

Strategic use of emotional intelligence in organizational settings: Exploring the dark side[☆]

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) comprises a set of abilities related to detecting, using, understanding and managing emotion. Research and discussion of EI has disproportionately focused on prosocial outcomes and has neglected the possibility that individuals high in EI may use their skills to advance their own interests, even at the expense of others. Just as the cognitively smart person may be able to understand options and draw conclusions quickly and competently, so the emotionally intelligent person may be able to assess and control emotions to facilitate the accomplishment of various goals, including the one of getting ahead. We suggest that high-EI people (relative to those low on EI) are likely to benefit from several strategic behaviors in organizations including: focusing emotion detection on important others, disguising and expressing emotions for personal gain, using misattribution to stir and shape emotions, and controlling the flow of emotion-laden communication. In addressing self-serving benefits, we reveal the dark side of EI and open new areas for research.

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Keywords: Emotional intelligence; Competition; Getting ahead; Interpersonal relations; Dyadic exchange; Organizational outcomes

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[☆] For constructive comments on earlier versions of this article, we thank Caroline Bartel, Alicia Grandey, Gavin Kilduff, Sophia Marinova, Ginka Toegel, and the editors of this volume. We also thank Members of the ORG seminar, Smeal College of Business, Penn State; members of the Organizational Behavior reading group, University of Cambridge; and symposium participants at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management.

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Organizations are arenas in which people strive to obtain promotions, awards, and reputations as high performers. In pursuit of such goals, people exhibit behaviors that range from the admirable (e.g., altruism) to the questionable (e.g., manipulation of others). Our great dramatists have excelled at contrasting this variety of human motivations and actions. Thus, in Shakespeare's *Othello*, the saintly Desdemona is contrasted with Iago, a man who manipulates others' emotions while controlling his own. Positive organizational scholarship (e.g., Roberts & Dutton, 2009), however, highlights the best of the human condition and neglects dark-side behaviors such as duplicity, manipulation, and pursuit of self-interest. In this paper, we redress the balance by examining the dark side of one of the key constructs of the positive scholarship movement – emotional intelligence. People high in emotional intelligence (EI; Salovey & Mayer, 1990) are, like Iago, skilled at regulating and controlling the emotions of themselves and others (Côté, Miners, & Moon, 2006; George, 2000; Law, Wong, & Song, 2004). We consider the possibility that those high in emotional intelligence, given competition for scarce resources typical in many organizations, are likely to use their skills to advance their own interests even at the expense of others in the workplace.

A useful analogy is with poker: a poker player with high EI can detect the emotions of other players around the table and use that information to advantage, while simultaneously controlling and regulating self-emotional display. As one review of the EI literature noted, “A person who sees the fleeting expression of fear in the face of another understands much more about that person's emotions and thoughts than someone who misses such a signal” (Salovey, Mayer, & Caruso, 2002, p. 161). Note that one does not have to attribute malicious intent or a Machiavellian personality to understand why a player might use EI to win money at poker, any more than one would need such attributions to understand why a player might use high cognitive intelligence to memorize cards played and calculate the odds of cards remaining in play. A corporate example of this kind of emotional intelligence at work is provided in this description of a bond trader named Meriwether at Salomon Brothers: “He had, . . . , a profound ability to control the two emotions that commonly destroy traders – fear and greed – and it made him as noble as a man who pursues his self-interest so fiercely can be. He was thought by many within Salomon to be the best bond trader on Wall Street. Around Salomon no tone but awe was used when he was discussed” (Lewis, 1989, p. 15).

1. Strategic emotional intelligence

EI “refers to the ability to process emotion-laden information competently and to use it to guide cognitive activities like problem-solving and to focus energy on required behaviors” (Salovey et al., 2002, p. 159).³ The four sets of skills

³ We exclude from our theoretical bases other models of EI (e.g., mixed models describing emotionally effective bundles of personality traits, attitudes and abilities) due to criticisms of their misleading use of the term intelligence (Mayer et al., 2008a) and their “extreme theoretical underdevelopment” (Joseph & Newman, 2010, p. 72).

typically grouped under the rubric of EI include perceiving emotions of self and others, using EI to facilitate thinking, understanding emotions, and managing emotions of self and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Those who score highly on the four dimensions of EI are able to (a) perceive when someone else is sad or joyful; (b) integrate this information into their thinking and decision-making; (c) find the right words to describe and explain emotions; and (d) skillfully regulate their own and other people's emotions, and anticipate and manage their own responses to others' emotional displays. Emotion management skills are interdependent (Joseph & Newman, 2010) such that the regulation of emotions, for example, requires the individual to both perceive which emotions are being displayed and understand their likely causes and consequences. Some of our arguments draw on one dimension more than another, but we take an integrated view on EI and discuss how the individual's use of these skills together serves in the struggle to get ahead in competitive organizational contexts.

In particular, we emphasize that the ability to regulate one's own emotions and the emotions of others in pursuit of self-interest opens up the possibility of strategic behavior on the part of high-EI people. We use the term *strategic* in this article to emphasize that emotions are used in the service of specific goals such as getting ahead. In pursuit of such goals, people employ the skills and abilities that they possess, but we do not mean to imply that people are always deliberately manipulating their own or others' emotional states. Rather, we assume that people vary in their level of control according to their EI. We further note that many affective processes in organizations occur on subconscious and implicit levels (Barsade, Ramarajan, & Westen, 2009) and that EI is often automatically infused into decision-making and behavior (Fiori, 2009). EI is likely to be effective in the pursuit of goals if such intelligence operates on an automatic basis (cf. Williams, Bargh, Nocera, & Gray, 2009). Thus, the term *strategic* neither implies nor excludes deliberate or conscious processes, but it denotes goal pursuit. The success of goal-focused behaviors, we argue, depends in part on EI.

Sometimes the strategic behavior seems calculated but relatively benign. Anita Roddick, founder and former CEO of The Body Shop International, demonstrated this kind of calculated emotional intelligence in running her business. In one instance, Ms. Roddick noticed that one of her employees tended to break down in tears when frustrated. Ms. Roddick encouraged this woman to cry for the advantage of the company: "I told her it has to be used. I said, 'Here, cry at this point in the . . . meeting'" (Martin, Knopoff, & Beckman, 1998, p. 451). In other cases, the "dark side" of strategic emotional intelligence is on full display. In one computer company in which success in the marketplace was the overriding priority, one development manager explained how he was emotionally manipulating a rival colleague's hopes and expectations in order to gain an advantage: ". . . I'm positioning Poulson to be the proponent for the X-101 strategy. I slap him on the back on every opportunity, tell him how great he is doing, how excited we all are with what he is doing – and I'm distancing my organization from the project. So when it blows up you know damn well who Sam [founder and head of the company] is going to turn on!" (Kunda, 1992, p. 186–187).

One example of emotion regulation on a large scale occurred in 1998 when Enron executives created a fake command center in Houston in order to impress analysts from Wall Street gathered for their annual meeting with the firm. The Enron chairman, Kenneth Lay, and the firm's ex-president, Jeffrey Skilling, led a rehearsal the day before the analysts were due. The careful stage-managing involved gutting a whole floor and equipping it with big-screen televisions, computers and telephones to create what was referred to as "Enron's Potemkin Village." As the analysts strolled through the fake trading room, the staff were busy pretending to be active doing deals and making money: "The whole operation was carefully choreographed in order to provide the most buoyant impression on analysts" (BBC News, 2002). Thus, not only were the two Enron executives regulating their own emotions in order to deceive the analysts, they arranged for the stage management of a host of other employees to pretend to be enthusiastic and active (Tran, 2002).

These examples suggest that emotion detection, expression, and regulation of the kinds we are discussing are prevalent in organizational arenas in which people compete for resources both tangible (i.e., money) and intangible (i.e., status). In such arenas, people, driven by motives to get ahead, are likely to engage in strategic behaviors utilizing cognitive, emotional, and other abilities. Under strong competitive pressures, people are likely to adopt a win-at-all-costs orientation, particularly if the corporate culture encourages and rewards such behavior, as was the case, apparently, at Enron (Swartz, 2006) and Salomon Brothers (Lewis, 1989).

2. A walk on the dark side

Research has neglected the strategic "dark side" potential of EI in favor of an emphasis on positive and pro-social outcomes (Jordan, Ashkanasy, & Ascough, 2007; Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008). EI has even been described as the

“accurate appraisal and expression of emotions in oneself and others and the regulation of emotion in a way that *enhances living*” (Mayer, DiPaolo, & Salovey, 1990, p. 772; italics added). Likewise, the popular press extols the virtues of being emotionally intelligent (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Goleman, 1998).

But to define EI as necessarily leading to positive, prosocial outcomes is to mix up a set of abilities (related to perceiving, using, understanding and managing emotion) with a normative belief concerning how individuals should use them. The possibility that emotionally intelligent individuals can use their skills to engage in self-promoting (rather than exclusively prosocial) behaviors, although neglected, is not excluded in prior work. Thus, there is evidence that job-seekers who control body language to communicate appropriate feelings are more likely to receive positive hiring decisions in interviews (Fox & Spector, 2000). Likewise, writers on EI cautioned that “some emotionally intelligent people may manage their feelings in . . . negative ways: to manipulate, control, and exploit themselves and others” (Mayer, 2001, p. 423). In focusing on the use of EI in pursuit of getting ahead, we build on these prior hints in the literature to present organizational members as active agents, responsive to the opportunities and constraints inherent in the dynamics of any workplace.

This emphasis on emotions in the service of goals contrasts with prevailing views concerning emotions in organizational life. Prior work has tended to present emotions as intimate expressions of self, trustworthy manifestations of inner attitudes, and credible sources of information about interpersonal exchanges (e.g., Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002). Further, we have learned that the spontaneous expression of negative or positive emotion facilitates or impedes the flow of work (e.g., Brown, Westbrook, & Challagalla, 2005; Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994). Only the literature on emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983) has emphasized (and criticized) the instrumental function of emotional expression, revealing in vivid detail how in some organizations managers require employees to follow specific emotion display rules as part of an overall policy of emotional control in the service of company strategy. Thus, bill collectors display anger to obtain payments from debtors (Sutton, 1991), and service employees display enthusiasm to increase the perception of service quality (Pugh, 2001; Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989).

“Emotional labor” describes emotion management required as part of the job, but employees can also manage emotions in the service of the self. Goffman (1959) investigated the social interactions in which people adopted expressions and behaviors to influence others’ impressions. This Goffmanesque exploration of the strategic manipulation of emotion (e.g., Goffman, 1969) influenced emotional labor research, and also inspires our emphasis on the strategic management of emotion. Prior to the current interest in EI, Goffman’s work already described how certain people were skilled at modulating their emotions so as to strategically influence others’ interpretations and behaviors. In competitive settings within work organizations, skilled emotion managers are likely, we suggest, to draw upon their particular skills to get ahead in terms of promotion tournaments (cf. Rosenbaum, 1979) and other status competitions.

Instead of contrasting emotion with cognitive rationality (e.g., Zajonc, 1980), or positing that feelings represent irrational passions (see Averill, 1974, for a review), we take seriously the idea that the management and expression of emotions can be understood as a kind of intelligence that has functional benefits for the individual in processes of social interaction. Prior work has already established that individuals with high EI tend to have high work performance (e.g., Côté & Miners, 2006; Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Gall, & Salovey, 2006; Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005), and some researchers have warned against overemphasizing the positive with respect to the interpretation of EI research (e.g., Eichinger, Dai, & Tang, 2009), whereas others have pointed to research showing underperformance associated with EI for jobs that require little emotional display (Joseph & Newman, 2010).

Despite these caveats, prior work is consistent with a functional approach (Morris & Keltner, 2000) according to which emotional expression has specific functions at the intrapersonal, dyadic, group, and social system levels. We focus here on the dyadic interaction level in organizational contexts. According to a social functional approach (Keltner & Haidt, 1999) the individual’s emotional expression in dyadic contexts: (a) provides clues to others about the individual’s emotions, social intentions, and status (e.g., whether the individual is being submissive or dominant – Knutson, 1996); (b) evokes specific complementary and reciprocal emotions in others (e.g., anger triggers fear – Dimberg & Ohman, 1996); and (c) helps control others’ behavior through incentives and deterrents (e.g., laughter rewards desired behavior, whereas anger can have a deterrent effect on the opposition’s demands in negotiation – Morris & Keltner, 2000, p. 29). We build on this functional approach to challenge the idyllic view often presented of EI. We emphasize the self-serving benefits derived by high-EI individuals who work in up-or-out environments and competitive organizations.

3. Theoretical foundations and overview

In this article we emphasize organizational arenas in which people compete to get ahead through the use of emotional levers that help control the outcomes of interactions. EI, we suggest, is similar to cognitive intelligence in providing individuals with advantages in competitive situations. Just as the cognitively smart person may be able to understand options and draw conclusions quickly and competently, so the emotionally intelligent person may be able to assess and control emotions to facilitate the accomplishment of various goals, including the one of getting ahead. To the extent that both cognitive intelligence and EI are taken-for-granted aspects of the individual’s psychological and emotional makeup, we do not have to posit a deliberate intent on the part of the individual to invoke a certain type of intelligence in order to accomplish personal goals.

3.1. Relating emotional intelligence to dark-side tactics

Our article posits four tactics that emotionally intelligent individuals, drawing on EI abilities (cf. Salovey et al., 2002), are hypothesized to employ under competitive pressure. Fig. 1 shows the relationship between EI abilities and “dark side” tactics, and also shows the hierarchical relationship among the abilities themselves, such that a more important ability (e.g., managing emotions of self and others) is assumed to incorporate a more basic ability (e.g., perceiving emotions of self and others). The four tactics are arranged in order of increasing likelihood of strategic exploitation for self-serving ends.

As Fig. 1 suggests, the tactic of *focusing on strategically important targets* requires the ability to perceive the emotions of self and others, and the ability to use emotional intelligence to facilitate thinking. Simply put, we are positing that emotionally intelligent individuals use these abilities selectively to focus on those whose attitudes and behaviors facilitate or impede getting ahead, with the emotions of less significant others generally disregarded. The second tactic listed in Fig. 1 involves *disguising and expressing emotions for personal gain*. This tactic draws on the EI ability to manage the emotions of self and others. Emotionally intelligent individuals, we suggest, can intentionally shape their emotions to fabricate favorable impressions of themselves. They display emotions that are appropriate and conducive to achieving objectives, but their emotional presentation may differ from their inner feelings.

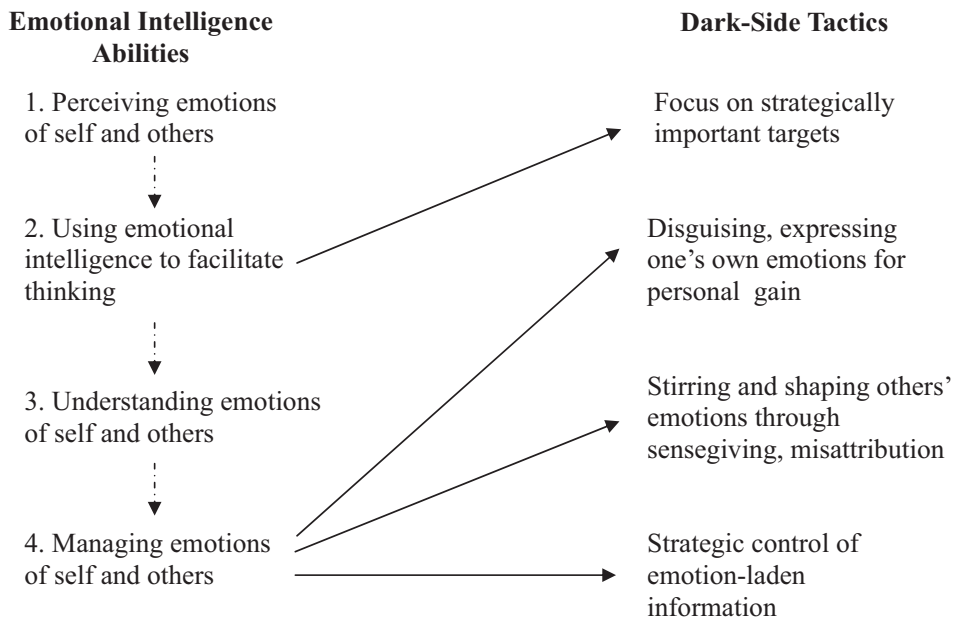


Fig. 1. How emotional intelligence relates to strategic behavior. Note: An arrow from left to right indicates that the implementation of a strategy requires one of the numbered EI abilities; dotted-line vertical arrows indicate that higher numbered abilities are assumed to incorporate lower numbered abilities. The four tactics are arranged in order of increasing likelihood of strategic exploitation of others for self-serving ends.

The last two tactics shown in Fig. 1 both draw upon EI abilities of understanding and managing the emotions of self and others. The tactic of *stirring and shaping emotions through sensegiving and misattribution* entails that individuals use their EI abilities both to change the meaning of events and to construe uncertain situations in terms that subtly advance their own agenda. Thus, high-EI people help colleagues interpret ambiguous feelings, and these interpretations are infused with self-interest. Related to this, the final tactic in Fig. 1 is the *strategic control of emotion-laden information*. This involves emotionally intelligent individuals evoking distinct emotions in others to influence decisions and behaviors. Thus, high-EI people, we suggest, influence the flow of information to affect others' reputations, and they provoke specific emotional reactions through selective communication and the allocation or deduction of resources.

We structure the following sections according to these four tactics. As individuals move, under competitive pressure, from monitoring the emotions of strategically important others to emotional interventions to advance self-interest, the self-serving use of EI escalates. Thus, in the course of this article, the dark side of EI becomes more visible.

4. Focusing on strategically important targets

We start with the notion that EI (like other types of intelligence) is utilized by individuals in some types of situations more than others. This aspect of EI is neglected in prior research (Mayer et al., 2008a; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008b). People are likely to deploy EI when situations have strong emotional content (e.g., when an individual is facing a performance review from a supervisor), or when the competitive character of a situation triggers keen attention to emotion regulation (e.g., when an attorney is trying to persuade a jury of the innocence of a client). In other situations in which little of consequence is at stake, people in highly competitive organizations are unlikely to focus attention on regulating their own or others' emotions. A description of life at Salomon Brothers includes an example of the complete neglect of outraged emotions. In this example, bond traders, as a joke, removed expensive clothes from a monogrammed suitcase which they thought belonged to one of their junior colleagues going on a business trip. The bond traders replaced the clothes with soggy toilet paper. But when the colleague returned from his business trip, it turned out that the suitcase had not been his after all, but belonged to a very senior person in another office with the same last initial. At first the bond traders panicked at the thought of having to deal with the explosive possibilities of a senior person being infuriated. But then it struck them that their joke was known only to the members of their own department and affected no one who had direct authority over them: "Since the goof had been internal to the mortgage department all along. . . , who, of emotional importance, would be the wiser if the suits simply disappeared? No one. So one of the traders bundled the suits in a green Glad bag, like a dead body, and dumped them in the construction wreckage across the street" (Lewis, 1989, p. 121). Even the emotions of the powerful are of no account beyond the boundaries of their authority.

People in organizations are surrounded by others whose emotional states are signaled by word and deed. But the attention that emotionally intelligent people pay to others' emotions is likely to be determined by how strategically important those others are to the focal individual (Overbeck & Park, 2006). As the bond traders asked themselves: "Who is of emotional importance to us?" Of course, individuals are likely to be attuned to the emotions of those in the organization with whom they have affective bonds – people are likely to help their friends deal with negative emotions at work (e.g., Toegel, Anand, & Kilduff, 2007). Controlling for such affectively important contacts, however, we can expect that emotionally intelligent people are likely to focus their emotion-detecting efforts toward those other individuals who are of strategic importance in their organizational lives. In order to influence the emotions of these strategically important people, these others' emotions must first be accurately assessed. We explicate in the following paragraphs the implications of this idea. Specifically, we argue that *EI in organizational settings will be employed to detect the emotions of those others whose attitudes and behaviors are of strategic importance to the individual*.

Individuals in organizations attend to multiple stimuli and monitor performance levels, role boundaries, and social environments. Organizational officeholders tend to pay attention to other employees and their problems to the extent that such attention is necessary to advance the officeholders' goals (Overbeck & Park, 2006). For example, theoretical developments in the analysis of power suggest that high-power individuals focus on other people "in terms of how they enable the power holder to satisfy current goals and desires" (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003, p. 272). Building on these insights, we suggest that given limited resources, people competing for organizational advancement are likely to use EI to detect the emotions of specific others, including supervisors, rivals to the occupancy of organizational positions, and key subordinates, and disregard the emotions of less important others.

4.1. Subordinate's perspective

Starting with individuals in subordinate positions: they tend to be attuned to the evaluations of others and pay particular attention to those who control their work outcomes (for a discussion, see Keltner et al., 2003, p. 274). Thus, in every organization, the emotions of supervisors, who control performance evaluations and pay increases, are likely to be studied carefully by subordinates. Subordinates with high levels of EI are likely to be attuned to subtle cues that indicate supervisors' emotions. As a recent review (Sanchez-Burks & Huy, 2009, p. 23) pointed out, emotional cues include vocal intonations, facial displays and other nonverbal gestures. These provide to emotionally intelligent observers information about opinions, preferences and potential behaviors. Low-EI subordinates who miss these subtle signals or misinterpret them may find themselves violating supervisory expectations, with potentially severe consequences (Magee & Galinsky, 2008, p. 375). By contrast, high-EI subordinates can use their emotional intelligence to strengthen their relationships with supervisors. A subordinate might, for example, pick up a hint of sadness in the face of a supervisor and offer help by asking empathically if something bad has happened. Empathy with a supervisor can create an emotional bond from which the subordinate can benefit in other situations (cf. Rimé, 2007). What seems a naturally occurring behavior serves a strategic purpose.

4.2. Rivals' emotions

Supervisors are not the only group of people whose emotions employees are likely to pay particular attention to. Social network theory suggests that rivals for positions in organizations pay close attention to each other in terms of attitudes and behaviors (Burt, 1982; Kilduff, 1990). Recent research (Kilduff, Elfenbein, & Staw, 2010) has developed the idea that rivalry involves the subjective perception on the part of the individual that certain other competitors require special attention. According to this work, rivals are those competitors who are perceived by focal individuals to be particularly similar to themselves and who are perceived by the focal individuals to be engaging with them in high numbers of intense competitive interactions. In the academic world, an example might be assistant professors hired at the same time in the same department and going through promotion and tenure processes together. In the world of office work, employees who repeatedly compete for bonuses may come to view each other as rivals for career advancement (Kilduff et al., 2010).

Going beyond the importance of similar others in attitude and behavior formation (cf. Festinger, 1954), we suggest that, given uncertainty with respect to important events and outcomes in *competitive* situations, people look to rivals for cues concerning their relative standing. The faces and body language of rivals are likely to be scanned for evidence of forthcoming competition or cooperation (cf. Frank, 1988), and for signals indicating whether they are focused on getting along or getting ahead (Hogan & Holland, 2003). A high-EI person is likely to understand the importance of emotional signaling in bargaining situations with rivals, and be able to spot where integrated solutions are possible. When a rival expresses happiness concerning the high-EI individual's high-priority demand, an integrated solution that benefits the focal individual is unlikely to be derailed by the rival's expression of anger concerning low priority demands (cf. Pietroni, Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Pagliaro, 2008). People are likely to use their EI to focus on the interpretation of rivals' emotions.

4.3. Supervisor's perspective

Turning to supervisors, under what circumstances are they likely to pay attention to their subordinates' feelings and emotions? First, we should recognize that, in the evocative words of a recent review, "those with high power... roam in a very different psychological space than those with low power... Whereas the powerful see mostly opportunity dancing in front of them, the powerless are more likely to see potential hazards lurking about" (Magee & Galinsky, 2008, p. 366). Thus, people in high-power situations pay attention to the individuating features of low-power others to the extent that those others can help the powerful fulfill their goals (Overbeck & Park, 2006).

In general, as people gain power in organizations, they are likely to construe others as means to attain their ends (Keltner et al., 2003). But supervisors with high emotional intelligence are likely to be alert to the opportunity to intuit the hopes and fears of strategically useful subordinates. Thus, in revealing the year-end bonus to a high-performing subordinate, a supervisor at Salomon Brothers "pushed all the right buttons" and left the subordinate feeling "deeply reverent about the firm" and anxious that the supervisor would approve of his performance (Lewis, 1989, p. 202).

Subordinates' emotions can signal possible selves that are awaiting expression in terms of as yet unfulfilled ambitions (cf. George & Brief, 1996). High-EI supervisors are likely to be able to notice and interpret accurately the emotions of key subordinates. In this way, high-EI supervisors can put the ambitions of subordinates to use for their own ends. Those in power are likely to be active in noticing subordinates' emotions to the extent that the powerful have the appropriate skills and abilities (Toegel et al., 2007). Indeed, "power-holders show remarkable focus when attending to individuals who possess characteristics that would be useful for the power-holder" (Magee & Galinsky, 2008, p. 371).

Supervisors typically pay attention to subordinates' emotions to determine and reconfirm their own social status, and to detect signals of competition. Emotions serve as social markers, indicating and reinforcing the power structures in work relationships (Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Tiedens, 2000). In interactions with subordinates, supervisors may well display emotions indicating high status, such as anger and pride, whereas subordinates are expected to display emotions conveying low status such as shame and guilt (Tiedens, Ellsworth, & Mesquita, 2000). Transgressions of social status norms, involving a subordinate displaying anger, for example, are usually followed by the subordinate's feelings of embarrassment – an emotion that serves as a form of appeasement, repairing the hierarchical relationship between supervisor and subordinate (Keltner & Haidt, 1999). But high-EI supervisors are likely to be alert to the shifting dynamics of emotion management possibilities in the workplace beyond this stereotypical anger-display-and-embarrassment-appeasement routine. Subordinates who are likely to get angry may be seen as useful tools to be used against competitors to challenge authority. High EI implies the ability to manage one's own emotional response and the ability to regulate others' emotional expressions. Thus, rather than seeing a subordinate's outburst of anger as a status threat, a supervisor with high EI may look upon the subordinate as a useful resource for those occasions when subordinate anger is likely to be needed.

As a matter of principle, EI research has assumed that "people high in EI will build real social fabric within an organization, and between an organization and those it serves, whereas those low in EI may tend to create problems for the organization through their individual behaviors" (Mayer & Caruso, 2002, p. 5). But there are subtle differences in how EI plays out in different cultural environments within organizations. In competitive environments in which individual striving is emphasized as part of the "social fabric," people high in EI are likely to respond to contextual pressures in ways that advance their own interests without violating social norms. For example, people high in self-monitoring (who demonstrate many aspects of high EI such as interpreting others' emotional displays accurately – Mill, 1984; and the ability to monitor and control their own emotional displays – Snyder, 1974), are able to elevate their social status among their peers by establishing reputations as generous exchange partners (Flynn, Reagan, Amanatullah, & Ames, 2006). By avoiding asking for help from others even if they actually need such help, these employees elevate their status at the expense of restricting the information they need to perform the organization's work. We might add to this research the speculation that, given limited time and resources, a supervisor with high EI is likely to target helpful interventions toward those others whose emotional states affect the supervisor's work and the possibility of getting ahead.

5. Disguising and expressing emotions for personal gain

Controlling emotions to produce desirable expressions has been a central theme in the emotional labor literature (e.g., Côté, 2005; Grandey, 2000). The idea in this stream of research is that employees need to comply with certain organizational display rules. Flight attendants, for example, ought to smile. Such emotional expressions serve organizational goals, often at the cost of the individual employee's well-being (Hochschild, 2001). Demands for emotional control extend beyond the frontline to affect most employees as they navigate in the social sphere of the organization and attempt to behave appropriately (Mann, 1999). What is neglected in this stream of research is that employees are not only passive obeyers of emotion rules, but also active invokers of emotions to communicate messages in their own interest. Emotion expression in this sense is not a duty, but a tool employed for getting ahead. The savvy poker player, for instance, may disguise trouble with a neutral face or smile delightedly when issued with mediocre cards. Similarly, in negotiation contexts, high-EI individuals "can use emotion strategically to express both positive and negative emotions in order to achieve personal goals" (Foo, Elfenbein, Hoon Tan, & Chuan Aik, 2004, p. 424). However, the active monitoring and management of emotional expression can expand to include a broad range of organizational activities beyond those of negotiation. High-EI individuals have the abilities to control or disguise their own anger, competitiveness, pride, anxiety, and other emotions potentially generated by organizational interactions; they also have skills related to the control and regulation of others' emotions. That is, *EI relates to the individual's*

pursuit of personal gain through the disguise or expression of emotions; and the elicitation and control of emotional expression by others.

5.1. *Emotional display*

Displays of emotions transmit information about emotional state, behavioral intentions, and personality characteristics (Ekman, 1993; Fridlund, 1994; Knutson, 1996). An emotional display can “give the game away” in a social interaction much as an inadvertent emotional impulse can disclose a poker player’s run of luck to others around the poker table. Because such inadvertent emotional displays can affect the outcomes of social interactions, people in general in anticipation of specific social interactions tend to develop neutral emotions that give little away concerning their inner life, particularly if the expected interactions are with people who are themselves likely to be in neutral or positive moods (cf. Erber, Wegner, & Therriault, 1996). People who are high in EI in organizational settings in which repeated interactions with the same people are the norm, are likely to be particularly good at anticipatory emotion regulation – that is, in preparing themselves emotionally for expected encounters in order to make such encounters facilitate their goals of building their reputations and progressing in their careers. We might also speculate concerning unexpected encounters, in which people only have a fraction of a second to orient themselves toward either a stranger or a familiar but unanticipated visitor. High-EI people encountering someone unexpectedly as the elevator doors open, for example, are likely to be much quicker than low-EI people in discerning the relative importance of the other person, the emotional state of the other person, and the appropriate emotion-weighted response to the unexpected encounter.

5.2. *Impression management vs. good citizenship behavior?*

In general, people use impression management techniques to protect and shape the images that others hold of them, but “many of these impression management strategies are very similar – if not identical – to citizenship behaviors” (Bolino, 1999, p. 83). Helping others at work may be considered both a citizenship behavior reflecting altruism (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006) and an action directed toward managing others’ impressions (Bolino, 1999). Extending help to others while avoiding asking for help promotes individuals’ social status in the eyes of others (Flynn et al., 2006).

From the dark-side perspective, we expect that high-EI managers are likely to portray their own self-interested behavior as disinterested or even selfless. For example, the chairman of Salomon Brothers, John Gutfreund, was described as a “genius” in “his ability to cloak his own self-interest in the guise of high principle” (Lewis, 1989, p. 227). One of the key moments in his campaign to become chairman of what was then a partnership, occurred when Gutfreund stood up at a meeting of the Salomon partners and disagreed with his main rival for the chairmanship (William Simon) concerning the attractiveness of converting Salomon Brothers into a publicly held corporation. Gutfreund made an emotional appeal, saying that “if the firm were ever sold, the partners could have his resignation.” William Salomon, who was the chairman at the time of this meeting, later commented: “that’s one of the main reasons I picked him to succeed me, . . . , because he said he deeply believed in the partnership.” Three years after gaining control of the company, Gutfreund sold it to a commodity dealer and realized a personal windfall of \$40 million (Lewis, 1989, p. 227–228).

Across studies, citizenship behaviors correlate with impression management at magnitudes approaching .50 (e.g., Grant & Mayer, 2009; Wayne & Green, 1993). Because impression management can be mistaken for good citizenship, an individual who is acutely aware of the emotional climate in a particular situation and who is able to regulate self-emotion and manage the emotions of others, may be able to advance self-interest while gaining credit for good citizenship behavior.

5.3. *Emotion scripts and inhibition*

To the extent that individuals are emotionally intelligent, they may be able to frame their self-interested attitudes and behaviors, using well-understood emotion scripts, so that they appear to be championing justice on behalf of others (cf. Gibson, 1995). The high-EI person can use knowledge of such scripts to express their own emotions in ways that appear authentic and reasonable within the political climate of the organization. To the extent that the individual is seen to be expressing “appropriate” emotions, the individual is likely to gain status and power in contested situations.

For people in low power positions (relative to those in high power positions), emotion scripts that facilitate the expression of feelings are less available, especially in situations in which important outcomes are at stake. For example, new recruits at an organizational training session given the opportunity to ask questions of a top corporate executive (who had the power to decide their first job assignments) were struck dumb by fear: “When he called for questions, there was silence. We were too frightened to talk” (Lewis, 1989, p. 46). People low in power have little control over outcomes and tend to focus on threats in the environment – these threats activate the inhibition system; in contrast, individuals high in power have greater control over outcomes and tend to focus on opportunities in the environment – these opportunities activate the approach system (Keltner et al., 2003).

Approach and inhibition can be characterized by pairs of opposites, such as attention to rewards vs. attention to threats, positive vs. negative emotions, and lack of constraints vs. presence of constraints. Individuals high in power tend to experience and express more positive emotions than do low power individuals, and also are more likely to be disinhibited in the expression of opinions during group discussion (Berdahl & Martorana, 2006). For approach-oriented individuals, rewards from the environment generate a movement toward goals through emotional and cognitive self-regulation. Conversely, individuals who are inhibition-oriented focus on threats and uncertainties and, as a result their behavioral responses are more focused toward heightened vigilance and constraining their responses (Keltner et al., 2003). This research has not considered the effects of EI.

In organizations, we suggest that it will be among managers – those whose emotional expression is relatively disinhibited by the possession of power – that differences will be observed in how people with high or low EI tailor emotional expression to the furtherance of personal goals. Managers who are low in EI are likely to respond to increasing power by giving free rein to their transitory feelings irrespective of social requirements. Conversely, managers who are high in EI are likely to be aware of how emotion management can further their goals, given that emotional displays can have a larger impact on perceptions of leadership than the content of leaders’ messages (Humphrey, 2002). Subordinates are likely to interpret leaders’ emotional displays as guidelines for how to deal appropriately with colleagues and customers (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003).

5.4. *Negative emotions*

The expression of *negative* emotions is fraught with danger given the relative vividness of such emotions (e.g., anger compared to joy, Dasborough, 2006; Hansen & Hansen, 1988). Among those with high power in organizations, the utilization of negative emotional displays may be particularly common given the general lack of inhibition due to increased interpersonal power (Keltner et al., 2003). The practitioner literature lauds “great intimidators” (Kramer, 2006) who frighten subordinates in selective settings to motivate them or otherwise direct their attention to specific issues. But managers who are unable to control their anger and other negative emotions are unlikely to prove effective. The vividness of negative emotional display means that it attracts a lot of attention from superiors. For example, in one high-tech company a development manager described one of his project leaders as follows: “Jim has a people problem. He is cross with people and says exactly what is on his mind. He gets angry in meetings. I want him to control himself. Next year he is going to be evaluated on that. I’m watching him. He knows it” (Kunda, 1992, p. 187).

Emotional intelligence, we suggest, is likely to be positively correlated with the ability to judge when negative emotions such as anger can further individual goals and when it is likely to cause resentment, backlash, and organizational sanctions. A supervisor who threatens to hit a union representative in a dispute at the drinks machine (Gouldner, 1954, p. 43) is unlikely to be an example of high emotional intelligence. But there are situations in which negative emotions can be motivational. For example, a basketball coach can use anger as an effective motivational tool during the half time talk, but a high-EI coach will be careful not to cause resentment by an over-the-top tirade that humiliates and shames players (Staw & DeGoey, 2010). A high-EI supervisor is likely to be in tune with the research finding that anger is likely to be functional only when this expression is of low intensity (i.e., no contempt), is expressed verbally rather than physically (i.e., no threats of violence), and is expressed in settings (such as the coach’s speech at the half time of a competitive game) in which anger expressions are considered appropriate (Gibson, Schweitzer, Callister, & Gray, 2009).

One of the dangers consequent upon the managerial display of negative emotions is the tendency for emotional contagion to occur – a spontaneous reproduction of emotion across the workplace (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994). Subordinates pay attention to the standards set by managers concerning which emotions should be displayed and how they should be displayed (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003). Whereas the spread of positive emotion across the

workplace can increase cooperation, reduce conflict, and positively affect performance (Barsade, 2002), the spread of negative emotions is likely to have negative effects on such outcomes (Brown et al., 2005). Perhaps for this reason, organizations generally encourage the display of positive emotions at work while proscribing the display of negative emotions (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003). Research shows that managers' beliefs about the emotions that their employees should display are influential – but only for the display of negative emotions (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003). Thus, it appears that managers have more influence on employee beliefs concerning the suppression of negative (relative to positive) emotions at work. The extent to which high-EI managers are particularly able to sequester the contagion of negative emotions within targeted groups is a topic worthy of further research.

5.5. *Resisting contagion while regulating emotions of others*

We do know that people differ in their susceptibility to emotional contagion (Hatfield et al., 1994). Thus, although emotionally intelligent individuals are able to diffuse emotions to others, they themselves are likely to be able to resist emotional contagion through a variety of self-regulatory processes such as selecting the situations that they choose to enter, intervening to modify ongoing situations, focusing their attention on their own work activities, interpreting situations in terms that favor their preferred emotions, and directly modulating their own emotional responses (Gross, 1998a). This creates a power asymmetry, such that high-EI people influence what others feel whereas others may find it difficult to sway the emotions of those with high levels of EI. Thus, high-EI individuals are likely to be more in control of the feeling states of themselves and others relative to those who are low on EI. Going beyond the general finding that supervisors (relative to non-supervisors) are likely to influence subordinates' displays of job-appropriate emotions (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003), we suggest that high-EI supervisors may be particularly astute in eliciting such displays in relation to their own career goals.

Thus, the ability to tailor emotional displays to the goals of specific interactions (while resisting efforts by others to shape one's emotional orientation), combined with the ability to shape others' emotional displays, can offer advantages to the individual both within an ongoing dyadic interaction, and as the individual moves between different social interactions that call for different emotional expressions. In this ongoing emotional display process, EI is likely to be positively associated with control over the dynamics of emotions. High-EI individuals are likely to be able to display a series of different emotions (negative and positive) in a dyadic interaction, so that, for example, emotional bullying to gain an advantage can be followed by emollient blandishments to calm otherwise aggrieved partners. Further, we suggest that EI will be positively associated with the ability to control the display of different emotions across different interactions so that discrete negative emotions such as anger, appropriate for the gaining of advantage in situation A (e.g., convincing a customer to pay an overdue bill; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1991) can be followed, without visible contamination, by a positive emotion for the gaining of advantage in situation B (e.g., deferentially persuading a coworker to switch vacation schedules). The same emotion can have different effects in different dyadic encounters. Expressing pride in one's accomplishments is appropriate after receiving an award for performance, but the same emotion disclosed to a competing peer can potentially create envy and negative consequences (Vecchio, 1995). By attuning emotion expression to situational demands and personal objectives, emotionally intelligent individuals increase their chances of getting ahead.

6. **Stirring and shaping emotions through sensegiving and misattribution**

Employee emotions are aroused not only by occurrences in the workplace (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) but also by events outside of the workplace, including, for example, accidents to family members (George & Brief, 1996; Hersey, 1932). Individuals often seek out others with whom they can discuss their emotional experiences (Rimé, Mesquita, Philippot, & Boca, 1991; Schachter, 1959) and these discussions are subject to cultural norms concerning what is appropriate. In mainstream American society, relative to societies such as India and Mexico, there is a greater separation between home life and work life. It is considered unprofessional in mainstream American corporate life to be overly-expressive at work concerning family matters. Rather, to be professional requires an almost exclusive focus on the task at the expense of expressing or taking an excessive interest in emotional expressions and cues (Sanchez-Burks, 2005). Given that most people in American corporations tend to be insensitive with respect to the detection of others' emotions, people with high emotional intelligence are likely to have a particular advantage in the control of others' emotions.

The specific emotions that arise from any particular event depend on the situational meanings attributed to the event (Frijda, 1988). Such meanings are malleable, and can change depending on others' actions and discussions (Schachter & Singer, 1962). Such discussions can either validate the individual's interpretation, confirming the initial emotion, or they can change the interpretation by providing a new perspective on the emotion-eliciting situation. In the latter case, the new perspective causes a reappraisal process that results in a different emotion or a different intensity of the emotion (Gross, 1998b). Thus, discussions with others can take on the function of interpersonal emotion regulation.

In other instances, people can experience ambiguous emotions. They feel stirred up, but they do not understand the cause or the exact label that should be attributed to the emotion. A person feels, for example, that something is wrong, but the person does not exactly understand what it is that bothers them. In such situations, people are vulnerable to credible explanations from others concerning what they are feeling and why they are feeling it (e.g., Brodt & Zimbardo, 1981). These explanations that one person provides for another rely on "labeling feelings, understanding the relations they represent, how they blend together, and the transitions they go through" (Mayer, 2001, p. 421–422). Although these skills are part of EI, their application to interpersonal processes has been neglected.

We explore in the next paragraphs the notion that people affect others' emotions by providing labels and interpretations, and by questioning and challenging the appropriateness of feeling states. People engage in sensegiving processes (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) that provide others with meanings and that change how people perceive situations. Individuals high in EI may be particularly capable of engaging in sensegiving or framing (Goffman, 1974) in the provision of credible accounts concerning feelings. We extend this thinking to suggest that under competitive pressure individuals high in EI will use opportunities to help others explain their own emotions in ways that promote the emotionally intelligent individual's self-interest. Poker players, for instance, can label another player's emotions by providing suggestive verbal interpretations, such as: "You seem to be tense." Thereby, they attach a label to another person that might change the person's self-perception, and they direct other players' attention toward that person's emotion. Prior theorizing in sociology referred to this strategic empathizing with others' emotions as *pseudo-gemeinschaft*: "the feigning of personal concern with the other fellow in order to manipulate him the better" (Merton, 1946, p. 142). Accordingly, we hold that *EI is related to the provision and communication of credible accounts of others' emergent and ambiguous emotions.*

6.1. Sensegiving

How do emotions arise in the context of specific events, and why are people likely to experience the same events in terms of quite different emotions? According to one of the appraisal theories of emotion (Roseman, Spindel, & Jose, 1990), the same situation may trigger quite different emotions in different people depending upon individuals' assessment of how pleasant the situation is, how certain or uncertain the outcomes are likely to be, the extent to which they see themselves as in control of these outcomes, the extent to which the situation represents something to be avoided or desired, and the extent to which individuals appraise themselves as weak or strong in the particular situation.

We add to these insights the suggestion that the appraisals that affect emotions can be triggered by *others'* sensegiving. The literature on the misattribution of emotion (Bem, 1972; Schachter & Singer, 1962) shows that people are susceptible to influence concerning the origin and direction of emotions. Indeed, as stated in prior work examining emotion, "when our feelings are vague or inchoate, the reactions of others to our gestures help define what we really come to feel" (Gerth & Mills, 1953, p. 55). Thus, epinephrine-induced undifferentiated arousal is construed as either euphoria or anger depending on the contagious behaviors of a confederate (Schachter & Singer, 1962). An emotionally intelligent person is likely to take the opportunity to label others' undifferentiated emergent emotions through the timely provision of appropriate cues and explanatory frames.

Organizations in which people compete for outcomes, and in which success and failure tend to be daily occurrences, are likely to be hotbeds of emotion arousal in which hope and fear are frequent. In such uncertain situations, people search for information in the environment (Festinger, 1954; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) and turn to others to reduce uncertainty and interpret ambiguous feelings (Rentsch, 1990; Schachter, 1959). At Salomon Brothers, for a full six weeks prior to the December 21 date on which annual bonuses were announced, new hires spent much of their time discussing how much they were likely to get, and providing interpretations of how much each of them was worth (Lewis, 1989, p. 200):

"If they don't pay me eighty, I'm going to Goldman. . ."

"Aw, they'll pay you eighty. You're one of the biggest producers in the class. . . they're already ripping you off."

"Goldman would guarantee at least a hundred and eighty. These people are screwing us."

In such circumstances, the scope for the emotionally intelligent to play a role in making sense of others' uncertain emotions is likely to be large. The provision of interpretations (e.g., "they're ripping you off") helps reduce emotional uncertainty and facilitate relatively unthinking reliance on those perceived to have expertise in the provision of plausible interpretations (Tiedens & Linton, 2001).

6.2. *Labeling injustice*

The social construction and labeling of emotions in organizations may be particularly prevalent with respect to perceived injustices. According to the social construction of justice approach (Degoey, 2000), events which threaten employees (such as layoffs and performance appraisals) trigger shared interpretative processes including storytelling and gossip. Under such circumstances people seek out social information from similar others (cf. Festinger, 1954; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Schachter, 1959). This approach emphasizes that employees may not even think of themselves as suffering from injustice until their situation has been labeled an injury by opinion leaders in the organization. Interpretations of what counts as injustice "may be particularly susceptible to contagion" relative to interpretations of justice (Degoey, 2000, p. 70). People may make claims about injustice simply because such claims advance their interests (Degoey, 2000, p. 84).

We add to this social construction approach the possibility that high-EI people may be particularly adept at conveying stories and offering interpretations to influence perceptions of injustice. Thus, high-EI subordinates can damage managers whom they perceive as manipulative by discussing their experiences with peers (Degoey, 2000, p. 78). High-EI supervisors, on the other hand, can target opinion leaders within networks (Degoey, 2000, p. 91) with stories concerning how others have emotionally reacted to stressful events. By strategically intervening in the social construction of justice process, high-EI people can potentially nudge the organization toward defining justice and injustice along the lines that are compatible with their own interests.

6.3. *Charismatic leadership*

Emotional intelligence tends to correlate with charismatic leadership (Gardner & Stough, 2002; see Walter & Bruch, 2009, for a review). In highly competitive environments, high-EI managers may create or exploit crises in order to boost their perceptions as charismatic leaders (Pillai & Meindl, 1998). Crises foster the emergence of charismatic leaders, who then tend to be rated as more effective than leaders who emerge in non-crisis situations (Pillai, 1996) as long as the emergent leaders are able to deal with the crises and thereby reduce the stress and anxiety of the employees (Pillai & Meindl, 1998). High-EI leaders in crisis situations may appear impressively unflappable – they are able to perform charismatic behaviors even when they are feeling less than positive (Walter & Bruch, 2007).

Thus, charisma combined with high emotional intelligence provides the leader with potent tools with which to focus subordinates' attention and transform emotional experiences. Because of the dynamic nature of the appraisal process, emotions are vulnerable to reinterpretation. Anger experienced by an individual in response to a failure attributed to an external cause (a colleague who did not send a critical piece of information on time) can quickly become shame once the attribution is internalized (and the person realizes that she forgot to send the email requesting the information). Masters of emotional control, such as Jack Welch during his time as CEO of General Electric, are able to persuade people to take responsibility for their own performance, even people at the lower end of the chain of command (Byrne, 1998). When people take responsibility for their own plights, then they automatically cannot feel that their situations are unjust (Crosby, 1976, p. 91). Because of their sensitivity to emergent emotions in others, emotionally intelligent leaders, especially those possessed of charisma, are likely to be able to fine tune their interventions in others' emotional lives, choosing to intervene when causal explanations and explanatory labels are still provisional and capable of change. In this way, subordinates' angry feelings can be directed toward their own performance rather to the actions and attitudes of their supervisors and colleagues.

7. **Strategic control of emotion-laden information**

People are motivated to get along with others and to get ahead through the pursuit of status and power (Hogan & Holland, 2003). These are two basic motives for human beings. In organizations that emphasize a culture of status, power, and competition, the ego objective (getting ahead) is likely to be more important than any common objective

(getting along) (cf. Lewis, 1944, p. 115–116). In competitive organizations, the emotionally intelligent person may be able to further his or her personal agenda by managing emotions at the expense of interaction partners.

Like Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello*, emotionally intelligent people may use the acuity of emotional perception and the regulation of self and other to obtain others' trust, and thereby occupy central positions in social networks, serving as go-betweens for those not directly communicating with each other (Burt, 1992). Given familiar access to trusting interaction with others, the possibilities of malfeasance are increased (Granovetter, 1985). Under such circumstances, some individuals may seek outcomes that damage other people's prospects while enhancing their own. We discuss below the proposition that *emotionally intelligent individuals are likely to occupy central positions in organizational communication networks and are thereby able to manage the infusion of emotions into the information flow to affect others' reputations.*

7.1. Network brokerage and the control of information

Someone who occupies a strategic position in the informal or formal social network in an organization (connecting otherwise disconnected people) has the power to act as a broker in control over the flow of information between these otherwise unconnected individuals (Burt, 1992). To the extent that an individual occupies a position as a broker or go-between in the communication network, the individual may be able to distort, block or amplify rumors, gossip, and other types of emotion-laden information typically circulating within organizations. Such information can be either damaging or enhancing for other individuals.

Go-betweens can transmit information that damages rivals while minimizing, blocking, or modifying information that damages allies. The occupancy of go-between positions provides individuals opportunities for undermining – defined as directing anger, dislike, and other negative emotions toward targets (Vinokur & Van Ryn, 1993). In workplace contexts, undermining involves making people feel incompetent, withholding important information, giving the silent treatment, and spreading rumors (Duffy, Shaw, Scott, & Tepper, 2006). Undermining requires an understanding of how much information needs to be transmitted and to whom in order to produce the appropriate emotions concerning the target individual. The strategically manipulative go-between handles this delicate task of modifying reputations while minimizing the risk (to the underminer) of damaging attributions concerning gossip-mongering.

To the extent that go-betweens have EI, they are likely to direct *others'* negative emotions toward targets thereby avoiding risks to their own reputations as honest brokers. For example, by disingenuously praising a rival's uninhibited lifestyle, the go-between can avoid the appearance of being the source of negative information, but may succeed in sowing dislike among others concerning the target. Thus, from a social network perspective, the extent to which individuals are able to manage the communication flow to affect self or other's reputation is likely to be enhanced by a combination of individual network position and level of EI.

As an example of this twin process of damaging others while enhancing one's own reputation, consider the stratagem enacted at Salomon Brothers by Michael Lewis (1989, p. 187–194) who was a junior bond trader. When an opportunistic senior trader falsely claimed credit for one of Lewis's very successful bond trades, Lewis controlled his own anger in order to plot revenge. Lewis constructed a very similar trade, but, this time, did not involve the opportunist in the execution of the deal. Then Lewis made sure that the top echelon of the company (including the opportunist's boss) knew that he alone was responsible for structuring and executing the deal, which was ingeniously designed in just the same way as the previous deal. Thus, it became clear that the opportunist had taken false credit for the prior deal. The opportunist became enraged, and threatened to get Lewis fired. Lewis "feigned concern" and told the opportunist he was sorry, and that he would never do it again, that whenever he had a good idea in the future he would "be sure to run straight away and give it to him" (Lewis, 1989, p. 193). In fact, Lewis was plotting to destroy the opportunist. Lewis passed information concerning the opportunist's threat to get him fired onto the syndicate manager responsible for all of these kinds of deals, and she made sure the opportunist's hopes of promotion were quashed, and his bonus slashed. The opportunist quit the firm.

Thus, moving from the whole network to the consideration of dyadic relationships, particularly superior/subordinate relationships, we elaborate on the following core idea: *whereas managers are able to trigger strong emotions in subordinates because of their control over valued resource allocation, subordinates are able to trigger strong emotions in managers through their control over and presentation of critical information.*

Betrayal, injustice, and unfairness trigger powerful emotions in those who feel themselves wounded (Bies & Tripp, 2002). Those who are able to manipulate others' perceptions of such outrages control powerful levers. Shakespeare's

story of how Iago tricks his master Othello into believing false clues concerning Othello's wife's supposed infidelity is one famous fictional example of dyadic emotional manipulation. It is interesting to note that Iago's determination to enrage Othello derives from his own feelings of being abused by his superior. We know that high-power individuals are likely to act toward subordinates in ways that often "disregard conventions, morals, and the effects on others" (Keltner et al., 2003, p. 277). Such high-power others rely on subordinates for respect (Emerson, 1962) and for critical information (March & Simon, 1958). Thus, the stage is set for potential manipulation of emotions on both sides.

7.2. *Overrewarding and underrewarding*

An emotionally intelligent supervisor may over-reward a subordinate to take advantage of the perceived inequity on the part of the subordinate. The subordinate's feelings of guilt and gratitude in the face of unexpected and unearned beneficence can be taken advantage of by the supervisor in order to prompt the subordinate to agree to taking on unappealing, unethical, or illegal tasks. An example of this was the habit of Michael Milken to vastly over-reward employees at Drexel Burnham, such as the occasion when a new recruit from Salomon Brothers was handed a bonus of several million dollars more than he expected: the employee "sat in his chair, stunned. . . he didn't know how to express his gratitude" (Lewis, 1989, p. 209). Evidence suggests that the systematic over-rewarding of employees at Drexel Burnham was related to the expectation that employees would engage in risky or fraudulent deals (Zey, 1993, p. 114). In this scenario, the supervisor strategically over-rewards today in order to command compliance with questionable behaviors in the future. Although employees will tend to experience happiness related to receiving an undeserved reward, they will also tend to experience transient guilt consequent upon receiving a reward at the expense of others (Mikula, Scherer, & Athenstaedt, 1998; Smith, Haynes, Lazarus, & Pope, 1993).

Conversely, the high-EI supervisor may under-reward a subordinate as part of a process designed to humiliate the subordinate or to discourage the subordinate's efforts. Predictably, subordinates react with anger to perceived violations of fairness (Barclay, Skarlicki, & Pugh, 2005), and the emotionally intelligent supervisor may know how to trigger such anger without violating any formal policy. The EI of the supervisor will, we suggest, have a positive relationship with the ability to under-reward strategically in order to take advantage of the ensuing subordinate feelings of inequity.

To avoid legalistic challenges to the performance evaluation process, managers may provide apparently equitable performance evaluations. However, the difference between two individuals' performance is likely to be in the eye of the beholder in many instances, providing the emotionally intelligent manager ample opportunity to calculate just the appropriate level of diminished reward to upset a particular subordinate. A manager high in EI can, therefore, seek opportunities to visibly under-reward certain subordinates in order to trigger subordinates' feelings of being treated unfairly. Such unfair treatment can elicit anger, which in turn can increase the likelihood that the subordinate will move elsewhere in the organization or leave the organization altogether. Under-rewarding can take various forms including positioning the subordinate in the outgroup (Zalesny & Graen, 1987), differentially distributing outcomes, and preferentially applying organizational procedures. As one review of leadership theory summarized, pointing to the example of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's tactics during Britain's war with Argentina over the Falkland Islands, well-established leaders can use rhetoric and polemic to marginalize their competitors, pillory ingroup deviants, and demonize members of outgroups (Hogg, 2001, p. 191).

Unjust treatment toward a subordinate is likely to provoke anger (Levine, 1996), given that anger is driven by interpersonal violations (Averill, 1983; Smith & Lazarus, 1993). Anger can lead to withdrawal reactions, manifested as intentions to quit, and actual turnover (Bies, 1987). But perceived injustice with respect to rewards seems to be common in organizations (Rusbult, Campbell, & Price, 1990) given the prevalence of individualized agreements (i.e., I-Deals – Rousseau, Ho, & Greenberg, 2006) between managers and subordinates and evidence that managers frequently provide some subordinates but not others with special favors such as time off, extra training, and bonuses (Nadiscic, 2008). The strategic exploitation of perceptions of under-reward is fraught with peril, and requires skill in detecting and regulating others' feelings of relative deprivation.

7.3. *Equity perceptions*

Perhaps a safer strategy for managers high in EI is to exploit the inherent ambiguity of how employee inputs and outcomes are calculated and regarded. Managers can emphasize some aspects and downplay others in order to change

employee perceptions concerning equity. Whether an employee feels equitably treated depends on comparison with similar others (Adams, 1965). Consequently, a supervisor high in EI can suggest and actively emphasize specific comparisons in order to enhance or diminish an employee's feelings of deprivation (the law of comparative feeling; Frijda, 1988). A skilled supervisor, high in EI, may even be able to reverse an equity imbalance in the mind of an employee through such information manipulation and subsequent emotional reactions. Explanations and justifications provided by a supervisor can guide subordinates' justice judgments (Degoey, 2000, p. 58), and this may be particularly the case for subordinates who are relatively isolated or who have low self-esteem (Degoey, 2000, p. 70). Thus, two supervisors presented with the same set of employee inputs and outcomes can achieve quite different levels of employee motivation, depending on what aspects of contributions and rewards are emphasized and which referent others are invoked.

7.4. Supervisory silence

One potentially devastating weapon in the high-EI supervisor's armory that has received little research attention is the withholding of information rather than its manipulation. Although there is a growing literature on employee silence (e.g., Kish-Gephart, Detert, Treviño, & Edmondson, 2009), only recently has attention focused on how supervisors use silence as a political tool and weapon to exert dominance, exact revenge, and spread blame (Bies, 2009). As one vice-president confessed: "I use silence to keep my people under my control" explaining further that he does so to elicit specific emotions: "When I keep them in the dark, it keeps them *anxious* and *fearful*" (italics added; Bies, 2009, p. 163). In this specific instance, the use of silence serves the interests of the supervisor: "I don't care if they don't like it. I like it." In other instances, supervisory silence is used to keep people off balance and disoriented (Bies, 2009, p. 164).

This use of silence is related to the common organizational practice of ostracizing some employees in order to exact their compliance with managerial commands and prerogatives. As an example, consider how one manufacturing executive used ostracism to bring into line one dissenting manager: "I shut him out. No more invitations to meetings, and no more cc: on the e-mails. And then I demanded that the rest of the team also shut him out. After a week of this treatment, he got the message. Now, he is much more of a team player" (Bies, 2009, p. 165). In the hands of a skilled operator, ostracism is a powerful tool because it induces feelings of helplessness and depression in its victims (Williams, 2007).

7.5. Subordinate control of information

Relative to managers, subordinates operate from a position of lower status and less power. But managers are typically in charge of several subordinates, and rely on them for "uncertainty absorption" in terms of the reduction of masses of information to more digestible and easily comprehended formats (March & Simon, 1958). This situation presents an advantage for subordinates, who have the possibility of highlighting some and downplaying other information in order to manipulate managers' emotions. Prior research has noted that subordinates may engage in impression management and manipulation of information (e.g., Wayne & Ferris, 1990) but has not focused on the emotional processes involved.

Leaders form stronger relationships with some subordinates than with others, and preliminary evidence suggests that managers' information processing is more heuristic when information originates from subordinates who belong to the "inner circle" (Burris, Rodgers, Mannix, Hendron, & Oldroyd, 2009). In some circumstances, it may be to the advantage of a subordinate from the inner circle to present information in such a way that triggers displeasure or anger on the part of a manager toward a rival of the subordinate. This can be done through inducing negative affect (e.g., highlighting some negative aspect of this particular subordinate's work habits, outcomes, or even lifestyle). Because the information originates from a subordinate from the inner circle, the information is likely to be seen as relatively certain and, therefore, the manager is likely to process it heuristically rather than systematically (Tiedens & Linton, 2001). Further, based on mood-as-information and affect-infusion models, negative affect primed by a subordinate will facilitate managers' access to affect-congruent memory structures (e.g., Forgas, 2007). If this affect-to-cognition processing cycle is repeated, the subordinate will succeed in imprinting a desired (negative) image of his or her rival in the manager's mind.

7.6. Ingratiation

Emotionally intelligent subordinates can strategically select *what* information they present to supervisors in order to ingratiate themselves. Ingratiation involves providing to the supervisor affirming evidence, opinion and praise,

while sheltering the supervisor from counter-evidence and criticism (Westphal & Stern, 2007). Such tactics elicit positive affect and increase the supervisor's psychic indebtedness. Through processes of reciprocity, subordinates who practice ingratiation are likely to receive favorable assessments from supervisors (Vonk, 2002; Westphal & Stern, 2007). Further, ingratiation has higher chances of receiving prestigious positions (Judge & Bretz, 1994; Orpen, 1996).

Selective presentation of information may be particularly useful for subordinates of bosses who are abusive. Some bosses abuse their positions in terms of being obsessed with detail, requiring perfection, second guessing of subordinates' decisions, and over-attention to subordinates' movements (Bies & Tripp, 1998). Faced with such petty tyranny (cf. Ashforth, 1994), emotionally intelligent subordinates may provide just enough information to avoid trouble, and report successes while obscuring failures. More proactively, subordinates can withhold support from abusive bosses at critical times, overload their bosses with information in the guise of keeping them dutifully informed, and fuel the demonization of their bosses by holding private meetings to share stories and plot strategies (Bies & Tripp, 1998). This latter tactic of creating consensus among friends and acquaintances concerning the moral shortcomings of the boss may be particularly powerful in shaping intuitions concerning how future actions of the boss are interpreted (cf. Haidt, 2001).

Emotionally intelligent subordinates also know *how* to present information to take advantage of the usual correlation between the intensity of emotions and the extent to which events are urgent and important (Frijda, 1988). Emotionally intelligent subordinates are skilled at describing events in stirring terms, drawing on concrete examples and appealing metaphors rather than relying solely on statistics or rational evidence. They make use of the "vividness effect" of information for their own purpose (Fiske & Taylor, 1984), defeating sound argumentation with emotionally compelling scenarios. By invoking emotions, they distort the supervisor's perception of risk (Loewenstein, Weber, Hsee, & Welch, 2001) and thereby gain influence on the supervisor's decision making (Leone, Perugini, & Bagozzi, 2005).

Furthermore, subordinates also influence supervisors by withholding emotions. Given that emotions are triggered by events of high relevance and concern (Scherer, 2000), a supervisor may interpret a subordinate's lack of emotional expression as an indicator of the minor importance of an event. If a subordinate exudes calm or even boredom, the supervisor is likely to conclude that an event has less importance than other events that trigger subordinate alarm.

More generally, we suggest that the EI of the subordinate will have a positive relationship with the ability to detect and regulate the emotions of the supervisor for the benefit of the subordinate. Such regulation of managerial emotion by the subordinate is likely to be enhanced by the extent to which the manager is dependent on the subordinate for information concerning others. Thus, managers who occupy informal positions in social networks of advice and communication are likely to have redundant sources of information, and are, therefore, less likely to be vulnerable to the emotion-based manipulations of any particular subordinate.

8. Discussion

In this article we have put forward the idea that EI is similar to other types of intelligence and other types of abilities in facilitating people's efforts to get along and to get ahead. We have countered the overly positive treatment of EI by researchers and commentators that has imperiled EI's scientific standing (Antonakis, 2010). Despite the affective revolution and redirection of research toward emotions (Barsade, Brief, & Spataro, 2003), little has been done to investigate the dark side of EI. Most research presumes emotions arise spontaneously and neglects "the benefits of emotion as a weapon" (Welcher, Gioia, & Kilduff, 2000, p. 1198). But an earlier tradition of micro-sociological theorizing did emphasize the strategic manipulation and control of emotion (Goffman, 1969, p. 10). The expert manipulators in Goffman's world of move and countermove are skilled at winking out rivals' hidden emotions all the while displaying a range of misleading emotions such as self-disbelieved enthusiasm. Bringing Goffman into the conversation concerning EI in organizational settings helps direct our attention to the dark arts of emotion dissimulation and manipulation.

Relatively early in the history of the EI construct, the capacity for Iago-type manipulative behavior was recognized: "on the negative side, those whose skills are channeled antisocially may create manipulative scenes or lead others sociopathically to nefarious ends" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 198). In the flood of subsequent theorizing there have been few mentions of this dark side of EI (but see: Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000; Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; Härtel & Panipucci, 2007; Mayer, 2001) and empirical studies of emotion manipulation are even rarer (see Austin, Farrelly,

Black, & Moore, 2007 for an exception). Thus, the ideas presented here concerning both strategic and manipulative behavior contrast with the standard account of EI.

This is not to say we believe people high in EI (relative to those low in EI) are necessarily more prone to unethical behavior. Poker players who discern the emotions of competitors and who disguise their own emotions are likely to win more hands and make more money. Their strategic behavior tells us nothing about their moral qualities. Similarly, those organizational participants who are skilled at discerning and acting upon the emotional undercurrents in organizations are likely, we suggest, to get ahead. Given competitive pressures, people do the best they can with the skills and abilities they possess.

Could the use of EI to get ahead be beneficial in the broader scheme of organizational functioning? Leadership scholars have speculated that the higher an employee climbs in the organizational hierarchy, the more important are emotional abilities (e.g., Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; George, 2000; Mayer & Caruso, 2002), although empirical support for these claims remains scarce (Brief & Weiss, 2002). It seems plausible that the self-serving use of EI by ambitious individuals at lower levels could culminate in the promotion of emotionally astute and politically-savvy individuals to leadership posts. To have such leadership guile at the disposal of the focal organization could help prevent the kind of naïve acceptance of expressed emotions by leaders of other organizations described by Goffman (1969). The caveat, here, is, of course, that employees and other stakeholders would suffer if a wily leader used strategic emotional skills to pursue personal agendas rather than the goals of the organization (Kish-Gephart, Harrison, & Treviño, 2010; Treviño, Weaver, & Brown, 2008).

Indeed, we need to acknowledge that emotional misconduct is similar to malfeasance in that it is likely to remain in the collective memory of the organization. Simply advancing one's own career without considering the effects on others is likely to harm an individual's reputation. High-EI individuals are likely to pursue their strategic endeavors in the guise of good citizenship behaviors that seemingly benefit others. They are likely to avoid the open acknowledgment or appearance that their behaviors are motivated by self-interest. The ability to positively reappraise one's own strategic actions may well be a necessary concomitant to the successful pursuit of advantage.

Getting ahead involves leaving others behind. Can EI help people handle the process of disengagement from relationships with those stranded further down the promotion ladder? Too much heartfelt compassion and empathy for others might threaten the strategic pursuit of advantage. High-EI individuals are likely to be able to regulate feelings of compassion, guilt, and remorse so that the expression of such emotions serves the overriding goal of getting ahead.

Of course, as people advance in organizational careers, their strategic endeavors involve other ambitious, talented people, who themselves are likely to possess unusual skills and abilities. Like expert politicians, top-level executives may find themselves in the company of other emotionally-savvy game players skilled at emotion regulation and expression. Having climbed the ladder by strategically influencing the emotions of those with low levels of EI (cf. Sy, Tram, & O'Hara, 2006), high-EI executives may find it difficult to manipulate the emotions of those with similar abilities to themselves (DeSteno & Braverman, 2002), and may resort to coalition building to advance their interests. Indeed, emotionally intelligent individuals may be particularly skilled at forming such coalitions (George, 2000; Kellett, Humphrey, & Sleeth, 2006; Koman & Wolff, 2008). This suggests that EI research can be extended to include dyadic, group, and organizational levels (Côté, 2007; Elfenbein, Foo, Boldry, & Tan, 2006; Huy, 2002; Menges & Bruch, 2009).

8.1. *Boundary conditions*

A number of boundary conditions are likely to accentuate the presence of the tendencies we presented in this article, and deserve investigation. Organizations differ in their preference for internal competition versus collaboration, and they attune their human resource practices accordingly (Toh, Morgeson, & Campion, 2008). Highly competitive internal promotion procedures and merit-based pay, for example, are likely to stimulate some of the self-serving behaviors we discussed. Collaborative practices, such as parity-based performance assessment procedures and group incentives, may limit the degree to which emotionally intelligent individuals can play out their skills for their personal benefit. Another boundary condition for the use of EI in organizations is the culture of the organization (Pizer & Härtel, 2005). In some cultures, emotion expression is part of everyday behavior (Martin et al., 1998), whereas in others, affect is likely to be restricted by bureaucratic routines, (Sanchez-Burks, 2005). Emotion regulation and control is likely to operate differently in these different contexts.

There is evidence that an attraction – selection – attrition process results in relatively homogenous personality profiles within organizations (Schneider, Smith, Taylor, & Fleenor, 1998). This process applies to emotional

intelligence, with some organizations being more capable than others of recruiting and retaining employees with high levels of emotional intelligence (Menges & Bruch, 2009). In organizations in which many people are high in emotional intelligence, the manipulation and control of emotions for devious ends is likely to be more difficult than in organizations in which high levels of emotional intelligence are relatively rare.

The strategies outlined in this article may be particularly relevant for some types of individuals more than others. People with relatively low cognitive ability can use high emotional intelligence to compensate for their cognitive decrements (cf. Côté & Miners, 2006). Further, the co-occurrence of EI with other personal attributes and abilities, such as trustworthiness (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995), self-monitoring (Snyder, 1987) and political skill (Ferris et al., 2005; Mintzberg, 1983; Momm et al., 2010), may amplify the effectiveness of the tactics we discussed.

In this article, we have provided an outline of the kinds of tactics that are likely to characterize the strategic application of emotional intelligence. We have refrained from discussing the plethora of discrete emotions that fuel the interactions between supervisors and subordinates and their rivals. The list could extend to love and hate, revenge and devotion, joy and jealousy, disgust and adoration. All these emotions are inherently social, emerging from the interaction between people (Hareli & Parkinson, 2008) and shaping the power structures in relationships (Clark, 1990; Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Kemper, 1990). The emotionally intelligent individual is likely to comprehend the wide repertoire of emotions and their effects. Much research remains to be done to understand how each of these discrete emotions might be strategically employed toward self-serving ends.

9. Conclusion

Despite recent clarifications of EI as a construct and as a process (Cherniss, 2010; Joseph & Newman, 2010), strong doubts continue to be expressed concerning how the overly-positive celebration of EI can be compatible with scientific norms of research (Antonakis, 2010). In this article, we present a new vein of theorizing. Whereas previous work focused almost exclusively on prosocial and positive aspects of this important set of skills, we redress the balance by exploring the dark side. To the extent that EI as a concept is pried away from its association with desirable moral qualities insisted upon in the popular press (see the discussion in Matthews, Emo, Roberts, & Zeidner, 2006), the scope for interesting research is likely to be expanded. We have shown that the strategic disguise of one's own emotions and the manipulation of others' emotions for strategic ends are behaviors evident not only on Shakespeare's stage but also in the offices and corridors where power and influence are traded.

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