertheless, it is really astonishing that in the men's camp dreams (CD) the dreamer's own happiness represents as much as 35% of all emotions—not only much higher than in the whole sample (13%), but even than in the Polish and American norms as well (18% and 21% respectively)! In the women's camp dreams the percentage of happiness (22%) is also significantly higher than in the whole sample (9%) and slightly higher than in the American norm (18%), but lower than in the Polish norm (26%).

The camp dreams also feature the lowest percentage of apprehension (which in Hall and Van de Castle's system contains all kinds and levels of fear). In the entire men's sample, the dreamer's own apprehension makes up 77% of all emotions, yet only 54% in the subsample of men's camp dreams—only 4 percentage points more than in the Polish norm. The overall women's sample features an apprehension percentage of 68%, and 52% in the women's camp dreams (compared with 43% in the Polish norm and 40% in the American norm).

The Auschwitz inmates reported very few dreams in which they were angry. The dreamer's own anger makes up only 1% of emotions across the men's sample (compared with 10% in the Polish norm and 12% in the American norm), and 3% of all emotions in the women's sample (compared with 13% and 9% in the Polish and American norms respectively). In the subsample of camp dreams the percentages are similar: 0 for men and 4% for women. These numbers indicate again that the dreamers were generally

passive. They rarely felt angry and seldom initiated aggressive (or friendly) interactions. The lack of anger in the inmates' dreams may reflect their blocked access to emotions in their waking life, both in the camp and many years after liberation. However, in the women's dreams about the camp (DAC) anger appears frequently—11% (which lies between the Polish and American norms). For the men's camp dreams this percentage is only 2%. This difference supports the assumption that in the post-war period, women were more capable of accessing their anger than men, so they were probably more successful in coping with their post-camp trauma. It is also noteworthy that women were more often sad in their dreams than men (15% versus 6% in the whole sample) which may suggest that they had generally better contact with their negative emotions.

#### 4. Characters

In the category of dream characters the most important findings concern familiarity and the quantity of friends. The statistics are presented in Table 1.4.

**Table 1.4. Characters in dreams (in %)**

Characters	Men				Women			
	WS	DAC	Polish norm	H/V Norm	WS	DAC	Polish norm	H/V Norm
Familiar characters	38	30	52	45	50	35	57	58
Unfamiliar characters	62	70	48	55	50	65	43	42
Friends percent	12	18	15	31	15	12	17	37

WS—whole sample, DAC—dreams about the camp (with the camp as a setting), H/V Norm—norm established by Hall and Van de Castle. The friends percent is obtained by dividing the total number of “known” characters by the total number of all human characters.

Men's dreams contain significantly fewer familiar characters (38% of all human characters) than the Polish (52%) and American (45%) norms. In the case of women (50%) the difference also exists (57% and 58% in the Polish and American norms respectively). These percentages are even lower in the subsample of dreams about the camp (DAC)—30% for men and 35% for women. This means that women generally dreamt more often about familiar characters than men (which is consistent with the norms), and that in their post-traumatic nightmares both the male and female inmates dreamt much more often about unfamiliar than familiar characters.

For Hall, Van de Castle and Domhoff a yet more important category was the so-called friend percent. This category includes all human characters known to the dreamer but excludes his or her family members. In comparison with the norms (31% for men and 37% for women in the American norm; 15% for men and 17% for women in the Polish norm), the respondents very rarely dreamt about friends (12% in the men's case and 15% in the women's case), which is consistent with the findings on dreams in depression (Kramer & Roth, 1973). Domhoff explains:

A lack of friends and acquaintances in dreams, as opposed to an abundance of family members, strangers, and other human character categories, is a potential indicator of adjustment problems.... This is because people with few friends in their dreams may be unable to develop relations beyond their family. (Domhoff 1996, 25-26)

The Auschwitz survivors' problems with adjustment and developing social relations are well documented (Orwid, 1962; 1964; 2009; Leśniak et al, 1961; Rutkowski & Dembińska, 2016.). The lack of friends in the dreams about the camp (DAC)—18% for men and 12% for women—also illustrates such problems.

Gender differences in the friends category are not huge, but they lead us to realise that men had more friends in their post-war dreams than across the whole male sample (18% versus 12%), whereas for women the opposite was true (12% in the dreams about the camp versus 15% across the entire female sample). These numbers contradict my assumption that the men's dreams about the camp were more positive than the women's.

## Basic conclusions

The quantitative data yield some rather general findings on the Auschwitz prisoners' dream experiences and their possible waking methods for coping with trauma. All conclusions should be taken with caution and treated as tentative suggestions rather than proven facts.