Childhood abuse and internalized relationship patterns

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Within a collaborative study in Ulm, the trans-generational trauma load by mothers (n=97) shortly after the delivery was investigated focusing on the role of parent-child relationship. The relationship experiences were investigated by different instruments. One of them was the standardized questionnaire CECA (Childhood experiences of care and abuse, Bifulco) translated in German and validated by M. Kaess. The first part of the questionnaire consists of 32 Likert scaled items concerning the childhood experiences with mother and father. The second instrument presented, AIR, is based on the relationship category system CCRT-LU. Mothers were asked to associate freely five adjectives to important relationship persons: mother and father during the subject's childhood, current partner, female friend, self, and the newborn child. The adjectives were coded to standard relationship categories by three independent raters. Results: (a) We will present relationship pattern characteristic for the six objects. (b) The mean of all CECA items and the total harmony index of AIR correlate highly (r=.57). (c) Particularly high are the correlations between the scales for the same object mother in both instruments; and analogously for father. Discussion: (a) Results based the qualitative rating of freely associated words correspond highly to those obtained by the standard psychometric instruments. (b) In our opinion, freely associated adjectives are closer to the subject's primary process. Moreover, the subject can express and communicate own conscious and unconscious feelings instead of prefabricated ones. We will illustrate this on the spectrum of adjectives generated by mothers describing their newborn children.