Chapter 12
The Influence of Intimacy and Gender on Emotions in Mobile Phone Email

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ABSTRACT
This chapter focuses on the roles of interpersonal closeness and gender on the interpretation and sending of emotions in mobile phone email messages. 91 Japanese college students were shown scenarios involving either a friend or an acquaintance describing situations intended to evoke one of four emotions: Happiness, sadness, anger, or guilt. The participants’ rated their emotions and composed replies for each scenario. Analysis revealed that in the happy and guilt scenarios, emotions experienced by the participants were conveyed to their partners almost without change. However, in the sad and angry scenarios, the emotions sent to the partners were weaker than the actual emotions experienced. Gender analysis showed that men were more likely to experience and express anger in the anger scenario, while women were more likely to experience and express sadness in the anger scenario. In addition, more women’s replies contained emotional expressions than did the men’s messages.

INTRODUCTION
While modern technology continues to expand our communication options, much of our daily communications rely on one of our oldest tools: Written text. As a distance communication medium, written communications offer numerous benefits including smaller file sizes, faster transfer speeds, and lower costs. There are limitations as well, although researchers are divided on the degree to which these limitations impact our communications. The following section will consider the positive elements of text-based mediated

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As infants, we are introduced to communication through face-to-face interaction. These early exchanges are essential to our developing communication ability and continue throughout our lives. Face-to-face communications involve a combination of verbal and nonverbal cues which we use to create understanding. One way these cues are used is to judge the emotional state of our communication partner (Krauss & Fussell 1996; Kraut 1978; Patterson 1994). Our long experience with such interactions makes us proficient at judging other people’s characteristics, such as familiarity, gender, emotions, and temperament (Cheng, O’Toole, & Abdi 2001). So how our communication efforts affected when a significant portion of this information (e.g. non-verbal cues) is unavailable to us?

Text-based communications lack much of the non-verbal communication cues we are accustomed to in face-to-face interactions (Short, Williams, & Christie 1976; Sproull & Kiesler 1991). Both sender and receiver rely on the written word to convey not only their meaning, but also their emotional intent (Kato, Kato, & Scott 2007). Research has shown that the transmission of emotions is difficult and misunderstandings can easily happen (Hancock 2007; Kato & Akahori 2006; Kato, Kato, & Scott 2007). Studies also suggest that low degrees of emotional cues transmitted between communication partners in email messages can cause misunderstandings (Kato, Kato, & Akahori 2007). Such emotional misunderstandings in computer-mediated communications (CMC) can, if left unchecked, develop into serious human-relations problems (see for example Green, Pitts, & Millward, 1995; Lea, O’Shea, Fung, & Spears, 1992; Morahan-Martin 2007; Siegel, Dubrovsny, Kiesler, & McGuire, 1986).

Kruger and his colleagues noted that the lack of nonverbal cues such as gesture, emphasis, and intonation can make it difficult to convey emotion and tone in email messages (Kruger, Epley, Parker & Ng 2005). Kruger et al. conducted several studies on email writers’ estimates of how well they can communicate in email messages. The studies’ findings confirmed that email writers were largely unaware of email’s limitations that would inhibit their ability to convey emotion or tone (e.g. sarcasm or humor). The authors characterize these findings as egocentrism—using one’s own perspective in lieu of another’s—and believe it to be the cause of email miscommunications as “the greater the difference between the communicator’s own interpretation of the stimuli and the stimuli available to the audience, the greater the miscalibration” (Kruger et al. 2005, p. 933). Egocentrism may be a necessarily element in communication but “…successful communication depends on an accurate assessment of one’s clarity (Keysar & Henly 2002), [thus] overconfidence of that clarity reduces the quality of communication” (Kruger et al. 2005, p. 934). These studies suggest that if writers remain unaware of email’s limitations, they may experience a variety of communication problems.

Even trivial misunderstandings in email exchanges can produce unpleasant emotions (Kato & Akahori 2004a, 2004b). Unpleasant emotions may cause communication partners to distrust one another damaging their interpersonal relationship. Kato, Kato, & Akahori (2007) focused on the relationships between the emotions experienced by senders and receivers and the degree of emotional cues contained in the email messages. The researchers investigated the influence the degree of emotional cues transmitted between the sender and receiver had on the emotions which were experienced. They found that while positive emotions were directly expressed and easily understood, negative emotions proved to be more difficult to interpret (Kato, Kato, & Akahori 2007). The results of the current study, described below, address this final point, that is, why are negative emotions more challenging to interpret?

Young people may be particularly susceptible to the potential problems of text-based commu-