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JAKOB narrative analysis: The psychodynamic conflict as a narrative model

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Abstract

When a patient tells a story during psychotherapy sessions, it is both a mutual interaction between patient and therapist and a presentation of personal experience. The patient calls up and re-creates a biographical occurrence and puts it before a listener for viewing, enacting it verbally in the perspective of wish fulfillment and anxiety coping. JAKOB narrative analysis, situated in the field of psychoanalytical and narrative analytical research, is an encoding-supported qualitative instrument for the systematic reconstruction of verbal everyday narratives in the context of psychotherapeutic processes. In this study, the JAKOB narrative analysis is described in detail with the aid of an example narrative, put in relation to the therapeutic process, and discussed critically from a methodological viewpoint.

Keywords: narrative; psychoanalytic/psychodynamic therapy; clinical narrative analysis; qualitative research methods; process research

With the advent of sound recordings of therapy sessions, it became possible to examine patients' narratives linguistically and by conversation analysis. The study of narrative speech patterns and the exploration of narrative presentation strategies show that, as a form of presentation, narratives are a persuasive construction achievement serving self-assurance and social response and are not documentation of objective observations (Bruner, 2004; Clandinin, 2007; Kohler Riessman, 2001; Sarbin, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2001; Schafer, 1981; Spence, 1984, 1986, 1994).

Narrative psychology (Sarbin, 1986) views narratives as fundamental for human organization of experience: It takes its starting point from the everyday practical recognition that people turn a large part of their experiences into stories and communicate them in the form of stories. The processes of "meaning making" (Bruner, 1990, 2004) connected with narratives lead to the shaping of narrative identity. Decisive ideas and stimuli for narrative psychology came from qualitative social and interaction research (Gergen, 1991, 2001).

Psychoanalytical therapy research began with outcome analyses, went on to develop combined process

and outcome studies, and more recently has turned increasingly to the microdynamics of the psychotherapeutic process (Thomä & Kächele, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c). The therapeutic process as a complex relational process can be investigated by means of systematic single-case research. Verbal and nonverbal data are gathered in natural therapy settings via audiotaping or videotaping and are analyzed and interpreted using qualitative research methods.

The systematized research tool presented here, JAKOB narrative analysis, makes possible narrative single-case studies that contribute to the research on psychodynamic conflict, relational, and process diagnostics. The goals are reconstruction of the narrative dynamics of a patient's narrative and formulation of a psychodynamic conflict and relational model

The unit of analysis is a patient's narrative, defined as a self-contained verbal account with a beginning, a middle, and an end in transcript material from therapy sessions. The method combines two levels of analysis: a first level of lexical analysis of the story organization and its communicative function (*narrative dynamics*) and a second level, where the narrative is understood as a psychodynamic compromise formation between wish and anxiety themes and

defense mechanisms and is stated as a conflict (*conflict dynamics*).

In the following, we present the theoretical basis for the narrative analysis and situate it within psychoanalytical research and narrative analysis research. The steps in reconstructing the narrative and arriving at a statement of the patient's conflict situation and patterns of interpersonal relations using JAKOB narrative analysis are then explained using as an example a narrative by a patient identified by the pseudonym "Wilma."

Narratives in the Therapeutic Process

An essential feature of psychodynamic therapy is the use of the patient's personal story as modeling and remodeling of experience (Boothe, 2004, p. 85). Recurring autobiographical presentation patterns can be identified as elements of narratives but also identified in the communicative dramatization and then worked on in relation to one another (Boothe & von Wyl, 2004). The mutual relations among narrating, dramaturgical production, remembering, and everyday practice are examined and reflected on in the therapeutic process. Therapist and patient can compare and contrast the conditions of the narrative to the conditions of the conduct of life: fulfillment hopes compared with pragmatic prospects, anxieties and fears compared with risk scenario assessments (Grimm & Boothe, 2007).

In the therapeutic dialogue, the roles taken by the patient on the rehearsal stage of the narrative are reflected on, explored, and brought into relation with the scenic happenings of the therapeutic situation. The patient's new relational experiences should also find expression in changed relational narratives, just as the organization of the narrative models of the therapeutic cooperation should show a change by the end of treatment. The therapeutic process and therapeutic success can thus take place also in the mirror of the narrative. Cooperation, self-articulation, and self-change are practically relevant research topics for qualitative psychotherapy research (Boothe, von Wyl, & Wepfer, 1999).

Form of Expression of the Dynamic Conflict

Conflicts arise from the divergence of forces in a physical, social, or psychological action context that work simultaneously and against each other and cannot be separated. The working of the divergent forces drives the conflict process; either it will be surmounted or it will lead to a more or less stable compromise formation. In a psychoanalytical perspective, observable human behavior is the manifest result of latent conflicts. Behavior is based on the

conflict between wish and fear, and via defense it leads to compromise or substitute formation that takes into account all of the tendencies involved. In this way, for instance, opportunities for development can become sabotaged as a result of infantilizing relationships. In the development of mental and psychosomatic disorders, malignant organizations of conflict resulting in increased inner tension play a decisive role. They find expression in linguistic and especially narrative patterns and in enactments of the relational world; these are forms of communicating that make their appearance also in the therapeutic situation, and that therapist and patient in cooperation recognize, explore, and clarify. In addition to assessing how patients shape their relationships and evaluating their psychological structure (e.g., using operationalized psychodynamic diagnosis [OPD], a form of multiaxial diagnostic and classification system based on psychodynamic principles; OPD Task Force, 2008), identifying the conflict constellation—the crucial part of psychoanalytical theory of mental disorders—represents the central access to understanding the patient's ailment and its treatment. The concept of psychodynamic conflicts is based on the fundamental assumption that human behavior is constantly influenced by dynamic and unconscious psychological activity in the form of thoughts, wishes, and ideas (OPD Task Force, 2008, p. 61). With the turn to a psychoanalytical understanding of the reenacting of psychological events in the here and now (Aron, 2003; Boothe, von Wyl, & Wepfer, 1998, p. 15; McLaughlin & Johan, 1992) and to the psychoanalytical *Bühnenmodell* ("stage model"; Thomä & Kächele, 2006a), attention has become focused on patients' enactments and also on our understanding of everyday narratives. Here, the stories told by patients are understood as mutual interaction and construction of experience arising between patient and therapist in the therapeutic situation.

Narrative Analysis as Access to the Dynamics of the Conflict

Today, psychoanalysis is regarded no longer as a discovery tool but rather as a construction tool in important areas; as the royal road to the personal cosmos, the narrative presentation of biographical events recommends itself. It offers optimal access to wishes, anxieties, and defense strategies. In their narratives, patients re-create conflict-laden episodes that are destabilizing in both a positive and a negative sense and in which they are involved emotionally. Here they reenact the past and model it in a wish-fulfilling and anxiety-coping way, at the same time seeking social acceptance from the listener (Boothe et al., 1998, p. 18; Boothe & von Wyl, 1999, p. 11). In

telling their stories, patients demand resonance for their egocentric perspective and individual dramatic self-portrayal. Systematic sifting through the JAKOB archive at the University of Zurich reveals that mainly three forms of narratives are found in psychotherapeutic discourse: (1) events/happenings described as a process, development, career, or longer course; (2) iterative accounts of a course or sequence as a pattern; and (3) episodic depiction of a one-time event (Boothe, 2009). Only this third form is suitable for JAKOB narrative analysis and, for purposes of this article, is called a “narrative.” The narrative consists of a patient’s account of past events that has a recognizable dramatic structure, with a beginning (starting situation), a middle (the complication), and an end (result), as a sequential course of actions by characters (figures) in a space–time frame of reference (Boothe et al., 2002, p. 10). The patients telling the stories can be said to be setting the rehearsal stage on which they dramatize their experiences, reenacting them before an audience with figures and props (Boothe, 2004, p. 22), giving them a newly constructed shape and form in the here and now. For the persons telling the stories, this serves as psychological tension regulation; psychological issues can be processed, in that the narrative can contain a wish-fulfilling scenario with restitution, or frightening or destabilizing happenings can be faced more calmly or coped with through this telling about them later. In this way, narratives model experience via four functions: reenactment in the here and now, social integration through recognition in the social sphere, reorganization through using the narrative to record and process experiences, and restitution as wish-fulfilling depiction in service of appropriation of experience (Boothe, 2002). If patients’ narratives are understood as dramatic reenactment, they are a form of self-communication in which patients disclose and dramaturgically reveal things that upset, move, and burden them in order to engage the listener for their own cause (Boothe & von Wyl, 1999, p. 14). The personal fulfillment hopes and fears are represented in the narrative arena as configured dynamics (Boothe et al., 1998, p. 63). The therapist is involved as a listener who participates actively and experiences the tension produced in the story.

JAKOB narrative analysis was conceived and developed by Boothe (2004) and further developed at the Chair of Clinical Psychology, Psychotherapy, and Psychoanalysis at the University of Zurich (Boothe et al., 2002, 2009) as a systematic interpretative tool for research, documentation, and practical examination of everyday narratives in psychotherapy.¹ The acronym JAKOB was chosen to reflect the central importance in narratives of the figures that appear, called objects (**OB**jekte) and

their actions (**AK**tionen). JAKOB has two levels: (1) analysis of lexical word choice and the development of the narrative dynamics from the start to the end and (2) relating these findings to the psychodynamic conflict dynamics identified based on the wish/anxiety/defense movement. The transition from the level of the lexical text to the operationalized development of psychodynamic hypotheses represents a move from the narrative construction level to the psychological regulation level.

Theoretical Foundations of JAKOB Narrative Analysis

As to theory and methodology, in addition to psychoanalysis, JAKOB narrative analysis relates to literary studies, sociological theories, and linguistic approaches and belongs to the narrative paradigm and narrative psychology. Points of reference are, among others, psychoanalytical narratology (Flader & Giesecke, 1980) and Spence’s (1984) emphasis on narrative truth as opposed to historical truth. Against that, the core conflictual relationship theme (CCRT) method, which investigates narratives of relationship episodes as an operationalized access to transference, assumes parallels between narratives and actual events (Book, 2004; Luborsky, 1990, p. 277). Thomä and Kächele’s (2006a) psychoanalytical *Bühnenmodell* (“stage model”) is especially suited to identifying the patient’s experience of self and relationships as described by the patient. When the narrator verbally portrays an imagined scenic sequence to the listener, the narrator as stage director (Flader & Giesecke, 1980) invites the listener to join him or her in setting up a stage in the verbally reenacted “there and then.” We reconstruct this stage direction artificially and programmatically, and we view the structure and lexical choice as nonreplaceable (Boothe, 2004, p. 186; Bühler, 1978). What arises is dramatic stage enactment (Goffman, 1977). Unlike in interactional linguistics or in conversation analysis (e.g., Deppermann, 2006), it is not the interactional performance of the depiction that is investigated; rather, the narrative is understood as being embedded in the context of the therapeutic process.

Data

The following example narrative is taken from the 230th session of a psychoanalytic therapy that was conducted in the 1990s in the practice run by the Chair of Clinical Psychology, Psychotherapy, and Psychoanalysis at the University of Zurich; therapy with the patient, given the pseudonym “Wilma,” lasted for 6½ years, with a total of 326 sessions.² The sessions were videotaped and then made

anonymous and transcribed according to the rules developed for the Ulm Textbank by the Department of Psychotherapy at the University of Ulm, Germany (Mergenthaler, 1992).

Wilma, approximately 40 years old, by her account had come to the practice for help with problems in dealing with men and in finding a partner. Another issue that came up repeatedly with Wilma involved her education and occupation. Because of her family's limited finances, Wilma had not been able to fulfill her great career aspiration to become a teacher and instead had to enter an apprenticeship. After completing her apprenticeship, Wilma had to move out of her parents' home because her younger sister by 2 years was entering her desired occupational training and was being granted the right to have her own room.

During her first contact with the therapist, the patient states her desire to get to the bottom of her difficulties in relationships with men so as to be able to find a suitable partner and to put an end to being alone, about which she is unhappy. Wilma is a single, childless, overweight woman who is competent at work despite not having been able to choose her desired occupation and desired education and training. Her private life is not very fulfilling and is marked by an attitude toward her primary family that is excessively ambivalent and even bitter and reproachful. Wilma is often alone, without company. She has not as yet been in a long love relationship; she does not act on her desire to make contact with a possible partner or does so only tentatively and with a great readiness to withdraw. Her symptoms include a depressive tendency to withdraw, self-esteem conflicts, emotional regulation through overeating, and social phobic tendencies. In the 230th session, Wilma talks about her career aspiration to become an opera singer. This is what she is referring to in the following narrative (where SD refers to start, ED to development, and EG to outcome).

Example narrative: Become an opera singer (Session 230, 22 segments; e = episodic, ne = non-episodic):

- 1 e SD Well once I uh uh
- 2 ne How should I say this
- 3 ne Well I think
- 4 ne SD I didn't really want to seriously uh
- 5 e SD But I somehow
- 6 e SD As I began to realize
- 7 e SD That there could be problems about my wanting to become a teacher purely because of money, you know
- 8 e SD So one Sunday uh I just threw it out there uh as a possible career aspiration, you know
- 9 e ED And I met with sheer horror, you know

- 10 e ED Anyway that was Esther's reaction
- 11 e ED And anyhow and she's nuts and opera and what, you know
- 12 e ED That's music
- 13 e ED That you can't listen to, you know
- 14 e ED uh Walter said somehow
- 15 ne I think
- 16 e ED Opera what's that, you know
- 17 e ED My father just looked at my mother and uh couldn't imagine what I was talking about
- 18 ne I think
- 19 e EG And my mother just said straight out
- 20 e EG That's out of the question, like
- 21 e EG Are you nuts?
- 22 e EG You can't make a living on a thing like that

Method

JAKOB narrative analysis is used in two, multistage parts (Table I). In a first part, the *narrative dynamics* are analyzed: The narratives are extracted from the transcript, prepared according to standardized formal procedures, entered into the Internet application by means of a form, and inventoried and categorized using various text analysis steps. In the second part, called analysis of the *conflict dynamics*, wishes, anxieties, and defense mechanisms are identified hypothetically based on the previous steps of analysis of the narrative dynamics.

Narrative Dynamics

Reenactment

JAKOB narrative analysis is used mainly for the analysis of narrative texts taken from psychotherapy sessions. The therapy sessions are recorded with the

Table I. Overview of JAKOB

Analysis/stage	Description
Narrative dynamics	
1. Reenactment	Transcription, extraction, and segmenting
2. Stage direction	Core segments and context segments; start, development, and ending
3. Subdivision of the segments	Actor/action/object structure: Who/does what/with regard to whom/what/how
4. Dramaturgical coding	Lexical choice
5. Social integration	Fate of the actor; centrality; power, closeness, and autonomy
6. Rules of the narrative	Starting conditions, SHOULD BE, ANTI SHOULD BE
Conflict dynamics	
7. Wish, anxiety, defense	Prototypical wish, anxiety, and defense themes
8. Conflict dynamics	Modeling of the conflict

patients' permission and transcribed for use in the narrative analysis. From the transcripts the narratives are identified and extracted with the aid of rules. Narratives are episodic courses of action that are fixed in space and time and construct a progression with start, story development, and outcome. The persons providing the accounts are a kind of stage directors, who set up the scene with figures (characters), props, and backdrops and stage their own actions and the actions of the other figures. In the role of storyteller, the patients perform a scene before us and at the same time present themselves as actors in this scene, that is, as narrating ego or ego figure. For the analysis, the narrative text is subdivided into individual segments (simple sentences or subject/predicate combinations), as can be seen in the example narrative.

Stage Direction

In this next step, we subdivide the narrative into core segments and context segments. The narrative core is made up of segments that present the actual action or episode in the world of the narrative; we, therefore, also call them episodic. The nonepisodic context segments convey the narrator's comments outside of the narrative world (interactive, descriptive, and evaluative parts of the narrative).

In addition, we mark the segments as belonging to the narrative phases of start (SD), development (ED), or outcome (EG). The starting conditions are the segments that initiate the dramaturgical development in the narrative and introduce the figures, actions, and backdrops. These terms are used for determining the rules of the narrative (see Rules of the Narrative and Course of the Narrative section).

Starting conditions (*e* = episodic) (*ne* = non-episodic):

1	e	SD	Well once I uh uh
4	ne	SD	I didn't really want to seriously uh
5	e	SD	But I somehow
6	e	SD	As I began to realize
7	e	SD	That there could be problems about my wanting to become a teacher purely because of money, you know
8	e	SD	So one Sunday uh I just threw it out there uh as a possible career aspiration, you know

The segments of story development (ED Segments 9–18, not shown here) take the dramatic events further and bring the action sequence to an episodic ending (outcome; EG segments 19–22):

Outcome:

- 19 e EG And my mother just said straight out
20 e EG That's out of the question, like

- 21 e EG Are you nuts?
22 e EG You can't make a living on a thing like that

Breakdown of the Segments (Frames)

A single segment is called a *frame*; it presents an actor/action/object structure. A frame answers in four slots the questions "Who does what how?" or "What happens to whom in what way?" (Table II). At the syntactic level, this marks the constituents subject, verb, and object and at the semantic level the roles of agent (the person acting) and patient (the person acted upon; Fillmore, 2003). Segments 9 and 19 are examples of the frame structure.

The two examples show how actors and actions are located in the syntactic/semantic structure. From this, it can then be derived how the "narrating ego" and the other actors in the narrative "act" (in a psychoanalytical view: "act with words"); the figures in the narrative stand out with a certain action repertoire.

This action repertoire and the actors are then coded using a category system based on psychoanalytical concepts, which is described in detail in the JAKOB narrative analysis manual and in the JAKOB coding manual (Boothe et al., 2002, 2009). The coding system provides codes for persons (the figures in the narrative), props, backdrops, and settings, but the focus is on categorizing the actions (verbs). There are 93 action codes in five different dimensions:

Dimension 1: Happening. Verbs concerning marking, existing, proceeding (questions: What's the matter? What is happening to me? What's going on?). Examples: "to sleep," "to die," "to be mistaken."

Dimension 2: Feeling. Verbs concerning approaching and distancing (questions: What am I experiencing? Does *X* feel pulled toward or repelled by *Y*?). Examples: "admire," "fear," "hate."

Table II. Frames and Slots

S9: And I met with sheer horror, you know			
Who	Agent	I	If
Does	Action	Met with sheer horror	BEW-ERR-FUR
What	Patient (semantic role)		
How	Instrument		
S19: And my mother just said straight out			
Who	Agent (semantic role)	My mother	f-ob-nah
Does	Action	Said	SIG
What	Patient (semantic role)		
How	Instrument	Just straight out	5: QORD

Note. JAKOB codes for persons (If = female ego) and actions (as described in Lin 450f).

Dimension 3: Wanting. Verbs concerning intending and establishing (questions: What do I want? Does *X* fulfill my wishes and expectations?). Examples: “agree,” “believe,” “know.”

Dimension 4: Acting. Verbs concerning presenting and interacting (questions: What do I do? What intelligent activity does *X* carry out with regard to *Y*?). Examples: “portray,” “deceive,” “fight.”

Dimension 5: Managing. Verbs concerning ordering, controlling, and attachment (questions: What do I achieve? How does *X* define his/her relationship to *Y*?). Examples: “design,” “steer,” “distance oneself.”

Management and coding of the narrative texts are done with computer support; the coding system is implemented in the electronic JAKOB-Lexikon³ (JAKOB dictionary). The linguistic analysis is conducted in several steps; it processes morphological, syntactic, and semantic features of the text segments with the aim of determining as precisely as possible the meaning content of the segments and words, so that the appropriate code can be found in the JAKOB dictionary. The dictionary entries are constructions in the sense of construction grammar (Luder, 2009).

Table II shows two examples of coding. For the narrator Wilma, frequent and, therefore, important verb codes are WIS (know) and LAU (believe).⁴ Both categories express mental activities and belong to the dimension of wanting, which is thus specific for the ego figure Wilma.

Social Integration

The analysis steps for social integration show us at what points in the episodic course of the narrative the ego figure has the action initiative, where it is that the ego interacts with other figures, and how the narrator presents herself and the figures (Table III).

Actor's fate shows at what point in the course of the narrative the ego figure takes the position of an initiator (i.e., in what core segments it occupies the subject position). Different patterns are possible, ranging from self-initiative exclusively to initiative of others⁵ exclusively.

Table III. Social Integration in the Example Narrative “Become an Opera Singer”

Actor's fate	“Regaining the initiative”
Actor's position	“Self-centering”; ego as subject: 7; others as subject: 5
Presentation of narrator	Power: dominant. Closeness: not relevant. Autonomy: dependent
Presentation of ego figure	Power: dominant. Closeness: not relevant. Autonomy: independent
Presentation of other	Power: not relevant. Closeness: not relevant. Autonomy: independent

Actor's position is calculated based on the frequency of the ego figure in the subject position as opposed to other figures in the subject position (in the core segments). Values ranging from “marginalization” to “centering” are possible based on the number of subject positions.

How does the narrator present herself and the figures (ego figure and others) in the course of the narrative with regard to the axes power, closeness, and autonomy? As the holder of power, influence, and control? As emotionally involved? As independent and self-determined? Here the context segments point to the teller of the narrative, whereas the core segments point to the narrating ego and the other figures. The core segments with ego initiative (ego as subject) serve to present the ego figure; the core segments with others taking the initiative serve to present the other actors. The values on the different axes are based on the action codes and yield a characteristic configuration (Boothe et al., 2009, p. 31).

Action on the power axis ranges between the two poles of dominant and submissive. On the dominant side, it encompasses goal-directed intentionality, initiative in leading the action, and situation control. The corresponding negative items are on the submissive side.⁶ Action on the closeness axis ranges between close and distant, with verbs expressing attraction versus repulsion, relationship, and contact-oriented actions.⁷ The autonomy axis, finally, contains actions between the poles independent and dependent, which encompass a range of actions of critical intentionality, shaping productivity, play, test, show, and so on, expressed using verbs in the direction of one or the other pole.⁸

Actor's fate in the example narrative follows the pattern “retaking the initiative”; that is, Wilma has the initiative at the start and at the end of the narrative; in the middle of the narrative the other family members have the actor position. In the entire narrative, the ego occupies the subject position seven times, and in this way Wilma takes a central position opposite the other actors (three times subject position). The example narrative is taken from Wilma's 230th psychotherapy session, from a phase in which the patient is beginning to take the agent position more often in her narratives. Wilma's presentation of the narrator, the ego figure, and the other actors, determined through the action codes used, shows the following values on the power, closeness, and dominance axes:

Presentation of the narrator: power: dominant; closeness: not relevant; autonomy: dependent.

Presentation of the ego figure: power: dominant; closeness: not relevant; autonomy: independent.

Presentation of the other actors: power: not relevant;
closeness: not relevant; autonomy: independent.

Rules of the Narrative and Course of the Narrative

Under the superordinate terms “rules of the narrative” and “course of the narrative,” the steps are described for capturing the organization of the tension dynamics of a narrative (Table IV). Narratives produce dynamic sequences that form an arc of tension. At the start of the narrative, a horizon of expectations opens up. The listener is keen to find out what will happen and is prepared for conflict and complications. They have intuitive ideas concerning happy end (SHOULD BE) and catastrophe (ANTI SHOULD BE).

Narratives are divided into start, middle, and ending. The dynamic sequences they produce form an arc of tension that includes initial phase, development, and outcome. The initial phase of the narrative (“What’s the matter?”) creates expectations on the part of the listener and the obligation on the part of the speaker, which are resolved through the development (“What happens next?”) and the outcome (“What will this lead to?”) of the narrative. The analysis step called “rules” attempts to capture these expectations and obligations, to systematically restate the framework within which the narrative develops based on the conditions (chances and

limits) set by the narrator, and from that to derive the hypothetically optimum fulfillment and the hypothetically catastrophic nonfulfillment of the expectations set.

The rules are stated in three parts:

1. Starting conditions: The initial segments that open the narrative.
2. SHOULD BE: The hypothetical optimum outcome aimed at as the solution by the specific starting conditions.
3. ANTI SHOULD BE: The hypothetical catastrophe, the maximum catastrophic outcome that is possible given the starting conditions.

Determining the starting conditions. To capture and restate the rules of a narrative, the starting conditions are examined for features that lay out the tension. The segments of the start conditions (SD) were already determined in the Stage Direction section. Based on the frames and codes of these segments, the starting conditions are restated in a shorter, more succinct form. The coding helps to fathom out the lexical content of the agents, actions, patients, and instruments. For this reason, mainly those segments are important that set a new orientation via who, what, and how. Segments that serve to locate the happenings in place and time, where and when, are considered only if they contribute to the tension.

Starting conditions:

- 1 e SD Well once I uh uh
- 4 ne SD I didn’t really want to seriously uh
- 5 e SD But I somehow
- 6 e SD As I began to realize
- 7 e SD That there could be problems about my
wanting to become a teacher purely because of
money, you know
- 8 e SD So one Sunday uh I just threw it out there uh
as a possible career aspiration, you know

For succinct restatement of the starting conditions, it is advisable to inventory the conditions: The figures and instruments are listed together with the codings. This captures the dramaturgical potential more completely.

Restatement of the starting conditions: At an alarming time for the ego figure, when it became apparent that her idea to become a teacher was not going to be possible because of financial reasons, she confronts her family surprisingly with her possible career aspiration of becoming an opera singer. Through fulfillment of this exclusive wish, the ego figure could develop to the fullest vocationally and could stand out and obtain public

Table IV. Rules for Identifying the Rules and the Course of the Narrative

Determine starting conditions and horizon of expectations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examine the segments of the initial conditions set by the narrator’s stage direction. 2. Inventory the starting conditions. 3. Succinct restatement of the starting conditions. 4. Determine the horizon of expectations in the form of freely stated dynamics for the central themes of the starting conditions.
Determine SHOULD BE and ANTI SHOULD BE
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SHOULD BE: Derive and state optimum outcome given the specific starting conditions. 2. ANTI SHOULD BE: Derive and state the negative form of the SHOULD BE, the maximum catastrophic outcome given the specific starting conditions.
Examination of the course of the narrative
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development dynamics: Examine the development course of the narrative from the perspective of the horizon of expectations and in the tension between SHOULD BE and ANTI SHOULD BE. 2. Outcome: Examine the outcome in the perspective of the horizon of expectations and in the tension between SHOULD BE and ANTI SHOULD BE. 3. BE: Movement between SHOULD BE and ANTI SHOULD BE; succinct statement of the real outcome of the story.

recognition. She refers to her family as “out there,” as in “I just threw it out there.”

Determining the horizon of expectations. The horizon of expectations of the narrative is determined based on the narrator’s setting of the systematically inventoried figures, actions, objects, and instruments in the starting conditions. The question here is, what dramaturgical space is opened up by the storyteller’s setting of the starting conditions? The object is to capture the central themes of the starting conditions as dramaturgical potential. Is the narrative about love, recognition, competition, success, or distinction?

Determining SHOULD BE and ANTI SHOULD BE. Based on the starting conditions set by the narrator and the horizon of expectations derived from that, in a next step hypotheses on the goal direction of the narrative are formulated. What can be viewed as the most positive goal fulfillment or outcome (SHOULD BE) given the specific starting conditions, and what can be viewed as the most negative failure to fulfill the goal (ANTI SHOULD BE)? Here, happy end and catastrophe should not be stated simply as positive and negative versions of achieving the goal; instead, it is important to try to work out the most radical form of happy end and catastrophe within the lexical choices.

SHOULD BE: *The ego figure can develop her artistic abilities and receives unlimited recognition from a well-meaning community.*

ANTI SHOULD BE: *The ego figure is denied all artistic ability; others refuse to support her. She is excluded from the familiar community.*

Determining the development dynamics. After determining the starting conditions, SHOULD BE, and ANTI SHOULD BE, it is examined how the specific course of the narrative develops from the starting conditions, in the narrative core, and in the narrative context and how the dramaturgical potential unfolds and is brought to a conclusion. Here the segments belonging to the development (ED) and outcome (EG) in the Stage Direction section are examined. The course of the narrative is examined from the perspective of the horizon of expectations and in the tension between SHOULD BE and ANTI SHOULD BE. Does the narrative move toward SHOULD BE or ANTI SHOULD BE?

Development dynamics:

- 9 e ED And I met with sheer horror, you know
10 e ED Anyway that was Esther’s reaction

- 11 e ED And anyhow and she’s nuts and opera and what, you know
12 e ED That’s music
13 e ED That you can’t listen to, you know
14 e ED uh Walter said somehow
15 ne I think
16 e ED Opera what’s that, you know
17 e ED My father just looked at my mother and uh couldn’t imagine what I was talking about
18 ne I think

Restatement of the development dynamics: The family responds with utter horror to Wilma’s wish, which is subsequently commented on by her sister, brother, and father in a derogatory way as “music that you can’t listen to” (Esther) or as something that one does not understand (brother and father). The ego figure is seen as crazy and destructive (DAR-DES) rather than as creative and productive (ARB-UNS),⁹ and she is devalued: “She’s nuts.”

Determining the statement of the outcome. The outcome is examined in the perspective of the horizon of expectations and in the tension between SHOULD BE and ANTI SHOULD BE. Which of the dynamics formulated in the context of the horizon of expectations are developed further up to the end? What dynamics fall away? What dynamics were added? Does the narrative end more in SHOULD BE or in ANTI SHOULD BE?

Statement of the outcome:

- 19 e EG And my mother just said straight out
20 e EG That’s out of the question, like
21 e EG Are you nuts?
22 e EG You can’t make a living on a thing like that

The mother forbids the narrating ego realization of her wish and agrees with the sister’s judgment: “Are you nuts?” At the end, she devalues the wish as a thing “you can’t make a living on”; however, it is not clear whether this last comment was made by the mother or the ego figure.

Determining BE. BE is the outcome of the narrative as told. The outcome is examined in light of the hypothetical SHOULD BE and ANTI SHOULD BE and is formulated based on the starting conditions and stated as a succinct statement of the outcome of the story.

Restatement of BE: The wish is devalued, and realization of the wish is denied to the narrating ego. The unfolding of artistic abilities and recognition do not occur. The ego figure is devalued by sister and mother for her fantasies regarding a career and with this is positioned outside of the family. The ego figure keeps her

dominant and independent (DAR-DES) position. Mother and (or?) ego figure devalue the wish as a thing that you can't make a living on.

→ BE converges on the ANTI SHOULD BE

Conflict Dynamics

The mental activity associated with the internalized conflicts consists in thoughts and ideas that are captured using the psychoanalytic concepts of wish and anxiety. Thanks to defense mechanisms, wish and anxiety are not accessible to awareness and reflection. The psychodynamic conflict is constellated as movement among wish, anxiety, and defense.

Identifying Conflict Dynamics in JAKOB Narrative Analysis

In JAKOB narrative analysis, the tapping of the conflict dynamics entails a change of perspective. The analysis changes from examination of the ego figure to examination of the narrator. It changes from narrative dynamics to psychodynamics. The reconstruction of the narrative dynamics tapped the narrative process from start to ending, with inventory of figures, sets, props, and actions. When formulating the conflict dynamics, the focus is on the narrator's psychological situation. The task is to discover what concern the narrator has in mind with the narrative. Using the dramaturgical codings and the rules with the concepts of starting conditions, SHOULD BE, ANTI SHOULD BE, and BE, the dynamic organization of the narrative is tapped. From there, we come to the formulation of psychodynamic hypotheses. This is done in three steps:

1. Pointers toward possible wish and anxiety themes are found based on the statement of SHOULD BE and ANTI SHOULD BE.

2. Based on that, in a further step the development process is analyzed in the context of defense mechanisms.
3. Based on the hypotheses regarding wish, anxiety, and defense, the wish/anxiety/defense movement is stated as a conflict within the narrative.

The social integration and the verb choices yield further indications of wishes, anxieties, and defense strategies (Table V). Wish and anxiety models are configured following the pattern of prototypical relational patterns as they are interpreted in the psychoanalytic understanding of fulfilling and threatening relational logics.

There is a traditional psychoanalytic inventory of defense mechanisms. Some characteristic forms of defense are listed in Table VI.¹⁰

Conflict Modeling

SHOULD BE: *The ego figure can develop her artistic abilities, and she receives unlimited recognition from a well-meaning community.*

The narrator has a fundamental wish. In a psychodynamic perspective we conclude: The wish theme is phallic self-promotion. She wants to present and show herself as an impressive and competent person and to receive applause for her impressive endowment.

ANTI SHOULD BE: *The ego figure is denied all artistic ability; others refuse to support her. She is excluded from the familiar community.*

The narrator conveys a fundamental anxiety theme. In a psychodynamic perspective we conclude: The anxiety is fear of social rejection and loss of potency, the loss of resources, energies, and strengths.

Table V. Wish and Anxiety Themes in Overview

Developmental stage in the triadic space	Wish theme	Anxiety theme
Parental care and conveying of self and objects	Perpetual child status	Repudiation
Exodus of child, exploration, self- and object control	Attachment and security	Destruction
	Object control	Control by others
Self-promotion, claim for phallic recognition	Loyal alter ego	Social rejection
	Phallic integrity	Loss of potency
	Self-sufficiency	Surrender
Exclusive intimacy, rivalry, privilege	Male oedipal triumph	Castration
	Female oedipal triumph	Shame
Moral reflexivity: ability to surrender to other and to allow oneself to be changed	Recognition from the conscience	Sanction from conscience
	Generativity	Unproductivity

Table VI. Defense Strategies

Acting out	Handling dangerous unconscious wishes or impulses through directly expressing them in action
Devaluation	After experiencing frustration of one's own wish or impulse by the object, denying the object esteem or importance
Identification with the aggressor	Taking over part functions of the object as a component of one's own person; aggressive impulses find expression that the subject had felt threatened by on the part of the object
Intellectualization	Avoiding perception of wishes, impulses, and affects toward the object by dealing with the relationship to the object on the cognitive level only
Projection	Attributing one's own unacknowledged unacceptable/unwanted thoughts and emotions to the object and perceiving them as being possessed by the object
Rationalization	Avoiding the perception of unacceptable wishes and impulses toward the object by surrounding connected actions or attitudes with justifications that are supposed to appear useful, situation-appropriate, or morally acceptable
Repression	Repressing of unacceptable or dangerous wishes or impulses or affects
Displacement	Displacing unacceptable/dangerous wishes or impulses toward the object to safer thoughts about the object

BE: *Realization of the wish is denied to the narrating ego; the wish is devalued. The unfolding of artistic abilities and recognition do not occur. The ego figure is devalued by sister and mother for her fantasies regarding a career, and with this she is positioned outside of the family. The ego figure keeps her dominant and independent (DAR-DES) position even though mother and (or?) ego figure devalue the wish as a thing that you can't make a living on.*

The narrator works with certain defense mechanisms. In a psychodynamic perspective, we conclude: Identifiable is the defense strategy of identification with the aggressor. Through the comment, "You can't make a living on a thing like that," the ego figure takes over the mother's devaluing/destructive mode of expression. This serves to cover the narrator's own feelings of destruction and devaluation; however, they find veiled expression in the fictitious staging of the ego figure as a future opera singer; for when the family is shocked about it, the ego figure is exposed to the superior mockery of the narrator and the listener.

Based on this wish/anxiety/defense movement, the conflict can be stated as follows: The narrator has a wish to promote herself or, concretely, the wish to become a teacher. She fears that she may not have sufficient provisions for that or, concretely, that she lacks the resources. Perception of her own lack carries with it the danger of resigned withdrawal. Confronting the family with her self-promotion goal of becoming a teacher is additionally risky for the narrator. This is about the additional risk of being rejected and discredited, discouraged and shamed for her own claim to self-promotion. To decrease this risk, the narrator resorts to exaggeration. Her serious wish to become a teacher becomes replaced with the fictitious and unreachable pretend wish to become an opera singer. When this wish meets with rejection, then, the rejection is controlled through her active

stage direction and, therefore, has no negative effect; in addition, the rejecting reactions of the family members, who do not see through the fiction and lack of seriousness, are exposed to ridicule.

The narrator thus operates using a strategy of ironic outdoing. In this way, not only are the family members in the position of refusing and discrediting, but also their refusal and discrediting arise from ignorance, narrow-mindedness, and dull-wittedness. A person unlucky enough to be born into a family like that and bound by its meagerness will never make her mark achieving her own potential. This potential, however, could unfold brilliantly, if only there were adequate support and mentoring. This is an accusation that the mother did not sufficiently endow the girl in that, as stated by Freud, she refused the girl phallicity and ultimately also did not give her sufficient food and care. The narrative conveys a movement of accusation and disqualification. However, it is very important to be attentive to the fact that this movement appears as a result of a first challenge: The narrator can perhaps not become a teacher; perhaps she should give up on her vision, for the financial resources are not sufficient. The narrator gives herself only insufficient credit for the desire to become a teacher. But this self-sabotage of a self-promotion wish is not developed further. Instead, the scene illuminates the attitude of refusal and devaluation of a meager and narrow-minded family.

The loss of potency of the whole family is also a threat to the ego figure. The narrator responds to this threat with provocation. She positions herself with the self-promotion desire to train as an opera singer. Here she appears to be dependent not on the resources of the family but rather only on her artistic ability. Through the devaluation of this desire and of her person by the entire family, the ego figure is threatened with social rejection (brother and father do not understand her) and loss of potency (sister and mother declare her crazy). The ego figure

defends against this threat through identification with the aggressor, her mother, because in the last comment (“You can’t make a living on a thing like that”) it remains unclear who is speaking. The ego figure takes over her mother’s mode of expression as a part of her own person, in this way leading to a kind of proud self-disqualification: She can call herself a “nutcase” and retain the dominant and independent position toward her family that she took at the start.

Results

The results of the analysis of the narrative and conflict dynamics, which lead to the formulation of a hypothetical conflict, are worked out for the single narrative and recorded, as described in the preceding section. However, to make meaningful conflict hypotheses that allow statements about how the narrator deals with her conflicts and that aim toward a psychodynamic diagnosis, it is necessary to analyze a number of narratives and to consider in addition data from the therapy context.

Wish/anxiety/defense movements typical for the narrator are put together based on all of the narratives examined, compared, and combined for more far-reaching interpretation. This means that from analysis of the single narrative to the mostly theme-focused examination and interpretation of a case, further steps are required. The narrative presented here as an example, “Become an opera singer,” comes from a study on the sibling relationship in Wilma’s narratives (Stärk, 2009). The study examined a total of 14 narratives from Wilma’s therapy sessions in which a sister of the patient appears prominently as an actor along with the narrator; seven of the narratives were from the initial phase of Wilma’s therapy (the first 1½ years), and seven were from the final phase (the last 1½ years).

Findings from the Initial Phase of Therapy

Narrative Dynamics

In the initial phase of therapy, both the ego figure and the sister alternately hold the initiative; they often take the initiative away from each other. The sister is presented in a central position; the ego figure remains in a marginal position. In this phase, characteristic verb codes for the ego figure/narrator are WIS (know) and LAU (believe), which are both codes in the wanting dimension. For the sister, the codes ORD (ordering) and ERR (stimulate) are characteristic (in the managing and happening dimensions).

Self-Presentation and Rules

The two axes central for the narrator are power and autonomy, in the values dominance and dependence. The closeness axis (close–distant) does not appear to be relevant; it is the relation of power and autonomy between the sisters that is put in the center of attention. Rules: With two exceptions, in this phase BE comes close to ANTI SHOULD BE.

Conflict Dynamics

Oedipal wish and anxiety themes appear frequently in the first seven narratives; the female oedipal triumph wish ranks higher than the wish for phallic integrity; the prototypical anxiety themes are castration and shame. The defense mechanisms vary; the predominant defense strategies are intellectualization, identification with the aggressor, rationalization, and devaluation.

Findings from the Final Phase of Therapy

Narrative Dynamics

The fight for the initiative now occurs in only two narratives between the ego figure and the sister. The ego has more control over the actor initiative; with one exception, the ego figure is presented as the central figure of the narratives in the final phase (actor position), whereas the sister appears in the marginal position. The verb codes that are important in this phase for the ego figure/narrator are WIS (know) and LAU (believe), as in the initial phase. For the sister, the code BIN (attach [attachment]) is characteristic (managing dimension).

Self-Presentation and Rules

As in the initial phase of therapy, the power and autonomy axes are important for the ego figure/narrator, with the value dominance for power axis and with a balanced relation of dependence/independence on the autonomy axis, whereas the closeness axis remains unimportant. Rules: In this phase again, BE mostly comes close to SHOULD BE (four times vs. three times when BE approaches SHOULD BE).

Conflict Dynamics

The prototypical wish themes in the final phase of therapy stem from the phallic-narcissistic and oedipal stages of development (female oedipal triumph wish, phallic integrity, loyal alter ego). The predominant anxiety themes are anxieties in the area of steering and control. Important defense mechanisms here are displacement, identification with the

aggressor, identification and other; no specific defense mechanism is predominant.

Summary of Changes from Initial to Final Phase

The changes from the initial to the final phases of therapy can be summed up as follows:

Actor fate: Action initiative shifts from ego and sister together to ego.

Actor position: Changes for the ego figure from marginalization to centering; the ego figure becomes increasingly central and the sister increasingly marginal.

Actions (verbs and codes): The ego figure develops increasingly into the dominant acting figure (the ego takes over more actions).

Self-presentation (on the power, autonomy, and closeness axes): The ego figure moves from a dependent to a more balanced position on the autonomy axis. Dominance remains decisive on the power axis, whereas the closeness dimension is not relevant.

Conflict dynamics: The wish themes of the ego show little change; the oedipal wish is present in the initial and final phases of the therapy (in addition to phallic-narcissistic wishes). In nine of the 14 narratives examined, an oedipal triumph wish was expressed. This agrees with the rivalry theme in the sibling relationship examined. As a trend, there is a shift from oedipal to anal anxiety themes from the initial to the final phase. The anxieties and defense mechanisms show that the ego is not able to cope with the oedipal wish theme. The ego ventures into an oedipal competitive situation, becomes flooded with childlike anxieties, and saves itself through withdrawal and distancing.

Conclusions: Further Findings on Wilma Concerning the Therapeutic Process

In conjunction with other study results on the patient Wilma, the findings presented can be integrated in statements about the entire therapy course. The individual findings allow two opposing tendencies to be identified:

Regressive Developments

The results of the narrative analysis (see Method section) suggest a regressive tendency or stagnation.

The oedipal rivalry with the sister remains in place, but the narrator is not confident that she will succeed. There is a regressive withdrawal to aspects of assertion and control (Stärk, 2009). With regard to the anxieties, this is also shown in the patient's dreams (Brändle, 2009). Resigned, resentful, and reproachful withdrawal with a passive expectation and anticipated disappointment become increasingly apparent, as does the focusing on regulation of self-esteem.

In the first therapy session, the therapist gives the patient credit for her ability to develop, and on that basis he expects and feels that she is capable of working on her conflicts with him and taking challenging steps. Over the course of the therapy, this turns into a regressive interaction with the therapist going easy on her (Grimmer, 2006; Hermann, 2009): The therapist addresses Wilma at first as an actor who is capable of resolving the oedipal competitive situation in order to reach her goal of "love relationships with men," but she repeatedly finds this overtaxing and adheres to her status as victim. A pattern of interaction develops in which the therapist increasingly shows solidarity with Wilma, so that together they bemoan the flaws of relationship figures and partners. In this stagnation, it is not possible to work out the oedipal situation by the end of the therapy, nor can the patient acquire a new position within it.

A similar movement can be observed in the example narrative presented here: The family discredits the "opera singer" project. Wilma asserts herself in the narrative by devaluing the competence of her family to give credit and withdraws to the position of a person whom others have failed to recognize or appreciate. However, a person desiring credit for her opera singer project must demonstrate to the creditors that her musical potential has prospects of success. In a similar way, Wilma discourages the therapist's efforts to give credit by her mental reservations: "My family did not treat me justly; they did not appreciate my sacrifice." She clings to an attitude of reproachful, resigned accusation.

This corresponds also with Brändle's (2009) finding that, toward the end of the therapy, Wilma developed displeasure and decided to end therapy against the advice of the therapist.

At the same time, in other areas there are more general, positive changes, discussed next.

Progressive Developments

Toward her sister, Wilma gains a central actor position as the dominant acting figure and can give up her dependent position (Stärk, 2009).

Over the course of the therapy, the narratives become longer. Wilma claims more space and time in the therapy sessions (Stärk, 2009), which can be interpreted as indicating that she can tap into a larger inner space. At the end of therapy, there is more scope and leeway for the ego figure.

A study on the use of metaphors in Wilma's therapy (Jung, 2009) came to similar conclusions. Systematic analysis of metaphors (Schmitt, 1997) reveals positive changes for Wilma at the end of therapy: Wilma has acquired "more ground," "more breathing space," and "a sharper tone"; she uses new metaphors at the end of her therapy; problematic experiences do not discourage her as much as at the start of therapy; and she "digests" and reflects on things better. The range of metaphors changes over the course of therapy and indicates that her initially expressed wish for a successful relationship with a man recedes into the background; instead, the patient enjoys increased freedom and finds pleasure in being alone. For the patient, "I must" changes into "I may," which is a shift from necessity to choice.

Even though not all of the patient's problem areas could be worked on sufficiently, Wilma gained a more independent position and more freedoms in forming her relationships.

Strengths and Limitations of JAKOB Narrative Analysis

A comparison of the results when considering different research methods reveals strengths and weaknesses of JAKOB narrative analysis. As many examples have previously shown, triangulation with further methods is a useful way to integrate the results in a more comprehensive total picture.

Through the analysis of a sufficient number of narratives, JAKOB can be used for the diagnostic formulation of the patient's general underlying conflict dynamics.

A methodological feature of JAKOB narrative analysis is the focus on the communicative category "narrative"; consequently, the analysis can consider neither the therapist's comments nor the interaction. Therefore, the question of the generalizability of JAKOB results must remain restricted to the narrative.

Analysis methods that are more strongly oriented to the manifest text level, such as the CCRT method, have the advantages of greater economy and generalizability, but they tend to be closer to consciousness in design than JAKOB and do not attach any importance to the unconscious dimension of language generation.

Through staying very close to the text and the lexical analysis, JAKOB makes possible detailed analyses in the sense of hermeneutic text under-

standing and connects this with the psychodynamic level of the unconscious conflict.

Use of JAKOB narrative analysis requires trained raters. In project groups and workshops, we regularly offer introductions to the method for novices and training for more advanced users.

Summary

JAKOB narrative analysis is a qualitative tool for the investigation of everyday narratives in psychotherapy. Narrators present themselves as stage directors of dramaturgically reenacted events in which they themselves act in relation to other figures and situations. The narratives are then categorized based on various criteria, yielding information on the psychodynamic wish/anxiety/defense scenarios and thus on how the narrators deal with conflicts.

The focus on the form of communication called "narrative" entails certain methodological limitations, but it also makes it possible to aim the analysis directly to those parts of the psychotherapeutic conversation in which important reenactment and presenting processes take place on the part of the patient and that are, therefore, especially suited to the presentation of conflicts. Analyses of Wilma's narratives reveal rich findings for various thematic foci and make possible, especially in triangulating connection with other qualitative methods, contributions to the research on psychodynamic conflict, relational, and process diagnostics.

Psychoanalysis as clinical dialogue is work that depicts things narratively and scenically in an exploratory and reflective way, but it is also a form of cooperation that serves to strengthen and develop the ego. Model narratives serve to represent changes over the course of the therapies examined and to evaluate the narrative differentiation of the inner world. Here the change in narrative structures plays an important role. The treatment process can also be viewed in the mirror of the narrative.

Notes

¹ URL: <http://www.jakob.uzh.ch>.

² A total of 886 narratives were extracted from the complete transcriptions of all therapy sessions following the rules described later.

³ With the category system, the aim is to evaluate the "lexical choice" (Spence, 1980). An overview of the categories is available at <http://www.jakob.uzh.ch/lexikon/>.

⁴ The characteristic frequency of these verb codes for Wilma in comparison with other actors is based on evidence from a sample of 14 narratives (Stärk, 2008); statements about code frequencies cannot be made based on one single narrative.

⁵ A detailed description of the individual terms and work steps is provided in Boothe et al.'s (2002) *JAKOB narrative analysis: Manual. Research report no. 58*.

- ⁶ Example verbs for dominant: want, know, demand, fight; example verbs for submissive: give up, tolerate, do without (relinquish).
- ⁷ Example verbs for close: love, hate, seduce; example verbs for distant: admire, despise.
- ⁸ Example verbs for independent: respect, portray, play; example verbs for dependent: fear, believe, worry/be frightened.
- ⁹ JAKOB codes for German categories “zerstörend” and “erschaffend” (destructive vs. creative in the English text).
- ¹⁰ The detailed descriptions of the wish and anxiety themes and further defense strategies are found in the JAKOB narrative analysis manual.

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