

Couples Emotion Dynamics During Conversations Involving Stress and Enjoyment

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Abstract: While conversing face-to-face, romantic partners are thought to form a coupled and co-regulatory system, unintentionally shaping each other's emotional states on a moment-by-moment basis. What has been less explored, however, are the ways in which this coupling is modulated by high-level interpersonal factors, such as discussing topics that are stressful for one or both partners. We provide an initial exploration by examining the emotion ratings of 42 romantic, heterosexual couples during conversations involving stress or enjoyment. Ratings were generated via continuous dials (sampled every second) as participants watched video playback of their interactions. The resulting time series were assessed for time-lagged patterns of emotional coupling using cross recurrence quantification analysis. Initial results show that for topics that involved a mutual sense of stress or enjoyment, overall coupling was high, but this coupling was largely disrupted once the stress was more asymmetrically experienced.