

“We Just Clicked” – Conversational Features of Social Bonding in Speed Dates

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Abstract:

Most research on social bond formation has argued that status-attraction and self-selection narrow the pool of suitable persons and then within the remaining set the quality of social interaction is such that some persons click / connect and form bonds while others do not. But what does it mean for persons to click and how is that accomplished? This paper studies how different speech styles e.g. controlling, supportive interchanges, excitement, and accommodation - are used differently by men and women to establish a reciprocal social bond. To study dating conversations we collected original data on multiple speed dating events using surveys on dating decisions and interpersonal perceptions and audio recordings for information on speech acts. We then construct indicators of speech styles using lexical, dialog act, and prosodic features derived from acoustic information and transcriptions of each date. Last, we use state of the art multi-level dyadic analysis (Kenny, Kashy and Cook 2006) to discern which speech styles are more or less associated with desired forms of tie formation (i.e., date selection).