Normativity, affect, and social interaction

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1. What role does normativity (including evaluation by others) play in the development of self and self-consciousness?

2. How are prelinguistic forms of social awareness motivated and enriched by this normative dimension?

Our face recognition abilities are well developed from birth

- newborns discriminate faces from other stimuli (Mondloch et al 1992)

- preferentially track moving face stimuli (Johnson et al 1991)

- discriminate different faces (Slater and Quinn 2001)

  - preference for mother's face and attractive faces

- imitate (Meltzoff and Moore 1977)

judgments about character (Berry and McArthur 1986)

social phobias and face avoidance (Chen et al 2002)

Simulating others

Motor mimicry

– behavioral matching of postures, mannerisms, and bodily configurations

– "social glue" (Chartrand and Bargh 1999)

Face the primary site of motor mimicry

– complex neuromusculature

– spontaneously imitate facial others' expressions

...and even *static pictures* (Dimberg and Thunberg 1998)

Simulation isn't the whole story!

Social interaction rests not just on simulation but also coordination and complementarity

We must successfully *coordinate*—and not just simulate—actions in complex social situations to accomplish joint goals
  – including communication
  – *inhibit* simulation

Requires agents mutually sensitive and responsive to interactive norms

Social expectations in still face paradigm an *affective* sensitivity to interactive norms

- infant feels disruptions, thwarted expectations, etc., without an explicit (cognitive) grasp of their normative content

Still face has consistent and differential effect on newborns' behavior (Nagy 2008)

- decreased eye contact
- increased negative affect
- more self-regulatory behaviors

Main point

Taking seriously our preverbal sensitivity to interactive norms affirms the centrality of *affectivity* in shaping basic forms of self-consciousness and social awareness.

Does emphasizing complementarity and coordination (sensitivity to norms) challenge or enhance simulation-based approaches to social cognition?

How do we experience norms?

- How do affectively sensed norms constrain action in the absence of an explicit grasp of their normative content?

- Can norms be part of the content of perception?

What is the relation between empathy and (affective sensitivity to) normativity?

Thank you.