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***Affect attunement between
disability support workers and
adults with profound
intellectual disability***





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Background

- Little research re: interactions between adults with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities (PIMD) and disability support workers (DSWs)
- Quality of interaction – quality of life
- Based on existing research – interactions low frequency, low quality
- Recommendations based on little evidence



DSW's views

- ***Interaction with people with PIMD***
 - Can be hard
 - Requires perseverance
 - Is not taught
 - Requires time to learn how to do it
 - Ruled by what the person responds to
 - Is confounded by conflicts (e.g. attachment, age appropriateness, play, role expectations)
 - Forster & Iacono, 2008



Research question

- ***What happens in interactions between people with PIMD and DSW?***
 - Preliminary study of coding methods
(*ASSID 2008*)
 - > Affect attunement



Affect attunement

- The performance of behaviours that express the *quality of feeling* of shared affect state without imitating the exact behavioural expression of the inner state (Stern, 1985)
- Behavioural modality same or different
- Clear affective emphasis must be present (Jonsson et al., 2001)

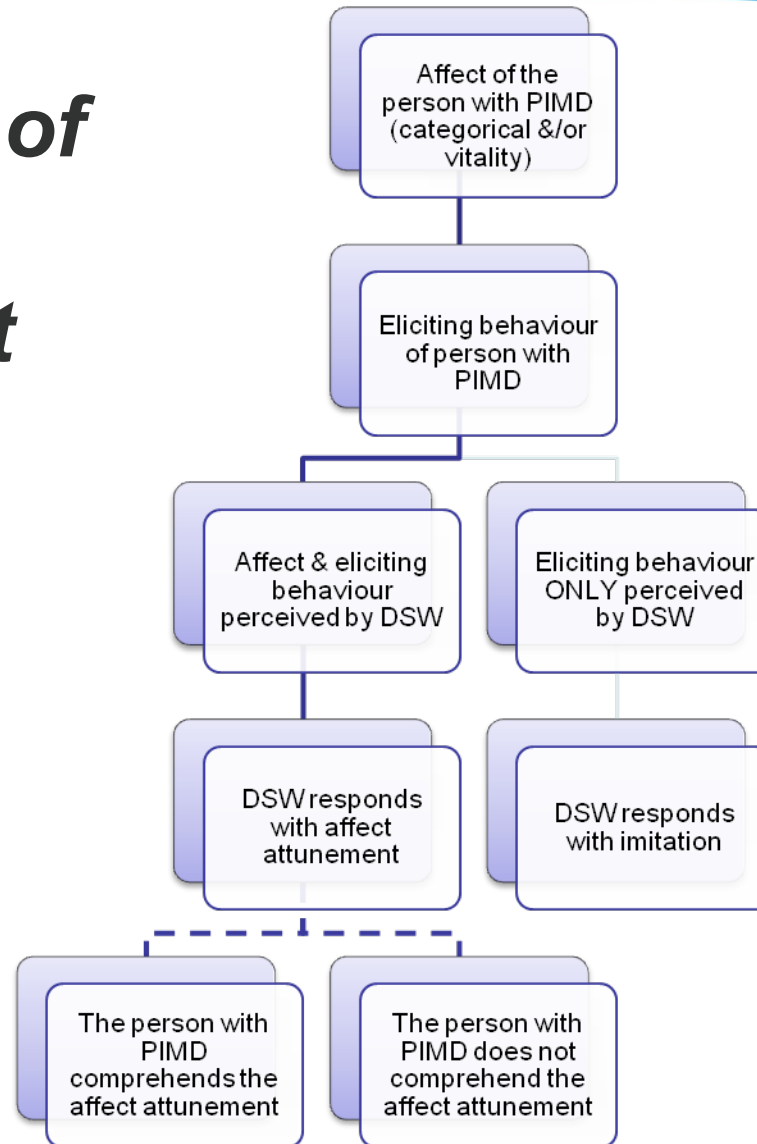


Parent-infant affect attunement





Processes of affect attunement





Person with PIMD affect attunement





Methodology

- ***Participants***
 - 21 dyads of people with PIMD / DSW
- ***Video recordings of interactions***
 - 20 minutes recorded – 10 minutes analysed
- ***Coding of the recordings***
 - Consensus coding following coding manual

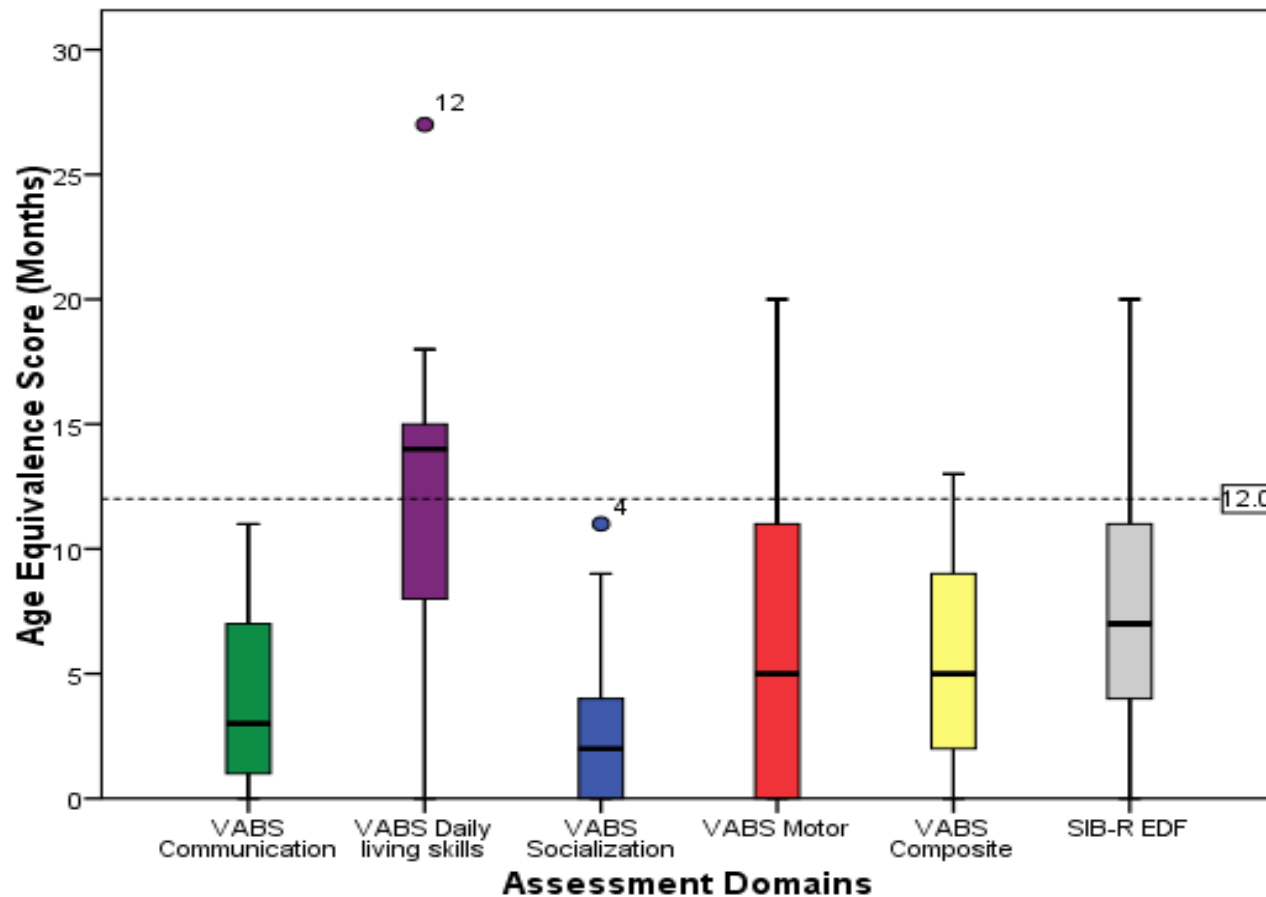


Participants with PIMD (n=21)

- Male- 52%
- Age – 24-55, mean = 37
- Epilepsy – 33% no, 33% controlled/monthly, 33% weekly/daily
- Medications for bowel management, reflux, and pain relief
- Vision – limited to little – 67%
- Hearing – reported normal – 86%
- Mobility – 52% unable to help with transfer
- Communication – body language 38%, looking and reaching 52%



Adaptive behaviour skills (Vineland age equivalence)





DSW participants (n=21)

- Female - 86%
- Age – 31-62, mean = 48
- Education – TAFE 76%
- Time working with people with disabilities – 9mths-30 years – mean = 10 years
- Time working with participant with PIMD – 8mths-16 years – mean = 4 years
- Parenting – 48% grandparents, 10% no children



Results

- ***DSWs do use affect attunement***
 - 1-8 incidents per 10 minutes (16 dyads)
 - no affect attunement in 5 dyads
 - Duration: 2.3 seconds (0.9 – 7.3 seconds)



Example of affect attunement

- “P20 sniffs long bringing head down into a smile like facial expression. DSW goes ‘mmm’ in response.”
- “P20 takes a deep breath in, brings his head down and exhales with a small smile, DSW response by saying ‘hmm...’”



Results

Nature of affective attunement

- Same intensity
- Short duration (< 1 sec)
- 20% complete match of intensity & duration, part matched shape and rhythm – complete match of all qualities only evident in 2 incidents
- Person with PIMD used postural, facial, with some vocal behaviours
- DSW used vocal, postural, and facial behaviours



Eliciting behaviour

- Mainly motor efforts and attention behaviours
- Some behaviours contained emotional affects (e.g. smile or frustration look)
- Little indication of falling, sudden, risk, intentional behaviours, or striving behaviours

Loss

Sudden

Fall

Risk

Effort

Attention

Emotion

Negative

Striving

Effective action



Discussion

- Affect attunement occurs between DSWs and people with PIMD
- DSWs respond to vitality affects more than categorical affects
- The eliciting behaviours are subtle



Future questions

- Is affective attunement an indicator of quality of interaction?
- What effect does affective attunement have on a person with PIMD?
- Intervention to enhance existing behaviour?