

POSTER

EARLY RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS IN TWINS: THE IMPACT OF IMITATION AND INITIAL INTERPERSONAL EXPERIENCES ON EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Maria Markodimitraki

Department of Preschool Education, University of Crete, Rethymnon, Greece

markodim@uoc.gr

ABSTRACT

The aim of the present longitudinal, naturalistic and comparative study was to explore and describe several basic aspects of early imitative exchanges in twins' intrapair, parents'-twin infants' and grandparents'-twin infants' free dyadic interactions and the emotional state of the partners before, during and after the imitative sequences. A pair of dizygotic twins of different gender was observed with their parents and grandparents at home from the 2nd to the 10th month of their life (N=8). Six hundred sixty five (665) minutes of dyadic interactions were videotaped and microanalyzed in 1/25sec. Microanalysis was based on Kokkinaki's (1999) protocol on imitation extended on emotions, and pre imitative zone. No significant differences between twins and non-twins were found in imitation frequency. It was also found that twins demonstrate intersubjective abilities from early infancy and adult participation shapes kind of imitation (vocal, facial, non-speech sound, combination) and frequency. The mixed emotion of pleasure and interest was the most dominant and imitation took mostly place in a communicative context before and after the imitative episodes. Imitation, as a social and emotional process, functions as a bridge for communication and relationship-building—even in early life stages. Twin infants demonstrate that sharing, in turn-taking playful interactions ("your turn – pause – my turn"), and the joy of coexistence are among the earliest "gifts" of human development.