

A Dynamic Dyadic Systems Perspective on Interpersonal Conversation

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Conversations between strangers, friends, coworker, romantic partners, and family members are the site where – through language – relationships are commenced or concluded, stressors are amplified or attenuated, conflicts are entrenched or resolved, and goals are advanced or thwarted. What happens in the back-and-forth exchange of messages within conversations to produce such consequential and varied outcomes? Previous answers have tended to focus on characteristics of conversations, in general, or on qualities of specific messages, rather than on the language that partners use over the course of a dyadic interaction. The study of language in conversations has also been constrained by the tools available for the quantitative analysis of conversational dynamics. A dynamic dyadic systems perspective (a) characterizes the language of conversations as sequences of behavior representing the back-and-forth exchange of messages between partners and (b) adapts intensive longitudinal data techniques to operationalize dynamic patterns within conversations. This presentation explicates a dynamic dyadic systems perspective on interpersonal conversation and recounts its development. Initial research informing the development of analytical methods used data from four laboratory observation studies of supportive conversations; in these studies, transcripts were coded at the level of utterances for verbal response modes operationalizing the language of supportive listening. Subsequent research extended the perspective to a variety of conversational episodes, focusing on language within (a) interpersonal influence interactions between peers concerning risky health behaviors, (b) interpersonal conflict interactions between romantic partners discussing a serial argument, and (c) supportive conversations between peers about parental bereavement. To conclude, this presentation illustrates how a dynamic dyadic systems perspective enables novel investigations of language and social interaction in interpersonal relationships.



[Denise Haunani Solomon](#) (Ph.D. Northwestern University) is a Distinguished Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences at Penn State University. Her research has developed relational turbulence theory, which clarifies how relational uncertainty and disrupted patterns of interdependence in romantic relationships are manifest relationship talk and can result in perceptions of relationships as chaotic. She has also advanced research connecting the language of support and conflict to social psychological antecedents and outcomes. Her recent work forwards a dynamic dyadic systems perspective on the study of language in conversation. In addition, she is co-author of the textbook *Interpersonal Communication: Putting Theory into Practice*.