

ANALYSIS OF CLINICAL VERBAL BEHAVIOUR: A NEW APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THE THERAPEUTIC PHENOMENON

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ABSTRACT: Efficacy of psychological treatments have been demonstrated scientifically. This research has made great strides in identifying *what* works in therapy, *with whom* and in *which circumstances*. However, these studies, although important, should be accompanied by research on the processes that explain therapeutic change. In this sense, to understand the therapeutic phenomenon fully, it is necessary to study not only *what* works in therapy, but also *how* and *why* it works. The authors present some preliminary results of an innovative research agenda. From a behaviourist perspective and on the basis of the main activity in psychotherapy, speaking, a scientific analysis of the functions of psychologists' verbal behaviour is proposed to identify underlying change processes in therapist-client interaction. This analysis is based on the observation of real clinical sessions recordings by the application of a validated system of categories and the use of *The Observer XT* software to code and register data

EFFICACY RESEARCH: What works, with whom, in which circumstances

(Chambless & Ollendick, 2001; Nathan & Gorman, 2002)

PROCESSES RESEARCH: How and why therapy works

FUNCTIONAL-ANALYTIC APPROACH FOCUSED ON VERBAL BEHAVIOUR AND LEARNING RESEARCH IN CLINICAL SETTINGS (Day, Hayes, Luciano, Follete, Köhlerberg, Willson, Rosenfarb, Barnes-Holmes)

RESEARCH FOCUSED ON THE ANALYSIS OF WHAT OCCURS IN THE CLINICAL SETTING (Therapist-client relationship constitutes a social context where problematic behaviours can be evoked and modified)

VERBAL BEHAVIOUR AS THE PRINCIPAL OBJECT OF RESEARCH (The most important activity in psychotherapy is speaking)

TOPOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS: THE PRELIMINARY STEP TO STUDY FUNCTIONS OF VERBAL BEHAVIOUR (Schlinger, 1990)

FOCUS ON THERAPISTS' VERBAL BEHAVIOUR IN THESE EARLY STAGES OF OUR RESEARCH (Study of clients' behaviour and therapist-client interaction in the future)

VARIABLE 1: Therapist's verbal behaviour

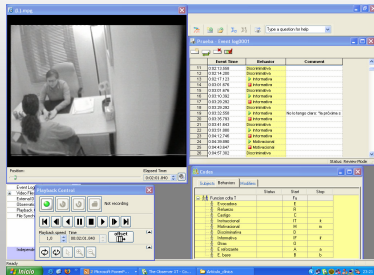
- **REINFORCEMENT:** verbalizations that show agreement with, acceptance of and/or admiration for the behaviour shown by the client.
- **PUNISHMENT:** verbalizations that indicate disagreement with, disapproval of and/or rejection of the behaviour shown by the client.
- **DISCRIMINATIVE:** verbalizations that occasion a client's behaviour (verbal or non verbal) followed by reinforcement or punishment (operant conditioning).
- **ELICITATION:** verbalization by the therapist that elicits an observable emotional response or a verbalization referring to its appearance in a covered up way by the client (classical conditioning).
- **INFORMATION:** verbalization by the therapist that transmits his or her theoretical and/or clinical knowledge to the client.
- **MOTIVATION:** verbalization by the therapist that highlights the benefits derived from a given behaviour shown by the client or the costs of maintaining a dysfunctional behaviour.
- **INSTRUCTION:** guidelines offered by the therapist with the aim of promoting a ce

Observational guide developed with a moderate reliability ($k_{01-02} = .46$, $k_{01-03} = .58$, $k_{02-03} = .65$)

VARIABLE 2: Therapeutic phase

- PHASE OF ASSESSMENT
- PHASE OF FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS EXPLANATION AND TREATMENT PROPOSAL
- PHASE OF TREATMENT
- PHASE OF THERAPEUTIC CHANGES CONSOLIDATION

REGISTER INSTRUMENT:
The Observer XT

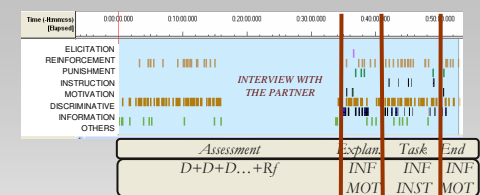


CONCLUSIONS

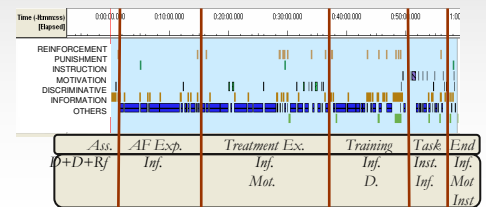
- ✓ THERAPISTS' VERBAL BEHAVIOUR CHANGES AS PSYCHOTHERAPY PROGRESSES.
- ✓ IT COULD BE POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY CATEGORIES/ BEHAVIOURAL SEQUENCES ASSOCIATED WITH PHASES.
- ✓ IT COULD BE POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY THERAPISTS' BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS RELATED TO EFFICACY CRITERIA.
- ✓ WE COULD STUDY SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES SUCH AS COGNITIVE REESTRUCTURING (Froján, Calero & Montaña, 2006)
- ✓ WE NEED TO COMPLETE THIS INITIAL WORK WITH THE STUDY OF CLIENTS' VERBAL BEHAVIOUR AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSES:

- Correlational methods (Truax, 1966)
- Lag sequential approach (Follete, Naugle & Callaghan, 1996)

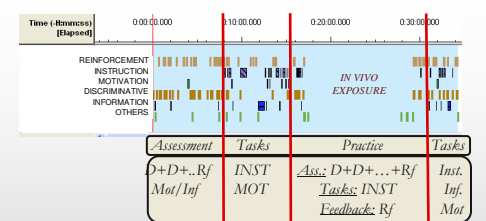
PHASE OF ASSESSMENT



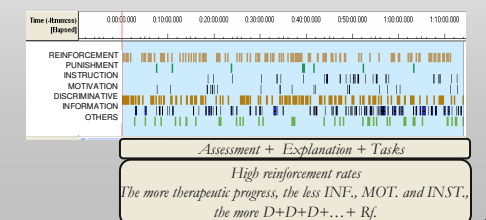
PHASE OF FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS EXPLANATION AND TREATMENT PROPOSAL



PHASE OF TREATMENT



PHASE OF CLINICAL CHANGES CONSOLIDATION



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METHOD: Observation of Behaviour Therapy clinical sessions recordings

PRELIMINARY RESULTS