

RELATIONAL MIND IN EVENTS OF CHANGE IN MULTIACTOR THERAPEUTIC DIALOGUES



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The relational mind derives from family therapy and has been developed especially within intersubjectivity research. Having an innate capacity in triangular situations the baby learns by initiating actions and responding to those present, and also to her inner voice, activated in the present moment. This process has been verified in both central nervous system and ANS studies, but there have been no studies in real-world settings. The project aims to increase understanding of the basic qualities of human life including the body's responsive rhythmic attunement and mutual synchronization with others. Couple therapy provides a unique opportunity to look at important qualities of the human mind in action, and to examine what happens in therapeutic meetings with several participants.

We need research examining how the ANS and emotions are connected to each other, and how they are coupled with other persons who are present. This program is unique in two respects. First, no comprehensive studies have been performed on the mutual synchronization and attunement of therapist- and client-behavior that would encompass (a) biological, (b) psychological and (c) social aspects. Secondly,

this study will include psychotherapists as informants on an equal footing with psychotherapy clients. Participants in interactional situations adapt their behavior to others by their linguistic responses, their body gestures, their facial expressions, and their ANS. The synchronization has been related to a good therapeutic alliance and consequently to a good outcome in therapy. We wish to determine (1) how responsive embodied actions and movements emerge in multi-actor dialogs, and how the embodied actions of therapists and clients resemble and mirror each other; (2) whether moments of change include emotional arousal on the part of clients and

therapists; (3) what is happening implicitly in important moments of dialog when things are not said; and (4) how any change for the better may be related to mutual attunement and synchronization in all of the aspects mentioned above. In the first couple therapy session we shall analyze responsive body arousals and face shown emotions and outer dialogs to define moments of change, plus the inner dialogs of both clients and therapists, and later the discursive quality of moments of change. In the first phase, the data will be obtained in the Department of Psychology, University of Jyväskylä, and thereafter in four universities in Europe.



Photo: Petteri Kivimäki

Interview about the inner dialogue during therapy: what was not said aloud during the session.

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