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## Emotional Intelligence and Emotion Work: Examining Constructs from an Interdisciplinary Framework

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## Emotional Intelligence and Emotion Work: Examining Constructs From an Interdisciplinary Framework

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*Career Partners*

*Emotional intelligence and emotion work are two research areas traditionally presented as distinct. This article reviews their definitions, examines their intersections, and illustrates the advantage of approaching emotion research from an interdisciplinary framework. Conclusions address the following: (a) An employee's emotional intelligence or cognitive abilities cannot be assessed or developed without an understanding of the context or emotion work rules; (b) an employee's emotional intelligence provides the foundational ability to perceive the display of emotions within a given job context or situation; (c) emotion work cannot be performed well without possessing a foundation of emotional intelligence. Those responsible for employee development must help the employee develop cognitive abilities and knowledge about contextual emotional expression rules. Implications for human resource development address ways professionals can utilize this interdisciplinary perspective in research and practice and the importance of developing both cognitive abilities and contextual knowledge about emotions to help employees develop emotional intelligence and perform emotion work.*

*Keywords: emotional intelligence; emotion work; employee development*

The importance of emotional intelligence and emotion work to employee career development and success has been stressed (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Callahan, 2000; Callahan & McCollum, 2002; Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Fineman, 2000; Hochschild, 1979; Rafaeli, 1989; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). These skills are crucial to one's career and are within the domain of employee development and performance; therefore, human resource development (HRD) professionals have responsibility for helping employees to develop these capacities.

Emotional intelligence and emotion work both consider emotions in the workplace, yet each body of literature differs somewhat. As a result, scholars have regarded the two areas as distinct, unrelated, and having emerged from two different fields—sociology and psychology (Callahan &

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McCollum, 2002; Domagalski, 1999). Research, theory development, and publication have reflected this disparate point of view. Many academics and practitioners alike are not familiar with the term *emotion work* and cannot explain the difference between emotion work and emotional intelligence. This traditional separatist perspective and lack of understanding of the two concepts hinders the ability of HRD to help employees.

In examining the definitions of emotional intelligence and emotion work, their importance to HRD and the intersections of the two fields become apparent. This overlap is important for examining workplace phenomena to consider multiple aspects of, and influences on, emotional behavior at work. The purpose of this article is to review and clarify the definitions of each body of literature, demonstrate their commonalities, and discuss the importance of approaching employee emotional development from a multidisciplinary perspective.

## Method

The author conducted a literature review of empirical and research-based articles to understand the theoretical and conceptual aspects of the literatures of emotional intelligence and emotion work. Articles reviewed included articles written in the two fields in academic, refereed journals. These were located by entering the following search words with no date restrictions into relevant business, psychology, and sociology databases: *emotional intelligence*, *emotion work*, *emotions*, and *emotional expression*.

After reviewing various authors' constructions of the concepts, definitions and current knowledge in each field were synthesized and compared and contrasted against each other. Tables are utilized to illustrate the commonalities and differences of the fields. An inductive analysis allowed for any conceptual patterns, relationships, and themes between the literatures to be identified and described. The two literatures are integrated to demonstrate how the perspective of an interdisciplinary framework can support HRD in the effort to develop employees.

## Emotional Intelligence

An aspect of emotional intelligence called social intelligence was first described by Thorndike in the 1920s as one of many different types of intelligence individuals possess (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001), yet Wechsler's IQ test, developed in the 1950s, had a greater societal influence. Thus, the next half-century was dominated by IQ testing (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001) and the view of emotions as the antithesis of rationality (Fabian, 1999).

Not until the 1980s was the idea of multiple intelligences revived. Initially described by Gardner (1983), these multiple intelligences included linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, musical, inter-

TABLE 1: Three Streams of Definitions of Emotional Intelligence

<i>Salovey &amp; Mayer (1990)</i> <i>Ability Model</i>	<i>Goleman &amp; Cherniss (1998)</i> <i>Personality Model</i>	<i>Bar-On (1997)</i> <i>Mixed Model</i>
Emotional intelligence is The capacity to process information and reason with emotion	Emotional intelligence is Self-awareness	Emotional intelligence is "An array of noncognitive abilities, competencies, and skills" (p. 14)
To perceive emotion	Self-regulation	Intrapersonal EQ
To integrate it into thought	Self-motivation	Interpersonal EQ
To understand	Social awareness	Adaptability EQ
To manage emotion	Social skills	Stress management EQ General mood EQ

NOTE: EQ = emotional quotient.

personal, and intrapersonal. Gardner described these intelligences as just as important as the type of intelligence measured by IQ tests (Cherniss, 2000).

After Gardner (1983), terms closer to the current usage of *emotional intelligence* were developed. Current authors often associated with this term use varying definitions; thus, a review of the main branches of emotional intelligence follows. Many authors discuss emotional intelligence, but its definitions seem to fall under three main branches: an ability model, a personality model, and mixed models (descriptions forthcoming). The main streams are outlined in Table 1 with each described under the author who is known for developing that branch of definition of emotional intelligence.

The evolution from *multiple intelligence* to the current term *emotional intelligence* began with Bar-On's (1988) development of the emotional quotient, or EQ, test, followed by the coining of the term *emotional intelligence* by Salovey and Mayer (1990). Salovey and Mayer defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action" (1990, p. 189).

According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), emotional intelligence comprises four levels of abilities that range from basic psychological processes to more complex processes integrating emotion and cognition. The model is developmental in that skill at the first level is required to possess the skills of the next levels. The first level, emotional perception, includes skills that allow an individual to perceive, appraise, and express emotions. These abilities include identifying one's own and other's emotions, expressing one's own emotions, and discriminating the expressions of emotion in others. The second level, emotional integration/facilitation, involves facilitating emotions and prioritizing thinking. Emotions enter the cognitive system, are recognized and labeled, and subsequently alter thought. The cognitive sys-

tem can then view things from different perspectives (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000).

The third level is emotional understanding and reasoning. At this level, emotional signals are understood along with their implications. These implications, such as feeling or meaning, are then considered. The fourth level, emotional management, involves an openness to emotions that allows personal and intellectual growth. This level of emotional intelligence is more complex with skills that allow individuals to selectively engage in or detach from emotions and monitor and manage emotions in themselves and others (Mayer et al., 2000).

Goleman (1995) defined emotional intelligence as having five parts: knowing emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others, and handling relationships (p. 43). Elsewhere in the book, the definition includes self-awareness, impulse control, delay of gratification, handling stress and anxiety, and empathy (Goleman, 1995, p. 259). In Goleman and Cherniss's (1998) subsequent book, the five dimensions are further broken down into 25 different emotional competencies. Some researchers argue that Goleman's all-inclusive definition describes personality rather than intelligence, is not scientific, and adds nothing new to the literature (Mayer et al., 2000). Thus, in the above table, this model is referred to as a personality model.

Others have proposed definitions that are considered mixed models or a mixture of abilities, behaviors, and general disposition (Mayer et al., 2000). For example, Bar-On (1997) characterized emotional intelligence as "an array of noncognitive abilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (p. 14). Cooper (1996) developed the EQ map, which includes dimensions such as self-awareness, emotional awareness of others, interpersonal connections, resilience, creativity, compassion, and intuition.

This difference in opinion as to what is the correct definition of emotional intelligence is important. An individual's inclination toward a specific definition will affect more than terminology, for which definition is utilized influences the extent to which one believes emotional intelligence can be learned, as well as the belief in its importance in career success, and the way HRD chooses to help employees develop.

Many researchers maintain that aspects of emotional intelligence, rather than traditional IQ, make the biggest difference in a person's success in life (Bar-On, 1997; Cooper, 1996; Cherniss, 2000; Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Goleman, 1995; Goleman & Cherniss, 1998; Lusch & Scrpkenci, 1990; Weisinger, 1988). Cherniss (2000) provided multiple examples of research suggesting the importance of emotional intelligence to success in the workplace. A longitudinal study of Ph.D. graduates indicated that social and emotional abilities were four times more important than IQ in determining

professional success and prestige. The "marshmallow studies" at Stanford University indicated that 4-year-olds who were able to resist temptation later had a total SAT score that was 210 points higher than those kids who were unable to wait (Cherniss, 2000). Lusch and Serpkenci's (1990) study of retail store managers "found that the ability to handle stress predicted net profits, sales per square foot, sales per employee, and per dollar of inventory investment" (p. 6).

Emotional intelligence clearly has the potential to contribute to workplace success. Goleman and Cherniss's model (1998) examines emotional intelligence as a theory of performance, adapting it to predict personal effectiveness at work and in leadership. In his second book, the author discussed emotional competence, defining it as "a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work" (Goleman, 2001, p. 1). According to Goleman and Cherniss, emotional competencies can be learned.

Research has also focused on the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership abilities. Evidence suggests that emotionally intelligent leadership results in improved business performance (Goleman, 2001). McClelland (1998) studied division heads of a global food and beverage company and found that the divisions of the leaders with strengths in emotional intelligence competencies outperformed yearly revenue targets by a margin of 15% to 20%. In a 1994 Catholic Health Association study of outstanding leaders in health care, it was found that more effective leaders were more adept at integrating key competencies (Goleman, 2001). Another study indicated that managers with self-awareness, an important aspect of emotional intelligence, are rated as more effective by both superiors and subordinates than those managers without self-awareness (Megerian & Sosik, 1996).

Transformational leaders, defined by their "individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence" (Cherniss, 2000, p. 7), are apt to be high in emotional intelligence abilities (Bass & Avolio, 1994; House, 1995; Megerian & Sosik, 1996; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). These leaders serve as positive role models (Bass & Avolio, 1994), selectively arouse followers' motives (House, 1995), and create strong emotional reactions and identification with and belief from followers (Megerian & Sosik, 1996).

"Emotional intelligence has as much to do with knowing when and how to express emotion as it does with controlling it" (Cherniss, 2000, p. 7). Whereas this knowledge is clearly influenced by biological forces, it also has to do with sociological and cultural pressures. Emotion work is the field that examines emotion from a sociological, cultural, and environmental perspective.

TABLE 2: Definitions of Emotion Work

<i>Hochschild (1983)</i>	<i>Callahan-Fabian (1999); Kipnis, Schmidt, &amp; Wilkinson (1980); Lerum (2000); Rafaeli &amp; Sutton (1991)</i>
Organizationally imposed control of emotion including elimination of or controlled display of emotions	Emotions may be employee initiated
Emotion work is performed in exchange for pay	Emotional expression is for the benefit of the employee
Emotion work is not viewed as beneficial by the employee	Women perform more emotion work than men

## Emotion Work

Emotion has traditionally been viewed as inappropriate for organizational life, disruptive, and illogical and has received relatively little attention as an area of research within organizations (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Callahan-Fabian, 1999; Fineman, 1993). A polarized view of emotionality and rationality came to pervade the Western industrialized world's way of thinking thereby resulting in the removal of emotion from scientific inquiry (Callahan-Fabian, 1999). However, researchers began to see that the phenomenon of emotion is in fact relevant to studies of social contexts and that emotions are not the antithesis of the rationality that is so traditionally valued in work settings (Putnam & Mumby, 1993). Emotions are inseparable from everyday organizational life (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995), shape social transactions, and contribute to the structure and culture of organizations (Fineman, 1993).

Beginning with Hochschild's (1979) foundational research on emotion work, emotions in the context of organizational life have been receiving increased attention. Emotion work, also referred to by some as emotion management or emotional labor, was defined by Hochschild as the active effort to change or control emotions in oneself or in others to meet social guidelines. These culturally embedded, socially shared guidelines, or feeling rules, govern how we should feel. Just as with emotional intelligence, emotion work has varying definitions. Some authors portray emotion work as organizationally imposed for the benefit of the organization, whereas the opposing view illustrates emotion work as employee initiated and potentially beneficial for the employee. Table 2 illustrates these main branches of emotion work definitions.

Hochschild (1979) used the term *emotion work* to apply to situations where the display of a particular emotion is exchanged for a wage. The author studied airlines and the required emotional behaviors of service

workers, particularly airline stewardesses. Current research maintains that service workers, particularly human service and customer service professionals, have much higher levels of emotion work than other occupations (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Hochschild (1983) described airline workers as having to exhibit certain emotions, such as happiness, as part of performing their work roles. The author found two general types of emotion work including evocation, which is eliciting an emotion that is not present, and suppression, eliminating, or subduing an emotion that is present.

Emotion work has been studied in a wide variety of organizations including the military, airlines, police departments, bill collection agencies, health care agencies, and the Disney corporation (Callahan, 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Pogrebin & Poole, 1991; Smith & Kleinman, 1989; VanMaanen & Kunda, 1989). Occupation-specific socialization practices have defined the rules for appropriate expression of emotions for nurses, doctors, and social workers (Fineman, 1993; Hearn, 1993).

Employees learn the required emotion rules using methods that vary from gentle to harsh. These may include organizational screening and selection, training, off-the-job socialization opportunities, and reward and punishment (Domagalski, 1999). The expression of emotion, once a personal decision, has become a marketplace commodity with standards and rules dictating how and when emotion should be expressed (Morris & Feldman, 1996). Display rules, the "behavioral expectations regarding which emotions should be expressed or hidden in a given situation" (Davis, LaRosa, & Foshee, 1992, p. 513), have even been incorporated into job requirements. Leidner (1993) found that McDonald's workers were "told to be cheerful and polite at all times" (p. 160).

In a punishment-oriented environment, the influence of social norms and cultural prescriptives becomes most apparent when they are violated. Deviations can be met with sanctions or pathological labels (Domagalski, 1999). In Leidner's (1993) study, new employees were "reprimanded for not smiling" (p. 160). In another study, various factors including wider societal socialization processes, management-designed organizational feeling/display rules, peer group influences, customer expectations, and self-regulation all influenced the emotion management of staff (Sandiford & Seymour, 2000). These authors found that for employees learning about emotion work in English pubs, even "customers were involved in the informal socialization process, often trying to mold new staff into 'their' environment, sometimes using bullying" (Sandiford & Seymour, 2000, p. 23), sarcasm, displaying overt or covert dissatisfaction, or simply not returning. Thus, organizational members can learn emotion rules from both formal and informal socialization, including reward and punishment.

As opposed to organizational emotion requirements, research has also demonstrated that the use of emotions may not be exploitative, may have positive effects, and can be used as a tool of social influence. This perspec-

tive argues that some employees perform emotion work for their own benefit (Kipnis et al., 1980; Lerum, 2000; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1991). This perspective also suggests that acknowledging and addressing emotion work requirements can benefit individuals as well as organizations (Wharton, 1993).

Lerum (2000) described the task of emotion work as not necessarily exploitative or harmful but as an optional control maneuver. The author found positive effects from emotion work conducted by service workers, including increased power and legitimacy. Kipnis et al. (1980) described using negative emotions to influence others, and Rafaeli and Sutton (1991) identified emotion strategies used by criminal interrogators and bill collectors that assisted them in their work endeavors.

Yet whether resulting in a positive or negative outcome, conceptualized as either job-focused or employee-focused emotional labor (Brothridge & Grandey, 2002), emotion work is still meeting workplace demands. The environmental component, the workplace, remains as a common bond between emotion work and emotional intelligence.

### **Differences Between Emotion Work and Emotional Intelligence**

There are distinct differences between the two fields. Research in emotions derives from many different perspectives. Whereas emotional intelligence takes a psychological perspective (Goleman, 1995), emotion work brings a sociological viewpoint. Emotional intelligence is considered psychologically based because of its cognitive and physiological associations. It addresses the appraisal, regulation, and utilization of emotion in oneself and others, focusing inward rather than outward. Emotional intelligence is having the ability to understand and manage emotions.

In contrast, emotion work examines contextual and social factors and addresses the organizational or job requirements. It examines organizationally or self-imposed control of emotions and the ability to monitor emotions. Because emotion work studies the workplace and jobs, its focus is outward or contextual.

Hochschild (1990) suggested that extracting emotion from context is problematic, yet some proponents of emotional intelligence insist on quantifying emotion to justify studying it (Fineman, 2004). Fineman, citing emotional intelligence as an example, argued that if people are "captured in an emotional number ... [this] can have marked consequences for how they are seen and managed" (2004, p. 720). Comments such as this might suggest that marriage of these two fields will end in quick divorce.

I suggest the opposite. This is because I am not necessarily promoting the use of measurement of emotions; rather, I am suggesting the necessity of

utilizing an interdisciplinary framework and approaching the study of emotions by considering both emotion work and emotional intelligence. This will not eliminate the differences that exist between the two fields, but it will provide a more complete perspective in understanding employee emotional behavior.

### **Integration of Emotional Intelligence and Emotion Work-An Interdisciplinary Approach**

Individual behavior cannot be understood without an understanding of the context, as the two are intertwined. For example, to understand why a particular emotion is expressed at work, it is necessary to know about the event that triggered the emotional response as well as the history of that person and his or her situation. It is essential to explore both the person and the environment together to understand the person-environment transaction or the relationship between them (Briner, 1999).

In other words, emotional intelligence and emotion work function together. For example, when a female manager working in a male-oriented environment effectively understands and expresses emotions in the workplace, her emotional intelligence gives her the foundational ability to perceive the display rules of her workplace and learn about emotions in her particular context to perform the necessary emotion work. Social settings are texts from which people learn lessons about themselves and others in a hidden curriculum (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). Thus, the emotional display rules (Hochschild, 1979) guiding emotional expression are learned within an employee's particular work context.

Fabian (1999) stated that "an individual may have the ability, yet fail to act on that ability" (p. 7) to express emotions appropriately. For a manager to have the emotional intelligence to monitor his or her emotional expression, he or she must be aware of what emotions are expected, acceptable, and unacceptable in a given context. The concepts of emotional intelligence and emotion work overlap, because management of emotions requires the intelligence to perceive, learn, and adjust behavior as necessary. In other words, emotional intelligence is having the ability, whereas emotion work is acting upon that ability (Fabian, 1999).

Thus, the issue here is that if one approaches developing employees' ability with emotions using only the emotional intelligence framework, there is a critical component missing—that of context. It is extremely difficult to assess and interpret emotional expression without contextual knowledge, for you have no basis from which to understand why someone chooses to express a particular emotion.

Similarly, if one attempts to critique or analyze emotional behavior of employees using only the framework of emotion work, there is also an

essential consideration lacking—the emotional abilities of the employee. The employee's emotional intelligence may need assessment and improvement to perform the emotion work required in his or her job. The emotional requirements and the quality of a particular job as well as the employee's ability to manage emotions need to be considered together (Brotheridge & Granley, 2002).

## **Conclusions and Contribution to HRD**

An employee cannot do the emotion work required for the organization or for his or her job if he or she does not possess emotional intelligence along with the contextual knowledge required to do emotion work. You would not give a person with broken legs only one crutch. Similarly, **HRD** should not teach a person who is performing poorly in emotional expression a partial set of skills.

Given the importance of monitoring and managing one's emotions at work, it is critical to consider both the contextual and cognitive aspects of an employee's performance. Instead of viewing the two fields as separate, emotional intelligence and emotion work must be viewed as interwoven when examining workplace emotional learning or emotional behavior.

In sum, the conclusions are as follows:

- An employee's emotional intelligence or cognitive abilities cannot be assessed or developed without an understanding of the context or emotion work rules. (Emotional expression cannot be assessed as appropriate or inappropriate without a contextual knowing or what was happening at the time.)
- An employee's emotional intelligence provides the employee the foundational ability to perceive the display rules within a given job context or situation. (They cannot understand and monitor the emotion rules without some basic abilities to read emotions in themselves and others.)
- Emotion work cannot be performed well without possessing a foundation of emotional intelligence. (An employee may not be able to change their expressed emotions for job purposes if they do not have the ability to identify and/or monitor their emotions.)
- Those responsible for employee development must help the employee develop both emotional intelligence/cognitive abilities and knowledge about contextual emotion work rules. (HRD can teach what is expected in the context and help develop employee ability to manage and monitor emotions.)

Employees' emotions are a significant aspect of organizational life and are a critical component of an employee's ability to succeed in his or her career (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Bar-On, 1997; Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Cooper, 1996). Emotions in the workplace cannot be ignored, and they cannot be treated as independent and unrelated phenomenon. They must be acknowledged as existing, often as job requirements, particularly in service positions. Emotional expression must be analyzed using a dual lens of emotional intelligence

and emotion work. If the dual lens is not used and only a single perspective is considered, the employee will suffer.

This interdisciplinary framework is very important to HRD because we help develop employees' abilities, improve their performance, and encourage employee learning. In terms of emotional expression, learning and development must be approached with a consideration of both the employee's cognitive abilities and his or her knowledge about workplace emotion rules. Developing one without the other would not be as effective as ensuring that the employee has both the ability to monitor his or her emotions as well as the knowledge of what emotional expression is expected and appropriate in a particular workplace or position. If both facets of employee emotional performance-emotional intelligence and emotion work context-are not considered together, then the employee's skills with emotional expression will suffer. This will affect the perception of employee performance and, subsequently, career success.

HRD professionals are in the position to influence learning and development in the workplace. They can conduct workplace interventions with a multidisciplinary approach to gain a more broad understanding of employees' emotional lives. Rather than simply evaluating an employee's performance on the appropriateness of emotional expression, HRD can consider the relationship between an employee's ability to express emotions appropriately and the social and contextual factors. Learning and development efforts around emotions must include improving the employee's cognitive ability as well as his or her ability to understand emotion work display rules. In sum, HRD professionals need to identify the cognitive, behavioral, and contextual aspects of emotions in the workplace so that both emotional intelligence and emotion work abilities can be simultaneously developed in employees.

### **Future Research**

This inclusive and multidisciplinary examination of emotions provides a more solid foundation from which HRD can research emotions in the workplace. The importance of an employee having both the emotional intelligence to monitor his or her emotional expression as well as the awareness of what emotions are acceptable at work has been presented. Prior research has demonstrated the importance of these emotional skills; therefore, future research must continue to discover better methods of developing these skills.

Future research should examine the interactions between having the ability and acting on the ability—in other words, between emotional intelligence and emotion work. A research study that would support this proposal of using an interdisciplinary approach would be an empirical study whereby

employees are taught to manage emotional expression within changing contexts thus allowing them to apply and develop their abilities given different contextual knowledge.

Another research possibility is to compare companies that are specific in their training regarding emotional expression with companies that are not. Most companies do not address emotional expression in their new employee orientation. What if they did? And do companies that specify for their employees how they should express themselves in their jobs have more effective employees? Are these employees more adaptable in different contexts? How does this relate to other statistics such as turnover, absenteeism, employee motivation, or sales?

This article is theoretical and therefore lacks empirical data. Future research can provide empirical data examining experiences with developing both cognitive ability and contextual knowledge together to see the effects on employees' emotional performance. Research can also examine how this connection is made and what organizations and HRD can do to increase employees' facility with both emotional intelligence and emotion work. HRD professionals must continue to discover more effective ways of developing emotional intelligence and emotion work capacities in employees.

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