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978-1-107-04824-9 - The Interpersonal Dynamics of Emotion: Toward an Integrative Theory of Emotions as Social Information

Gerben A. Van Kleef

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The Interpersonal Dynamics of Emotion

Emotions are an elemental part of life – they imbue our existence with meaning and purpose, and influence how we engage with the world around us. But we do not just feel our own emotions; we typically express them in the presence of other people. How do our emotional expressions affect others? Moving beyond the traditional intrapersonal perspective, this is the first book dedicated to exploring the pervasive interpersonal dynamics of emotions. Integrating existing theory and research, Van Kleef develops the Emotions as Social Information (EASI) theory, a ground-breaking comprehensive framework that explains how emotional expressions influence observers across all domains of life, from close relationships to group settings, conflict and negotiation, customer service, and leader-follower relations. His deeply social perspective sheds new light on the fundamental question of why we have emotions in the first place – the social influence emotions engender may very well constitute their *raison d'être*.

GERBEN A. VAN KLEEF is Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Amsterdam. He obtained his PhD from the University of Amsterdam in 2004 and has held visiting appointments at UC Berkeley and Columbia University. He received numerous awards for his scholarship, including the best dissertation award of the International Association for Conflict Management, the early career award of the European Association of Social Psychology, and the most influential paper award of the Academy of Management. He is currently Chair of the Social Psychology department of the University of Amsterdam and Associate Editor of *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

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To my parents, with love and gratitude

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Preface

The social nature of emotions has interested me ever since I took a course on emotions by Nico Frijda at the University of Amsterdam, in 1997. In the years to come, my fascination with this topic would be nurtured by close collaborations with fellow emotion researchers such as Tony Manstead, Dacher Keltner, Agneta Fischer, and Stéphane Côté, as well as by the writings of numerous other inspiring scholars whose work is featured in the pages of this book.

At the time when I took Frijda's classes, scholarly awareness of the social effects of emotions was clearly on the rise, but empirical research was scarce. Now, almost two decades later, there is a burgeoning literature on the social functions and consequences of emotional displays. Researchers have begun to examine how emotional expressions shape close relationships, influence group processes, regulate the negotiation of social conflict, affect consumer behavior and customer service encounters, and contribute to (or undermine) effective leadership. Although research is quickly accumulating, the literature is scattered, and no single volume exists that brings together the important theoretical and empirical advances that have been made over the past years.

Now that a substantial body of research on the social effects of emotions has been amassed, the time seems right for a comprehensive review and theoretical integration of this literature. What have we learned from more than twenty years of research? Do we see recurring patterns in the social effects of emotions across social, clinical, developmental, and organizational domains of inquiry? Where are the inconsistencies in the empirical record? Can we start building an integrative theory of the social effects of emotions? Which important questions remain unaddressed? And where should we go from here?

This book presents my attempt at addressing these questions. Being the first volume dedicated specifically to the relatively young research field of the social effects of emotions, it should be seen as a beginning rather than an end point. My intention is to provide a theoretical framework that can be used to interpret and integrate previous findings and to guide future research. I hope this book will be instrumental in

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spurring new research that will bring us closer to a full understanding of the social nature of emotions.

In addition, it is my hope that this book will prove useful as a teaching resource. During ten years of lecturing on the social effects of emotions, I have been frequently alerted by both undergraduate and graduate students that there is a need for a book that offers a comprehensive treatment of this rapidly growing field of research. I have therefore tried to make this text accessible to students as well. If this book turned out to be half as stimulating to a new generation of emotion researchers as my personal heroes have been to me, I would be very satisfied indeed.

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At this point I would also like to acknowledge the financial support I have been offered by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research. The various research grants I have been privileged to receive have catalyzed my research on the interpersonal dynamics of emotion and have allowed me to create favorable conditions for writing this volume.

I am grateful to my colleagues at the University of Amsterdam for contributing to a stimulating intellectual environment, and to Columbia University for hosting me during part of the time when I was working on this book.

Finally, I would like to extend a warm thank-you to Tony Manstead for the honorable invitation to contribute a volume to this series, which is so close to my heart, and for providing valuable comments on a previous draft of the manuscript.