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# INDIVIDUAL AND SETTING DIFFERENCES IN KINESIC ACTIVITY DURING CONVERSATIONS

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**SUMMARY** Popular notions to the contrary, recent studies of the relationship between enduring personal characteristics (such as personality traits, gender and age) and kinesic activity during social interaction have had disappointing results. The present study advocates and tests an approach to the problem which involves defining kinesic activity more broadly, i.e., by attempting to discover *patterns* of non-verbal acts. Conversations among quartets of adolescents were video-taped and coded for seated kinesic activity. Based on factor analysis of numerous kinesic activities observed during the conversations, scales (labelled Boredom, Leg Activity and Turning) were correlated with personality, age, sex and seating arrangement measures. Boredom was negatively related to affiliative tendency and positively related to increasing age. The Leg Activity scale distinguished the sexes and was related to defensiveness. The Turning scale was related to affiliative tendency, defensiveness and seating arrangements. This broader (pattern) approach to non-verbal behaviour measurement appears to be a promising one.

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Non-verbal behaviour is widely believed to communicate important information about emotion, interpersonal attitude and personality. As Duncan (1969) notes, studies linking specific non-verbal acts to such "external" variables are very numerous. However, those which deal with emotion or attitude are much more frequent than those which examine the relationship between non-verbal behaviour and personality or other individual difference variables. The present study is concerned with a specific understudied set of relationships, those between kinesic activity occurring during conversations and such enduring individual difference variables as traits, gender and age.

Studies akin to the present one have not had much success in identifying significant relationships. This may be because emotion and attitude (the more commonly investigated psychological correlates of non-verbal behaviour) are more immediate; they are more often writ large upon the face and body. Personality characteristics are more enduring, but they may be overshadowed as determiners of body posture and movement by the more immediate cognitive activities