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The Classification and Coding of Activities

Introduction

In this section a system of classifying what characters *do* in dreams is presented. It includes activities that may be done by a character acting alone or in conjunction with other characters, as well as interactions between characters. We have already taken up some social interactions in the preceding sections on aggression, friendliness, and sexuality. These social interactions and the interactions described in this section are not mutually exclusive. For example, a hostile act of one character hitting another -- which would be coded A7 on the aggression scale -- is also coded as a physical activity on the activities scale. In the same way, a friendly remark made by one character to another -- which would be coded F2 on the friendliness scale of the preceding chapter -- is also coded as a verbal activity on the activities scale of this section.
Eight classes of activities are included in our coding system. They are described below.

Classes of Activities

Physical (coding symbol: P)

Any voluntary movement of the whole body or of part of the body while the character remains more or less in one place is coded as a physical activity. Physical activity in a limited spatial area is emphasized, because physical activity such as walking or running which results in the character moving into a different location is coded in the subsequent class of movement. In order for a physical activity to be coded, the nature of the physical activity should be clearly recognizable from the dream report. Reference to a character shopping, for example, is too vague to be coded because the description does not explain the precise activities of the character. It is possible that it might have referred primarily to visual activities, as in window shopping; or to verbal activities, as in telephone shopping or haggling with a merchant; or to movement activities, in walking from store to store; or to physical activities, in handling various objects. A rough criterion that may be employed for judging whether or not a physical activity should be coded is: can the coder, with the information provided in the dream report, pantomime the activity successfully enough so that an observer could correctly identify the activity? If the answer is yes, a physical activity is coded. A few examples of codeable physical activities are: dressing, combing one's hair, brushing one's teeth, sitting down, getting up, bending, writing, picking up an object, and chopping wood.

Movement (coding symbol: M)

When a character changes his physical location by self-propelled movements of his body, a code is given for movement. Change in location through various means of transportation is coded in the subsequent class. Walking and running are the most frequent forms of movement activity but a number of other possibilities such as crawling, sliding, swimming, and climbing are also reported. Terms such as entering

or leaving are also codeable if they refer to a character voluntarily carrying out these activities under his own muscular power. Entering a house would be scorable as movement if it seems clear that the character walked into the house, but entering a hospital on a stretcher would not be scorable in this class. Involuntary movements such as falling, slipping, or being thrown through space are not coded as movement.

Location Change (coding symbol: L)

Whenever a character moves in a spatial dimension and arrives at a different location through any means other than self-propelled muscular activity, a location change code is given. The change in location may occur because the character uses some means of transportation such as a car, plane, or boat, or the character may fall through space, be carried, or dragged by someone else. Any verbs which suggest a change in location, even though they are somewhat vague as to just how the change was effected, are grounds for coding a location change. A few examples of such verbs are went, came, arrived, departed, journeyed, and traveled. If a character suddenly finds himself in a new location because there has been an abrupt shift in setting, a location change code should not be entered. In order for a location change code to be given, there must be an indication that the new surroundings have appeared after some intervening travel by the character, even though the means of travel have not been specified. Movement activities such as walking and running which were described in the immediately preceding class are not included in the location change class.

Verbal (coding symbol: V)

Any type of vocalization, whether it be a breakfast conversational grunt, a thundering speech, a whispered affectionate term, an abusive curse, a recited poem, or a dramatic soliloquy, is coded as verbal activity. Singing is also coded as verbal activity.

Expressive Communication (coding symbol: E)

Included in this class are those nonverbal activities associated with emotional states which are sometimes not under voluntary control. Numerically, it is a very infrequently used class. Laughing and crying are the most common forms of expressive communication, although smiling, scowling, baring one's teeth, drooling, and gasping all belong to this class.

Visual (coding symbol: S)

All types of seeing activities are included here. Among the large number of words denoting visual activities are those such as see, notice, read, watch, peek, glance, view, inspect, and distinguish.

Auditory (coding symbol: A)

Whenever a character is described as being engaged in any type of hearing or listening behavior, a code for auditory activity is given.

Thinking (coding symbol: C)

The remaining class consists of the most *covert* form of activity: thinking activity. In order to be coded as a thinking activity, the description should indicate that deliberate continued mental effort was involved. This thinking should possess a goal-directed or problem-solving quality. Some verbs reflecting this quality of thinking are: concentrate, puzzle over, contemplate, ponder, brood, ruminate, preoccupy, engross, study, weigh, speculate, deliberate, and think about. Attempts to decide, figure out, understand, grasp, and plan are also reflective of the kind of sustained ideation that is included in this class. Brief, transient mental activities are not coded. For example, such reports as "I think it was blue," "I remember the room was familiar," "I forgot my coat," and "I couldn't recognize him" do not convey any sense of prolonged or intentional thinking activity. Wishes, feelings, and sensations represented in such reports as "I wished I were home," "I felt sorry for him," or "I was thrilled by the view" are not included in the thinking class.

Procedure for Coding Activities

Most activities are coded as follows: If the dreamer alone engages in these activities, it will be coded as **D X**, where X is one of the activity codes (**P**, **M**, **L**, **V**, **E**, **S**, **A**, or **C**). If other characters, or the dreamer and other characters, engage in an activity together, the coding symbols for these characters are followed

by the coding symbol for the activity class (e.g., **1MFA L**). Joint activity by more than one character is indicated by a plus sign.

For two of the activity classes -- physical and verbal activities -- there can be interactions between two characters. In this case, the coding procedure is identical to that followed for social interactions. If a physical or verbal interaction occurs between two or more characters, the coding symbol for the character beginning the interaction is written first, followed by the letter **P** or **V** depending on the class involved, then a sideward V (>), and finally the coding symbol for the character toward whom the activity is directed. A character who is the recipient of a physical activity may return a physical activity to the initiator, or the recipient of a verbal activity may reply with a verbal activity to the initiator. These are called reciprocated physical or verbal activities and are coded by placing the letter **R** after P or V, in place of a > mark. When the physical or verbal interactions do not have a clearly defined initiator and recipient they are called mutual interactions and are coded by placing an equal sign (=) after the P or V.

Of course, there are quite a large number of physical activities and some occasional verbal activities where only a single character is involved, or where two or more characters are engaged in a parallel physical or verbal activity at the same time. In such cases, the procedure is the same as for all other activities: list the name of the character(s), followed by P or V.

In Hall/Van de Castle's original coding scheme, activities were treated slightly differently. When the dreamer was the only character involved, the "D" was omitted; and when there was no interactive P or V activity, the characters were written to the *right* of the activity code, separated by a comma. We have changed it slightly so that the data is easier to enter into a computer for further analysis; in our new system, the person(s) involved in the activity are always on the *left*.

"I PUNCHED this guy in the stomach and then he CONNECTED WITH AN UPPERCUT to my jaw."	D **P>** 1MUA D **PR** D
"The doctor and I HAD A LONG TALK TOGETHER about my mother's condition."	D **V=** 1MOA
"I SLICED A PIECE OF BREAD from the loaf on the table."	D **P**
"When Roger and I finally REACHED THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN we rested, and then HE PILED A GROUP OF ROCKS on top of each other to make a marker."	D+1MKA **M** 1MKA **P**
"We LOOKED AT EACH OTHER for awhile and then we both SMILED."	D+1IUA **S** D+1IUA **E**

Coding Rules

In order to be coded, an activity must be described as a current or completed activity. Do not code contemplated or anticipated activities. The latter are indicated by such terms as would, could, should, and might. An activity is indicated by the use of a verb. Since a dream report will often contain a large number of verbs, the following rules are intended to serve as a guide with regard to the number of activities that should be coded.

1. A continuous sequence of similar actions performed by the same character is coded as one activity.

"I was TALKING to my young son. I *asked* him what he did in second grade that day. When he didn't answer, I *asked* him again. Finally I *asked* in a very loud voice and he REPLIED, 'Nothing much.'"	D **V>** 1MAC 1MAC **VR** D
"The pitcher THREW the ball and the umpire YELLED, 'Ball one.' The pitcher *threw* again and the umpire called it a strike. The pitcher *threw* three more times and the count was three and two. Then the pitcher *threw* once more and the umpire *yelled*, 'Strike three.'"	1MOA **P** 1MOA **V**

2. A sequence of activities performed by the same character and belonging to the same class are coded as separate activities if they involve different activities.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="6">"I WALKED into the bathroom, TURNED ON the light, TOOK A SHOWER, SHAVED, BRUSHED my teeth, and then COMBED my hair."</td><td>D</td><td>**M**</td></tr>
<tr><td>D</td><td>**P**</td></tr>
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</table>

3. If activities belonging to the same class are separately engaged in by different characters, they are coded as separate activities.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">"I was WALKING down one side of the street and Mary was WALKING down the other side of the street."</td><td>D</td><td>**M**</td></tr>
<tr><td>1FKA</td><td>**M**</td></tr>
</table>

4. If activities belonging to the same class are jointly engaged in by different characters, they are coded as a single activity.

"Mary and I were WALKING down the street TOGETHER."	D+1FKA **M**

5. If the same character engages in interactional activities with different characters, separate activities are coded.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">"I was TALKING to my mother and then my father CAME HOME and I began TALKING to him."</td><td>D</td><td>**V>**</td><td>1FMA</td></tr>
<tr><td>1MFA</td><td>**L**</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>D</td><td>**V>**</td><td>1MFA</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">"I SHOOK HANDS WITH my uncle John, then WITH my uncle Henry and then WITH my cousin Jim."</td><td>D</td><td>**P=**</td><td>1MRA</td></tr>
<tr><td>D</td><td>**P=**</td><td>1MRA</td></tr>
<tr><td>D</td><td>**P=**</td><td>1MRA</td></tr>
</table>

6. If intervening events occur, separate activities are coded even though they involve identical activities, identical characters or identical interactional patterns.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="9">"My sister and I WENT FOR A WALK in the woods. As we *turned* down one trail, we SAW two squirrels. One squirrel was RUNNING along a branch and the other WAS CRACKING a nut. I HEARD a bluejay and CALLED to my sister to listen. We both LAUGHED at the sound. We then CONTINUED OUR WALK."</td><td>D+1FTA</td><td>**M**</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>D+1FTA</td><td>**S**</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>1ANI</td><td>**M**</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>1ANI</td><td>**P**</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>D</td><td>**A**</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>D</td><td>**V>**</td><td>1FTA</td></tr>
<tr><td>D+1FTA</td><td>**E**</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>D+1FTA</td><td>**M**</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

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