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INSPIRING THE WONDERMENT: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

By

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A Professional Project submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,
Marquette University,
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master in Leadership Studies

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ABSTRACT

INSPIRING THE WONDERMENT: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Kurt H. Gering, B.S.

Marquette University, 2012

The purpose of this research was to shed insight on the degree to which instructor Emotional Intelligence (EI) may moderate the student/teacher relationship. Interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data on the experience of several students at a private university in the Midwest. The findings suggest that there appears to be a positive relationship between instructor EI and a positive academic experience by the student. Further research on this topic may indicate that institutions may also benefit from incorporating the tracking and evaluating of EI in their faculty body to enhance academic success student.

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to my mother, whose support during the process was a constant source of vigor and encouragement, and to my father, who passed away quite suddenly on December 17th, 2003. Dad, I reached the destination, but the journey continues.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Kurt H. Gering, B.S.

There are so many who have guided and compelled me onward during this process, that I would be remiss without giving proper credit and expressing my eternal gratitude. I am thankful to have known Dr. Brenda Stoelb, along with other many colleagues and friends at the University of Miami, who taught me the value of persistence. I would also like to recognize Dr. Patrick Jung, who taught the first college class I took as an adult and sparked a passion for lifelong learning that I will forever be grateful. I would also like to thank the faculty at Marquette University, including Dr. Maureen McAvoy, Rev. Michael Class, S. J., Cheryl Coan, C. J. Hribal, Jim McNamera, Leslee Ruscitti and Brian Truka, who nurtured this passion along the way. In one way or another you have all contributed to the person I have become today and I am deeply humbled to call you colleagues.

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Inspiring the Wonderment: Emotional Intelligence in Higher Education

Introduction

According to a recent U. S. Department of Education study, a mere 60 percent of learners who begin their education at a four-year institution will have completed their degree after six years (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). This rate becomes even more alarming as the age of the incoming freshman increases, to the point where only 45 percent of those beginning school after the age of 24 will have completed their degree after six years (Johnson, Rochkind, Ott, & DuPont, 2009). These shocking rates of graduation are among the lowest of any developed countries and many experts and civic leaders see it as a threat to U.S. competitiveness in the international marketplace. In light of these remarkable statistics, the Obama Administration has emphasized that education is key to the country's ability to compete globally and has recently laid out a vision for America to once again lead the world in the proportion of college graduates by the year 2020 (White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2010). Accordingly, recent statistics have shown a dramatic increase in the number of students applying for admission to college; unfortunately, however, there has also been a concomitant increase in recidivism once students have begun their pursuit of a college degree.

Considerable research exists in the literature as to what may moderate student success in college, including the role Emotional Intelligence (EI) may play in the achievement of graduation. However, while the literature is fairly abundant with studies investigating the relationship of a student's EI and academic success, there is little present involving those most involved with their academic experience, namely, class instructors. Indeed, there exists a significant gap in the literature concerning the role instructor EI plays in moderating the student-

teacher relationship; yet this information is vitally significant since, in seeking to fulfill President Obama's goal for 2020, maintaining high retention rates is critical to achieving this success as well as maintaining the solvency of an academic institution. The purpose of this research therefore, will be to investigate the scholastic experiences of several college graduates in an effort to answer the research question, namely to what degree do these students perceive that the emotional intelligence of their instructor moderated their class experience.

Literature Review

This research seeks to investigate the degree to which students perceive the emotional intelligence of their instructors may have moderated their academic experience. The literature on academic learners is full and replete with research on what influences students to complete a college degree. Additionally, much inquiry is present in the way of illuminating why students fail to complete their degree once they have begun their studies. However, as previously stated, while the literature is fairly abundant with studies investigating the relationship of a student's EI and academic success, there is little present involving the individual most responsible for their academic success, namely, the class instructor. Because of this deficiency in information, the following studies are submitted for review. They seek to provide critical insight into how the concept of EI has emerged and provide a background of current research useful in evaluating the research question of this investigation, namely; "To what degree, if at all, does the EI of the class instructor may moderate the student/teacher relationship?" It is important to note that the results of each of the studies listed have limitations related to the size and nature of the sample used. In addition, research with different religious views, sexual orientation, racial background, age category, gender and ethnic heritage may influence findings.

Motivational Factors

In recent years, exploratory efforts seeking to distill some of motivational factors of the student learner have been the focal point of increasing efforts by university administrators, investigators and researchers. In 2009, for example, a study commissioned by the American Enterprise Institute examined this very issue in an effort to determine what causal factors might be moderating this shocking recidivism rate. In tracking 1.2 million freshmen who began college at a four-year institution of higher learning in the United States, fewer than 60 percent had graduated from college after six years of attendance. In addition, the researchers found graduation rates varied widely from institution to institution, with a few select colleges achieving nearly perfect scores, while others were maintaining graduation rates in the single digits. This vast discrepancy in graduation rates would seem to suggest that many of these institutions are not serving their students well and that perhaps, in addition to the student, there may be environmental and outside influencers that determine whether students will complete their degree (Hess, Schneider, Carey & Kelly, 2009).

Indeed, recent research by Arum and Roksa (2011) suggests that there may be serious problems with the instruction higher education is delivering to its youthful clientele. In assessing 2,300 students of traditional college age enrolled at a range of four-year colleges and universities, they uncovered remarkable deficiencies in how much students reported that they are actually learning in college. For example, after two years in college nearly half of all students demonstrated any significant increase in learning, as measured by the Collegiate Learning Assessment, which is designed to measure gains in critical thinking, analytic reasoning and other skills taught at college, during various points of their college education. While that figure drops to 36 percent after four years, the information presented would seem to add validity to previous

research that the student alone is not the sole determinant of graduation rates (Arum and Roksa, 2011).

While admittedly there are significant differences in graduation rates amongst institutions, the underlying reasons contributing to these statistics lay with the individual student. Ultimately, the question remains as to why one student completes a degree while another gives up and drops out of college. Could it be that the stress of college is too much for some students? One would anticipate that for most undergraduate students, the stresses of life at such a young age would be almost negligible. However, recent studies have suggested that stress events are common among college students, and in fact, occur with some frequency. As Balk (2008) points out, “At any one time, 22 to 30 percent of undergraduates are in the first 12 months of grieving over a family member or friend” (p. 4).

Building on the work of Balk (2008), Cox and Reason (2011) tracked 2,600 Black, White, Asian and Latino students for six years, comparing each ethnic group’s graduation rate with their frequency of self-reported stressful life events. Their resulting analysis showed that for each ethnic group evaluated, graduation rates dropped sharply with each reported additional stressful life event. In addition, the results were similar across gender lines. Little statistical differences were seen between men and women (Cox & Reason, 2011).

In an effort to expand this body of research, the Public Agenda Foundation along with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation sought to further this exploration by interviewing 614 students aged 22 to 30 who had started their college coursework but had not received a degree. The participants were asked a series of questions regarding why they left school and what led to their decision. The views, experiences and responses of each participant were recorded and compared to those students who had successfully completed a degree program. The outcomes

showed that the main reason students listed for leaving school was largely financial. Specifically, students stated that their economic obligations required they work and go to school at the same time. Ultimately, the stress of doing both became too much to endure and they were compelled to drop out. In fact, maintaining this delicate balance between work and school was cited more often than the combined reasons of tuition costs, access to education, or failure to realize the importance of a degree combined (Johnson et al., 2009).

History

In studies addressing Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and EI, Sternberg (1998) notes, "There has to be much more to school performance than IQ" (p. 14). In addition, another researcher has pointed out that multiple components, in addition to IQ, are necessary to predict successful performance in individuals (Gardner, 1983; 1989; 1991; 1993; 1993b). Thus, it seems reasonable that additional influencers exist that may play a significant role in moderating a student's academic success.

As much of this inquiry was taking place in the past two decades, one of the leading contemporary theories to emerge and achieve prominence is the concept of emotional intelligence. Since the early 1900s, researchers have measured intelligence and recognized the importance of "social intelligence" (Thorndike, 1920). The first formal mention of the term "Emotional Intelligence" (EI) appeared in 1966, by Leuner in the German publication *Praxis der Kinderpsychologie und Kinderpsychiatrie*. Leuner suggested that women who experience early separation from their mothers are more likely to reject their social roles at an early age. Leuner proposed that as a result, this cohort of women had a low EI compared to their contemporaries and suggested a prescription of Lysergic Acid Diethylamide, better known as LSD, as treatment (Leuner, 1966).

Nearly 20 years later Wayne Payne (1985) introduced the concept of EI to the English research community in an unpublished doctoral thesis, “A Study of Emotion: Developing Emotional Intelligence.” In his research, Payne proffers that the mass suppression of emotion throughout the civilized world has stifled growth emotionally, leading individuals down a path of emotional ignorance. In subsequent years, work from many researchers, including such notables as Jack Meyer, Peter Salovey, Reuven Bar-On and others have appeared in peer-reviewed journals and the popular press. However, as noted by Zeidner, Roberts & Matthews (2002), “Daniel Goleman has clearly been the most influential in bringing this concept to the masses” (p. 10).

In his seminal work *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), Goleman asserted that EI be viewed as a wide array of competencies and skills that drive leadership performance. Goleman’s initial definition proposes that individuals are born with a general emotional intelligence that determines their potential for learning emotional competencies. According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence includes “. . . abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope” (p.34).

Contemporary Research and Measurement

In recent years, Goleman has furthered his initial work by revising his theory to a model encompassing four main EI constructs. The first of these is self-awareness, or the ability to read one's emotions and recognize their impact, while using “gut” feelings to guide decisions. The next construct is self-management, involving the control of one's emotions and impulses and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The third construct is social awareness, or the ability to sense, understand and react to others' emotions while comprehending social networks. The

final construct involves relationship management, or the ability to inspire, influence, and develop others while managing conflict (Goleman, 1998).

While Goleman may have been the first to popularize the concept of EI to the mainstream public, it remained for other researchers to further its genesis into science through empirical research. One of the most influential individuals in this regard has been Reuven Bar-On, who developed the first operational instrument to assess EI (Bar-On, 1997; Bar-On & Parker, 2000). The Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) is a self-reporting instrument designed to measure five broad subtypes of EI, including intrapersonal intelligence, interpersonal intelligence adaptability, stress management and mood. Bar-On has conducted a series of tests to indicate strong validity estimates and statistical reliability in North America and other samples worldwide (Zeidner et al., 2002).

Another instrument used to measure EI in widespread use is the Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MSCEIT) developed by Jack Meyer, David Caruso and Peter Salovey in the early 20th Century. According to Meyer, Caruso and Salovey (1999), EI should not be viewed from an abilities perspective, but rather seen as an intelligence system for processing information and should be measured as a construct distinct from existing personality dimensions. The MSCEIT is composed of four areas, including emotional perception/identification, emotional facilitation of thought, emotional understanding and emotional management (Zeidner et al., 2002).

Over the years, further research has suggested that EI represents a set of dispositional attributes (i.e., self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy, and relationship management) for monitoring one's own and others' feelings, beliefs, and internal states in order to provide useful information to guide one's and others' thinking and action

(Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). An individual who possesses the emotional management aspect of EI considers the needs of others over his or her personal needs (Goleman, 1995). An individual who possesses the emotional management aspect of EI uses emotionally expressive language and non-verbal cues associated with transformational/charismatic leaders (Salovey, Hess & Mayer, 1993). As a result, by providing followers with purpose and meaning, delivered in an emotionally expressive manner, an individual may inspirationally motivate followers to perform beyond expectations (Shamir, 1991).

A growing body of interdisciplinary research seems to suggest that there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and achievement, productivity, leadership, and personal health (Goleman, 1995, 1998; Epstein, 1998; Sternberg, 1996; Weisenger, 1998; Nelson and Low, 1999, 2003, 2005). In addition, research has suggested emotional management and relationship management may promote positive affects in followers, resulting in broader levels of thinking and enhanced capacity for self-learning (Greenspan, 1989). Indeed, a good mood may facilitate an individual's intellectually stimulating behaviors aimed at solving old problems in nontraditional ways. Finally, empathy may be required for transformational leaders who display individually considerate behaviors to foster individuation, mentoring, and development of followers (Bass, 1998).

EI Research in the Academic Environment

While the majority of research regarding EI has mainly investigated the leader/follower relationship outside of academia, inquiry within the realm of education has largely focused on the degree to which a student's level of EI moderates academic success. For example, studies have suggested that EI may be positively related to a high school student's academic and social success (Gil-Olarte Márquez et al., 2006; Hogan et al., 2010). In addition, some studies involving

undergraduate students have seemed to indicate that EI may be positively related to GPA (Jaeger & Eagan, 2007; Barchard, 2003) and positively related to academic success (Jaeger, 2003). In addition, research has indicated that EI may be correlated with GPA in graduate students (Jaeger, 2003). Furthering this research in higher education, undergraduate students in the social sciences and liberal arts score significantly higher in EI than their technical science counterparts (Sanchez-Ruiz, Perez-Gonzales, & Petrides, 2010).

While much of the body of work associated with EI relates to the leader/follower relationship within the business community, there is some research present in the literature relating to the educational environment. Studies on teachers have indicated significant relationships between managing emotions and occupational burnout (Mendes, 2002), and the inclusion of instruction among beginning teacher candidates, enhancing the emotional self-awareness of teachers (Justice & Espinosa, 2007). It is, therefore, certainly reasonable to assume that a similar relationship may exist between the leader of a class and their follower students. The research into this inquiry is minimal, but a handful of work suggests that instructor EI may moderate the student learning experience (Murray, 1990; Stein & Book, 2000; Watkin, 2000). In addition, recent doctoral research has seemed to link emotional intelligence with teaching effectiveness (Hwang, 2007) while others have seemed to indicate that teachers who scored high on EI scales were not perceived by their students to have displayed emotionally intelligent behavior in the class (Boyd, 2005).

Such contributions seem to suggest that we have yet to completely understand the role that the emotionally intelligent instructor plays from the student perspective. Do teachers with high levels of emotional intelligence make better instructors? This study seeks to further explicate the experience of the students' themselves, through their own description of the class

environment and teaching practice of individuals who delivered academic content, describing whether an element of EI was infused into their class.

Methodology

This research sought to investigate the student perceptions of the emotional intelligence exhibited by their teachers in the class; the four constructs suggested by Goleman (1998) formed the basis of the study. The first of these is self-awareness, or the ability to read one's emotions and recognize their impact, while using 'gut' feelings to guide their decisions. The next construct is self-management, involving the control of one's emotions and impulses and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The third construct is social awareness, or the ability to sense, understand and react to others' emotions while comprehending social networks. The final construct involves relationship management, or the ability to inspire, influence, and develop others while managing conflict (Goleman, 1998).

After much consideration, it was determined that a qualitative research method in the form of a case study would best suit this investigation, especially in light of the fact that it would record the experiences of students who graduated from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As Creswell (1998) points out, ". . . a case study is an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (p.61).

However, conducting a case study is not without inherent danger and there are significant pitfalls to be avoided. The case study method has on occasion been regarded as weak when compared to more traditional positivistic quantitative social science methodology. Yet, it should be pointed out that case studies are not entirely without merit and qualitative research, in general,

is increasingly more common in the academic community, and continues to be used extensively in traditional disciplines such as psychology and history, as well as public-sector fields such as urban planning and management science (Yin, 2003).

Indeed, in some circumstances, the case study continues to be regarded by many as the preferred framework for a number of investigations. As Yin (2003) points out, “In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p.1). In the final analysis, by using the case study approach for this effort, the investigation was able to focus on a single bounded system (college students completing their degrees at one university) while at the same time utilize a number of sources (college students who completed their degrees) to provide a rich source of information.

Sample and Data Collection

The sample and data collection used in this investigation generally mirrored the principles and techniques of a focused interview, wherein a respondent is interviewed once for a relatively short period of time. In this investigation, participants were interviewed for approximately one hour and a specific set of questions was used to provide structure and guide the conversations and responses. Particular care was taken to ensure that the dialogue appeared as an open discussion, rather than a structured inquiry, to ensure the conversation remained open-ended and maintained fluidity. In addition, special attention was paid in the construction of the questions, to appear moderately naïve to the subject matter and facilitate the creation of an environment necessary to allow the participant to provide fresh insight into the questions posed (Merton, Fiske & Kendall, 1990).

In selecting the participants for this research, purposive convenience sampling was used for ease of access to the researcher and in consideration of the short timeline for the completion of the research. Four (two female) students, who had completed their graduate or undergraduate degrees at Marquette University within the last five years, took part in this project. The mean age of the participants was 38 years and the range was from 24 to 53 years old. The ethnic makeup of the participants used in this research consisted of two Hispanic-Americans and two Caucasian-Americans. Approval for this project was received from the Institutional Review Board at Marquette University (Appendix: A).

Data collection for this investigation was conducted through separate in-person interviews with each of the four participants. The location of each interview was based on the personal preference of each participant, though all were located on the campus of Marquette University in a subdued atmosphere conducive to two-way conversation. Prior to the date of each interview, all participants were sent an email with a consent form (Appendix: B) asking for their acknowledgement that the conversation would be recorded, transcribed and kept strictly confidential. In addition, on the day of the interview each of the participants were electronically mailed a copy of the interview protocol (Appendix: C) to allow sufficient time to pause and reflect on the questions posed before the interview took place. A complete listing of interview protocol questions asked of each participant can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1
Interview Protocol Questions

Number	Question
1	What can you tell me about your familiarity with Emotional Intelligence?
2	Do you perceive yourself to have a high level of Emotional Intelligence?
3	What role do you feel Emotional Intelligence plays in your interactions with others?
4	What role do you feel Emotional Intelligence played while you were in college?
5	How do you feel the Emotional Intelligence of your fellow students moderated the learning experience?
6	How do you feel the Emotional Intelligence of your instructor moderated the learning experience?

Data Analysis

According to Yin (2003), when using a qualitative case study approach to investigative research, the primary sources for such investigations are documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artifacts. Aligned with this approach, through the interview process, as Rubin and Rubin (2005) note, “. . . one can understand experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate” (p. 3). As such, the interview protocol questions used in this study were asked in an open-ended manner and organized in a fashion to allow the emergence of themes, if present.

In addition to interviews, observation is one of the primary methods for collecting data in qualitative research. At its most basic level, observation is the act of detecting phenomena, through the five senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight and recording them for later review and analysis (Angrosino, 2007). The primary researcher in this investigation

assumed the role of what Creswell (2007) describes as the complete participant, meaning the researcher was fully engaged with the participants during the interview process. As such, research notes were taken during each interview to serve as a collection of thoughts, reactions, questions and pondered musings after each interview during the course of this inquiry. These notes had the overall effect of providing an experiential and historical record of the investigative activities and served as a rich resource for further reflection.

To supplement the handwritten notes of the primary researcher, during each of the interview sessions, responses from participants were recorded and saved in an electronic file format for assessment. Once each file had been reviewed for clarity, each interview was transcribed for further review and analysis. To ensure accuracy, participants were emailed a copy of their respective transcripts for member checking and possible revisions for accuracy. In all cases, transcriptions were confirmed by each participant to be a true representation of the interview dialogue and no revisions were necessary.

As Creswell (2007) points out, “Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables or a discussion” (p. 180). In an effort to distill the most clarity, once the data had been transcribed, the responses were organized in a matrix by each question and sorted by participant. Once this data was reviewed, it was noted that several key themes emerged and these have been highlighted in Table 2.

Table 2
Summary of Responses to Interview Protocol Questions

Question	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
What can you tell me about your familiarity with EI?	Taken classes where it was covered	Somewhat	Taken classes where it was covered	Familiar with
Do you perceive yourself to have a high level of EI?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
What role do you feel EI plays in your interactions with others?	Plays an important role at home and work	Plays a big role in the way I interact with people	Important role in influencing others and managing conflict	Plays a very large role in interactions with others
What role do you feel EI played while you were in college?	Increased perception of others needs in group projects	Helped in the self-regulation of stress management	Relationships in college made me more aware of EI	Played a huge role in college
How do you feel the EI of your fellow students moderated the learning experience?	Students with high EI seemed to get better grades	Students with high EI seemed to do better than average learners	Students with low EI seemed to struggle academically	Played a significant role on group assignments

How do you feel the	Faculty with high	Took classes	The best	Plays a
EI of your instructor	EI were better	because an	professors	significant
moderated the	communicators	instructor with	seemed to have	role in the
learning experience?		high EI was	a very high	learning
		teaching it	level of EI	environment

In addition to completing the aforementioned response matrix, an exhaustive review and keyword search was performed on all of the transcribed data. After further breakdown, a series of themes began to emerge and grow apparent, a summary of which is represented in Table 3.

Table 3

Key Themes Presented

Key Theme 1	All of the participants in this study were at least familiar with the concept of EI and a majority had taken classes with the concept of EI integrated into the coursework.
Key Theme 2	The majority of the participants in this study described themselves as having a high level of EI.
Key Theme 3	All of the participants in this study believed EI plays an important role in their interactions with others.
Key Theme 4	All of the participants believed that EI played a significant role in their college experience.
Key Theme 5	Overall, there was congruence among participants as to the role they felt EI played amongst their fellow students. Two participants noted that students with high EI seemed to do better academically, while another noted students with low EI seemed to be struggle.
Key Theme 6	All of the participants believed the EI of the instructor significantly contributed to the teaching effectiveness of the instructor.

A review of the responses to the first research question, which asked participants to share their familiarity with EI, suggests that all of the participants in this investigation had at least some familiarity with EI, often through classes or seminars attended. One participant

commented, “In my BA degree in communications, some of the textbooks dealt with EI and some of the seminars I have attended have dealt with issues closely related to EI.” Another noted, “I actually have the Goleman book, but haven’t had a chance to read it much.”

The second research question asked participants whether they perceived themselves as having a high level of Emotional Intelligence. In response to this inquiry, three of the four responses paralleled that of one participant, who noted, “I think I am on the higher end of emotional intelligence.” However, one participant was a bit uncertain, commenting, “Emotional Intelligence is a fairly new term that I have been introduced to and am just beginning to learn about.”

The third interview question asked participants to reflect upon the role they felt EI plays in their interactions with others. In each case, the participants in this study believed emotional intelligence plays an important role in their interactions with others. One participant commented, “I believe emotional intelligence plays a very large role,” while another noted “EI plays a big role in the way I interact with people, both professionally and in the business world.”

The fourth question asked the participants to consider what role they felt EI played while they were in college. All of the participants believed that EI played a significant role in their college experience. One participant commented, “It played a huge role in college,” while another noted, “It helped in the self-regulation of stress management.” Among the participant responses to the fifth question, overall there was congruence as to the role they felt EI played amongst their fellow students. Two respondents noted that students with high EI seemed to do better academically, with one observing that students with high EI, “. . . were much better than average students.” Another spoke of a fellow student with low EI, who seemed to, “. . . have a few problems academically and has since had problems finding full time employment over the last

couple of years.” Perhaps a third participant summarized the responses best, when they stated, “Strong people in EI had better grades and just the opposite for those that were weak in EI.”

A review of the responses to the final research question, which asked participants how they felt the EI of their instructor moderated their learning experience, indicates that all of the participants in this study felt that the EI of the instructor significantly contributed to the learning experience in college. As one participant commented:

Lower EI instructors did not seem to grasp the frustration of the class with students. And in that sense, it tells me they have a lower EI because they are not picking up on those signals that students are not understanding the material, or they are not happy with the selection of the material or the way it is being taught or the teacher’s performance. And if they are not grabbing those hints out there, then it points to me as being a low EI and so it correlates to an unproductive class.

Another commented “I feel that I retained more information and became more motivated to work harder and learn more from those professors that I believe may have a higher EI than those of my other professors.” A third participant remarked:

Faculty members that had a stronger EI were some of the stronger communicators. They were delivering the information around the course in a method that went beyond just the technical information. They were finding a way to connect it with the class.

Data Verification

According to Gay and Airasian (2000), observer bias and the observer effect can represent significant threats to the validity of interview studies. Observer bias refers to the injection of personal attitudes and beliefs of the researcher into the interpretation of results, to the

point where she or he may favor one participant over another. The observer effect suggests that participants' responses may be affected by the mere presence of the researcher and accordingly, they may alter their responses (Gay and Airasian, 2000). As a scholar who perceives that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in our lives, the researcher recognized that these biases had the potential to guide the interview and as such, strict adherence to the interview protocol questions (Appendix C) was maintained.

“In qualitative research, verification refers to the mechanisms used during the process of research to incrementally contribute to ensuring reliability and validity and, thus, the rigor of the study” (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002, p. 9). Thus, in an effort to establish rigor, improve validity and reduce bias, during the course of this investigation, a research journal was kept to serve as a collection of thoughts, reactions, questions and reflections during the course of this inquiry. A journal such as this has the overall effect of providing an experiential and historical record of the study and the chronicled activities contribute to the overall credibility and integrity of this research project (Creswell, 2007).

However, while such activities can provide invaluable information for post-hoc analysis, there still may exist a lacking. The framework for verification, which includes establishing confirmability, and, thus ensuring rigor, needs to be rooted within the qualitative research process itself. As such, the investigator in this research carefully made use of the strategies that Morse et al. (2002) note, which are, “. . . verification strategies that insure both reliability and validity of data are activities such as methodological coherence, sampling sufficiency, developing a dynamic relationship between sampling, data collection and analysis, thinking theoretically and theory development” (p. 11).

As suggested then, in addition to maintaining a research journal, methodological coherence was maintained by making sure the research question was prudently aligned with the methodology chosen and data analysis used. Sampling was entirely appropriate for this study and consisted entirely of participants who had received their college degree within the last five years, and thus as a result had clear and present knowledge of the questions posed to them. In addition, the entirety of the participant interviews were conducted within a two-week period, ensuring continuity between data collection and analysis. As Morse et al. (2002) point out, “This pacing and the iterative interaction between data and analysis is the essence of attaining reliability and validity” (p. 12).

Discussion

As humanity moves forward in the early dawn of a new millennium, it is difficult to envision a world that does not involve interacting with others in some form or another. In centuries past, the relationship of how leaders interact with a group of individuals has been a source of great interest for scientists and philosophers alike (Fiedler & Chemers, 1974). Initial work by researchers in the early Twentieth Century viewed leadership as a trait of birthright, similar to the color of one’s eyes, height or the size of one’s shoe. In subsequent decades, however, researchers shifted focus and began to concentrate on the leader’s behavior as a key performance indicator.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the scholastic experiences of several college graduates and explore the role they perceive the emotional intelligence of their leader in the class played in their collegiate experience. While Salovey and Mayer (1990) were among the first to conduct important research into how EI may contribute to an individual’s personality and

cognition, it remained for Daniel Goleman (1995) to popularize the concept of EI to the mainstream public. Yet, even with widespread popularity, EI has remained relatively unknown within the realm of academia. As Walker (2001) notes, “The population Goleman originally anticipated would gravitate towards emotional intelligence was the education system; however, business seems to bring the majority of interest to the field, which has led to the development of measuring tools to gauge emotional intelligence” (p. 97).

Undoubtedly research into EI as it presents itself in the class is in its relative infancy, with few studies present. However, it should be noted that the information obtained in this researcher’s investigation, closely aligned with what more numerous studies regarding the traditional leader-follower relationship have shown. These investigations suggest that EI represents a set of dispositional attributes (i.e., self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy, and relationship management) for monitoring one’s own and others’ feelings, beliefs, and internal states, in order to provide useful information to guide one’s own as well as others’ thinking and actions (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

In addition, a growing body of interdisciplinary research seems to indicate that there is a strong relationship between emotional intelligence and achievement, productivity, leadership, and personal health (Goleman, 1995, 1998; Epstein, 1998; Sternberg, 1996; Weisenger, 1998; Nelson and Low, 2003, 2005). Furthermore, research has suggested emotional management and relationship management may promote positive affect in followers, resulting in broader levels of thinking and enhanced capacity for self-learning (Greenspan, 1989). Indeed, a good mood may facilitate an individual’s intellectually stimulating behaviors aimed at solving old problems in nontraditional ways. Finally, empathy may be required for transformational leaders who display

individually considerate behaviors to foster individuation, mentoring, and development of followers (Bass, 1998).

While much of the body of work associated with EI relates to the leader/follower relationship, the progenitor of this research was that it was reasonable to assume that a similar relationship may exist between the leader of a class and their follower students. The first research question asked participants to share their familiarity with EI and the majority stated they were very familiar with the concept. This level of familiarity was not entirely unexpected to the researcher, since the concept of EI was popularized with the mainstream public nearly 20 years ago by Daniel Goleman (1995).

The second research question asked participants whether they perceived themselves as having a high level of Emotional Intelligence. In response to this inquiry, three of the four participants characterized themselves as having a high level of EI. The fact that 75% of the participants believed that they had high levels of EI was entirely unexpected and would seem to suggest that these individuals may be better at perceiving the EI of others, especially their instructors. However, as observed by Boyd (2005), a student possessing high levels of EI does not seem to correlate with being able to correctly perceive the emotional intelligence of their instructor.

The third interview question asked participants to reflect upon the role they felt EI plays in their interactions with others. In each case, the participants in this study believed emotional intelligence plays an important role in their interactions with others. These responses were not entirely unexpected to the researcher, given that the majority of the participants stated they had received education in EI and considered themselves to possess a high level of emotional intelligence.

The fourth question asked the participants to consider what role they felt EI played while they were in college. All of the participants believed that EI played a significant role in their college experience. Among the participant responses to the fifth question, which queried how they felt EI moderated the learning experience of their fellow students, there was congruence as to the role they felt EI played amongst their fellow students. The responses to the fourth and fifth were not entirely unexpected, given that all of the participants previously, in response to the second question, felt that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in their interactions with others. Again, though, it should be noted that accurate student assessment of instructor EI is not necessarily always accurate (Boyd, 2005).

A review of the responses to the final research question, which asked participants how they felt the EI of their instructor moderated their learning experience, indicates that all of the participants in this study felt that the EI of the instructor significantly contributed to the learning experience in college. The strong belief that all of the participants felt that the EI of the instructor strongly moderated their learning experience was not unexpected, given that all of them previously stated they felt EI plays an important role in their life and during their college years. What was a bit surprising to this researcher was the emphatic degree to which they thought so. An instructor who was perceived as possessing a high level of emotional intelligence not only seemed to be favored by the participants, but several commented that they actually motivated them more and in one case, compelled a student to take additional classes taught by that instructor.

In summary, a review of the findings of the investigation this researcher conducted suggests that an instructor's EI keenly influenced student satisfaction and motivation when taking a class. The findings of this investigation closely align with work that indicates that

instructor EI may moderate the student learning experience (Murray, 1990; Stein & Book, 2000; Watkin, 2000). In addition, recent doctoral research has seemed to link emotional intelligence with teaching effectiveness (Hwang, 2007).

Limitations

One of the limitations of this work is the unique difference between the sample population used and that which is present in the literature. In this study, participants were alumni of Marquette University, which may attract a specific type of learner, such as those seeking a Catholic, Jesuit education rather than seeking education from a public institution of higher learning. Thus, there exists the potential for the introduction of participant bias in the data and as a result the possibility for the data to be skewed.

A second limitation with this study is related to the teacher population the participants were asked to assess and reflect upon. Participants were asked to reflect on their teaching experience as a whole, without regard to identifying gender or stating years of teaching experience in the class. This information might have the effect of skewing participant responses, since previous research by Goleman (1995) has seemed to indicate that women generally have higher levels of EI and an investigation by Mendes (2002) suggests that an instructor's EI may directly be related to years of experience, or that EI improves with age and maturity (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999).

A third limitation of this research is that teachers possessing a high level of emotional intelligence may or may not choose to display these qualities while in the class. In a like manner, students may be able to correctly perceive these attributes in their teachers or they may not. However, this inquiry would seem to indicate that at least on some level, there appears to be a

positive relationship between student perception of their instructor's EI and overall student satisfaction with the instructor. Future studies may wish to account for this through the use of formal testing of instructor EI and comparison with student perception.

A final limitation of this research is associated with the interview format used in this investigation. While all interviews were transcribed into written documents, as Yin (2003) points out, “. . . the interviews should always be considered verbal reports only. As such, they are subject to the common problems of bias, poor recall and poor or inaccurate articulation” (p. 92). Future research should attempt to employ a more diverse sample from institutions outside of Marquette University, preferably outside of the Midwest too, and corroborate data collected with information obtained from other sources.

Conclusion

While it has been noted that the field of EI is relatively new and thus not without its detractors, this research suggests that a better understanding is needed of precisely to what effect instructor EI may moderate the student learning experience. Some research suggests that it is possible for an individual to raise their level of EI (Bar-On & Parker, 2000; Walker, 2001); thus designing programs that develop aspects of instructor EI may enhance students' academic performance and as such, researchers and educators must further examine if instructor EI and academic performance are related. Additional research using a broader sample should seek to corroborate this, and if similar results are observed, strategies for intervention developed to palliate this dependency. In addition, findings from such research may be useful to a broad audience of teaching professionals, such as teaching assistants, instructional coaches and corporate trainers.

According to the US Department of Education (2002), less than half of freshman students beginning college will complete their college degree after six years of study. This rate is among the lowest of any developed countries and many business experts and civic leaders see it as a considerable threat to U.S. competitiveness in the international marketplace. To turn this around, higher education needs to closely scrutinize this crisis and determine clear remedies for mitigation. As Littky and Grabelle (2004) note, “Teaching and learning are about problem solving. Education is the process by which you put teachers and learners in the best possible environment to do this together” (p.16). Doing so will admittedly require a significant coordinated effort, however perhaps the best prescription for this scholastic malady may lay in Edmund Burke’s oft quoted aphorism, that “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing” (as cited in Bandura, 2002, p. 13).

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APPENDIX A: IRB Approval Letter

June 19, 2012

Mr. Kurt Gering
Professional Studies

Dear Mr. Gering:

Thank you for submitting your protocol number HR-2436 titled, "*Emotional Intelligence in Higher Education*." On June 19, 2012, the Marquette University Institutional Review Board granted exempt status for this protocol under Exemption Category #2: Educational Tests, Surveys, Interviews, or Observations.

Your IRB approved informed consent form is enclosed with this letter. Use the stamped copies of this form when recruiting research participants. Each research participant should receive a copy of the stamped consent form for their records.

You may proceed with your research. Your protocol has been granted exempt status as submitted. Any changes to your protocol affecting participant risk must be requested in writing by submitting an IRB Protocol Amendment Form which can be found here:

<http://www.marquette.edu/researchcompliance/research/irbforms.html>. These changes must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before being initiated, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the human subjects. If there are any adverse events, please notify the Marquette University IRB immediately.

Please submit an IRB Final Report Form once this research project is complete. Submitting this form allows the Office of Research Compliance to close your file.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,



Amanda J. Ahrndt, RN, MS, MSN, CIM,
CIP IRB Manager

cc: Dr. Christopher Okunseri, IRB
Chair Dr. Jay Caulfield,
Professional Studies Mr. Carl
Wainscott, Graduate School

Enclosure
AA/rr

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY
AGREEMENT OF CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Emotional Intelligence in Higher Education
Kurt H. Gering
College of Professional Studies

You have been invited to participate in this research study. Before you agree to participate, it is important that you read and understand the following information. Participation is completely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this research study is to conduct a qualitative investigation into the attitudes of students regarding the emotional intelligence of instructors. You will be one of approximately 25 participants in this research study.

PROCEDURES: A single one-hour, face-to-face interview will be conducted on campus with each participant, wherein responses will be recorded in a written format, collated and analyzed for themes. For confidentiality purposes, your name will not be recorded.

DURATION: Your participation will consist of a single, one-hour interview.

RISKS: There is minimal risk to the participant, other than perhaps what one would encounter in everyday life.

BENEFITS: There are no direct benefits to the participants. However, possible benefits to society include a better understanding of how EI moderates the student/instructor relationship in Higher Education.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All information you reveal in this study will be kept strictly confidential. All your data will be assigned an arbitrary code number rather than using your name or other information that could identify you as an individual. When the results of the study are published, you will not be identified by name.

Data will be stored on the Primary Investigator's (PI) personal computer and both the computer and files will be password protected. The data will be destroyed by shredding paper documents and deleting electronic files five years after the completion of the study. Your research records may be inspected by the Marquette University Institutional Review Board or its designees, (and (as allowable by law) state and federal agencies.



VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION: Participating in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled by contacting the PI, Kurt H. Gering at 414.288.3751

CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact the PI, Kurt H. Gering at 414.288.3751. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact Marquette University's Office of Research Compliance at (414) 288-7570.

I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO READ THIS CONSENT FORM, ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND AM PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Name

Researcher's Signature

Date



APPENDIX C: Interview Questions

In his seminal work *Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman (1995) asserts that emotional intelligence includes “. . . abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope” (p.34). In recent years, Goleman has furthered his initial work by revising his theory to a model encompassing four main EI constructs. The first of these is self-awareness, or the ability to read one's emotions and recognize their impact, while using “gut” feelings to guide their decisions. The next construct is self-management, involving the control of one's emotions and impulses and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The third construct is social awareness, or the ability to sense, understand and react to others' emotions while comprehending social networks. The final construct involves relationship management, or the ability to inspire, influence, and develop others while managing conflict (Goleman, 1998).

1. What can you tell me about your familiarity with Emotional Intelligence?
2. Do you perceive yourself to have a high level of Emotional Intelligence?
3. What role do you feel Emotional Intelligence plays in your interactions with others?
4. What role do you feel Emotional Intelligence played while you were in college?
5. How do you feel the Emotional Intelligence of your fellow students moderated the learning experience?
6. How do you feel the Emotional Intelligence of your instructor moderated the learning experience?