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Neural Activity During Social Exclusion: An Exploratory Examination

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NEURAL ACTIVITY DURING SOCIAL EXCLUSION: AN EXPLORATORY EXAMINATION

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This study examined the relation between social exclusion and event-related brain potential (ERP) activity. ERPs were collected while participants completed three blocks of the Cyberball Paradigm during which they experienced situations of social inclusion, exclusion, and re-inclusion. This well-established paradigm mimics actual social behavior experienced in real-world situations. Results indicated that an N2 component was present when participants were not included in the interaction regardless of the larger social context (i.e. inclusion, exclusion), suggesting neural indicators of conflict are sensitive to the moment-to-moment changes in social interaction. Further, results showed that a P3 component was present for all types of throws between participants, but was reduced for throws excluding the participants. However, in the exclusion block, the P3 during exclusionary throws was larger in amplitude than in both the inclusion and re-inclusion blocks, suggesting greater attention was given to instances of exclusion in a larger exclusionary context. These combined findings show that social exclusion is a process that may best be examined both in terms of momentary changes evidenced during social interaction as well as the larger context of the social interaction.