2020

Developing EI: leadership journeys in emotional intelligence

Erin Bric
erin.bric@gmail.com

DEVELOPING EI:

LEADERSHIP JOURNEYS IN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

A Research Project

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graziadio Business School

Pepperdine University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

In

Organization Development

---

by

Erin Bric

August 2020

This research project, completed by

ERIN BRIC

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The Graziadio Business School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Date: August 2020

Faculty Committee

Committee Chair, Kent Rhodes, Ph.D.

Committee Member, Darren Good, Ph.D.

Deryck J. van Rensburg, D.B.A., Dean
The Graziadio Business School

Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) has been deemed a critical competency for leaders in today's world. However, there is little information to help OD practitioners, leaders, and organizations understand how leaders can develop these valuable skills in ways that meaningfully and positively impact their teams and organizations. This study examined the journeys of senior leaders as they developed their emotional intelligence. The study addressed two research questions: how leaders perceive they have developed their emotional intelligence throughout their lifetimes and how leaders are continuing to develop their emotional intelligence in their lives and careers. Key themes emerged out of leader interviews and were coded, analyzed, and summarized. Key findings were discussed. Recommendations for leaders include engaging in and reflecting on challenging life and work experiences and participating in EI training, while recommendations for OD practitioners include providing stretch opportunities and thoughtfully constructing leadership development programs to prompt self-awareness, practical application, and reflection.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, leadership, lived experiences, training, role modeling

Table of Contents

Abstract ..... *iii*

Table of Contents ..... *iv*

Chapter 1: Introduction *1*

Emotional Intelligence as a Leadership Competency **1**

Leadership Development **2**

Methods of Developing Emotional Intelligence **3**

Purpose of this Research **4**

Research Questions **4**

Importance of this Research **4**

Organization of the Study **5**

Chapter 2: Literature Review *6*

Emotional Intelligence (EI) **6**

Developing Emotional Intelligence **17**

Can emotional intelligence be developed? 18

How is emotional intelligence developed? 20

Challenges and conclusions of the literature research. 25

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design *26*

Research Purpose **26**

Research Design **26**

Sampling Methodology **27**

Demographics **27**

Interview Design and Structure **29**

Data Collection **29**

Ethical Considerations **30**

Data Analysis **31**

Summary **32**

Chapter 4: Results *33*

Research Questions **33**

Key Themes & Sub-Themes **33**

Research Question 1: Prior Development of Emotional Intelligence **34**

Key theme 1 - work experiences. 36
Key theme 2 - training / development experiences. 41
Key theme 3 - modeling / mentoring / coaching. 44
Key theme 4 - life experiences. 47
Key Themes 5-8. 51

Research Question 2: Current, Ongoing Development of Emotional Intelligence 53
Key theme 1 - work experiences. 54
Key themes 2-8. 57

Summary 61
How leaders have developed emotional intelligence. 62
How leaders continue to develop emotional intelligence. 62

Chapter 5: Discussion 64

Purpose 64

Summary 64

Conclusions 65
Work experiences. 65
Life experiences. 67
Training and development programs. 68

Recommendations to Leaders 70
Engage in challenging experiences. 70
Reflect on hardship experiences. 70
Engage in EI training. 71

Recommendations to Organization Development (OD) Practitioners 71
Incorporate stretch opportunities. 72
Thoughtfully construct leadership development programs. 72

Limitations 73

Suggestions for Future Research 74

Final Notes 76

References 77

Appendix A: Emotional Intelligence Model 80

Appendix B: Participant Interview Script and Questions 82

Interview Questions 83

List of Tables

Table 1. The Four-Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence.....11

Table 2. The Elements of Emotional Intelligence..... 13

Table 3. The Components of Emotional Intelligence.....16

Table 4. Emotional Intelligence Models……..……..20

Table 5. Participant Demographics .....….28

Table 6. Key Themes to Research Question #1 - How Leaders Have Developed Emotional Intelligence……...…..35

Table 7. Key Themes to Research Question #2 - How Leaders Continue to Develop Emotional Intelligence…..……...……..54

List of Figures

Figure 1. Key Theme 1 (Work Experiences) and Sub-Themes 1-5.....37

Figure 2. Key Theme 2 (Training / Development Experiences) and Sub-Themes 6-8….41

Figure 3. Key Theme 3 (Modeling / Mentoring / Coaching) and Sub-Themes 9-14……44

Figure 4. Key Theme 4 (Life Experiences) and Sub-Themes 15-18…….48

Figure 5. Key Themes 5-8 – Reflection, Mindfulness, Curiosity, Self-Directed Resources……...51

Figure 6. Key Theme 1 (Work Experiences) and Sub-Themes 1-4…..……55

Figure 7. Key Themes 2-8 – Self-Directed Resources, Relationships, Intentional Curiosity & Practice, Reflection, Training / Development, Life Experiences (Challenges), Mindfulness….....57

Figure 8. Key Theme 9 (Role Models / Mentors) and Sub-Themes 5-6…….……61

Acknowledgements

I have immense gratitude for the leaders who volunteered to participate in this study. Your vulnerability, self-reflection, and candor added greatly to this research and provided me with powerful stories that shed light on the development of emotional intelligence. Learning about your lives and careers was a joy and was my favorite part of this research study.

I am also grateful for the guidance, support, and kindness of Dr. Kent Rhodes, my advisor for this study. You patiently supported my process to hone in on a meaningful research topic about which I am passionate, and your ongoing guidance and perspective positively impacted my research experience.

Thank you to the faculty of Pepperdine University's MSOD program. You have immeasurably shaped my life over the course of the last two years. The beautiful experiential learning arc you created has inspired and fulfilled me, and I have taken away lessons that will stay with me for a lifetime. *Non nobis solum*. Not for ourselves alone. This spirit has run like a current through our curriculum and experiences and has strengthened my OD practice. In particular, thank you to Dr. Darren Good for your contributions to this research as a second reader. Your input was thoughtful and developmental. Thank you also for your friendship and support.

Many thanks to my Chi Prime cohort members. You have become family. You are a magnificent group of people with the fire of positive change coursing through your veins. Your love and positive reinforcement have been transformative. I am so grateful to have joined the MSOD community, and to carry Chi Prime with me in my lifelong journey of learning and growth. Thank you in particular to my learning group, The

Redwoods, and to my Beach Condo Babes. You have been a daily source of connection, humor, and love.

Thank you to our MSOD Learning Group Consultants (LGCs), who have guided my journey of whole-person development with love and friendship. In particular, thank you to John Childers. You have made a lasting impact on my life and have modeled coaching, accountability, and support in extraordinary ways.

I would also like to thank my wonderful family and friends, who have cheered me on through my journey in MSOD. You have supported my efforts to enhance my personal and professional life through an intense, two-year academic commitment. Your faith in me has been like an engine, revving me up through challenging experiences. In particular, I'd like to thank my mother Sharon, my father Steve, my brother Kevin, my sister-in-law Courtenay, and my grandmother Helen. Your love and encouragement has been touching and inspiring.

Chapter 1: Introduction

"Unlike few other business concepts, the notion of an emotionally intelligent leader has caught the interest and stirred the imagination of scholars and practitioners alike" (Walter, Humphrey, & Cole, 2012, p. 212). Emotional intelligence (EI) has been hotly debated over the decades: defining it, examining its developability, and debating its impact on leadership and organizational success. Some organizations consider it a "soft" skill less worthy of investment, while others build leadership models around EI and require that leaders demonstrate emotional intelligence to grow in the organization.

There is now a broader consensus that emotional intelligence can be developed (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000), and a large training and development industry has been built around developmental programs to enhance EI. Professionals in the fields of Organization Development, Learning and Development, and Human Resources are often charged with finding a comprehensive solution to the challenge of crafting effective and impactful leadership development. Yet, there are many unanswered questions and open challenges in the leadership development space. Once a decision is made to invest in developing an organization's leaders, the organization must determine in which areas of skill and competency it should invest to achieve differentiated impact. In addition, there are questions around the methodologies, programs, or experiences that will most effectively and efficiently develop positive, sustained leadership skills.

Emotional Intelligence as a Leadership Competency

Emotional intelligence is a leadership competency that has been debated in terms of its impact on leadership effectiveness and organizational effectiveness. Questions remain about the foundational definition of EI. There are multiple models to be found and

those models may be interpreted differently by practitioners designing interventions for the workplace. However, woven throughout the literature are examples of profound impacts that EI can have on a person's success and/or effectiveness, both personally and professionally.

There is an increase in focus on the emotional, which is an emerging point of view on the tail-end of a long history of valuing "head" (cognitive) over "heart" (emotional) (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008). While emotional intelligence was brewing in the scientific community decades before, EI burst onto the scene for businesses with Goleman (1995)'s book. Goleman (1995) popularized the concept that EI was significantly more important to life success than IQ, garnering the attention of practitioners hungry to address leadership challenges in organizations, and others followed suit. The impact of EI on a leader's effectiveness has been relatively well-studied and documented, with many exploring EI as a significant differentiator.

> ...Leadership is, at its core, a highly emotional process. Effective leaders develop a positive, optimistic vision of the future and convey this vision to followers in an emotionally captivating manner. Also, they express authentic sympathy and support toward discouraged followers, irritation toward 'slackers,' and enthusiasm toward high performers. In other words, effective leaders skillfully manage their own and their followers' feelings - leadership roles are ripe with intense emotional demands. (Walter, Humphrey, & Cole, 2012, pp. 214-215)

Leadership Development

In 2018, the corporate training market grew to over $200 billion globally (Bersin, 2018), with providers peddling various solutions, many of which are convincingly

labeled as uniquely high-impact ways to grow exceptional leaders, thereby accelerating organizational success. “The need for leadership development has never been more urgent. Companies of all sorts realize that to survive in today’s volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment, they need leadership skills and organizational capabilities different from those that helped them succeed in the past” (Moldoveanu & Narayandas, 2019, p. 42).

The ability to accelerate organizational growth and performance while navigating the realities of high-tech, ambiguous, and high-change competitive environments is often associated with the capabilities and behaviors of leaders (Vardiman, Houghton, & Jinkerson, 2005). Hiring and grooming effective leaders is considered a significant differentiator in an organization’s capability to outshine in the market or to achieve its mission.

Methods of Developing Emotional Intelligence

Given some of the claims of the impact of EI on performance, “...a multi-million dollar industry has emerged, offering ‘off the shelf’ applications designed to improve one’s emotional intelligence” (Walter, Humphrey, & Cole, 2012, p. 212). As practitioners seek to maximize impact and minimize spend, the return on investment of development dollars becomes a critical case to be made. Therefore, clarity around the most successful methods of developing leadership competencies would greatly benefit those tasked with up-leveling leadership effectiveness.

In the area of emotional intelligence, there is a general consensus that the behavior can be developed in leaders (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000), though research on the methods by which that development occurs is comparatively light. The research that

exists focuses primarily on the following as potential methods of developing emotional intelligence:

- Formal Training Programs
- Workplace Experiences
- Reflection & Dialogue
- Mindfulness
- Life Experiences

Purpose of this Research

The purpose of this study is to understand leaders' perceptions about their journey of developing their emotional intelligence and to explore their ongoing development efforts in this area.

Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- How have leaders developed their emotional intelligence throughout their lifetimes?
- How are leaders continuing to develop their emotional intelligence in their lives and careers?

Importance of this Research

While there is a plethora of research to define emotional intelligence and study its developability, there is a comparative shortage of research studying how the skills and behaviors associated with EI are developed. Given the potential for EI to positively impact leaders and organizations, and given the new and ambiguous challenges faced by

organizations in present times, it would be beneficial to better understand how leaders can enhance their EI to ultimately create a positive impact in an organization.

The study aimed to identify more specific methods by which leaders have developed their emotional intelligence over the course of their lifetimes and careers, and which methods they currently employ to continue their development. The results of this research have the potential to positively impact:

- Organizations, many of which seek to develop strong leadership talent to lead the organization into the future
- Organization Development / Learning & Development practitioners, who are responsible for creating and implementing developmental programs, and to show a return on investment
- Leaders, who want to continue to grow their individual skills, for their own success and the success of their teams and/or organizations

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 has outlined the background and purpose of the study and made a case for the significance of the study. Chapter 2 will review and discuss the existing literature and theories around emotional intelligence and how it is developed. Chapter 3 focuses on the research design and methodology. Chapter 4 reports the results of the research and data analysis. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a summary and a discussion of the findings, including possible next steps to consider in the continuation of this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, the definition, origin, and progression of emotional intelligence theory, as well as methods to develop emotional intelligence, are reviewed in support of the research purpose: to understand leaders' perceptions about their journey of developing their emotional intelligence and to explore their ongoing development efforts in this area.

Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Emotional intelligence theory: Brief history and key contributors. Chopra and Kanji (2010) trace the theory of emotional intelligence back to explorations of overall human intelligence, as well as the role of emotions in human functioning. It "is as old as the history of mankind. Its origin, however, can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophy. Socrates (469 - 399 BCE), a great Saint of Reason and an ancient Greek philosopher, believed that emotions, desires, and appetites can influence human motivation and all one's moral actions" (Chopra & Kanji, 2010, p. 973). They go on to trace the focus on emotions through the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, and the survival and adaptation work conducted by Darwin (Chopra & Kanji, 2010). In the 1920s, psychologist Thorndike "reviewed the predictive power of IQ and subsequently developed the concept of 'social intelligences' to explain aspects of success which could not be accounted for by IQ" (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2003, p. 405). Thorndike defined social intelligence as: "...the ability to perceive one's own and others' internal states, motives, and behaviors, and to act toward them optimally on the basis of that information" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 187). In the 1960s, the term emotional intelligence was first used in literary criticism (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004), and a few decades later,

Gardner (1983) published breakthrough work on the topic. Gardner's (1983) work refuted the previously held notion that human intelligence was a singular type of intelligence, and instead laid out a theory of multiple intelligences situated within different parts of the brain which he grouped into: logical, linguistic, spatial, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Naturalistic and spiritual / existential intelligences were added later (Gardner, 1983). Chopra and Kanji (2010) note that Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences can be organized into one of three categories: abstract, concrete, and social intelligence. Emotional intelligence is thought to have its roots in social intelligence (Chopra & Kanji, 2010).

Mayer and Salovey (1993) contributed to the rise of emotional intelligence research and have since contributed multiple studies on various facets of EI, including a definition of the construct. Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2004) discuss relevant historical context that laid the groundwork for ideas relating to emotional intelligence:

> There are a number of general cultural influences that serve as a context for our thinking about the relation between emotion and cognition. These include the ancient Greek Stoic idea that reason was superior to emotion, the European Sentimentalist movement's idea that there existed innate, pure, emotional knowledge, the Romantic movement's emphasis on emotional expression in the arts, and the political turmoil of the 1960s and the public discussion it elicited of the proper balance between feeling and thought. (p. 198)

Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2016) have since updated their original emotional intelligence model.

Bar-On's (2010) early contributions came in the form of a doctoral dissertation. Upon reflecting on the dissertation, a study of the impact of effective emotional and social functioning on a sense of well-being, Bar-On (2010) wrote, "...it is abundantly clear that I [Bar-On] was conducting research in an area which is directly associated with 'positive psychology' as well as 'emotional intelligence' although both terms were virtually unknown at the time" (p. 54). Bar-On's (2010) conceptualization of emotional intelligence would go on to emerge from work as a clinical psychologist.

Goleman (1995) became a central figure in the popularization and wide distribution of the concept of EI outside academic environments. "He [Goleman] introduced an emotional competencies model that focuses on emotional intelligence as a wide array of competencies and skills that drive leadership performance" (Chopra & Kanji, 2010, p. 976). Goleman's (1995) work is credited for drawing widespread attention to the concept of emotional intelligence and bringing the concept into focus in the business world, crossing over into practical applications that organizations could utilize in leadership and employee development initiatives. The validity of Goleman's (1995) research has been widely refuted, however, which will be discussed in further detail in defining his EI model.

What is emotional intelligence? There are various emotional intelligence models to define the construct, which can create challenges when culling for themes. However, there are some common components that appear repeatedly throughout the literature. Perhaps the most inclusive characterization of these frequently found attributes of EI comes from Bar-On (2006), who notes that the majority of the EI models include one or more of the following components:

- The ability to recognize, understand and express emotions and feelings
- The ability to understand how others feel and relate with them
- The ability to manage and control emotions
- The ability to manage change, adapt and solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature
- The ability to generate positive affect and be self-motivated (p. 14)

Despite the recurring themes, some researchers find the varying definitions of EI to be problematic. Dulewicz and Higgs (1999) assert that "the concept of emotional intelligence, as portrayed in the popular literature, is somewhat nebulous" (p. 242). Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008) similarly argue that the term 'emotional intelligence' is used to cover too many different concepts, presenting challenges to EI's legitimacy. However, some argue that these conflicting definitions of EI should be expected, based on its being in a research infancy stage and that "...at this early stage of the theory's development, the generation of several versions of EI theory is a sign of vitality in the field not a weakness" (Cherniss, Extein, Goleman, & Weissberg, 2006, p. 239).

Salovey and Mayer's (1990) research on EI is perhaps the most frequently cited and, as noted above, was an early contributor to the body of research on the topic. The model has been updated twice (Mayer et al., 2016). Salovey and Mayer (1990) define emotional intelligence as "...the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 189). They outlined three mental processes involving emotional information: "a) appraising and expressing emotions in the self and others, b) regulating emotions in the self and others, and c) using

emotions in adaptive ways" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, pp. 190-191). Mayer & Salovey (1997) edited the model to add a fourth branch and subsequently updated the four-branch model to incorporate new findings in the field of EI research (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016). In addition, they define EI as a hot intelligence: "We view hot intelligences as involving reasoning with information of significance to an individual - matters that may chill our hearts or make our blood boil" (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016, p. 292). People will utilize hot intelligences to navigate the facets of their lives that matter most to them. Their four-branch model is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1

The Four-Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence, with Added Areas of Reasoning

The Four Branches	Types of Reasoning
4. Managing emotions	• Effectively manage others' emotions to achieve a desired outcome • Effectively manage one's own emotions to achieve a desired outcome • Evaluate strategies to maintain, reduce, or intensify an emotional response • Monitor emotional reactions to determine their reasonableness • Engage with emotions if they are helpful; disengage if not • Stay open to pleasant and unpleasant feelings, as needed, and to the information they convey
3. Understanding emotions	• Recognize cultural differences in the evaluation of emotions • Understand how a person might feel in the future or under certain conditions (affective forecasting) • Recognize likely transitions among emotions such as from anger to satisfaction • Understand complex and mixed emotions • Differentiate between moods and emotions • Appraise the situations that are likely to elicit emotions • Determine the antecedents, meanings, and consequences of emotions • Label emotions and recognize relations among them
2. Facilitating thought using emotion	• Select problems based on how one's ongoing emotional state might facilitate cognition • Leverage mood swings to generate different cognitive perspectives • Prioritize thinking by directing attention according to present feeling • Generate emotions as a means to relate to experiences of another person • Generate emotions as an aid to judgment and memory
1. Perceiving emotion	• Identify deceptive or dishonest emotional expressions

	• Discriminate accurate vs. inaccurate emotional expressions • Understand how emotions are displayed depending on context and culture • Express emotions accurately when desired • Perceive emotional content in the environment, visual arts, and music • Perceive emotions in other people through their vocal cues, facial expression, language, and behavior • Identify emotions in one's own physical states, feelings, and thoughts

Note. Adapted from Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey, 2016. The order of the branches, from perception to management, represents the degree to which the ability is integrated within the rest of an individual's major psychological subsystems - that is, within his or her overall personality (p. 199).

Higgs and Aitken (2003) show that among the varying models of EI, there is a general consensus on two aspects: self-awareness and emotional management (p. 815). Dulewicz and Higgs (1999) have identified seven elements that contribute to emotional intelligence (Table 2).

Table 2

The Elements of Emotional Intelligence

Elements of EI	Description
Scale a: Self-awareness	The awareness of one's own feelings and ability to recognize and manage these feelings in a way which one feels that one can control. This factor includes a degree of self-belief in one's ability to manage emotions and to control their impact in a work environment.
Scale b: Emotional resilience	This scale reflects the ability to perform consistently in a range of situations under pressure and to adapt behavior appropriately. The facility to balance the needs of the situation and task with the needs and concerns of the individuals involved and the ability to retain focus on a course of action or need for results in the face of personal challenge or criticism are also encompassed within this scale.
Scale c: Motivation	This scale covers the drive and energy to achieve clear results and make an impact and to balance both short- and long-term goals with an ability to pursue demanding goals in the face of rejection or questioning.
Scale d: Interpersonal sensitivity	Interpersonal sensitivity relates to the facility to be aware of, and take account of, the needs and perceptions of others in arriving at decisions and proposing solutions to problems and challenges. The ability to build from this awareness and achieve ``buy in'' to decisions and action ideas; the willingness to keep your own thoughts on solutions open and actively listen to, and reflect on, the reactions and inputs from others are also aspects of this scale.
Scale e: Influence	The ability to persuade others to change a viewpoint, based on the understanding of their position and the recognition of the need to listen to this perspective and provide a rationale for change, are core elements of this scale.
Scale f: Decisiveness	This scale is concerned with the ability to arrive at clear decisions and drive their implementation when presented with incomplete or ambiguous information, using both rational and “emotional" or insightful perceptions of key issues and implications.

Scale g: Conscientiousness and integrity	The ability to display clear commitment to a course of action in the face of challenge and to match words and deeds in encouraging others to support the chosen direction is core to this scale, together with the personal commitment to pursuing an ethical solution to a difficult business issue or problem.

Dulewicz & Higgs, 1999, pp. 244-245.

Bar-On (2010) developed a model of emotional intelligence, 'emotional-social intelligence', defined as "...an array of interrelated emotional and social competencies and skills that determine how effectively individuals understand and express themselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands, challenges and pressures" (p. 57). To define the referenced emotional and social competencies, Bar-On (2010) utilizes five meta-components (with sub-competencies and skills): Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Stress Management, Adaptability, and General Mood (p. 62). Bar-On's (2006) model is influenced by the work of Charles Darwin, in particular as it relates to the importance of emotional expression for survival, and emotionally and socially intelligent behavior as key to effective adaptation. Dulewicz and Higgs (2004) argue that Bar-On's (2006, 2010) distinctions between intrapersonal and interpersonal components of EI were important contributions to the field, given that the interpersonal components of EI are paramount to tying EI to manager performance (as managers achieve results with or through others).

Goleman (1998) has continued to iterate on the topic and laid out five components of emotional intelligence at work (Table 3): Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Motivation, Empathy, and Social Skill. Goleman (1998) argued that these five skills enable leaders to achieve peak performance in themselves, and also in their followers. Because Goleman (1995) brought emotional intelligence to the world stage and translated

the concept for businesses to utilize in practical application, his name has become almost synonymous with EI. However, the validity of Goleman's research has been widely refuted, with Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008) describing his theory as a "...a complex and, at times, haphazard composite of attributes" (p. 504). Dulewicz and Higgs (1999) describe Goleman's (1995, 1998) research as derivative and anecdotal. The model has also received criticism for asserting that EI is a significantly more important indicator of life success than IQ (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).

Table 3

The Components of Emotional Intelligence

EI Component	Definition	Hallmarks
Self-awareness	Knowing one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values, and goals - and their impact on others	• Self-confidence • Realistic self-assessment • Self-deprecating sense of humor • Thirst for constructive criticism
Self-regulation	Controlling or redirecting disruptive emotions and impulses	• Trustworthiness • Integrity • Comfort with ambiguity and change
Motivation	Being driven to achieve for the sake of achievement	• A passion for the work itself and for new challenges • Unflagging energy to improve • Optimism in the face of failure
Empathy	Considering others' feelings, especially when making decisions	• Expertise in attracting and retaining talent • Ability to develop others • Sensitivity to cross-cultural differences
Social Skill	Managing relationships to move people in desired directions	• Effectiveness in leading change • Persuasiveness • Extensive networking • Expertise in building and leading teams

Adapted from Goleman, 1998, p. 1.

In contrast to Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso's (2004) ability model of emotional intelligence, mixed models, which blend abilities and traits, have also emerged. In part due to the wide access to Goleman's (1995, 1998) work, a 'journalistic version' of EI

rose to popularity and became a very public face of the concept of emotional intelligence. This version made impressive claims related to EI's impact on leadership and performance outcomes. Others built on top of this model and added in related and unrelated traits and attributes (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008). Mayer et al. (2008) deemed these popularized concepts mixed models:

> At this point, the pattern is clear: A large number of personality traits are amassed, mixed in with a few socioemotional abilities, and the model is called one of EI or trait EI. (The 'trait' designation is particularly confusing, as *trait* is typically defined as a distinguishing quality, or an inherited characteristic, and could apply to any EI model.) (p. 505).

Mayer et al. (2008) instead opt for their ability model of emotional intelligence. Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005) present a comparison between ability and mixed models of EI:

> Ability models conceptualise EI in a similar way to cognitive intelligence (i.e. intelligent quotient (IQ)). EI is assumed to develop over time, be correlated with measures of IQ, and be measurable with a test based on performance. In contrast, mixed models of EI incorporate both non-cognitive models and competency-based models (p. 389).

Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005) go on to note that mixed models often utilize self-reports as the method of self-assessment, which create limitations and whose validity has been questioned.

Developing Emotional Intelligence

There is a vast amount of literature to be found on the topic of emotional intelligence, in particular in the areas of concept definition, the overall validity of the

concept, valid measurements of EI, and its impact on a person's effectiveness. There is comparatively a significant deficit in the literature to shed light on how emotional intelligence is developed. The following is a summary of the research that was found.

Can emotional intelligence be developed? There is a strong consensus among researchers that emotional intelligence is developable (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000), however the extent to which it can be developed has been conflicted in the literature.

Goleman (1995) asserts that the stage of life at which EI interventions or developmental moments occur is a key component to the development of emotional competence, with childhood interventions being most effective and with the family being the first 'schooling' for emotional learning. "The ways a couple handles the feelings between them - in addition to their direct dealings with a child - impart powerful lessons to their children, who are astute learners, attuned to the subtlest emotional exchanges in the family" (Goleman, 1995, p. 190). Goleman (1995, 1998) argues that childhood interventions are most effective and asserts that emotional learning can be reshaped throughout a lifetime. In fact, Goleman (1998) states that emotional intelligence increases with age via the maturation process.

An exception to this viewpoint is the ability-based view of Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (1999, 2004) who speculate that emotional intelligence is an aptitude that remains relatively stable. However, they note that emotional knowledge, a foundational informational component of emotional intelligence, can be acquired with relative ease. Despite their viewpoint that EI remains relatively stable, they acknowledge evidence that suggests EI increases with age (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 1999, 2004). Others view the developability of EI as split based on sub-characteristics. Dulewicz and Higgs (2004)

liken it to a vessel containing fluid. They argue that some elements can be enhanced and skill ranges extended (vessels that can fluctuate in size). "At the other extreme, some elements appear to be more enduring characteristics, probably formed earlier in life, and so could be seen as vessels which are fixed in size. Therefore, experience can increase only the volume of contents within the vessel, not the vessel itself" (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2004, p. 100).

Others argue that we cannot yet know whether EI is truly developable, due to fatal flaws in the research. McEnrue and Groves (2006) argue that EI development studies are limited because they either:

- lack a control group;
- use an EI measure of unknown psychometric quality;
- fail to control for demographic factors such as age, gender or work experience that may account for the results obtained;
- measure training effects at markedly different time periods for control and treatment groups (e.g. nine months versus immediately after training);
- provide no check on social desirability as an alternative explanation for results reported;
- rely on a conceptually suspect EI model;
- involve training that does not focus specifically on emotional intelligence;
- use diagnostic and training criteria that appear devoid of emotional content; or
- provide no information about the training process at all. (p. 226)

McEnrue and Groves (2006) conducted their own study controlling for some of the issues referenced above and concluded that it is possible to improve emotional

intelligence through deliberate, well-designed training. Table 4 lays out multiple types of emotional intelligence models, their corresponding authors, and key related studies.

Table 4

Emotional Intelligence Models

EI Model Types	Measures	Key Related Studies
Ability	MSCEIT	Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso (2000)
Mixed	EQ-i	Bar-On (2006)
Competency	ECI and ESCI-360	Goleman (1998) Boyatzis (2008)

How is emotional intelligence developed? The gaps in the literature present a challenge to interpreting the specific methodologies that can be leveraged to enhance emotional intelligence. In this section, I attempted to cull themes in the literature, noting there are not enough sources to present a broad array of well-vetted methodologies for development in the EI space.

Much of the discovered literature is focused on classroom-based training methodologies for developing emotional intelligence. Goleman (1998, 2000) argues that EI training can be effective, but that the majority of such training programs fail because they target the neocortex in the brain when, in fact, emotional intelligence is developed in the limbic system. By targeting the individual limbic systems of participants, training programs may be able to break old behavioral habits and establish new ones that foster the growth of EI. Key to this success is also the rewiring of old leadership habits in the brain circuits by unlearning them and replacing them with new habits (Goleman, 2000).

Walter, Humphrey, and Cole (2012) assert, "Ability-based models offer a viable basis for emotional intelligence trainings that extend beyond traditional 'soft skills' development and explicitly address participants' capability to effectively deal with their own and others' emotions" (p. 216).

Clarke (2006) found that "Training programmes may instead decontextualize emotional knowledge and abilities from the specific situation in which they are used and, as a result, may be of a far more limited value in relation to emotional abilities that are specific to job performance" (p. 460). Clarke (2006) also acknowledges the lack of literature dedicated to exploring the effectiveness of EI training, and that it is possible that such training programs may play a hand in raising awareness as a starting point. Walter, Humphrey, and Cole (2012), while supportive of training as a viable means of developing emotional intelligence, acknowledge that the application of learnings from a training is a critical component of embedding learning. They state that training should entail "intense, on-the-job practice opportunities (e.g., mentoring, coaching, or team-based learning)" and that the learning must extend beyond the day(s) of classroom training (Walter et al., 2012, p. 216).

Workplace learning / experiential learning emerged in the literature as a methodology to be further explored. Clarke (2006) defines workplace learning as learning that occurs in the process of conducting a job itself or in the workplace, including "...a wide range of both planned and unplanned non-formal learning mechanisms, including mentoring, coaching, team learning, special assignments, increasing job scope and job challenge, self-directed learning as well as the wealth of incidental learning that arises through everyday work experience" (p. 448). Clarke (2006) argues that this mode of

learning is important for acquiring the skills needed in today's workforce and suggests that it is more effective than traditional training approaches. Amagoh (2009) supports an experience-based approach to development, which combines on-the-job experience, life experience, and skill development. "The goal of experience-based leadership development is to equip employees to continuously tap into their experiences for insight into what it takes to lead, what it takes to grow as a leader, and what it takes to develop as an effective leader" (Amagoh, 2009, p. 992). Amagoh (2009) sees experience-based development as the way to merge learnings from more traditional development activities with actual work assignments. Clarke (2006) also indicates that the social structures of networks and relationships that exist within the workplace are key enablers of the transfer of emotional knowledge. There is research that asserts that while much capability is built in childhood, adulthood work experiences can impact the development of emotional intelligence. Höpfl and Linstead (1997) state,

> Patterns established by powerful experiences at this stage [childhood school learning] can set lifelong attitudes to and capacities for learning, which if unaddressed may be permanently limiting. These capacities are plastic and can be changed and developed, and experiences in the workplace contribute to them. The complex levels of learning which exists in the school context remains in the workplace, although learning may not be the primary focus of socialization. In learning what to do, we also learn what to feel about it and about the people and organizations we do it for - not in a mental response to what we are instructed, but as a visceral response to a bodily experience. (p. 8)

Dulewicz and Higgs (2004) synthesize, "Höpfl and Linstead (1997) consider that the core capabilities are developed within childhood but these are malleable and thus capable of being developed and changed; furthermore, workplace experiences have a significant impact on this shaping process" (p. 108).

Reflection and dialogue were also noted as mechanisms by which emotional intelligence can be developed. Clarke (2006) found that reflection paired with dialogue was effective in bringing tacit forms of emotional learning into the explicit. "In particular, emphasis was placed on discourse and sharing experiences or narratives as a means of enhancing the visibility of particular emotional abilities or enabling them to surface so that they become a far more focal point for discussion and therefore learning" (Clarke, 2006, p. 455). Reflective writing is another form of learning with potential implications for EI development. Kirk, Schutte, and Hine (2011) conducted a self-efficacy writing intervention, utilizing expressive writing. Kirk et al. (2011) found that participants who had scored low in self-efficacy in a pre-test significantly improved their self-efficacy in a post-test. The authors reference prior research to suggest that positively modifying self-efficacy can improve emotional intelligence. Grant, Kinman, and Alexander (2014) argue that reflection plays a role by providing insight into one's own emotional reactions, prompting understanding of how they may impact oneself and others. They assert that "...emotional writing interventions can help people gain awareness of complex emotional experience and how best to manage them, as well as enhance psychological and physical health" (Grant et al., 2014, p. 878). In addition, listening to the stories of others enabled growth in EI, by normalizing the topic and creating a safe space for such dialogue to occur, bringing the inward outward for

processing and reflection. Amagoh (2009) also recognizes the importance of reflection in the journey of leadership development, in order to transfer acquired knowledge and skills to work contexts for practical application.

There are some linkages in the research between mindfulness and emotional intelligence. Miao, Humphrey, and Qian (2018) state that "Mindfulness stimulates the development of emotional regulation and enhances people's recognition of their own and others' emotions; further, the nonjudgmental and self-regulating aspects of mindfulness may enable individuals to more accurately decipher their own and others' emotions and to possess better emotion management capacities" (p. 102). Charoensukmongkol (2014) asserts that regularly practicing mindful meditation can result in enhanced ability to understand one's emotions, to detect and understand the emotions of others, to regulate and control one's own emotions, and to effectively use those emotions. Enríquez, Ramos, and Esparza (2017) found that college students showed significant increases in emotional regulation after participating in a mindfulness course.

Life experience can also play a significant role in the development of emotional intelligence. Goleman (1995) discusses the positive impacts on children of emotionally adept parents: better handling of one's own emotions, better emotional regulation, lower negative biological indicators of stress, higher social aptitude, and more effective cognitive learning. Stressful life experiences during a child's formative years can leave lasting impacts on various types of learning, emotional learning more so than others. Despite the profound impact of life experiences in childhood, Goleman (1995) acknowledges that they can be shaped by experiences later in life. Meers (2009) found

that significant life experiences support the development of emotional intelligence in leaders:

> Several of the leaders clearly stated that they felt they had gained deeper levels of self-awareness through their experiences and that they were better in touch with themselves and consequently their drives, motivations, emotions, and moods. As one looks at the descriptions of the experiences in this study and the lessons learned and lays them over the components of EI, it can also be seen that the leaders in this study spoke of self-regulation as they learned to control their own responses in certain circumstances and then to use those as greater passions or motivation to drive change (p. 130).

Challenges and conclusions of the literature research. While emotional intelligence has been deeply explored in the research, the practical application becomes challenging as tried-and-true methods for EI development are yet to be solidified. I hope to contribute to an evolving body of research that will support leaders, employees, and organizations alike in their journeys to enhance emotional intelligence, and therefore effectiveness.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design

This chapter describes the design and methodology used for this research study, which includes the methodologies and processes used for sampling, data collection, and data analysis. It also includes interview design and structure and discusses important ethical considerations to protect the privacy of human subjects.

Research Purpose

While extensive research exists on the definition of EI and whether it can be developed (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000), there is comparatively limited research on the methods by which leaders develop their emotional intelligence over the course of their lifetimes. The purpose of this study is to understand leaders' perceptions about their journey of developing their emotional intelligence and to explore their ongoing development efforts in this area. The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- How have leaders developed their emotional intelligence throughout their lifetimes?
- How are leaders continuing to develop their emotional intelligence in their lives and careers?

Research Design

This was a qualitative methods study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), which leveraged research in the form of human subject interviews. I believe the benefits to a qualitative approach (e.g., enabling an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and greater opportunity to report on complexity and nuance: Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 4) better facilitate the exploratory type of research needed to meaningfully add to the body

of research on this topic. Specifically, I designed a phenomenological research study "...in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 13). This type of data was most relevant to me on the quest to better understand leaders' lived experiences in more robust detail. I thought this would allow me to capture and examine themes and patterns as potential learnings for future leaders and practitioners.

Sampling Methodology

The sampling methodologies used for this study were both a purposeful approach and a snowball sampling technique to select 12 senior leaders representing various industries, organizations, geographies, and business units. Using a purposeful selection approach (Maxwell, 2013), I selected senior leaders known within my network, some of whom I have collegial relationships with. Maxwell (2013) notes there are benefits to engaging participants within one's network, and also that the researcher must be on the lookout for 'key informant bias' (Maxwell, 2013), in which the perspectives of a few may not be able to be generalized as typical for the many. Maxwell (2013) also calls attention to reflexivity: "the fact that the researcher is part of the social world he or she studies, and can't avoid either influencing this or being influenced by it" (p. 90).

In addition, I utilized a snowball sampling technique to further identify additional participants based on recommendations from existing participants. This allowed me to include others who have a knowledge or passion for the topic of emotional intelligence.

Demographics

The qualitative study examined the individual experiences of senior leaders as they have developed emotional intelligence and methods they are currently employing to

continue to develop their emotional intelligence. 12 senior leaders from various organizations, industries, and business units participated in one-on-one interviews to provide their personal stories related to their emotional intelligence development journeys. Table 5 highlights the participant demographics.

Table 5

Participant Demographics

	Role in Organization	Business Unit	Industry	Team Size (Employees)
1	Sr. Director - Program Management	Marketing	Small Business Marketing	8
2	Vice President - Employee Experience	People / Human Resources	Tech	10
3	Chief Marketing Officer	Marketing	Web Services	350
4	Director of Employment Research & Analytics	Human Resources / Talent Management	Retail	60
5	EVP and Group President	Senior Executive	Footwear & Apparel	30,000
6	Founder	Founder	Organization Development	6
7	District Supervisor	Policy & Budgets	Government	5
8	Head of Global Business Development & Strategic Partnerships	Business Operations	Social Media	12
9	Human Resources Director	People / Human Resources	Media & Telecommunications	3
10	Executive Director, Office of Philanthropy	Philanthropy	Healthcare	16
11	Head of Talent, Learning & Development	People / Human Resources	Health, Fitness, & Wellbeing	8
12	Business Director	Agency Functions & Operations	Media & Telecommunications	20

Interview Design and Structure

I selected a semi-structured, qualitative interview approach as part of the phenomenological research design of inquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The same set of interview questions was used with each participant, while the semi-structured nature enabled me to probe more deeply in areas where the participant showed particular energy, or when further clarification was needed. Maxwell (2013) notes that less structured approaches allow for better contextual understanding, which is important in forming a more detailed understanding of how emotional intelligence has been developed in individual leaders.

Interviews followed the proposed structure from Creswell and Creswell (2018), including an introduction, a set of opening, introductory questions meant to put the participant at ease and begin thinking about emotional intelligence, content questions, probing questions where I felt they would benefit the data set, and closing instructions. Creswell (2018) states, "The research process for qualitative researchers is emergent" (p. 182). While some interview questions were constructed to directly address the research question, others were designed to prompt subjects to tell more indirectly related stories on the topic of EI and their experience with it, during which I was also able to capture meaningful data that answer the research questions.

Data Collection

The goal of the interviews was to provide a comfortable and open environment for self-reflection and evaluation of one's own experiences. The open-ended questions were structured to elicit context, detail, and richness via participants' stories by extracting more personal and reflective information about their perceptions of their journeys. I

planned to conduct a blend of in-person interviews (for subjects based in my city) and virtual interviews (for subjects at a geographical distance). Some interviews were conducted in-person, in a private office space of the participant's choosing. However, during the course of the data collection process, the novel coronavirus brought about restrictions that required all remaining interviews be transitioned to Zoom (video communications software). All interviews were video- or audio-recorded so that I was able to be fully present and actively listen during the interview. Interviews ranged from 22 minutes to 58 minutes in length.

Interview transcripts were utilized in the data analysis process and were also helpful in providing the opportunity to include direct quotes from participants. Participants were advised that the sessions were being recorded and that they would remain anonymous in the reporting of the results.

Ethical Considerations

This research study was conducted under the supervision of the Pepperdine University Institutional Review Board and all safeguards for the protection of human subjects were followed. Participants opted into the study and received a consent form that stated measures taken to protect confidentiality and safety of human subjects. Participants were given an opportunity at the beginning of the interview to ask any questions and were given the option to opt out of the study upon reviewing the consent form. All participants received the same set of contextual information related to emotional intelligence in the form of a modified version of Goleman's (1995) model (Appendix A). The model was chosen because I felt it would be more easily accessible for interview

participants. Interview participants also received the same set of procedural information regarding the interview process.

After the interview data were collected, measures were taken to protect participant privacy. Participant identities were anonymized and all digital files, such as audio recordings of interviews, were stored in a password-protected file accessible only by me. There were no physical copies of interview notes generated during the course of the research.

Data Analysis

Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe qualitative data analysis: "It involves segmenting and taking apart the data (like peeling back the layers of an onion) as well as putting it back together" (pp. 191-192). I followed Creswell and Creswell's (2018) recommended approach to data analysis:

- Step 1: Organize and prepare the data for analysis
- Step 2: Read or look at all the data
- Step 3: Start coding all of the data
- Step 4: Generate a description and themes
- Step 5: Represent the description and themes (pp. 193-195)

Qualitative data from interviews were first transcribed from audio recordings to documents. I then listened to and read all interviews.

In each leader's description of their development journey, themes and sub-themes began to emerge which could be bucketed into categories and sub-categories and coded. The coding process was used to organize the data. Utilizing these categories, and the context provided via the leaders' stories, I was able to investigate commonalities across

the experiences of the leaders, as well as outliers. While I did not predetermine codes for analysis prior to the interviews, there were some expected codes based on the interview questions. In addition, some surprising codes emerged in the data analysis.

Summary

This chapter described the design and methodology used for this research study. It began by sharing the research purpose, highlighting the research design, sampling methodology, interview participant demographics, interview design and structure, data collection protocol, ethical considerations, and the data analysis process. Chapter 4 will present and explore the results of this research study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to understand leaders' perceptions about their journey of developing their emotional intelligence and to explore their ongoing development efforts in this area.

Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- How have leaders developed their emotional intelligence throughout their lifetimes?
- How are leaders continuing to develop their emotional intelligence in their lives and careers?

Chapter 3 summarized the research methodology of the study. I gathered qualitative data using a phenomenological approach through 12 interviews with senior leaders. After the interviews, I coded the data and identified themes and sub-themes related to the research questions. Some of the themes were expected and others were emergent based on commonalities I heard across the lived experiences of multiple participants. This chapter presents the results of 12 interviews with senior leaders across various organizations, industries, geographies, and business units and outlines key themes that emerged from the interviews. The themes are presented in the order of strength with which they were reported, and the research questions will be answered at the end of the chapter.

Key Themes & Sub-Themes

During the course of the interviews, multiple key themes and sub-themes emerged. Some themes were expected based on the structure of the interview questions,

while others were emergent. The following section highlights key themes and sub-themes related to the ways in which senior leaders perceive they have developed their emotional intelligence over the course of their lifetimes and careers, and the ways in which they continue to develop their emotional intelligence, including some direct quotes to provide additional context.

Research Question 1: Prior Development of Emotional Intelligence

The responses to eight interview questions provided data that showed eight themes and 18 sub-themes related to prior development of emotional development. Of the eight themes related to prior development, Work Experiences were the most frequently noted ways of developing emotional intelligence and, more specifically, challenges or hardships within those work experiences. Following Work Experiences, participants identified Training and Development experiences, EI Modeling / Mentoring / Coaching, Life Experiences, Reflection, and Mindfulness as the ways in which they have developed emotional intelligence. There were two methods that were less frequently referenced: Intentional Curiosity and Practice and Self-Directed Resources. While these are not considered by me to be key themes, I included them as part of the data analysis and conclusions. Table 6 provides an overview of key themes, respective sub-themes, and less frequently referenced methods related to how leaders have developed their emotional intelligence over their lives and careers.

Table 6

Key Themes to Research Question #1
How Leaders Have Developed Emotional Intelligence

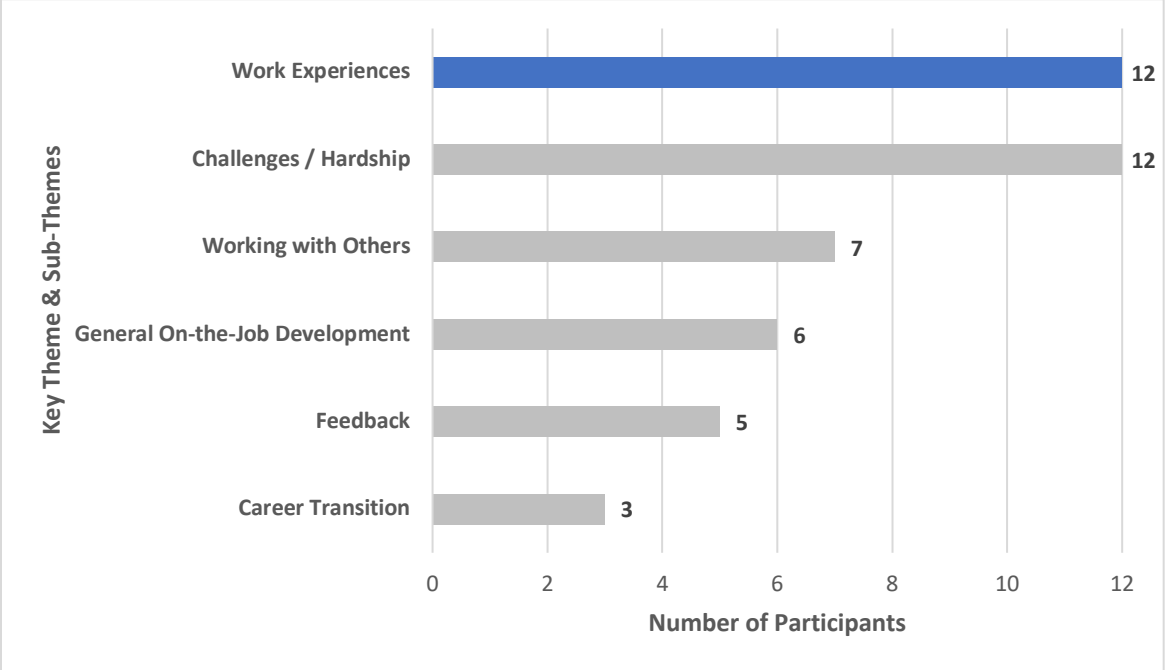
Key Theme	Sub-Theme	N	%
Work Experiences		12	100%
	Challenges / Hardship	12	100%
	Working with Others	7	58%
	General On-the-Job Development	6	50%
	Feedback	5	42%
	Career Transition	3	25%
Training/Development Experiences		11	92%
	Workshop / Session	10	83%
	Assessments	5	42%
	Teaching Emotional Intelligence	1	8%
Models/Mentors/Coaches		11	92%
	Parents/Grandparents	7	58%
	Bosses/Leaders	7	58%
	Mentors	5	42%
	Executive/Leadership Coaches	4	33%
	Friends	3	25%
	Spouses	1	8%
Life Experiences		9	75%
	Challenges/Hardship	7	58%
	Relationships	5	42%
	Therapy	2	17%
	Religion	1	8%
Reflection		4	33%
Mindfulness		3	25%

Less Frequently Referenced Methods		
Intentional Curiosity & Practice	2	17%
Self-Directed Resources	1	17%

Key theme 1 - work experiences. The overall theme of Work Experiences was most frequently cited by interview participants, with 12 of 12 interviewees naming it as one of the ways in which they have developed their emotional intelligence. Under Work Experiences, there were five sub-themes: Challenges/Hardship, Working with Others, General On-the-Job Development, Feedback, and Career Transitions. In order to more clearly depict the frequency with which some key themes and sub-themes were referenced, Figure 1 depicts the number of participants who cited the key theme of Work Experiences, as well as the number of participants who cited each of its related sub-themes.

Figure 1

Key Theme 1 (Work Experiences) and Sub-Themes 1-5



Sub-theme 1 - challenges/hardship. 12 of 12 interview participants noted some form of challenge in their work experiences as a contributor to their emotional intelligence, ranging from minor challenges through professional hardship. The types of challenges faced by participants were diverse. Five participants cited a challenging boss or senior leader who contributed to a stressful situation through which they were able to develop higher EI. All participants described scenarios in which they experienced new or stressful situations that caused significant discomfort, thereby prompting growth. Sample scenarios included stressors related to COVID-19 such as furloughs and layoffs, new job assignments in new countries working in unfamiliar cultures, closing down a company, a rash of violence in a local community that led to multiple deaths, and stressors related to the economic crash of 2008. Empathy, self-awareness, and adaptability, among others, were called out as areas of emotional intelligence that were built through these

interactions and experiences. One participant described how their empathy grew through the challenge of stepping into a new role in which they had less functional expertise than in their prior role:

> ...I would say my empathy probably grew the fastest when I stepped into a role that, and this has happened now multiple times since, that was far outside my area of expertise and comfort. Because not only did I have to really understand how the people around me thought and worked, but I didn't inherently understand their function, and so both how people are feeling and what they do really matter, but if you don't innately understand what they do, I think that empathy is that much more important.

In general, there was a theme of breaking out of one's own comfort zone in order to develop emotional intelligence. Once experiencing a challenge, a novel task, or a relationship or situation that required flexing, the participants were able to reflect on the learning that had come from moments of discomfort.

Sub-theme 2 - working with others. The potential learning from working with others also surfaced as an impactful part of workplace learning. Seven participants described interpersonal dynamics and interactions in the workplace as having contributed to the development of their emotional intelligence. Four of seven described scenarios in which they worked with people who either had different cultural backgrounds, worked in different functions, exhibited different styles, had different perspectives, or who the participant found difficult. They noted that this contributed to their awareness of how others operate and subsequently enabled them to better adapt or to build new and different skills. One participant described utilizing the conflict that can arise from

working with others to fuel their growth in emotional intelligence. One participant recalled how they learned over time to flex their communication style based on various differences:

> ...the diversity of different people that I was working with there, and frankly how I had to change how I communicated to each one of those different groups depending on whether we even spoke the same language...and being attuned to how I explain something to somebody within Marketing that's a legal issue. I discovered over the years I'm going to lean into the adjectives. I'm going to lean into the feeling-type words and the things that get people excited, where on the Engineering side, it's short, to the point, efficient, and no ambiguity.

Sub-theme 3 - on-the-job development. Role-based learning, such as new skills needed in the day-to-day of the job, were noted as participants needed to stretch into new ways of doing or being in order to fulfill the duties of their roles. Six participants described general on-the-job learning in the course of their role as having contributed to their emotional intelligence. One participant was in a job in which they played a natural liaison role between creatives at an agency and the agency's clients. Deeply listening to and understanding the needs of both parties and learning to communicate to each party based on their needs was additive to their emotional intelligence. Another, while serving as a community organizer, realized they would be more successful by coming to interactions with the community without a personal agenda and by listening and showing empathy. Another participant shared their experiences in mental and behavioral health care and in waiting tables in terms of how the natural job duties helped them build emotional intelligence. They described scenarios in which, no matter what was going on,

they needed to show up as a calm and reassuring party, take a step back, and show empathy. Two interviewees noted that their roles in the Human Resources space required that they enhance their emotional intelligence in order to better understand how people operate, with one describing their role as being the 'balm' to soothe conflicts and challenging situations. Those who expressed that on-the-job experiences were additive to their EI development were not necessarily dedicating intentional effort to developing EI in the moment, but rather found that opportunities to learn and exhibit EI showed up in the course of their day-to-day work. One said, "Every day affords you an opportunity to grow your emotional intelligence".

Sub-theme 4 - feedback. Feedback was noted by five participants as a tool or method to develop their emotional intelligence. Of those, four recounted examples of receiving feedback and two gave examples of when giving feedback to others was beneficial. In receiving feedback, participants were able to expand their self-awareness by having development areas illuminated for them by a boss, direct reports, or peers. The act of giving feedback was also additive to building emotional intelligence. One leader recounted an example of when they provided challenging feedback to a direct report, utilizing vocal techniques they had learned in a course that they attributed to having enhanced their EI.

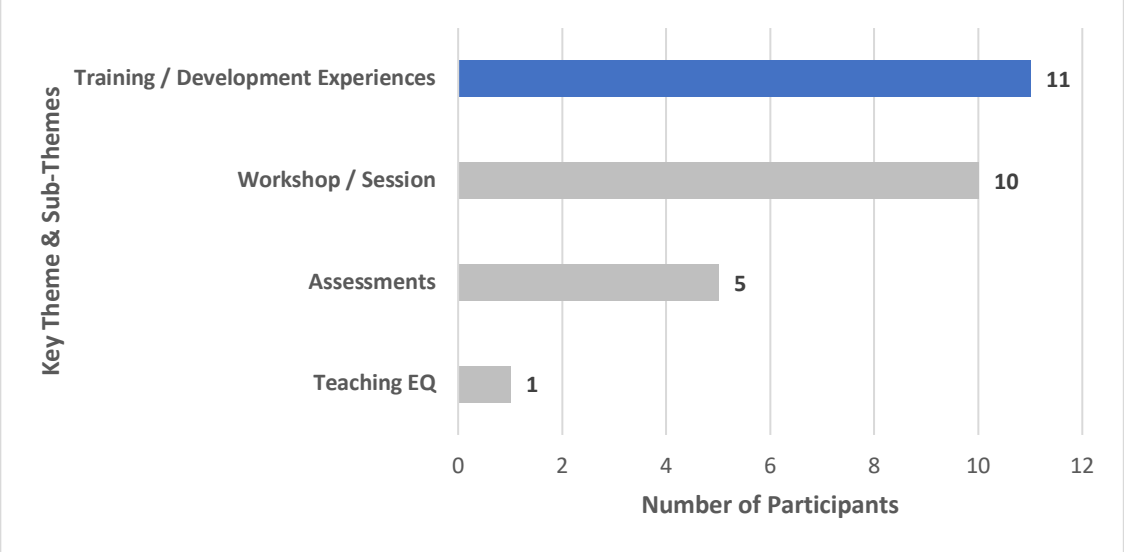
Sub-theme 5 - career transition. Three participants pointed to transitions into leadership roles as moments in their career in which they enhanced their emotional intelligence. Stepping into roles in which they were leading individuals, teams, or leading leaders were pivot points for their EI. The shift was described as going from early in career, a time in which one is able to think just about the work, to then moving into roles

in which one is now responsible for bringing people along in the work, and for leading other leaders. One interviewee noted that “Things get harder the more you advance in your career, and it's not the work that gets harder. It's all the situations around it. EI shows up when you realize it's not really so much about the work anymore."

Key theme 2 - training / development experiences. A second theme contributing to the development of EI in participants was participation in training or developmental experiences. 11 participants attributed a training or developmental activity as a source of their growth in EI. Under the key theme Training / Development Experiences, there were three sub-themes: Workshops / Sessions, Assessments, and Teaching EI. In order to more clearly depict the frequency with which this key theme and its subsequent sub-themes were referenced, Figure 2 depicts the number of participants who cited the key theme of Training / Development, as well as the number of participants who cited each of its related sub-themes.

Figure 2

Key Theme 2 (Training / Development Experiences) and Sub-Themes 6-8



Sub-theme 6 - workshops / sessions. 10 participants identified a specific training session or workshop from which they drew learnings for enhancing their emotional intelligence. Participants described multiple types of training sessions. Some examples are:

- self-awareness-related workshops to explore personal styles and values, aimed at creating a stronger understanding of how the participants operate and how they show up in the workplace
- workshops that enabled participants to better understand the needs and styles of others and adjust their interactions and styles accordingly
- leadership development sessions to help them understand their impact on others
- team dynamics sessions to enable better understanding of how team members operate with one another
- equity training to uncover individual biases, and learn how their individual experiences and perspectives may differ from those of others
- workplace mediation training to build self-regulation, empathy, and conflict management
- restaurant server and bartender training, focused on building trust and rapport with customers and remaining calm during conflict
- T-groups, in which participants receive real-time feedback on how they are being perceived by an individual or group

- trainings that involved inward reflection such as asking the participant to articulate their own values or sense of purpose, or engaging in extended periods or journaling and reflection in a retreat experience
- sales training featuring techniques to mirror communication and more deeply understand where another person is coming from

Participants recalled specific techniques and skills they took away from the trainings, as well as the experience of learning with or from others in the training environment.

Sub-theme 7 - assessments. Five interviewees shared self-assessments they had taken over the course of their careers that had added to their emotional intelligence. The following assessments were named by participants as having enhanced their EI: DiSC®, MBTI®, Insights Discovery®, CliftonStrengths®, and TAIS®.

The behavioral or personality assessments provided a window into the participants' styles or tendencies. Some interviewees noted that gaining a better understanding of their own styles prompted higher empathy for and understanding of people in their workplace and home lives. One participant identified that taking a self-assessment and comparing their results to the aggregate of the broader organization's results helped them to build empathy for the organization, in which they had been feeling a cultural mismatch.

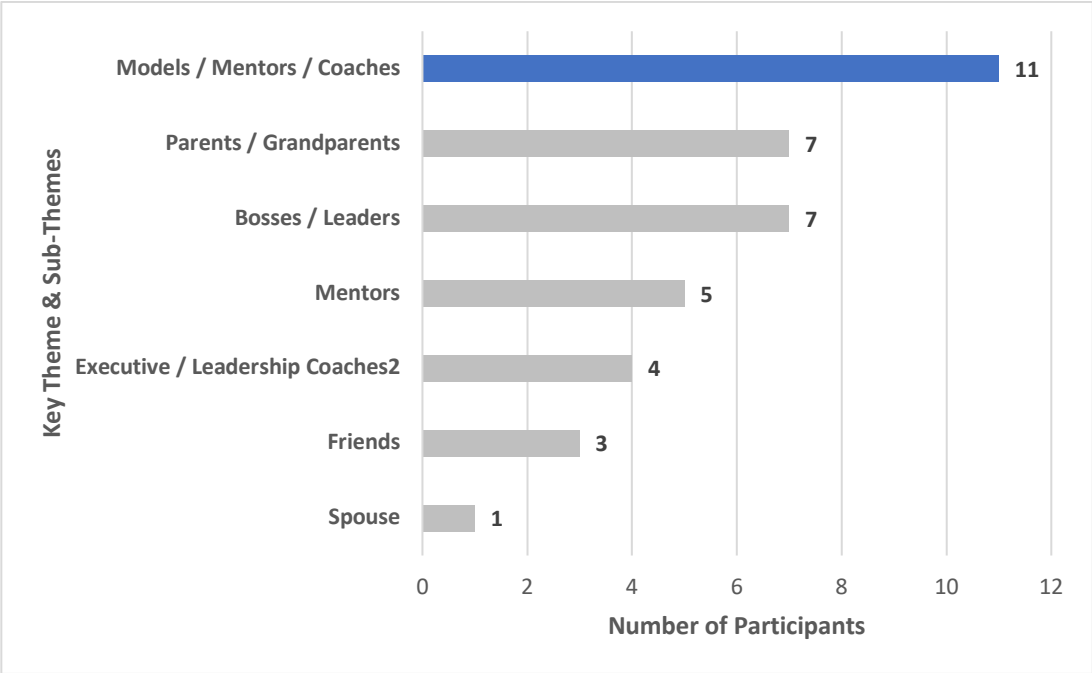
Sub-theme 8 - teaching emotional intelligence. As a coach and consultant in the leadership development space, one participant noted that their emotional intelligence had been enhanced by the practice of teaching the skills to others. They said, "I put myself in

the shoes of the learner...I introduce these topics to students because I need it myself. I'm in it with them, and I'm humbled by it."

Key theme 3 - modeling / mentoring / coaching. 11 of 12 interview participants identified that emotional intelligence was either modeled to them in their life or work, or that they were mentored or coached by others which helped them develop the skills. There were six sub-themes called out in this key theme: Parents/Grandparents, Bosses/Leaders, Mentors, Executive/Leadership Coaches, Friends, and Spouses. In order to clearly depict the frequency with which this key theme and its sub-themes were referenced, Figure 3 illustrates the number of participants who cited Modeling, Mentoring, or Coaching, and its sub-themes.

Figure 3

Key Theme 3 (Modeling / Mentoring / Coaching) and Sub-Themes 9-14



Sub-theme 9 - parents/grandparents. Seven interviewees identified parents and/or grandparents as models of emotional intelligence in their lives. Some modeled behaviors included:

- Building easy rapport with others
- Showing curiosity in and listening to the stories of others
- High levels of self-awareness
- High levels of emotional self-management
- Exhibiting a positive outlook through adversity
- Understanding and caring for the needs of others
- Having an awareness of how one 'shows up' and the potential impact on others

Two participants developed their emotional intelligence by witnessing parents engaging in behavior that did not model emotional intelligence and making corrections in themselves based on those observations of their parents. One noted that living with a father who took a tough-love approach enhanced their EI in a roundabout way. "To be pushed so much caused me to spend a lot of time internally reflecting".

Sub-theme 10 – bosses and leaders. Seven participants cited that role modeling, mentoring, and/or coaching from bosses and leaders was impactful in their EI development. One describes a former boss as the person they still think of when approaching challenges, asking "What would they do in this situation?" Multiple participants picked up specific skills from former or current leaders, such as exhibiting empathy, engaging in positive reframing, forming deep connections with others, engaging in deep listening, or utilizing the Socratic method to stimulate critical thinking.

As surfaced in Sub-Theme 9, participants learned both from the positive role modeling of bosses or leaders and by observing behaviors that conflicted with emotional intelligence. This allowed them to determine how they would behave differently from the negative role model. At times, the positive and negative role modeling occurred within the same boss/leader.

Sub-theme 11 – mentors. Five participants named mentors as people from whom they learned emotional intelligence. One participant described being challenged by a mentor to work through uncomfortable situations. Another told the story of a high-profile tech leader and board member in their organization, who was serving as their mentor, and who had memorized information about them prior to meeting so that they could make them feel valued and important. One female participant described the experience of having multiple female mentors throughout her career to help her understand and navigate her male-dominated environments. One experienced a situation in which a potential client, with years of deep experience, invited him to breakfast, offered to mentor him, and said, "Boy, you don't know what you're talking about, but one day you're going to". They went on to have a long-term mentoring relationship, which the participant credits as additive to his EI development.

Sub-theme 12: executive/leadership coach. Four participants credited professional coaches with helping to develop their EI. Multiple interviewees called out that the external perspective of a coach helped them to make connections they previously had not seen on their own. Coaching was also effective in bringing awareness to their individual strengths to be leveraged and development areas to be worked on. Two participants had highly developed strengths that had been overleveraged and had become

potential weaknesses, to which a professional coach was effective in bringing awareness: "Although I do fancy myself self-aware, they were able to coach me on when some of my innate strengths actually became weaknesses."

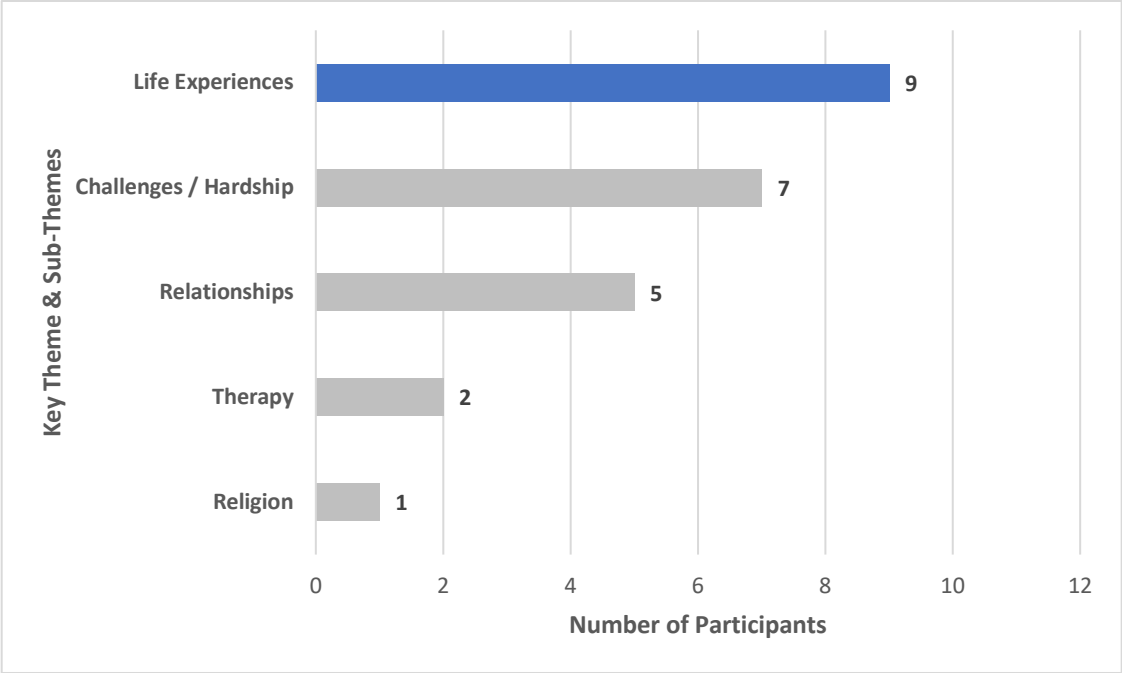
Sub-theme 13 - friends. Three participants noted that their friends are part of their support and accountability network when it comes to enhancing their emotional intelligence. One participant's friend is in a similar industry and has helped broaden their emotional intelligence with industry-specific support through challenges. Two participants have groups of friends with whom they openly share the areas of EI they are working on and ask for accountability in doing so. These friend circles were described as being encouraging, honest, and willing to hold each other accountable for their actions. One participant holds a weekly 'Boys Night Out'. What started as a purely social engagement earlier in life has transformed into a group that helps the participant better navigate how he shows up in the world, by holding up a reflection, challenging him, and supporting him.

Sub-theme 14 - spouse. One participant noted that her spouse regularly models emotional intelligence through emotional self-regulation when she is emotionally escalating. She shared, "I think maybe part of EI too is watching how others can do it better than you can, and hoping you can 'catch' it at some point."

Key theme 4 - life experiences. Nine of 12 participants attributed some of their growth in emotional intelligence to various types of life experiences. Within Life Experiences, there were four sub-themes: Challenges/Hardship, Relationships, Therapy, and Religion. Figure 4 depicts the frequency with which this key theme and each of its sub-themes were referenced.

Figure 4

Key Theme 4 (Life Experiences) and Sub-Themes 15-18



Sub-theme 15 - challenges/hardship. Seven of nine participants who identified Life Experiences as having contributed to their development of EI called out challenging situations. Some specific situations included:

- An eating disorder
- The divorce of their parents
- Fertility-related challenges
- Illness in childhood and/or adulthood
- The death of one or multiple parents
- The feeling of being a cultural outsider
- International travel experience that was unwanted and frightening

These life experiences ranged in time frame from childhood to present-day adulthood, and ranged from more minor challenges to more major, 'dark' moments. Participants also cited overall childhood experiences, such as a Midwest U.S. upbringing and the values associated with it, or growing up in a Native American community and witnessing how a non-dominant group experiences the world.

One participant shared how her challenges with fertility prompted her to look outside her own situation and think more about the experiences of others, thereby developing empathy:

> I think that the biggest periods of growth for me from a personal empathy standpoint, came from, at the risk of oversharing, from super dark moments, right?....I think what I realized in a dark moment there, and I think most people probably have similar experiences with different issues, was that I realized how often people are sort of just living their life without being cognizant of the impact their actions, words, and decisions have on others.

Another participant developed an illness that forced them to leave work, right at a time in which they had identified that they needed to be more cognizant of creating space for their employees to step into larger responsibilities. They considered it a "lucky coincidence", in which they were forced to learn a lesson about emotional intelligence due to a challenging situation. Illness in childhood prompted another interviewee to grow their emotional intelligence early, as extended time spent in the hospital provided them with time to self-reflect. Another was orphaned by 14 years old and shared, "Emotional intelligence probably was extreme and premature for me, and I had to develop that a lot faster than a lot of people I know."

Sub-theme 16 - relationships. Five participants shared that they utilized various types of relationships to enhance their emotional intelligence. Relationships included spouses, parents, children, friends, and romantic relationships. One participant found that people in their life naturally came to them to be a sounding board, which helped them to develop deeper empathy for others. One conquered a fear of having a very challenging conversation with their parents to establish new ways of being with each other, which they credit with enhancing their EI. Some participants learned lessons from mistakes made in relationships. Three participants learned from former marriages how to better communicate and how to be better attuned to the needs of others, and carried those learnings forward. One participant shared they had a temper that has caused rifts in prior relationships with friends and family. They have learned from those interactions and actively worked on emotional self-management. They now counsel their son to do the same. They tell him, "Remember fire is power if you use it well, but fire literally can burn things down if you don't."

Sub-theme 17 - therapy. Two interview participants credited therapy with increasing their emotional intelligence. One called out that therapy starting at a young age provided them with tools for better self-management throughout their life, while another found that therapy helped enhance their self-awareness by uncovering aspects of themselves and their behavior that they previously were not able to see.

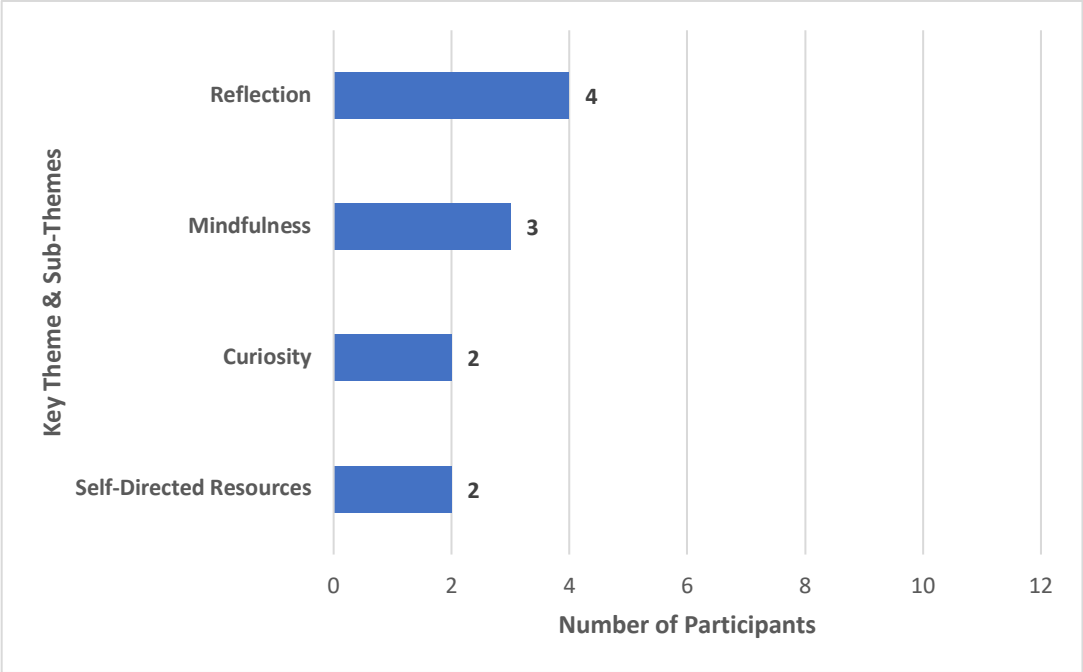
Sub-theme 18 - religion. One participant shared the role that religion has played in their EI development. They have been on a journey from being a part of the Catholic faith, to then joining a non-denominational church, to then following the Buddhist faith.

Of their religious experiences, they stated that the 'Golden Rule' (Do unto others as you would have them do unto you) most directly fed their growth in EI.

Key Themes 5-8. The remainder of the key themes do not have any sub-themes and are therefore depicted alongside one another in Figure 5 and subsequently discussed in more detail.

Figure 5

Key Themes 5-8 – Reflection, Mindfulness, Curiosity, Self-Directed Resources



Key theme 5 - reflection. Four participants identified various forms of reflection as practices that have enhanced their EI. One has engaged in journaling and reflective writing to process learnings. Three spoke of general self-reflective activities such as pausing before reacting, identifying what triggers them, exploring reactions that arise in them when they arise, and reflecting on their core values when making decisions or reacting to situations.

Key theme 6 - mindfulness. Three interviewees identified mindful practices as being additive to their emotional intelligence. One participant self-manages by getting quiet and practicing yoga breathing before they speak in a tense situation. One engages in various forms of meditation on a regular basis. One has worked on developing an overall mindful mindset and applying it: "So applying that kind of mindful mindset to why I'm feeling the way I'm feeling and noticing it and exploring it and building a relationship with it, as opposed to letting it get to me."

Theme 7 – curiosity (less frequently referenced). Two participants attributed a curious mindset, and demonstration of that curiosity, as contributors to their emotional intelligence. One recalls that they had been curious since birth, which they feel has fed their ability to be empathetic. They attributed their curiosity to wanting to understand why others think, act, and feel the way they do, and why they may have a different point of view. They also feel their curiosity enables them to be a deeper listener, paying better attention to verbal and non-verbal cues from others. Another participant credits their curiosity with their ability to pause a situation and to be comfortable asking for clarification about what is going on. They feel it helps them identify their own biases and better handle interpersonal situations and interactions.

Theme 8 – self-directed resources (less frequently referenced). Two participants credited their consumption of self-directed resources, in particular prior readings, as having contributed to their emotional intelligence. One participant recalled books that have built skills in communication, influence, and mediation. Another has benefitted from regular reading of short-form articles that are quicker to consume and digest, and satiate their appetite for shorter bursts of ongoing learning.

Research Question 2: Current, Ongoing Development of Emotional Intelligence

The responses to eight interview questions provided data that output nine themes and six sub-themes related to current, ongoing efforts to develop emotional intelligence. Of the nine themes related to current, ongoing development, the most frequently cited efforts were in Work Experiences, Consuming Resources/Content, Relationships, Intentional Curiosity and Practice, and Reflection. There were four methods (and two sub-methods) that were less frequently referenced: Training & Development, Life Experiences, Mindfulness, and Models/Coaches (with sub-methods of Role Models and Executive / Leadership Coaching). While these are not considered by me to be key themes, I included them as part of the data analysis and conclusions. Table 7 provides an overview of key themes, respective sub-themes, and less frequently referenced methods related to how leaders continue to develop their emotional intelligence over their lives and careers.

Table 7

Key Themes to Research Question #2
How Leaders Continue to Develop Emotional Intelligence

Key Theme	Sub-Theme	N	%
Work Experiences		**7**	**58%**
	Challenges	3	25%
	Intentional Leadership Practices	3	25%
	General On-the-Job Development	2	17%
	Feedback	1	8%
Self-Directed Resources		**5**	**42%**
Relationships		**4**	**33%**
Intentional Curiosity & Practice		**4**	**33%**
Reflection		**4**	**33%**
Less Frequently Referenced Methods			
Training & Development Sessions		**2**	**17%**
Life Experiences - Challenges		**2**	**17%**
Mindfulness		**2**	**17%**
Models/Coaches		**2**	**17%**
	Role Models	1	8%
	Executive/Leadership Coaching	1	8%

Key theme 1 - work experiences. The overall theme of Work Experiences was most frequently cited by interview participants, with seven of 12 interviewees naming it as one of their current modalities in developing their emotional intelligence. Under the theme Work Experiences, there were four sub-themes: Intentional Leadership Practices, Challenges / Hardship, General On-the-Job Development, and Feedback. In order to

clearly depict the frequency with which the key themes and sub-themes were referenced, Figure 6 illustrates the number of participants who cited the key theme of Work Experiences, as well as who cited each of its respective sub-themes.

Figure 6

Key Theme 1 (Work Experiences) and Sub-Themes 1-4

Sub-theme 1 - challenges. Three participants called out that continuous opportunities to engage in challenging and difficult situations help them to continue to build their emotional intelligence. One leader moved from the United States to Asia to take on a larger role and leaned into the opportunity in that transition to grow their EI. For example, they navigated and managed geopolitical conflict that can arise with employee sentiments in the office, and actively listened to better understand the regional perspectives so that they could better advocate for regional needs to the company's headquarters. Another leader has utilized challenges presented by COVID-19 to enhance their adaptability in navigating new and unknown situations. One leader practices self-

management in working with a colleague whose behavior is triggering for them. Another seeks out and engages in challenging roles that are new to them, such as taking on a new function or discipline without added resources.

Sub-theme 2 - intentional leadership practices. Three of 12 interviewed leaders identified various leadership practices they intentionally employ in order to continue developing their emotional intelligence. One engages in skip-level meetings with the direct reports of their direct reports. They feel this practice continuously builds empathy and understanding for others. Another leader intentionally practices vulnerable leadership with their team, being open about their own development areas and how they feel about particular situations or experiences at work. They made a commitment to be "strongly vulnerable and vulnerably strong" in order to model the behavior for their team members and create space for them to be vulnerable. Another leader practices emotional self-management in quieting negative thoughts about how others may be perceiving them. They feel this helps them to more fully listen to their team members and learn more about what motivates them so that they can adapt their style according to what best engages them.

Sub-theme 3 - general on-the-job development. Two leaders stated that they utilize their day-to-day job responsibilities and activities to further enhance their emotional intelligence. For example, one regularly works with executives and observes and coaches them on their journeys through various degrees of emotional intelligence in their leadership. One regularly works with partners from the United States and Britain and utilizes those moments of cultural difference to enhance their emotional intelligence.

Sub-theme 4 - feedback. One leader called out the ongoing experience of sharing feedback with team members as moments in which they built their emotional intelligence. They stated that challenging feedback conversations in particular provide learning in this space and that they get continuously better by helping others through feedback.

Key themes 2-8. The following key themes do not have any sub-themes and are therefore depicted alongside one another in Figure 7, and subsequently discussed in more detail.

Figure 7

Key Themes 2-8 – Self-Directed Resources, Relationships, Intentional Curiosity & Practice, Reflection, Training / Development, Life Experiences (Challenges), Mindfulness

Key theme 2 – self-directed resources. Another theme that emerged was the consumption of self-directed, developmental content which five participants named as a

method for enhancing their emotional intelligence. Participants cited various types of resources as being additive to the development of their emotional intelligence, specifically books, short-form articles or blog posts, and podcasts. The topics are areas related to emotional intelligence, such as vulnerable leadership and empathy. One participant shared about the short-form content, “It's like picking up a Bible. You pick up short scriptures to take and reflect”.

Key theme 3 - relationships. Four participants utilize and benefit from various relationships in their lives, such as their relationships with friends and spouses. One leader creates dedicated time and practices focused listening at home by storing their phone when they arrive home from work. They stated this allows them to be more present at home and to be more highly attuned to others without distraction. Another participant recently remarried and intentionally practices what they have learned about emotional intelligence from their work and from their prior marriage in their relationship with their new spouse. Two leaders intentionally surround themselves with friends from whom they can glean insights about emotional intelligence, and who can hold them accountable to their own goals related to EI behaviors.

Key theme 4 - intentional curiosity and practice. Four participants shared intentional practices they have formed in order to continue developing their emotional intelligence. The practices all centered around demonstrating curiosity and continuous practice in developing EI-related behaviors. Two participants intentionally utilize inquiry, leading with more questions to better understand other (particularly opposing) points of view and to gather better context from others before acting. Two participants commented

on the ongoing nature of this type of learning, and that they benefit from an ongoing practice that shows up throughout different types of interactions. One participant shared,

> For me, it's just trying to keep learning as much as I can, and trying in every possible way, no matter how hurried I get, to try and remember that I just don't know enough, and to make sure I slow down, engage the right people, and listen to them.

Key theme 5 - reflection. Four participants engage in reflective activities to continue their ongoing EI development. One practices reflecting more than asserting when in interactions with others. One goes through a reflective process for self-management, pausing to think about why they are having a particular emotional reaction, why something might be bothering them, asking whether it will matter in the future, and what they can do differently. One leader intentionally books time for reflection, so that they can take what they learn into the future.

Theme 6 - training and development sessions / workshops (less frequently referenced). Two leaders engage in structured developmental workshops to continue developing their emotional intelligence. One engages their team in a workshop with a self-assessment to continue building awareness of self and others, as well as strengthen team dynamics. Another engages in leadership development programs, in particular programs targeted to female leaders, as a means of ongoing growth.

Theme 7 - life experiences – challenges (less frequently referenced). Two leaders intentionally push themselves outside their comfort zone in their recreational lives in order to develop emotional intelligence. One is a more natural introvert and is continuously challenging themself to step out of their comfort zone to engage in more

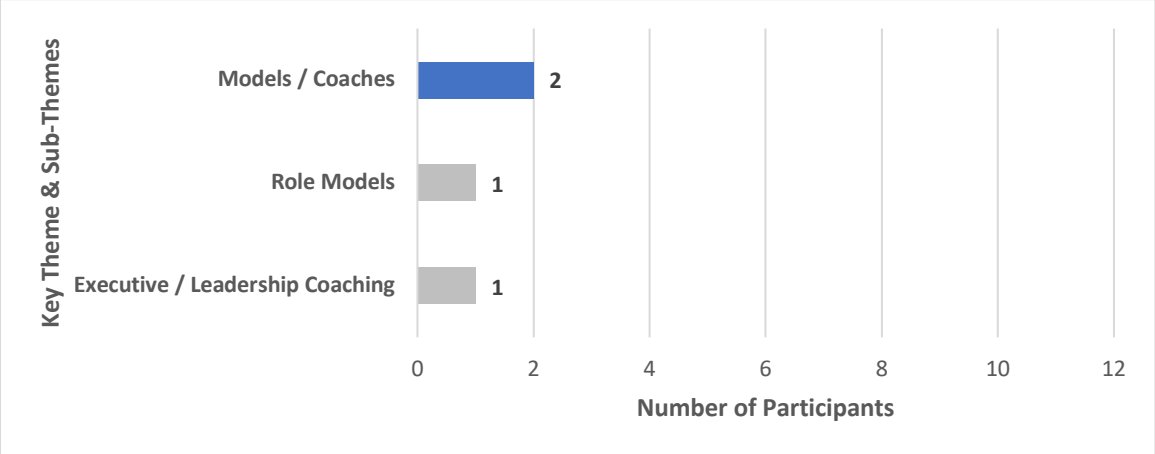
social interaction. Another took on a leadership position in their community, in which they manage sometimes contentious interactions with people they find difficult. They use this experience to practice self-management. They said, "You have to put yourself in situations that challenge, and where you're not always with people that are of the same values system or the same socioeconomic profile, or in these gilded and gated communities we put ourselves into." They shared a belief that emotional intelligence is best grown when tested and challenge themself to enter environments that are not fully congruent to their own value system or social network.

Theme 8 – mindfulness (less frequently referenced). Two participants noted that regular mindful practices help them continue to develop their EI by heightening awareness of their body and mind and by being present. Both leaders shared their meditation practices are helpful rituals in developing EI, by getting better physiological control over their bodies and creating space. One utilizes learnings they gained during a sabbatical to slow down and let go of their thoughts and to be more present. For example, they practice mindful dishwashing, which helps them to turn a mundane task into an opportunity to clear their mind and be present and self-reflective.

Theme 9 - models/coaches (less frequently referenced). Support from a role model or a coach was identified by two leaders as a component of their EI development. Under the theme Models / Coaches, there were two sub-themes: Role Models and Executive / Leadership Coaching. Figure 8 illustrates the frequency with which this key theme and its sub-themes were referenced.

Figure 8

Key Theme 9 (Role Models / Mentors) and Sub-Themes 5-6



Sub-theme 5 - role model. One leader continuously seeks out other leaders who demonstrate strong EI in various areas and watches, listens, and learns from them. They also observe leaders who do not exhibit high EI and takes learnings from their actions as well.

Sub-theme 6 - executive/leadership coach. One participant has recently begun an executive coaching engagement, which is helping them to exhibit higher levels of EI in the workplace, by better adapting to changes associated with a new boss, advocating for themself and their team, better observing and reading others, and knowing when and how to challenge others.

Summary

This study provided answers to the key research questions:

- How have leaders developed their emotional intelligence throughout their lifetimes?
- How are leaders continuing to develop their emotional intelligence in their lives and careers?

How leaders have developed emotional intelligence. I found that prior development of EI came from a combination of methods. Work Experiences were cited by all study participants as a method by which they have developed EI, with challenges and hardship as the most-frequently cited sub-method within work experiences. Training and development experiences were cited by the majority of participants, some of whom utilized self-assessments as part of their training experience. Models/mentors/coaches were also identified by almost all participants as a method by which they have developed EI, in both personal and professional contexts. Life Experiences were the next most frequently cited method by which participants have developed their emotional intelligence, with challenges and hardships again being cited most frequently as the types of life experiences that provided developmental fodder.

How leaders continue to develop emotional intelligence. I found that the most frequently attributed method of current EI development is learning through Work Experiences. Within that, engaging in intentional leadership practices and experiencing challenges or hardships were noted as current methods to continue development. Participants also attributed the consumption of resources or content related to EI with their ongoing development. The developmental content ranged from books to podcasts to articles.

This chapter provided an overview of key themes and sub-themes in the results of the research interviews, as well as a summary of the results. Chapter 5 will conclude this study and will discuss the research findings, compare the research findings to the findings in the literature review, summarize implications for practice, hypothesize the impact of

the research on the field of Organization Development, discuss study limitations, and recommend areas for future examination.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand leaders' perceptions about their journey of developing their emotional intelligence and to explore their ongoing development efforts in this area. This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- How have leaders developed their emotional intelligence throughout their lifetimes?
- How are leaders continuing to develop their emotional intelligence in their lives and careers?

This chapter will summarize the research findings, review the study conclusions, provide recommendations to leaders and Organization Development practitioners, highlight limitations of this study, and explore options for future research. While the findings of the study do not provide definitive answers, they provide valuable insight into how leaders have developed their emotional intelligence over their lifetimes and how they continue to do so.

Summary

The responses from 12 leader interviews yielded eight themes and 18 sub-themes related to prior development of emotional intelligence and nine themes and six sub-themes related to current efforts to develop emotional intelligence. The eight content interview questions related to a leader's general experiences with emotional intelligence, direct questions about specific modalities of development (e.g., training, role modeling, life and work experiences), open-ended probing for additional modalities, most

challenging and easiest areas of EI development, and their continued efforts to develop their EI.

The interview participants believed that their emotional intelligence had been developed by 1) Work experiences, in particular challenging ones; 2) Training and development experiences; 3) Having EI modeled to them by a family member or boss/leader, or engaging with a coach or mentor; and 4) Life experiences, in particular challenging ones. Other less frequently cited methods were mindfulness practices, reflection, a mindset of curiosity, and consuming self-directed resources related to emotional intelligence.

When asked about their continued efforts to develop their emotional intelligence, interview participants shared the following practices: 1) Work experiences, including challenges and intentional leadership practices; 2) Consuming self-directed resources related to EI; 3) Learning from relationships; 4) Intentional curiosity and practice; and 5) Reflection. Other less frequently cited modalities were training and development sessions, life experiences, mindfulness, and models or coaches.

Conclusions

The findings from this research study do not appear to meaningfully contradict assertions discovered in the literature review. However, I was unable to find a breadth of research on the topic. Therefore, these findings do provide additional clarity on what practices may be most impactful for developing emotional intelligence. The following section will explore some of the conclusions unearthed through the research.

Work experiences. Based on this research, work experiences were most frequently referenced as a significant contributor to EI development. Each interview

participant shared a story of one or multiple challenges or hardships in their work environment that spurred their EI learning. Some participants shared that it was only in hindsight that they were able to articulate and understand the learning that had taken place, as in the moment they were quite focused on the challenge or struggle at hand. The idea that challenge and hardship can be formative in EI development is interesting when examining Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey's (2016) four-branch model of emotional intelligence. There are particular components of the model that align to how participants described their EI journeys as related to challenging experiences. From the 'perceiving emotions' branch, multiple participants described processes of identifying and perceiving their own emotions, as well as the emotions of others, through cues like expression and behavior. When Mayer et al. (2016) describe the 'facilitating thought' branch, they identify the act of leveraging one's mood swings, which interview participants described in multiple examples. There were examples of taking a negative mood state and intentionally transforming it into a more positive mood state as part of their learning. From the 'managing emotions' branch, participants found they grew through intentionally practicing self-management when faced with challenges, as well as attempts to manage the emotions of others through demonstrating empathy and listening.

The overall findings around workplace experiences as developmental tools align with Clarke's (2006) research finding power in both planned and unplanned non-formal workplace experiences. Planned work experiences such as a career transition or stepping into a new role were noted by participants of this research as effective learning modalities. In addition, the unplanned challenges or experiences, such as challenging workplace relationships or needing to flex one's style and approach for a new client or

partner, were ripe for development. Amagoh's (2009) findings also support the data from interview participants, as leaders continuously tapping and reflecting on their experiences can grow their insights on how to demonstrate great leadership. In addition, Höpfl and Linstead (1997), in discussing the power of childhood experiences, note that the patterns developed from them are plastic and can be impacted by work experiences. In fact, some participants in this study noted threads between their life experiences into their work experiences. For example, a participant who learned empathy quite early from unexpected time spent living abroad in a country that had been ravaged by war, later had an experience in adulthood developing the same skill when leading a highly diverse and multicultural team in the workplace.

Life experiences. The experiences one lives outside of work are also impactful in developing emotional intelligence. Similar to work experiences, within the theme, the most frequently cited types of life experiences were those that included some element of challenge or hardship. Higgs and Aiken (2003) identify emotional resilience as one of the core elements of emotional intelligence and multiple participants described a process of building resilience throughout life experiences that tested their emotional strength and prompted them to act outside their comfort zone. Participants also at times expressed a level of disbelief at what they had successfully endured or survived and credited resilience with their ability to do so.

There is also some crossover with another theme I found around emotional intelligence being learned from role models, many of whom were cited as parents and grandparents (and therefore part of their lived experiences). Within their experiences observing their parents and grandparents, some participants learned from family members

who showed them what emotional intelligence is and others learned by observing what it is not. Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey's (2016) model contains various facets that participants utilized when learning what to do or not do by observing others. For example, reducing or intensifying the emotional responses of others (e.g., managing an angry parent) or observing and perceiving emotions in others (e.g., watching a parent successfully manage trauma and modeling oneself after them). Goleman (1995) notes that positive role-modeling from parents results in positive outcomes for their children related to emotional intelligence, such as better emotional regulation and social aptitude. Goleman (1995) also discusses that stressful events in life can impact emotional learning in a lasting way into adulthood. Meers (2009) also found that significant life experiences positively impacted both self-awareness and self-regulation in study subjects.

It was in the telling of stories about life experiences, and also work experiences, that participants most frequently increased their observable engagement with the topic. Their stories were rich and detailed, they spoke with vivid imagery, and they more readily described their own emotional states during the experience as compared to their stories about other EI development methods, such as training or coaching. This may be due to the fact that EI is considered a hot intelligence, as defined by Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2016): something quite significant to an individual, "matters that may chill our hearts or make our blood boil" (p. 292).

Training and development programs. Almost all participants recalled some sort of training or development program that had contributed to the enhancement of their emotional intelligence. In each example provided, the interview participants described some element of self-awareness building. All emotional intelligence models noted in

Chapter 2 of this study align directly or indirectly to self-awareness as a key component of EI. Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (2016) reference the ability to "identify emotions in one's own physical states, feelings, and thoughts" (p. 199). Research from both Higgs and Aiken (2003) and Goleman (1998) name self-awareness as a key component of EI, while Bar-On (2006) lists a series of components that the majority of EI models contain, one of which is "the ability to recognize, understand, and express emotions and feelings" (p. 14). Universally, the ability to identify and understand emotional aspects of oneself is key to emotional intelligence, and this focus on self-awareness came through in the interview participants' stories in this study. Following self-awareness, interview participants called out various types of trainings that related to self-management, awareness of others, and/or managing relationships with others, which also appear across multiple EI models.

This research, which finds training to be an effective method of developing EI, appears to refute Goleman's (1998, 2000) assertion that most training programs fail because they target the wrong area of the brain, though it is unknown which areas of the brain the subjects' training programs targeted. Clarke (2006) also expresses doubt in the efficacy of training programs in building emotional capabilities, though acknowledges they may provide a pathway to greater self-awareness building. Given the overwhelming number of participants in this research who cited training as a core component of their EI learning, it seems that training programs may have the capability to be more effective than is noted in the current body of research.

Recommendations to Leaders

While every leader's developmental journey is unique, existing literature and the findings highlighted throughout this research provide some clarity on what activities leaders should focus on in order to grow their emotional intelligence.

Engage in challenging experiences. Both in life and at work, leaders should intentionally push themselves out of their comfort zones by pursuing new challenges (large or small) that they may find uncomfortable and seizing opportunities to grow through those challenges. This may include:

- taking on a new role
- asking for or giving critical feedback
- participating in stretch assignments
- engaging in difficult conversations to build relationships
- working with people they find difficult
- moving to a different country in a global role

The EI-related skills built through this type of learning spanned across the leveraged Goleman (1998) model with development in areas from all four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. This, plus the fact that all participants noted experiential learning as a method of developing EI, make this a particularly impactful modality of learning these skills.

Reflect on hardship experiences. While I would not recommend seeking out potentially emotionally damaging hardships to develop EI, the reality is that your average leader will experience some extreme challenge in their life and/or work throughout the course of their lifetime. When that happens, I recommend activities that prompt self-

reflection and self-awareness building. While some research participants did not immediately recognize the value of the challenging experiences in the moment, many benefited from later reflecting on the difficult circumstances, either through reflective writing such as journaling or engaging in reflective practices to uncover what they learned from an experience. Asking reflective questions to oneself may prompt some of this learning, for example: What do I know today that I didn't know prior to this experience? How has this experience shaped me? What are the negative impacts it has had on me? What are the positive impacts? What can I now do differently? What was triggered in me by this experience? Why was I triggered? What were my actions when triggered? What do I want my actions to be?

Engage in EI training. While many leaders find it challenging to create time and space for formalized learning, the results of this research indicate that various types of training programs may be beneficial to developing emotional intelligence-related skills. Leaders should seek out training or development opportunities that incorporate some element of self-awareness building, either through feedback, assessments, and/or reflection. Multiple participants noted that self-awareness was a bit of an entryway into broader emotional intelligence and viewed it as a first step before the others were possible. Many of the training programs they referenced positioned self-awareness as a cornerstone, which made the programs feel personal and memorable.

Recommendations to Organization Development (OD) Practitioners

In addition to leaders taking intentional action in their own development, Organization Development practitioners may benefit from the outcomes of this research and can take specific actions based on what was uncovered in the study.

Incorporate stretch opportunities. Given the immense impact that challenging experiences have on developing EI in a leader, OD practitioners should consider formalizing these types of stretch assignments or opportunities into career paths within an organization. For example, creating a job rotation program may provide leaders with a challenging experience, with the supportive guardrails of doing so intentionally and with the support of the organization. Leaders may rotate into different roles, business units, or across different geographies to gain the benefit of this development. OD practitioners should also consider shorter-term stretch assignments that may enable leaders to work with new and diverse groups of people, on challenges they have not solved before. This would combine the benefits I found from working with others and the benefits of stretching into new experiences a leader has not done before, both of which were found to contribute to EI development.

Thoughtfully construct leadership development programs. I tend to agree with some of the referenced authors that training programs vary widely in efficacy. Therefore, the learnings from this research prompt me to recommend that OD professionals include the following components in any leadership development program aimed at increasing emotional intelligence:

- Incorporate content or experiences to increase self-awareness. This may include assessments, in-depth feedback, and/or self-reflection.
- Incorporate practical applications of the learning, outside the classroom. Also incorporate reflection on these practical applications, for better synthesizing and processing of the experience, and to better enable the leader to integrate new insights and learnings.

- Incorporate reflection on challenging life experiences, where appropriate. While the life experiences themselves cannot be manufactured in an organizational learning environment, OD practitioners can prompt reflections to better synthesize and apply relevant learnings from life into work. An example might be a narrative exercise in which a leader walks through their life experiences, what they've learned, and the impact these experiences have had on their life and career.

Limitations

There are limitations to this study that are worth noting. First, only 12 people were interviewed which is a small sample. Also, a portion of the sample was built from my personal and professional network connections. Those that I did not know prior to the research were recommended by other participants and were recommended because they may have an interest in this topic or area of study. This may have resulted in a positive bias around the topic of emotional intelligence.

Second, although I took precautionary measures to ensure objectivity and consistency across interviews, there is room for error based on the flow of conversation, the nature of the probing follow-up questions, and interpretations of participants' answers.

Third, the interview questions were open-ended and the participants' responses depended on what the participant deemed relevant, or what they could recall from past experiences. For example, a participant may have responded 'no' to whether anyone had role-modeled emotional intelligence in their life, and while this may be true, it may also be true that the participant was simply not able to recall an instance in the moment.

Fourth, some participants were more familiar with certain dimensions of the referenced EI model, such as empathy, self-awareness, and adaptability. While the entire EI model was available to participants during the interview, some dimensions of the model were referenced less frequently. This may be because they were less relevant to the actual experience of the participants or because they did not as naturally associate those dimensions with EI. This may have caused participants to not consciously include them in their thought process and responses.

Fifth, the interview questions around specific modalities of EI development may have been worded in a way that may have indicated my perspective or bias. Further research on this topic may benefit from more open-ended questions, such as "What do you think has most impacted your development of emotional intelligence?".

Sixth, I collected data on the number of participants who cited a particular modality of EI development. However, this current study did not collect data on the perceived impact of each of the modalities, which would be an interesting approach for future research on this topic.

Finally, this current study did not explore the specific attributes or qualities of each modality that made for lasting EI development. For example, what about EI training or a life experience made the learning stick for leaders? Future research could address what made each modality effectives.

Suggestions for Future Research

Emotional intelligence is a broad set of skills and behaviors and is a hot topic of conversation in the business world, thereby prompting many roads for potential future research. First, it would be helpful to conduct this study with a much larger sample of

leaders, which could complement this study by layering in additional data to form a broader picture.

Second, it would be useful to conduct a similar study and analyze the data by particular demographics. For example, leaders' perceptions of developing emotional intelligence in various geographies, various ethnic backgrounds, different industries, or leaders of different genders. In fact, multiple female participants in this study called out that they would like to see research conducted on emotional intelligence and gender norms, as they perceived they were expected to exhibit higher levels of EI than their male peers. I was thoughtful to include participants of different genders, backgrounds, business units, geographies, and industries. However, the sample size was too small to conduct useful analyses based on demographic data.

Third, it would be beneficial to conduct research on development experiences related to each of the sub-skills within the emotional intelligence model (e.g., self-awareness, adaptability, organizational awareness). Dulewicz and Higgs (2004) have a perspective that some aspects of EI have more limited developability than others, and further research may confirm or refute this assertion. It would also be interesting to explore various development modalities for each of the particular sub-skills within EI. For example, some of the sub-skills may be strengthened more readily by training, while others built more naturally through life or work experiences.

Finally, as noted above, I would like to see future research dedicated to the specific attributes or qualities that might make each development modality effective.

Final Notes

In the course of this research, the novel coronavirus came to light and spread across the globe. Leaders, teams, individual contributors, and entire organizations have had to dramatically shift the way they work in order to survive, or hopefully thrive, through a global pandemic.

As with many major changes or disruptions, there are emotional impacts being felt by leaders and team members alike. Never has it felt more important for leaders to develop their emotional intelligence, in order to navigate the disruption themselves, and to lead others through it with motivation, engagement, and emotional connection.

By investing in their development in this area, leaders and organizations may find an unlock to navigating the pandemic, and the predicted economic fallout to follow, in such a way that helps them and their teams thrive. In addition, strengthening emotional intelligence may have broader implications for successfully navigating the still-unknown challenges of tomorrow and beyond.

References

Amagoh, F. (2009). Leadership development and leadership effectiveness. *Management Decision*, *47*(6), 989–999.

Bar-On, R. (2006). The Bar-On model of emotional-social intelligence (ESI). *Psicothema*, *18*, 13-25.

Bar-On, R. (2010). Emotional intelligence: an integral part of positive psychology. *South African Journal of Psychology*, *40*(1).

Bersin, J. (2018, July). *JoshBersin.com*. Retrieved from https://joshbersin.com/2018/06/a-new-paradigm-for-corporate-training-learning-in-the-flow-of-work/

Charoensukmongkol, P. (2014). Benefits of mindfulness meditation on emotional intelligence, general self-efficacy, and perceived stress: evidence from Thailand. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, *16*(3), 171–192.

Cherniss, C., Extein, M., Goleman, D. & Weissberg, R. (2006). Emotional Intelligence: What Does the Research Really Indicate? *Educational Psychologist*, *41*:4, 239-245.

Chopra, P., & Kanji, G. (2010). Emotional intelligence: a catalyst for inspirational leadership and management excellence. *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, *21*(10), 971–1004.

Clarke, N. (2006). Developing emotional intelligence through workplace learning: findings from a case study in healthcare. *Human Resource Development International*, *9*(4), 447–465.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5 ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Dulewicz, V. & Higgs, M. (1999). Can emotional intelligence be measured and developed? *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *20*(5), pp. 242-253.

Dulewicz, V. & Higgs, M. (2000). Emotional intelligence: A review and evaluation study, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *15*(4), pp. 341-372.

Dulewicz, V., & Higgs, M. (2004). Can emotional intelligence be developed? *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *15*(1), 95–111.

Dulewicz, V., Higgs, M., & Slaski, M. (2003). Measuring emotional intelligence: content, construct and criterion-related validity. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *18*(5), 405–420.

Enriquez, H., Esparza, O., & Ramos, N. (2017). Impact of the mindful emotional intelligence program on emotional regulation in college students. *International Journal of Psychology and Psychological Therapy*, *17*(1), 39–48.

Gardner, H. (1993). *Frames of mind: the theory of multiple intelligences* (2nd ed.). Fontana.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence*. Bantam Books.

Goleman, D. (1998). What makes a leader? *Harvard Business Review*, *76*(6), 92.

Goleman, D. (2000). Leadership that gets results. *Harvard Business Review*, *78*(2), 78.

Grant, L., Kinman, G., & Alexander, K. (2014). What's all this talk about emotion? developing emotional intelligence in social work students. *Social Work Education -London Then Abingdon*, *33*(7), 874–889.

Higgs, M., & Aitken, P. (2003). An exploration of the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership potential. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *18*(8), 814–823.

Höpfl H., & Linstead, S. (1997). Introduction: learning to feel and feeling to learn: emotion and learning in organizations. *Management Learning*, *28*(1), 5–12.

Kirk, B. A., Schutte, N. S., & Hine, D. W. (2011). The effect of an expressive-writing intervention for employees on emotional self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, affect, and workplace incivility. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *41*(1), 179-195.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative Research Design* (3 ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1993). The intelligence of emotional intelligence. *Intelligence*, *17*(4), 433–442.

Mayer, J.D., & Salovey, P. (1997). What is emotional intelligence? In: Salovey, P, Sluyter, D (eds) Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence: Implications for Educators. New York, NY: Basic Books, pp. 3–31.

Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D. R., & Salovey, P. (1999). Emotional intelligence meets traditional standards for an intelligence. *Intelligence*, *27*(4), 267–98.

Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. R. (2004). Target articles: "emotional intelligence: theory, findings, and implications". *Psychological Inquiry*, *15*(3), 197–215.

Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. R. (2008). Emotional intelligence: new ability or eclectic traits? *The American Psychologist*, *63*(6), 503–17.

Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D. R., & Salovey, P. (2016). The ability model of emotional intelligence: principles and updates. *Emotion Review*, *8*(4), 290–300.

McEnrue, M. P., & Groves, K. (2006). Choosing among tests of emotional intelligence: what is the evidence? *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, *17*(1), 9–42.

Meers, Ryan P., "How Effective Leaders Learn from Life: A Grounded Theory Study of the Impact of Significant Life Experiences Upon Leadership Development" (2009). *Theses, Dissertations, & Student Scholarship: Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communication* Department. 3.

Miao, C., Humphrey, R. H., & Qian, S. (2018). The relationship between emotional intelligence and trait mindfulness: a meta-analytic review. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *135*, 101–107.

Moldoveanu, M., & Narayandas, D. (2019). The Future of leadership development. *Harvard Business Review*, *97*(2), 40-48.

Rosete, D., & Ciarrochi, J. (2005). Emotional intelligence and its relationship to workplace performance outcomes of leadership effectiveness. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, *26*(5), 388–399.

Salovey, P. & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. Imagination, Cognition, and Personality, *9*, 185-211.

Vardiman, P. D., Houghton, J. D., & Jinkerson, D. L. (2006). Environmental leadership development: toward a contextual model of leader selection and effectiveness. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *27*(2), 93–105.

Walter, F., Humphrey, R., & Cole, M. (2012). Unleashing leadership potential: Toward an evidence-based management of emotional intelligence. *Organizational Dynamics, 41,* 212-219.

Appendix A: Emotional Intelligence Model

The following definitional model was sent to participants just before the interview, to be used as a reference if needed:

Emotional Intelligence Domains and Competencies

SELF-AWARENESS	SELF-MANAGEMENT	SOCIAL AWARENESS	RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT
Emotional self-awareness	Emotional self-control	Empathy	Influence
	Adaptability		Coach and mentor
	Achievement orientation	Organizational awareness	Conflict management
	Positive outlook		Teamwork
			Inspirational leadership

SOURCE MORE THAN SOUND, LLC, 2017

Appendix B: Participant Interview Script and Questions

Interview Script

Introduction: Thank you for your time today to discuss your journey in developing emotional intelligence. We will spend approximately 45-60 minutes together today. I have a set of interview questions I will ask you, and appreciate your candid responses. There will also be an opportunity at the end for you to provide additional relevant information, if you'd like. Your responses will remain anonymous in the published research.

I'd like to remind you of the purpose of our study, which is to better understand how leaders have developed their emotional intelligence. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

Opening questions:

1. What is your job title? [open-ended answer]
2. What is your business unit/function? [open-ended answer]
3. In what industry does your organization operate or compete? [open-ended answer]
4. How many people are on your team reporting to you? [open-ended answer]

Content questions:

1. How has emotional intelligence shown up in your life and career? [open-ended answer]
2. Can you think of a time you've participated in a training that increased your emotional intelligence? If so, tell me about it. [open-ended answer]
3. Who has modeled EI and/or mentored you in developing emotional intelligence? Tell me about that. [open-ended answer]

4. Tell me about any life or work experiences that you think have helped you develop emotional intelligence. [open-ended answer]

Invite the participant to share any other methods or modalities by which they have developed their emotional intelligence.

5. What part(s) of EI do you find most challenging to develop? Or would you like to have more of? [open-ended answer]

6. What part(s) of EI are you most skilled at or develop most easily? [open-ended answer]

7. What are you doing these days to continue developing your EI? [open-ended answer]

8. What additional information would you like to share that might be relevant to this topic? What else would you like for me to know? [open-ended answer]

Closing: Thank you very much for your time, and I appreciate your participation in adding to the body of research on emotional intelligence. As you know from our initial communications about this research project, your name and any identifying information will not be shared with anyone, and will not appear in my published thesis. I will share my completed thesis with you, along with an executive summary. Lastly, may I follow up with you if there is a need in the future to clarify any of your points?