**Title of Doctoral Thesis:** Comparativestudy of mother-toddler interactions in the case of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

**Name of PhD Candidate:** Lefkaditi Efstathia

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the interactions between preschoolers with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), preschoolers with Attention–Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and their mothers, compared to each other and to a control group of Typically Developing (TD) preschoolers. In the context of current theoretical approaches to genetic and neurodevelopmental disorders, according to which early interaction during infancy and early childhood among these children and their main caregivers significantly affect the development of these disorders and the outcome of the children’s difficulties, a mapping of these interactions will be attempted in order to identify their functional and dysfunctional characteristics. Due to brain neuroplasticity during infancy and early childhood, it is estimated that the quality of these interactions contributes significantly either to the consolidation and worsening of neurodevelopmental deficits or to the reinforcement and "normalization" of deficient brain structures. The sample of the study will consist of 10 pairs of mothers with children with ASD (level 1), 10 pairs of mothers with ADHD (combined presentation) and 10 pairs of mothers with TD children. The age of the children is identified between 36 and 60 months and the infants will be paired in terms of chronological and mental age. Research combines both quantitative and qualitative methodology. There will be two visits to each family home. In the first visit, mothers will be given: a) a questionnaire for the collection of demographic information about the child and the family, b) the Children's Behavioral Control List (CBCL), c) Attention–Deficit Hyperactivity Assessment Scale (ADHTDT), (d) Childhood Autism Rating-Scale (CARS), ~~;~~e) The Parenting Stress Index (PSI), f) The Symptom Checklist-90 Scale (SCL-90), g)The Parenting Self-Agency Measure, and h) The Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ). Children will also be given the scale WPPSI-III to pair the groups as to their cognitive level. Furthermore, video-filming will take place in free play conditions in the child's home (naturalistic process) on the basis of a structured screenplay as well as semi-structured interviews with their mothers. The analysis of the video data will be carried out with the help of the special digital program ELAN. It is expected that the interactions between the experimental groups and the control group will differentiate each other in terms of both quality and type and duration of communication. Findings from this research can be exploited at a clinical level for the design and implementation of early intervention programs for families with children with ADHD and families with children with ASD focused on parental education.

**Key words:** Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention–Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), early interactions, early intervention, secondary prevention