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## **The Case for Emotional Intelligence in Organizational Research**

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Since its popularization by Goleman (1995), the concept of emotional intelligence has been the subject of on-going controversy, so it is understandable that the model we proposed, which includes emotional intelligence as a moderator variable, would attract its share of criticism. Thus, while Becker states that he was impressed with the general thrust of our theory, he expresses misgivings about the legitimacy of emotional intelligence in the model. In particular, he questions whether emotional intelligence is sufficiently differentiated from intellectual intelligence to justify its inclusion in organisational behaviour research. Becker's critique centers on two issues. The first point is that emotional intelligence is not sufficiently developed as a construct to enable advances in our understanding of behavior in organizational settings. Second, he questions whether existing measures of emotional intelligence are sufficiently developed. We deal with each of these issues in turn.

The first issue concerns the legitimacy of the emotional intelligence construct. We agree that the construct has been controversial (see Ashkanasy, Härtel, & Daus, 2002), and that some of the more popular literature on emotional intelligence (e.g., Goleman, 1995, 1998) has not always been helpful. But we see this as part of the healthy development of a new construct, which Weick (1989) suggests involves a three-stage process. Weick refers to the first stage as "variation", where "focused imagination" is a principal requirement. Here, scholars debate issues concerning the new construct in a freewheeling fashion. In the second stage, "selection", the new construct is subject to validation testing. Finally, the ultimate adoption or otherwise of a construct depends upon its "retention", or a demonstrated ability to provide parsimonious and credible solutions to real problems.

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We argue that emotional intelligence is at present in Weick's (1989) selection stage, and entering the retention phase, which is where our theory is positioned. In this respect, Sternberg (1985) maintains that three criteria are needed for an intelligence to exist: it should reflect behavior in the real world, it should be purposive or directed towards goals, and it should involve either adaptation to the environment (fluid intelligence) or the automation of high level processes (crystallised intelligence). Based on this definition, and what we know about the construct to date (see Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitareneos, 2001), emotional intelligence fits this definition of intelligence.

In his commentary, Becker notes the importance of general intelligence in determining overall ability. Obviously, cognition is important, but we argue that for too long the emotional dimension has been a neglected variable in organizational behavior. This is the thrust of Ashforth and Humphrey's (1995) argument that work life is intrinsically emotional and value-based (see also Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000). Ashforth and Humphrey posit specifically that rational organisational behaviour often reflects the extent to which organisational members are able to deal with their emotions. This view is also consistent with the understandings emerging from neural psychology that human behaviour cannot be understood fully without reference to underlying emotional dimensions (Damasio, 1994).

Becker also cites Carroll (1993) as an exemplary study of human ability that found no broad mental ability independent of general intelligence. Carroll (1993), however, based his work on the results of factor analyses of the then extant empirical research on human ability. Of course, in the ten years since Carroll's work was completed, there have been great advances in our understanding of the link between emotion and cognition. In this regard, emotional intelligence is appropriately viewed as a new area of research that has potential to increase our

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understanding of intelligence and its role in organizational settings, which captures the broad sense of Sternberg's (1985) definition, and which extends beyond Carroll's (1993) concept of ability.

In his critique of emotional intelligence, Becker alludes to the vague nature of the construct. In effect, he refers to what Weick (1989) would characterize as the variation stage of construct development. We consider that the construct of emotional intelligence has moved beyond this stage now. We make it unequivocally clear that our conceptualisation of emotional intelligence is based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) definition, which Becker concedes is "not bad". We reiterate in this reply that the Mayer and Salovey definition of emotional intelligence is the recognised standard for scholarly discourse. This status is reflected in the inclusion of Mayer, et al. (2001) in the inaugural issue of the new APA journal *Emotion*. Scholars who wish to contribute to the mainstream of literature on emotional intelligence need to be absolutely clear on this point. Like Ulysses, scholars need to protect themselves from the siren calls of the emotional intelligence impostors.

Becker's second point concerns measurement. He cites Davies, Stankov, and Roberts (1998), who claim to have refuted the existence of emotional intelligence as a measurable construct. Davies and his colleagues' study, however, incorporated only some of the early measures of emotional intelligence, including a 10-item vox pop instrument from the Internet that never pretended to be rigorous. Not one of the measures they assessed was based on the more recent Mayer and Salovey (1997) definition. Recent research into measures based on this definition has progressed enormously in the last few years, including ability assessment (e.g., MSCEIT: Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, and Sitaramanos, in press) and self-report (e.g., WEIP: Jordan,

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Ashkanasy, Härtel, & Hooper, 2002). Both of these measures have overcome problems identified by Becker in his critique.

A more fundamental issue is that Becker implies that the lack of a definitive measure of a construct precludes its use in theory development, as the theory would be difficult to test. This argument simply does not hold up. Many of the best established measures of organizational behaviour constructs continue to attract controversy, such as that surrounding measures of organizational commitment, viz. Allen & Meyer (1990) vs. Mowday, Steers, & Porter (1979). Indeed, if we reflect on the intelligence research that Becker holds up as exemplary, we discover that, although this research is more mature by many decades than emotional intelligence research, debates over the most appropriate means to measure IQ still rage, with new measures being developed and old measures updated.

In conclusion, we have addressed Becker's two points of concern about the legitimacy of emotional intelligence. Becker's first point questions the theoretical legitimacy of emotional intelligence. Our model, however, was based on the Mayer and Salovey (1997) definition, which is now recognised by scholars working in the field of emotions as the standard. Becker's second point is that theorising is not appropriate unless measurement issues are first resolved. If this were the case, then many of the major theories in organizational behavior would never have been proposed. Clearly, Becker has raised some important points of criticism in respect of clarifying emotional intelligence and its impact on organizational behavior, and we welcome further debate on these issues. Indeed, such debate is a hallmark of the vigorous and growing research interest in the role that emotions and emotional perceptions play in organizational settings.

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