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Study about mother-child versus female educator-child communication and interaction

Portuguese Team – Escola Superior de Educação de Lisboa

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German “Tandem-team”

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Introduction

Both (parents and educators) play an important but differentiated role on children socioemotional development and socialization.

Parents are attachment figures whereas educators can help children at risk for attachment problems building their resilience by offering new relational models (e.g., revision in Fuertes & Santos, 2015).

Since different interactions and relationships contribute for children's mean-making of their social world, our team investigated those differences comparing mothers and female educators.

Aims of the Present Study

Following the original Tandem study, **we aimed to compare Portuguese mothers and female educators** regarding their:

- **Style of work with the child** (types of products manufactured and the ability to work together).
- **Interactive behaviour** (empathy, ability to challenge the child, dialogical interaction, communication contents and cooperation with child).
- **Communicative behaviours** (e.g., instructions, questions, positive feedback, negative feedback).

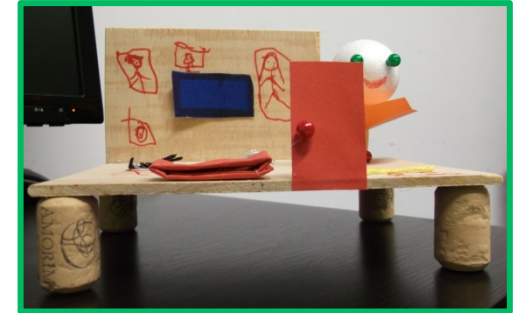
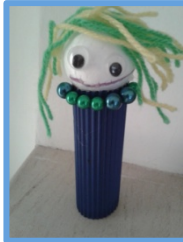
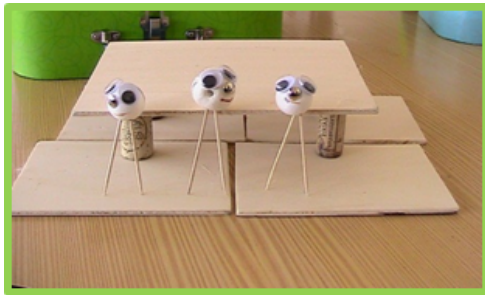
What can we do?

Types of products made with mothers and female educators

Subjects - living organisms (real or imagined), such as humans or animals (operationalized as 'having eyes')

Objects – things, such as cars, buildings or aeroplanes ('without eyes')

Both - objects and subjects



Results according to types of products made with by dyads with mothers and with female educators

In our study, 24 products were subjects, 4 objects and 13 had both subjects and objects. Subjects were more likely performed by educator-child dyads whereas products with both objects and subjects were more often performed by mother-child.

	Products			
	Subject	Object	Both	Total
Educator-Child	16	2	4	22
Mother-Child	8	2	9	19
Total	24	4	13	41

Lets work together?

Products made by the child, the educator, the mother or by the dyad in cooperation

	Made by			Total
	Child	Together	Adult	
Educator-child dyads	9	9	4	22
Mother-child dyads	2	10	7	19
Total	11	19	11	41

Although there were no significant differences in global proportions (Pearson $\chi^2 = 5.133$; $p=.077$), it is clear that children produced more products alone with educators whereas mothers work more solely in the product.

Do we act differently?

Mean differences in mother versus female-educator interactive behaviour during the activity

Results for Empathy

	Mother-Child		Educator-Child		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>DP</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>DP</i>		
<i>The woman reacts to the expressions and impulses of the child appropriately and promptly</i>	2.74	1.48	3.59	1.41	-2.385	.022
<i>The woman support the child appropriately</i>	3.41	1.37	2.68	1.16	1.815	.07
<i>The woman gives appropriately positive and appreciative feedback</i>	3.36	1.05	2.79	1.13	1.684	.10

During the activity, the female educator reacts appropriately and promptly to the expressions and impulses of the child more often than mothers do.

Do we act differently?

Mean differences in mother versus female-educator interactive behaviour during the activity

Results for Challenge

	<u>Mother-Child</u>		<u>Educator-Child</u>		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>DP</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>DP</i>		
<i>The woman encourages the child to experiment and deal with unfamiliar tasks</i>	2.42	1.31	3.41	1.26	-2.464	.018
<i>The woman ask questions which stimulate thinking</i>	2.58	.84	3.18	1.10	-1.953	.058
<i>The child loses interest or seems bored during the activity</i>	2.58	1.35	1.68	1.0	2.448	.019
<i>The woman acts on competitive manner with the child</i>	2.32	1.34	1.23	.53	3.522	.001

It seems that educators challenge more the children during the activity than mothers.

Do we act differently?

Mean differences in mother versus female-educator interactive behaviour during the activity

Results for Dialogical Interaction

	<u>Mother-child</u>		<u>Educator-child</u>		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>DP</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>DP</i>		
<i>The woman acts according to the child suggestions and/or initiatives</i>	2.74	1.05	3.91	1.31	-3.391	.003
<i>The woman waits patiently for the child decisions</i>	2.89	.994	3.59	1.22	-1.981	.055
<i>The woman faces the child and seeks eye contact</i>	3.26	1.15	4.36	1.0	-3.279	.002

The Dialogical Interaction seems to be more attuned in dyads with female educators than with mothers.

Do we act differently?
Mean differences in mother versus female-educator interactive
behaviour during the activity
Results for Cooperation

	<u>Mother-Child</u>		<u>Educator-Child</u>		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>DP</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>DP</i>		
<i>The woman observes the child and her involvement is only verbal</i>	2.36	1.33	1.89	1.15	1.198	.238
<i>The woman acts herself and lets the child watch</i>	2.36	1.78	2.89	.99	-1.547	.130
<i>The woman and child pursue different sub-projects in a parallel activity and only with partial co-operation</i>	2.68	1.49	1.36	1.05	3.312	.002
<i>The woman and the child (both) work together on an object with continual cooperation</i>	2.42	1.34	4.00	1.17	-3.978	.000

Mothers tend to be less cooperative with children than female educators, pursuing different sub-projects or parallel activities.

Learning how to communicate?

It is well established that the way adults communicate with children affects their linguistic and cognitive development (e.g., Alves, Fuertes, & Sousa, 2014; Bruner, 1981; Snow, 1989; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The adult ability to reframe, expand, and support children language offers new senses and opportunities to the child speech and communication abilities.

In this study, we describe and compare educators verbal communication in their interaction with children.

Talk to me or Talk with me?

Mean differences in mother-child versus female educator-child communication

	Mother-Child dyads		Educator-Child dyads		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Orders	7.98	1.83	3.88	.83	5.305	.000***
Instructions	2.18	2.11	11.53	6.84	-6.090	.000***
Suggestions	7.42	4.0	4.95	2.92	2.274	.029*
Positive Feedback	5.82	.86	4.03	1.34	2.254	.03*
Negative Feedback	4.35	1.0	1.89	.39	4.786	.000***
Questions about contents	4.37	2.73	21.05	11.391	-6.219	.000***
Procedimental questions	28.05	10.78	11.05	7.22	6.006	.000***

Discussion

- We found considerable differences in mothers and female educators behaviour and communication towards the children.
- Those differences support the idea that parents and educators offer different learning opportunities and distinct relationships. We speculate that educators training contributed to their ability to support children actions using less directive cues.
- The Portuguese team felt that the scales organized by German Tandem Team were quite complete and took in consideration the main aspects of educators interactive behaviour, and their application generated an important debate between coders.

Lets start again! - Study limitations and future research

- For further results generalization, a larger sample is needed.
- Throughout the scoring process observers were getting “routined” in their evaluation. Therefore, a constant reflection on the scoring process was necessary as well as on the interpretation given by each coder to the items.
- We note that during scoring process an important discussion in our team was brought out about educators and children behaviours – concerning *their shared inter-subjectivity*.
- For further research, additional samples with mothers and fathers were collected and results are being compared.

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Thank you for your attention!

Arrábida – Portugal