Emotions in Leadership Development: A Critique of Emotional Intelligence

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The problem and the solution. In this conceptual article, emotional intelligence (EI) is critiqued, particularly as a resource for leadership development. Ultimately, this article seeks to answer the question: What should human resource development (HRD) professionals know and reflect on as they consider the use of EI instruments and interventions in leadership development? The transmutation of emotions in organizations from negative and irrational to a positive attribute of successful leaders is traced, demonstrating how emotions have traditionally been mobilized in organizations to achieve instrumental goals. The following questions are explored: Is there one accepted model of EI? What are the instruments and measures for EI? Is there a definitive association between EI and leadership effectiveness? What issues are raised by generalizing EI abilities and competencies across cultures or in multicultural contexts? How might EI training enable leaders to abuse power more skillfully to achieve personal or organizational ends? In conclusion, suggested areas of concern for HRD practitioners are raised, and alternative ways to include increased awareness of emotions in leadership development are discussed.

Emotional intelligence (EI) has become a common phrase in the vocabularies of organizational leaders and managers today. Few of the consumers of this popular commodity are aware that in the academic community, however, EI is a highly contested construct (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; Murphy, 2006; Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2004). Over the years, emotions have played an important role in organizational life, though they were seldom expressly included in theories. Because emotions were typically seen as irrational in

North American society, they represented a potential threat to organizational stability. With the advent of EI as a new resource for leadership development, emotions have been transformed from negative and irrational to positive critical success factors, and EI has been touted as vital to leadership effectiveness (Goleman, 1998).

In this article, we show how the changing organizational backcloth has enabled emotions to emerge from the shadows to take center stage. With the appearance of EI in the new pro-emotional organizational arena more than a decade ago, the time is right to take a careful look at what has been learned about the construct of EI and how it has fared as a tool for leadership development. We will discuss the most widely accepted EI models and measurement instruments and review the research linking EI to specific leadership performance outcomes. After an exploration of the ethos underlying EI, we present a global critique of EI as a construct, a tool for leadership development, and a mechanism for social control. We also conclude with implications for practice, suggesting how a critical analysis of EI will lead HRD professionals to better choices for leadership development, including suggestions for integrating dimensions of emotional growth into deeper, less normative approaches to leadership development.

Emotions in Organizations

Theorist and Nobel Prize winner, Herbert Simon (1945), asserted that "rationality . . . does not determine behavior . . . behavior is determined by the irrational and nonrational elements that bound the area of rationality" (p. 241). He shrewdly noted that "the individual's failure to identify himself correctly with the goals of the whole organization" (p. 242) presented a serious threat to an employee's rational judgment. Simon was clear that to bring about increased rationality, some organization members would require a reorientation of their values. Without using the word *emotional*, Simon intimated both the expectation of emotional control of self within the parameters of acceptable prescribed behavior as well as the leadership function of righting organization members' irrational attachments to the *wrong* values. Barley and Kunda's (1992) analysis of trends in organizational control mechanisms traced an alternation between normative and rational methods. Simon's opaque call for value alignment reflected an early brand of normative control that grew more visible as the notion of organizational culture became popular (Barley, Meyer, & Gash, 1988).

The "organizational culture and quality era" (Barley & Kunda, 1992, p. 381), purported to have begun in 1980 and still under way, brought with it participative management (Lawler, 1986), "management by walking around," and a strong focus on quality and customer service (Peters & Waterman, 1982). These examples of organizational trends all shared an inextricable interpenetration with the organizational culture movement (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Schein, 1985). Similar to Simon's message in the 1940s,

Barley and Kunda (1992) noted that by cultivating strong cultures, leaders could build relationships with direct reports, fostering commitment to shared values: "Management was advised to exorcise unwanted thoughts and feelings from the workforce and to replace them with beliefs and emotions that benefited the organization" (p. 383). Culture was recognized as a conduit for emotion-laden messages, leaders were to model proper etiquette, and workers would thus comply with established standards of behavior and emotional display.

Rules Governing Emotions

HRD Policy: The Explicit Containment of Negative Emotions

An area of critical importance falling within the purview of HRD professionals has been the management of workplace emotions run amok, or at least astray. Rationality was reified as the unshakable stanchion of the idealized bureaucratic, paternalistic organization (Fineman, 1993; Putnam & Mumby, 1993). Western organizations were rooted in principles of a just society promising fair treatment, without favor or bias. This lofty mandate rested squarely on the shoulders of rational human beings interacting logically and objectively sans unchecked emotional breaks. North Americans regularly hear news stories highlighting the risks associated with the too-free expression of emotions in both the public and private domains. Indeed, emotions can evoke fear: consider *going postal* or a *crime of passion.* As James and Arroba (2005) pointed out in their discussion of learning about emotions in organizational systems as a dimension of leadership development, "primitive emotion is actively defended against and perceived as destructive and unwanted" (p. 306).

Thus, emotions deemed potentially dangerous have long had a place in the field of HRD because policies and procedures for regulation and discipline have always seemed necessary (Fineman, 2004). Job stress and various forms of harassment were also interwoven with strands of emotionality. Note that virtually all the emotions featured in human resource policy (and many of the emotions targeted in training, e.g., conflict resolution, negotiating, customer service) emphasized expressions of negative emotions.

The Covert Regulation of Emotions

With the publication of *The Managed Heart* in 1983, Hochschild presented her new social theory of emotion. She conducted some of the earliest research into emotions in organizations (Ashkanasy, Härtel, & Daus, 2002) and introduced the constructs of *emotion work*, *emotional labor,* and *feeling rules* (Hochschild, 1983). She explained that emotional labor meant "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional

labor is sold for a wage and therefore has an *exchange value*" (p. 7). A primary vehicle for appropriating emotions to serve organizational goals is through *feeling rules* (Hochschild, 1983). "Since feeling is a form of pre-action, a script or a moral stance toward it is one of culture's most powerful tools for directing action" (p. 56). Feeling rules are the mostly unwritten laws governing individual thought and behavior. Hochschild acknowledged that both conscious and unconscious dimensions of emotions and emotional control may affect individual health, performance, relationships, and social interactions at work.

Hochschild's work on the commercialization of human feelings spawned significant research of occupations requiring high degrees of emotional labor. Numerous studies exploring the explicit use of positive emotional display as a means of increasing sales in retail establishments were conducted (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987, 1990; Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988). In describing the organizational context for their study on the display of emotion in convenience stores, Sutton and Rafaeli (1988) noted that top executives had read Peters and Waterman's (1982) *In Search of Excellence*, committing fully to a culture of service. Intent on presenting an image of hyperhospitality to clientele, explicit feeling rules were communicated through employee handbooks and training, culminating in various incentives, including a bonus of more than 25% of base salary "to regional managers when a high percentage of sales clerks in the stores they managed were observed greeting, smiling at, establishing eye contact with, and saying 'thank you' to customers" (Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988, pp. 464-465). This example illustrates the role of leaders as enforcers of feeling rules or what Ekman (1980) called *display rules*. Research findings have since suggested *collateral damage* to workers who are forced to express inauthentic emotions or repress felt emotion in fulfillment of job role expectations, often manifested in some form of stress that may include health-related symptoms (Putnam & Mumby, 1993).

The Gendering of Organizations and Emotions

It is not surprising that much of the research conducted by Hochschild (1983) in the development of her theory of emotional labor drew from female-dominated professions, particularly flight attendants. Likewise, much of the research into the use of emotional control in the service sector focused on lower-level, female-dominated jobs, although there have been exceptions (e.g., studies of bill collectors by Sutton, 1991). Many contend that organizations are gendered (Calás & Smircich, 1996; Hearn & Parkin, 1995), as are emotions (Hyde, 2007). Organizations in their most perfect state have traditionally been shaped in an idealized male emotional image of cool restraint. Most of the emotions that have been associated with organizations have also been male or masculine: anger, contempt, aggression, and harassment. Expression of these emotions organizationally, without adequate restraint, has been considered

aberrant and destructive. The personal emotions considered female or feminine (Shields, 2005) are no more appropriate to the public, male workplace. Thus, emotions such as sadness and caring have been and continue to be best left in the private domain (Hochschild, 1983).

Additionally, the template for organizations, having been constructed by and for males (Dodson Gray, 1982), provided a context ready to support various means of generating commitment to, and assumption of, the right values and feelings by organizational members. "A central self-justifying claim of paternalism, is that power is exercised in positive ways which enhance subordinates' self-interests" (Collinson & Hearn, 2001, p. 157). In this way, leaders were empowered to actively ensure compliance with values and conformance to feeling rules.

It is axiomatic that female-identified emotions represented less of a threat to the organization than the more forceful masculine emotions traditionally regulated in formal HRD policies. Nonetheless, prior to the advent of the era of organizational culture and quality, the softer emotions had not been valued and were often stigmatized as signs of irrationality or weakness. Such emotions are still eschewed in their extreme (e.g., crying), and self-control undoubtedly remains a desirable quality.

The Positive Turn

Positive organizational scholarship (POS; Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003) was the culmination of a persistent interest of some academics and practitioners in moving beyond a problem orientation toward a future of hope. Influenced by the rise in popularity of positive psychology (Seligman, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), Roberts (2006) stated that "the overarching emphasis of this work [positive organizational scholarship] is on identifying individual and collective strengths (attributes and processes) and discovering how such strengths enable human flourishing (goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005)" (p. 292). A clear outgrowth of humanistic psychology (e.g., Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers), POS was propelled by an interest in buoying our innate goodness rather than simply repairing our imperfections. In the organizational realm, the bedrock for the positive turn might have been Douglas McGregor's (1960) Theory Y assumptions about human nature: the belief that given proper nurturance, individuals are hardworking, trustworthy, and loyal.

Fineman (2006b) explained POS: "'Positive deviance' marks the positive movement's rhetorical and moral/ideological stand. Positive is good. . . . Positive deviance is a normative, morally anchored position characterized by a cluster of predefined virtues" (p. 271). The play on the word *deviant,* typically associated with the negative, gets our attention when challenged to consider the possibility of deviating *toward* the good. By dichotomizing deviance, our only other choice is to

deviate toward evil. Amid the twist, it is important to heed the rest of the message: This positive deviance is regulated, ideological, and linked to prespecified virtues. One is thus compelled to ask a number of incisive questions. First, what are these predefined virtues, and who prescribed them? Whose interests are being served by these virtues, and perhaps more important, whose interests may not have been heard or even solicited? And finally, are these virtues unilateral and universal across cultures?

According to Roberts (2006), proponents of positive psychology acknowledged cultural differences and recognized the need for differing approaches to organizational effectiveness in various contexts. Nonetheless, she reported that

> there may be six overarching virtues that almost every culture across the world endorses: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence (Dahlsgaard, Peterson, & Seligman, in press). The most commonly endorsed strengths, in 40 different countries, were kindness, fairness, authenticity, gratitude, and open-mindedness (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2005). (Roberts, 2006, p. 298)

Fineman (2006b) problematized such a position elsewhere, juxtaposing differing perspectives "in an era where terrorism for many observers is an abysmal evil. But for its perpetrators and their backers, it can be presented as a noble act, morally justified as 'God's will'" (p. 274). A situated, contextualized virtuousness may be defensible, but there is considerable potential for contention regarding universal virtues (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999).

Fineman (2006b) pointed out that EI has consistently been included as part of the POS movement. It has thus been shaped in the mold of the positive movement itself, posing positive and negative emotions as a discrete binary, rather than as "a continual, dialectical relationship" (p. 274). Fineman noted that supporters of EI have made sweeping claims regarding the advantages of EI for bolstering leader effectiveness, and there are, in fact, countless examples of such allegations in the literature (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997; George, 2000; Goleman, 1998; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). As EI gained popularity among HRD and organizational development practitioners, the construct gained a public persona as a self-help, feel-good, performance enhancer—an elixir of sorts. As discussed earlier, emotions are not new to organizations; they have long been a source of community building and social control. Though they have often been viewed negatively as signs of poor self-control or weakness, which was frequently manipulated to garner support for organizational goals, emotions have now transmuted into a new entity called EI.

Emotional Intelligence: Models and Measures

The notion of EI, conceived by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and popularized by Goleman (1995), had its conceptual underpinnings in the work of Thorndike (1920) and Gardner (1983) who both stressed the importance of emotional awareness and understanding as components of social intelligence

(SI; Landy, 2006). The differences in approaches to measuring EI and assessing its connection to and usefulness for leadership effectiveness and job performance have spawned a significant debate among the proponents of the various perspectives, at times resulting in a heated division among psychologists and management and organization theorists, and among theoretical and practical scholars of EI.

Zeidner et al. (2004), in their critical review of EI, provided a thorough comparison of the differences in models, dividing the features into two camps—*ability-based*, and *mixed* or *trait* models of EI (Lyusin, 2006; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004; Petrides & Furnham, 2000). As Zeidner et al. (2004) explained, mixed models are typically used to present EI as a set of competencies that should help individuals be more effective in responding to their environment, whereas ability-based models focus on a "well defined and conceptually related set of cognitive abilities for the processing of emotional information and regulating emotion adaptively" (p. 375).

Ability-based theorists Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined EI as "the subset of social intelligence that involves 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 own thinking and actions" (p. 189). They proposed a four-branch ability model: "the ability to (a) perceive emotion, (b) use emotion to facilitate thought, (c) understand, and (d) manage emotion" (Mayer et al., 2004, p. 199). The MSCEIT, the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso EI test, (Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2002), measured each of the four branches. The authors suggested that their instrument was the only measure of EI that had to do with intelligence because it is an ability-based measure that meets three criteria for intelligence tests: (a) more or less correct answers can be given; (b) correlations can be shown that resemble other known intelligences; and (c) EI can be developed over time as people age and mature (Mayer et al., 2004). Because their measure does not correlate strongly with many scales of personality measurement, they emphasized that EI is a construct unique from personality.

Whereas ability-based models such as Salovey and Mayer's focused on measuring abilities by evaluating participant responses to scenarios like those used in intelligence tests, *mixed* or *trait* EI models involved measuring the frequency of particular behaviors and identifying when they occurred in a variety of situations (Lyusin, 2006). Zeidner et al. (2004) warned us that the types of EI measured by the different approaches were in fact different constructs. The mixed model approaches encompassed a wide variety of aspects, including "self-awareness, self-motivation, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, assertiveness, stress tolerance, impulse control, coping with stress, reality testing, social problem solving, etc." (Zeidner et al., 2004, p. 375). There are even more competencies included in these models.

Bar-On (1997) developed a mixed model and measurement tool for EI, known as the EQ-I, defining emotional quotient as all noncognitive abilities, knowledge, and competencies that help one cope with a variety of situations

encountered in life. He identified five areas representing emotional intelligence, including: self-knowledge, stress management, interpersonal skills, adaptability, and general mood. His approach focused on self-report for measurement in which individuals could identify *typical behaviors*. McEnrue and Groves (2006) pointed out that

the test does not appear to clearly tap the ability to discriminate between accurate and inaccurate or honest and dishonest expressions of feelings, to redirect and prioritize one's thinking based on one's feelings, or to generate emotions to facilitate one's own and others' decision making. (p. 23)

They noted that the instrument shows a bias toward positive affect.

Goleman's (1998) model for EI had been operationalized through *emotional competencies* that are relevant for particular professions and may only be developed through sustained practice, coaching, and feedback. This model was used to develop a measurement instrument (Hay-McBer, 2000) known as the ECI-2. The major components of the model include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1995). Boyatzis, Goleman, and Rhee (2000) clustered the competencies comprising Goleman's original model into four dimensions, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills. The ECI-2 was most useful in the identification of broadly defined competencies related to job performance rather than EI, and the tool did not distinguish or measure EI separately and distinctly from other managerial competencies or personal characteristics (McEnrue & Groves, 2006; Zeidner et al., 2004). The instrument appeared to not measure some competencies that would be expected of emotionally intelligent individuals and tested for others that were not part of the EI model on which it was based (Goleman, 1998), including initiative and achievement (McEnrue & Groves, 2006). Furthermore, the ECI-2 failed to measure (a) the ability to appropriately express emotions, (b) the ability to recognize authentic or feigned emotions in others, (c) the ability to make choices regarding how and when to respond to others' emotions, and (d) the ability to consider the effect of emotions on decision-making in one's self or others (McEnrue & Groves, 2006). It would behoove us to take note of Fineman's (2004) warning that "all emotional intelligence measures are based on author-contrived domains and response categories, each one reflecting its own, particular, rendition of emotional intelligence" (pp. 727-728) and Zeidner et al.'s (2004) caution regarding the "scant, and sometimes controversial, empirical evidence used to support the importance of EI in the workplace" (p. 372).

Triggered by Goleman's (2006) recent book, *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relations*, along with the work of other EI theorists who are actively embracing SI (e.g., Seal, Boyatzis, & Bailey, 2006), doubts are cast on the conceptual foundation of EI as an outgrowth of SI (Gardner, 1983; Thorndike, 1921). Goleman widens the scope of his book beyond the traditionally narrow construct of SI as a set of individual differences associated

with social intelligence to include the expansive domain of social effectiveness (Heggestad, 2008). Though Thorndike (1920) originally defined SI as the "ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls—to act wisely in human relations" (cited in Heggestad, 2008, p. 102), since that time, myriad constructs have been created, diluting the precision and usefulness of the term. Nonetheless, Goleman (2006) suggested that SI included more than the processing of social information, and Heggestad reported that Goleman's "website indicated that he saw social intelligence as the interpersonal component of emotional intelligence" (Heggestad, 2008, p. 103). This would intimate a reversal in the dominant thinking of EI theorists—that EI is an outgrowth of SI. Because Goleman's intent appeared to be the sharing of new ideas, not research findings, readers may be intrigued but are also left with continuing questions regarding the relationship between SI and EI, their discreteness, degree of overlap, and viability as measures of performance, ability, or development.

In a similar vein, Seal et al. (2006) offered an entirely new theory, emotion and social intelligence (ESI), which drew from multiple traditions. The authors included an ESI competency model blending EI and SI, in which EI competencies were directed toward intrapersonal development and SI competencies focused on interpersonal development. While acknowledging the roots of SI, along with other theories of intelligences, they asserted that EI "is best understood as a competency, focusing on behaviors that lead to greater social and emotional functioning" (p. 193). They stressed the utility of (a) blending EI and SI, and (b) adopting a competency perspective. In doing so, they skirted the issue of the relationship between the origins of SI and EI, yet displayed how the constructs were being used loosely and imprecisely.

The various strains of interest in EI range from a committed scholarly concern for creating and extending knowledge through rigorous research to a less structured application of blended knowledge from the past and present. Perhaps the most important thing we can glean from this discussion is awareness that thinking among leaders in the field of EI is not aligned. In the following section, we examine EI as a tool for leadership development through a critical lens.

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Development

Hitt (1993) told us that "leadership is generally defined as *influence,* the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly toward the achievement of group goals" (p. 5). Yukl agreed, stating that "leadership is a process of social interaction where leaders attempt to influence the behavior of their followers" (cited in Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002, p. 615). The promise of EI and the reason to select for and develop the EI capacity of leaders is to enhance their effectiveness in influencing followers to ensure organizational success and to contribute to an uplifting culture (Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000).

In the 1980s, new approaches to leadership conflated around "a conception of the leader as someone who defines organizational reality through the

articulation of a vision, which is a reflection of how he or she defines an orga-nization's mission, and the values that will support it" (Parry & Bryman, 2006, p. 450). Various labels were ascribed to this leadership approach including trans-formational leadership (Bass, 1985), charismatic leadership (Conger, 1989), and visionary leadership (Block, 1987). Although Parry and Bryman (2006) acknowledged differences among these approaches, they focused on their simi-larities, drawing attention to parallel themes, suggesting that "the transforming leader raises the aspirations of his or her followers such that the leader's and the follower's aspirations are fused" (p. 450), a notion they grounded in Burn's (1978) study of political leaders that distinguished between those who were transactional versus those who were transformational. Though various forms of influence exist, consensus abounds that a legitimate role of leaders is to influence followers and, by extension, the culture of the organization.

Transformational leadership has been of particular interest to EI enthusiasts, probably because transformational leaders have historically been personified as embodying qualities now appropriated by the various models of EI. When speak-ing of transformational leaders, Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) stressed that such leaders may have a unique impact on some followers who "feel strongly affiliated with the leader and have an unquestionable willingness to obey their leader's instructions" (p. 618). They conceived transformational leadership to be a process of social interaction in which leaders and followers were highly con-nected, with inspirational, motivational, and emotional elements.

Limitations of Research Linking EI to Leadership Effectiveness

Many have asserted that EI positively influences followers' perceptions of leaders and that high EI strengthens the effectiveness of transformational leaders (Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000; George, 2000; Goleman et al., 2002; Prati et al., 2003; Sosik & Megerian, 1999). The studies of Sosik and Megerian (1999), Rubin, Munz, and Bommer (2005), Newcombe and Ashkanasy (2002), Wong and Law (2002), and Wolff, Pescosolido, and Druskat (2002) all claimed to connect specific elements of EI such as self-awareness, emotion recognition ability, empathy, and positive affect to positive leader perceptions and job satisfaction among followers. However, Wong and Law (2002) reported that "no relationship between the EI of leaders and the job perfor-mance of their followers has been found" (p. 269).

Dulewicz, Young, and Dulewicz (2005) attempted to directly test the appli-cation of EI for improving leadership performance. In a study they conducted with navy officers and enlisted personnel (known as *ratings*), they found that EI, IQ, and MQ (managerial quotient) are all related to overall job perfor-mance but that EI better predicted job performance than the other quotients. They also found that self-awareness was not correlated to job performance. In addition, this work revealed that EI made a greater contribution to officer leadership performance than the other measures, though they found that IQ

and MQ were also correlated with officer leadership performance. Their results reflected the confusion in the literature surrounding any proof that differences in leadership performance could be directly attributed to EI measures. It seems suspect that an officer's overall job performance reflects a relationship to EI but not to self-awareness, a major component of most EI models. This confusion was compounded by the research of Kobe, Reiter-Palmon, and Rickers (2001), indicating that "EI did not account for variance in leadership experience above and beyond social intelligence" (p. 161).

The Dark Side of Emotional Intelligence

EI theorists have argued the ways in which EI enhanced and built transformational leadership skills and capabilities. Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) explained that "true transformational leaders transform their organization by enticing members to join them in achieving their visionary goals" and "that authentic transformational leadership is grounded on a strong ethical and moral foundation" (p. 618). Many of us might willingly choose to be lured into the web of the true transformational leader—one with the abilities and competencies associated with EI, along with the cognitive insight and moral fortitude to withstand the systemic pressures and external temptations to act in ways that are self-serving, along with a commitment to social justice. Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) described *inauthentic* (though not necessarily unconvincing) transformational leaders, in which leadership is used to fulfill unscrupulous ends. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) also discussed authentic versus pseudotransformational leadership, asserting that though the difference is not fully describable behaviorally, the authentic transformational leader is distinguished by her or his ultimate goal of transforming followers into leaders, along with a conspicuous lack of a personal agenda of queuing up the faithful. What contribution might EI training, for example, make to the inauthentic transformational leader?

This perspective on EI calls into question the ethics of those who may be seen as providing tools of manipulation to organizational leaders. Clearly, a tension exists that is not new: The bright and intelligent are more likely to be tapped as *leadership material*. If they also have the ability to be persuasive, then they can use their talents for good or evil. Having so recently experienced an era of public exposure of corporate malfeasance, Americans tend to be cynical about the inherent goodness of organizations. Should we be reassured, or unnerved, by Goleman's (1995) words, "there is an old-fashioned word for the body of skills that EI represents: character" (p. 34)?

> Indeed, something not always clearly distinguishable from emotional intelligence—emotional *cleverness* or *cunning*—has often been used by political demagogues to further their own ends via the mass manipulation—even destruction—of others. . . . Hence, it seems that emotional intelligence is no end in itself, and that its ultimate value is crucially dependent upon the moral ends which it serves. (Carr, 2000, p. 31)

The use and misuse of power and influence is not unfamiliar, but bears reflective consideration by HRD professionals in light of the tools and models we are using and the transparency of our methods.

Political and Multicultural Considerations

As HRD professionals evaluate the appropriateness of EI for leadership development, we suggest that they critically appraise two important areas: the political and multicultural dimensions of EI.

Political

EI becomes a locus of workplace identity politics in two primary areas. First, issues of personal identity and emotional control are roused, appropriated, and potentially exploited, and second; the political agenda underlying EI is contested, raising dilemmas for scholars and practitioners.

Fineman (2004) pointed out that, "measuring emotional intelligence, and assigning people an ordinal value of their worth, is no neutral act" (p. 729). Accordingly, like knowledge of one's IQ, knowing one's EI influences one's sense of value and personal identity. Hence, because employees are defined by their level of EI, "it renders the emotionally intelligent, and 'unintelligent', visible and more governable" (Fineman, 2004, p. 729). Through measurement, and the ultimate disbursement of rewards based on one's designation as possessing high or low EI, emotions may be politicized, rendered commodities, and subject to exploitation. A related argument has been forwarded in the literature that the limiting of the range of emotions permitted and valued to only the positive may blunt personal development and lead to other destructive consequences by repressing impulses (Ashkanasy et al., 2002). Fineman (2006b) explained that Lazarus (2003) argued the inseparability of positive and negative emotions, describing them as "two sides of the same coin, inextricably welded and mutually informative" (Fineman, 2006b, p. 274). The control of individual emotions to achieve organization-level goals that may or may not benefit the worker is one way EI can be seen as the commoditization of emotions by management. If EI assessment and training had potentially dehumanizing effects on leaders, what, if any, responsibility should an HRD professional assume?

HRD professionals might also consider the potential hidden political agendas underpinning EI (Locke, 2005). Locke is not alone in commenting that EI has been popularized as a potentially equalizing intelligence holding unprecedented promise for success at work (Matthews, Emo, Roberts, & Zeidner, 2006). He contended that "the ultimate motive is egalitarianism: redefining what it means to be intelligent so that everyone will, in some form, be equal in intelligence to everyone else" (Locke, 2005, p. 426). He argued that a review of the elements cited in most popular models of EI indicated that "most of the

actions involved actually require the use of reason" (p. 426). Locke ultimately concluded that there is no basis to hold that EI, without the reasoning abilities of IQ, will compensate for cognitive intelligence. Locke's (2005) argument that a central motive behind the creation and dissemination of EI is to erode the dominance of IQ as the signifier of an individual's potential value to an organization may be weakened by Fineman's (2004) contention that EI simply provided another arena in which workers could be stratified and labeled according to means that, though based in science, were frequently decontextualized and viewed without consideration of the social influences affecting differences in outcomes. On the other hand, the dearth of studies indicating the ease and rate with which EI abilities and competencies could be increased, or that high EI positively affected the performance of leaders and their followers, might be seen as support for Locke's (2005) position. The contention that EI can be acquired by most, if not all, leads to yet another political agenda.

The hidden agenda to which Locke refers is overtly political and is associated with positions of social justice and a contextual, collectivist view toward social issues. He obviously favored the realist perspective of acknowledging individual capability and merit as objective and measurable and used this position to form his foundation to eschew EI. Another political agenda could be claimed as also underlying the same message regarding the accessibility of EI as an intelligence anyone can learn or improve, and actually purchase. Unlike IQ, which was theorized to remain relatively stable over time, one could make a deliberate decision to acquire or increase their EI. The somewhat different political agenda of producing hope-filled customers and employees who at best may become more competent emotional performers with well-internalized feeling rules in service of the organization continues to be fulfilled by practitioners, consultants, and academics. At worst, these customers will experience few of the promised benefits of EI, and the political issue becomes a case of truth in advertising.

Cross-Culturalism and Multiculturalism: The Universalization of EI

Reflecting on the plethora of literature generated on EI, it is bewildering that issues concerning cross-cultural applications and relevance to the multicultural workplace are given short shrift, beyond the recognition that the challenges of cross-culturalism and multiculturalism may require leaders to have high levels of EI (Ashkanasy et al., 2002). Though most theorizing about EI has originated in North America, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, empirical studies from non-Western cultures are appearing (e.g., see Suliman & Al-Shaikh, 2006, for a study of EI in the Arab world). Fineman (2004) suggested that it is difficult to know how different cultures, ethnicities, and genders look at the role of emotions and their expression. "What constitutes emotional intelligent action in one cultural or sub-cultural setting may not be seen so in

another" (Fineman, 2006a, p. 681). Alon and Higgins (2005) commented that agreement among members of a culture or subculture regarding the meaning or expression of certain emotions provided no assurance that they would "readily translate across borders" (p. 505). There was a distinct lack of cross-cultural/ multicultural sensitivity in the work published by the creators of the most widely used instruments for measuring EI (Fineman, 2004). Nonetheless, purveyors of EI have often been willing to apply EI tools cross-culturally, assuming successful transferability of models and instruments. Because EI was developed in context (Matthews et al., 2006) and was thus undoubtedly culturally bound, some wariness among HRD professionals would be appropriate when considering applying EI tools or principles cross-culturally or in multicultural contexts.

Implications for Practice

In this article, we traced the changing role of emotions in organizations, critiquing EI as a strategy for leadership development. Based on the lack of consensus surrounding EI measures and their weak links to leadership effectiveness, the prudent practitioner would likely proceed with caution before choosing to sponsor a full-blown EI program. At the same time, we suggest that leaders will benefit from an increased understanding of their own emotions and the ability to express emotions in congruent, nonthreatening ways. Attending to the emotional responses of others, along with a genuine commitment to interpreting emotions with empathic accuracy are habits and skills that can be honed over time and will certainly increase interpersonal effectiveness. We thus suggest that leadership development programs include features designed to acknowledge the importance of emotions in organizational life. Because emotions are so frequently repressed or regulated in the workplace, leaders need opportunities to make authentic contact with their own core emotional fabric and to examine how they are using emotions to achieve organizational and personal goals. Opportunities to confront the enormous responsibility of leadership as a source of influence and creation of meaning for followers should be part of leadership development agendas.

Thanks in part to the popularity of EI, holistic approaches to leadership development are likely to be well received in many corporate environments. Group or individual interventions involving personal reflection offer possibilities for deeper self-exploration on all levels. An example is the use of personal autobiographies as a component of leadership development (Comerford & Fambrough, 2002). Another innovative approach is conversational learning, grounded in experiential learning theory (Baker, Jensen, & Kolb, 2005). Moreover, engaging the whole person, this technique offers unique opportunities for building understanding across differences and creating opportunities for relational growth.

Chris Argyris and Donald Schön (1979) distinguished between the technical and interpersonal competencies required of professionals and how they are mutually interdependent. We agree with their point that task-related skills and abilities and people-associated strengths are intertwined and add that they must occur in the presence of admirable human qualities that may vary contextually (e.g., integrity, respectability, honesty, or trustworthiness). These are the qualities HRD professionals hope to develop in leaders. Earlier, we suggested that the splitting of positive and negative emotions was perhaps impossible and the desire to do so unhealthy. In reinforcing that message, we end with a quote from Parker Palmer (2000), who warned of further ways we could be blindsided by enlarging the positive and diminishing the negative as EI seems to encourage us to do:

> A leader is someone with the power to project either shadow or light onto some part of the world and onto the lives of the people who dwell there. A leader shapes the ethos in which others must live, an ethos as light-filled as heaven or as shadowy as hell. A *good* leader is intensely aware of the interplay of inner shadow and light, lest the act of leadership do more harm than good. (p. 78)
>
> We have a long tradition of approaching leadership via the "power of positive thinking." I want to counterbalance that approach by paying special attention to the tendency we have as leaders to project more shadow than light. Leadership is hard work for which one is regularly criticized and rarely rewarded, so it is understandable that we need to bolster ourselves with positive thoughts. But by failing to look at our shadows, we feed a dangerous delusion that leaders too often indulge: that our efforts are always well intended, our power is always benign, and the problem is always in those difficult people whom we are trying to lead! (p. 79)

To accomplish transformative learning (Hart, Conklin, & Allen, 2008), we must acknowledge that there is no quick-fix EI elixir that will create the emotionally attuned leader. Goleman himself admitted that developing even one EI component takes considerable time, personal commitment, coaching, feedback, and practice (Emmerling & Goleman, 2005). By continuing to evaluate leadership development tools such as EI through a critical lens, perhaps HRD practitioners will make well-informed decisions resulting in enhanced leadership effectiveness and healthier organization in the long term.

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