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31 Apologies, forgiveness and the social perception of emotions

Abstract: From a semiotic perspective, expressions of emotions can be considered as a kind of language containing the same types of units and organization as spoken language. As such, expressions of emotions can be seen as explicit and compacted representations of information analogs of speech acts communicating various things about the expresser and/or the situation. This language consists of a set of relatively distinctive signals, that is, expressions typically recognized by observers as representing a specific emotion. Each expression is associated with specific information about the internal state of the expressers, the way they evaluated the situation and their likely future actions. The interpretation of the meaning of the emotion expression is based on perceivers' naïve theory of the characteristic antecedents and consequences of specific emotions. However, the interpretation of perceived emotions depends not only on the message contained in the emotion but also on the context in which the expression was observed. This chapter exemplifies the working of this language in the context of apologies, forgiveness and social perception more generally. Specifically, knowing which emotion drove a person's apology, observers use their naïve knowledge of emotions to decide whether the person should be forgiven or not.

1 Introduction

Emotion expressions serve a social communicative function (Darwin [1872] 1965; Eibl-Ebesfeldt 1989; Ekman 1992; Fischer and Manstead 2008; Fridlund 1994; Hess, Kappas, and

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Banse 1995; Scarantino 2017; Shariff and Tracy 2011). Specifically, emotions are expressed through observable changes such as the appearance of the face, postural and verbal behaviors and variations in speech and voice (Ekman 1993; Rimé et al. 1991; Scherer 2003; Tracy and Robins 2008). Yet, what is actually signaled by such expressions is a source of dispute among scholars. Whereas some hold the view that expressions of emotions primarily reflect the expressers' underlying emotional states (e.g., Ekman and Friesen 1971; Izard 1971), others insist that expressions of emotions are predominately linked to expressers' social motives (e.g., Barrett 2013; Fridlund 1994). Still others maintain that emotion expressions communicate both an underlying emotional state and a social motive (e.g., Parkinson 2005; Hess, Kappas and Banse 1995). Further suggestions focus on action tendencies (e.g., Frijda 1986) as well as demands from others (Scarantino 2017). What all of these have in common is that emotion expressions communicate something about the emoter and/or the emoter's understanding of the events that elicited the emotion. Importantly, what is communicated through emotion expressions could also be communicated via language.

Whereas the question of what emotion expressions actually represent is of crucial importance for the understanding of the function of emotional expressions for the expresser, it is less important for the understanding and interpretation of such expressions by observers. This is because observers usually assume that expressions of emotions indeed represent emotions, and they react based on this understanding (Niedenthal and Brauer 2012). This is also relevant to the information that can be deduced from observing or learning about an individual's emotional reaction to an event (Hess and Hareli 2015). Namely, observers use emotional expressions of others to infer how the expresser feels, the meaning of the emotion-eliciting situation, the expresser's intentions and personal characteristics as well as the implications of the situation for the observer (Hess and Hareli 2015; Scarantino 2017).

From a semiotic perspective, expressions of emotions can be conceived of as signs conveying information to others. These set of signs can be considered as a kind of language containing the same types of units and organization as spoken language (Birdwhistell 1970). In fact, as will be apparent in what follows, expressions of emotions can be seen as explicit and compacted representations of information analogs of speech acts communicating various things about the expresser and/or the situation (Scarantino 2017); that is, messages that can also be conveyed by other sign types such as spoken words or written text.

The characteristics of this language of emotion expressions are as follows: (a) it consists of a set of relatively distinctive signals, that is, expressions typically recognized by observers as representing a specific emotion; (b) each expression is associated with specific information about the internal state of the expressers, the way they evaluated the situation and their likely future actions; (c) the interpretation of the meaning of the emotion expression is based on perceivers' naïve theory of the characteristic antecedents and consequences of specific emotions; and (d) interpretation of perceived emotions depends not only on the message contained in the emotion but also on the context in which the expression was observed. In what follows, we will present theory and evidence supporting these claims and exemplify its working in the context of apologies and forgiveness, person and situation perception. The focus of the present chapter is on facial expressions. However, much of what we discuss can be applied to emotion decoding processes in general, both those based on nonverbal signs such as postures, tone of voice, and gestures and those based on secondhand information such as verbal descriptions of the expresser's behavior.

2 Drawing inferences from emotions: a model of the reverse engineering of appraisals and action tendencies

One of the important consequences of the fact that perceivers consider expressions of emotion as signs of emotions is that they use their naïve knowledge of emotion about the type of events that elicit specific emotions and the behavioral consequences of such emotions to infer not only what the expressers feel but also additional information about them and the situation. For example, people share the knowledge that anger is typically elicited by a perceived intentional insult or hurt by another person which then leads to a tendency to act against the wrongdoer (Frijda 1986). Knowing this enables a perceiver to infer that a person who expresses anger feels hurt by someone else and may wish to act against this person. In other words, by simply taking note of the expression, a perceiver can deduce both what happened to elicit the expression and what is likely to happen next. This knowledge in turn allows the perceiver to adjust their own behavior, for example, either to try to intervene to calm the angry person down or to withdraw from the situation. In this manner, emotions serve to regulate social interactions, a notion already proposed by Darwin ([1872] 1965). Yet, this process assumes that the information deduced by the observer has a reasonable chance to be accurate. That is, the observers' naïve theory has to capture the actual emotion elicitation process reasonably well. Appraisal theories of emotion provide a basis for this assumption.

3 Appraisal theory of emotions – emotions have characteristic eliciting conditions

According to appraisal theories of emotion, emotions are elicited and differentiated through a series of appraisals (i.e., evaluations or judgments) of internal or external events based on the perceived nature of the event (e.g., Frijda 1986; Lazarus 1991; Scherer 1987). According to Scherer (1984), a change in the internal or external environment is evaluated according to whether the event is pleasant or unpleasant (pleasantness) as well as whether the change is in line with the motivational state of the individual or obstructs the individual's goals (goal obstruction). Individuals further evaluate their ability to cope with or adjust to the change (coping potential). A further set of evaluations regards the correspondence with the relevant social and personal norms, i.e., how the event is to be judged in terms of ethical, moral or social norms (norm incompatibility). Importantly, these appraisals are specific to the individual and the individual's current state. Hence, while one individual may evaluate an event as a threat that cannot be coped with due to a lack of skill or resources or maybe a submissive personality, another may see a challenge instead. For example, the sight of a bear may elicit fear and terror in most people but pleasant anticipation in a hunter with the appropriate hunting license due to the difference in their motivational state and ability to cope with bears.

Specific emotions are differentiated by their pattern of appraisals. Thus, anger is an emotion that is characterized by appraisals of goal obstruction, high coping potential and a perception of norm violation. By contrast, sadness is characterized by appraisals of goal obstruction, but combined with low coping potential, with norms playing less of a role (Scherer 1984). In this sense, one can say that emotions are like short and simple stories. This is what Lazarus (1991) referred to as core relational themes. In this view, sadness tells a story about loss and anger a story about insult to the self. More about appraisals will be presented later in the chapter.

4 Emotions and action tendencies – specific emotions are associated with specific behavioral intentions

Emotions are responses to major concerns of the individual (Frijda 1986). Concerns can best be viewed as a relatively enduring disposition to prefer a certain state of the world, for example, the preference to succeed in what one is doing or to be free of pain (Frijda 1988). As such, emotions prepare the individual to respond appropriately to the emotion-eliciting event. This implies that an appraisal pattern associated with a specific emotion is also associated with a specific action tendency or action readiness. These are behaviors that are likely to address the issue that gave rise to the emotion in the first place (Frijda 1986; Scherer 2005). For example, fear is associated with tendencies to engage in protective behavior, often in flight. By contrast, anger is linked with a tendency to move against, to oppose the source of the anger (Frijda, Kuipers, and ter Shure 1989). Thus, specific emotions are associated with both specific appraisals and specific behaviors (Roseman, Wiest, and Swartz 1994).

In short, according to appraisal theory, a person's personality, skills and world knowledge determine their resources, values and motivations. These in turn define the outcome of their appraisal of an event. The appraisal pattern in turn entrains the emotional and behavioral reaction to the event (see upper half of Figure 31.1).
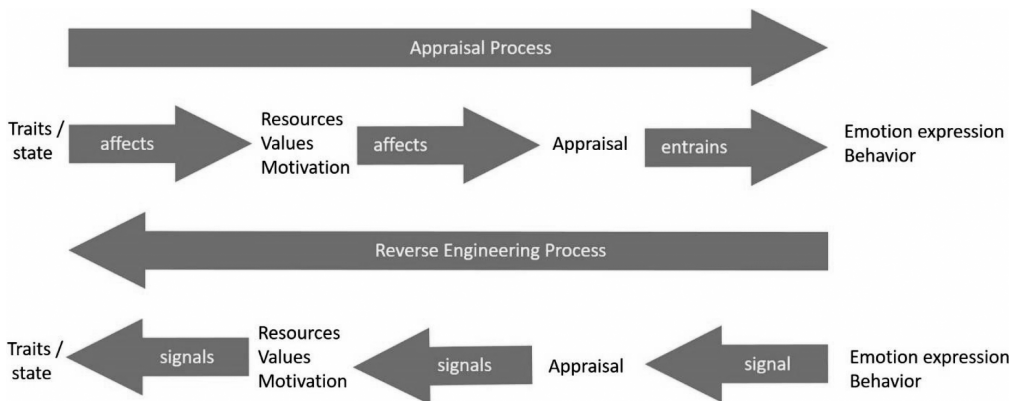

Fig. 31.1: Appraisal and reverse engineering processes (Hareli and Hess 2019).

5 Emotion knowledge – people are aware of the links between specific emotions, appraisals and action tendencies

The link between appraisals and action tendencies on one hand and emotion words or stories about emotional events on the other has been well studied (e.g., Fontaine et al. 2007; Frijda et al. 1989; Roseman, Spindel, and Jose 1990; Roseman, Wiest, and Swartz 1994). For example, participants may be asked to read about an emotional event and then reconstruct the appraisals or action tendencies of the protagonist. This line of research generally confirms predictions of appraisal theory (Roseman 1991; Roseman Wiest, and Swartz 1994; cf Hess and Kappas 2009). Even though these studies are not solid evidence for the actual link between emotions, appraisals and action tendencies (Parkinson 1997; Parkinson and Manstead 1993), they provide an insight into participants' naïve emotion theories. These theories tend to be overall in line with appraisal theory (Hareli 2014). In other words, people's naïve theories are a close match to the process described in the upper half of Figure 31.1.

It is important to note that appraisals are typically not the product of reasoning processes (Kappas 2006). However, people can and do reconstruct appraisal patterns consciously after the fact (Robinson and Clore 2002) and, based on the naïve emotion theories described above, they can do so for other people's emotions as well (e.g., Hareli and Hess 2010; Hess and Hareli 2015; Roseman 1991; Scherer and Grandjean 2008). Furthermore, they can use this information to deduce unknown information about the expresser or the situation, based on known information about the expresser's behavior in a process we call reverse engineering.

6 A model of the reverse engineering of appraisals and action tendencies

As depicted in the lower half of Figure 31.1, knowing how a person reacted to a given event makes it possible to reconstruct that person's likely appraisal of the event. This in turn provides insights into their goals, values and motivations. Specifically, the mere fact that someone reacts with an emotion to an event signals that the event is relevant to that specific person, which in turn provides information about the person's goals and values. For example, the fact that a person reacts with anger to a perceived injustice signals that the person cares about justice. Likewise, the fact that the person reacted with anger suggests that the event obstructs their motivational goals, i.e., that they would like to see justice served.

The appraisal of coping potential provides information about a person's resources. For example, had the person reacted with sadness, one could conclude that they do not see a way to redress the injustice. The evaluations regarding the correspondence of the event with the relevant social and personal norms provide further information about a person's values.

Thus, an angry person experiences a motivation incongruent (low goal conduciveness) state, but considers the situation to be potentially under their control (high coping potential). In turn, an observer who sees a person react with anger or learns that this person has reacted with anger to an injustice, can conclude that the person has values according to which the event appears unjust, perceives this injustice as incongruent with their own motivational state and also feels endowed with enough resources to act accordingly. How the person acts in accordance with these appraisals provides additional information about their values, goals and motivation as well as their interpretation of the situation.

For example, if someone shows anger at the undesirable act of another person, punishment behavior is a likely action tendency. If the person does not actually act this way, we may surmise that some other value, goal or motivation conflicts with this behavior, maybe the offending person is their boss and they fear for their job, or that the situation is already sufficiently addressed by the mere communication of anger (Darwin [1872] 1965). Importantly, inferences based on both the expression of the emotion and on performed actions need not be sequential, but rather impressions from both sources may be formed simultaneously. One issue that becomes evident in this context is the difficulty of distinguishing between expressive behavior and behavior that addresses the emotion-eliciting event. For example, running away from a threat is both an expression of fear and puts distance between the threat and the person. To avoid confusion, we will confine the term emotion expression to facial and vocal expressions that do not directly address the elicitor.

As outlined above, expressions of emotion and performed actions can provide information about the situational context and the motivations and values of the expresser. Other information that can be deduced regards the personality of the expresser (Hareli and Hess 2010). Specifically, stable traits such as dominance, affiliation, and competence impact the motivational goals, preferences, and resources of a person. Thus, a person who is competent may be expected to have more resources to deal with potential problems than a person who is not. Conversely, seeing a person react with restrained anger in a difficult situation suggests that this person is high in resources in this situation and likely in other situations as well, but also, that this person is capable of maintaining self-control in such situations. In what follows, we will present examples of how reverse engineering is used by observers to make sense of a situation and the people involved in the context of apologies and forgiveness.

7 How knowing which emotions motivated a transgressor's apology determine forgiveness

According to a classical view by Goffman (1971), apologies can be best conceived of as means for remedial work. That is, for any social activity whose function it is to change the meaning of what is seen as offensive to something seen as acceptable. For Goffman, apologies split the self into two parts, a "bad" self that is criticized for the misconduct and a "good" self that recognizes the misconduct and promises explicitly or implicitly to behave in a more acceptable way in the future. Apologies tend to be an effective means for restoring broken relationships following a social transgression (Gonzales et al. 1990; Itoi, Ohbu-

chi, and Fukuno 1996; Takaku, Weiner, and Ohbuchi 2001). However, the effectiveness of an apology depends on, among other things, the verbal and nonverbal components of the apologetic message and on how this message is perceived by the injured party. In other words, the likelihood that the message that one is sorry for the wrongdoing will repair the relationship with the victim depends on the context in which this message is conveyed, as analysis of the pragmatics of apologies suggests (see e.g., Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989). One important contextual factor is the emotions known to have motivated the apology, as described in what follows. To understand why and how such emotions determine the effectiveness of apologies, one needs first to consider how apologies achieve their goal.

Apologies promote forgiveness because by apologizing transgressors attempt to repair the damage caused by their act. Thus, apologies accompanied by offers of help foster forgiveness by contributing to actual reparation of the undesirable outcomes of the transgression (Ohbuchi, Kameda, and Agarie 1989; Scher and Darley 1997). Also, the mere act of apologizing signals that the transgressor acknowledges the wrongdoing and takes responsibility for the transgression, which in turn suggests that the transgressor is likely to avoid similar behavior in the future (Scher and Darley 1997). In doing so, the transgressor also signals that they are in principle a person of good character and that the transgression was a glitch, which also fosters forgiveness by reducing the transgressor's perceived responsibility for the transgression (Ohbuchi, Kameda, and Agarie 1989).

A different aspect of an apology that may encourage forgiveness is its "status equalizing" function. The act of apologizing tends to lower the status of the transgressor because of the disgrace that is part of a public apology (Ohbuchi, Kameda, and Agarie 1989). To the degree that the original offence had a status lowering effect on the victim, the apology then creates a new equilibrium. This effect is analogous to the more general effect of expressions of submissiveness in acts of appeasement (Keltner, Young, and Buswell 1997).

Finally, apologies are also more effective when they are perceived as trustworthy, genuine, and sincere (Takaku Weiner, and Ohbuchi 2001). Any aspect of the apology that conveys these meanings and contributes to the perceived honesty of the apology is likely to enhance its effectiveness.

The emotions that accompany an apology play an important role in this regard. These same emotions can also be a motivating force for the apology. Indeed, realizing that one is the source of someone else's hurt, the wrongdoer may feel guilt or shame for causing the undesirable situation as well as pity for the hurt person (Hareli and Eisikovits 2006). The specific emotions that motivate an apology affect the acceptance of the apology. For example, Hareli and Eisikovits (2006) showed that participants were more likely to forgive a person who hurt them when they knew that the apology was motivated by feelings of guilt and/or shame rather than pity. The reason for the difference lies in the appraisals and action tendencies associated with each of these emotions and what this means for the message conveyed by the apology.

Specifically, guilt follows from a self-judgment of responsibility for the violation of a norm (Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton 1994; Roseman, Antoniou, and Jose 1996) and hence expressing guilt signals the transgressors' awareness that they broke a social norm and that this was a bad thing to do as well as their intention to avoid similar behavior in the future. By apologizing and accepting responsibility, the transgressor also communicates that they do not hold the victim responsible for what happened. Guilt also suggests

an equalization of status between the transgressor and the victim because guilt entails a painful experience that can be seen as a kind of punishment. Moreover, public expressions of guilt involve a degree of disgrace (Ohbuchi, Kameda, and Agarie 1989).

Shame, like guilt, is also elicited by the perceived association of the self with an undesirable action. Also, like guilt, it reflects that the transgressor acknowledges their blame for the situation (Lazarus 1991). However, in the case of shame, the self-criticism refers more to the self as a whole than to a specific act (Lewis 1971; Roseman, Antoniou, and Jose, 1996). The experience and expression of shame also entails aspects associated with self-punishment, derogation of status and submissiveness (Tangney and Dearing 2002). Finally, feeling contrite, as in shame and guilt, may reflect one's good character by showing that one is caring and sensitive to the way one's actions affect others. Thus, both these emotions signal that the transgressor understands the wrongness of their act and suggests that they will not repeat it in the future as well as testify to their good character. The emotion itself is also a form of punishment and serves to equilibrate the status between transgressor and victim. Thus, guilt and shame may be one way by which apologies achieve the desired self-split suggested by Goffman (1971).

The situation for pity is different. Pity, unlike guilt and shame, focuses outward on the victim's unfortunate situation (Weiner 1986). To a degree, pity suggests intentions of help and can thereby create a more positive perception of the transgressor's character (Ben-Zeev 1990), which contributes to forgiveness.

However, expressions of pity do not imply any admission of responsibility, which is considered by some theorists to be a crucial component of forgiveness (Tavuchis 1991). Also, pity signals the belief that the emoter is somehow superior to the individual who is pitied (Ben-Zeev 1990). As such, showing pity does not assure the victim that the transgressor will do better in the future and it further increases the distance in status. Thus, even though pity reflects somewhat positively on the transgressor's character, victims of social transgressions should be more likely to forgive a transgressor whose apology is known to be driven by guilt and/or shame rather than by pity.

These findings by Hareli and Eisikovits (2006) demonstrate, in line with the reverse engineering model, how people use what they know about the characteristics of emotions to infer the character of apologizing transgressors, their intentions and their self-perceived status. Yet, Hareli and Eisikovits (2006) did not provide direct evidence that people use their naïve understanding of emotions to decide if they forgive transgressors when knowing which emotions motivated their apology. Other research that examined the social perception of emotions and assessed inferences that people extract from witnessing others' emotion expressions, tested more directly how an understanding of the language of emotions contributes to such inferences. One such study is presented in what follows.

8 Expressions of emotions inform inferences of others' character

As outlined above, knowing how a person reacts emotionally to an event provides information regarding their character. We have so far only considered guilt and shame as signals of "good character" in a wider sense. But more specific attributions can also be made.

Thus, Hareli and Hess (2010) asked participants to imagine themselves in the role of a human resource employee who interviews a job candidate. One part of the interview was a description of the candidate's narrative of a failure event in their previous job. Candidates were described as reporting that they reacted with anger, sadness or neutrality to the failure. Participants were then asked to rate the candidate, among other things, on aggressiveness, self-confidence, masculinity and emotionality, warmth, and gentleness. Participants also rated how they thought the candidate had appraised the event. The results showed that the rated traits were linked to the presumed appraisals, in line with appraisal theory.

Specifically, as anger is associated with the appraisal of a situation as unpleasant, norm incongruent and requiring immediate action, an angry person can be expected to react assertively and confidently. Congruent with this notion, appraisals of urgency mediated perceptions of aggressiveness and appraisals of unpleasantness mediated perceptions of self-confidence. A person who stays neutral in a negative situation can be perceived as "above the situation" and hence unemotional and cold. In fact, an individual who showed a neutral reaction was perceived as less likely to assess the situation as norm incompatible and unpleasant and these appraisals mediated the perception of the person as less emotional/warm/gentle. Overall, this study shows that emotional reactions signal the individual's appraisal of the situation and that these perceived appraisals mediate observers' perceptions of an individual's personality as a function of their emotional reaction to an event.

The study described above shows that people use others' expressions of emotions to infer their intentions and character. Yet, the expressions of others may also provide observers with information about the situation. Further, we suggested that the context in which the emotion is perceived also plays a role in this process. In the following section, we will describe findings that show how expressions of emotions are used to make sense of a situation and the contribution of context to this function.

9 Making sense of an unknown situation based on perceived expressions of emotion – the contribution of context

As suggested above, emotions are expressed in response to a specific situation and are the result of the emoters' appraisal of that situation (Frijda 1986; Lazarus 1991; Scherer 1984). Accordingly, emotions contain information about the situation as perceived by the expresser, which observers can use to draw inferences about the situation. For example, Hareli, Elkabetz and Hess (2019) showed participants images from a fictitious ball game as well as the emotional responses of spectators. The participants' task was to evaluate the performance of the last player. Yet, the participants did not have any explicit standard that could serve as a benchmark to decide on the quality of the play. They were only given images that showed the playing field as well as spectators who either support the team of the player currently on the field (supporters), the opposing team (opponents), or spectators who do not support either team (unaffiliated spectators). The identity of supporters served as context information.

In Study 1, participants saw the final throw in the game followed by the reactions of an individual who was identified either as a supporter, an opponent, or an unaffiliated spectator and who reacted to the performance either with awe, happiness or neutrality. Regardless of the individuals' identity, when they expressed awe, the quality of performance was perceived as rather high. By contrast, when the individuals expressed happiness or neutrality, the ratings depended on their identity. Specifically, when an opponent expressed happiness, the performance was perceived as rather low. When a supporter or an unaffiliated spectator expressed happiness, the performance seemed of higher quality, and conversely for expressions of neutrality. That is, in order to draw conclusions based on expressions of happiness and neutrality, the participants had to also draw on their real-world knowledge about the negative interdependence of competitors in a game, such that what is good for one is bad for the other and vice versa. Hence both the happiness (which signals a pleasant goal conducive event) of a supporter and the neutrality (which signals an absence of pleasantness and goal conduciveness) of an opponent signal the same thing – that the player played well. Awe, by contrast, is elicited by events that are larger than the self. This includes nature, art, and religion (Keltner and Haidt 2003; Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman 2007) as well as achievements (Campos et al. 2013). Accordingly, in the present context awe signals a high performance regardless of who expresses the emotion.

Overall, these findings indicate that (i) different emotions are perceived as signaling different levels of performance; (ii) contextual factors, in this case knowledge about the identity of the expresser, are involved in inferences deduced from the emotions; and (iii) different emotions vary in terms of the extent to which the context contributes or affects the inferences deduced from them.

To further show that such inferences are the result of reverse engineering of appraisals rather than the positivity of the emotion, Hareli, Elkabetz, and Hess (2019) conducted a second study. This study was similar in all respects to the first except for two aspects. First, only reactions of uninvolved fans were shown. Also, participants received additional, explicit information about the quality of the game. Specifically, a control group received the exact same information as in the initial study. A second group saw the performance of an additional player who played worse than the first player in the same game. A third group saw information about the previous record, which again was somewhat worse than the present performance. Finally, the last group saw the emotional reaction of the observer, which was again neutrality, happiness or awe, to which a speech bubble was added. The bubble included the message "Unbelievable... This is a far better performance than I have ever seen in all the years I have been following this game." It was only in this last condition that the perceived quality of the player's performance was similar for all expressions. The addition of the explicit awe-like verbal information had no effect when the fan showed awe since the same information was already provided by the expression. In all of the other conditions, however, the perceived level of performance was higher when awe was shown than when happiness or neutrality were shown. That is, for the perceivers, an expression of awe was equivalent to the spoken claim to never have seen a better performance. Overall, this shows again the role of the naïve knowledge of the appraisals contained in emotions in enabling the observer to make sense of the situation at hand.

10 Summary and conclusions

The present chapter describes how people use their naïve understanding of appraisals underlying emotions to draw inferences about the expresser and the situation in which the emotion was expressed. From this perspective, emotions can be seen as a simple language that provides observers with information about their social world. Unlike with spoken language, this information can be extracted from the emotional reaction of a person even when the expresser had no intention to convey that information. This information helps observers navigate their social relationships. Just seeing how a person reacts to an event provides valuable information about that person and how the person may react in the future. This information also provides additional information about the situation as seen by the emoter. Hence, an observer can learn that a situation is likely difficult if a person known to be competent shows dejection or that a situation is dangerous if fear is shown. Yet, when the emotion elicitor and the situation become incompatible – for example, when someone shows fear when encountering a kitten – it is more likely that this reaction will be attributed to the person (i.e., fear of cats) than the situation (Hess and Hareli 2017). That is, there are limits to this process which again are informed by the observers' naïve emotion knowledge, which informs them that kittens are unlikely objects of fear.

Whereas the naïve knowledge of emotions includes knowledge about both the characteristic antecedents of emotions and their possible consequences, the present chapter provided evidence only about the role of antecedents. Future research should move further by attempting to explore how knowledge about consequences of emotions can contribute to this process. Further, it is important to better understand when and how context contributes to the process. The present chapter provided evidence that emotions may vary in the extent to which a specific context affects inferences based on the emotion. It appears that one important determinant here is whether the context adds crucial information for the inference in question or not. However, context and the information it provides may contribute to inferences in other ways. For example, by contradicting the information provided by the emotion as shown above in the example of fear of kittens.

In sum, when people see a person reacting emotionally, they assume that the expression shown reflects an internal emotional state which depends on the person's understanding of the situation. This understanding, in turn, depends on the motives, goals and resources that the person brings into the situation. Observers intuitively use this information to glean an understanding of these aspects of the observed and to learn more about the situation. This information is crucial for the effective negotiation of social relationships. As such, the understanding of the language of emotions and their expression is an integral source of our mastery of the social world. This idea is well exemplified in the context of apologies and forgiveness, as well as in other context, as shown in this chapter.

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