

within engagement, acknowledges the emotionally involved agency of both partners—teacher and learner—who can easily swap roles. This second perspective is necessary, we argue, for anything other than a sterile and mechanistic understanding of human mental and emotional development and, indeed, for promoting development itself (Reddy, 2003). We must share and respond to the powerful emotions of our infant companions.

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Sympathy in the Brain

Functional imaging of activity in normal adult brains responding naturally to real emotive events, and/or expressing communication with emotion, is bringing exciting evidence for extensive systems that reflect states of mind between people. Decety and Chaminade (2003) say, of their findings:

Motor expression of emotion, regardless of the narrative content of the stories, resulted in a specific regional cerebral blood flow (rCBF) increase in the left inferior frontal gyrus . . . these results are consistent with a model of feeling sympathy that relies on both the shared representation and the affective networks. (p. 127).

Most remarkable of all, the same “mirror” systems for matching expressive states between people are already active in the brain of a 2-month-old baby who is looking at a person’s face, responding sympathetically to it, and [suggesting that he is] ready to communicate feelings (Tzourio-Mazoyer, DeSchonen, Crivello, Reutter, Aujard, & Mazoyer, 2002).

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