

# Death Dreams From a Manifest Perspective: A Cross-Cultural Comparison Between Tibetan and Han Chinese Dreamers

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*The present study is a cross-cultural comparison of death dreams between Tibetan and Han Chinese dreamers from a manifest perspective. Manifest perspective means that the elements can be seen directly in the text of the dream studied. Altogether, 536 Tibetan and Han Chinese participants were interviewed via questionnaire regarding death dreams. Data collected showed that 66 participants (12.3%) reported that they never had or could not remember a death dream. Four hundred seventy participants, 150 Tibetan and 320 Han Chinese respectively, reported that they had such a dream and were interviewed further. Results showed that there was a significant difference of the death role between Tibetan and Han Chinese in death dreams. Specifically, unknown others appeared more frequently with Tibetan participants, whereas the dreamer appeared more often in the dreams experienced by the Han Chinese participants. There was also a significant difference in the main emotions expressed in death dreams. Tibetan participants were more peaceful than Han Chinese participants. About the described cause of death, Tibetan and Han Chinese participants showed a significant difference. More Tibetan than Han Chinese participants described the cause of death in the dream as unknown. Another finding was that, regardless whether Tibetan or Han Chinese, the role of the helper in death dreams seldom appeared, and the frequency of nonappearance was more than 94%. The importance of these results was analyzed in relation to the living environment, lifestyle, and religious differences. Future research directions were also suggested.*

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**Keywords:** death dream, manifest perspective, cross-cultural study, comparison between Tibetan and Han Chinese

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Most of people have at least one death dream in their lifetimes, and the exploration of such a dream can help to further an understanding of death and its depth of meaning. In the present study, a death dream is a dream associated with death, that is, there is a character who has deceased. This character can be the dreamer, other people, or even other living beings. Whereas death is unavoidable yet unknown to us, death dreams at the level of the unconsciousness can provide us with insight into the process and act of dying.

In the 1960s, [Feldman and Hersen \(1967\)](#) began to explore the relationship between death and dreams. Their study suggested that both nightmare behavior and/or attitudes toward death might be rooted in concrete experiences. They also found that people who had frequent nightmares had a history of greater frequency of death of relatives and close friends, especially before the age of 10. Since then, more researchers have studied death dreams. Among them, Barrett's study has provided a more systematic means for exploring death dreams ([Barrett, 1988–1989](#)). Her study examined the frequency and characteristics of overt dreams of dying among healthy young adults. Dreams of dying were found to be a rare, but distinct content category. Most surprisingly, they were overwhelmingly pleasant dreams. Slightly more than half of these accounts involved a lengthy afterlife sequence, and may best be interpreted as symbolizing other psychological changes. Other remnants of the dreams were found to be more focused on the process of death, and seemed to illustrate the struggle to achieve an acceptance of mortality. Several years later, [Barrett \(1991\)](#) further studied death images in dreams and differentiated four categories, i.e. when the deceased (a) described the state of death, (b) delivered messages to the living, (c) sought to change the circumstances of his or her death, and (d) gave loved ones a chance to say goodbye. These dreams were discussed in terms of what they illuminated about attitudes toward mortality and loss. Alluding to the death content in a dream was groundbreaking.

More recently, the relationship of death dreams and other variables has also been studied. In Kroth's study, dream characteristics of 29 women from a graduate program were correlated with scores on the Sensation-Seeking and Death Anxiety scales ([Kroth, McDavit, Brendlen, Patel, & Zwiener, 2001](#)). The results showed that death anxiety scores positively related to the occurrence of nightmares, representations of death in dreams, and recurring nightmares. In addition, [Kunzendorf et al. \(2007\)](#) studied the primal fears and existential fears of death shown in the dreams. In this study, primal fears referred to dreadful ways of dying, and existential fears concerned the possible demise of the dreamers' immortality symbols. Their study found that, for the subjects seeking symbolic immortality, primal fears of death were less intense than existential fears of death.

In addition to the aforementioned research, most death-dream studies have focused on special populations, for example, the bereaved and the dying person's dreams. These studies found that these dreams had brought positive influence to those special populations' psyches, as well as provided help for the clinical work ([Trappey, 2001](#); [Danks, 2001](#); [Moss, 2002](#); [Ringel, 2002](#); [Belicki, Gulko, Ruzycski & Aristotle, 2003](#); [Lowther, 2003](#); [Bulkeley & Bulkley, 2005](#)). [Trappey \(2001\)](#) focused on symbols contained within dreams before and after near-death events. She pointed out that work with individuals who were experiencing traumatic events, significant symptomatology, or any developmental stage can activate a transforma-

tive process. Danks (2001) explored a series of six dreams and personal associations of a 70-year-old woman. She found that the dreams corresponded to an understanding of life transitions occurring in the participant's external life. The dream themes also contributed to the dreamer's acceptance of her own death when they were interpreted within the context of death preparation. Belicki et al. (2003) studied a widower's 16-year dream diary. Although there was a slight tendency for dreams of the deceased to be alive again to occur earlier in the diary, and dreams of being separated from the deceased to occur later, in general there was no evidence of an orderly emergence of dream themes across time. These findings were supportive of the views of bereavement that stress the importance of redefining a relationship with the deceased, rather than resolving grief in an orderly and timely way. Another dissertation also revealed that near-death dreams can partner with the dying process (Lowther, 2003). Bulkeley and Bulkley (2005) compiled a map of near-death dreamland, and summed up three themes that tended to appear in near-death dreams: Death is a journey; death is a journey with a guide leading the way; and death is a journey full of impediments which correspond to worries in real life.

In addition to bereaved and dying peoples' dreams, the death dreams of subjects who have certain psychological problems have also been studied. Ostow (1992) demonstrated that many dreams of patients with disorders of affect regulation exhibit alternating episodes clearly recognizable as representing death and rebirth. These dreams, from a clinical perspective, seem to inform the therapist of the patient's struggle to control his or her affects. Overall, the above studies about death dreams paid more attention to a particular population and its relationship with other variables while investigating death as a content of the dream.

Studies about death dreams all support the idea that death is symbolically represented, and death dreams are helpful to an individual's mental health and the completion of their psyche's process of individuation (Evans, 1990; Vande Kemp, 1994; Cookson, 1990; Goelitz, 2001). These ideas vary significantly with secular understanding. Therefore, the proposed research about the content of death in dreams can provide further understanding of the death dream. It aims to clarify who in the dream is experiencing death? How do the dreamers feel in the dream? What are the causes of death in the dream? Is there any helper in the dream? Most important, are there any cultural differences with respect to these proposed questions?

With their own unique cultural backgrounds and living environments, the Tibetan and Han Chinese have formed different ethnic characteristics that can be seen through all aspects of their psychology and behavior. Tibetan people's unique religious faith and funeral rituals are entirely different from Han Chinese. Yalom proposed that religious faith could be projected as the symbolic helper toward death (Yalom, 2005). Yin, Li, & Shen's (in press) study indicated that Tibetan Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism cultures had different effects on explicit and implicit death anxiety of Tibetan and Han individuals. Their study concluded that the Tibetan participants had a higher level of explicit death anxiety and a lower implicit level of death-anxiety than the Han participants. The cultural differences between the two nations (two distinct peoples within China, with different customs and traditions, including religions) have been demonstrated in their study.

To better understand two cultural differences in relation to death dreams, we analyzed Tibetan and Han Chinese death dreams in relation to a manifest perspective in this study. Manifest perspective implies that the elements can be seen directly in the text of the dream studied. This is different from what Freud called the manifest content of the dream (Freud, 1920).

According to previous studies, the present cross-cultural comparison between Tibetan and Han Chinese dreams is based on the following hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 1:* There is a significant difference between the Tibetan and Han Chinese death roles in the death dream.

*Hypothesis 2:* There is a significant difference between Tibetan and Han Chinese people's emotional experiences in the death dream, and Tibetans would show more positive emotions than Han Chinese.

*Hypothesis 3:* There is a significant difference between Tibetan and Han Chinese people's described causes of death.

*Hypothesis 4:* There is a significant difference between Tibetans and Han Chinese regarding whether there is a helper in the death dream or not, and Tibetans would show more helpers than Han Chinese.

## METHOD

### Participants

This study employed the technique of interviewing participants to collect death dreams and explore their similarities and differences through content analysis. After defining the range of the death dream, appropriate open ended questions were designed to elicit information. Interviewers were acquired via Internet and campus recruitment. Specifically, 10 interviewers came from South China Normal University (Guangzhou, Guangdong, PRC) and 15 from Lhasa Normal College (Lhasa, Tibet, PRC). All the interviewers underwent interview training to ensure consistency of interviewing style. Volunteer participants were also selected via Internet and campus recruitment. In total, 536 people were interviewed. Among them, 66 people, 19 Tibetans and 47 Han Chinese, reported that they did not dream about death or could not remember any death dream. Those participants who reported having death dreams were our interview subjects. Altogether 470 people were interviewed, among them, 150 people were Tibetan, and 320 people were Han Chinese. There were 322 female and 148 male participants in total. The youngest participant was 11 years old, and the oldest was 70 years of age. The average age was calculated at 26.90 ( $SD = 8.48$ ). The following table provides further details.

### Classification and Coding

A research group consisting of two psychological scholars, two nonpsychological scholars, together with the authors classified and coded the results from the interviews. After seeking the psychologists' opinions, the authors decided to

analyze the death dreams from a manifest perspective first. One assigned group member checked 20 questionnaires randomly, and summarized the elements of the death dreams from his or her individual professional knowledge. After a group discussion, the elements of manifest perspective of death dreams were divided into the following four aspects: (a) the role of death in the dream, (b) the main emotion in the dream, (c) the described cause of death, and (d) a helper in the dream.

According to the interviewing results, group members coded the death dreams according to the above four aspects. After further group discussions, the death role in the dream was further coded as the dreamer, maternal elders (including mother), paternal elders (including father), people of same sex and same age, people of opposite sex and same age, children, animals, and unknown others. The main emotions were also coded as fear, sadness, peace, joy, anger and other (e.g., remorse, despair, helplessness, guilty, grievance, doubt, confusion, pity, anxiety, and complex combined emotion or unknown emotion). Described cause of death was coded into the following subcategories: tiredness or sickness, homicide, calamitous accident (car accident, explosion, electric shock, thunderstruck, falling down, flood, and earthquake), suicide (including sacrifice) and unknown. Helper was coded into present or absent. In the event that there was a helper, the roles were further coded into the following subcategories: dreamer (self), doctor, related to religion, counselor, parent(s), and elder(s).

After ensuring that the psychologists accepted all coding, all research group members graded the data accordingly. The research group was divided into two subgroups: each consisting of one psychological scholar and one nonpsychological scholar. Due to the large sample size, 50 questionnaires were chosen randomly and two subgroups of people then graded them separately. Two scholars in one subgroup graded each questionnaire together. An interrater reliability analysis using the  $\kappa$  statistic was performed to determine consistency among raters. Interrater reliability is a measure used to examine the agreement between two raters on the assignment of categories of a categorical variable. In this instance, two group evaluators'  $\kappa$  coefficients on the four dimensions of the death dream were above 0.72 ( $p < .001$ ), which showed that the evaluator had a relatively high consistency and relatively good scorer reliability. The rest of the 420 questionnaires were divided into two equal parts, and completed by the two subgroups separately. The researchers checked and integrated all the coding, and compared the Tibetan and Han Chinese death dreams according to the four dimensions. We used SPSS 19.0 to undertake the statistical analysis.

## RESULTS

### Frequency of the Death Dream

From the sample distribution mentioned above (see [Table 1](#)), 87.7% of the total sample of Tibetan and Han Chinese participants, 88.8% of the Tibetan sample, and 87.2% of the sample of Han Chinese reported that they had death dreams.

Table 1. Sample Distribution

Valid samples	Gender	No. of participants	Percentage of total
Tibetan ( <i>n</i> = 150)	Female	104	22.1%
	Male	46	9.8%
Han ( <i>n</i> = 320)	Female	218	46.4%
	Male	102	21.7%
<i>N</i>		470	100%

Death Role in the Death Dream

On the death role in the dream, the Tibetan sample indicated that the largest presence of deceased were unknown others (46.7%), the second largest, the dreamer (21.3%), with a paternal elder (14.7%) in the next most common role. In the Han Chinese sample, they indicated the dreamer had the largest presence (37.8%), second, a maternal elder (17.8%), and the least common was a paternal elder (15.9%). There was a significant difference in the total distribution of the Tibetan and Han Chinese death roles in the death dream,  $\chi^2 = 87.761, p = .000$ . To further compare the difference between Tibetan and Han Chinese dreamers on each death role, each of them was treated as a trait of the death dream and graded as a dichotomous (0, 1) variable. Therefore, if the participant's death dream fit this trait, then it was graded 1 point, and if not 0. A  $\chi^2$  test was used for comparison of the two groups across all categories. When more than 20% of the cells have expected count less than five, the continuity correction or Fisher's exact test was used as appropriate. To account for the multiple tests used here, we used Bonferroni-corrected  $\alpha$  values of  $.05/n$ , and  $n$  is the number of multiple comparisons. If  $p < .05/n$ , there was a significant difference. The detailed distribution and results of the  $\chi^2$  tests compared cross-culturally can be seen in Table 2.

The results showed that the Han Chinese experienced more death dreams that showed the death of the dreamer, whereas the Tibetan experienced more death dreams that showed the death of unknown others.

Furthermore, of all the dreams, on the maternal elder variable, most of the women were mothers, whereas others were grandmothers, older sisters, and aunts. Regarding the paternal elders, most were fathers, whereas the others were grandfathers, teachers, and leaders. Regarding same sex-same age and opposite

Table 2. Comparison of Tibetan and Han Chinese Death Role in the Death Dream

Death role	Frequency		$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
	Tibetan ( <i>n</i> = 150)	Han ( <i>n</i> = 320)		
Self (dreamer)	32	121	12.199	.000
Maternal elders	13	57	6.739	.009
Paternal elders	22	51	.126	.723
Same sex, same age	9	24	.352	.553
Opposite sex, same age	3	12	.525	.469
Children	0	15	5.825	.016
Animals	1	8	.982	.322
Unknown others	70	32	80.804	.000

Note. Bonferroni-corrected value  $.05/8, \alpha = .0063$ .



sex-same age, they were deemed mostly classmates and friends. On occasion, they were strangers of the same age. In relation to children, they were deemed sons, younger brothers, younger sisters, and others' children. Regarding the category of animals, they were snakes, dragons, dogs, cats, geese, and cattle. In addition, dogs, cattle, and cats showed up most, and some appeared twice. For the category of unknown others, this suggested that the dreamer only knew that someone had died, but did not know exactly who had passed away.

Main Emotion in the Death Dream

The emotions in the death dream were mostly negative. The Tibetan participants indicated mostly sadness (40.0%), second was fear (31.3%), and then peace (23.3%). The Han Chinese also indicated mostly sadness (40.3%), tied with fear (40.3%), and then peace (10.3%). There was a significant difference in the total distribution of the Tibetan and Han Chinese main emotions in the death dream ( $\chi^2 = 16.538, p = .004$ ). According to the scoring system mentioned above, each emotion was treated as a dichotomous variable, graded as 0 or 1. A  $\chi^2$  test was used for comparison of the two groups across all categories. As such, Bonferroni-corrected  $\alpha$  values were also used for multiple comparisons, as mentioned above. The detailed distribution and results of the  $\chi^2$  tests are shown in Table 3.

Results showed that there was a significant difference between Tibetan and Han Chinese in feeling peace, which indicated that the Tibetan participants felt more peaceful than the Han Chinese participants. Regarding other emotions, there was no significant difference between groups in the death dream.

Described Cause of Death in Death Dreams

Regarding the described cause of death, the Tibetan participants showed mostly unknown reasons (71.3%), second was homicide (11.3%), followed by tiredness or sickness (9.3%). Whereas for the Han Chinese, the order went as follows: unknown reasons (58.8%), homicide (16.3%), and calamitous accident (11.9%). There was a significant difference in the total distribution of the Tibetan and Han Chinese described causees of death in the death dream ( $\chi^2 = 11.325, p = .023$ ). As such, different kinds of described causes of death were treated with the

Table 3. Comparison of Tibetan and Han Chinese Participants' Main Emotions in the Death Dream

Main emotion	Frequency		$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
	Tibetan ( <i>n</i> = 150)	Han ( <i>n</i> = 320)		
Sadness	60	129	.004	.949
Fear	47	129	3.515	.061
Peace	35	33	13.992	.000
Joy	3	6	.000	1.000
Anger	2	5	.000	1.000
Other	3	18	3.144	.076

Note. Bonferroni-corrected value .05/6,  $\alpha = 0.0083$ .

scoring system mentioned above. A  $\chi^2$  test was used for comparison of the two groups across all categories. Bonferroni-corrected  $\alpha$  values were also used for multiple comparisons, as mentioned above. The detailed distribution and results of the  $\chi^2$  tests are shown in Table 4.

Results showed that more Tibetans than Han Chinese described cause of death in the dream as unknown.

The interview results showed that, regarding tiredness or sickness, unknown disease was indicated most often, secondary was cancer, then blood disease, infection, and tiredness. Homicide meant the deceased had likely been killed by thieves, bandits, enemies, soldiers, policeman, animals, or unknown bad people. Calamitous accident meant dying due to natural calamities or other accidents, such as earthquake, flood, car accident, drowning, or falling. Regarding calamitous accidents, falling was indicated most often, followed by drowning, car accident, earthquake, and flood. Drowning didn't show up in Tibetans' death dreams, whereas it did among the Han Chinese. In addition, explosion appeared twice, electric shock once, and thunderstruck once; drift sand also appeared once. Suicide didn't show up in Tibetans' dreams, whereas Han Chinese manifested suicide incidence in different forms, such as cutting wrist, jumping from a building, hanging, knocking into the wall, and gun slinging were considered suicide, not homicide. Unknown reason meant that only death appeared in the dream without designating the cause of death, or participants couldn't remember the cause.

Helper in the Death Dream

It was noted that 94.0% of Tibetan participants' death dreams did not have helpers. On the rare occasion that a helper appeared, it was mostly related to religion, which occurred for 4.7%, followed by the dreamer (1.3%). In relation to the Han Chinese sample, 94.7% did not endorse a helper. On the rare occasion that a helper appeared, it was mostly the dreamer, which occurred for 2.2%, followed by a helper related to religion (1.9%). The results of  $\chi^2$  tests indicated that there was no significant difference between the Tibetan and Han Chinese participants' descriptions of the helper ( $\chi^2 = 4.556, p = .486$ ). The frequency of a helper appearing in the death dream is shown in Table 5.

Most death dreams experienced by the Tibetan and Han Chinese participants did not have helpers. In the few death dreams in which the helper manifested, the end result of death was unavoidable. The description of the dreamer as a helper always occurred when someone else was dying, and it was noted that the figure of

Table 4. Comparison of Tibetan and Han Chinese Described Cause of Death in the Death Dream

Described cause of death	Frequency		$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
	Tibetan ( <i>n</i> = 150)	Han ( <i>n</i> = 320)		
Tiredness or sickness	14	30	.000	.988
Homicide	17	52	1.971	.160
Calamitous accident	12	38	1.613	.204
Suicide	0	12	4.364	.037
Unknown reasons	107	188	6.919	.009

Note. Bonferroni-corrected value .05/5,  $\alpha = 0.01$ .



**Table 5.** Comparison of Tibetan and Han Chinese Helpers in the Death Dream

Helper in the dream	Tibetan ( <i>n</i> = 150)		Han ( <i>n</i> = 320)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
No helper	141	94.0	303	94.7
Self (dreamer)	2	1.3	7	2.2
Related to religion	7	4.7	6	1.9
Psychological counselor	0	0	1	0.3
Parents or elder(s)	0	0	1	0.3
Doctor(s)	0	0	2	0.6

the dreamer was doing something to rescue. When the helper was related to religion, for example, represented by the Lama, Buddha, or by objects associated with the Buddha, such as Buddha beads or a Buddhist pagoda, such images mainly functioned as pacifiers of the emotion or guides offering suggestions.

**DISCUSSION**

Tibetan and Han Chinese participants’ death dreams have some similarities, as well as many differences. First of all, Tibetan and Han Chinese showed significant differences in the death role. Han Chinese showed more dreamers in the death role, whereas Tibetan participants showed more unknown others in the death role. This might be related to different levels of Tibetan and Han Chinese development of consciousness. It has been suggested that the more developed an individual’s consciousness or self-awareness, the more the unconscious would employ a symbolic method to ensure balance. As in the gradual development (i.e., the inflation) of an individual’s ego during the process of socialization, the Han Chinese unconscious might employ the death of the dreamer in the death dream to compensate for the potential arrogance of consciousness. Whereas perhaps the Tibetan just experiences the image of death itself, which, in this study, was expressed in terms of the death of unknown others, indicating no specific death role.

The emotions in Tibetan and Han Chinese death dreams were mostly negative. In spite of this, there was a significant difference in main emotion between Tibetans and Han Chinese. The emotion in Tibetan participants’ death dreams was more often peaceful than in Han Chinese participants’ dreams. This result is consistent with Yin’s finding that Tibetan individuals showed a higher level of explicit death anxiety and a lower level of implicit death anxiety than Han individuals (Yin et al., in press). Kroth’s study also showed that death anxiety scores positively related to the representations of death in dreams (Kroth et al., 2001). Death dreams seem to be more at the implicit and unconscious level. With lower implicit death anxiety, Tibetan people experienced more peaceful emotions in the death dream than Han Chinese on the deep, unconscious level. Under different cultural backgrounds and living conditions, Tibetan and Han Chinese may have different ways of expressing negative emotions and attitudes on death. In the Buddhist belief, Tibetans are able to use their own language and behavior to express their horror, such as talking to the Lama, whereas the Han Chinese, who are more influenced by Confucianism and Taoism, have more taboos toward death. Therefore, it is surmised that the Han

Chinese may avoid and repress emotions related to death, so that these emotions can only return to a state of unconsciousness. Such fear and sadness can be felt only in the dream. Therefore, the peace in the level of consciousness might be a kind of defense, and the true peace is at the deep, unconscious level.

Regarding the described cause of death, Tibetan and Han Chinese showed a significant difference. More Tibetans than Han Chinese described cause of death as unknown. This might be consistent with the death role in the dream mentioned above. Tibetans' dream emphasis seems to be more on the experience of death than about who died, how the death occurred, or for what reason. Whereas for Han Chinese, the described causes were more concrete, for example, there were comparatively more images of falling, drowning, and other natural calamities. In addition, this was related to Tibetans' living environment and religious beliefs. Tibet is on the Tibet Plateau, its weather is very dry, and there is very little rain even in the rainy season, and thus, there is seldom a flood. Most of the headwaters are worshipped in Tibet; this includes landscapes, lakes, and rivers. Water is deemed very sacred in Tibet, which is not only related to the scarcity of water, but also related to the teachings of original Bonism. The original Bonist has beliefs based in animism, with water as the most spiritual object. Therefore, it could explain why no one died from drowning in their dreams. Furthermore, no Tibetan had the image of suicide in the death dream. In Buddhism, it is a tremendous sin to commit suicide, therefore, Tibetan people with such a religious belief rarely use the image of suicide to represent death.

There was no significant difference of the helper role in Tibetan and Han Chinese death dreams. Both the Tibetan and the Han Chinese seldom dreamed of a helper in their death dreams, which is different than the former hypothesis. Perhaps the unconscious already knows that death in the dream is not real death and, therefore, can enable the dreamer to embrace the meaning of death more easily and release corresponding emotions. Assuming the purpose of a death dream is to make one experience death, how can there be a helper? Although religious faith could be used as a symbolic helper toward death (Yalom, 2005), such a function was represented in the emotions category rather than in the helper role in the present study. On the rare occasion that a helper appeared, it was related to religion first and the self second for the Tibetans; whereas for Han Chinese, it was mostly the dreamer first and then religion. The Tibetan is more likely to give him- or herself fully to the religion and, although they fear death, their religious beliefs might pacify their emotions in the dream. As a gradual increase in Han Chinese self-consciousness, they may feel that they would be able to manage death, but that it would be useless because the end result of death is unavoidable on such occasions.

The uncertainty and complexity of death and the mystery and richness of the psyche itself can only allow limited research into death dreams. As such, the present research has a number of areas that need to be improved. First of all, the interaction effect of the four categories can be further examined. Second, we only studied the manifest dimensions of Tibetan and Han Chinese death dreams, so future studies might focus on the implicit perspective of Tibetan and Han Chinese death dreams to further explore the intrapsychic process. Third, future studies might also explore different death images among different age groups, especially in elders, who will likely face death sooner than will younger people.

## CONCLUSION

1. Tibetan and Han Chinese showed significant differences in the role of death. Han Chinese showed the dreamer more in the death role, whereas Tibetan participants showed more unknown others in the death role.
2. Regarding the main emotion in the death dream, Tibetan and Han Chinese showed a significant difference. Tibetan participants' emotions were more peaceful than those of the Han Chinese participants.
3. About the described cause of death, Tibetan and Han Chinese showed a significant difference. More Tibetan than Han Chinese described cause of death in the death dream as unknown.
4. Regardless whether Tibetan or Han Chinese, there seldom was a helper in their death dreams.

The above research findings provided evidence that there are cultural differences between Tibetan and Han Chinese death dreams. In addition, the research findings demonstrated subtle psychological differences between these two cultural groups.

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## Appendix

### The Interview Outline of a Death Dream

Instructions: Death dream: A dream in which a role has lost its life, the role can be the dreamer, others and even other creature.

Nation: Age: Gender:

Have you ever had a death dream? If you have, please describe this dream, the more detailed the better.

Following are some detailed questions about this dream, please answer them patiently.

1. Who has lost life in the dream?
2. What characteristic does it or he has? Please depict it in detail.
3. What will you think of this role?
4. What is your role in the dream? What is your relationship with the one who lost its life?
5. What caused its or his lost life? Or what's the reason that it or he died?
6. When the life of this role is threatened, is there a helper? If there is, who is the helper?
7. What is your emotion in the dream?