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Meaning making in dialogue between persons with PIMD and direct support staff

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Dialogical approach and persons with PIMD

- Challenged communication with persons with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities (PIMD)
- Dialogical viewpoint
 - Inherent a-symmetry does not exclude the creation of shared understanding
 - Process of meaning making is meaningful, regardless of its result
 - Less deviant from all human interaction

Research aim

Rich theoretical viewpoint

- Using it to systematically investigate the communication between persons with PIMD and their interaction partners
- Developing an observation rating scale to describe dialogue

Scale for Dialogical Meaning Making
S-DMM (°); Hostyn, Janssen, Daelman, Maes, 2009

- Dyadic relationship scale
 - Focus on the interacting dyad and not on individuals
 - Relationship variables
- Synthesize the interaction and apply a global judgement
- Describe the communication on a continuum from monologue to dialogue

(°) The S-DMM manual is available from the author.

S-DMM subscales

- Mutual openness
- Joint embedding context
- Non-manipulative negotiating
- Joint confirmation
- Non-evaluativeness

- Five-point Likert Scales with midpoints
- Verbal and non-verbal behavioural indications
- Content validity by consultation of experts

Method

- 18 staff-client dyads
 - Persons with PIMD between 3 and 59 years old
 - Developmental age below 24 months and severe motor disabilities
 - Support staff working with them minimally 6 months
- 10 minute video-observations
 - No objects
 - Two cameras
- Scoring process
 - Training with the S-DMM
 - Actual scoring on the basis of client information forms (Petry & Hermans, 2007)

Consensus-rating procedure

Dialogical scoring process by two raters

- Independent scoring: argumentations and qualitative observations on scoring sheets
 - Percentage agreement (0.5 scale point): 78%
- Discussion on scores and observations
- Result: shared score and evaluation

Detailed description of the study and its results in:

Hostyn, I., Daelman, M., Janssen, M. J., & Maes, B. (2010). Describing dialogue between persons with PIMD and direct support staff using the S-DMM. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 54, 679-690.

Subscale scoring: illustration

- Mutual openness

“Hand contact, bodily proximity and bodies oriented towards each other, mutual eye contact, attending for each other(’s utterances)”

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Subscale scoring: illustration

- Mutual openness
- Joint embedding context

“Building up a joint context of bodily games “we and our bodies and voices”, this embeds what is happening and forms the basis of their conversation, fluent repair when there is short distraction”

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Subscale scoring: illustration

- Mutual openness
- Joint embedding context
- Non-manipulative negotiating

“Negotiation and discussion on a theme of interest, initiatives of both partners are valued as starting points for communication, the support worker makes suggestions but is open for the child too (pausing and awaiting attitude).”

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Subscale scoring: illustration

- Mutual openness
- Joint embedding context
- Non-manipulative negotiating
- Joint confirmation

“Mutual imitation of each other’s utterances, verbal and non-verbal confirmation of the theme “yes, that’s is what we are communicating on”, confirming each other by eye contact and smiles”

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Subscale scoring: illustration

- Mutual openness
- Joint embedding context
- Non-manipulative negotiating
- Joint confirmation
- Non-evaluativeness

“Intense and real mutual pleasure, will to get to know each other’s perspective, experiences and interests, patience and accepting each other’s initiatives and utterances)”

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Qualitative scoring: trend

- Higher scored interactions
 - Often reference to joint bodily processes
- Lower scored interactions
 - Often reference to non-adapted verbal conversations

“He is trying to animate the girl but the girl does not get a chance to initiate, she can only smile in response to his funny sounds”

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Conclusion Scale for Dialogical Meaning Making

- Reliable + stimulates discussion, creative thinking and argumentation
- Quantitative results
 - Differentiation between higher and lower functioning dyads on the dimensions of dialogue
 - Tendencies across the group
 - Interconnected subscales (≠ multidimensional)
- Comprehensive qualitative descriptions of positive as well as negative aspects of the communication

Limitations and further research

- Explorative study
 - Small convenience sample
 - Only one observation of the dyad
- Further investigation of the S-DMM: validity, larger sample size, other target groups, etc.
- Observing dyads in different situations
- Influence of staff and client characteristics

Future directions

- The dialogical view and consensus rating are one approach to study interactions with persons with PIMD
- Investigate how to compare/combine with other approaches
- Examine its use in
 - Qualitative (case) studies
 - Communication improving intervention programs

Contact

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