

*CLOSER TO EMOTIONS:*  
NEW PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES  
A Report from a Conference Series in Lublin

Over the last two decades there has been a significant growth of interest in emotions among social, clinical, and “experimental” psychologists. The period of cognitivists gave way to intensive investigations of emotions in politics, organizational settings, in communication, and in general subjective well-being. Yes, well-being as such is one of the criteria of a happy life, which no one denies as the purpose of life. Scientists realize one important aspect, namely, that humans are the most emotional of creatures. The list of emotions seems to increase with time and with new experiences, e.g. fast communication, intense social interactions, changing localization. Our emotions are signs of our capability to adapt to those quickly changing conditions. Responding to this challenge is the initiative of the *Closer to Emotions* debate. Combining the theoretical reflection with empirical research will not revolutionize our knowledge, but gives the chance to grasp and describe human emotions in various conditions of this wonderful, but at the same time hectic and demanding world. We present briefly the structure and contents of the meetings.

The series of three conferences, *Closer to Emotions*, were organized at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin in 2006, 2007 and 2008 by the members of the Department of Emotions and Motivation Psychology. The main objective was to present different perspectives on emotions and the ways in which emotions can be studied under varied conditions. Many scholars from different academic backgrounds took part in these meetings, not only to summarize the current research, but to provide insight into the psychology of human affect.

The inspiration for this body of work stems from the lectures presented at the Annual Nebraska Symposium on Motivation. It is at this symposium where authorities in the field met to review the current literature on motivation. This event became the standard for future improvements in the study of American psychology. Similarly, the *Closer to Emotions* conference is a biennial meeting designed to provide the attendee with a multidimensional approach to the study of emotions. Each of these events is accompanied by the publication that holds the same title as the conference. The editors of these volumes are Agata Błachnio and Aneta Przepiórka, and the overview introduction is given by Zbigniew Zaleski, chairman of the department. The books contain articles on emotions and provide a complementary overview of current theories and studies in the area of emotions and motivation. This perspective on emotions is essential for practitioners, as well as laypeople. It is also noteworthy that the first book was published in Polish in 2007 (Błachnio & Gózik, 2007), and the second volume which was published in 2008 (Błachnio & Przepiórka, 2008), contained Polish as

well as English articles. The third edition, which is slated to be published in 2009, will be presented entirely in English (Błachnio & Przepiórka, 2009).

The first edition of the *Closer to Emotions* conference was a one-day meeting on April 21, 2006. Scientists from several Polish universities were invited to the event including representatives from Jagiellonian University, Warsaw University, the Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University and the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin.

The papers presented at the conference examined the impact of both positive and negative emotions on the individual. Dagmara Musiał provided a study on happiness as an emotion, Barbara Gawda presented research on the expression of love in a narrative form through the eyes of an antisocial personality, and Małgorzata Zabłocka presented a study which suggests that humor should be regarded as an emotional-cognitive complex set. It should also be noted that Zabłocka's research indicates that diverse components of her work should be highlighted in the various contexts in which they exist.

Regarding the presentation on negative emotions, Barnaba Danieluk maintained that it is particularly difficult for a researcher who studies the psychology of emotion to differentiate between the emotions of shame and guilt, because there is no coherent theoretical approach to those two emotions. According to outcomes found in other scholarly work, one can easily find contradictory interpretations of the same concept. Jadwiga Wrońska analyzed the psychology of disgust and found that it is hard to habituate, often exhibiting itself as a "stubborn" emotion. Sylwester Orzechowski, lectured on the nonverbal expression of emotions in lie detection.

Paweł Fortuna presented on the psychological role of mood in persuasive communication, while Mariola Łaguna and Waław Bąk provided a forum for discussion on the relationship between the experience of a particular emotion such as anxiety, anger, depression and curiosity, and their relationships to self-referent beliefs such as global self-esteem, self-efficacy, hope and optimism. Their findings in this area indicated that emotions in general are better predictors of global self-esteem. They also found that anxiety is the best emotional predictor of the examined beliefs when tested against other emotional variables. Beata Tęcza spoke about the importance of personal differences in the perception of emotional expression in music. During her presentation, she administered a questionnaire concerning the sensibility of emotional expression in music.

Tytus Sosnowski and Łucja Domańska presented their work in the field of neuropsychology and highlighted the new directions being taken in the analysis of neuropsychological diagnosis.

Michał Janson presented on the emotional background of revenge as the conference began to focus on the mechanisms of emotion. He found that different emotions have motivational value in the earlier stages of vengeful thinking, and retributive gratification in the last stages of the process.

Next, Agata Błachnio discussed the influence of gratification and loyalty when the individual is asked for this sort of deference. In the field experiment she found that when people were asked for loyalty, they tended to stay loyal and abide by the original request.

Regarding emotions in politics, Wojciech Cwalina used his work, *Derivation and Rationalization Processes in Forming Voting Preferences for Winners and Losers* to argue that during presidential elections, voters are more prone to rationalizations when evaluating candidates.

During the conference, some interesting workshops on the application of emotions were organized by various speakers. Urszula Cur (Regional Headquarters Police in Lublin) presented a workshop about the relevance of emotions as a message in communication. Katarzyna Jędruszczak (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin) instructed the audience in methods to use when coping with emotions on a clinical scale

The second edition of the conference Closer to Emotions was a two-day meeting on 19-20 of May, 2007. The researchers gave presentations mainly in the areas of gratitude, revenge, dishonesty, and stress. Other papers which focused on emotions in sports and advertisement were also presented in that conference. Michał Janson posed the question, "how do situational and personality factors act as predictors of retaliatory behaviour?" In his work, he found that there is support for the differentiation of aggressive mechanisms underlying retaliation and revenge. In addition, he maintained that previous retaliation attempts do not play as important a role as expected in decreasing the magnitude of possible revenge. Tomasz Baran showed the audience how the tendency to infra-humanize out-of-group members is modified by the level of identification within the group. Baran also showed results that suggest the existence of out-of-group infra-humanization. In his findings, he states that people ascribed more typically human emotions (secondary) to the in-group than to the out-group. This infra-humanization effect was not modified by the level of in-group identification.

Tomasz Rowiński analyzed the natural semantic meta-language in linguistic analysis of feelings. He focused on the word 'intimacy' from *Hermans' List of Feelings*, and implemented the methodology used by Anna Wierzbicka. In discussing the relationship between personality, emotional states, and academic dishonesty, Agata Błachnio found that people with low self-esteem who also value loyalty, were more likely to cheat in school.

The third edition of the conference took place from 10 to 12 April 2008 and consisted of a keynote lecture, as well as a paper and poster session. A book fair was also organized on these days. Psychological publishing houses were presenting their latest publications, which aroused both the speakers' and other participants' interest. Some of the speakers provided emotional resources/services in different fields such as in entrepreneurial pursuits, in the workplace, and in sports/entertainment. As in the previous conferences, papers focused on positive and negative emotions, and some of them are mentioned here.

Mariola Łaguna (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin) offered a presentation that focused on the idea of how the experience of a particular emotion (such as anxiety, anger, depression and curiosity) is related to the entrepreneurial process.

Agata Błachnio and Aneta Przepiórka (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin) examined the types of emotions that are connected to betrayal. They discussed the influence of situational (physical attractiveness, social status, kind of betrayal) and personal (gender, culture, vulnerability to rumination, attitude towards loyalty) variables on emotional reactions to betrayal. Eufrozyna Gruszecka (Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities) presented her study, *Attitudes Toward the Social World: Self-Referent Beliefs and Emotional Response to Given Help*. Małgorzata Szcześniak (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin) spoke about her work on the determinants of gratitude, as well as the psychological determinants of gratitude of people who commit to doing good deeds. The personal and subjective factors of gratitude were proven, and the idea of gratitude as an emotional experience influenced by objective factors (material value of the gift and donor's effort/cost) and subjective characteristics (donor's and receiver's qualities) was also highlighted in her study.

Agata Błachnio and Michał Janson (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin) studied dynamics of a change in people's perceptions of shame before and after political elections. This study was a replication of previous research done before and after past elections (Błachnio, Janson, & Zaleski, 2000).

A good platform to exchange ideas was the panel discussion convened by Zbigniew Zaleski. The speakers, Wojciech Cwalina, Bogdan Wojciszke (Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities), Waldemar Domachowski (Adam Mickiewicz University), Stanisław Judycki (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin), Andrzej Szmajke (University of Wrocław), discussed the topic, "Is there still any space left for emotions nowadays? Do they play any role?" They highlighted the unquestionable importance of emotions in a human's existence and their role in experiencing everyday life. They stressed the importance of emotions to our well-being and the irreplaceable nature of this discipline in other areas of behavioral research.

The final session was organized in English and this is where Bogdan Wojciszke presented a paper on *Antecedents of Schadenfreude and Envy*. He hypothesized that emotional responses to other persons' outcomes depend on attitudes toward these individuals. He found that positive attitudes toward other people results in empathic responses to their outcomes. Following this line of reasoning, there will be empathic joy after success and empathic dejection after failure. Negative attitudes toward others result in negative responses where luck or success (envy) are present, and positive responses to the misfortune or failure of others (*Schadenfreude*).

Felix Ehrlenspiel, Juergen Beckmann (Technical University of Munich, Germany), and Katharina Strahler (University of Potsdam, Germany) gave an interesting presentation on *Competitive Anxiety and Cortisol Awakening Response in the Week Leading to a Competition*. One of the points that they emphasized in their

work was that competitive anxiety leads to the excretion of catecholamines and glucocorticoids.

Peter Kuppens (University of Leuven, Belgium) provided the attendees with some interesting insights into his presentation *Towards Understanding Individual Differences in Emotional Experience*. In this segment he discussed the results of his study and how people differ in their average core affect, as well as their variability in core affect when observing the relationship between pleasure and arousal. Kuppens also explained the variability in specific emotions, particularly anger.

Rafał Ohme (Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities) presented on the influence of a full vs. shortened versions of TV commercials which are created for advertising campaigns. Ohme did measurements on the participants which looked at emotionality and arousal as indicated by their neurological and physiological reactions (brain waves and skin conductance). Ohme found that the brain waves were a fairly accurate indicator of emotional states.

Willy Lens and Bart Neyrinck (University of Leuven, Belgium) presented on the topic of *Motivation: Quantity and Quality; a Matter for Emotion*. They showed how differences in the quality of motivation mattered for outcomes such as interest, persistence, ill-being (e.g., burnout), well-being (e.g., engagement), and positive and negative affect.

Our guest from Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza," Caterina Lombardo, presented her study on *Emotions in Psychopathological States: the Case of Eating Disorders and Pathological Body Dissatisfaction*. Caterina posed the question about how particular eating habits, behaviours, or attitudes toward food and body, seem to influence emotions. She concluded that the correlation between emotional eating and Body Mass Index is higher among restrained eaters. Furthermore, restrained eaters report more intense negative emotions as compared to non-restrained eaters during meals.

Vilfredo De Pascalis in his presentation, *The Effect of Impulsivity on Event-Related Potentials to Semantic and Emotional Words*, showed that highly impulsive individuals differ from low impulse individuals in the degree and extent of their cognitive processes. Findings suggest that differences in impulse behavior have a profound impact on the ability to perform linguistic tasks. More specifically, impulsive individuals have difficulty integrating incongruent words into syntax and that the activity of the frontal lobes may account for individual differences of impulsivity on sentence processing.

The conferences was followed by book publications and strengthened the academic debate on affective processes. We hope the conferences will contribute to widely spreading interest in this sphere of human subjective states (Zaleski, 1998). The fourth edition of the *Closer to Emotions* conference is planned for April 2010 at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin.

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