INTRODUCTION

Why affect regulation?
• No change during treatment without change in the capacity of affect regulation.
• A wide and flexible range of affect regulation capacities correlates with psychological and physical health.

Why dreams and affect regulation?
• Dreams as microworld: problem-seeking structure with the aim to resolve problems
• Affects are everywhere in the dream: in every place or object, their interactions and movements.
• Affects as motor and central feedback mechanism during the dream generation process (safety vs. involvement)
• Reprocessing of not integrated information (unresolved conflicts, traumata, loss)
• Resolving only possible in interactions → dream tendency towards interactions (involvement)

METHOD

Dream coding system
• Dream is analyzed under structural aspects and as sequence of situations and explicit interrupts.
• Formal dream elements are coded in three fields (position field, field of movements, interaction field).
• Situations end by interrupts: changes in interaction type, the movement of an object, apparition of new objects or new attributes of objects, explicit interrupts like cognitive or affective comments or evaluations.
• Interrupts are the central affect regulation mechanism to increase safety or involvement – depending on the arousal level for the dreamer at each moment of the dream.
• Reduction of the complex system of nearly 160 codes (Moser & von Zeppelin 1996) to 35 codes
• Testing of reliability and validity

Hypotheses for validity-testing: The coding system shows
1. Individual patterns of affect regulation
2. Individual changes during treatment
3. Flexibilisation of affect regulation capacities in treatments with good outcome

RESULTS

Reliability for segmentation: Cohen’s Kappa = .936
Reliability for all 35 codes together: Cohen’s Kappa = .913

Validity of the dream coding system: It shows
1. Individual dream patterns
2. Individual changes

DISCUSSION

The differences between average number of codes sorted by fields (see: coding system) are high significant (p< 0.01) between cases for all fields; for interrupts is a tendency towards significant.

3. Flexibilisation of affect regulation in treatments with good outcome

Case 5 has been rated in prior studies as treatment with good outcome.

The differences between case 1 and case 5 small, not significant increase. Case 1 shows a significant decrease, case 3 significant increase and case 5 small, not significant increase.

The dream coding system is a reliable and valid instrument to measure changes in affect regulation capacities. The dream coding system is a quantitative and qualitative usable instrument that may be very useful in psychotherapy process research.

Further research on the validity of the dream coding system seems necessary and should use other instruments on affect regulation like questionnaires in still ongoing treatments and compare dream narratives with other emotional narratives.

References:

Susanne Döll-Hentschker

Narrative working through of emotional experiences

Material
• Transcripts of sessions in which dreams were recounted of the first and last 100 sessions of five long-term psychoanalytic treatments (altogether 112 dreams) from the Ulmer Textbank. These cases have already been analyzed by Leuzinger-Bohleber (1987, 1989).

See related posters by
- Diel & Habermas
- Habermas et al.
- Rümisch, Leban et al.