

The Ability to Influence Others via Emotion Displays:

A New Dimension of Emotional Intelligence

Stéphane Côté and Ivona Hideg

University of Toronto

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Abstract

We propose a new dimension of emotional intelligence (EI) that is particularly relevant in organizational settings: The ability to influence others via emotion displays. In this article, we first describe social functional accounts of emotions and the evidence supporting social effects of emotions. Then, we propose that individuals differ in the degree to which they can influence the behaviors, attitudes, and emotions of others via their emotion displays, and we demonstrate that this individual variation meets the criteria for an emotional ability. We articulate the mechanisms by which the ability to influence others via emotion displays is related to competence in organizational settings. In addition, we develop propositions about factors that moderate the effect of this ability on competence. We describe the research implications of our model.

## The Ability to Influence Others via Emotion Displays:

### A New Dimension of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a set of abilities concerned with processing emotions and emotional information, as opposed to higher-level cognitive processes (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The dominant models of EI propose a global construct and sub-dimensions.<sup>1</sup> Salovey and Mayer (1990) first identified three sub-dimensions by reviewing and organizing findings from the literature on individual variations in emotional processing. The ability to perceive emotions is the ability to detect and decipher emotions in faces, pictures, voices, and cultural artifacts, and to identify one's own emotions. The ability to use emotions is the ability to harness emotions to facilitate cognitive activities such as information processing and decision-making. The ability to manage emotions is the ability to change emotions in oneself and others. In a subsequent publication, Mayer and Salovey (1997) added a fourth dimension suggested by additional research findings. The ability to understand emotions is the ability to comprehend emotion language, the distinctions among discrete emotions, and the causes and consequences of emotions.

The approach used to identify the dimensions of EI suggests that it is possible to identify other dimensions when new research findings become available. This is not an unusual notion; scholars have noted that more dimensions of cognitive ability may eventually be discovered (cf. Carroll, 1993). The literature reviewed to identify the current dimensions of EI predominantly concerned the intrapersonal effects of emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). We propose that recent advances in theory and research on the interpersonal effects of emotions suggest a new dimension of EI that is particularly relevant in organizational settings:

The ability to influence others via emotion displays. Individuals vary in their effectiveness in displaying emotions to influence the behaviors, attitudes, and emotions of others.

We draw on research on emotions and emotion regulation to develop a model of the ability to influence others via emotion displays as a new dimension of EI. This article unfolds as follows. We first describe social functional accounts that provide the broad theoretical foundation for the social effects of emotions in organizations, and we review and integrate the evidence for these effects. In the core section of this article, we develop a model of the ability to influence others via emotion displays, depicted in Figure 1. Specifically, we describe this ability, articulate the mechanisms by which it relates to competence, and identify moderators of this relation. We end by describing the implications of our model for future research.

### **Social Functional Accounts of Emotions**

The research on emotions in organizations has primarily focused on their intrapersonal effects – the effects of one person’s emotions on that person’s thoughts and actions. This research has shown that the emotions of organization members impact their own decisions, judgments, and behaviors (see Brief & Weiss, 2002; Grandey, 2008; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, for reviews). To illustrate, research has investigated which affective states are more conducive to various forms of performance, including task performance (Beal, Weiss, Barros, & MacDermid, 2005) and creativity (George & Zhou, 2007). These intrapersonal effects may represent only a subset of the effects of emotions in organizations because emotions may influence the decisions, judgments, and behaviors of both people who feel emotions and people who observe displays of emotions. For instance, the emotions that service agents feel may influence their own decisions, judgments, and behaviors, as well as the decisions, judgments, and behaviors of their customers (Grandey, 2000; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989). The effects of displays of emotion by one person on

the thoughts, feelings, and actions of other people have been labeled the interpersonal, or social, effects of emotion (Frijda & Mesquita, 1994; Keltner & Haidt, 1999).

Social functional accounts posit that public displays of emotion communicate rich and important information about one's attitudes, goals, and intentions to those who observe these displays (Darwin, 1872/1965; Frijda & Mesquita, 1994; Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Izard, 1971). For example, displays of enthusiasm by customer service agents communicate their intentions to be helpful to customers. These accounts are supported by evidence that internal experiences of emotion are accompanied by public displays (Cacioppo, Petty, Losch, & Kim, 1986; Wagner, MacDonald, & Manstead, 1986), and that different emotions involve distinct muscle movements in the face (Darwin, 1872/1965; Ekman, 2003) and distinct acoustic features in the voice (Juslin & Scherer, 2005). There is some similarity in how emotions are displayed across cultures, but cultures have emotional dialects that shape how emotions are expressed to some degree (Elfenbein, Beaupré, Lévesque, & Hess, 2007).

Social functional accounts also posit that individuals attend to others' emotions because doing so provides them with important information about the behavior they might expect from others. Research suggests that individuals are particularly attuned to identify information about emotions in their environments, presumably because these cues have evolutionary significance. For instance, a study of people who viewed clips of former US President Ronald Reagan exhibited different skin conductance and heart rate responses depending on whether he expressed happiness, anger, or fear (McHugo, Lanzetta, Sullivan, Masters, & Englis, 1985). Displays of emotions that are shown outside of the conscious awareness of observers elicit corresponding muscle movements in observers (Dimberg, Thunberg, & Elmehed, 2000). Individuals' ability to

rapidly identify and respond to others' emotion displays suggests that this ability represents an evolutionary adaptation (Brosch, Sander, Pourtois, & Scherer, 2008; Öhman & Mineka, 2001).

Observers draw inferences about others' displays of emotions, and these inferences shape how observers think, act, and feel. For example, employees may consult their leader's displays of emotions to obtain information about how their leader will act. Employees who infer that their leader is unsatisfied with the state of affairs via displays of anger subsequently exert more effort (Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005). Other research has shown that people who commit a social transgression are more likely to be forgiven if they display embarrassment (Keltner & Buswell, 1997; Semin & Manstead, 1982) or guilt (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994). There is also considerable research showing social effects of positive emotions. Displays of positive emotions in yearbook pictures of women graduating from a private college were associated with evaluations of both competence and affiliation by naïve observers 40 years later as well as self-reports of marital satisfaction and general well-being at age 52 (Harker & Keltner, 2001). Displays of emotions were associated with enhanced cooperation in a group (Barsade, 2002).

Illustrative findings from areas of particular interest to organizational researchers, including customer service, negotiations, and leadership, appear in Table 1. Taken together, these findings suggest that displays of emotions have potent and reliable effects on the behaviors and attitudes of those who observe these displays in organizational settings.

### **The Ability to Influence Others via Emotion Displays as an**

#### **Emotional Ability in Models of Emotional Intelligence**

Individuals consciously exert efforts to modify the emotions that they show to others, because displays of emotions influence the behaviors, attitudes, and emotions of other people (Andrade & Ho, 2009; Grandey, 2003). We propose that some individuals more effectively rely

on the social effects of emotions than others to influence the behaviors, attitudes, and emotions of other people. We propose that this ability consists of a) deciding which display of emotion will have the desired impact on others and, then, b) effectively eliciting these displays during interpersonal interactions. We further propose that this individual variation meets the requirements for a new emotional ability within models of EI.

### **Deciding which Display of Emotion will have the Desired Impact**

Discrete emotions evolved to communicate different attitudes, goals, and intentions to others and, accordingly, their facial displays differ (Darwin, 1872/1965). In an early demonstration, Knutson (1996) showed that people infer the dispositions of others and, particularly, their dominance and affiliation, from their displays of emotions. All else equal, people who display anger or disgust are perceived to be high in dominance and low in affiliation, those who display happiness are thought to be high on both traits, and those who display fear or sadness are believed to be low on both traits. In the domain of conflict management, negotiators who display anger are believed to be tough, and negotiators who display happiness are believed to be satisfied with the current state of affairs (Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004a).

When deciding which emotion to display, individuals must consider the match between the discrete emotion and the communication medium. Discrete emotions are displayed in the face (Ekman, 2003), voice (Juslin & Scherer, 2005), and touch (Hertenstein, Holmes, McCullough, & Keltner, 2009). Meta-analytic research reveals that some emotions (e.g., anger) are detected more accurately via the voice than the face, and other emotions (e.g., happiness) show the opposite pattern (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002; Juslin & Laukka, 2003). In addition, some emotions such as sympathy and gratitude are reliably communicated through touch between the

elbow and hand of the target (Hertenstein et al., 2009; Hertenstein, Keltner, App, Bulleit, & Jaskolka, 2006). Facial and vocal displays of these emotions have not yet been identified (Keltner, 2009).

This suggests that by focusing predominantly on facial displays of emotions, organization members may be missing social effects of emotions that occur through frequently used communication media such as the telephone, electronic mail, and instant messaging. Given that emotions more effectively communicate their meanings via some channels than others, it is important to consider the communication channel when exhibiting in the ability to influence others via emotion displays. Specifically, we suggest that individuals equipped with the ability to influence others via emotion displays will not only choose the most appropriate emotion to express but also express it via the optimal communication medium, when possible. There may be situations, however, when using the optimal medium is not an option, such as when the optimal medium is face-to-face interaction, but the parties interact in different physical locations.

### **The Regulation behind the Displays**

Many emotional displays result from spontaneously felt emotions, but many are voluntarily triggered via emotion regulation efforts (Gross, 1998; Hochschild, 1983). Individuals with high ability to influence others via emotion displays understand which displays will produce the desired effects. This requires, to a degree, that emotion displays are voluntarily elicited, because not all spontaneously felt emotions will be beneficial in that moment.

There is more than one way in which individuals can regulate emotions. An individual with high ability to influence others via emotion displays will be aware that the effect of displayed emotions may depend on how emotion is regulated, and use the more effective strategy for regulating emotions. At a broad level, researchers have identified two forms of emotion



regulation that differ in their timing during the unfolding of an emotion: antecedent-focused regulation, or deep acting, and response-focused regulation, or surface acting (Gross, 1998; Hochschild, 1983). Deep acting occurs early in the emotion generative process. Laboratory studies show that deep acting changes internal experiences and public displays of emotion (Gross, 1998). Leaders may use deep acting, for example, by thinking about uplifting moments to amplify both their internal experience and public display of confidence. Surface acting, in contrast, occurs late in the emotion generative process. In laboratory research, surface acting predominantly changed the public display (Gross, 1998). Leaders may use surface acting, for instance, by pretending to be excited externally about a change in the organization while leaving their subjective experience of doubt intact.

Deep acting produces relatively authentic displays of emotions because the internal experience matches the public display (Côté, 2005; Grandey, 2003). Surface acting produces more inauthentic displays because the internal experience is less likely to match the public display. The authenticity of the display, in turn, has important consequences. Past research generally concludes that observers generally respond adversely to expressers' inauthentic displays of emotion, because observers interpret these displays as calculated attempts to control them, a lack of interest in developing a close relationship, or evidence that expressers do not trust them (Côté, 2005; Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, Jansen, & Sideman, 2005; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989). For instance, rather than inferring that an angry leader is dissatisfied with their performance, team members may infer that the leader has malevolent intentions if the leader's anger is deemed inauthentic.

These theoretical considerations are supported by past research. In two laboratory studies, interaction partners of individuals who used surface acting to hide their displays of emotions

reported liking their partner less, felt less rapport with their partner, and exhibited larger increases in blood pressure than interaction partners of individuals who used deep acting or who did not regulate emotion (Butler et al., 2003). Field studies have shown that the more individuals amplify or suppress emotion through surface acting (and, hence, the more inauthentically they display emotion), the worse receivers respond to them (Grandey, 2003; Gross & John, 2003; Holman, Chissick, & Totterdell, 2002). Service agents who displayed authentic positive emotions were rated as better performers than those whose emotions were inauthentic (Grandey, 2003; Groth, Hennig-Thurau, & Walsh, 2009). This suggests that the ability to influence others via emotion displays involves individuals' choice of strategy to generate displays of emotions.

Choosing the best way to manage emotions may not be sufficient. The distinction between knowledge and implementation from the larger literature on abilities (Ackerman, 1996) suggests that people who know the best strategies may not implement them well (Côté, Gyurak, & Levenson, in press). For example, a customer service agent who knows that cognitively reframing an interaction with a difficult customer is the best strategy to display genuine positive emotions may not implement that strategy well during the interaction. Thus, another aspect of the ability to influence others via emotion displays consists of successfully operating the machinery of emotion regulation to successfully execute the chosen strategy.

**Summary and definition.** The preceding discussion identifies the two key aspects of the ability to influence others via emotion displays: a) making good decisions about which emotion to display, given the context and b) choosing and implementing strategies to display emotion effectively. These processes are currently under-emphasized in models of EI. Although models of EI include deciding which emotion to feel, this is typically discussed in the service of influencing one's own actions, thinking, and feelings (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). In contrast, the

dimension of EI that we introduce concerns modifying the actions, thinking, and feelings of other people. Moreover, models of EI include the regulation of emotions, but theoretical discussion of this dimension typically focus on regulating one's own or others' internal feelings, rather than expressive displays directly. These considerations point to the following definition of a new emotional ability within models of EI:

*The ability to influence others via emotion display reflects variation in how effectively individuals can change the behaviors, attitudes, or emotions of other people by expressing emotions. This ability involves identifying the best emotion to display and choosing and implementing a strategy to display this emotion effectively.*

### **The Ability to Influence Others via Emotion Displays meets the Criteria for an Ability**

Abilities reflect “the possible variations over individuals in the liminal [threshold] levels of task difficulty ... at which, on any given occasion in which all conditions appear to be favorable, individuals perform successfully on a defined class of tasks” (Carroll, 1993, p. 8). This definition provides guidance for identifying and defining new abilities, and for distinguishing constructs that are abilities from constructs that are not. According to Carroll's (1993) definition, a first criterion is that an ability must represent individuals' maximum performance on tasks, under favorable conditions. A second criterion implied by this definition is that there should be variation among individuals. A third criterion is provided by Mayer and Salovey's (1997) indication that “emotional intelligence requires at least some “right” answers as to feelings” (p. 9). A fourth criterion for an ability to be considered a dimension of EI in particular is that it must involve emotional processing (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). A final criterion is that emotional abilities help individuals show competence in daily life (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). We show how the ability to influence others via emotion displays satisfies these criteria.

**Criterion 1: Maximum performance.** For a construct to represent an ability, it must represent the highest level of performance a person can attain in a given domain. For instance, verbal ability represents the maximal level of competency that a person can exhibit in the domain of language. A construct is outside the realm of ability and is instead located within the realm of personality traits if it reflects the degree to which people typically attempt to influence others (Côté, 2010). For individual variation in influencing others via emotion displays to represent an ability, it must represent the highest level of performance a person can attain in this domain and be defined as maximal performance. A person has high level of the ability to influence others via emotion displays if that person has the potential to produce a relatively large change in the behaviors, attitudes, and emotions of other people. A person has low level of this ability if that person has the potential to produce only a small change in the behaviors, attitudes, and emotions of other people. Thus, the ability to influence others via emotion displays indeed represents the maximal level of influence that people can exert on the behaviors, attitudes, and emotions of others via their displays of emotions, suggesting that it meets this first criterion for an ability.

**Criterion 2: Individual variation.** For the ability to influence others via emotion displays to represent an ability, individuals must differ on this construct. Specifically, some individuals must be able to influence others via displays of emotions better than other individuals. Past research suggests that this is the case. In a qualitative study, bill collectors who were better able to conveying urgency to debtors were more likely to be hired and rewarded at the agency (Sutton, 1991). Further, bill collectors were trained to augment their ability to adjust their displays of emotions depending on the demeanor of debtors. Additional evidence is provided by findings that some individuals are better able to modify their emotional expressive behavior than others (Côté et al., in press; Gross & Levenson, 1993; Jackson, Malmstadt, Larson,

& Davidson, 2000), an important ingredient of the ability to influence others via emotion displays. This evidence suggests that the criterion of individual variation is met.

**Criterion 3: Correct and incorrect outcomes.** A particularly important criterion is that there must be more “correct” and “incorrect” outcomes to problems within the domain of an ability (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). “Correct” outcomes to the ability to influence others via emotion displays involve an actual change in the behaviors, attitudes, or emotions of another person in the desired direction. A person is correct if this person has influenced the other person in the desired way (i.e., by changing behaviors in the desired direction). For example, if one person uses anger strategically to obtain concessions from another person, and the other person actually concedes, this represents a correct type of change. “Incorrect” outcomes involve a lack of change, or a change in others’ behaviors, attitudes, and emotions in an unwanted direction. For instance, if one uses anger strategically to obtain concessions from another person, but the other person gets angry and becomes demanding instead of giving in, this represents an incorrect type of change.

If some outcomes are more “correct” and others are more “incorrect,” then it should be possible to document this difference objectively. Change in the behaviors, attitudes, and emotions of others can be measured objectively in several ways. Changes in others’ behaviors can be measured, for example, by counting purchases in a store (Tsai, 2001). Changes in others’ attitudes can be measured, for example, by asking targets to report on their favorability towards a product or the person displaying emotions (Grandey et al., 2005). Changes in others’ emotions can be measured, for example, by capturing psychophysiological indicators such as skin conductance (Butler et al., 2003). A person will exhibit the ability to influence others via emotion displays when others’ behaviors, attitudes, and emotions change, as objectively

indicated by measures like the ones described above. This suggests that the criterion of correct and incorrect outcomes is likely to be met.

Even so, an important issue concerns potential cultural variation in what are correct and incorrect answers to problems (Salovey & Mayer, 1997). People of all cultures can exhibit changes in their behaviors, attitudes, and emotions as a result of viewing displays of emotions by others. For instance, displays of positive emotions by service agents have been shown to influence customer behavior across cultures (Grandey et al., 2005; Tsai & Huang, 2002). Although change in the behaviors, attitudes, and emotions can be observed in all cultures, what constitutes a desired change in others' behaviors, attitudes, and emotions may vary across cultures. In addition, the same displays of emotion will likely be interpreted differently in different culture. For example, negative emotional displays produce different reactions in North American versus East Asian negotiators (Kopelman & Rosette, 2008). Thus, we advocate taking into account cultural factors when determining whether a specific social effect of emotion is correct or incorrect.

**Criterion 4: Emotional content.** For a construct to represent an *emotional* ability, its content must focus principally on emotion. There are various mechanisms by which organization members may influence others' behaviors, attitudes, or emotions. The ability to influence others via emotion displays implies that some of this influence occurs via emotional processes. This ability specifically involves regulating and displaying emotions, and the consequent reactions to displayed emotions represent the cause of change in the behaviors, attitudes, or emotions of the target. Thus, the criterion of emotional content is met.

**Criterion 5: Relation to competence.** The final criterion for the ability to influence others via emotion displays to be considered an ability consists of demonstrating associations

with competence in organizational life. As a new ability that we are introducing, there is no extant research showing such associations. In the next section, we articulate the mechanisms by which individual variation in the ability to influence others via emotion displays may be related to competence in organizational settings.

### **The Ability to Influence Others via Emotion Displays and Competence**

Several complementary mechanisms may underlie the effects of the ability to influence others via emotion displays on competence. Past research and, in particular, the emotions as social information model (Van Kleef, 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2009) suggest two broad categories of processes: affective reactions and strategic inferences.

#### **Affective Reactions Mechanism**

Affective reactions concern the emotions that are elicited in observers and the liking that observers develop as a result of observing others' displays of emotions (Van Kleef, 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2009). Affective reactions, in turn, shape how observers think, feel, and act during social interactions, and these observer reactions may facilitate expressers' performance by providing them with support, information, and other resources. Affective reactions may be elicited in observers via the process of emotional contagion (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994; Neumann & Strack, 2000) or when others' displays of emotion constitute emotionally-evocative stimuli (e.g., a display of anger by an opponent may be an event that elicits happiness in a negotiator, like other events such as attractive offers from counterparts). Another type of affective reaction, liking, may also result from observing the emotions that others display. People judge individuals who display happiness to be likable and trustworthy (Clark, Pataki, & Carver, 1996), and individuals who display anger are not well-liked (Clark et al., 1996; Glomb & Hulin, 1997).

Evidence that affective reactions explain, in part, the social effects of emotions includes findings that subordinates' emotions mediate the effect of leaders' emotions on the degree of coordination among subordinates (Sy et al., 2005) and the task performance of teams composed of members with reduced epistemic motivation (defined as the willingness to expend an effort to achieve a thorough understanding of the situation; Van Kleef et al., 2009). In addition, several studies have found that customers' emotions mediate the effect of service agents' displays of emotions on customers' attitudes and intentions (Barger & Grandey, 2006; Pugh, 2001; Tsai, 2001; Tsai & Huang, 2002). These arguments and empirical evidence suggest that affective reactions such as emotional experiences and liking explain, in part, why individuals who use the ability to influence others via emotion displays become competent.

### **Strategic Inferences Mechanism**

Strategic inferences consist of inferential processes in observers that shape their behavior during the interaction (Van Kleef, 2009). Observers draw inferences about a host of qualities of expressers from their emotion displays, including their competence, dominance, friendliness, and ability (Knutson, 1996; Tiedens, 2001). Observers' inferences help them coordinate their behavior with the behavior of their interaction partners (Maddux, Mullen, & Galinsky, 2008; Tiedens & Fragale, 2003). For example, past research suggests that subordinates infer from leaders' expressions of anger that their efforts do not meet expectations, and that they increase their efforts to attain expected standards of performance (Sy et al., 2005; Van Kleef et al., 2009).

Evidence for the strategic inference mechanism comes from findings that team members' inferences about their current level of performance mediated the effect of leaders' emotions on performance among teams composed of members with high epistemic motivation (Van Kleef et al., 2009). In addition, negotiators' inferences about their opponents' attributions mediated the



effects of their opponents' displays of emotions on their own behavior (Van Kleef et al., 2004a; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2006, Study 2), and inferences about a negotiation opponents' interpersonal sensitivity explain the effect of displays of guilt, regret, disappointment, and worry on the impressions observers form about the opponent (Van Kleef et al., 2006, Study 1). Further, the effects of service agents' displays of positive emotions on customers' satisfaction are explained, in part, by judgments of service quality as a strategic inference (Barger & Grandey, 2006). These arguments and empirical evidence suggest that strategic inferences (e.g., inferences about others' status and friendliness) explain, in part, why individuals who use the ability to influence others via emotion displays attain competence.

### **Summary**

We articulated two categories of mechanisms by which the ability to influence others via emotion displays may help people demonstrate competence in organizations: affective reactions and strategic inferences. Identifying and describing these mechanisms provides conceptual evidence that this ability meets the last criterion for an emotional ability.

Proposition 1: The ability to influence others via emotion displays is an emotional ability within models of emotional intelligence.

Proposition 2: The ability to influence others via emotion displays is positively associated with competence. This association is mediated by affective reactions (Proposition 2a) and strategic inferences (Proposition 2b).

### **Moderators of the Effects of the Ability to Influence Others via Emotion Displays**

Strong theories often describe the conditions in which a phenomenon occurs and when it does not occur (Davis, 1971). We propose that the nature of the association between the ability to influence others via emotion displays and competence depends on targets' motivation to process

emotional displays, targets' ability to process emotional displays, and the culture of the interaction partners.

### **The Observer's Motivation to Process Emotional Displays**

The ability to influence others via emotion displays assumes that observers will pay close attention to expressers' displays of emotions. There is reason to believe, however, that observers will vary in the extent to which they are motivated to pay attention to and process expressers' displays of emotions. Negotiators, subordinates, and customers will be less affected by their interaction partners' emotion displays if they have little motivation to interpret the meaning of those displays. Past research has suggested that indicators of motivation include power, epistemic motivation, and the observer's trust in the expresser.

**The observer's power.** Power represents the relative influence of an individual over the outcomes of others (Dahl, 1957; Fiske, 1993). Research suggests that high power negotiators are less affected by the emotions that their counterparts display, presumably because they have substantial resources and hence can act at will without serious consequences (Van Kleef & Côté, 2007; Van Kleef, De Dreu, Pietroni, & Manstead, 2006). For example, Sinaceur and Tiedens (2006) found that displays of anger led to concessions from negotiators with low power, but not from negotiators with high power.

**The observer's epistemic motivation.** Epistemic motivation is the degree to which a person is motivated to develop and maintain a complex understanding of situations (Kruglanski, 1989). When epistemic motivation is high, people expend more effort and process information about the situation more deliberately and systematically. In past research, these individuals were more strongly influenced by their counterparts' emotions, relative to those with low epistemic motivation (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004b). For example, Van Kleef and his

associates (2009) found that team members only considered the strategic implications of their leaders' emotions if they were high in epistemic motivation.

**The observer's trust in the expresser.** There is evidence that how much the observer trusts the expresser influences the observer's motivation to interpret displays of emotions. In the absence of trust, observers may have little motivation to attend to and respond to displayed emotions because observers are not certain that these emotions are felt and what they reveal about the counterparts are accurate. For instance, research has shown that displays of emotions only impact the behaviors of negotiation opponents when these opponents trust them (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2006, Study 2).

**Summary.** The preceding discussion suggests that power, epistemic motivation, and trust moderate the effects of the ability to influence others via emotion displays on competence. These factors influence observers' motivation to pay attention to and process expressers' displays of emotion. Thus, we propose:

Proposition 3: The association between the ability to influence others via emotion displays and competence depends on motivation, such that the association will be stronger when motivation is high (as in the case of low power, high epistemic motivation, and high trust in the expresser) than when motivation is low.

### **The Observer's Ability to Identify Emotions**

There are differences among observers in the degree to which they are able to identify expressers' emotions correctly, even if they are highly motivated to identify those emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Rosenthal, Hall, DiMatteo, Rogers, & Archer 1979; Wedeck, 1946). People's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are more likely to be shaped by others' displays of emotions if they can perceive these emotions correctly. For example, customers who are not able

to perceive the enthusiasm displayed by a service agent should not be very likely to decide to make more purchases. In past research, displaying positive emotions during a service interaction exhibited a stronger positive association with customers' perceptions of service agents' interest in, and ability to fulfill, customers' service-related needs (which were associated with customers' intentions to be loyal to the store) if customers had high rather than low ability to identify whether emotions are authentic (Groth et al., 2009).

Further, observers can altogether misperceive emotions, and one emotion can be taken for another, leading to opposite effects than the ones intended by the expresser. For example, a negotiator may miss the anger in the expresser and perceive the negotiators to be calm and satisfied, which, in turn, may lead to fewer concessions as opposed to more (as the expresser could have hoped for). Thus, despite attempts by expressers to show emotions to influence outcomes in a desired way, the ability to influence others via emotion displays will exhibit a weak relation to competence if observers have little ability to accurately perceive these emotions.

Proposition 4: The association between the ability to influence others via emotion displays and competence depends on observers' ability to perceive emotions, such that the association will be stronger when observers have high rather than low ability to perceive emotions.

### **The Culture of the Interaction Partners**

The similarities and differences in how emotions are expressed across cultures have been frequently examined in the literature. There are strong similarities in how emotions are expressed across cultures (Ekman, 2003). Meta-analytic research has shown some differences, however, so that cultures express emotions with a certain dialect. Specifically, people are about 7% more accurate when identifying emotions in the voice of members of their own cultural group (Juslin

& Scherer, 2005) and 9% more accurate when identifying emotions in the face of members of their own cultural group (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002).

This suggests that the interaction between the culture of the expresser and the culture of the observer may moderate the association between the ability to influence others via emotion displays and competence. Members of the same cultural groups should most reliably capture the signals of expressers' goals, attitudes, and intentions, because interaction partners are most likely to identify each other's emotions correctly. In contrast, members of different cultural groups should be expected to miss social signals more often. This suggests the following proposition.

Proposition 5: The association between the ability to influence others via emotion displays and competence depends on the cultural match between expressers and observers, such that the association is stronger when expressers interact with observers from the same cultural group than observers from different cultural groups.

There are also likely effects due to the cultural group of observers. Cultural values may influence how individuals react to the displays of certain emotions. Past research has shown that displaying anger has different consequences on the behavior of East Asian observers because anger conveys antagonism that counters their collectivistic values. In negotiations, displaying anger may have worse consequences with a counterpart from East Asia, because negative emotions undermine the values of respect and the protection of face that are particularly important to East Asians (Adam, Shirako, & Maddux, in press; Kopelman & Rosette, 2008). Consistent with this reasoning, in past research, East Asian negotiators were less likely than Israeli negotiators to accept an offer from a counterpart displaying negative emotions (Kopelman & Rosette, 2008), and less likely to concede than North American negotiators who presumably considered expressions of anger to more appropriate (Adam et al., in press). Thus, cultural

orientations and values may guide which emotions are appropriate to express and which emotions are not. People with different cultural values may react differently to the same display of emotions.

Proposition 6: The association between the ability to influence others via emotion displays and competence depends on the cultural appropriateness of the emotional display as assessed by observers, such that the association is stronger when cultural appropriateness is high rather than low.

### **Implications for Research**

Our theory of the ability to influence others via emotion displays as an emotional ability offers several opportunities for future research. In particular, researchers must develop procedures to assess this ability, demonstrate that it is distinct from extant abilities and that it predicts competence, and provide further insight on the mechanisms underlying the ability-competence relationship (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

### **Measuring the Ability to Influence Others via Emotion Displays**

Individual variation in emotional abilities exists when person A can successfully perform more challenging emotional tasks (e.g., perceive subtle expressions of emotions, quickly modify an emotion) than person B. The superiority of person A must cause person A to receive a higher score on the measure than person B. Describing the processes by which variations on the ability to influence others via emotion displays cause variations on measures of this ability is critical to the validity of inferences (Borsboom, Mellenbergh, & van Heerden, 2004).

Valid measures of this new ability may be developed by extending existing paradigms from the research on the social effects of emotions. For instance, individuals could be instructed to influence the behavior of others by displaying certain emotions. Sinaceur and Tiedens (2006)

asked participants to show anger to their opponents to win a negotiation. Individuals could similarly be asked to amplify their displays of anger. Their ability to do could be assessed by objectively measuring the degree of change in their counterparts' behaviors, attitudes, and emotions. It would also be important to demonstrate that these changes occur via changes in expressive displays (Côté et al., in press; Gross & Levenson, 1993). These procedures map on the definition of the construct, increasing confidence in the validity of inferences (Borsboom et al., 2004).

This approach to developing measures of this ability would circumvent problems that plague research on emotional abilities, such as the use of self-judged abilities and consensus-based scoring, in which respondents' responses to hypothetical scenarios are compared to the judgments of people from the general population (Legree, Psotka, Tremble, & Bourne, 2005).

### **Demonstrating Independence from Extant Abilities and Testing Associations with Competence**

The development of measures of the ability to influence others via emotion displays will allow researchers to conduct formal tests of discriminant validity. This new ability should demonstrate discriminant validity with the extant dimensions of EI from Mayer and Salovey's (1997) model to demonstrate that it is not a proxy for them. It must also demonstrate discriminant validity with cognitive ability to demonstrate that it is predominantly emotional rather than cognitive (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Finally, the ability to influence others via emotion displays should demonstrate discriminant validity with personality traits to demonstrate that it does not reflect preferred ways of behaving. Independence from extant abilities will also be demonstrated by examining direct effects of the ability to influence others via emotion displays on competence, above and beyond competing predictors. In addition, the strongest tests

will involve testing hypotheses about when it will show the strongest and weakest associations with competence. This involves testing the moderators of the effects identified above.

### **Investigating Additional Mechanisms Underlying the Ability-Competence Association**

To complete our theoretical understanding, it is also important in future research to examine other mechanisms by which emotions may exert social effects, above and beyond affective reactions and strategic inferences. One possible additional mechanism concerns social comparison, whereby organization members react to the behaviors of others that indicate that others are feeling emotions (Elfenbein, 2007, 2009). For example, an employee may react to a sudden increase in co-workers' efforts on a task because this increase in efforts may reveal that co-workers are anxious. Another potential mechanism concerns empathy, whereby organization members react to the emotions that they believe their peers are feeling because of the events that they are experiencing (Elfenbein, 2007, 2009). Observers note the events that others are encountering, infer which emotions others feel as a result of these events, and respond to these inferred emotions rather than the emotions that others actually show (as in emotional contagion). For example, salespersons may feel happy because they infer that a co-worker is satisfied with a closed sale. These and other potential mechanisms should be studied in future research.

### **Considering Moderating Factors in Relation to Underlying Mechanisms**

In our discussion of the ability to use the social effects of emotions and our development of a model linking this ability to competence, we considered moderators and mediators of the association independently. We did not specify where exactly the moderating effects take place in the mediated chain linking ability to affective reactions and strategic inferences and, finally, to competence. The association between the predictor (the ability to influence others via emotion displays) and mediators (affective reactions and strategic inferences) may be moderated; the



association between the mediators and competence may be moderated; or both of these links may be moderated.

Further, it remains unclear when and why each mechanism operates. When an organization member displays an emotion, various affective reactions and strategic inferences may simultaneously occur in observers. Some of these affective reactions and strategic inferences may, in turn, influence the attitudes and behaviors of observers (and, therefore, act as mediators), and others may not relate to attitudes and behaviors. Developing a clear understanding of when and why each mediating process operates would increase our theoretical understanding. Future research should expand our model and offer more precise predictions as to where the moderation effects occur. In particular, future research should develop moderated mediation models, in which mediating effect are influenced by separate, moderator variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Edwards & Lambert, 2007).

### **The Ethical Use of Ability to Influence Others via Emotion Displays**

Researchers have noted that emotional abilities are not always used ethically (Austin, Farrelly, Black, & Moore, 2007; Fineman, 2006). In their original paper on EI, Salovey and Mayer noted that “those whose skills are channeled antisocially may create manipulative scenes or lead others sociopathically to nefarious ends” (1990, p. 198). In addition, influence strategies such as liking, authority, and consistency can be used to attain prosocial and self-serving goals (Cialdini, 2001). These considerations are relevant to the emotional ability that we introduce, because influencing others is inherent to this ability.

We are not advocating employing the ability to influence others via emotion displays toward unethical or selfish ends, but we acknowledge that organization members may display emotions strategically in the service of both prosocial and self-serving goals. By influencing

others via emotion displays, organization members may sometimes increase their own competence in ways that help the organization. For instance, fundraisers may strategically use the social effects of compassion to draw attention to their cause, and inspirational leaders may strategically use the social effects of confidence to elicit hope. At other times, organization members may use this ability to increase their own competence at the expense of the organization. For example, supervisors may strategically use anger to persuade subordinates to act unethically. Future research should examine the factors that lead organization members to use the ability to influence others via emotion displays more prosocially or self-servingly. In addition, research is needed to understand the various consequences of using this ability prosocially versus self-servingly. For example, it is possible that using this ability unethically hurts a person's competence in the long run by damaging the person's reputation, relationship with others, or social capital, especially if the ability is used repeatedly.

### **Conclusion**

The social effects of emotions are pervasive in organizational life, and organization members' displays of emotions continually shape the attitudes and behaviors of their co-workers. We proposed that recent developments in the research on the social effects of emotions suggest that the ability to influence others via emotion displays is a new dimension within models of EI abilities. This ability may be crucial in today's interdependent workplace, in which performance depends on coordinating efforts and managing relationships with others (Grant & Parker, 2009; Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). We hope that this article encourages researchers to study this ability and continue completing and improving theoretical models of EI.

### **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Some models of EI include abilities, plus various other characteristics such as traits of personality, motivation, and affective states. These models have been critiqued for being overly broad (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Further, including factors that do not fit with the definition of intelligence within models of EI has been critiqued for being imprecise and potentially misleading (Côté, 2010). Thus, in this article, we consider models of EI that only include concepts that meet the definition of ability.

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Table 1

*Summary of Illustrative Findings on Social Effects of Emotions in Organizational Settings*

General Effect	Representative Studies
1. Displays of anger elicit concessions and displays of happiness elicit demands in negotiations	van Kleef et al. (2004) Sinaceur & Tiedens (2006)
2. Displays of happiness by service agents cause higher customer satisfaction and perceptions of service quality	Barger & Grandey (2006) Pugh (2001) Tsai (2001)
3. Displays of happiness by leaders cause greater cooperation and prosocial behavior; displays of anger by leaders cause greater effort	George & Bettenhausen (1990) Sy et al. (2005)
4. Alternating displays of positive and negative emotions by criminal interrogators elicit more confessions by suspects	Rafaeli & Sutton (1991)
5. Displays of anger by employees cause co-workers to exhibit more escalation of commitment to losing courses of action	O'Neill (2009)

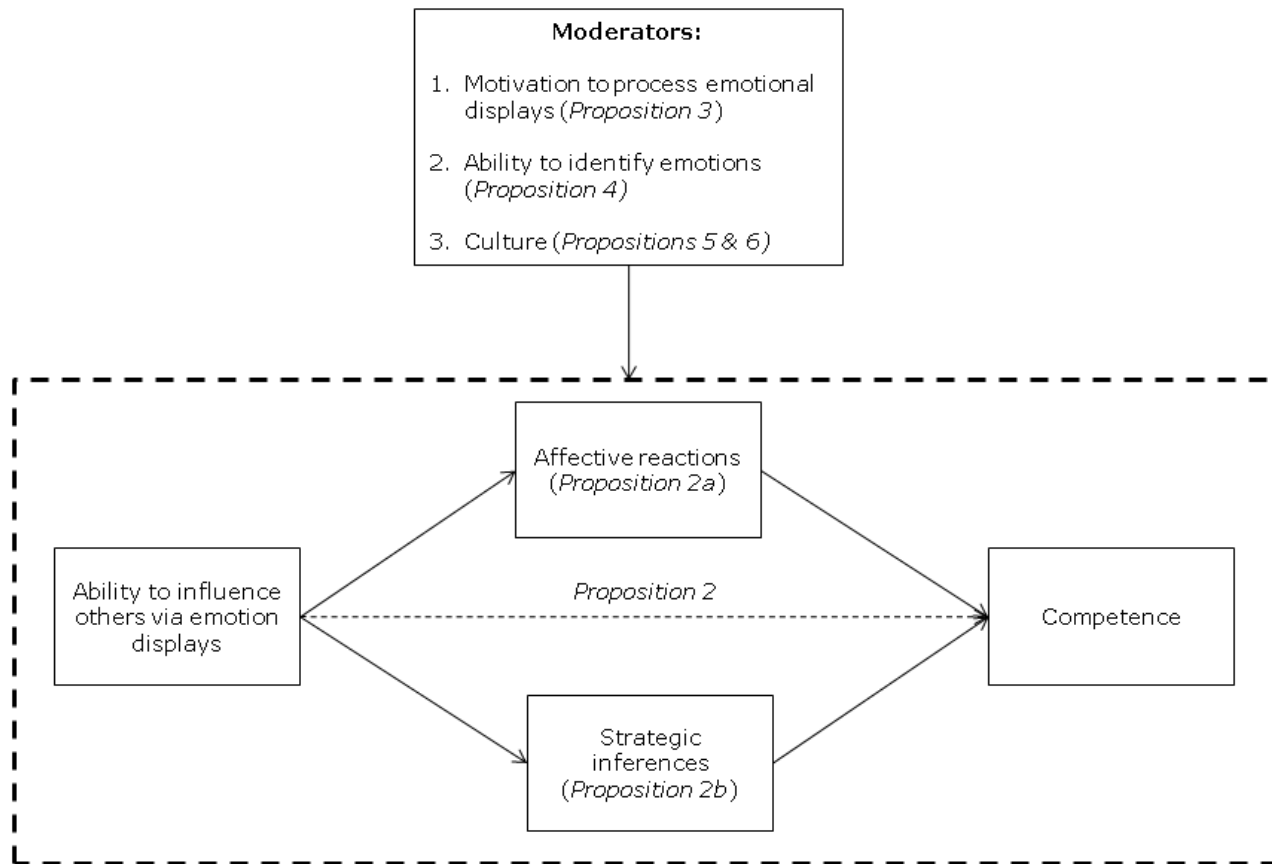


Figure 1. The association between the ability to influence others via emotion displays and competence.