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Cultural influences on the relation between perceived emotional intelligence and depression

Titre français

*Pablo Fernández-Berrocal**
*Peter Salovey***
*Aldo Vera****
*Natalio Extremera & Natalia Ramos*****

Abstract

The present study examined the hypothesis that cultural factors influence the relation between Perceived Emotional Intelligence (PEI) and depression. We predicted that the influence of PEI on depression is moderated by culture. The cultural factors used in this study were Individualism-Collectivism and Masculinity-Femininity based on in Hoftede´s dimensions. Participants from three different cultures (United States, Chile, and Spain) completed measures of Perceived Emotional Intelligence (Trait Meta-Mood Scale, TMMS, with three factors: Attention, Clarity, and Repair) and depression (Beck Depression Inventory, BDI).

Résumé

La présente étude a examiné l'hypothèse que les facteurs culturels influencent la relation entre l'intelligence émotionnelle perçue (IEP) et la dépression. Nous avons prévu que l'influence de IEP sur la dépression serait modérée par la culture. Les facteurs culturels utilisés dans cette étude étaient l'Individualisme collectivisme et la Masculinité-Féminité de Hofstede. Les participants de trois cultures différentes (Etats-Unis, Chili, et Espagne) ont répondu à des mesures d'intelligence émotionnelle perçue (TMMS, avec trois facteurs : Attention, Clarté, et Réparation) et dépression (BDI). L'attention a été associée à la dépression (BDI),

Mots-clés
Culture; Individualisme-Collectivisme; Masculinité-Féminité; Intelligence Emotionnelle Perçue; Dépression.

Key-words
Culture; Individualism-Collectivism; Masculinity-Femininity; Perceived Emotional Intelligence; Depression.

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Please address all correspondence to Dr. Pablo Fernández-Berrocal, Department of Psychology, University of Málaga, Faculty of Psychology, Campus de Teatinos s/n. 29071 Málaga, Spain. Email: berrocal@uma.es
* Pablo Fernández-Berrocal, University of Málaga.
** Peter Salovey, Yale University.
*** Aldo Vera, Universidad de Chile.
**** Natalio Extremera & Natalia Ramos, University of Málaga.

Attention was related to a higher score in BDI, and Clarity and Repair were associated to a lower level of BDI in all cultures. As predicted, Attention and Clarity were a stronger predictor of depression in feminine cultures than in masculine cultures. The results indicate that the effect of PEI on depression is moderated to some degree by culture.

et la Clarté et la Réparation ont été associées à un niveau plus bas de BDI dans toutes les cultures. Comme prévu, l'attention et la Clarté prédisaient plus fortement la dépression dans les cultures féminines que dans les cultures masculines. Les résultats indiquent que l'effet de IEP sur la dépression est modéré à un certain degré par la culture.

In our day-to-day lives we are engaged in a continuous effort to attain an emotional balance. There exist diverse strategies, both cultural and personal, for the achievement of this balance. Individuals who possess this ability can be distinguished from those around them for their greater levels of both physical and mental health as well as for the fact that they are better integrated into their social and professional environment. This capacity has recently been classified by psychologists under the term Emotional Intelligence (EI). The model of EI most influential in the scientist community was developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 1999). Their model focuses upon emotional abilities that can be developed through learning and day-to-day experience. According to this theory, EI is defined as the individual's ability to perceive, use, understand and manage their emotions. Various instruments have been developed that attempt to avoid the problems associated with self-report in the measurement of EI (e.g., the MSCEIT, and its precursor, the MEIS). However, one of the most widely used self-report measures is the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS), essentially a measure of Perceived Emotional Intelligence (PEI), namely the knowledge that individuals have about their own emotional abilities (Goldman, Kraemer, & Salovey, 1996; Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Palfai, 1995; Salovey, Woolery, & Mayer, 2001; Salovey, Woolery, Stroud, & Epel, 2002). Specifically, the TMMS assesses beliefs concerning one's emotional *Attention* (amount of attention paid to one's emotional states), *Clarity* (understanding of one's emotional states), and *Emotional Repair* (the ability to regulate one's emotional states). Various

investigators throughout the world have used TMMS as a measure of PEI and have documented the relation between PEI and behavior in both laboratory settings and "real-world" coping settings (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2002; Fernández-Berrocal, Ramos, & Orozco, 1999; Gohm & Clore, 2002; Goldman, et al., 1996; Ghorbani, Bing, Watson, Davison, & Mack, 2002; Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler, & Mayer, 2000; Salovey, *et al*., 1995; Salovey, *et al*., 2002). The relation between PEI (as measured by the TMMS), and emotional variables such as depression, anxiety and overall physical and mental health has been well documented. For instance, individuals with poor emotional adjustment report greater attention to their emotions, lower emotional clarity, and an inability to regulate their own emotional states (see Salovey, 2001). Conversely, individuals reporting greater emotional clarity and a greater ability to repair their own emotional states report higher levels of self-esteem, another important indicator of mental health (Salovey *et al.*, 2002).

The Moderating Effect of Culture

Culture influences the emotional adjustment of individuals and their perception of subjective well-being in a variety of ways. Two significant variables that have been taken into account in this study are the Hofstede dimensions of Individualism-Collectivism and Masculinity-Femininity.

Individualistic cultures emphasize the needs of the individual and hence give more importance to the individual's emotional world. Previous research has pointed out that the greater relevance of emotions in individualistic cultures is connected to the perception of quality of life, subjective quality of life being the balance between the individual's positive and negative emotions. Hence, individualistic cultures would have higher levels of perception of subjective well-being than collectivistic cultures (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998). On the other hand, in collectivistic cultures, greater importance is given to cohesion with one's peers, and individual needs are subordinate to those of the group. Hence, in collectivistic cultures less attention would be paid to the emotional world of the individual.

Nevertheless, this effect is not always unequivocal. There are tradeoffs that seem intrinsic in certain cultural strategies (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003). For example, "individualistic nations have high mean levels of reported SWB and at the same time also manifest the highest levels of suicide and divorce" (Diener *et al*., 2003, p. 412)

In a related vein, a transcultural study comparing different countries in the Masculinity-Femininity dimension found this to be of greater importance in the explanation of the emotional experience variable than the Individualism-Collectivism dimension. The feminine nations (in this study Chile and Spain) had both greater emotional intensity and greater emotional expressiveness than the masculine nations studied (Belgium and Mexico) (Paez & Vergara, 1995; see also Paez & Casullo, 2000). Furthermore, feminine cultures also displayed greater levels of subjective well-being (Basabe, Paez, Valencia, Rimé, Pennebaker, Diener, & González, 2000; Scherer, 1997). For instance, Basabe, Paez, Valencia, Gonzalez, Rimé, & Diener (2002) demonstrated that cultural femininity was associated with a higher frequency of positive emotions, such as joy, and to a lower frequency of negative emotions, such as anger and sadness.

The studies that have analyzed the influence of cultural dimensions on personality and the perception of subjective well-being have found that the culture variable moderates the effects of the other individual variables. For example, Extraversion and Neuroticism are more strongly related to subjective well-being in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures (Diener *et al.*, 1999; Diener *et al*., 2003; Schimmack, Radhakrishnan, Oishi, Dzotoko, & Ahadi, 2002).

This study explored the way in which Perceived Emotional Intelligence (PEI) interacts with cultural dimensions and the specific weight that each of these variables has in its influence upon the individual's emotional adjustment. More specifically, in keeping with the results of previous studies, our hypothesis was that the relation between PEI and depression is moderated by the cultural dimension as follows:

In individualistic cultures PEI is more strongly related to depression than in collectivistic cultures.

In feminine cultures PEI is more strongly related to depression than in masculine cultures.

Method

Description of Cultural Samples

This study presents data gathered in three nations that are representative of different cultures: Spain (Europe), Chile (Latin America) and the United States of America (North America). Table 1 shows the cultural differences between these three nations in accordance with the four dimensions proposed by Hofstede (cited in Suh *et al.*, 1998). Previous studies have showed the convergence of Hofstede's rankings with more recent measures as Pairwise Comparison Value Survey which assess Schwartz's (1994) 10 universal values (Schimmack *et al*., 2002; Suh *et al*., 1998). These measures tend to converge in terms of the relative position of the cultures.

This study only analyzed the dimensions of Individualism-Collectivism (IC) and Masculinity-Feminity (MF). According to these dimensions, Spain is an Individualistic-Feminine nation, Chile is a Collectivistic-Feminine nation, while the United States is an Individualistic-Masculine nation.

Participants

For each of the nations studied, we gathered the data from only one source (see Table 2). Table 2 contains information relating to the number of participants included in each sample as well as their age and gender. All of the participants were university students, participation in Spain and Chile was on a voluntary basis, whereas in the United States students participated in return for course credit.

National Sample	Hofstede Individualism-Collectivism factor scores	Classification	Hofstede Masculinity-Femininity factor scores	Classification
Chile	23	Collectivistic	28	Feminine
United States	91	Individualistic	62	Masculine
Spain	51	Individualistic	42	Feminine

TABLE 1:
Location of National Samples on Cultural Dimensions

TABLE 2:
Demographic Variables

Sample	N	% Women	Age (SD)
Chile (Santiago de Chile)	108	57	21,97 (2.61)
United States (New Haven)	58	53	19.12 (1.21)
Spain (Málaga)	112	48	24.46 (3.38)
Total	278	53	21.85 (2.67)

Materials and Procedure

The participants completed a questionnaire that was composed of a variety of measures. It consisted of some brief demographic questions, followed by a test of Perceived Emotional Intelligence (TMMS) and a test of depression (BDI).

Perceived Emotional Intelligence. To evaluate PEI, subjects completed the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (24-item scale, TMMS; Salovey *et al*., 1995). The TMMS is a twenty-four item Likert-type scale. This scale addresses three key aspects of emotional intelligence: *Attention* conveys the degree to which individuals tend to observe and think about their feelings and moods (8 items, e.g. "I don't think it's worth paying attention to your emotions or moods"); *Clarity* evaluates the tendency to discriminate between emotions and moods (8 items, e.g. "I am usually very clear about my feelings"); *Repair* refers to the subject's tendency to regulate their feelings (8 items, e.g. "Although I am sometimes sad, I have a mostly optimistic outlook"). Participants were required to rate the extent to which they agreed with each item on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Previous studies using this scale have proved to be reliable and satisfactory: Attention (α= .86), Clarity (α= .87), and Repair (α= .82) (Salovey *et al*., 1995).

For the Chilean and Spanish samples, we used a Spanish adaptation: Attention (α= .91), Clarity (α= .89), and Repair (α= .85) (Fernández-Berrocal, Extremera, & Ramos, in press). The Spanish version of the Trait Meta-Mood Scale was translated and back-translated by two authors, one of whom did not know the original English text. The final translation was fixed by consensus.

Depression. To evaluate depression subjects completed the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979;

Beck & Steer, 1987). The BDI is a 21-item self-report inventory. Each item is rated on a scale of 0 to 3; inventory scores thus may range from 0 to 63. The BDI is a reliable and well-validated measure of depressive symptomatology (Beck, Steer, & Garbin, 1988).

For the Chilean and Spanish samples, we used a Spanish version that has demonstrated good internal consistency, reliability and validity in clinical samples (α= .82, test-retest reliability between .65 and .72; Vazquez, & Sanz, 1991).

Results

Descriptive Analyses

First, we examined the transcultural differences between the samples studied in the three countries. However, these differences must be interpreted with caution given that the system of selection of the samples was not representative (Church, 2000). Further analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were carried out to ascertain the differences between the countries. Global differences were only found for the Attention and BDI variables, as is shown in Table 3.

The Tukey posthoc test (α=.05) was used to identity the significant differences between the means. For Attention, the Chilean sample presented the lowest levels and the United States had the highest levels. For BDI, the sample from the United States presented the highest levels and Spain the lowest.

Variable	Chile M (SD) (α)	United States M (SD) (α)	Spain M (SD) (α)	F (2, 276)
Attention[1]	3.21 (.89) (.92)[ab]	3.87 (.61) (.71)[ab]	3.49 (.70) (.88)[ab]	12.64***
Clarity	3.32 (.86) (.92)	3.28 (.55) (.86)	3.52 (.63) (.85)	2.95
Repair	3.44 (.81) (.86)	3.68 (.94) (.76)	3.53 (.70) (.85)	1.56
BDI[2]	7.93 (6.61) (.87)	8.74 (6.49) (.86)[a]	6.29 (6.14) (.86)[a]	3,28*

1. The possible range for TMMS scales (Attention, Clarity, and Repair) is 1-5.
2. BDI= Beck Depression Inventory.
Note. ***p<.001; * p<.05. For each variable, means with the same letter are different (p<.05).

TABLE 3: Cross-cultural differences between the national samples

The next set of analyses explored the relations between PEI and depression for which correlations were drawn between variables without taking into account culture (i.e., the country from which the sample originated). The correlations showed a strong relationship between PEI and BDI. More specifically, subjects who obtained lower scores in Attention but higher scores in Clarity and Repair obtained lower scores in BDI (see Table 4).

TABLE 4: Simple correlations (N=278)

Variable	1	2	3
1. Attention			
2. Clarity	.13*		
3. Repair	.05	.40**	
4. BDI	.16*	-.30**	-.38**

Note. **$p < .01$. *$p < .05$. BDI= Beck Depression Inventory.

The Moderating Effect of Culture

This study's central hypothesis was that culture moderates the relation between PEI and BDI. Specifically, the relation would be more intense in individualistic cultures and in feminine cultures. To test the moderating effect of culture on the relation between PEI and BDI, we computed a series of hierarchical regression analyses with BDI scores as the dependent variable (Aiken & West, 1991).

First, we examined the potential moderating effect of IC on the relation between PEI and BDI. We used BDI as the criterion variable. In the first step we entered Attention, Clarity, Repair, Individualism/Collectivism (IC; United States, Spain=1; Chile=0), Gender (male=0, female=1) as predictors. In this first analysis, Attention, Clarity, Repair and Gender were significant predictors of BDI. People with lower levels of Attention and higher levels of Clarity and Repair had lower scores in BDI and that women scored more highly in BDI than men, presented in Table 5. In the second step, we entered the products Attention x IC, Clarity x IC and Repair x IC, and the products of Gender with Attention, Clarity, Repair, and IC. Following the procedures outlined by Aiken and West (1991), Attention, Clarity, and Repair were centered on the mean before calculating the cross-product in order to reduce multicollinearity between the predictor and

interaction term. The results did not support the prediction that IC served as a moderator. Similarly, results did not indicate a significant interaction between either Gender and PEI or Gender and IC.

Variable	Step 1. Beta	Step 2. Beta
Attention	.17***	.33
Clarity	-.23***	.05
Repair	-.28***	-.57***
IC	-.04	-.06
Gender	.21***	.196*
Attention × IC		-.04
Clarity × IC		-.04
Repair × IC		.15
Attention × Gender		-.25
Clarity × Gender		-.13
Repair × Gender		.16
IC × Gender		.03
Change in R^2	.25	.01
Total R^2	.25	. 26
Change in F	18.32***	.67

Note. DV= BDI. BDI= Beck Depression Inventory. IC= Individualism-Collectivism.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 5: Hierarchical Regression Analyses for PEI, Individualism-Collectivism, and Gender as predictors of BDI

A second set of analyses examined the potential moderating effect of MF on the relation between PEI and BDI. Again, we used BDI as the criterion variable. In the first step, we entered Attention, Clarity, Repair, Masculinity/Femininity (MF; United States=1; Chile, Spain=0), Gender (male=0, female=1) as predictors. In this first analysis, Attention, Clarity, Repair, and Gender were again significant predictors of BDI. The results of the regression analyses are presented in Table 6. In the second step, we entered the products Attention × MF, Clarity × MF, and Repair × MF, and the products of Gender with Attention, Clarity, Repair, and MF. Attention, Clarity, and Repair were centered on the mean before calculating the cross-product. The results supported the hypothesis that the MF variable functioned as a moderator, more specifically there was a significant interaction between Attention × MF (B=-.18; $p < .01$) and Clarity × MF (B=.17, $p < .001$), although the principal effects of the Attention variable did not disappear.

As displayed in Figure 1, people with high Attention evidenced high scores in BDI, regardless of their MF. However, in the cases

in which people reported low Attention, their scores in BDI were more influenced by MF. People with low Attention who belonged to a feminine culture displayed lower scores in BDI than those with low Attention in a masculine culture.

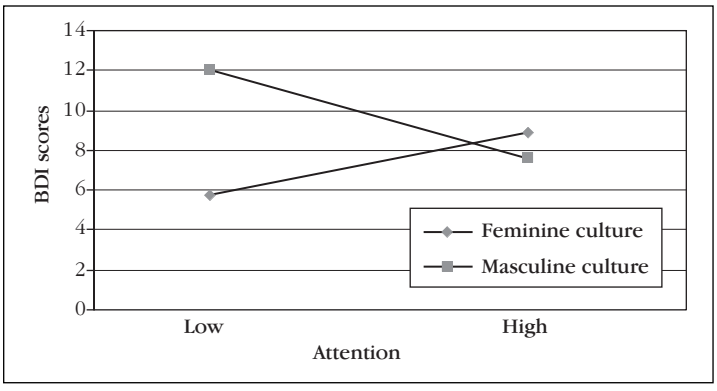
As displayed in Figure 2, when individuals belonged to a masculine culture they had the same scores on the BDI independent of whether their Clarity was low or high. On the other hand, participants who belonged to a feminine culture evidenced low scores in BDI when their Clarity was high, and high scores when their Clarity was low.

TABLE 6: Hierarchical Regression Analyses for PEI, Masculinity-Femininity, and Gender as predictors of BDI

Variable	Step 1. Beta	Step 2. Beta
Attention	.14**	.37*
Clarity	-.22***	-.19
Repair	-.30***	-.36*
MF	.08	.05
Gender	.22***	.16**
Attention × MF		-.16
Clarity × MF		-.08
Repair × MF		.04
Attention × Gender		-.18**
Clarity × Gender		.17**
Repair × Gender		.03
MF × Gender		.17*
Change in R^2	.26	.06
Total R^2	.26	.32
Change in F	18.72***	3.31**

Note. DV= BDI. BDI= Beck Depression Inventory. MF= Masculinity-Femininity.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 1: Relation between Attention and BDI in Masculine and Feminine cultures



Note. BDI= Beck Depression Inventory.

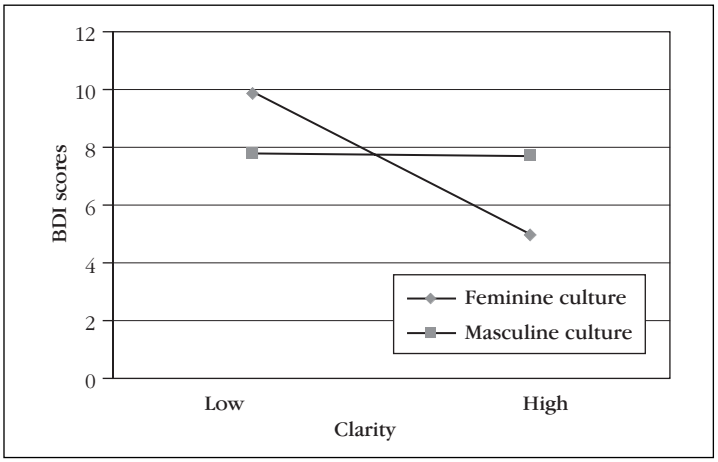


Figure 2:
Relation between Clarity and BDI in Masculine and Feminine cultures

Note. BDI= Beck Depression Inventory.

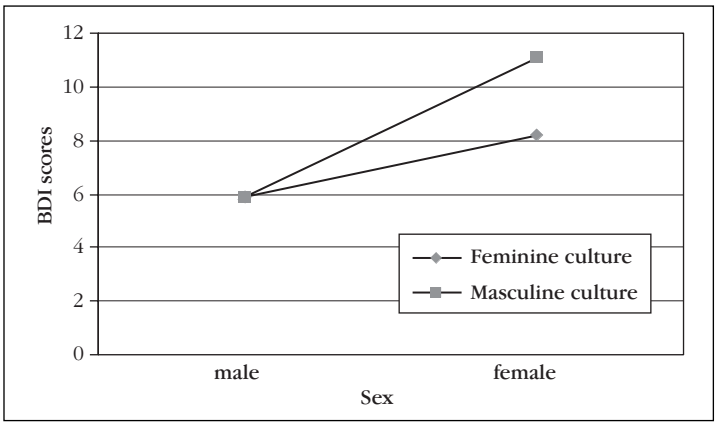


Figure 3:
Relation between Sex and BDI in Masculine and Feminine cultures

Note. BDI= Beck Depression Inventory.

Finally, results indicated a significant interaction between Gender and MF, although the principal effects of the Gender variable did not disappear. As displayed in Figure 3, men evidenced low scores in BDI, regardless of their MF. However, women scored more highly in BDI in masculine cultures than in feminine ones.

Discussion

In this transcultural study, depression was fundamentally associated with PEI (20% of the variance), gender (5% of the variance) and with cultural dimensions (approximately 6%). As in previous studies, people with lower scores in Attention and higher scores in Clarity and Repair had low scores in BDI (Extremera, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2002; Fernández-Berrocal, Ramos, & Extremera, 2001; Salovey, *et al.*, 2000; Salovey, *et al.*, 1995; Salovey, *et al*., 2002), or in other words, the relation between PEI and depression remained stable in the two cultural dimensions of the different samples studied.

The pattern discovered for Gender, namely that women obtained higher scores in BDI, needs to be explored in more detail. Previous studies have demonstrated the need to control influential cognitive variables such as ruminative thoughts (Fernández-Berrocal, Ramos, & Extremera, 2001; Lynn, & Martin, 1997; Nolen-Hoeksema, Larson, & Grayson, 1999).

Of the countries studied, the United States displayed the highest scores in BDI. Our findings coincide with the results of other investigations that indicated that in individualistic cultures the expression and experience of negative emotions is more intense (Fernández, Carrera, Sánchez, Paez, & Candía, 2000). Future studies should explore whether the tendency toward higher scores in Attention found in the United States is indicative of a more intense connection between Attention and depression and other variables such as ruminative coping in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures.

In contrary to what we had expected, the Individualism-Collectivism dimension did not moderate the relation between PEI and depression. However, in past research this dimension did moderate the effects of variables such as Extraversion and Neuroticism on cognitive components of subjective well-being (Schimack *et al*., 2002). It will be necessary to repeat this type of study with samples from more heterogeneous cultures than those used here along the Individualism-Collectivism dimension.

As we expected the Masculinity-Femininity dimension moderated the relation between PEI and depression. The relations between PEI and depression were more intense in feminine cultures. This

effect was reflected in both Attention and Clarity and it could be related to the greater emotional intensity associated with feminine cultures.

We also found an interaction between culture and gender, women's BDI scores showed a stronger effect of MF. In masculine cultures their scores in BDI were superior to 11 (above the range of normality, 0-9). These data coincide with that obtained by Bagozzi, Wong, and Li (1999) that proposed that women's reports of emotions were more strongly influenced by non-scientific theories about emotions. Given that these beliefs are influenced by culture, in masculine cultures women's reports of emotions should produce more negative correlations than those of men.

The limitations of this study can mainly be attributed to sample size and the number of nations used (only three). As reviewers noted, these limitations open other alternative explanations of the results as plausible as a cultural explanation. For example, one possibility is that United States students responded differently because they were receiving credit, while the others were not.

Future studies should include ability measures of EI and another cognitive variable such as rumination. Another important line of future research is the examination of the influence of culture on the relation between EI and the affective (hedonic balance) and cognitive (life satisfaction) components of subjective well-being.

Finally, the present article suggests that cultures can influence the EI of their members with implications for their emotional adjustment. Consequently, the results of this investigation open a promising new line of investigation in that they establish a connection between our cultural norms and the individual's ability to attend to, understand and regulate their emotions as well as establishing a subject as new as EI in its cultural and interpersonal context.

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