

Four Thoughts on Trait Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

In this brief response, I present four thoughts on trait emotional intelligence with reference to the commentaries by Laborde and Allen (2016) and Schutte and Malouff (2016).

Keywords

emotional intelligence

The commentaries by Laborde and Allen (2016) and Schutte and Malouff (2016) raise important issues for trait emotional intelligence (trait EI) research that cannot be adequately addressed in a few hundred words. In light of the growing interest in the field, I am confident that the opportunity for a fuller exchange of ideas will arise soon. I concur with the gist of the two commentaries and would only like to make the following observations with general reference to their contents.

On a potential distinction between intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of trait EI, I believe it has some appeal, but would ultimately prove awkward because so much of our emotional experience has social antecedents and consequences. Accordingly, I would opt for a much broader distinction between trait EI and trait social intelligence (trait SI; Petrides, Mason, & Sevdalis, 2011). Other-reports methodology would undoubtedly play a role in the investigation of both these constructs.

On the challenges of conceptualization and measurement variance, the existence of an integrative theory can easily—and fruitfully—accommodate variations at subordinate levels. It

should not be the field's goal to manufacture consensus, although this may spontaneously emerge at some point. In any case, consensus is often indicative of little more than conformity and groupthink, which, incidentally, is why it is quite unsuitable as an indicator of intelligence.

On the possibility of extending trait EI research to a systems level (e.g., couples, groups, and societies), we should keep in mind that the individual is the basic constituent element in all those systems and, as such, no social system can genuinely change for the better unless the individuals comprising it change for the better. Thus, although I agree that there should be an increase in trait EI research at the systems level, this should be accompanied by an even greater increase at the individual level.

On the notion of artificial emotional intelligence, I would suggest that the urgency today is for human beings to become more aware, spontaneous, and humane, rather than more mechanical, calculating, and dependent on gadgets. Perhaps in the process of pursuing noble goals, true intelligence will eventually be awakened (Krishnamurti, 1987).

References

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