Human Performance

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Managing Emotions During Team Problem Solving: Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution

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Although the potential links between emotional intelligence and performance continue to garner interest, few empirical studies have examined this phenomenon. The influence of emotional intelligence on team performance is of particular interest to researchers and practitioners as teamwork becomes more prevalent in organizations. In this article, we examine the utility of emotional intelligence for predicting individual performance, team performance, and conflict resolution styles. Three-hundred-and-fifty respondents working in 108 teams were administered a measure of team members' emotional intelligence. Participants then completed a problem-solving task, individually and as a team member, and afterwards reflected on the conflict resolution tactics used to achieve the team outcome. In line with expectations, emotional intelligence indicators were positively linked with team performance and were differentially linked to conflict resolution methods. Limitations and implications for future research are also discussed.

A growing number of writers suggest emotional intelligence contributes to work performance (Cherniss & Adler, 2001; Goleman, 1998; Huy, 1999; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000). At the same time, some researchers have begun to specifically consider the impact of emotional intelligence on performance in teams (Druskat & Wolff, 2001; Jordan, Ashkanasy, Härtel, & Hooper, 2002). The premise for linking emotional intelligence to team performance is that high emotional intelligence enables team members to manage and be aware of their own emotions and the emotions of other team members. Emotional awareness and emotional management abilities have important consequences for team performance, as these

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abilities help maintain effective and appropriate relationships with fellow workers. In turn, the enhanced relationships that emerge contribute to better information exchange and decision making in teams (Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999). The ability to be aware of and manage emotions is also thought to facilitate functional, rather than dysfunctional, conflict resolution and consequently contribute to better team performance (Borisoff & Victor, 1998; Jordan & Troth, 2002).

Although the role of functional conflict in achieving higher performance is well documented (see Pelled et al., 1999), there is currently no empirical evidence regarding the role of emotional intelligence in achieving better performance during conflict resolution. Furthermore, only a single study exists examining emotional intelligence and team performance links (Jordan et al., 2002). To explore these relationships in greater detail, the aim of this study is to empirically determine the effect emotional intelligence has on successful individual and team problem-solving performance. The study also examines the impact of specific conflict resolution strategies on individual and team problem-solving performance and determine if there is a link between emotional intelligence and different conflict resolution strategies.

We expect, in line with the general assertion put forward by emotional intelligence scholars, that teams composed of individuals with high emotional intelligence will be more effective in resolving conflict than teams of individuals with low emotional intelligence (Druskat & Wolff, 2001; Jordan et al., 2002). We also predict that teams with greater collective emotional intelligence will perform at higher levels than teams with lower collective emotional intelligence.

EMOTIONS AND WORK

Although there has been considerable research conducted into team performance over a substantial period (Belbin, 1981; Beyerlein, Johnson, & Beyerlein, 1997), interest regarding the role of emotions in organizations has been much more recent (e.g., Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Ashkanasy, Härtel, & Zerbe, 2000). Existing research into emotions in the workplace has focused on issues such as emotional labor (Hochschild, 1979), emotional expression and organizational culture (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989), organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990), feelings in work settings (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987), emotions and work motivation (e.g., George & Brief, 1992, 1996), general mood and work satisfaction (Forgas, 1995), and the type of emotions experienced at work (Fisher, 2000). Emotions have also been shown to determine affect-driven behaviors such as impulsive acts, organizational citizenship behaviors, and transient effort (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). In the main, however, this work has focused on the role of emotion as it influences the attitudes and behaviors of individual workers.

In terms of the links between emotion and work in teams, there has been significantly less research. Building on original work by Barsade and Gibson (1998), Kelly and Barsade (2001) developed a model for understanding the effect of emotion on work teams. In their model, Kelly and Barsade proposed the existence of group emotion, a phenomenon that emerges from the individual group members' emotional traits and the context in which the group works. In this article, we examine individual team members' emotional abilities to determine the impact these have on team performance during a problem-solving task.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

In the early 1990s, Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined the *emotional intelligence construct* as involving the ability of an individual to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among the positive and negative effects of emotion, and to use emotional information to guide one's thinking and actions. In later work, Mayer and Salovey (1997) argued that emotional intelligence is differentiated from other forms of intelligence (e.g., Gardner's, 1983, constructs of interpersonal or intrapersonal intelligence), because it deals specifically with the management of emotions and emotional content. Although there is broad agreement that emotional awareness and emotional control are core factors of emotional intelligence, there is also disagreement over other factors that contribute to the construct (Mayer et al., 2000). For instance, Mayer and Salovey's conceptualization of emotional intelligence focuses on emotional abilities that link emotion and cognition, whereas Goleman's (1995) broader definition incorporates social and emotional competencies including some personality traits and attitudes. Recently, the Mayer and Salovey model of emotional intelligence was identified as the most appropriate model for research purposes (Jordan, Ashkanasy, & Härtel, 2003), as their model of emotional intelligence clearly conforms to three criteria identified by Sternberg (1985) as being required to distinguish an intelligence. Mayer and Salovey's model reflects behavior in the real world, it is purposive and directed toward goals, and it involves the automation of high-level processes (crystallized intelligence).

This study adopts Mayer and Salovey's (1997) model of emotional intelligence that encompasses (a) perception, (b) assimilation, (c) understanding, and (d) management of emotions. This model emphasizes that emotional intelligence is a multidimensional construct and that these four steps are iterative in that each factor contributes to the development of other factors. *Perception* refers to an ability to be self-aware of emotions and to express emotions and emotional needs accurately to others. A part of this self-awareness is the ability to distinguish between accurate and inaccurate expressions of emotions and honest and dishonest expressions of emotions. *Assimilation* refers to an individual's ability to use emotions to prioritize thinking by focusing on important information that explains why feelings are be-

ing experienced. This factor also includes the ability to adopt multiple perspectives to assess a problem from all sides, including pessimistic and optimistic perspectives. *Understanding*, the third component of emotional intelligence, refers to an individual's ability to understand complex emotions such as simultaneous feelings of loyalty and anger. This factor also refers to an ability to recognize the likely transitions between emotions—for example, moving from feelings of betrayal to feelings of anger and grief. Finally, *emotional management* revolves around the regulation of emotions—that is, an individual's ability to connect or disconnect from an emotion depending on its usefulness in any given situation. For example, when faced with what is perceived as a personal injustice during a conflict episode, an individual's feelings of anger may motivate or distract them from resolving the conflict. The individual with high emotional intelligence would be aware of their anger, be able to connect to their anger, and regulate it to motivate their behavior constructively. On the other hand, an individual with low emotional intelligence may not be aware of their emotions or the source of these emotions and allow anger to consume their thoughts and dwell on the injustice that may have precipitated their anger in the first place. Each of these emotional abilities has implications for how individuals perform in teams and, in particular, how they resolve conflict.

Some of the emotional intelligence abilities described previously have been shown capable of influencing workplace behaviors. For instance, self-awareness contributes to a leader's performance (Sosik & Megerian, 1999), whereas emotional regulation is considered a prerequisite for maintaining relationships in the workplace (Martin, Knopoff, & Beckman, 1998). Measures of emotional intelligence have also been linked to performance in managerial inbox tests (Daus & Tuholski, 2000) and performance in selection interviews (Fox & Spector, 2000). In contributing to this research, we expect that various components of emotional intelligence will influence an employee's ability to perform in teamwork. Specifically, we anticipate that emotional intelligence will influence the problem-solving performance of teams through individual team members' ability to successfully resolve conflict.

To make sure that emotional intelligence is the factor that influences performance in our research program, we set a cognitive problem-solving task that was initially completed by individuals and then by teams. The task set was a cognitive problem and therefore, we predicted, in line with Mayer and Salovey (1997), who noted that there should be a difference between general intelligence and emotional intelligence:

> H1: Emotional intelligence will not predict the performance of individuals in undertaking the cognitive problem-solving task.

In developing this hypothesis, we acknowledge that researchers argue that null hypothesis testing is detrimental to research (Kluger & Tikochinsky, 2001). Other researchers, however, argue that a null hypothesis can provide a basis on which to

progress research (Wainer, 1999). Indeed, Wainer offered several examples across a range of disciplines in which null hypothesis testing would result in major contributions to knowledge. In this study, this hypothesis assists in determining whether a relationship between cognitive intelligence and emotional intelligence exists and thus allows further relationships to be explored. This conforms to Frick's (1995) criteria for accepting the null hypothesis, which include that the null hypothesis is possible, that results confirm this hypothesis, and that the study is well designed to find an effect.

TEAM PERFORMANCE AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

As noted earlier, there has been extensive research to show that teams perform better than individuals in a broad range of tasks (Belbin, 1981; Beyerlein et al., 1997). In previous studies examining the difference between individual performance and team performance, research has shown that the synergy and shared experiences that team members contribute to problem solving within teams contributes to higher performance (Dyer, 1987). In line with these findings, we also predict that

H2: Teams will perform better than individuals on the problem-solving task.

Druskat and Wolff (2001) noted that the majority of the discussion about emotional intelligence revolves around individual competencies. They also pointed out the majority of tasks in organizations are generally completed by teams; in other words, tasks are completed by groups of individuals who share a sense of commitment to completing a task and who strive for synergy (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Finally, they argued that team emotional intelligence is more complex than individual emotional intelligence, as team emotional intelligence involves an array of emotional interactions at the individual and group levels as well as beyond the boundaries of that team. Unfortunately, little empirical evidence is given to support these assertions.

In the only empirical study to date regarding the role of emotions in achieving team performance, Jordan et al. (2002) explored the link between emotional intelligence and longitudinal performance in teams. This research tested the notion that teams composed of individuals with high emotional intelligence outperformed teams composed of individuals with low emotional intelligence. A particularly interesting finding was that work teams with lower average emotional intelligence initially performed at a lower level than high emotional intelligence teams. Over the 10 weeks of the study, however, low emotional intelligence teams eventually achieved the same level of performance as high emotional intelligence teams. Jor-

dan and his colleagues speculated that the training teams received during this period might have contributed to this performance improvement (Jordan et al., 2002).

We believe conflict will emerge in the teams during the problem-solving exercise because of the different ideas and opinions individuals bring to the group task. These differences produce emotions arising from perceptions of threat to individual or group goals (Borisoff & Victor, 1998). In line with the theoretical literature on the benefits of high emotional intelligence in teams (Druskatt & Wolff, 2001), teams with high emotional intelligence will be better able to resolve these differences, and this will contribute to better performance. Therefore, we predict that

H3: Teams with higher average levels of emotional intelligence will perform better than teams with lower average levels of emotional intelligence on the problem-solving task.

In the next section, we develop a link between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution as one possible explanation for the higher performance of emotionally intelligent work teams. In identifying a link between superior team performance and high emotional intelligence, we propose that emotional intelligence has a role in influencing functional conflict outcomes in teams.

CONFLICT, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, AND PERFORMANCE

Research into the role of conflict within groups shows that dysfunctional or unresolved recurring conflict has a destructive and negative impact on team performance, whereas functional or constructively resolved conflict is conducive to team and organizational performance (Brown, 1983; Schulz-Hardt, Jochims, & Frey, 2002; Tjosvold, 1997). Indeed, organizations where functional conflict is a part of the culture tend to be more creative and responsive to clients, report better performance, and benefit from improved decision making because different ideas and opinions can be expressed and resolved openly (Jehn & Chatman, 2000). How well conflict is managed also has been shown to be a crucial factor in the performance of virtual teams (Montoya-Weiss, Massey, & Song, 2001), cross-functional teams (Trimmer, 2001), and management teams (Amason, Thompson, Hochwarter, & Harrison, 1995).

We put forward the notion in this article that all conflict (functional or dysfunctional) is inherently emotional because it involves the perception of threats to individual or group goals. As a result, we expect that emotional intelligence will be linked to conflict management in groups. More specifically, we expect that individuals (and teams) who have higher levels of emotional intelligence will resolve

conflict more productively when compared to their counterparts (with lower emotional intelligence).

In categorizing conflict responses, Thomas (1977) identified the following five styles of conflict resolution that are determined by how cooperative (concerned for others) and assertive (concerned for self) an individual is in a conflict situation: (a) *dominating* or *competing*, a focus on winning the conflict; (b) *avoiding*, withdrawing from a conflict and allowing the other party to gain all demands; (c) *accommodating*, allowing others to win in a conflict situation; (d) *compromising*, based on giving concessions; and (e) *collaborating* or *integrating*, seeking mutually advantageous gains by both parties. Other conflict researchers (e.g., Rahim, 1983) confirmed these five main conflict resolution styles.

Examining the role of conflict within groups, Tannen (1994) found that workers were generally dissatisfied in situations where one party dominates working relationships. Both Tannen and Kuhn and Poole (2000) suggested that conflict resolved through competition or avoidance has negative consequences for ongoing working relationships and, consequently, work performance. As our earlier discussion regarding emotional intelligence factors indicates, we believe such conflict resolution behaviors may emerge from an individual's inability to be aware of, control, and manage their emotions. If maintaining relationships is an important outcome for emotionally intelligent teams (Druskat & Wolff, 2001), then we expect individuals (and teams) with lower levels of emotional intelligence to report greater use of these negative conflict behaviors that jeopardize relationships in the team performance task in this study. Therefore, we predict that

H4a: Teams with lower average levels of emotional intelligence will be more likely to adopt avoidance conflict resolution patterns compared with teams with higher average levels of emotional intelligence.

H4b: Teams with lower average levels of emotional intelligence will be more likely to adopt dominance conflict resolution patterns compared with teams with higher average levels of emotional intelligence.

On the other hand, Poole and Roth (1989) and Putnam (1986) argued that a more collaborative style in teams will result in superior outcomes because it encourages more open discussion and cooperation among members that will help the team synthesize information to derive a common solution. Goleman (1998) also suggested individuals with high emotional intelligence will have superior conflict resolution skills and engage in greater collaboration where emotions are both controlled and generated to develop new solutions that satisfy both parties' needs. Indeed, recent research by Jordan and Troth (2002) found a positive link between collaboration as a preferred style of conflict resolution and high individual emotional intelligence. Given recent research has shown that the emotion-

ally intelligent individual has a preference for collaborative conflict resolution strategies (Jordan & Troth, 2002), we predict that

H5: Teams with higher average levels of emotional intelligence will be more likely to report adopting collaborating (integrating) conflict resolution patterns compared with teams with lower average levels of emotional intelligence.

Finally, it is important to note that Jamieson and Thomas (1974) showed compromise or accommodation were appropriate and acceptable conflict resolution behaviors when time and resources are limited and the issue is not important. For the emotionally intelligent individual in this study, we recognize the possibility that compromise or accommodation might be an appropriate response during the performance task and may be a sign of their ability to recognize and regulate their emotions to enhance their relationship with fellow workers and to achieve their goals within a limited timeframe. We make no predictions for the use of compromise or accommodation, as this is likely to be a contingency conflict resolution pattern used only if all others failed.

To further explore group conflict and its possible links to emotional intelligence, this study also draws on Jehn and Chatman's (2000) delineation of task and relationship conflict within groups. Whereas *task conflict* describes disagreement about the work that is being done in the group, *relationship conflict* involves disagreements based on personal and social issues that are not related to work. The work by Jehn (1995) has lead many to argue that task conflict can have positive effects on team performance, whereas relationship conflict generally decreases satisfaction and interferes with task performance. In many ways this is analogous to the functional and dysfunctional conflict dichotomy discussed earlier (e.g., Simons & Peterson, 2000).

Although there has been some recent debate in the literature (see De Dreu & Weingart, 2003) about whether task conflict contributes positively to group performance, this data is not yet definitive. Indeed, these researchers (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Schulz-Hardt, Jochims, & Frey, 2002) conceded that task conflict is most likely to have a positive effect when the indicator of group performance is decision-making quality. As the team performance measure in this study is a decision-making task, we expect that task conflict will be conducive to group performance and positively linked to emotional intelligence. Based on earlier research that demonstrated that emotionally intelligent teams will be more goal focused (Jordan et al., 2002), we predict that

H6: Teams with higher average levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to experience task conflict than teams with lower average levels of emotional intelligence during the problem-solving task.

On the other hand, we expect relationship conflict to have a negative impact on group performance. The cognitive nature of the task and the short timeframe for completion of the task mitigate against the need for relationship conflict (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). Consequently, in line with Jehn's (1995) findings that relationship conflict can detract from performance, we predict that relationship conflict will be negatively linked to emotional intelligence:

H7: Teams with higher average levels of emotional intelligence will experience less relationship conflict than teams with lower average levels of emotional intelligence during the problem-solving task.

To summarize, research to date has shown that conflict, if managed correctly, can contribute to performance in teams. The research, however, has not explored in any detail the emotional element involved in conflict resolution. Although task conflict has been portrayed as a cognitive phenomenon, relationship conflict has an inferred emotional dimension. Our research explores this in greater detail and seeks to determine the impact of emotional intelligence on conflict resolution strategies during a problem-solving exercise. Therefore, our research moves beyond an examination of the emotional intelligence–conflict link at the individual level and examines links between emotional intelligence and conflict behaviors when making decisions within teams.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study were 350 university students working in 108 teams enrolled in an introductory management course. Although some teams were composed of 4 or 5 members, the modal and mean number of team members for the total sample was 3 and 3.20, respectively. The team size was made small intentionally for two reasons. The first reason was to minimize the possibility of social loafing, a phenomenon that occurs in larger groups (George, 1995), and the second reason was to control for the effects of differential team size when comparing performance between teams. Random allocation also ensured team members were working together for the first time. The average age of the respondents was 23.05 years (ranging from 17 to 53 years), with 51.1% being female. The majority of students (75.6%) reported having full-time (34.6%) or part-time (41%) work experience.

Measures

Emotional intelligence.   Emotional intelligence was assessed by asking participants to complete the self-reporting section of the Workgroup Emotional Intelligence Profile–Version 6 (WEIP6; Jordan, 2000). A self-reporting measure of emotional intelligence was chosen for two reasons. The first reason was that more complex measures such as the Mayer, Salovey, Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitareneios, 2001) were time consuming to administer. The second reason was that the WEIP provides a situational measure of group emotional intelligence (a measure that seeks to examine emotional intelligence displayed when working in groups rather than a general measure) that was appropriate for this study. The measure employs a 7-point response format ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), with items encouraging reflection on one's own behavior, such as "I am aware of my own feelings when working in a team" and "I am able to describe accurately the way others in the team are feeling." The WEIP6 captures the two dimensions of emotional intelligence: Ability to Deal with Own Emotions (Scale 1: 18 items) and Ability to Deal with Others' Emotions (Scale 2: 12 items) discerned by Jordan et al. (2002). Alpha reliability coefficients of .79 (Self) and .80 (Other) were adequate, and the two scales were significantly correlated at $r = .43$, $p < .01$.

Scales 1 and 2 can further be delineated into 5 subscales. Scale 1 is composed of the subscales Ability to Recognize Own Emotions (Perception; 5 items, $\alpha = .75$), Ability to Discuss Own Emotions (Knowledge/Assimilation; 5 items, $\alpha = .78$), and Ability to Manage Own Emotions (8 items, $\alpha = .71$). Scale 2 is composed of the subscales Ability to Recognize Others' Emotions (Perception; 7 items, $\alpha = .80$) and Ability to Manage Others' Emotions (5 items, $\alpha = .77$). These scales conform to Mayer and Salovey's (1997) description of the emotional intelligence construct (Jordan et al., 2002).

Team emotional intelligence was measured by calculating the average of scores on the WEIP6 for all team members. This method of calculating team emotional intelligence was based on research that shows the weaknesses of individuals in a team are generally moderated by the strengths of other team members (Stout, Salas, & Fowlkes, 1997).

Performance.   Participants were asked to complete a survival situation exercise (Lafferty & Eady, 1973) in which they were asked to rank 15 items according to their importance for survival. The item ranked Number 1 should be the most important item, and Item 15 should be the least important item. The quality of the decision is derived by comparing the participant's score and an expert score derived from the consensus among a group of survival experts. This type of performance measure has been used in a broad range of research, including examinations of team members' relative contribution in teams (Harris & Barnes-Farrell, 1997),

communication in teams (Innami, 1994), and resistance in groups (Haunschild, Moreland, & Murrell, 1994). The lower the summed difference scores between individual and expert rankings, the better an individual's performance. The lower the summed difference scores between team and expert rankings, the better a team's performance. In essence, higher scores indicate divergence from the survival experts' score and therefore reflect poorer performance. To assist in the interpretation of correlational data relating to performance in our study, we have reversed the signs of the correlations so that positive correlations predict better performance. The means and standard deviations of the performance measure for both individuals and teams conform to the results in previous research (Harris & Barnes-Farrell, 1997; Haunschild et al., 1994; Innami, 1994).

Conflict resolution.   Rahim's (1983) Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict measure was used to assess the tactics participants individually employed to resolve team differences during the problem-solving exercise. This widely used instrument consists of 15 items that differentiate styles of handling conflict in organizations along two basic dimensions: (a) *concern for self* (high or low), the extent to which a person attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns; and (b) *concern for others* (high or low), the extent to which a person wants to satisfy the concerns of others. The measure is scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*rarely*) to 5 (*always*) indicating the conflict tactics used to resolve conflict during the performance exercise. Items include "I argued my case with group members to show the merits of my position" and "I tried to hold onto my solution of the problem." The 15 items tap one of five conflict resolution styles: *integrating* (collaborating—high concern for self and others), *obliging* (accommodating—low concern for self and high concern for others), *compromising* (intermediate in both concern for self and others), *dominating* (competing— high concern for self and low concern for others), and *avoiding* (low concern for self and others). In this study, alpha reliability coefficients of .70 (dominating and avoiding) and .71 (integrating) were adequate. Although previous research indicated that the five scales were reliable (Rahim, 1983), in our research alpha reliability coefficients of .59 (compromising) and .46 (obliging) were unacceptable, and therefore these scales were dropped from further analysis. We calculated the average score on each of the conflict scales for all team members to assess team-level usage of conflict resolution tactics.

Conflict at the team level was also assessed using Jehn's (1995) 8-item Intragroup Conflict Scale, which differentiates between relationship and task conflict in groups. Relationship conflict involves disagreements based on personal and social issues that are not related to work. Task conflict describes disagreement about the work that is being done in the group. This measure asks participants to report on the amount and type of conflict they believe existed in their team during the performance exercise on a 5-point Likert scale anchored by 1 (*none*) and 5 (*a lot*). Four items measured relationship conflict—for example, "How much tension

was there among members of your group?" An example of the four items measuring task conflict included "How often did people in your group disagree about opinions regarding the task being done?" The alpha reliability coefficients for relationship and task conflict were .85 and .82, respectively.

Procedure

Initially, participants completed the emotional intelligence measure and individually undertook the problem-solving survival exercise. Participants were then randomly allocated into teams by the researchers and given 15 min to complete the same problem-solving task as a team. Teams were asked to make a group decision by agreeing on the order of importance of the 15 items. Although some teams easily completed the task in the allotted time, other teams found it difficult to complete the exercise in time. No extensions were given to these teams, and they were placed under pressure with a couple of minutes remaining to complete the exercise in the allotted time. After completing the team exercise, participants were asked to separately complete the conflict measures that asked them to reflect on their own and the team's conflict behavior during the team survival exercise. The ranking given by the individuals and the teams were then compared with several survival "experts'" ranking of the items (Lafferty & Eady, 1973) to determine the best- and worst-performing individuals and teams.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations for the WEIP6 scales, conflict scales, and problem-solving performance task at the individual level. As expected, significant positive correlations were found between an individual's ability to deal with their own emotions (Scale 1), ability to deal with others' emotions (Scale 2), and the total WEIP6 scale.

Table 1 reveals no significant links between the emotional intelligence indicators and individual performance and confirms the prediction made in Hypothesis 1. In terms of the conflict resolution styles adopted by individuals during the team exercise, an investigation of the means shows that integration (collaboration) was the preferred style of conflict resolution for individuals during the team problem-solving task. Table 1 also indicates that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence (WEIP6), or more specifically, with a greater ability to deal with their own (Scale 1) and others' (Scale 2) emotions, perceived that they used more integrative (collaborative) tactics when resolving differences during the team task than their counterparts. This reflects previous research findings (Jordan & Troth, 2002). Although the total WEIP6 scores and dealing with one's own emotions (Scale 1) was negatively correlated with avoidance, no significant correlation

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for WEIP6 Scales, Conflict, and Performance for Individuals[a]

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Dealing with Own Emotions	76.74	9.30	(0.79)						
2 Deal with Others' Emotions	38.73	5.88	0.43**	(0.80)					
3 WEIP6 total	115.47	13.16	0.92**	0.78**	(0.80)				
4 Dominate	2.46	0.82	0.13*	0.22**	0.19**	(0.70)			
5 Integrate	3.41	0.85	0.38**	0.20**	0.35**	0.29**	(0.71)		
6 Avoid	2.08	0.96	−0.16*	−0.03	−0.12*	0.10	0.03	(0.70)	
7 Performance–Individual	61.67	12.71	0.08	0.06	0.08	0.16**	0.06	−0.07	—

Note. WEIP6 = Workgroup Emotional Intelligence Profile–Version 6. Alpha reliability in parentheses.
[a]$n = 350$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

emerged between avoidance and dealing with others' emotions (Scale 2). Table 1 also shows that participants who performed better individually on the problem-solving task perceived that they were more likely to use dominating (competing) strategies in the subsequent group condition.

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations and correlations for the WEIP6 indicators, conflict scales, and the problem-solving performance task at the team level of analyses. In support of Hypothesis 2, teams ($M = 53.14$) performed better than individuals ($M = 61.67$) on the problem-solving task, $t(348) = 12.01$, $p < .001$, with higher scores indicating poorer performance. In line with Hypothesis 3, teams with higher average levels of emotional intelligence (WEIP6) performed better than teams with lower average levels of emotional intelligence. Although the ability of team members to deal with their own emotions (Scale 1) was linked to higher team performance, their ability to manage others' emotions (Scale 2) was not linked to performance on the team task.

Examining specific conflict resolution strategies used during the team problem-solving exercise, the results show that there was a negative correlation between avoidance and the ability to deal with one's own emotions (Scale 1), but not with the ability to deal with others' emotions (Scale 2). Hypothesis 4a is therefore partially supported. There was, however, no relationship between high emotional intelligence and dominance in the team condition. Hypothesis 4b is therefore not supported. The data also reveals that teams with high average emotional intelligence used integration (collaboration) as their preferred style of conflict resolution and supports Hypothesis 5.

In terms of Hypotheses 6 and 7, the pattern of correlations showed no significant links between emotional intelligence and measures of the type of conflict experienced (task or relationship) or between the types of conflict experienced and team performance. Hypotheses 6 and 7 are therefore not supported. There was, however, a strong link between dominance (competing) as a style of conflict resolution and task and relationship conflict.

Given Scale 1 (Ability to Deal with Own Emotions) emerged as a significant predictor of team performance, a regression analysis was conducted to assess the relative importance of the subscales of this dimension in predicting team performance (see Table 3). Entry of the subscales—awareness of own emotions (perception), discussion of own emotions (knowledge/assimilation), and management of own emotions—significantly predicted team performance. Closer examination of the beta weights showed team scores on both discussion of own emotions and management of own emotions emerged as significant predictors. Low scores on discussion of own emotions and high scores on management of own emotions were associated with greater performance for teams. Awareness of own emotions did not emerge as a significant predictor. With $R^2 = .13$ and Adj$R^2 = .10$, the overall regression equation was statistically significant, $F(3, 104) = 4.97$, $p < .001$.

TABLE 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for WEIP6 Scales, Conflict, and Performance for Teams[a]

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Dealing with own emotions	76.84	5.88	(0.79)								
2 Deal with others' emotions	38.81	3.65	0.53**	(0.80)							
3 WEIP6 total	115.65	8.39	0.93**	0.80**	(0.80)						
4 Task conflict	2.36	0.66	0.00	−0.01	0.00	(0.82)					
5 Relationship conflict	1.64	0.60	−0.07	−0.05	−0.08	0.82**	(0.85)				
6 Dominate	2.45	0.48	0.08	0.15	0.12	0.61**	0.50**	(0.70)			
7 Avoid	2.09	0.64	−0.23*	−0.03	−0.17	0.04	0.15	0.04	(0.70)		
8 Integrate	3.43	0.53	0.49**	0.25**	0.45**	−0.03	−0.02	0.21*	0.09	(0.71)	
9 Performance–Team	53.14	12.75	0.26**	0.13	0.24*	−0.08	−0.13	0.02	−0.17	0.11	—

Note. WEIP6 = Workgroup Emotional Intelligence Profile–Version 6. Alpha reliability in parentheses.
[a]$n = 108$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

TABLE 3
Prediction of Team Performance with
Awareness, Discussion (Knowledge), and
Management of Own Emotions as
Independent Variables

Variable	β
Awareness of own emotions	0.13
Discussion of own emotions	−0.20[*]
Management of own emotions	0.31[**]
$F(3, 104) = 4.97**$	
$R^2 = 0.13$	
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.10$	

[*]$p < .05$. [**]$p < .01$.

DISCUSSION

As anticipated, no link was found between emotional intelligence and performance at the individual level (Hypothesis 1). The primary explanation for this is that the performance task, when completed individually, was purely cognitive in nature. Emotional management skills were not required for optimal individual performance. This outcome suggests that not all tasks benefit from emotional intelligence, a notion that is supported by Daus and Tuholski (2000) in research regarding the link between emotional intelligence and performance on managerial inbox tests. Another interesting finding to emerge from this initial analysis was the link between high achievement on the problem-solving task for individuals and their perceived preference for dominance as a method of dealing with the team task. It appears that those who were successful in the initial exercise were confident in their abilities and sought to dominate when in a team.

Although the task at the individual level was highly cognitive, the transfer of the task to a team condition introduced an emotional element as the result of conflict over differing opinions and ideas. As we have argued earlier, even task conflict can be emotional if there is a threat to individual goals or to self-esteem (in this case, having the right answer). The fact that there was a significant difference between group and individual performance on the task (Hypothesis 2) indicates that changes to individual decisions occurred in the group condition. Observations of the teams' behavior confirmed that many of these changes were the result of conflict and differences in opinion. In a number of teams there was serious conflict over which item was the most important for survival, and identifying the most important item for survival in these teams sometimes took 10 of the 15 min allotted for the task. It is important to note that, although the reported mean levels of task

conflict in our study was similar to Jehn's (1995) sample, the level of relationship conflict reported in our teams was lower. This suggests the teams in this study did exhibit task conflict as opposed to minor disagreement; however, relationship conflict was mostly absent. We consider that the lack of relationship conflict may be attributable to the procedure used in the study. Teams were randomly selected, which meant that team members were working together for the first time, and the team also had a short timeframe to complete their task. These factors may have limited the amount of relationship conflict because teams needed to focus on completing the task.

The results of this study provide empirical evidence for the notion put forward by other researchers (Druskat & Wolff, 2001; Jordan et al., 2002) that teams composed of individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence will perform better on tasks than teams whose members have lower levels of emotional intelligence (Hypothesis 3). More specifically, the results indicate that a team's overall level of emotional intelligence and the collective ability of members to deal with their own emotions during a problem-solving exercise lead to higher performance. One explanation for the links between the ability to deal with one's own emotions and problem-solving performance is that teams composed of individuals high in emotional intelligence, particularly the ability to deal with one's own emotions, may be more inclined to listen to alternative viewpoints and seek superior solutions without feeling threatened by the possibility of being wrong. This requires emotional self-control.

The regression conducted on the subscales of the WEIP (own) enabled us to examine our findings in greater detail. Specifically, we examined the link between the ability to deal with one's own emotions and team performance. The analysis revealed that, although management of emotions contributed to performance, discussion of emotions detracted from performance. Initially, the negative link between discussion of one's own emotions and performance was unexpected. However, on reflection we consider that the short time limit associated with the task and the lack of previous relationships among team members meant that it was ineffective and inappropriate to discuss one's feelings with fellow members and to successfully complete the task. Instead, team members were more effective if they could manage (or control) their emotions and become task focused.

The finding that a team's ability to deal with other team members' emotions was not linked to team performance was also unexpected. As with the findings regarding own emotions, we believe an explanation for the null finding lies in the nature of the task and the way in which the teams were created in the study. Team members were working together for the first time and had no prior relationship. This in combination with the short time frame for completing the set task reduced the potential to influence others in this situation. Influencing others and managing others' emotions tend to be abilities that require a great deal of time to achieve. Indeed,

these results suggests that not all emotional intelligence skills are required at all times, and furthermore, that some skills may be more prominent depending on the task being undertaken.

Moving on to examine our findings regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence conflict resolution pattern and performance, we have mixed results. Our data partially support the hypotheses that emotional intelligence at the individual and team level will influence the type of conflict tactics adopted during a team performance task by an individual (Jordan & Troth, 2002) and by the team as a whole (Hypothesis 5).

Examining the individual level of analysis first, significant links were found between emotional intelligence and use of integrative (collaborative) and dominating (competing) tactics to complete the team task. The emergence of dominance (competition) as a predictor of performance at the individual level may indicate that at some point in the team task, emotionally intelligent individuals in the team determined there was a need to dominate to complete the task in the required time. Borisoff and Victor (1998) noted that the most effective conflict resolution strategy is contingent on the situation. For example, in the spirit of choosing one's battles wisely, conflict resolution scholars argue that dominating (competing) strategies might be most effective when the dilemma is important and there are extenuating circumstances (i.e., time constraints or negative consequences). In support of this, Van de Vliert, Nauta, Giebels, and Janssen (1999) in a recent study found that dominating can contribute to effectiveness during problem solving. If indeed "flexibility in response" is the hallmark of emotional intelligence (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997)—that is, a response commensurate with the situation—then examining behavioral flexibility in the context of emotional intelligence and conflict resolution might be an area for further investigation.

Examination of the data at the team level of analysis indicated that individuals within teams were more likely to use integrative (collaborative) tactics if they were in a team that had higher average levels of emotional intelligence (Hypothesis 5). Clearly this parallels previous findings by Jordan and Troth (2002) in relation to the preferred conflict resolution styles of individuals with high emotional intelligence. Similarly, in the team condition those with less ability to deal with their own emotions were more likely to engage in greater use of avoidance tactics (Hypothesis 4a). The lack of a link between the ability to deal with others' emotions and avoidance should have been anticipated, as avoidance involves your own behavior and not others' behavior. The results in relation to avoidance are particularly interesting because the data indicate a trend where avoidance could be associated with lower levels of team performance. These results correspond to Jordan and Troth's findings of a link between an individual's level of emotional intelligence and their expressed preference for the use of collaboration (akin to integrative conflict resolution) and the emotionally intelligent individual's rejection of avoidance as a conflict resolution strategy. The lack of any correlation between high emotional intel-

ligence and dominance (Hypothesis 4b) and dominance and performance in the team condition suggests that this was not a particularly successful tactic.

The finding in the team condition that the ability to deal with others' emotions was less salient in terms of conflict than the ability to deal with one's own emotions was again unexpected by the researchers, particularly in terms of integration (collaboration). In previous research, Jordan and Troth (2002) found a link between collaboration as a preferred style of conflict resolution and the ability to deal with one's own emotions and the ability to deal with others' emotions. A review of the literature (e.g., Canary & Cupach, 1988) suggests that integration is the conflict strategy that relies most on an individual's ability to deal with the opinions and rights of others, as well as their own, to achieve a win–win outcome. According to Carlopio, Andrewartha, and Armstrong (1997), however, effective and appropriate conflict management skills rely strongly on an individual's skills of self-management and the ability to find solutions without negative affect. Clearly, self-management was important in successfully completing the task in this study.

Finally, Hypotheses 6 and 7 were not supported in this study. Emotional intelligence was not significantly linked to either relationship or task conflict within the groups while the decision-making task was being performed. One explanation for the null finding regarding relationship conflict is that given group members were randomly allocated and working together for the first time and for a limited time, there was no real opportunity for relationship conflict to emerge. Relationship conflict involves disagreements based on personal and social issues that are not related to work and suggests some history between group members. The relatively low levels of relationship conflict (compared with Jehn's, 1995, sample) reported by the groups support this. Our performance exercise mostly elicited task conflict. A high correlation ($r = .82$) between relationship and task conflict also suggests the intragroup conflict measure was not differentiating well between the two different types of conflict in this study. Such a measurement limitation might partially explain the null findings between task conflict and emotional intelligence and indeed between task conflict and team performance. Nevertheless, these findings do correspond to some of the concerns raised by De Dreu and Weingart (2003) about the "functionality" of conflict in terms of performance. Clearly more investigation is needed here.

Limitations and Future Directions

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of our study. Primarily, our sample consisted of undergraduate students in an introductory management course. Given the average age of the respondents is 23.05 years, they will have less life experience. If emotional intelligence increases with maturity (Mayer & Salovey 1997), the sample may have less variance in emotional intelligence and lower levels overall compared to more experienced workers. To boost the generalizability of our findings, it

would be highly desirable to transfer this study to a work setting and examine individual and team performance and its relationship to emotional intelligence. Our results strongly suggest that more research within workplace samples might be fruitful. More specifically, it would be beneficial to measure employees' conflict resolution strategies in terms of specific workplace change scenarios and examine how these strategies link to emotional intelligence. This approach may also overcome the moderating effect of the time pressure that was experienced in this study.

Another limitation may have been common method variance. Although the research task was completed in a single session, we took steps to overcome common method variance. The emotional intelligence measure was completed first, with the survival exercise being completed by both individuals and team next. This procedure gave a 30-min hiatus between completing the measures of emotional intelligence and conflict. Finally, when completing the conflict measures, respondents were encouraged to reflect on their experiences and behaviors during the team exercise, rather than stating their preferred styles of conflict resolution.

Team size may also have been a limitation. In this study, we attempted to control for team size by restricting the team size to 3 members. In future research, we will examine the effect of emotional intelligence on performance with larger teams of between 5 and 7 team members to assess the impact of team size on team members' ability to use emotional intelligence skills. In larger teams, we could expect to find a stronger or different relationship between emotional intelligence—in particular the ability to deal with others' emotions—and problem-solving performance. If teams were larger, a greater number of ideas would need to be incorporated in the final decision, and this may require the team to manage other team members' emotions.

By moving our research into a business setting and working with existing work groups, our research could also be extended to consider the influence of emotional intelligence on team performance where there is a team leader or a dominant figure within the team. Finally, within this context, we could also examine the impact of prior and ongoing relationships in undertaking problem-solving tasks.

Implications for Practice

There are a number of implications that emerge from our research. The first is that the blanket assertion that emotional intelligence abilities generally contribute to performance requires further investigation. Indeed, the results of our study indicates that the ability to deal with one's own emotions was a significant factor that contributed to performance in the context of this study, whereas the ability to deal with others' emotions did not contribute to performance. This suggests that the complex construct of emotional intelligence cannot be reduced to a simple single factor without reducing our understanding of the construct. This is essential for our ability to determine how emotional intelligence is linked to performance. Although popular writers such as Goleman (1995) emphasized the importance of em-

pathy in emotional intelligence and stressed the need to consider others' emotions, it may actually be more important to consider our own emotions instead. Indeed, our research indicates that, depending on the nature of the team and the nature of the task, not all emotional intelligence abilities may be required simultaneously.

Our research also informs our understanding of the link between emotional intelligence, styles of conflict resolution, and team performance. Based on our research, it is important for managers to consider emotional issues during conflict resolution, even if the conflict is task-related conflict. Clearly, our research indicates that emotional abilities predict successful problem-solving performance in teams. Although the task we set appeared to be purely cognitive exercise at the individual level, at the team level emotional abilities influenced performance.

Finally, linking our findings to those of Jordan et al. (2002), there is a case for managers to consider the utility of emotional intelligence training for their employees and, in particular, for groups of employees. Jordan and his colleagues (Jordan et al., 2002) in their recent research observed that training in emotional abilities improves the performance of teams. If emotional intelligence influences group performance, then managers need to consider training as an option for improving performance.

CONCLUSION

Our research has extended our understanding of the emotional intelligence construct and its relationship to team performance and conflict resolution. Based on this study, there is a clear distinction between completing tasks at the individual level and at the group level. Although emotional intelligence played no role in determining performance at the individual level, as the task was purely a cognitive exercise, at the group level high emotional intelligence predicted group performance. We have also provided evidence of a difference between abilities relating to dealing with one's own emotions and abilities relating to dealing with others' emotions. Clearly, further investigation of this distinction is warranted. In the final analysis, this study demonstrates that emotions are important in conflict resolution and do contribute directly to team performance. Managers who are looking for performance gains would be wise to investigate this aspect of organizational behavior to address performance issues.

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