Motive Conflicts and Dreaming

Incongruence Between Implicit and Explicit Affiliation Motives is Related to Affective Dream Experience

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Introduction

Over a century ago, Freud (1900) proposed a motivational explanation of human dreaming: Intrapersonal conflicts between consciously represented values and the unconscious, hedonic desires of the id were supposed to be reflected in the contents of dreams. This assumption, although of great influence in psychoanalytic practice, has rarely been tested empirically. To this end, we adopted a contemporary approach to motive dispositions (McClelland et al., 1989) and investigated the joint effects of implicit and explicit affiliation motives on affective experiences in dreams as well as in waking life.

Hypotheses

Incongruence between implicit and explicit affiliation motives is related to…

1.…more negative day affect,

2.…more negative dream affect,

3.…more intense dreams,

4.…more frequent reflecting about one's dreams.

Method

Participants and Procedure

- Cross-sectional study
- *N* = 142 German adolescents and adults
- 63% female
- Age: 13 to 84 years, *M* = 32.4, *SD* = 14.0
- 41% had a German Abitur (High School) or a higher educational degree

Implicit Motive Measure

- Picture Story Exercise
- 6 picture cues
- Stories were coded for affiliative contents using Winter's (1994) system

Self-Report Measures

- **Negative Day Affect:** Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (10 items, *alpha* = .85; Krohne et al., 1996)
- **Dream Experiences:** Single items adapted from Schredl and Erlacher (2007):
  - Dream Valence: *Which kind of emotions occur in your dreams? (–2 = mostly negative* to *2 = mostly positive)*
  - Dream Intensity: *How intense are your dreams? (1 = not intense* to *5 = very intense)*
  - Dream Reflection: *How often do you think about your dreams? (0 = never* to *7 = nearly every morning)*
- **Explicit Affiliation Motive**: Personality Research Form (16 items, *alpha* = .70; Stumpf et al., 1985)

Data Analysis

- **Polynomial Regression / Response Surface Analysis** (Edwards, 2002; Schönbrodt, 2014a, 2014b)

Comparison of three regression models:

Absolute Difference Model (ADIF): $Z = b_0 + b_1WX - b_1WY + e$

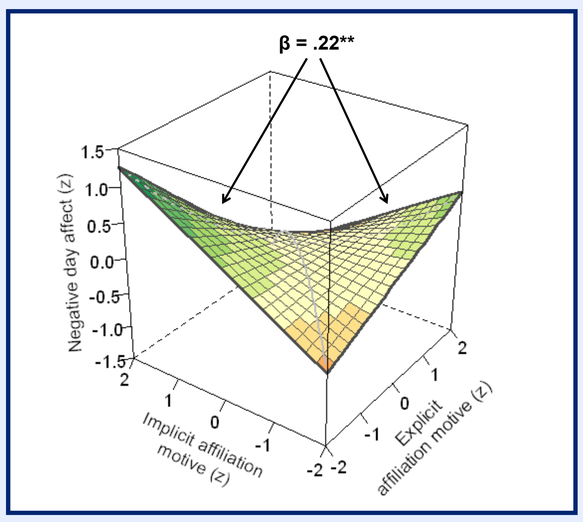
Squared Difference Model (SDIF): $Z = b_0 + b_1X^2 - 2b_1XY + b_1Y^2 + e$

Product Interaction Model (PINT): $Z = b_0 + b_1X + b_2Y + b_3XY + e$

Results

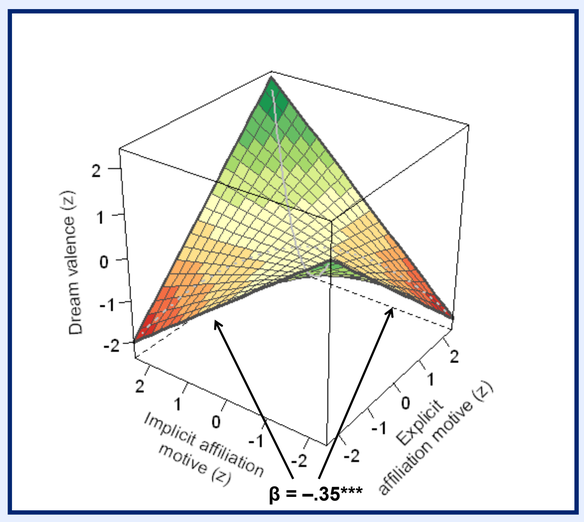
Negative Day Affect

Model	R^2	χ^2	*df*	*p*	*RMSEA*
ADIF	.008	8.248	4	.083	0.086
SDIF	.011	10.118	4	.038	0.104
PINT	**.053***	**1.957**	**2**	**.376**	**0.000**



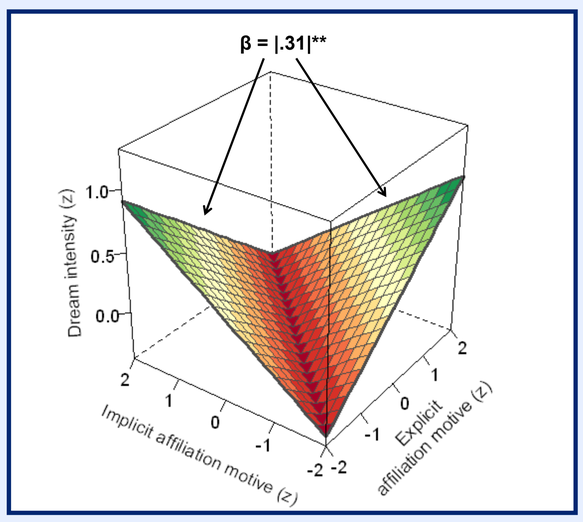
Dream Valence

Model	R^2	χ^2	*df*	*p*	*RMSEA*
ADIF	.028*	3.448	4	.486	0.000
SDIF	.055*	10.602	4	.031	0.108
PINT	**.095****	**2.378**	**2**	**.305**	**0.036**



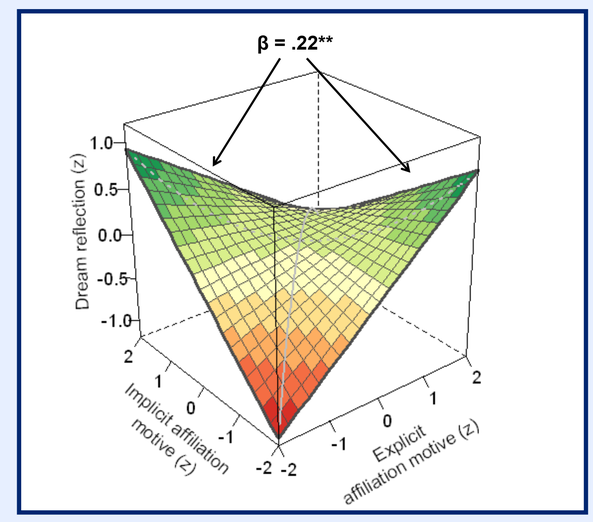
Dream Intensity

Model	R^2	χ^2	*df*	*p*	*RMSEA*
ADIF	**.048****	**2.464**	**4**	**.651**	**0.000**
SDIF	.034*	2.431	4	.657	0.000
PINT	.015	3.220	2	.200	0.066



Dream Reflection

Model	R^2	χ^2	*df*	*p*	*RMSEA*
ADIF	.012	4.163	4	.384	0.017
SDIF	.019	7.016	4	.135	0.073
PINT	**.038***	**2.134**	**2**	**.344**	**0.022**



* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$. Best fitting models are printed in boldface and plotted for visual inspection of the interaction patterns. β = slope on the line of incongruence.

Conclusion

Motive incongruence in the affiliative domain was consistently related to more negative and more intense affective experiences (a) in waking life and (b) in dreams. Whereas the former result replicates previous findings (e.g., Hofer et al., 2006), the latter extends our knowledge about the consequences of motive incongruence into the realm of dreams. Notably, the associations between motive incongruence and dream experiences remained significant when day affect was controlled. In addition, motive incongruence was associated with more frequent thinking about one's dreams. These results highlight the significance of motive dispositions for the formation of dreams and support the long-held assumption that conflicts between conscious and unconscious desires are reflected in dreams.

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