



MASTER THESIS:

Early Interactions - Exploring the Role of Affectionate Touch for Infants Perception of Bodily Signals

Background: Infants are born with limited abilities to regulate their internal bodily signals, such as hunger. To survive, they need to learn to communicate their internal bodily signals to their primary caregiver, who in turn needs to identify them and react adequately (Fotopoulou & Tsakiris, 2017, doi.org/10.1080/15294145.2017.1294031).

Our project: However, we are lacking empirical studies investigating this relationship. In the present project we aim to investigate in which contexts affectionate touch might be related to bodily perception of mom and infant.

The master thesis: The thesis will be part of a larger project exploring the perception of bodily signals in infants and moms. The thesis will center around video-coding of interactions between infants and their moms for affectionate touch. Video-coding allows for a self-paced working style, thus making the empirical part of the thesis-project rather flexible. Going beyond, the applicant is free to explore potential links to other data sources collected as part of the project (such as eye-tracking, ECG, or fNIRS) depending on his or her interest.

Why does it matter: Identifying and interpreting internal bodily signals has been proposed to play a crucial role in early social development, such as for the formation of a minimal self-concept. Further, we know from adult research that deficits in identifying internal bodily signals are related to negative mental health outcomes. Thus, it is crucial to understand how this ability evolves in early childhood.

Join us in the laboratory of the Wiener Kinderstudien at the University of Vienna to write your **Master thesis** (start: SS 2024 or later) with us!

In case you are interested or have questions please contact markus.tuente@univie.ac.at (in English or German) until **15.07.2024** with your CV and a short description of why you are interested!