

Social Seminar, 4th December 2020



Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan

Alexander Kirchner-Häusler

1

Relationships show emotions that fit cultural relationship practices.

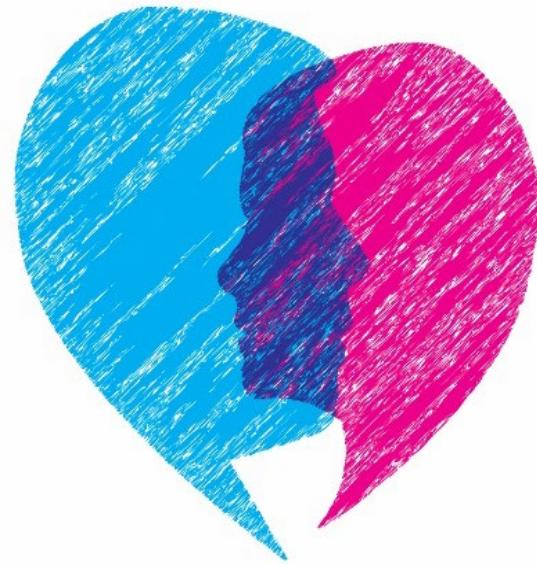
2

These differences emerge partly between partners and over time.

3

Having more fitting emotions is related to better relationships.

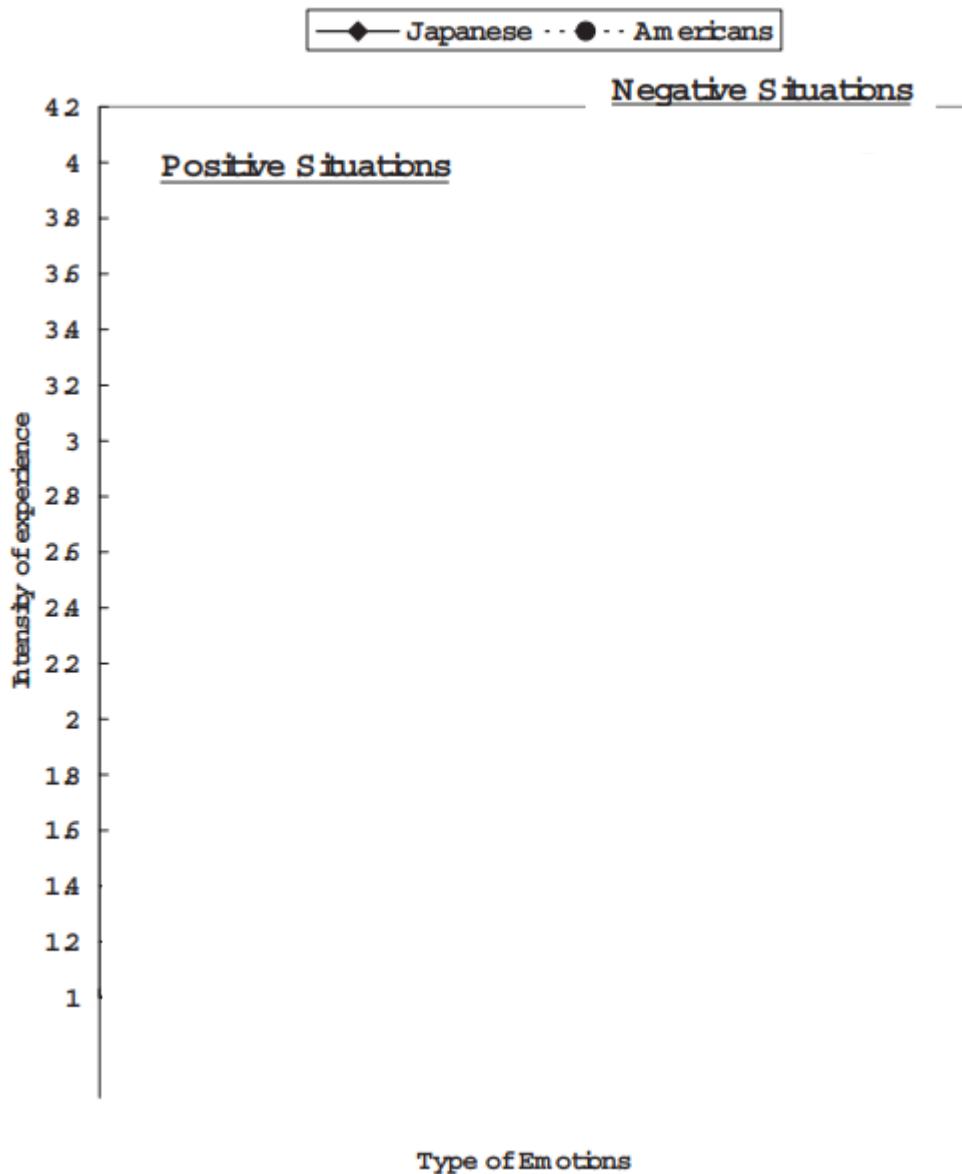
The Couple Interaction Project



Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan



Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan



Different emotional lives

Western individuals tend to report

- more disengaging (individual oriented) feelings,
- more positive feelings, and
- less negative feelings

compared to East-Asian individuals.

East-Asian individuals tend to report

- more engaging (relationship oriented) feelings,
- greater balance of positive and negative feelings, and
 - more emotional moderation

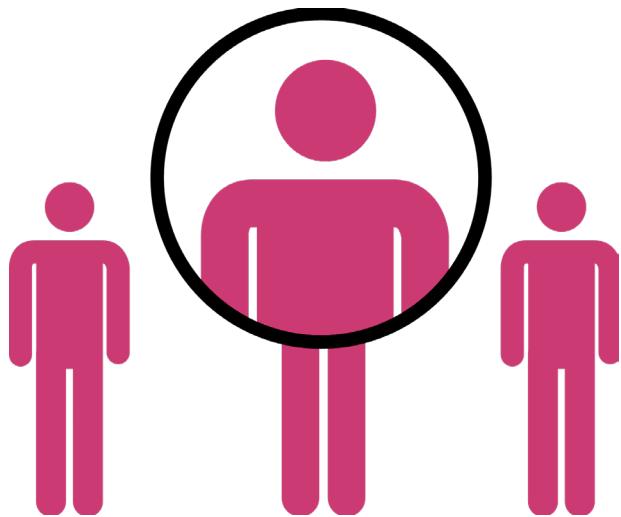
compared to Western individuals.

Emotions as building blocks of relationships



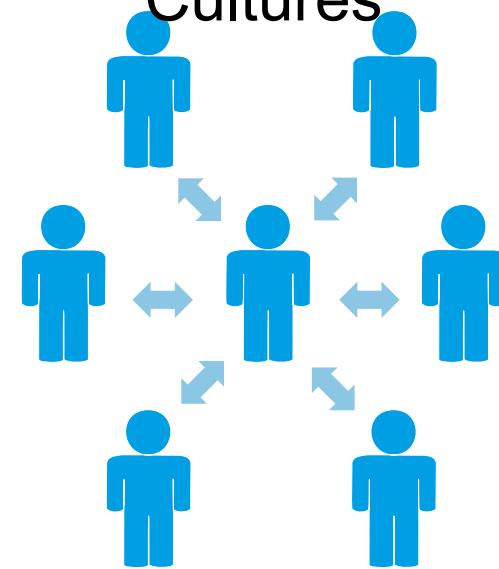
Relationship Models can differ

Western Cultures



Autonomy
Self-Worth
Self-Expression & Enhancement

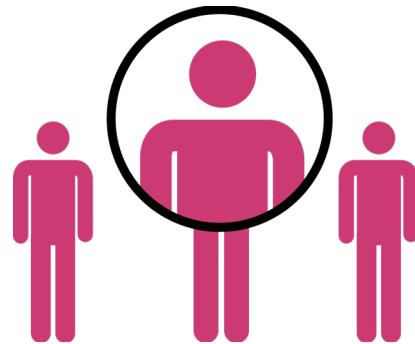
East-Asian Cultures



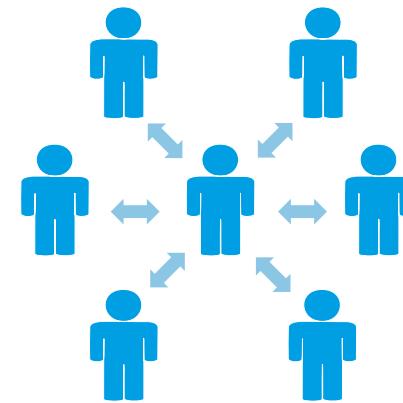
Relatedness
Social Harmony
Adjustment & Perspective Taking

Emotions fit cultural relationship models

Western Cultures



East-Asian Cultures



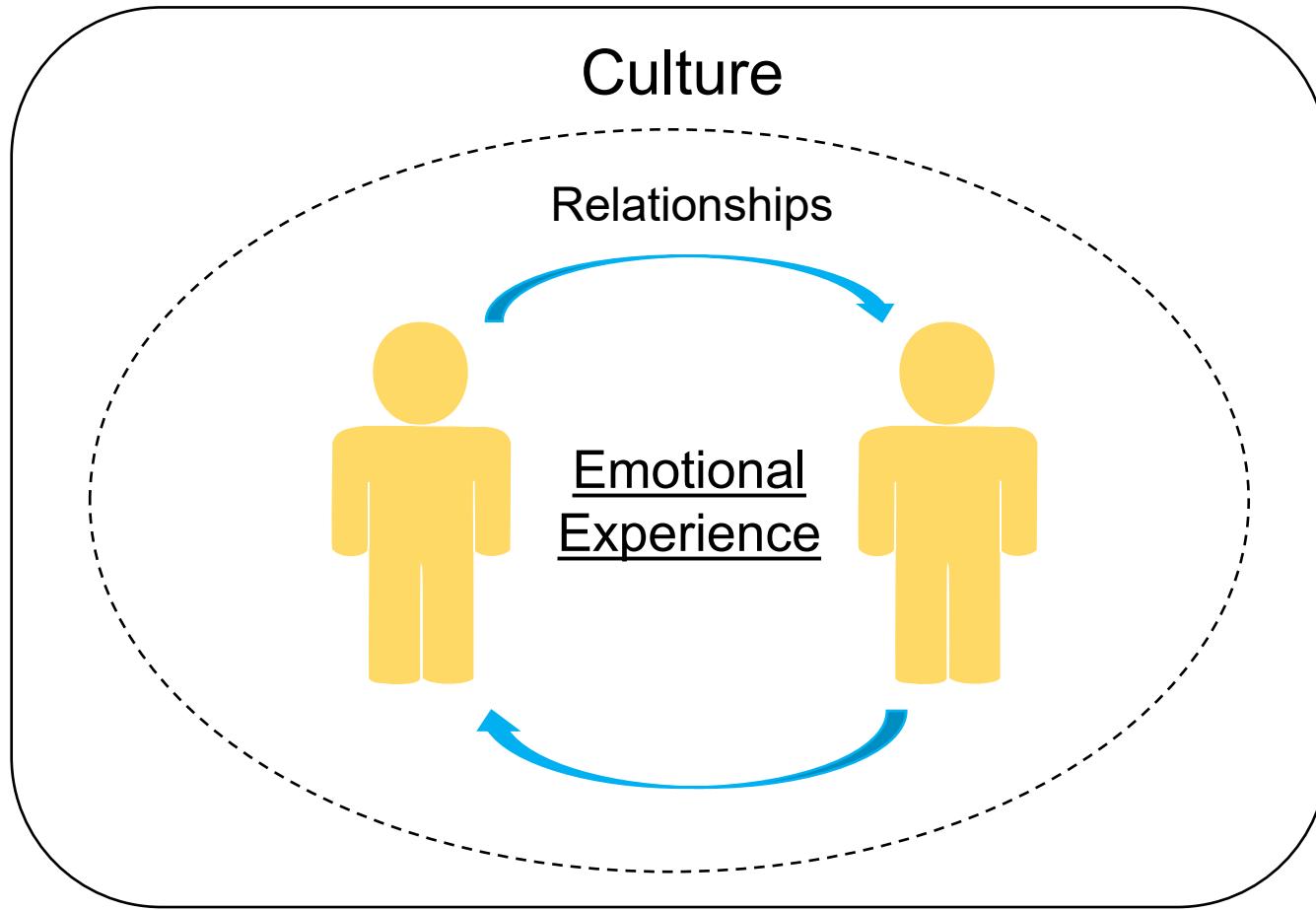
Relatively greater fit of disengaging emotions

Maximization of **positive** over **negative** feelings

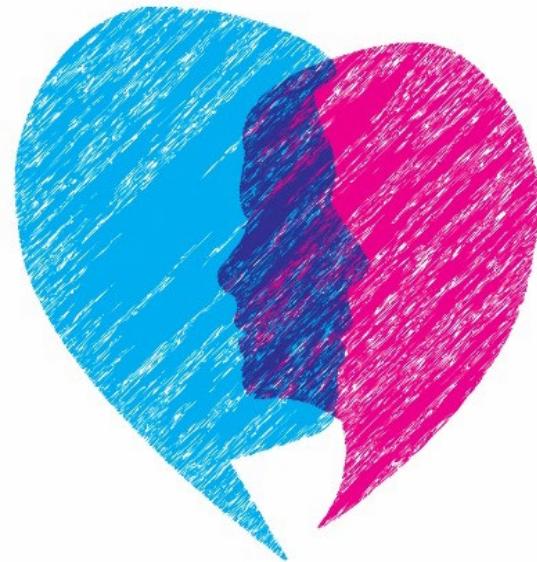
Greater focus on engaging over disengaging feelings

Greater balance of **positive** and **negative** feelings

From individuals to couples



Data The Couple Interaction Project



Project Goals:

Examining cultural differences in emotions in social contexts



Observe emotions in the social contexts of interactions and relationships



Examine emotions as dynamic phenomena between people, over time



Explore the implications and consequences of affective patterns

KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium
58 heterosexual couples



Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan
80 heterosexual couples

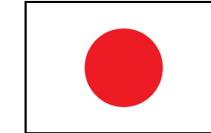


35 to 50 years old / at least 2 years together / cohabiting

Who are these couples?



58 couples



80 Couples

Age	41.22 (5.15)	42.98 (4.33)
Relationship	15.55 (8.20)	14.98 (7.20)
Duration	72.4%	97.5%
Married		
Socio-Economic Status	30.4% Upper Middle Class 60.7% Middle Class 6.0% Lower Middle Class	10.0% Upper Middle Class 64.4% Middle Class 20.6% Lower Middle Class

0

Preparatory Study

1

Pre-Visit Questionnaire (online & at home)

- Current areas of disagreement in couple
- Relationship satisfaction, Self-Construal, ...

2

10-minute disagreement interaction

- Topic chosen from list of areas of disagreement
- All interactions were videotaped

3

Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan



Belgian Lab



Japanese Lab

0

Preparatory Study

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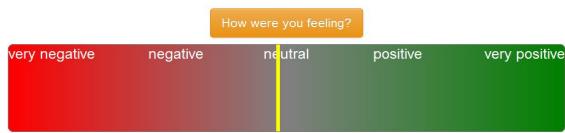
Post Interaction Assessment (VMR)

- Second-by-second affect during the interaction
- 30s segments of 12 discrete emotions and 3 actions

Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan



Move the slider to the left and the right to indicate how your feelings during the conversation were changing. You do not need to click or keep the mouse button held down.



Below the video is a list of feelings and thoughts that you may have experienced while you were talking with your partner. You can indicate how much you remember experiencing each feeling and thought by clicking a number between 0 (did not experience it at all) and 6 (did experience it extremely). Please answer spontaneously. There are no right or wrong answers. If you think an answer does not apply, select "not at all".

During the part of the conversation that I just saw, I remember feeling...

	Not at all	Somewhat	Very much				
empathy for my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
afraid of hurting my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
resigned	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
hurt	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
guilty	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
annoyed	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strong	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
calm	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Continuous Affect

“Use the slider below the video to indicate how good or bad you were feeling during that conversation.”
(-100 to +100)

Discrete Emotions (30s)

“Indicate how much you remember experiencing each feeling and thought.”
(12 emotions, 3 Actions)

0

Preparatory Study

1

Pre-Visit Questionnaire (online & at home)

- Current areas of disagreement in couple
- Relationship satisfaction, Self-Construal, ...

2

10-minute disagreement interaction

- Topic chosen from list of areas of disagreement
- All interactions were videotaped

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Post Interaction Assessment (VMR)

- Second-by-second affect during the interaction
- 30s segments of 12 discrete emotions and 3 actions

4

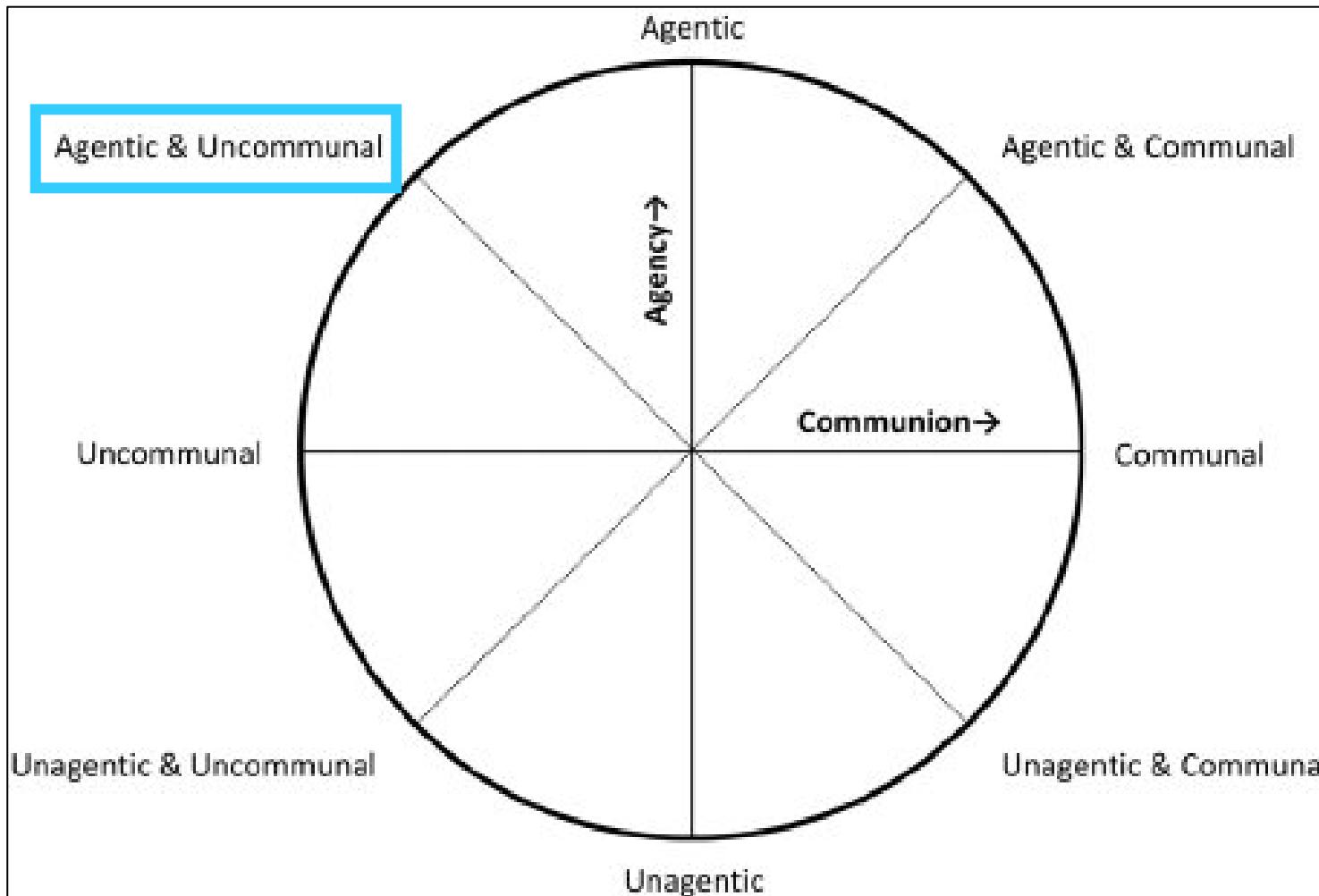
6-Month Follow Up

Different topics were discussed in the two cultures

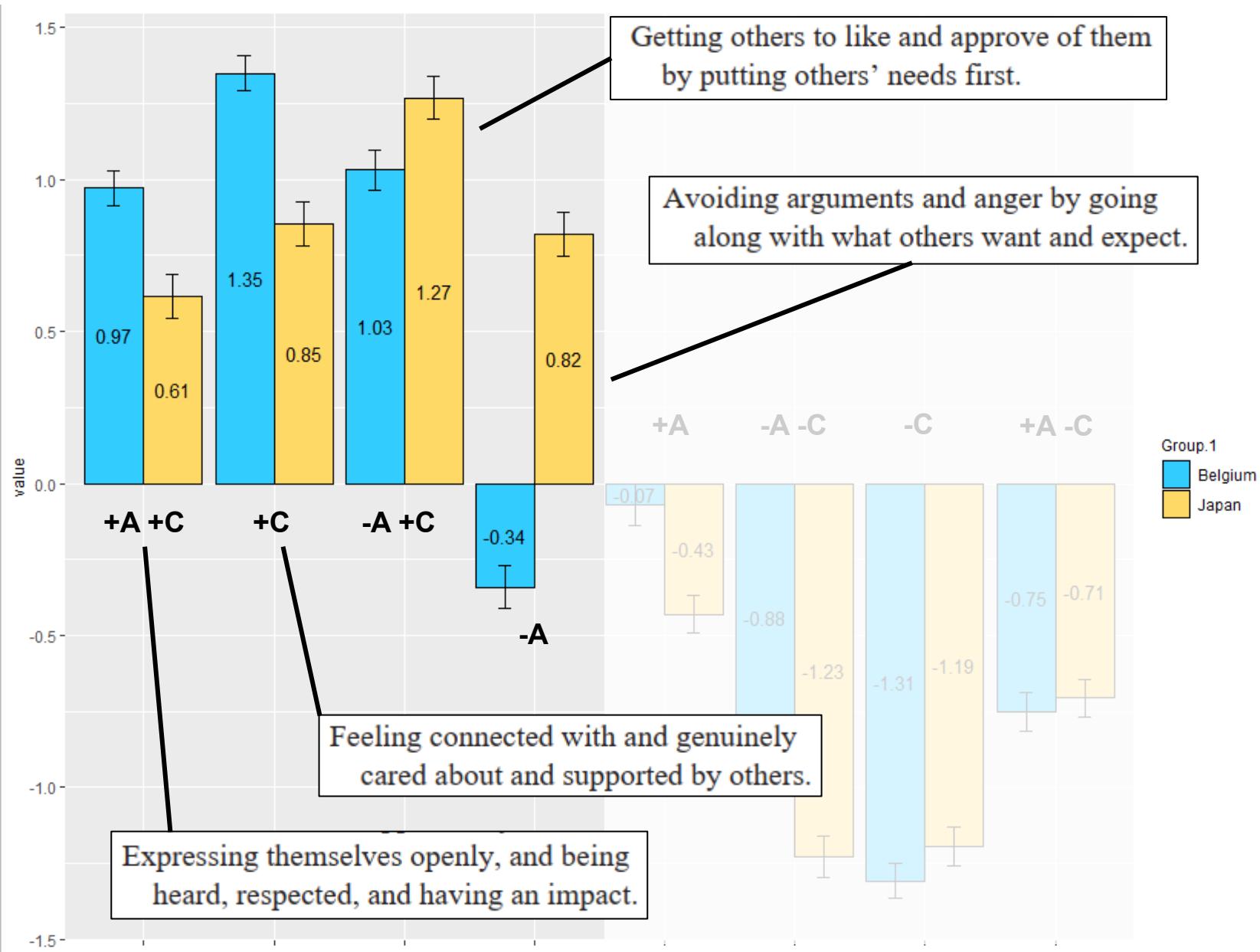
Topic		Percent
Relations with in-laws, family, or neighbors		15.52%
Communication (e.g. not listening to each other)		13.79%
Children (e.g. whether or not to have children, how to raise children)		10.34%
Convictions, beliefs (e.g., religion, politics, or other things believed important)		8.62%
Work (e.g. time spent at work, career decisions)		8.62%

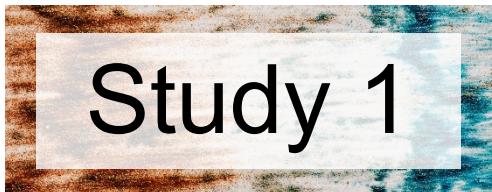
Topic		Percent
Money or possessions relevant to your relationship (e.g. house, mortgage, car)		20.00%
Health (e.g. alcohol, drugs)		12.50%
Personal habits, characteristics, or behavioural tendencies (e.g. looks, fashion sense, diet, always showing irritation)		12.50%
Leisure time interests or activities		11.25%
Children (e.g. whether or not to have children, how to raise children)		8.75%

Partners differed in their interpersonal values



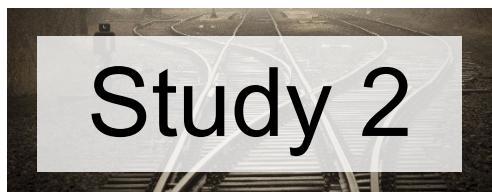
Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan





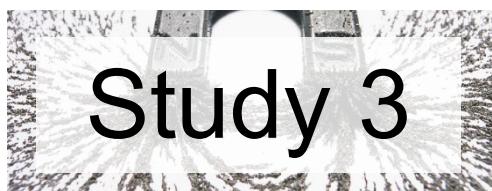
Kirchner, Boiger, Uchida, &
Mesquita, in preparation

Proportions of Positive and Negative Feelings



Kirchner, Boiger, Uchida, &
Mesquita, in preparation

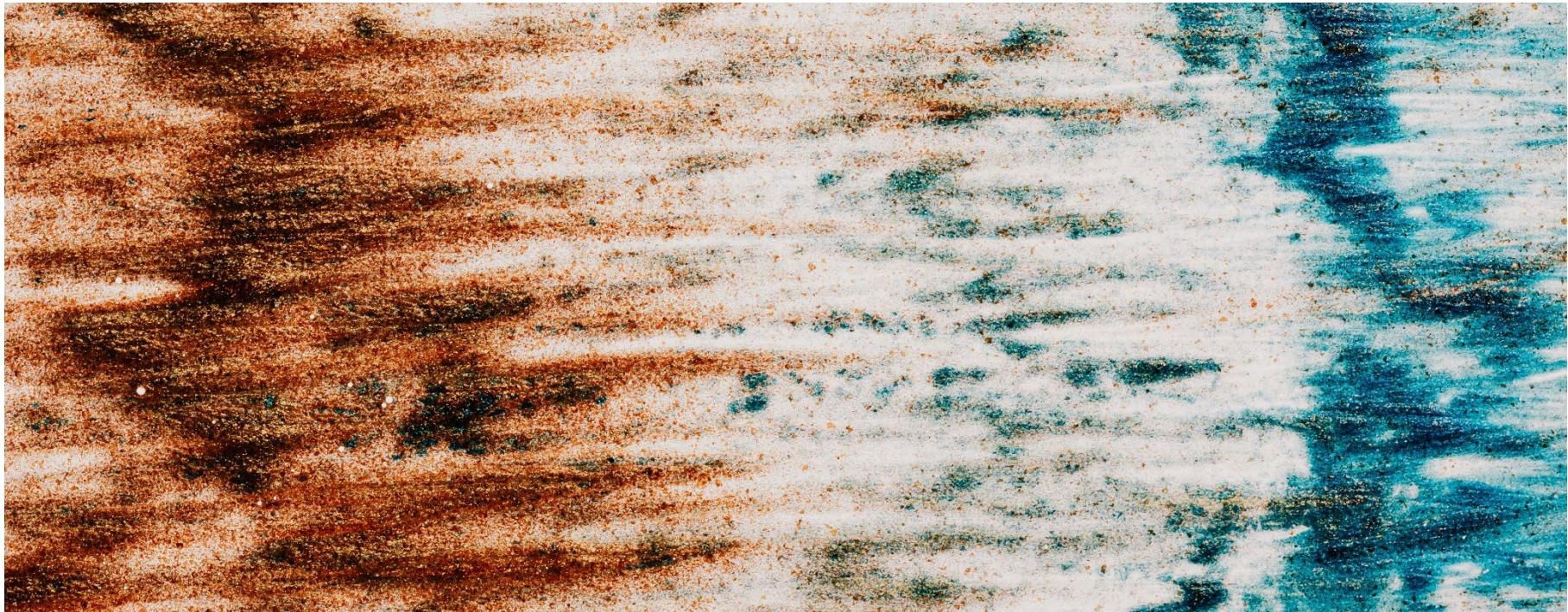
Affective Dynamics of Positive and Negative Feelings



Boiger, Kirchner, Schouten,
Uchida, & Mesquita, 2020

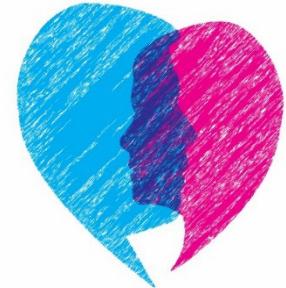
Cultural Differences in Attractor States

Study 1: Proportions of positive and negative feelings



Project Goals:

Examining cultural differences in emotions in social contexts



Observe emotions in the social contexts of interactions and relationships



Examine emotions as dynamic phenomena between people, over time



Explore the implications and consequences of affective patterns

5 TO 1: THE GOLDEN RATIO IN RELATIONSHIPS

If you want to stay together, remember this equation: Five good things for every bad one.

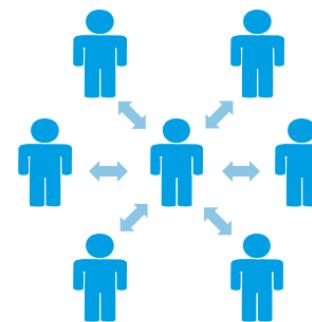


Western Cultures



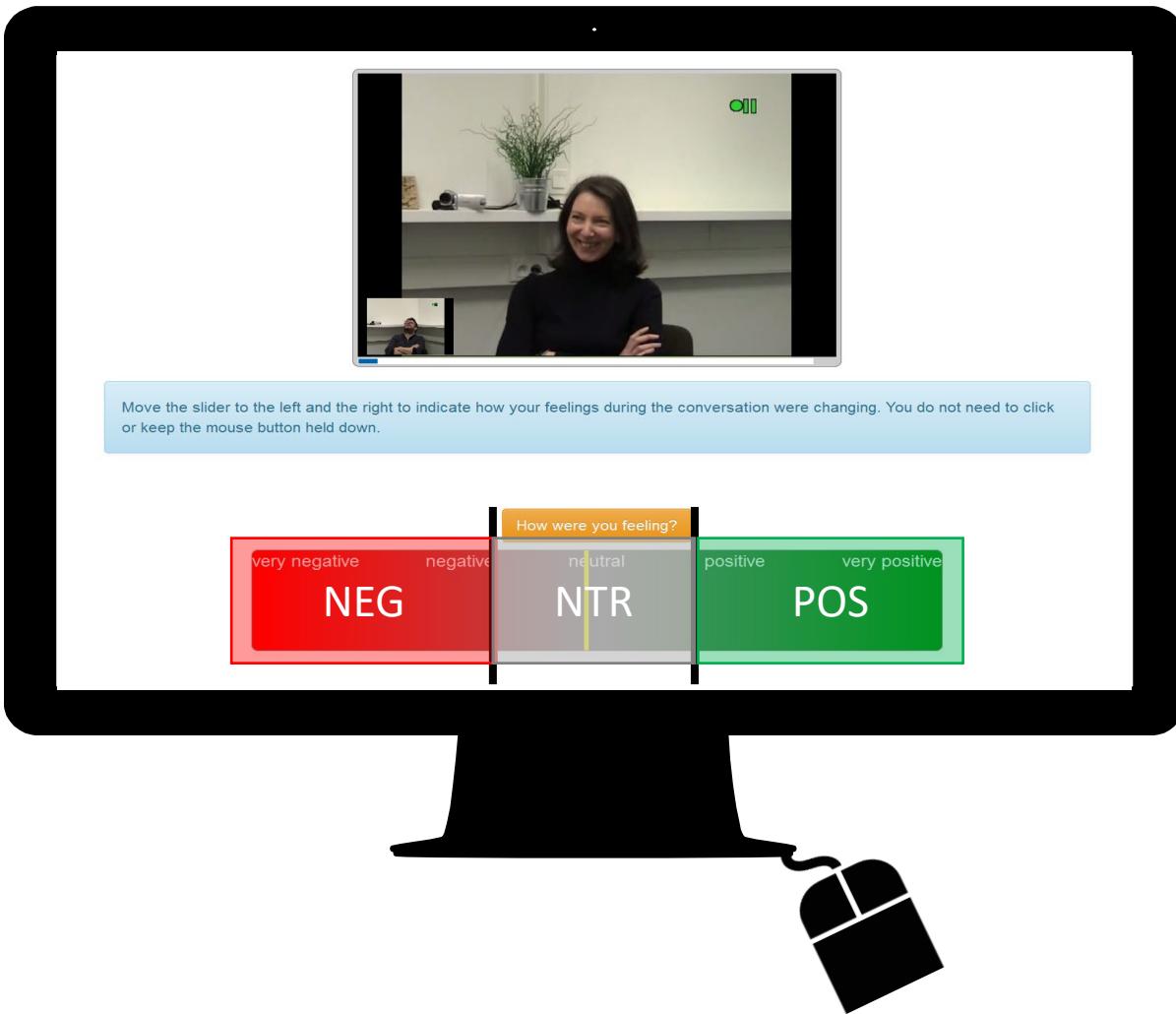
Maximization of **positive** over
negative feelings

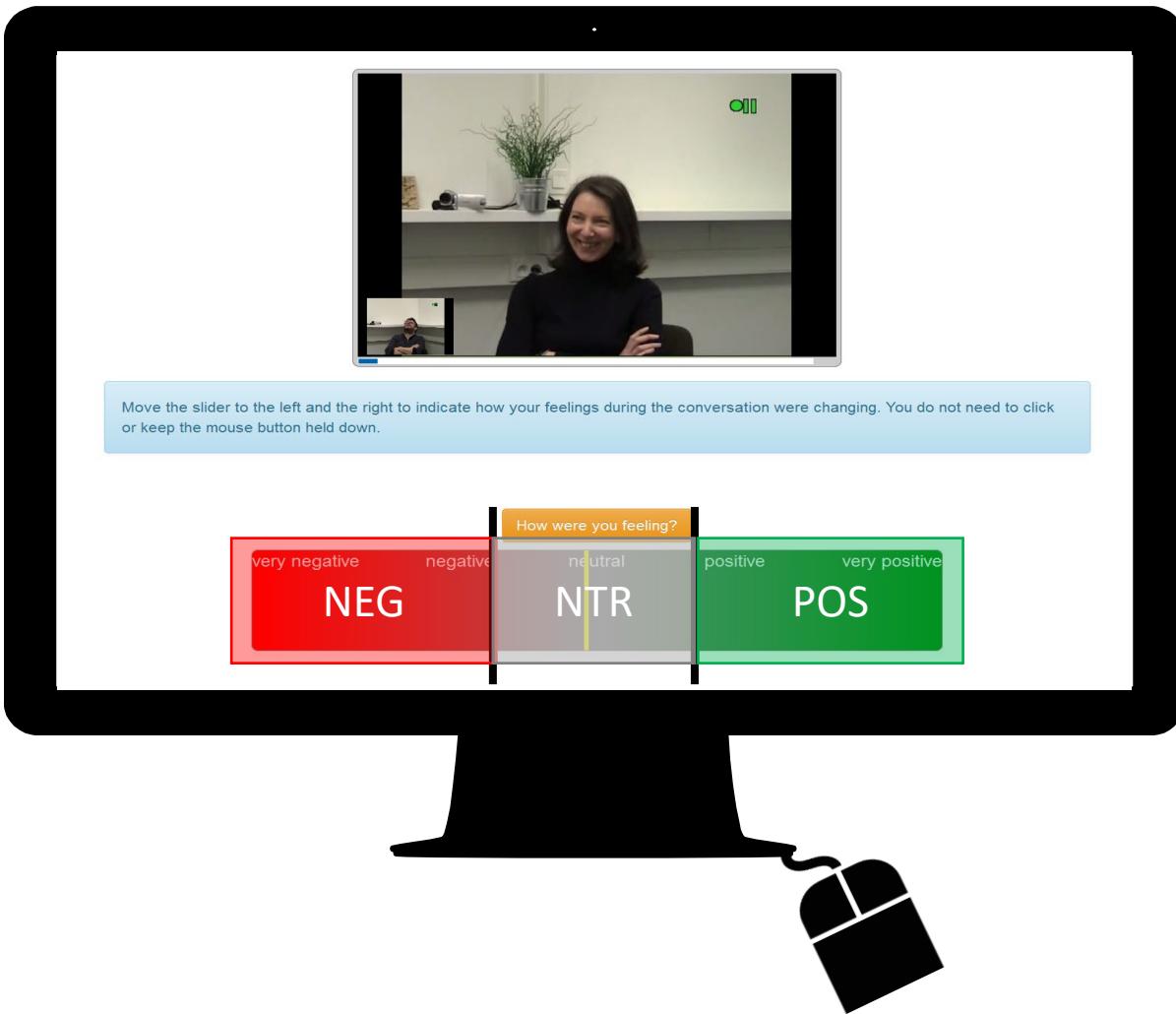
East-Asian Cultures



Greater balance of **positive** and
negative feelings

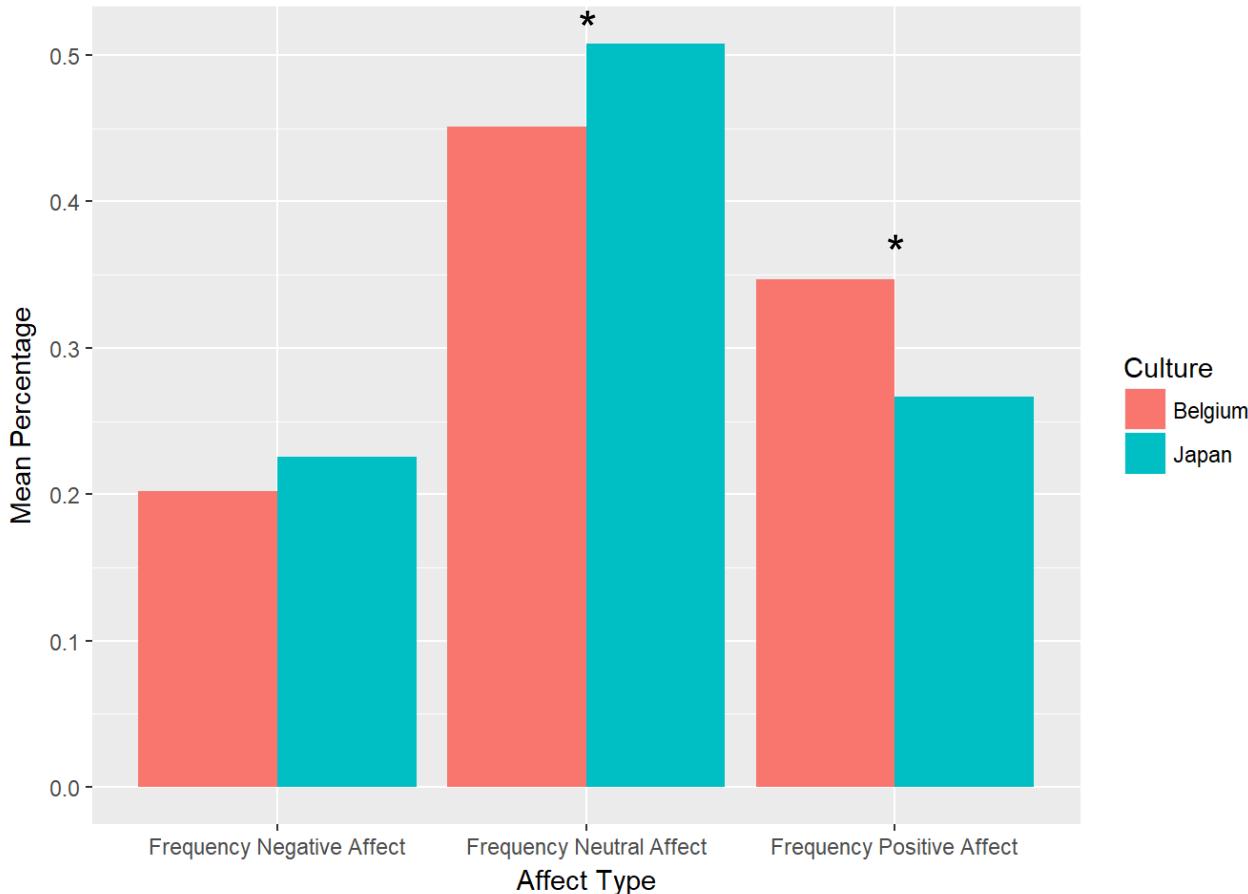
Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan



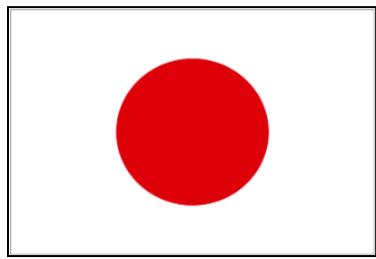


Couple Affect Ratio

Belgian couples reported more positive,
Japanese couples more neutral affect



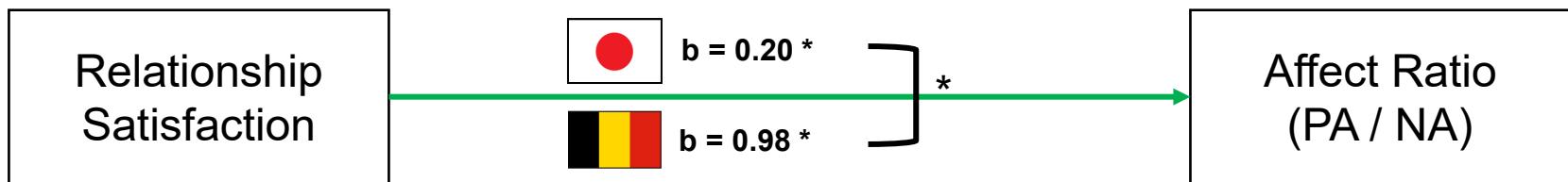
Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan



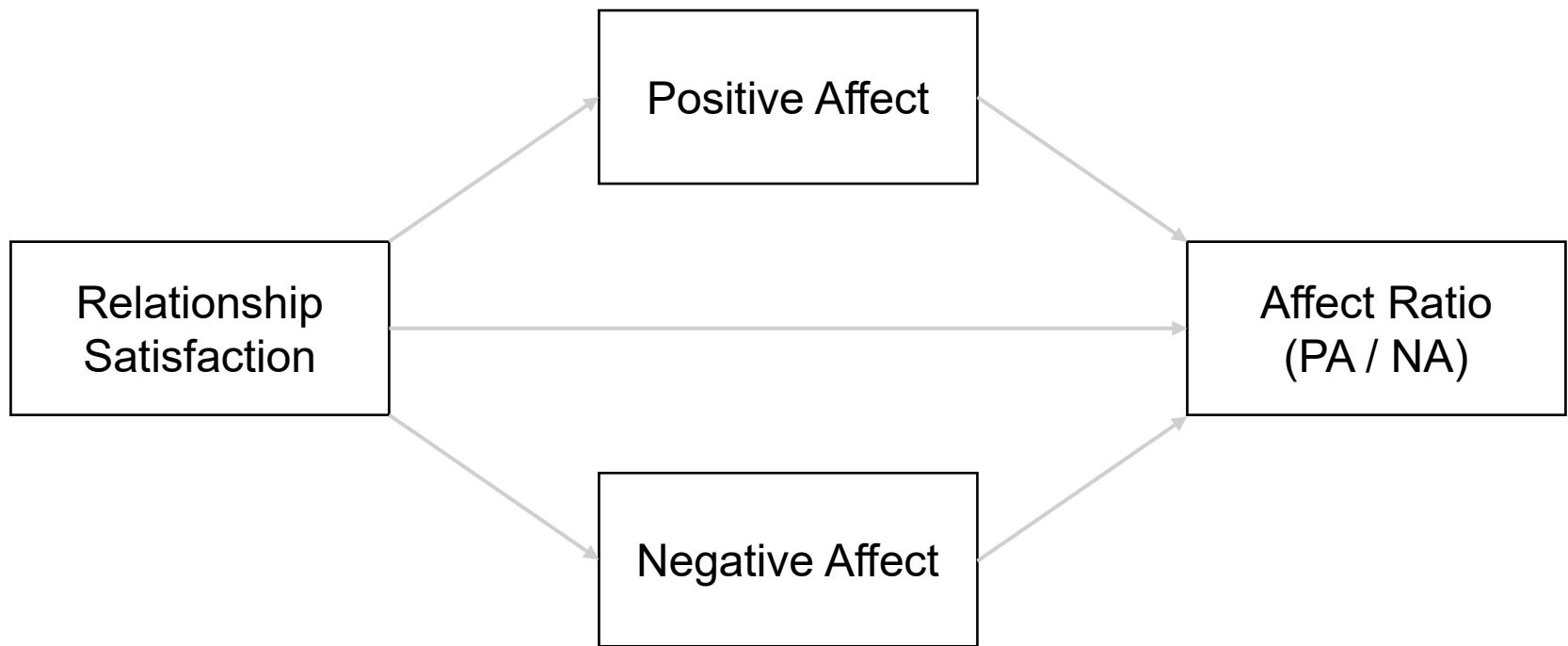
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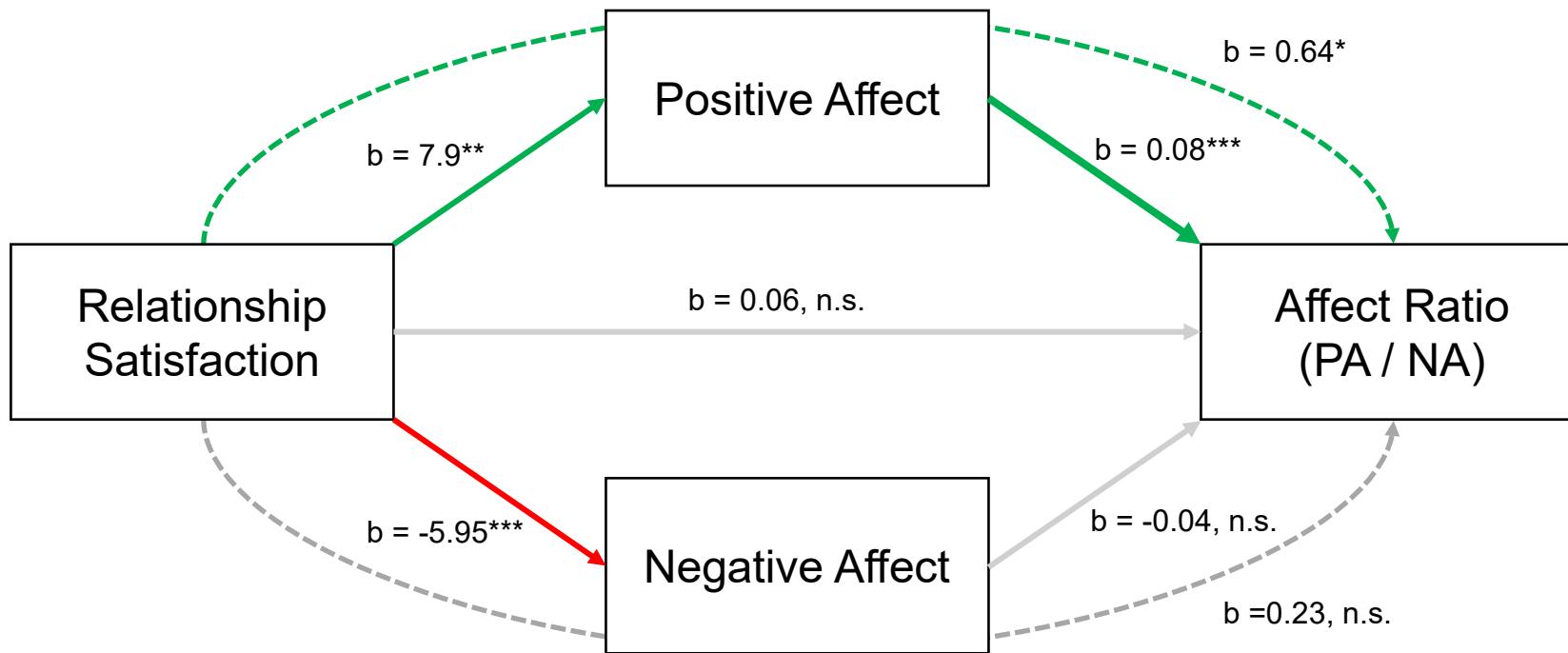
More satisfied couples show more positive affect ratios, but more so in Belgium than in Japan



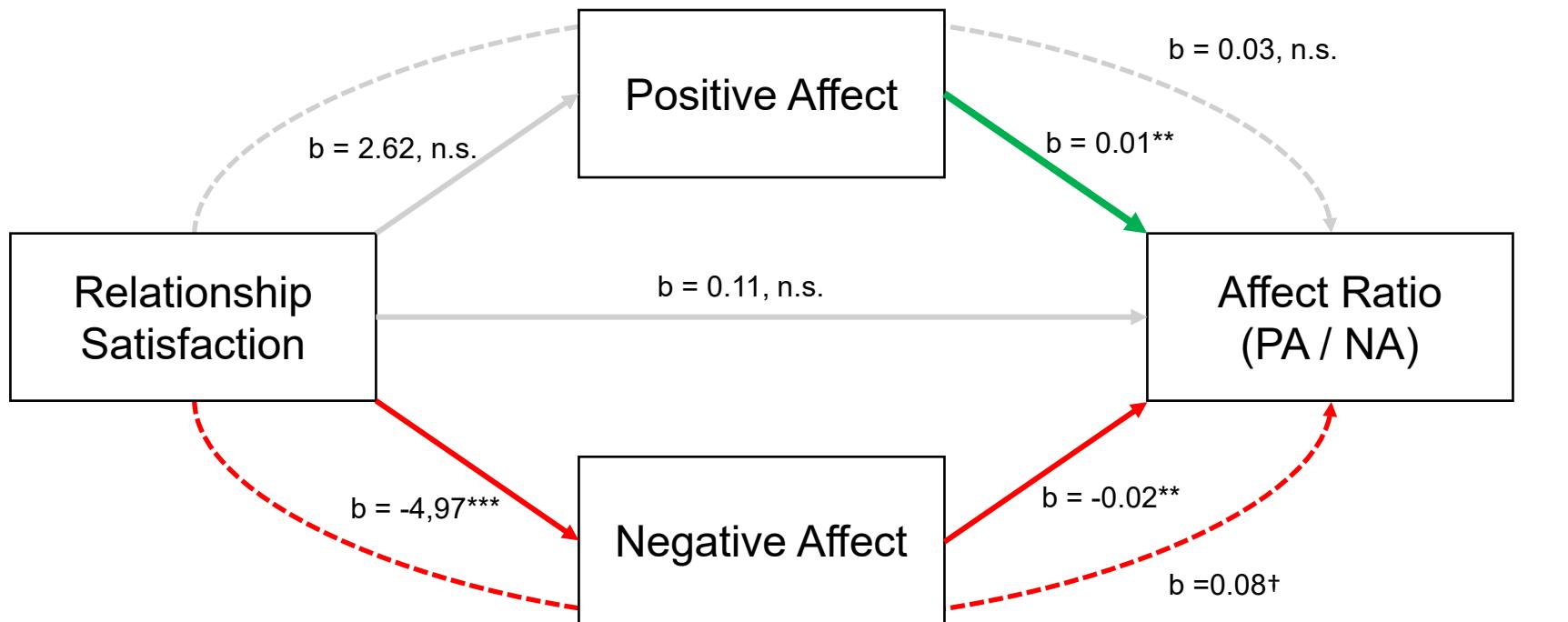
Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan



More satisfied Belgian couples show higher affect ratios due to more positive (and partly less negative) affect



More satisfied Japanese couples show higher affect ratios due to less negative, but not more positive affect



Study 2: Affective Dynamics of positive and negative affect



Project Goals:

Examining cultural differences in emotions in social contexts



Observe emotions in the social contexts of interactions and relationships

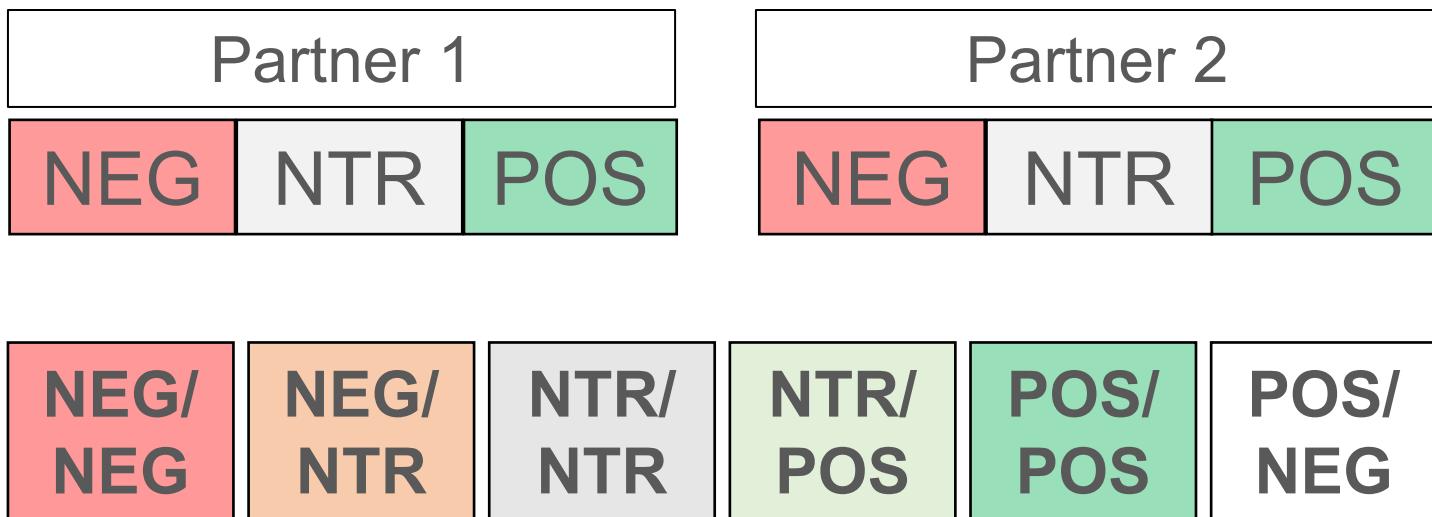
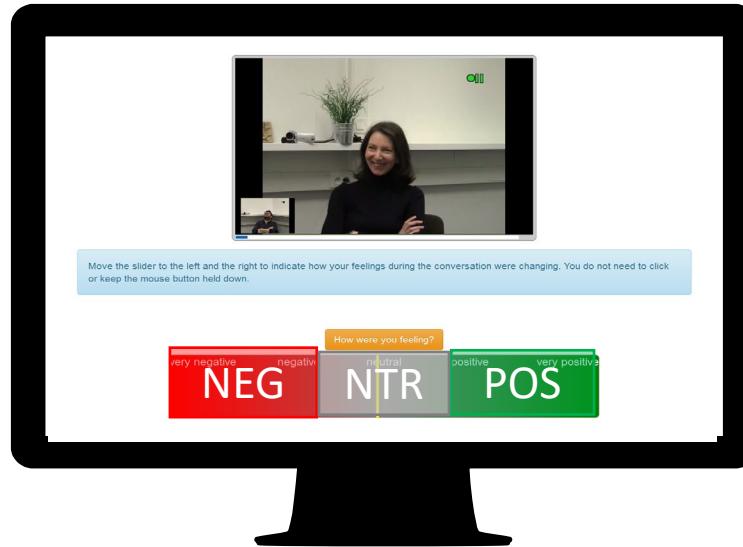


Examine emotions as dynamic phenomena between people, over time

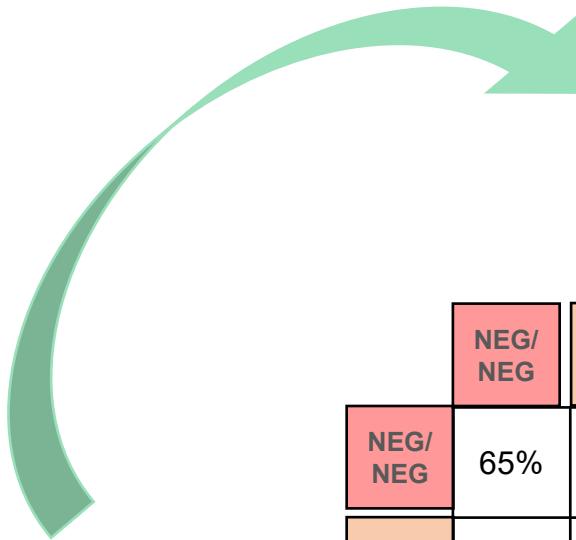


Explore the implications and consequences of affective patterns

Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan



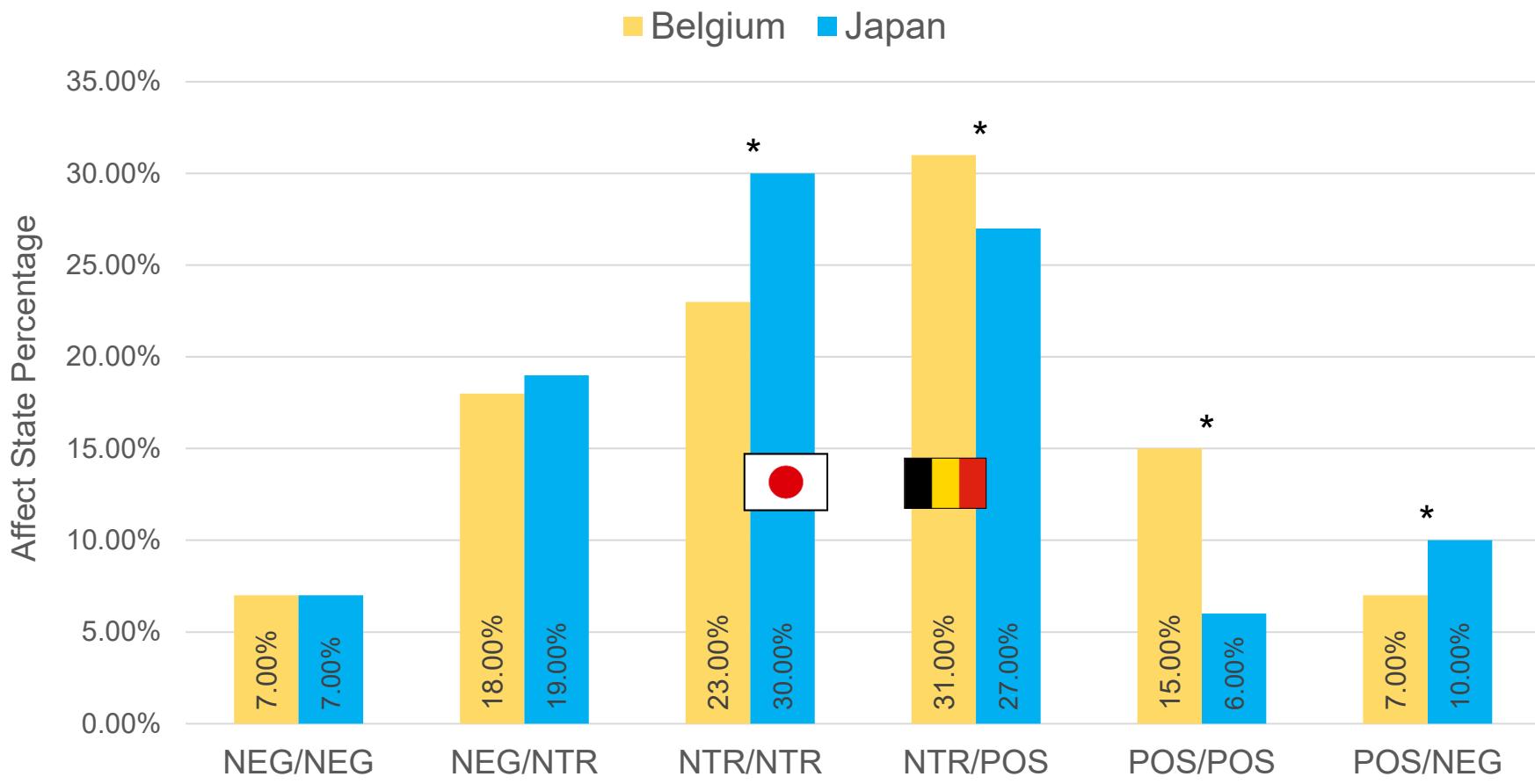
**Couple
State
Time 1**



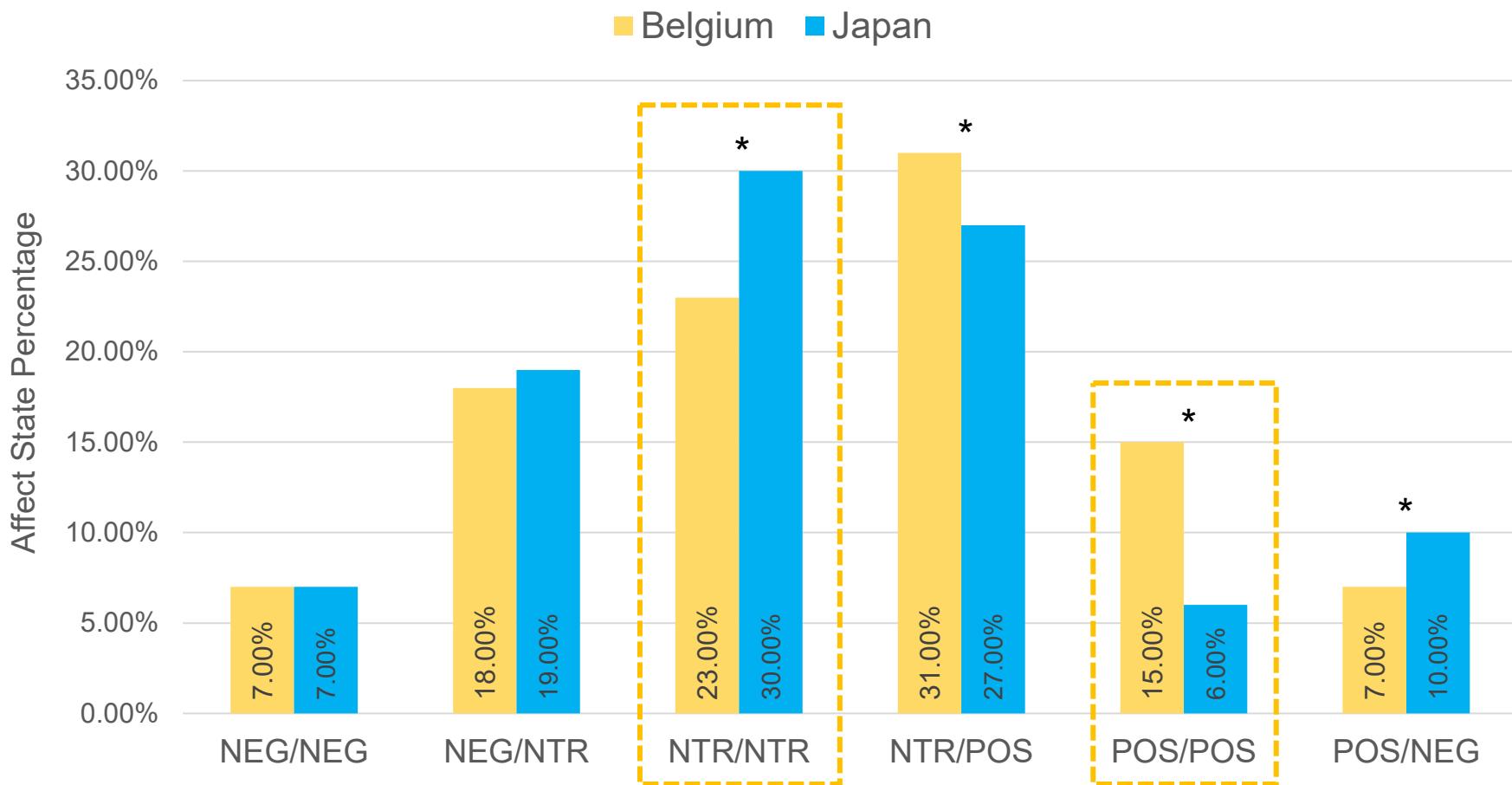
**Couple
State
Time 2**

	NEG/ NEG	NEG/ NTR	NTR/ NTR	NTR/ POS	POS/ POS	POS/ NEG
NEG/ NEG	65%	24%	9%	1%	0%	1%
NEG/ NTR	10%	60%	20%	4%	0%	5%
NTR/ NTR	2%	16%	58%	20%	2%	2%
NTR/ POS	0%	4%	14%	66%	11%	5%
POS/ POS	0%	1%	4%	2%	7%	1%
POS/ NEG	3%	11%	4%	25%	2%	56%

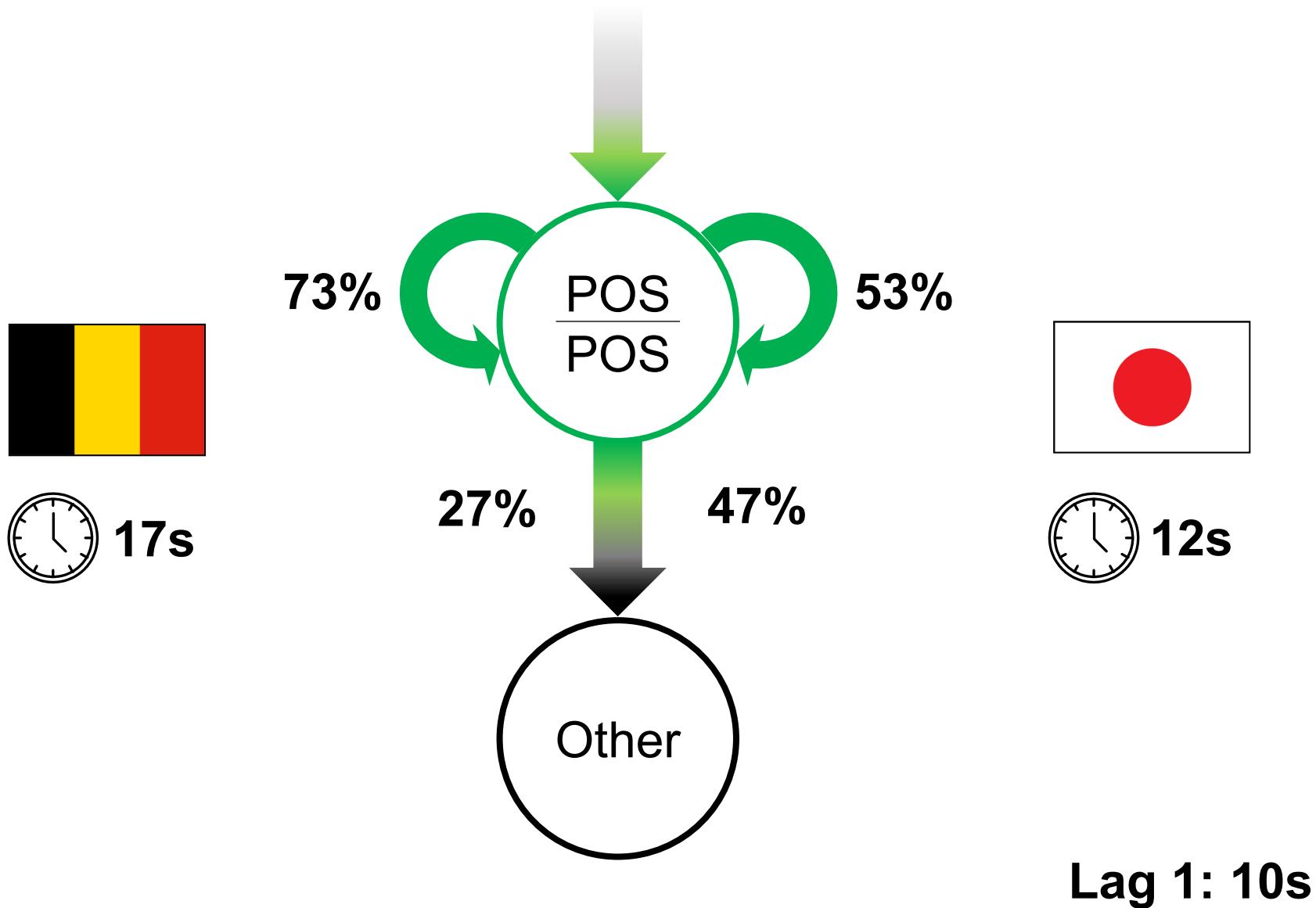
Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan



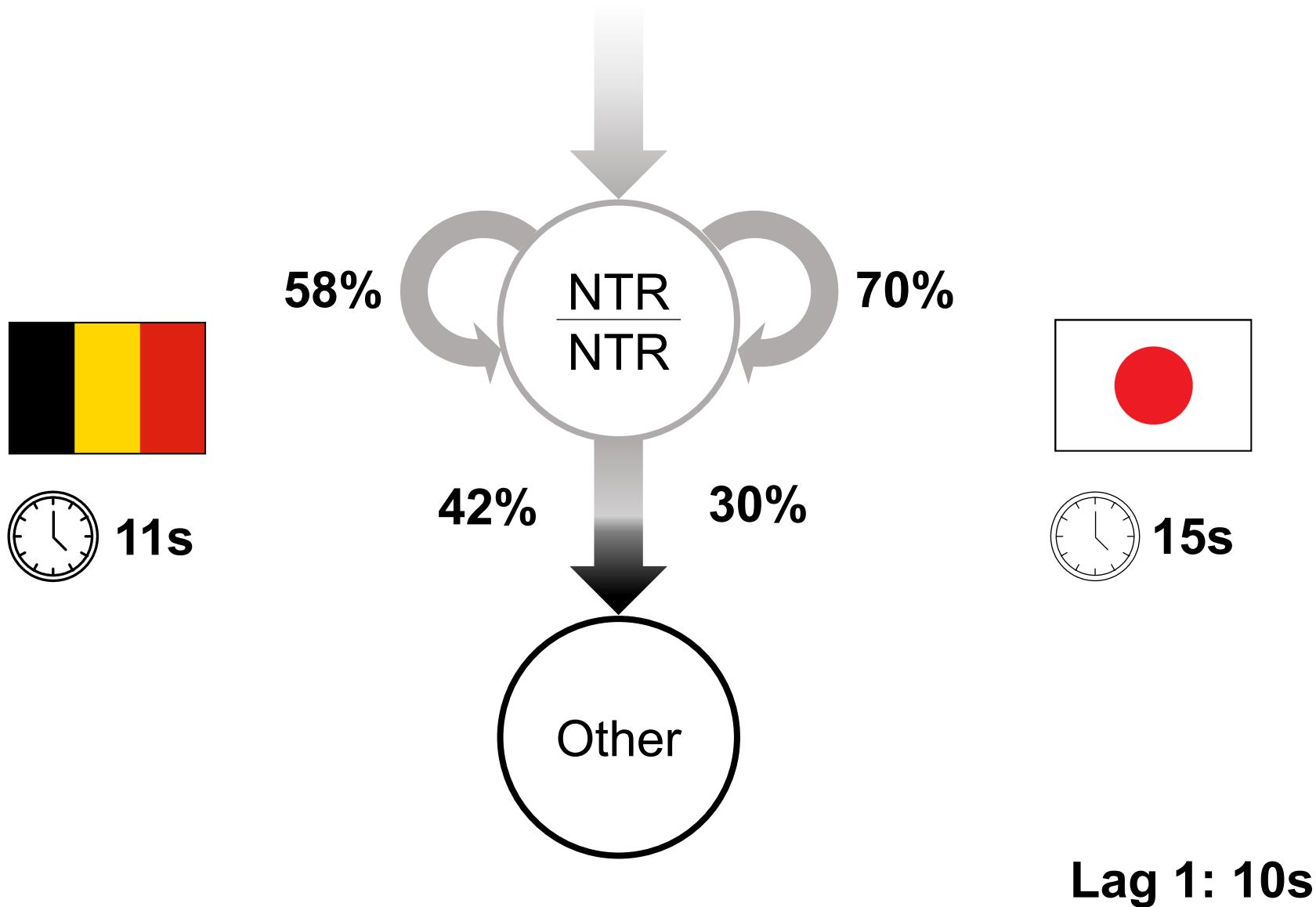
Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan



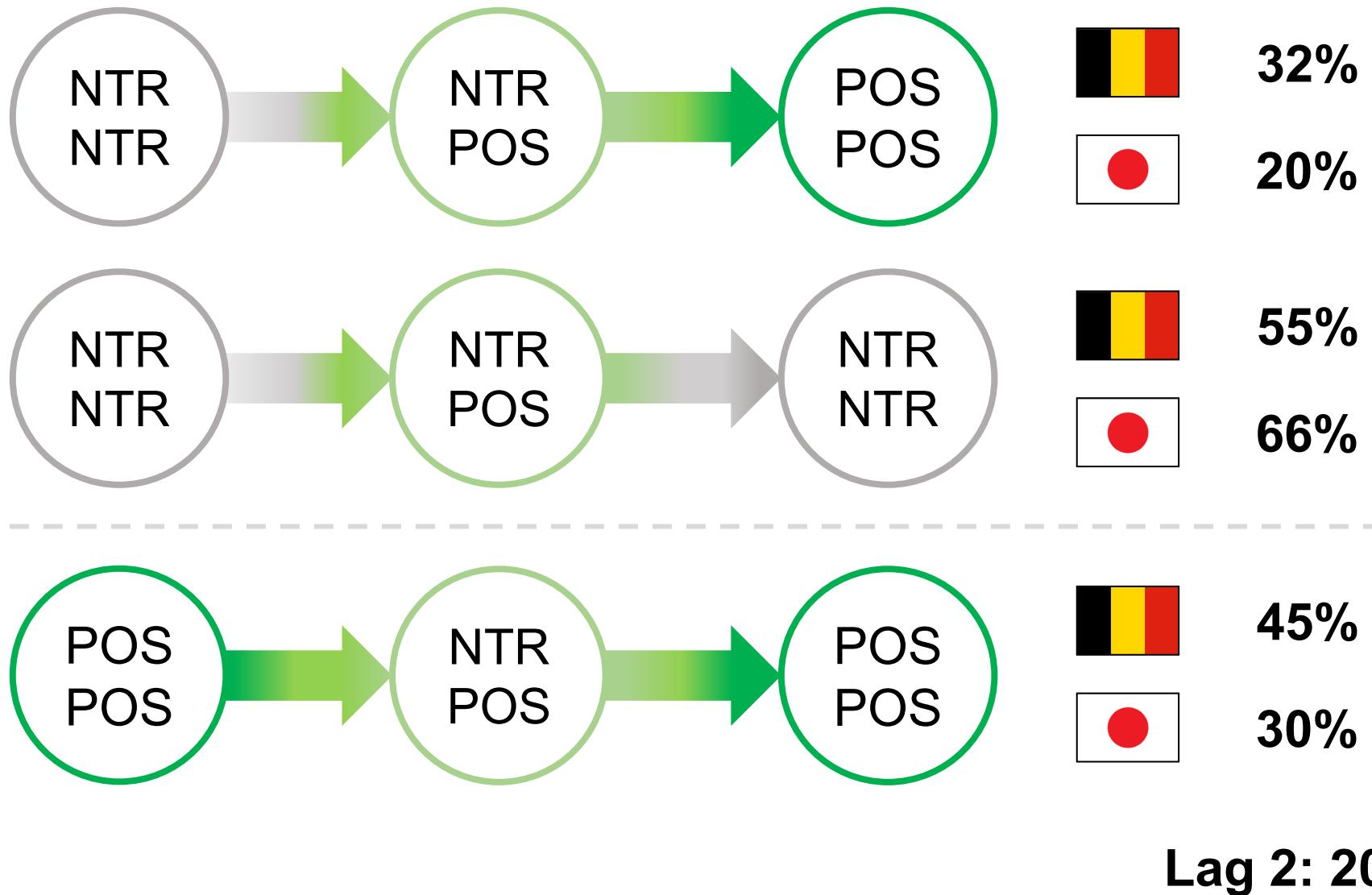
Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan



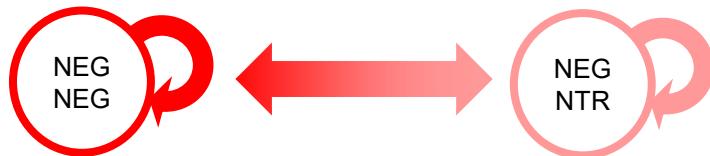
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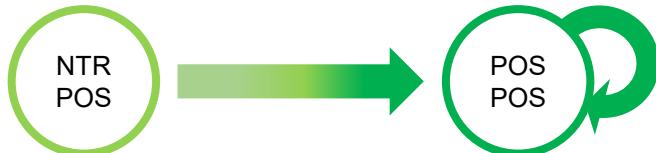
Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan



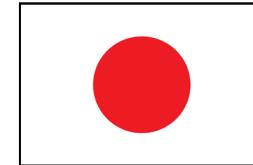
Relationship satisfaction



Less stability and transitions
of negative affect states



More transitions into, and
more stability of, shared
positive affect



Less stability and transitions
of negative affect states



More transitions out of
negative affect into shared
neutral affect

Study 3: Cultural Differences in Attractor States



Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan



Below the video is a list of feelings and thoughts that you may have experienced while you were talking with your partner. You can indicate how much you remember experiencing each feeling and thought by clicking a number between 0 (did not experience it at all) and 6 (did experience it extremely). Please answer spontaneously. There are no right or wrong answers. If you think an answer does not apply, select "not at all".

During the part of the conversation that I just saw, I remember feeling...	Not at all	Somewhat	Very much				
empathy for my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
afraid of hurting my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
resigned	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
hurt	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
guilty	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
annoyed	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strong	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
calm	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Discrete Emotions (30s)

"Indicate how much you remember experiencing each feeling and thought."

**During the interaction with my partner,
I remember feeling / thinking that...**

empathy for my partner
strong
calm

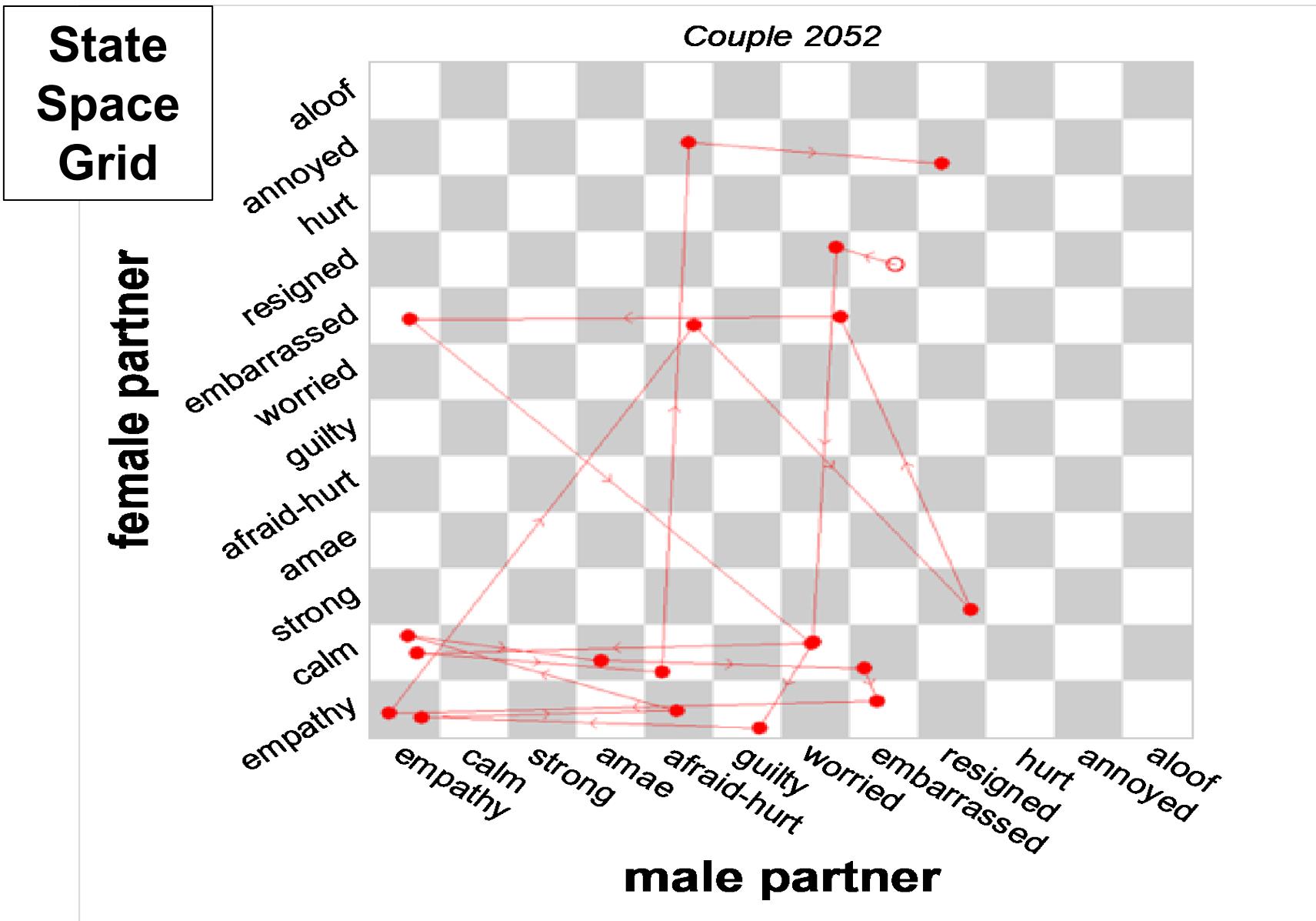
like my partner would indulge any of my
requests (amae)

resigned
hurt
aloof
annoyed
worried

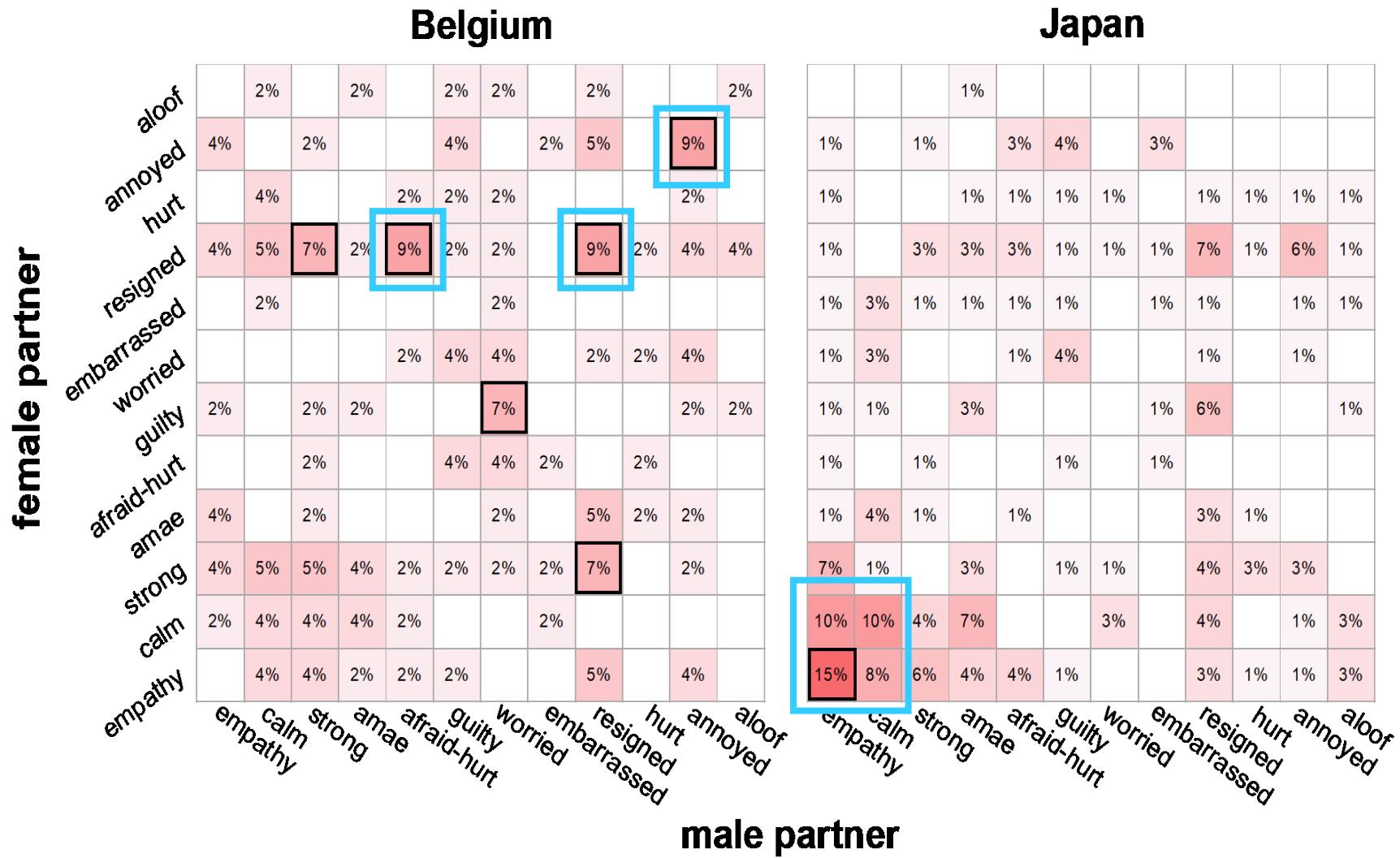
afraid of hurting my partner
embarrassed
guilty

I wanted to make up with my partner
I wanted to hide my emotions
I wanted to change my partner's thoughts
and actions

Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan



Emotions and Relationships in Belgium and Japan



Some other studies:
What about behaviors and strategies
during the interaction?



What emotions are expressed during interactions?

16

James A. Coan
John M. Gottman

The Specific Affect Coding System (SPAFF)

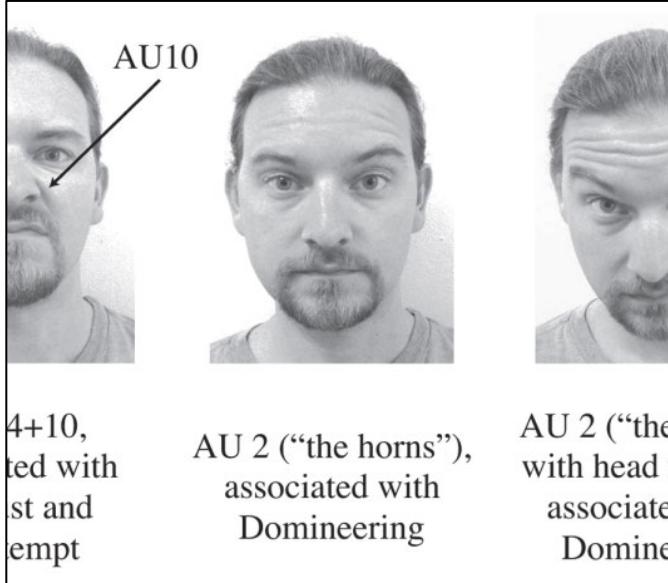
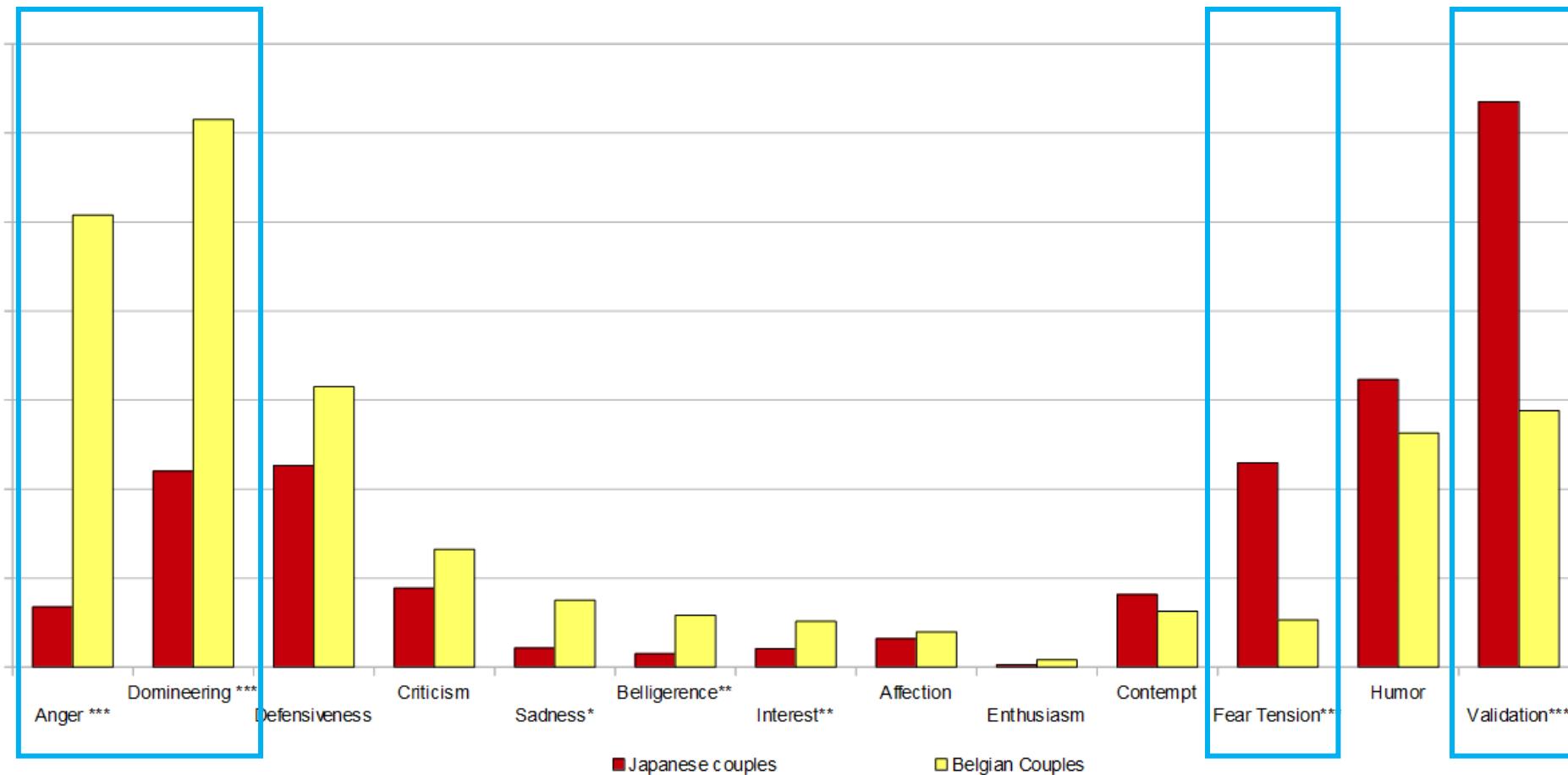


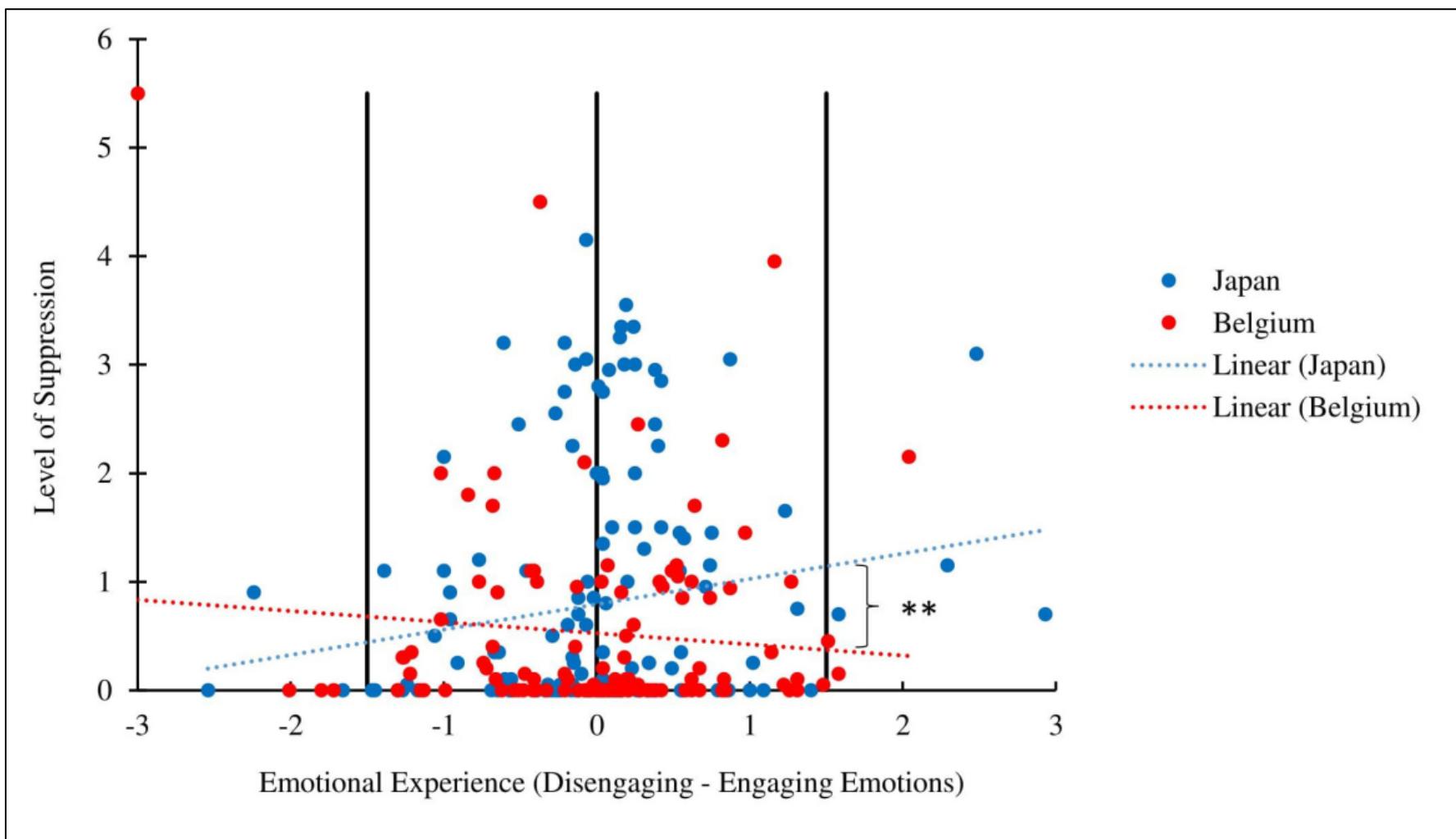
Table 16.1
Current Codes of the SPAFF

<i>Positive Affects</i>	<i>Negative Affects</i>
Affection	Anger
Enthusiasm	Belligerence
Humor	Contempt
Interest	Criticism
Validation	Defensiveness
	Disgust
	Domineering
	Fear / Tension
	Sadness
	Stonewalling
	Threats
	Whining
Neutral	

What emotions are expressed during interactions?



Japanese suppress more, but also selectively



1

Relationships show emotions that fit cultural relationship practices.

2

These differences emerge partly between partners and over time.

3

Having more fitting emotions is related to better relationships.

Thank you for your attention!

Collaborators



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University



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Fulya Ozcanli,
KU Leuven