Social intelligence for the social leaders
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**ABSTRACT**
Social Intelligence, an emerging new science with startling implications for our interpersonal world. If the purpose of education is to teach students skills they need to be well-prepared for life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness...and most likely the pursuit of gainful employment, then teaching social skills must be a crucial part of education. There are new requirements of today’s and tomorrow’s social leaders and members, and they all demand social intelligence.

**Components of Social Intelligence**
Social intelligence has two components:
- Social awareness
- Social facility

**Social awareness includes:**
- Primal empathy: Feeling with others, sensing emotional signals.
- Attunement: Listening with full receptivity
- Empathic accuracy: Understanding another person’s thoughts, feelings and intentions
- Social cognition: Knowing how the social world works.

**Social facility includes:**
- Synchrony: Interacting smoothly at the verbal level
- Self presentation: Presenting ourselves effectively
- Influence: Shaping the outcome of social interactions
- Concern: Caring about others’ needs and acting accordingly.

**Primal Empathy:**
We keep sending signals all the time about what we feel.

**Attunement:**
Attunement means offering a person total attention and listening fully. It goes beyond momentary empathy to a full sustained presence that facilitates rapport. It means trying to understand the other person rather than just making our own point.

We can facilitate attunement simply by intentionally paying more attention. Full listening maximizes psychological synchrony so that emotions align.

**Empathic accuracy:**
This probably represents the essential expertise in social intelligence. Empathic accuracy builds on primal empathy but adds an explicit understanding of what someone else feels and thinks. Additional activity in the neocortex thus bringing high road circuitry to the primal empathy of the low.
Our brain attunes us to what someone intends to do but it does so at a subliminal level. Conscious awareness of someone’s intentions allows a more explicit understanding of underlying motives. This can make a big difference and facilitate more accurate empathy.

**Social cognition:** This is knowledge about how the social world actually works. People who are good at this know what is expected in different social settings.

**Synchrony:** Synchrony lets us glide gracefully through a non verbal dance with another person. A failure in synchrony sabotages social competence. People, who are weak here, typically suffer from dyssemia, a deficit in reading and acting on the non verbal signs that guide smooth interactions.

**Self presentation:** This is the ability to express oneself in ways that make a desired impression. Charismatic people know how to express themselves in such a way that enables others to sync up well with them and be tuned to their feelings. The ability to control our emotions and avoid an excessive display sometimes holds the key to self presentation.

**Influence:** We must express ourselves in a way that produces a desired social result. Those adept at deploying influence rely on social influence to guide their actions. For example, they may turn a blind eye to some situations to protect a relationship.

**Concern:** Concern goes beyond empathy. Concern reflects a person’s capacity for compassion. Concerned people take out time to help a colleague. They understand the need for greater cooperation to meet larger objective.

**Social Intelligence and Managerial Skills**

Leadership and management ideas come and go. But a few business ideas transcend trendiness and become part of accepted management wisdom. The most important of these big ideas currently is that biology--specifically neuroscience--can be mined for clues and cues that inform how we behave in an organization environment. That is, what do our brains tell us about how leadership works?

The most important work to come out of this so far is referred to as emotional and social intelligence--a theory that our behavior can affect how people around us behave. In an education institution context this means that improving your social intelligence will make you a better leader and, therefore improve performance.

To measure an executive’s social intelligence and help him or her develop a plan for improving it, there is a special behavioral assessment tool, developed by Harvard Business School called the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory. It is a 360-degree evaluation instrument by which bosses, peers, direct reports, clients, and sometimes even family members assess a leader according to seven social intelligence qualities. The Harvard Business School came up with these seven by integrating their existing emotional intelligence framework with data assembled by their colleagues at the Hay Group, who used hard metrics to capture the behavior of top-performing leaders at hundreds of corporations over two decades. Listed here are each of the qualities, followed by some of the questions they use to assess them.

**Empathy**
- Do you understand what motivates other people, even those from different backgrounds?
- Are you sensitive to others’ needs?
- Attunement
- Do you listen attentively and think about how others feel?
- Are you attuned to others’ moods?
- Organizational Awareness
- Do you appreciate the culture and values of the group or organization?
- Do you understand social networks and know their unspoken norms?
- Influence
- Do you persuade others by engaging them in discussion and appealing to their self-interests?
- Do you get support from key people?
- Developing Others
- Do you coach and mentor others with compassion and personally invest time and energy in mentoring?
- Do you provide feedback that people find helpful for their professional development?

**Social Intelligence in Life Tasks**

Although the social intelligence view of personality diverges from the psychometric approach to social intelligence on the matter of assessment, it agrees with some contemporary psychometric views that intelligence is context-specific. Thus, in Sternberg's (1985, 1988) triarchic theory, social intelligence is part of a larger repertoire of knowledge by which the person attempts to solve the practical problems encountered in the physical and social world.

According to Cantor and Kihlstrom (1987), social intelligence is specifically geared to solve the problems of social life, and in particular to manage the *life tasks, current concerns* (Klinger 1977) or *personal projects* (Little, 1989) which the person selects for him or herself, or which other people impose on him or her from outside. Put another way, one's social intelligence cannot be evaluated in the abstract, but only with respect to the domains and contexts in which it is exhibited and the life tasks it is designed to serve. And even in this case, "adequacy" cannot be judged from the viewpoint of the external observer, but rather from the point of view of the subject whose life tasks are in play.

Life tasks provide an integrative unit of analysis, for the analysis of the interaction between the person and the situation. They may be explicit or implicit, abstract or circumscribed, universal or unique, enduring or stage-specific, rare or commonplace, ill-defined or well-defined problems. Whatever their features, they give meaning to the individual's life, and serve to organize his or her daily activities. They are defined from the subjective point of view of the individual: they are the tasks which the person perceives himself- or herself as "working on and devoting energy to solving during a specified period in life (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987, p. 168).

First and foremost, life tasks are articulated by the individual as self-relevant, time consuming and meaningful. They provide a kind of organizing scheme for the individual's activities and they are embedded in the individual's ongoing daily life. And they are responsive to the demands, structure and constraints of the social environment in which the person lives. Life tasks are imposed on people and the ways in which they are approached may be constrained by socio-cultural factors. However, unlike the stage-structured views of Erikson (1950) and his popularizers (e.g., Levinson, 1978; Sheehy, 1976), the social-intelligence view of personality does not propose that
everyone at a particular age is engaged in the same sorts of life
tasks. Instead, periods of transition, where the person is entering
into new institutions, are precisely those times where individual
differences in life tasks become most apparent.

For example, Cantor and her associates have chosen the
transition from high school to college as a particularly
informative period to investigate life tasks (Cantor, Acker, and
Cook-Flanagan, 1992) Freshman year is more than just
convenient for academic researchers to study.

The transition from high school to college and adulthood is a
critical developmental milestone, where many individuals
leave home for the first time to establish various independent
habits and lifestyles.

And although the decision to attend college may have been
made for them (or may not have been a decision at all, but just a
fact of life), students still have a great deal of leeway to decide
for themselves that they are going to do with the opportunity –
what life tasks will occupy them for the next four years.

Accordingly, when college students are asked to list their life
tasks, they list social life tasks (e.g., making friends or being on
my own) as often as they list academic ones (e.g., getting good
grades or carving a future direction). And while the majority of
students’ life tasks could be slotted into a relatively small
number of common categories, their individual construals of
these tasks were quite unique, and led to equally unique
strategies for action.

The intelligent nature of life-task pursuit is clearly
illustrated by the strategies deployed in its service. People often
begin to comprehend the problem at hand by simulating a set of
plausible outcomes, relating them to previous experiences stored
in autobiographical memory.

They also formulate specific plans for action, and monitor
their progress toward the goal, taking special note of
environmental factors which stand in the way, and determining
whether the actual outcome meets their original expectations.

Much of the cognitive activity in life-task problem solving
involves forming causal attributions about outcomes and in
surveying autobiographical memory for hints about how things
might have gone differently.

Particularly compelling evidence of the intelligent nature of
life task pursuit comes when, inevitably, plans go twisted toward
one side or some unforeseen event frustrates progress.

Then, the person will map out a new path toward the goal or
even choose a new goal compatible with a superordinate life
task. Intelligence frees us from reflex, tropism and instinct, in
social life as in nonsocial domains.

Social Intelligence for Leadership Practices

For outstanding leadership requires social intelligence. The
leadership competencies that build on self-mastery include self-
confidence, the drive to improve performance, staying calm
under pressure, and a positive outlook. All these abilities can be
seen at full force, for instance, in workers who are outstanding
individual performers.

When Claudio Fernández-Aráoz, head of research for the
executive recruitment firm Egon Zehnder International, looked
at CEOs who had succeeded and those who had failed, he found
the same pattern in America, Germany and Japan: those who
failed were hired on the basis of their drive, IQ, and business
expertise – but fired for lack of emotional intelligence.

They simply could not win over or sometimes even just get
along with, their board of directors, or their direct reports, or
others on whom their own success depended.

Several new studies confirm how essential social intelligence – as opposed to simple self-mastery – can be for
leadership effectiveness. The findings:

• At a transportation company: those leaders strongest in the
social intelligence competencies led greater revenue growth,
compared to executives with strengths only in the self-mastery
competencies.

• The same goes for banking: at a major nationwide bank, high
social intelligence (but not self-mastery alone) predicted
executive’s yearly performance appraisal, which in turn reflects
business success.

• The value of social intelligence even applies to clergy: among
Catholic priests, greater social intelligence predicted more
satisfied parishioners.

All these studies were based on the Emotional and Social
Competency Inventory (ESCI), verify this effect using other
measures to replicate these findings.

Any graduate students out there notion that effective leadership
is about having powerful social circuits in the brain has
prompted us to extend our concept of emotional intelligence,
which we had grounded in theories of individual psychology. A
more relationship-based construct for assessing leadership is
social intelligence, which is defined as a set of interpersonal
competencies built on specific neural circuits (and related
diary systems) that inspire others to be effective.

The idea that leaders need social skills is not new, of course.
In 1920, Columbia University psychologist Edward Thorndike
pointed out that “the best mechanic in a factory may fail as a
foreman for lack of social intelligence.” More recently, Claudio
Fernández-Aráoz found in an analysis of new C-level executives
that those who had been hired for their self-discipline, drive, and
intellect were sometimes later fired for lacking basic social
skills. In other words, the people Fernández-Aráoz studied had
smarts in spades, but their inability to get along socially on the
job was professionally self-defeating.

Measuring Social Intelligence

Good way to measure Social IQ is to use the basic IQ
system, adapted for social skills. Most people have social IQ’s
from 85-115, but many exceed these limits. People with social
IQ’s below 80 may show symptoms of autism spectrum
disorders such as Asperger’s Syndrome and have trouble with
making friends, and with communication, and might need some
social skill training or extra support from specialists. People
with social IQ’s over 120 are considered very socially skilled
and well adjusted and will work well with very social jobs such
as social work, education, and law enforcement.

Researches in Social Intelligence

Psychotherapy often involves helping people to modify
their patterns of social intelligence, particularly those that cause
them problems in their interpersonal relations. Some efforts are
also underway to use computer-based interventions to help
people develop their own social intelligence. Paul Ekman, for
example, has created the Micro Expression Training Tool, to
allow people to practice identifying the brief emotional
expressions that flit across people’s faces. The website
MindHabits.com offers a research-based software programme
with which people learn to modify their mind habits, focusing
attention on positive social feedback and inhibiting attention to
the social threats and rejections that can cause stress. Other
interventions, for example to help autistic individuals develop
social perception and interaction skills, are also in development.
As psychologists are fond of saying, further research is needed
to answer many questions related to social intelligence.
However, we can hope that future research on social intelligence will have a different character than it has had in the past.

**Artificial Social Intelligence**

Sociologists have begun to explore the gains for theory and research that might be achieved by artificial intelligence technology: symbolic processors, expert systems, neural networks, genetic algorithms, and classifier systems. The first major accomplishments of artificial social intelligence (ASI) have been in the realm of theory, where these techniques have inspired new theories as well as helping to render existing theories more rigorous. Two application areas for which ASI holds great promise are the sociological analysis of written texts and data retrieval from the forthcoming Global Information Infrastructure. ASI has already been applied to some kinds of statistical analysis, but how competitive it will be with more conventional techniques remains unclear. To take advantage of the opportunities offered by ASI, sociologists will have to become more computer literate and will have to reconsider the place of programming and computer science in the sociological curriculum. ASI may be a revolutionary approach with the potential to rescue sociology from the period of stagnation into which some observers believe it has fallen.

**Conclusion**

People who have a highly developed sense of social intelligence have more friends, better relationships, more successful careers and happier lives than those who lack those skills. In recent years SI has been the subject of intense research interest and researchers are reporting many intriguing findings. This is an exciting and promising area of research, but it is still in its infancy. The research results have not yet charted the utility and limits of SI for understanding human behavior.

**References**