

Emergence of Social Connection Through Synchronous Movement

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Research suggests that being spontaneously pulled into synchrony with the incidental movements of another person may be the basis of forming minimal connections with others. Motion tracking of individuals while they shake maracas, or sit in rocking chairs yields patterns of interpersonal synchrony that closely follow the predictions of coupled-oscillator models developed to describe stable modes of interlimb coordination within individuals (e.g., Haken, Kelso, Bunz, 1985). However, between-person synchrony illustrates that mere informational coupling can yield these emergent social unity states, or social “synergies”. Lab experiments manipulating visual or auditory information, and contextual variables, illustrates the conditions under which synchronous states emerge and their links to social connection. The importance of apparently low-level perceptual and motoric behavior for grounding people in their physical and social world is also illustrated by research examining populations with unique perceptual differences (students with dyslexia) and more profound motoric and perceptual challenges (children with autism spectrum disorder). Findings from such research raises the question as to whether difficulties responding to the natural rhythms of the world may untether one socially as well.