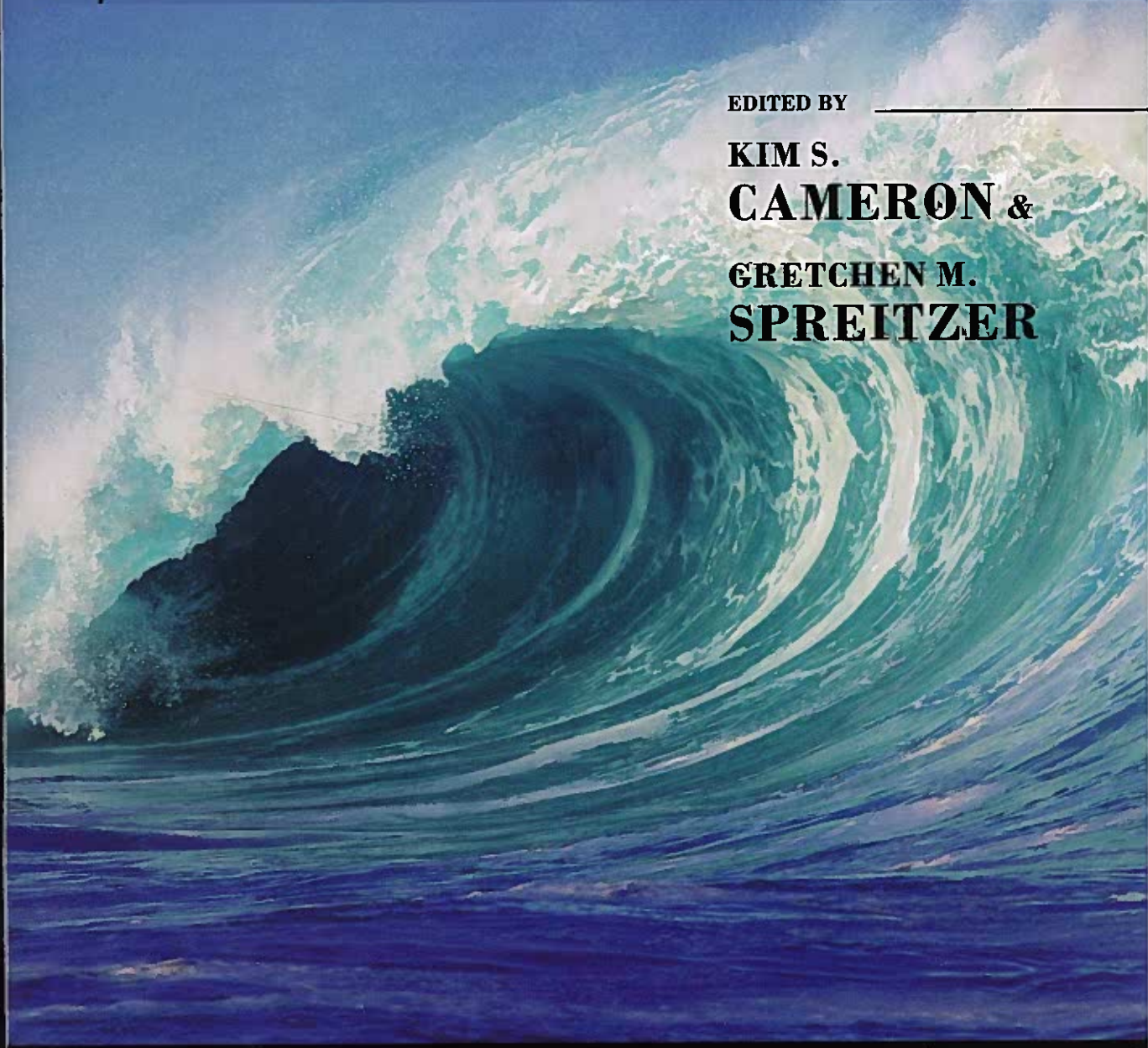




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The Oxford Handbook of
**POSITIVE
ORGANIZATIONAL
SCHOLARSHIP**

Social Context and the Psychology of Emotional Intelligence

A Key to Creating Positive Organizations

Oscar Ybarra, Laura Rees, Ethan Kross, and Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks

Abstract

In this chapter, we bridge work on positive organizational scholarship (POS) and emotional intelligence by focusing on their common element—an emphasis on how people navigate social interactions and relationships. We put forth a synthesis—*social-emotional intelligence*—based on two assumptions: (a) a useful integration of POS and emotional intelligence needs to describe the social context in order to understand *when* and *why* people apply their emotional intelligence skills; and (b) a useful model of emotional intelligence needs to be based on agreed upon conceptions of *how* the mind works—namely, by defining the interaction between intuitive (automatic) and deliberative (controlled) processes that underlie emotional intelligence abilities (e.g., emotional recognition and control). Our synthesis adds flexibility and adaptability to the emotional intelligence process and takes into account how it interacts with the presence or absence of positive organizational environments.

Keywords: Social context, emotional intelligence, dual psychological processes, dynamic social intelligence

Positive organizational scholarship (POS) provides a perspective for creating exceptional performance through a focus on the internal, social environment of organizations (e.g., Cameron, 2008). This perspective is essential to developing successful organizations that foster “positive deviance,” or performance above the norm (e.g., Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003). Emotional intelligence, as currently understood however, is a diffuse construct. As O’Sullivan (2007, p. 260) notes, “Clinical practitioners, business consultants, popular writers, serious researchers, and scores of other groups use the term *emotional intelligence* (EI) to refer to anything related to understanding oneself and other people, even if the ‘emotional’ connection is rather tenuous.” This critique notwithstanding, the construct of EI is germane to the issue of creating positive organizational environments. However, clarity, precision, and elaboration are needed in order to refine this construct, increase its explanatory value, and link it directly to POS. This chapter aims to provide such a

bridge by creating a synthesis—*social-emotional intelligence*—based on two assumptions:

- *Assumption 1:* A useful model of POS and emotional intelligence in relation to each other needs to delineate the nature of the social context in order to understand *when* and *why* people apply their EI skills.
- *Assumption 2:* A useful model of EI needs to integrate fundamental conceptions of *how* the mind works—namely, by defining the interaction between intuitive (automatic) and deliberative (controlled) mental processes—to fully capture the flexibility with which people make sense of their social worlds and are influenced by it.

We begin by reviewing the predictive ability of EI measures. Then, we turn to the diverse approaches to conceptualizing EI. Finally, we elaborate the two assumptions of social-emotional intelligence, discuss their implications for research and theory on

POS and EI, and highlight important future research directions.

What Emotional Intelligence Assessments Predict

Over the past two decades, a great deal of research has examined the relationship between EI and various outcomes for individuals, such as job satisfaction, quality of relationships, and well-being. Here, we review findings on what EI measures predict. The review is by necessity selective, given the numerous studies conducted on EI (for more extensive reviews, see Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008; Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2004).

Some research findings indicate that low levels of EI are associated with negative emotional reactions and negative coping strategies in response to stress (Jordan, Ashkanasy, & Hartel, 2002). Low EI has also been related to worry and avoidance coping (Matthews et al., 2006). On the other hand, high EI has been associated with greater well-being (positive mood and high self-esteem), higher economic self-efficacy (Engelberg & Sjoberg, 2006), and adaptive coping following negative events (Schutte, Malouff, Simunek, McKenley, & Hollander, 2002). Importantly, recent work demonstrates that trait EI is associated with such positive outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction; well-being) over and above that predicted by personality (Singh & Woods, 2008).

Emotional Intelligence Assessments and Organizational Outcomes

In organizational research, emotions and their effective management have significant implications for employees, managers, and organizations (Barsade & Gibson, 2007). Although cognitive intelligence is often prized as an ideal quality in employees, EI has also been found to have significant positive relationships with in-role, task performance, and citizenship behaviors (i.e., out-of-role performance that goes "above and beyond" one's job; Côté & Miners, 2006). These effects persist after controlling for cognitive intelligence, suggesting that EI facilitates worker's performance.

More recent work has linked EI with higher merit increases in salary and increases in company rank among members of the finance department of a Fortune 400 insurance company (Lopes et al., 2006). Supervisors and peers also rated individuals who scored higher on EI as possessing better social skills (e.g., stress tolerance). Some recent work has also shown positive relationships between EI and

objective performance measures. For example, a recent study of Singaporean sellers in a buyer-seller negotiation exercise found that better emotion recognition was associated with better individual negotiation outcomes based on objective performance measures, including value created and share captured (Elfenbein et al., 2007).

Although many studies focus on individual-level implications of EI, some studies have begun to study the broader social ramifications of EI. On a dyadic relationship level, for example, studies have illustrated the intrinsically social nature of EI by finding positive relationships between EI—particularly the ability to manage emotions—and the quality of social interactions (Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schutz, Sellin, & Salovey, 2004). In teams, EI—specifically, the awareness and management of one's own and others' emotions—has been linked to performance (based on a self-report workgroup-level scale, Jordan & Lawrence, 2009). Emotional intelligence has also been studied in relation to transformational leadership (Brown & Moshavi, 2005), which has been shown to have significant effects on followers' performance, motivation, and other work outcomes (Bono & Judge, 2003; Divr, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002). One study has even proposed a multilevel theory of individual-level EI and organizational-level emotional capability (including receptivity, mobilization, and learning) as significant influences on an organization's ability to change (Huy, 1999).

Despite the seemingly high level of consensus among researchers regarding EI and its predictive value, it remains a multifaceted concept, which means different things to different people—conceptually, operationally, and empirically. In the next section, we provide a brief overview of the different ways in which EI is conceptualized to illustrate this point.

Conceptualizing and Assessing Emotional Intelligence

There exists a diversity of approaches to conceptualizing and assessing EI. Some researchers think of it more in terms of personality tendencies or traits, akin to extraversion, whereas other researchers regard EI more as an ability or set of abilities. Regardless of the definitional approach to EI, researchers have created various measures that fit with their definitions. Some researchers have developed ability measures of EI, whether as trait tendencies people can self-report (Tett, Fox, & Wang, 2005) or as assessments developed to measure specific components of EI (e.g., Nowicki & Duke, 1994).

Other approaches combine self-reported EI tendencies with broader personality constructs. The diversity of treatments of EI has, in the estimates of some authors, given rise to a conceptual morass (Conte, 2005). Nevertheless, by briefly surveying the literature, we can arrive at a working understanding of what EI is.

Mixed Models

Mixed models start with self-reported qualities that appear related to EI abilities, but they also consider more molar qualities, such as one's motives, mood, self assessments, self-esteem, and coping tendencies. Some of these measures include the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i; Bar-On, 1997), the Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SREIT; Schutte et al., 1998), and the Multidimensional Emotional Intelligence Assessment (MEIA; Tett, Fox, & Wang, 2005). Such mixed approaches are considered by some not to provide real assessments of EI, as they tend to heavily overlap with other personality traits, assess self-judgments rather than abilities related to EI, and measure tendencies such as assertiveness and flexibility (Mayer et al., 2008). Indeed, studies have reported correlations above 0.70 between the EQ-i and the Big Five personality scales (e.g., Brackett & Mayer, 2003). Thus, although popular and easy to administer, it is not clear what such assessments offer beyond available personality measures, in addition to the problem that they can be faked in a socially desirable direction (Day & Carroll, 2008; Grubb & McDaniel, 2007).

Ability Models

In addition to mixed-model assessments of EI, there are a variety of ability-related models. In ability models researchers focus on single abilities, such as how people reason about emotions (e.g., Clore, Ortony, & Foss, 1987; Roseman, 1984) or how emotions influence thought (e.g., Damasio, 1994; Frigda, 1988; George & Brief, 1996; Isen, Johnson, Mertz, & Robinson, 1985; Salovey, Hsee, & Mayer, 1993; for a review, see George, 2000). Other researchers have studied different abilities such as accuracy in facial recognition and emotion perception (Ekman & Friesen, 1975; Matsumoto et al., 2000; Nowicki & Duke, 1994; O'Sullivan, 1982; Sanchez-Burks & Huy, 2009) and emotion management (e.g., Gross, 1998; Kross, Ayduk, & Mischel, 2005; Lazarus, 1994). That these abilities are considered distinct stems in part from their separate historical and intellectual traditions. For example,

whereas emotional perception has its roots in non-verbal perception and facial recognition (e.g., Buck, 1984; Nowicki & Duke, 1994; Rosenthal, Hall, DiMatteo, Rogers, & Archer, 1979), an interest in emotion management seems to be rooted in part in the clinical tradition (e.g., Beck, 1979; Ellis, 2001) and social cognitive research on impulse control (e.g., Mischel, Shoda, & Rodriguez, 1989).

Integrative Models

On the other hand, integrative models, such as the four-branch model of EI (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer et al., 1997), integrate four separate-but-related abilities under one overarching concept. The four-branch model deals with people's ability to *recognize* emotions (in self and others), the ability to *use* emotion to influence thought, the ability to *understand* emotions, and the ability to *manage* emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer et al., 1997). Although sometimes studied individually, together, this group of abilities gives rise to an individual's overall EI under the four-branch model (Mayer et al., 2008). Integrating different abilities into an overarching EI framework in this way acknowledges that the person has a variety of EI tools at his or her disposal to make sense of his or her environments and to adapt.

Critical Synthesis: Seeking Common Ground by Explicating the Social Context and Psychology of Emotional Intelligence

Given the diversity in theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of EI, and the varied research findings in which these different conceptions have been studied, it is challenging for even a trained researcher to understand what EI is. Such a lack of conceptual coherence promotes confusion as researchers do not have a lingua franca to use in integrating and growing their research field. This problem is compounded as practitioners propagate well-intentioned but simplified views and findings from the EI field.

However, our goal is not to throw out the proverbial EI baby with the bath water. The research and conceptions described thus far provide important early steps in the study of EI, but these approaches lack two things. First, they do not fully explicate the importance of the social context in which people apply their EI toolkit. How do we answer questions such as: How is EI influenced by the social context? What perils lurk in the social world that can make the most emotionally intelligent person ineffective at times? Once the social

context is considered more explicitly, it will become clearer that the social world people navigate can shape, direct, and place constraints on a person's EI, regardless of the EI level they think they have (for similar argument in the domain of personality see Mischel & Shoda, 1995).

Second, the research described thus far assumes a very "conscious" or deliberate view of EI. For example, participants in laboratory settings are often asked to judge faces or scenes for emotional content and describe what they see. At other times, participants are presented with hypothetical, verbal descriptions of social situations and asked to report how they and the other person in the situation would feel. Communicating and reporting on one's opinions and feelings are very conscious activities (e.g., Smith & DeCoster, 2000), and they can also be cognitively demanding. In popular writing on EI, one feature that made EI promising, in addition to its potential predictive power compared to cognitive intelligence (which is quite modest for current EI assessments), was the possibility that some EI processes might be carried out automatically. Terrific links were made to the neuropsychological literature that suggest, for example, the efficiency with which the amygdala and related neural circuits can process emotional information even with little involvement of higher-level thought (e.g., Goleman, 1995; based on work by LeDoux). Although it was insightful to relate the idea of automatic and efficient mental processes to EI, in actuality, little research on automatic processes has been carried out by EI researchers. This limits most current EI conceptions.

Given these concerns, our aim in the remaining part of this chapter is to provide a framework to guide research on EI, especially in the context of POS. One aspect of our approach is to consider the social context in which EI-related tools are applied (Assumption 1). It is in this sense that POS, with its explicit focus on social interaction and relationships, can ground the concept and study of EI. The second element of our approach is to take seriously the notion that EI involves a set of mental processes, not just a score a person is given on an EI test. By delving deeper into the psychology of EI and relating it to widely accepted dual-process models (Assumption 2), we delineate a conception of EI that is more realistic psychologically, dynamic, and open to inefficiencies, but also more amenable to the goals of creating positive organizational environments. We turn to the two assumptions of our framework next.

Two Assumptions

Social-Emotional Intelligence Assumption 1: Unpacking Challenges in Social Contexts to Understand the "When" and "Why" of Emotional Intelligence

Implied in many discussions of EI is that what also matters in performance such as in one's job, in addition to cognitive intelligence (e.g., crystallized and fluid), is how people respond to and manage aspects of the social environment. This proposal may stem from findings that suggest traditional IQ types of assessments account for only 20%–25% of the variance in academic and job-related outcomes (for a review, see Neisser et al., 1996). Such a conclusion, though, rests on the assumption that measures of intelligence are based on an agreed-upon definition of intelligence and how best to measure it. Nevertheless, the remaining variance to be explained invites conjectures about what other skills and domains of life influence a person's success. One domain that has historically attracted such attention is that of social interaction and relationships.

Although it appears that putting the focus on the social domain was a coup for the field of EI, it is important to appreciate that a long history of research has dealt directly with how people make sense of their social environments, such as work on social intelligence and social cognition, as we will discuss (for reviews see Kihlstrom & Cantor, 1989, 2000). At times, EI researchers have attempted to distinguish EI from social intelligence (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). However, conceptually and operationally, many EI approaches emphasize the social domain. For example, some of the subscales of the EQ-i (Bar-On, 1997) converge onto an interpersonal factor, and many of the ability models deal with emotion recognition in others (e.g., the DANVA, Nowicki & Duke, 1994; the Japanese and Caucasian Brief Affect Recognition Test, or JACBART, Matsumoto et al., 2000) and the ability to manage emotions in others (e.g., the portion of the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test, or MSCEIT, Four-Branch Model dealing with emotion management, Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002). Popular treatments have also moved beyond the term *emotional intelligence* and refer to *social intelligence* (Goleman, 2006) to make explicit the connection between EI and interpersonal processes.

Empirically, some studies of EI have been related to social outcomes, such as the quality of a person's interactions with others (Lopes et al., 2004), negotiation results (Elfenbein et al., 2007), leaders' interaction

with followers (Bono & Judge, 2003; Divr et al., 2002), and the extent to which workers pursue organizational citizenship behaviors (Côté & Miners, 2006), as reviewed above. However, although navigating the social world is implied to be part of the purview of EI, it is rarely discussed in depth in terms of how EI is influenced by the social context. For example, why is it that otherwise emotionally intelligent and savvy individuals crumble when faced with temptation, such as President Clinton with Monica Lewinsky, and more recent occurrences involving other prominent individuals, such as Eliot Spitzer and John Edwards. President Clinton, for example, won two elections—achievements based on the precise navigation of the social and perilous world of U.S. politics. Yet, his downfall with regard to the Lewinsky debacle also resulted from a failure to read the social landscape and control his emotions. The inability to deal with such judgmental and behavioral outcomes performed by people considered emotionally intelligent is a serious limitation of most models of EI, and it is why we make the social context an explicit element in our analysis.

At one level, it is perplexing that, despite some allusion to the social aspect of EI, most available treatments of EI pay scant direct attention to the nature of the social world. It is also perplexing that little of the research on what was previously referred to as “social intelligence” is rarely reviewed or referred to by EI researchers. This is despite the fact that considerable research has been carried out in this area, for example, on the psychometrics of social intelligence and related social intelligence skills, which predates work on EI (e.g., Hendricks, Guilford, & Hoepfner, 1969; Hunt, 1928; Gardner, 1983; Guilford, 1967; Moss, Hunt, Omwake, & Ronning, 1927; O’Sullivan, Guilford, & deMille, 1965; also for a review see Kihlstrom & Cantor, 2000). Decades before the term “emotional intelligence” gained popularity, researchers were investigating how social intelligence differs from nonsocial intelligence and whether they can be distinguished from each other (Ford & Tisak, 1983; Riggio, Messamer, & Throckmorton, 1991; Shanley, Walker, & Foley, 1971; Thorndike & Stein, 1937; Wechsler, 1958; Woodrow, 1939), in addition to examining the role of personality factors in social intelligence (e.g., Ford & Tisak, 1983; Gough, 1966; Marlowe, 1986). Much of the work on social intelligence serves as the basis for the social cognition frameworks that have had much success in psychology in the last four decades.

Emotional intelligence is germane to navigating social interactions and relationships, but any such treatment can be greatly enhanced by considering social context and being open to available research and concepts on social intelligence and social cognition.

Thus, we take as our starting point the proposal that a useful model of EI needs to carefully, deliberately, and explicitly consider the social world that people navigate, in particular from the perspective that the social world is “fuzzy”—it is comprised of negotiable facts whose perception is driven by people’s subjective construals and the meaning they ascribe to social events. It is in this regard that most models of EI are limited, in that they assume that a high score on a measure of EI represents a skill that will yield high performance across all contexts, and that the efficacy with which a person applies that skill can be determined. But truth and accuracy are difficult to establish when dealing with social events whose meanings are pliable and interpretable (for a similar discussion, see Kihlstrom & Cantor, 2000). Most EI models also neglect to consider that people’s goals, unfulfilled needs, time pressures, or lack of cognitive resources can shape their construals. It is in the fuzzy zone of the social world, with its labile nature, that the promise of creating positive organizations becomes clear, as such an emphasis challenges researchers and practitioners to help shape how people construe their social surroundings and the goals they seek. Before pursuing these implications, though, it is important to address one of the assumptions of POS, which is that people value and strive for positive social connections with others. This desire for positive social connections will help put into even sharper relief the need to incorporate the social into any model of EI.

The Value of the Social

That people should strive to form supportive social connections with others is in line with the proposal of Trivers’ (1971) classic paper. In an extensive review of varied psychological and related literatures, the renowned biologist convincingly concludes that people are driven to establish relationships with others, at times even at great cost to the self (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Supportive research has shown, for instance, that people are faster to notice information with social versus nonsocial implications (Ybarra, Chan, & Park, 2001), and when getting to know someone, people prefer receiving information that tells them about the person’s social versus work-related qualities (Wojciske, Bazinska,

& Jawoski, 1998). People also constantly talk about others (Dunbar, Marriott, & Duncan, 1997), and they also think about others even while sleeping (McNamara, McLaren, Smith, Brown, & Stickgold, 2005). Relationships and connections with others are fundamental drivers of individuals' judgment and behavior.

This drive to create social and emotional bonds emerges and asserts itself even in work- and task-related contexts. Classic examples of this can be found in the organizational literature dealing with groups. This research showed that, when formal groups were put in place to perform tasks relevant to organizational goals, informal groups—such as employees from different units gathering to eat lunch—were spontaneously created as a response to people's need for social contact (e.g., Hamner & Organ, 1982; Sayles, 1957). As many of the contributors to this volume discuss, such positive connections at work can lead to benefits for the organization, and their absence can lead to detrimental outcomes.

The above discussion suggests that a more complete model of EI needs to incorporate information about people's social goals and whether such goals are being met. For example, research has shown that when people do not feel socially accepted, they become emotionally negative and their ability to reason is reduced (e.g., Baumeister, Twenge, & Nuss, 2002). They also tend to focus on information related to fulfilling the need to connect (Gardner, Pickett, & Brewer, 2000), which can limit their ability to take in information relevant to the task at hand—goals have a way of blinding people to other aspects of their environments (Ordoñez, Schweitzer, Galinsky, & Bazerman, 2009).

This aspect of the social context—in terms of people's need to form and maintain social connections with others—suggests that the EI process is fluid and at times open to inefficiencies. It suggests that when people are lacking in positive social connections or have been rejected, they may be subject to experience some emotions over others and may be apt to misread or focus more on goal-relevant information, even seeing social cues where there are none (Epley, Akalis, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2008; Humphrey, 1976). Further, given that some social inferential processes depend on limited cognitive capacity, as we will discuss in Assumption 2 of our analysis, a strong social goal that is not being met may short-circuit higher-level reasoning processes when such processes are most needed.

Available models of EI have little to say about people's need to connect and the implications such unmet needs have for social thinking and social navigation. It is usually assumed that people apply their EI skills—whatever level they happen to have—consistently across time, but we have known for some time that traits and abilities are not expressed consistently across situations (Mischel & Shoda, 1995).

The Veridicality of Emotional Displays and Chronic Perceptual Biases

In addition to not explicitly considering issues of social motivation and how this can influence social thinking, EI models assume that assessments of the social world—assuming a person has scored high on some measure of EI—are static and valid. It is comforting to assume so, but just as smart people can be foolish for a host of reasons (Sternberg, 2002), people who score high on EI may also exhibit socially inefficient behavior for a host of reasons. One way this can happen is by assuming that the emotions of others can actually be recognized (as most EI models assume), for example. In complex and mixed-motive environments in which people deal with strangers or competitors (e.g., large organizations), those being perceived many times can enact unpredictable behaviors or limit the degree to which they are “readable” (Ybarra et al., 2010). At best, it could be argued that a person high on EI would not render a judgment of another person in such cases, but no conception or assessment of EI has been created to capture this “skeptical” approach to information presented by others. At worst, the person will inaccurately read the target's emotions, triggering a cascade of inferences and assumptions that could potentially lead to a suboptimal way of interacting. Ecologically valid models of EI need to incorporate such knowledge of others and the social conditions that are more or less likely to trigger attempts not to be figured out and predicted (e.g., Ybarra et al., 2010).

Certain social environments can also chronically shape the construals people make and inferences that they draw. Although various psychological and behavioral processes are in place that prompt people to form social connections with others, people are also attuned to potential interpersonal costs, such as being betrayed by a coworker, overlooked by a boss, or treated with disrespect in front of other employees. This sensitivity to potential costs can create barriers to positive organizing as people have lower thresholds for noticing the bad and drawing

negative inferences about others, and higher thresholds for accepting at face value others' positive acts. Evidence that this is the case is well documented in several domains (Ybarra, 2001, 2002; Ybarra, Schaberg, & Keiper, 1999; Ybarra & Stephan, 1996, 1999). One implication of this is that organizational values that facilitate competitiveness, distrust, and behavioral practices harmful to an organization's "social glue" could trigger less-than-generous and erroneous inferences and thus ineffective EI, due in part to supporting some beliefs over others (e.g., "My colleagues only care about themselves"), but also due to social stress and diminished cognitive resources, as we discuss under Assumption 2.

SUMMARY

Thus, with regard to Assumption 1 of our analysis, we propose that what is needed to enhance current conceptions of EI is an explicit exposition of the social context in which people apply their EI skills as they attempt to navigate their interactions and relationships with others and how the pursuit of positive organizational goals (or lack thereof) impacts the EI process. Such considerations help inform the *when* and *why* of EI. All people have a need to connect, but *when* such a need is unfulfilled, they may exhibit low EI despite having scored high on an EI assessment. A better understanding of the social context thus can also help us explain *why* people considered emotionally intelligent can be socially inefficient as a function of context—a scenario no current model of EI addresses.

We next turn to Assumption 2 of our analysis, which provides a fuller and more nuanced analysis of *how* people think, which should also help us to better predict when people will be effective in deploying their EI.

Social-Emotional Intelligence Assumption 2: Specifying the Mental Processes Involved in Emotional Intelligence and How They Interact (the "How" of Emotional Intelligence)

Most EI research assumes a very "conscious" or deliberate view of EI. For example, many times, participants in studies are asked to judge scenarios or facial stimuli and then describe what they have seen or complete self-report personality-type inventories. Thus, although EI researchers acknowledge the possibility that some mental and brain processes can operate efficiently, few if any researchers have taken seriously the distinction between intuitive

and deliberate processes, or their potential interactions (for an exception, see Fiori, 2009).

In contrast, cognitive and social psychologists (and also philosophers, political scientists, economists, and developmentalists) have described in many theoretical treatments automatic or intuitive mental processes and how they differ from more conscious and deliberate ones (e.g., Chaiken & Trope, 1999; Epstein, 1994; Evans, 2008; Hofman, Friese, & Strack, 2009; Kross & Mischel, 2010; McClure, Laibson, Loewenstein, & Cohen, 2004; Milkman, Rogers, & Bazerman, 2008; Posner & Snyder, 1975; Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977; Sloman, 1996; Smith & DeCoster, 2000; Stanovich & West, 2000). In our analysis, we integrate deliberate and intuitive components in a model of social-EI.

The abilities to communicate and report on one's opinions and feelings are very conscious activities (e.g., Smith & DeCoster, 2000)—activities that many times depend on limited cognitive resources. We refer to this aspect of EI as *deliberate*—individuals consciously use their EI to judge and analyze social and emotional situations. On the other hand, research from other areas has begun to show that processes related to EI can actually be carried out automatically and with little awareness. We refer to this as the *intuitive* aspect of EI, and discuss the deliberate-intuitive distinction presently. As we elaborate in the next section, taking seriously the distinction between intuitive and deliberate processes not only adds dynamism and context sensitivity to our framework, it also suggests novel hypotheses and implications, in addition to laying the groundwork for applying social-EI to enabling positive organizations.

Two General Abilities and Two Types of Processing for Social-Emotional Intelligence

Although a variety of abilities relevant to EI are assessed by EI instruments, here we focus on two abilities that are common to many EI models. These are the meta-capabilities of *emotional recognition* and *emotional control*. Emotional recognition and control are the workhorses of social navigation and provide the most common ground across different theoretical perspectives. Beyond this, however, our framework also incorporates the two types of information processing we discussed above—*intuitive* and *deliberate* processing. This also helps place our framework in the context of similarly distinctive dual-process models used in various disciplines, including social cognition, cognitive science, reasoning and rationality, personality, behavioral economics,

and emotion regulation, for example (e.g., Chaiken & Trope, 1999; Epstein, 1994; Evans, 2008; Kross & Mischel, 2010; Posner & Snyder, 1975; Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977; Sloman, 1996; Smith & DeCoster, 2000; Stanovich & West, 2000). Going forward, we refer to these four concepts—recognition, control, intuitive, and deliberate—in terms of the *social* aspect of EI to help emphasize Assumption 1 of our analysis.

Social-emotional recognition traditionally deals with people's ability to determine in the self and others which emotions are being felt or expressed verbally and nonverbally and is rooted in earlier work on nonverbal sensitivity (e.g., Buck, 1984; Rosenthal et al., 1979). Social-emotional control refers to a person's ability to manage moods and emotions in the self and others, and research has shown this is usually in the service of maintaining or creating positive affective states and eliminating or minimizing negative ones (e.g., Clark & Isen, 1982; Erber & Erber, 2001; Larsen, 2000; Mischel, Ebbsen, & Zeiss, 1973).

Both social-emotional recognition and control can operate through a deliberate process (see Table 16.1). For example, an employee can consciously focus on what his boss is saying and attend to the boss' facial expression and gestures to infer not only what the boss wants done, but when and by whom. In terms of social-emotional control, a leader could guide her attention to think differently about the impending downsizing of her unit, a conscious frame switching that might not only help quell personal distress and anxiety, but might suggest different ways of helping the affected employees (instead of focusing on the self, for instance, the leader could focus on employee needs).

As already mentioned, in the majority of EI models, social-emotional recognition and control are considered to operate through a deliberate process (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; for an exception, see Fiori, 2009),

and research indicates that there are deliberate components to the operation of both of these skills. For example, the use of pattern matching procedures to recognize faces by certain people—those who suffer from autism spectrum disorder—necessitates deliberate attempts at recognition through the application of rules and knowledge to make inferences about what another person is feeling (Winkielman, McIntosh, & Oberman, 2009). In terms of social-emotional control, researchers have been able to manipulate the particular deliberate manner in which people approach a negative emotional experience—for instance, whether they immerse themselves or take a step back from the experience. Their findings indicate that people's cognitive approach to the situation matters, with the ability to take in more information about the social situation and not remain immersed in one's feelings helping to buffer against reexperiencing intense negative emotions associated with the event (Kross, Ayduk, & Mischel, 2005). This type of conscious, controlled approach—at least when people are first developing such skills—is at the heart of many cognitive-behavioral therapy techniques (e.g., Ellis, 2001). Deliberate steps taken by a unit leader to distance herself from the distress of impending layoffs, for example, may be effective for managing emotions (for discussion see Mischel, DeSmet, & Kross, 2006).

Although these deliberately implemented skills are critical to helping people interact effectively in social contexts, they require cognitive effort. Thus, their use is restricted by a person's level of cognitive resources. Fortunately, these skills can also operate *intuitively* through a process that is more immune to cognitive resource level (e.g., Smith & DeCoster, 2000). For example, a service provider might readily notice among a group of jockeying customers one who is smiling and who seems friendly, even if the provider is not aware of why that person captured his attention. With regard to emotion control, an employee, without deliberating but almost

Table 16.1 2 × 2 Model of social-emotional intelligence

Type of Processing	Social-emotional recognition	Social-emotional control
Deliberate	Consciously focusing on the new boss' communications and expressions to infer intentions and what the boss wants done.	Exerting cognitive resources (attention, working memory) to switch mindsets and reappraise the meaning or consequences of impending layoffs.
Intuitive	Quickly recognizing a smile or friendliness in a customer's face, even when the customer is at a distance.	With the help of internalized organizational values, automatically speaking up against a coworker who makes a discriminatory comment.

impulsively, could speak up when a coworker says something discriminatory that goes against the company's egalitarian mantra.

Recent research has delved deeper into the intuitive operation of social-emotional abilities. For example, in terms of emotion recognition, research indicates that people can recognize the valence of faces (positive, negative) even when the faces are presented too fast to engage higher-level cognitive skills (e.g., Clark, Winkelman, & McIntosh, 2008). Recent findings also suggest that some elements of emotion control can occur quite efficiently with little deliberation (for reviews see Bargh & Williams, 2007; Mauss, Bunge, & Gross, 2007). In one study, Mauss, Cook, and Gross (2007, Experiment 1) primed participants either with words related to the concept of "control" or to the concept of "express" to activate these goal-related concepts outside of people's awareness. Following the priming task, the participants completed a mood questionnaire, which was followed by an anger-inducing situation and then a second mood questionnaire. The results indicated that participants with the "control" goal expressed less anger at Time 2 than did participants for whom the goal of "express" had been activated. This use of activated goal concepts without any awareness is taken as evidence of an efficient, intuitive type of process. These results also support prior findings that preference judgments can occur without conscious cognitive processing. In this sense, immediate feeling may not depend directly on thinking but can occur automatically (Zajonc, 1980).

Although the operation of social-EI can occur quite efficiently through intuitive processing, it does not mean this type of processing will always be effective. People create bad habits out of thoughts and behaviors all the time, and on occasion, intuitive skills can be misapplied. For example, the service provider may see a smiling customer, and only later realize the customer's smile was really an anxious grin. In cases such as these, conscious and deliberate processes are useful in conjunction with intuitive skills in order to unlearn potentially ineffective ways of relating to others, and for controlling and modulating initial assessments of others to correct for inaccurate inferences.

For example, although some aspects of emotion recognition can operate intuitively (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002), some cultural contexts may make recognition challenging because the culture may reinforce display rules in its citizens that foster the reduction of emotion expression when dealing with

strangers (e.g., Matsumoto, HeeYoo, Fontaine, Anguas-Wong, Arriola, & Ataca, 2008), making it harder for those unfamiliar with the context to judge emotions accurately. This issue is akin to that raised earlier in the context of the social context and how at times people will be less readable and predictable to others, regardless of the perceiver's EI ability. With regard to the culture example, in this case, the integration of deliberate social-emotional capabilities allows for emotion recognition to include controlled elements, in that, in addition to intuitive recognition processes, people may also have explicit knowledge about display rules for a specific culture, which can then be used to inform emotion recognition.

However, because deliberate processing tends to be more controlled and linked to limited cognitive resources, such processing should influence emotion recognition only to the extent that people are not cognitively overloaded. This assumption may not hold if people are dealing with cognitive fatigue (e.g., Winkelman, 1994). Similarly, if people are under time pressure, or if they are not motivated to undertake such deliberate processing (cf. Smith & DeCoster, 2000), social-emotional recognition (or control) could be compromised—instead of reserving judgment about the emotion being perceived, for instance, an individual might jump to conclusions and judge inaccurately. In another example, the employee lacking sleep and overwhelmed by the tasks piling up on his desk may not have the cognitive resources to discern the boss' intent (assuming they have little experience with the boss), which could compromise subsequent performance on the job. Similarly, the boss who has been traveling nonstop and putting in 14-hour days is not likely to have the cognitive wherewithal to step back from their distress and take somebody else's perspective, as doing so requires cognitive resources (e.g., Carlson, Moses, & Breton, 2002; Ruby & Decety, 2003).

Overall, the above discussion suggests that people can be flexible and even strategic in how they integrate their social-emotional abilities, playing them off each other to arrive at effective assessments of their social surroundings, but this use of deliberate processing to restrain or inform intuitive processes is restricted by the availability of limited cognitive resources. However, social-emotional abilities can become efficient and automatized through practice, much like other skills. This bodes well for organizations and employees who want to develop their social-EI potential. It suggests that, although work

can be stressful and employees can be fatigued, factors that impact the availability of cognitive resources can be less of a concern because well-practiced skills and abilities can be executed with little need for cognitive resources (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Smith & DeCoster, 2000). In order for this to happen, however, an organization has to explicitly provide its employees regular opportunities for developing and practicing these social-emotional abilities. The only way that skills can become intuitive and automatically implemented is through repeated practice and application. As the lower right-hand quadrant in Table 16.1 indicates, the automatic, egalitarian response of the employee is likely made possible by organizational practices that lead to internalizing those values (i.e., a focus on developing positive organizations). A person could want to be egalitarian and ethical, but if the organizational environment does not support that implicitly or explicitly, those behaviors and skills will not be practiced.¹

Overall then, factors in Assumption 2 that will impact a person's social-EI fall into two related categories: (a) the availability of cognitive resources and (b) the determination of appropriate individual reactions. Recall that, even though a skill can be executed efficiently does not imply appropriateness, as skills at times can be misapplied. In some contexts, automatically triggered reactions might need to be considered more carefully or "shelved" temporarily before acting on them. Many times, the outcomes of intuitive processes represent proposed solutions that must be monitored for their appropriateness, which requires cognitive resources. The level of individual cognitive resources—which different organizational practices can impinge upon—thus allows for various idiosyncrasies in how people manifest their social-EI, but so does the degree to which people practice and make more intuitive some EI reactions over others.

Future Directions

Many questions remain regarding the definition, measurement, and application of social-EI, so we concur with many of our colleagues' previous calls for further study of EI to help address these issues. But to this we would add that what is also needed is more conceptual work that takes the social context seriously, with all its implications, and that provides a model of mental processes, given what is known in the psychological literature. In this vein, we have proposed one approach for doing this. With regard to Assumption 1 of our analysis, we have argued

that social context has the capacity to create inefficiencies in people's EI. Most models of EI are person-centered and assume that the person or perceiver can make sense of situations as a function of their level of EI, but these models rarely consider the possibility that social and relational factors are at work to influence, bias, if not preclude a person's attempts to use their EI. Models of EI need to be more explicit about the interaction of the individuals with their social worlds, and we have argued that one of the most positive implications of positive organizational environments is its potential to constrain, simplify, and make more generous how people make sense of social and emotionally tinged situations.

Our approach also delineates the mental processes that underlie how people exercise EI and the conditions that may impact it. We regard EI to be based generally on two meta-capabilities, social-emotional recognition and control. These, of course, can be broken down further, but in the interest of simplification, these two meta-capabilities provide the most common ground across conceptions of EI. In addition, we regard both social-emotional recognition and control as being implemented through either an intuitive or deliberative process. The former processes are well practiced and can give rise to social-emotional understanding even under conditions that involve time pressure and limited cognitive resources. The latter processes are more reliant on limited cognitive resources, but they can be deployed to monitor and inform the products of intuitive EI. Such a conception adds dynamism, flexibility, and a sense of process (vs. a static EI "score" or assessment) to EI and suggests how context, especially the social context, can interact with these mental processes. We conclude by highlighting directions for future research and questions that should be answered to flesh out the present analysis:

- For us, the person matters but so does the social context. Thus, with regard to the social context, how do organizations that differ in their values, in particular the pursuit of positive organizational values and practices, influence employee EI, independent of what these individuals score on EI assessments? Moreover, how do these features of organizations interact directly with people's EI scores/abilities?
- Related to the above point, how do organizations dominated by a competitive

ethos or low levels of trust influence people's willingness to be "figured out" and predicted, and how does this affect social-emotional recognition and control?

- What organizational practices influence employee cognitive resource levels (e.g., time pressure, fatigue), and how does this state of affairs influence employee flexibility in applying the EI toolkit, especially when the context of social-emotional recognition or control calls for deliberate or conscious approaches?
- In terms of Assumption 2 of the present analysis, what are methods by which to measure intuitive versus deliberate forms of EI abilities? In terms of current EI assessments, how do such measures respond to manipulations that impact cognitive resources, and how do people who score at a certain level of EI on some measurement respond to time pressure or cognitive fatigue?
- What are the most effective ways by which individuals can transfer deliberate EI skills into intuitive ones, and how can organizations support employees in doing this (e.g., "practice" of social-emotional abilities in the workplace; organizational policies that limit threats posed by unmet social needs)?
- Are some intuitive and deliberative processes, or some interactions between the two (e.g., judgment being overwhelmed by intuitive processes), more likely in some contexts than others? Also, when is it better for a person to consider different explanations for individually perceived emotional expressions before rushing to conclusions, and how do positive organizational environments influence this process?
- Finally, when are people who score high on EI apt to act inefficiently in the social realm, and is it possible for a person who is low on some measure of EI to display socially intelligent behavior given environmental supports (e.g., internalization of organization's values)?

Conclusion

The interplay of Assumption 1 and Assumption 2 of our synthesis, along with the interactions possible in our 2 × 2 framework (Assumption 2), are ripe areas for future research. We have mentioned some

possibilities, but there are likely to be many others. It is our hope that, by delving deeper into both the social context and psychology of EI, researchers will have more knowledge at their disposal and guidance to pursue research questions that can ultimately help bridge the promise of EI with POS. Such a bridge can show us how the interplay of individual mental processes applied to interactions and relationships with others can be fostered to support positive social connections to influence organizational and individual performance.

Note

1. Most skills follow the path of explicit practice to automaticity, from being deliberate to becoming more automatic and intuitive. This is not to say that skill acquisition cannot occur implicitly and with little awareness (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Lewicki et al., 1992).

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