

# **Is the Future Female?**

*How Emotional Intelligence and Gender Affect  
Workplace Leadership*

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## Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EQ<sup>1</sup>) is a highly discussed, but not fully utilized element in human resource management, hiring practices, leadership, and professional success. Research has shown that having high EQ is a top indicator of workplace success and workplace flourishing. Research also indicates that women display higher levels of EQ than men, but do not prosper or excel as highly as men in the workplace. This paper reviews the original, representative, and popular research on EQ, its use in the workplace, and its implications across gender, as well as a discussion on the barriers women face in career success and leadership. I present empirical studies, popular literature, and anecdotes regarding these topics and provide my own understanding of the topic and outlook towards the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Academic papers and popular texts on emotional intelligence abbreviate the term as “EI” or “EQ.” In this paper, I use the acronym “EQ.” In instances where an academic paper has the acronym written as “EI,” I have changed it to “[EQ]”.

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## Introduction

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*Anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way – this is not easy. - Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics*

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Daniel Goleman opens his 1995 best-seller *Emotional Intelligence* with this quote by Aristotle, and it speaks volumes to the concept and importance of EQ. Possessing the ability to control one's own emotions and to assess the emotions of others is an extremely valuable skill in life's day-to-day interactions, as well as in the workplace. An individual's EQ level determines the potential he or she has for utilizing important emotional and practical skills and indicates emotional competencies that are translated into workplace capabilities (e.g. – good customer service is a competency based on empathy) (Goleman 1998, 25). EQ, factored in with cognitive ability (IQ) and the Five Factor Model of personality (FFM – Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience) are measurable indicators of one's potential career success.

EQ is an important concept for every person to understand and the emotional competencies gained with a high EQ are crucial for professional success. For women, understanding, regulating, and assessing emotion (all factors in EQ) is especially important, as the notion that women are "more emotional" than men is a commonly held belief in popular society – and not complimentary. McRae, et al. confirm this as a "master stereotype" and held across gender, age, and cultural backgrounds. Research suggests that women have been shown to display more

emotion than men, as shown in some [empirical] evidence (cf. Brody, 1997). Most studies of the emotionality of men and women rely on retrospective self-report methods which leave the reports vulnerable to the effects of gender stereotypes. When retrospective and stereotypical biases are removed, however, gender differences tend to disappear or only emerge late in the emotional response, after being offset by tests using psychological responses to emotional stimuli (McRae, et al. 2008, 144-145). EQ relies on understanding, regulating, and assessing emotions, so, in light of the stereotype of women being more highly emotional (whether correct or incorrect), the notion that women are more emotionally intelligent should come as no surprise.

In this paper, I will explore the history of EQ from conceptualization and definition to its rise in popular culture and human resource development and management, then analyze its role in the workplace, with particular specification to the traits of superior leadership. Finally, I will discuss the significance of EQ across gender, specifically examining “feminine” and “masculine” traits of EQ and the role EQ plays in women in leadership positions, as well as review barriers for women leaders and look towards the future of leadership.

I hypothesize that women possess higher EQ than men and that “the future is female.” With that, I seek to understand what this means for the future of workplace and organizational dynamics and leadership. Further, I will question what it means for the future if/when women become the face of leadership in our modern society: If

the future is female does that mean that the way in which we lead should and will skew more “feminine?” And, if so, how will women and men fare in this future?

### **A little bit of history**

The concept of *emotional intelligence* has origins in the term *social intelligence*, “the ability to understand and manage people,” introduced in 1937 (Thorndike and Stein 1937, 275). The earliest publication the term *emotional intelligence* is cited is by Michael Beldoch (1964, 39) in the book, *The Communication of Emotional Meaning*. The next known use of *emotional intelligence* is by B. Leuner in a 1966 paper titled *Emotional intelligence and emancipation* (Leuner 1966). Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer presented the first scientific conceptualization of EQ in their 1990 paper, *Emotional Intelligence*. Finally, the concept was made popular and gained public attention through Goleman’s 1995 *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*.

### **Some definitions**

#### *Mayer and Salovey*

Mayer and Salovey first defined EQ as: “the subset of intelligence that involves *the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions*” (Salovey & Mayer 1990, 189). In this definition, Mayer and Salovey place EQ with social intelligence as a subset of Gardner’s personal intelligences (inter- and intra-personal intelligence), which are intelligences that include knowledge of the self and

about others. EQ, in this definition, is used to recognize one's own and other's emotions for problem solving and behavior regulation (Salovey & Mayer 1990, 189). The authors defend defining EQ as an *intelligence* rather than a competence since an intelligence “involves organismic abilities to behave.” They note that extraversion, for example, is a social skill or behavioral preference, whereas understanding and examining what another person feels is a mental ability, and this knowledge may stem from general intelligence (*g*), or be somewhat independent of it. The authors infer that the way in which they defined EQ – an intelligence involving a series of mental abilities – qualifies it as a form of intelligence (Mayer & Salovey 1993, 434-435).

When Mayer and Salovey set out to define EQ, they found no collective theoretical concept, but rather a body of dismembered research scattered over several journals, books, and subfields of psychology. Seeking to collect and define EQ cohesively, they developed a framework to conceptualize EQ (Figure 1) (Salovey & Mayer 1990, 190-191).

This original conceptualization asserted that “there is a set of conceptually related mental processes involving emotional information. The mental processes include: a) appraising and expressing emotions in the self and others, b) regulating emotion in the self and others, and c) using emotions in adaptive ways” (Salovey & Mayer 1990, 190-191).



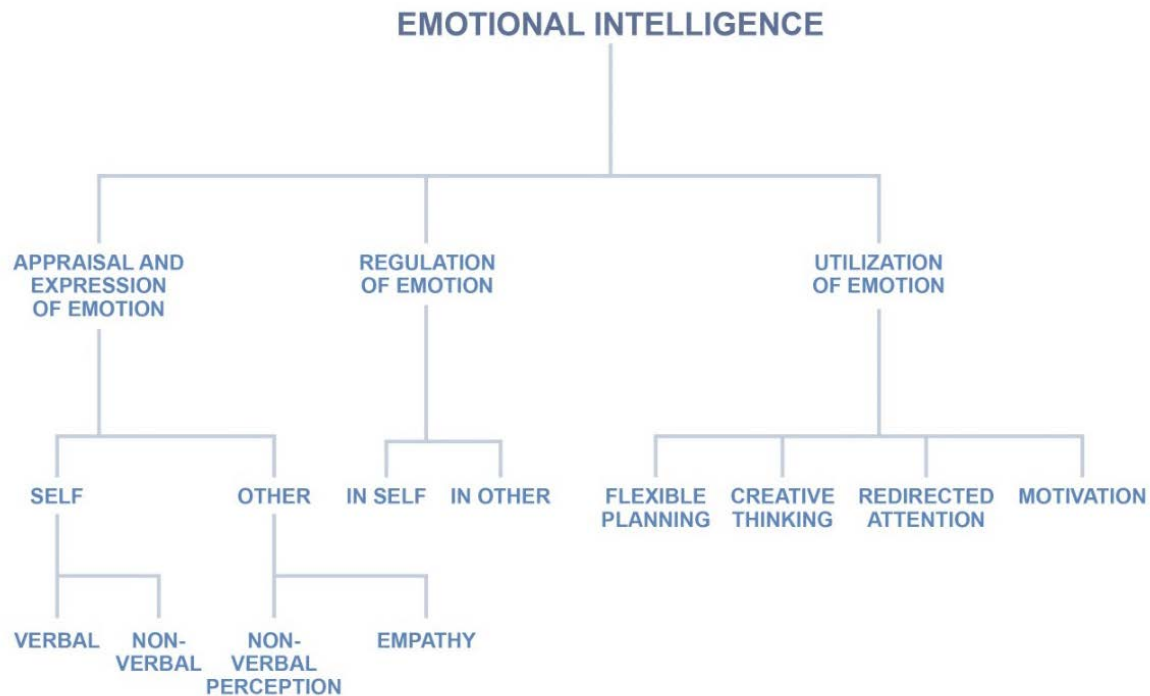


Figure 1

As Mayer and Salovey continued to develop the concept, they determined their early definition of EQ was too vague, as it focuses specifically on perceiving and regulating emotions and omits thinking about feelings (Mayer & Salovey 1997, 10). A revision is as follows:

"Emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth"

(Mayer & Salovey 1997, 10)

With this revised definition, a new framework was developed, deepening the conceptualization (Figure 2) (Mayer & Salovey 1997, 10) of EQ.

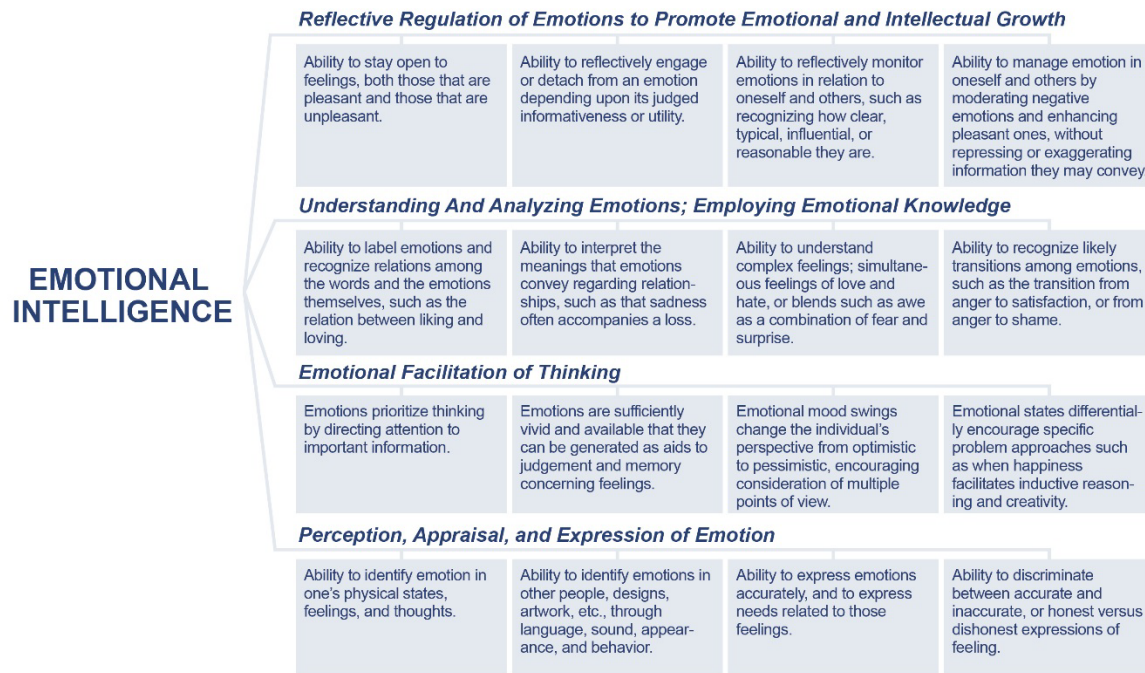


Figure 2

The diagram is organized by row and column, with basic psychological processes in the lowest row and more psychologically integrated processes with each higher row. Additionally, each branch (row) has four “abilities” associated with it; the skills in the column further left surface early in development while those to the right are later developing abilities (Mayer & Salovey 1997, 10).

Mayer and Salovey’s research and work first defined EQ in a scientific manner and their findings meant to place EQ in with other intelligences. They note, “It is our belief that the adaptive use of emotion-laden information is a significant aspect of

what is meant by anyone's definition of intelligence, yet it is not studied systematically by investigators of intelligence nor included in traditional school curricula" (Mayer & Salovey 1997, 22). They argue the use of EQ as an important part of social competencies and adaptive behavior, as well as a basis for thinking, thus making EQ a core intelligence.

### *Daniel Goleman*

The term and concept of EQ became widely known and culturally popular in 1995 when Daniel Goleman published *Emotional Intelligence – Why it can matter more than IQ*. The book reached best-seller status and propelled the concept of EQ into the minds of everyday readers, including employers. Goleman based his research on the theoretical establishment of EQ on the work of Mayer and Salovey ("Like Mayer and Salovey, I used the phrase to synthesize a broad range of scientific findings, drawing together what had been separate strands of research – reviewing not only their theory but a wide variety of other exciting scientific developments, such as the first fruits of the nascent field of affective neuroscience, which explores how emotions are regulated in the brain." (DanielGoleman.info, 2016)) and offers his own understanding of and implications for the value of EQ. In his 1998 follow up, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman offers a solid definition: "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships" (Goleman 1998, 317).

In *Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman sought to explore using emotions intelligently in order to better the future for our children. He questions the traditional wisdom that IQ

alone determines success and aims to convince the reader, and the public at large, that teaching EQ will help our future leaders fare better by giving them additional skills to pair with their innate intellectual abilities. He argues that often the success of those with a moderate IQ and the floundering of those with a high IQ may be attributable to variabilities in EQ, which, he notes, include “self-control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself” (Goleman 1995, xii).

Goleman explores the complexity of emotions from evolutionary imprinting of emotions for survival (“Each emotion offers a distinctive readiness to act; each points us in a direction that has worked well to handle the recurring challenges of human life”), to our two minds (emotional and rational), to the amygdala – the almond shaped cluster of interconnected structures perched above the brainstem, which is responsible for all emotional feeling (Goleman 1995, 4-5).

In discussing how EQ comes into play in our everyday life, Goleman points to the implications of brain functioning in which the emotional brain (the amygdala) reacts just slightly quicker than our neocortex (rational, thinking brain), which is the cause of gut feelings and immediate emotional response to activity. Research by Joseph LeDoux found that sensory signals travel first to the thalamus, then immediately to the amygdala with a second signal routing to the neocortex. This means that the emotional brain reacts to an event with a completely emotional response before the rational, neocortex contemplates the information through several steps of brain processing and perception then initiates a finely-tailored response (Goleman 1995, 17). Due to this shorter circuit to the amygdala, humans have an emotional response

to an event before the brains fully processes it at a cognitive level. Many of us have experienced a situation in which we had an immediate, gut-level reaction to an event then quickly determined our initial feelings, thoughts, or actions were wrong. For example, I hallucinate and lucid dream when I sleep and all too often, I open my eyes in the middle of the night and “see” things lurking in the shadows. Once, I woke up and thought several spiders were descending down to my bed, so I threw the covers off and started swatting at the air, until I was able to process that it was just a hallucination. My initial reaction was based on the amygdala responding emotionally before the neocortex processed the event and allowed me to respond more appropriately (there was literally nothing there).

By offering a science lesson in the brain and then further defining the responsible use of emotions in life, Goleman lays the foundation for understanding the role EQ has in a happy, healthy, and successful life: “being able, for example, to rein in emotional impulse; to read another’s innermost feelings; to handle relationships smoothly” (Goleman 1995, xiii).

Goleman also makes the distinction between EQ and *emotional competence*. EQ is the *potential for learning*, and the practical skills of EQ are based on five elements: self-awareness, motivation, self-regulation, empathy, and adeptness in relationships. With EQ, one’s emotional competence determines how much of the EQ potential one has is translated into capabilities, in work and daily life. For example, the competence of trustworthiness is based on self-regulation, which is handling one’s impulses and internal states well. The key point here is that high EQ does not

automatically mean a person has emotional competencies, rather he or she has a high *potential to learn* the competencies. Goleman clusters the competencies into groups, based on an EQ capacity, and he notes the key to being successful in life's test of EQ lies in having strength in a number of these competencies, but not necessarily all (strength in at least six, spread across all five areas). He states: "there are many paths to excellence" (Goleman 1998, 24-25). Figure 3, below, illustrates Goleman's Emotional Competence Framework.

| THE EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK   |   |
|--|---|
| PERSONAL COMPETENCE<br>How we manage ourselves   | SOCIAL COMPETENCE<br>How we handle relationships  |
| <p><b>Self-Awareness</b> - <i>Knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources, and intuitions</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emotional awareness</li> <li>2. Accurate self-assessment</li> <li>3. Self-confidence</li> </ol> <p><b>Self-Regulation</b> - <i>Managing one's internal states, impulses, and resources</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Self-control</li> <li>5. Trustworthiness</li> <li>6. Conscientiousness</li> <li>7. Adaptability</li> <li>8. Innovation</li> </ol> <p><b>Motivation</b> - <i>Emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Achievement drive</li> <li>10. Commitment</li> <li>11. Initiative</li> <li>12. Optimism</li> </ol> | <p><b>Empathy</b> - <i>Awareness of others feeling, needs, and concerns</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. Understanding others</li> <li>14. Developing others</li> <li>15. Service orientation</li> <li>16. Leveraging diversity</li> <li>17. Political awareness</li> </ol> <p><b>Social Skills</b> - <i>Adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18. Influence</li> <li>19. Communication</li> <li>20. Conflict Management</li> <li>21. Leadership</li> <li>22. Change catalyst</li> <li>23. Building bonds</li> <li>24. Collaboration and cooperation</li> <li>25. Team capabilities</li> </ol> |

Figure 3

### *Further definitions*

Since Salovey and Mayer developed the concept of EQ and Goleman propelled it into popular culture, the importance of EQ study, research, and practical application in science and popular psychology has burgeoned over the past 20 years. Many scholars have developed their own definitions when participating in the body of work.

Van Rooy and Viswesvaran (2004, 72) define EQ as: “the set of abilities (verbal and nonverbal) that enable a person to generate, recognize, express, understand, and evaluate their own, and others, emotions in order to guide thinking and action that successfully cope with environmental demands and pressures.” Bar-On (1997, 16) defines EQ as “an array of noncognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures.” Schutte & Loi (2014, 134) borrow from Bar-On, Salovey, Mayer, and Caruso, stating “Emotional intelligence describes and operationalizes adaptive emotional functioning. Perception, understanding, and managing emotions effectively in the self and others are described as core competencies in most operationalizations of emotional intelligence.”

As I seek to explore the concept of EQ, with a focus on a gendered analysis in its application to the workplace, I offer my own definition, as influenced by my research:

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the ability to recognize and understand emotions both in yourself and in others, the ability to assess, process, and regulate these

emotions accurately and appropriately, and the ability to harness emotions for growth both personally and intellectually.

In the following section, I seek to better understand the nuance of EQ in the workplace and how it affects leadership, as well as the employees for whom these leaders lead. It is this author's belief that utilizing the concepts of everyday EQ as it applies to business, government, and nonprofit organizations (including academic institutions) is important for the propagation of a more successful and emotionally healthy workforce that can serve to push business and government into further prosperity.

## **Putting Emotional Intelligence to Work**

Type "emotional intelligence in the workplace" into Google.com and about 2,140,000 results will appear (Google, 2016). Search results come from publications like *Entrepreneur*, *Forbes*, *The Atlantic* and the *Ivy Business Journal*, as well as institutions like the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Florida, and more. EQ, especially in the context of "the workplace," is a hot topic and trending upwards as more and more companies and employers are focusing on the importance of soft skills and personality factors in the success of the organizations, their employees, and themselves. Beyond the thousands of published articles in trade websites, business publications, and popular culture and books published on the topic, the scientific community has found interest in the study and understanding



of EQ at work, too. Since Mayer and Salovey defined the concept in 1990, a plethora of articles and studies have claimed that individuals high in EQ are more equipped to excel in organizational leadership and flourish in the workplace (see O'Boyle, et al. 2011, Goleman 1998, Schutte & Loi 2014). Individuals that score high in EQ have the ability to understand, appraise, and influence their peers' emotions which leads to shared goals, influence in work environment and cooperation, and optimism in personal contribution to the shared vision; likewise, these leaders can effectively process negative emotions. Research has also claimed that these highly emotionally intelligent individuals are more successful in communication of both personal goals and business plans, effective and innovative communication, have an advantage in developing and growing teams, and possess the appropriate skills in teamwork.

It has been shown that highly emotionally intelligent people understand the value of relationships in an organizational setting from an HR (interpersonal) perspective as well as business perspective and prove to be useful in organizational development through leveraging the strengths of their peers and recognizing weaknesses.

Additionally, research has shown that EQ aids in the managing and handling of change, environmental demands and pressures, and helps individuals find success while under stressful conditions (Zeidner et al. 2004, 386-387). Research suggests that individuals with higher EQ perceive their work environment to be supportive, feel that they have a great sense of power at work and control over their work, which are associated with better mental health. It has been shown that employees with higher

EQ build more social capital resulting in greater social support (Schutte & Loi 2014, 134).

O'Boyle et al. (2011) provided empirical evidence to support the claim that EQ is a factor in workplace success through a meta-analysis aimed to determine the relationship between job performance and EQ. While cognitive ability was shown to be the single best predictor of job performance and an important factor in workplace leadership, the study also found that personality measures like EQ and FFM contributed to predictions of job performance. The meta-analysis confirmed the importance of EQ as a success predictor across several disciplines: academic performance, job performance, negotiation, leadership, emotional labor, trust, work-family conflict, and stress; further, the meta-analysis found EQ to account for "unique variance in predicting job performance above and beyond the FFM and cognitive ability" (O'Boyle, et al. 2011, 789). The analysis classified EQ into three streams: (1) ability-based models that use objective test items (for example: The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT); (2) self-report or peer-report measures based on the four-branch model of EQ (generally based on the Mayer-Salovey definition); and (3) "mixed models" of emotional competencies (using traditional social skill measures with EQ measures). These three streams of EQ were shown to be correlated with job performance (corrected correlations ranging from 0.24 to 0.30), suggesting that EQ is a predictor of job performance. Additionally, the authors note that each stream correlated differently with cognitive ability and the FFM. Streams 2 and 3 had the largest incremental validity beyond

cognitive ability and the FFM, and all three streams demonstrated “substantial relative importance” in the presence of FFM and intelligence when predicting job performance (O’Boyle, et al. 2011, 788 & 807).

Furthermore, the O’Boyle et al. study analyzed the three streams of EQ relative to cognitive ability measures and FFM measures in terms of relative dominance<sup>2</sup>. The results found that cognitive ability represents the largest variance in job performance versus the aforementioned three EQ streams and the FFM. Only against stream 1 did Conscientiousness account for higher levels of variance: cognitive ability accounted for 73.5%, followed by 12.8% for Conscientiousness, and just 6.4% for EQ stream 1. The researchers conclude that stream 1 contributes “relative importance compared to the FFM and cognitive ability” because, though minor, it does meet the threshold for a small effect. EQ indicated a higher variance above all FFM factors, but still below cognitive ability. EQ captured 13.6% and 13.2% in streams 2 and 3 respectively, both just behind cognitive ability, and were deemed “a small to moderate amount of relative importance” by the study. The model showed dominance of cognitive ability, but importantly, also showed that EQ holds a substantial relative importance percentage (13.2%). This aids to confirm that EQ is an essential component to workplace and career success, and the researchers suggest that the analysis does “provide additional explanatory power above and beyond the FFM and cognitive ability in the prediction of job performance,” and they

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<sup>2</sup> To test for dominance (the relative importance of [EQ] in the presence of the FFM and cognitive ability), the authors used relative importance analysis techniques outlined in Johnson (2000) and Johnson and LeBreton (2004). Additionally, they note: “At present, there exist no formal standards of relative importance, but there are effect size standards put forth by Cohen (1988). *R*-values of 0.01, 0.09, and 0.25 constitute small, medium, and large effects, respectively, and we used these thresholds to evaluate the magnitude of relative importance.” (O’Boyle 2011, 802-803).

provided “a contrasting perspective to the extant claims that [EQ] is nothing more than cognitive ability and personality” (O’Boyle, et al. 2011, 803-804).

Slightly contrasting, Goleman (1998) claims that the skills related to having a high EQ correlate *better* with achievement in work or life more than having a high IQ/cognitive ability. He references studies that suggest that when IQ tests are correlated with career performance, the highest estimate of IQ contribution is 25%, concluding that IQ cannot determine success or failure. These studies claim that IQ is the job success predictor with the least power, and EQ is the best predictor, in people in highly cognitively demanding fields (fields for which professional entry focuses on intellectual abilities), especially in determining who emerges a leader (Goleman 1998, 19). Further, research provided by Goleman across government and Fortune 500 companies suggests that at the highest levels of leadership, high levels of cognitive skills, like intellectual or technical superiority, did not have a role in leadership success, with the exception of *pattern recognition* (“big picture” thinking and future planning). He notes, “Emotional competence made the crucial difference between mediocre leaders and the best. The ‘stars’ show significantly greater strengths in a range of emotional competencies, among them influence, team leadership, political awareness, self-confidence, and achievement drive.” Studies by Hay/McBer showed that 90 percent of the success of the leaders studied in these organizations could attribute their success to EQ (Goleman 1998, 34). This claim does not come without criticism, and many researchers point out that Goleman has

yet to cite or determine empirical data supporting a causal link between EQ and its positive effects, such as workplace and career prosperity (Zeidner et al. 2004, 380).

Notably, O'Boyle et al. and Goleman differ in the core ability purported to determine job success. The O'Boyle et al. meta-analysis showed that cognitive ability has higher dominance over EQ in each stream as well as dominance over Conscientiousness, as part of the FFM (O'Boyle et. al 2011, 803-804). Goleman claims that job excellence gives more weight to emotional competencies than to cognitive abilities, per an array of company-sponsored studies from Spencer and Spencer's 1993 *Competence at work: models for superior performance* (Goleman 1998, 29). Whether it matters *which* factor (EQ, cognitive ability, Conscientiousness) is more highly correlated to job performance and workplace flourishing does not necessarily matter, as long as the value of EQ is taken into consideration when evaluating performance, hiring employees, understanding workplace environments, and working directly with employees and supervisors. The more that our workplace leaders recognize the importance of EQ as a means for growing and thriving, the better the future of our workforce will be. Schutte & Loi (2014) found that EQ lays the foundation for further beneficial characteristics. "The competencies comprising [EQ] may directly facilitate workplace flourishing and may also indirectly impact workplace flourishing through encouraging development of other qualities such as perception of power and workplace satisfaction that may in turn further encourage workplace flourishing" (Schutte & Loi 2014, 137).

It is this author's opinion that this relationship between EQ and job performance should be taken into higher consideration in hiring practices, learning & development (L&D) practices, mentoring, leadership, and promotion. A personal anecdote: when I was about three years into my professional career, my work team needed to hire a new member. The position that needed to be filled was a higher title than mine, but I was still a valued team member and my assessment of the potential hire was given high consideration (perhaps a telling sign of my supervisor's EQ level, as well as my own). I remember, even at the age of 25, being more focused on the personality factors and cultural fit of the interviewees than their boastful resumes or perceived experience. I knew that experience, expertise, and cognitive ability mattered but it was my belief that the deeper, more personal traits and [though I did label it so at the time] level of EQ mattered just as much as their experience. I remember telling my boss, "We can teach someone the business, but we cannot teach someone personality." In my professional career of about eight years, I have seen and learned that those with high EQ tend to excel and navigate the workplace with more ease. Through this research and in my personal experience, I infer that competencies gained through high EQ and the ease with which relationships are formed through a high EQ are invaluable in an employee, coworker, and supervisor, and these skills matter equally with the relative experience and expertise of an individual.

Research has shown that EQ is a crucial element to workplace success – supported empirically (O'Boyle et al. 2014) and through other studies (Goleman 1998), as well as anecdotally (by myself, human resource managers, and thousands of business

review and career articles online). The defining question I seek to answer is: Are there gender differences in EQ? And if so, do they favor females over males? I hypothesize that women have a higher EQ than men, on average, and that due in part to EQ, the future *is* female. The next section will explore these questions, analyze men and women as emotional beings, explore the barriers for women to succeed in the workplace, and discuss the implications gender differences in EQ have for the future of our organizations and the leaders that will take the charge.

## The “XX” factor

*What are little boys made of?  
What are little boys made of?  
Snips and snails  
And puppy-dogs' tails  
That's what little boys are made of*

*What are little girls made of?  
What are little girls made of?  
Sugar and spice  
And everything nice  
That's what little girls are made of*  
(Opie & Opie, 1997)

From birth throughout childhood and into adulthood, little girls (and the women they become) are encouraged to be sweet and delicate, to be poised and aplomb, to smile back at strangers and accept any and all compliments. Items marketed and sold to girls/women generally cost more than items meant for boys/men – essentially the same items in different colors, scents, and aesthetic; this is called the “pink tax,”

and it extends from toys to toiletries (U.S. News & World Report 2016). Day-to-day rules and roles are different for women and men – societal rules, societal roles, parental rules, etc. – and these differences, often subtle, have contributed to making professional work and career success more difficult for women than for men.

Women are paid less than men for the same jobs, on average (79%, or \$.79 to the dollar) (WhiteHouse.gov, 2016), there are significantly fewer women CEOs of Fortune 500 companies (21 in 2016, 4.2%) (Fortune, 2016), and women face tougher societal pressures when balancing work and parenthood. Women are more likely than their male peers to face “gender-specific resistance in their efforts to reach the highest echelons in organizational hierarchies” (cf. “glass ceiling effect”; see Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, & Vanneman, 2001) and face more exposure to job- and family-related pressure as a result of parenthood (Petrides and Furnham 2006, 563). Additionally, “women are still underrepresented at every corporate level and hold less than 30% of roles in senior management. And women hit the glass ceiling early: They are far less likely than men to be promoted from entry level to manager, and they continue to lose ground incrementally the more senior they become” (Sandberg/WSJ.com, 2016).

With the cards seemingly stacked against women to succeed professionally, the achievements women have made thus far are striking: Fortune 500 companies do have women CEOs (even if the number is a dismal 4.2%), women have become secretaries of state and 4-star US military generals, and 2016 marked the first



election cycle that a woman was a major party candidate for President of the United States of America. The glass ceiling may not be shattered, but it is cracking. There is certainly a plethora of reasons for womankind rising to high levels of leadership, and EQ is an important factor in this success.

Men and women are often judged by their perceived emotional state and emotional being, as well as the ways in which they interact with others, lead and follow, and work in groups. While rules and roles for women have shifted toward more gender equality in our modern society, the shift has not completely changed the dynamic of women in professional settings, especially with respect to emotion. Women *are* taking more leadership roles, demanding to be heard, and chipping away at the glass ceiling, but research shows that women tend to “resist taking leadership positions and that when women do attain leadership based on their own merits, their positions are often not seen as legitimate” (cf. Ridgeway and Berger 1986). An experimental study showed that when a female outsider took on leadership in a group by acting competent and assertive, group members responded more negatively to that woman than to male leaders (Lucas and Baxter 2012, 54). This is a major issue facing women as they become more valued in the workplace and take more high-level leadership roles in business and government.

With emotion performance (“doing” emotion; being an emotional being), when a woman acts passionately or with any shred of intensity, that woman is generally deemed shrill or hysterical; when a woman expects a high level of support and

demands action (acts very leaderly), she is deemed bossy. Conversely, when a man acts aggressively, passionately, or with tremendous intensity, that man is deemed strong, fervent, and commanding; when a man demands high performance or acts very leaderly, he is perceived as strong and formidable. This phenomenon is seen in business and politics. Research by Thory (2012) notes, “When women seek to inhabit socially ascribed ‘masculine’ categories at work, they are judged more harshly, treated with a lack of credibility, or viewed as deficient (cf. Kumra & Vinnicombe, 2008; Rudman, 1998; Sheppard, 1989).” She cites research that indicates that “when women adopt an authoritarian approach they are perceived more negatively than men and are viewed as domineering (cf. Eagly, Makhijani, & Knonsky, 1992)” (Thory 2012, 230). A compelling article from CNN further shows that emotional expression differs for men and women and points to the difference between Secretary Hillary Clinton and Senator Bernie Sanders during the race for the 2016 Democratic presidential nomination. In regard to aggression and likeability in women, the article illuminates that the public speaking styles used to criticize Secretary Clinton (as well as other women seeking higher office or leadership roles) are seen as attributes for Senator Sanders (and men, in general). “When Sanders shouts, it is because he is angry at the injustice in America, because he cares so much. In her case, it is a character flaw” (CNN.com 2016). A similar anecdote reflects this same dynamic in Chilean politics: After an incident when Chile’s former president Ricardo Lagos was tearful during a speech, Chile’s then President, Michelle Bachelet, commented “The media said ‘It’s his sensitive side coming out,’

but when I did it, they said: ‘She’s hysterical.’ I’m not whining about it, but come on” (Thory 2012, 229).

The perceived emotional status of women is that they are *always* highly emotional, which has led women to constantly demonstrate total control and regulation of emotions, to remain poised and even-keeled, and to withstand exhibiting too much passion, lest she be deemed hysterical. It is this author’s view that because of the societal pressures placed on women to regulate their emotions and the perception that women are the more emotional gender that has caused women to be more emotionally intelligent beings. Assessment, regulation, and understanding of emotions are a cornerstone in a woman's life, regardless of any deliberate intention to be highly emotionally intelligent.

### **Gender at work**

A number of studies have found that women score higher than men on tests of EQ (see Day & Carroll, 2004; Joseph & Newman, 2010; Palmer, Gignac, Manocha, & Stough, 2005; van Rooy, Dilchert, Viswesvaran, & Ones, 2006). In response to the previously reviewed research suggesting the importance of EQ in workplace success (Goleman 1998, O’Boyle, et al. 2011, Schutte & Loi 2014), it seems that the present as well as the future, should “be” female. This is a suggestion that in light of the evidence that “feminine” skills are highly valued, often more than “masculine” values, the female leaders should be in greater control of business and government – simply, the future should be led by women. While women are achieving success in

some domains, perhaps partly attributable to EQ, the female gender group is still less successful in high-level leadership (by quantity and position). Stereotypes and historical and societal factors are likely at play. Gallup polls have shown people currently rate leaders as more effective when they portray “masculine” leadership styles (independence, decisiveness, and aggressiveness) rather than those associated with “feminine” styles (nurturance, compassion, and sensitivity to the needs of others) due to cultural stereotypes. These polls also show that more Americans would prefer a male boss at a new job (37%) versus a female boss (19%) (noting that at 44%, “it makes no difference” was the favorite); the male boss preference was shown for women and men surveyed (34% of men favored a male boss and 10% favored a female boss; 40% of women favored a male boss and 26% favored a female boss). Additionally, cultural prejudice against women may reduce desirability and make it difficult for women to get ahead (Powell 2011, 2). The Gallup polls do not assess traits that make an effective leader in general, regardless of a gendered view, and these polls only scratch the surface of the gender and leadership discussion. Differing demographics, cultural perceptions, and understanding the value of EQ will play a factor in the shift to a female-led future. This section will explore the role that EQ plays in ensuring the proliferation of women as our future’s leaders for the benefit of us all.

In an analysis of EQ in the workplace from a gendered perspective, Thory (2012) explores the social construction of EQ and trends like “the future is female” to understand perceptions of men and women in the workplace and judgements of both

genders against symbolic representations of “masculine” and “feminine.” The author explores gender performance in traits of EQ and illustrates how men and women may perform the opposite gender roles in EQ, but women fare less well when taking on “masculine” traits versus men taking on “feminine” traits. She suggests that women “win” in EQ because the types of leadership women tend to employ and the virtues of leadership that embrace EQ challenge “masculinized workplaces,” which Thory notes, “have historically determined what is appropriate emotional (in)expression” (Thory 2012, 221-223). Yet, even if women are “winning” in EQ, women are not winning in leadership and positions of power.

The notion that the “future is female” is suggested by Broadbridge & Simpson (2011), which they contribute to several media outlets, denoting that the stereotypically “feminine” abilities of collaboration, empathy, and interpersonal relationship building perpetuate transformational forms of leadership, which are rated positively (Broadbridge & Simpson 2011, 475). Recent theories of leadership styles and practices focus on three types of leadership: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. Transformational leadership is focused on setting high standards of performance and developing subordinates to meet those standards, which in turn, develops followers into leaders. Transactional leadership is task-based and focuses on contingent rewards (promising and providing rewards based on objective achievement) and management by exception (intervening when a problem may occur or has occurred). Laissez-faire leadership is avoidance of leadership; these leaders do not give direction or make decisions and do not focus

on follower development. Transformational leadership has been shown to be preferred over transactional and laissez-faire leadership in our modern economy due to an emphasis on “high involvement” organization that focus on open communication and decentralized management, which is seen as more democratic. And female leaders are more transformational than male leaders (Powell 2011, 5-7). This trend toward “feminine” and transformational leadership does appear to show a shift in thinking among workers, as “masculine” skills have traditionally been rated more effective (Powell 2011, 2). Moreover, Thory argues that the studies of EQ and the positive effects of the “feminine” style have been conducted in psychological studies, which miss the nuanced sociological analysis of societal and structural factors that tend to skew male (Thory 2012, 223). Comparison of masculine traits (emotional control, rational, quantified use of emotions for performance) and feminine traits (identifying and understanding emotion in self and others, talking about emotion, empathy, and care) reveal sociologically-developed and biased differences. Men and women may or may not display these “gender-linked norms,” yet both gender groups are constantly judged against them. The critical point is that while the “feminine” and “masculine” qualities are deemed “complementary,” we can look to Shields and Warner (2007, 174) who note: “If we look at the way that ‘his’ and ‘hers’ types of [EQ] are valued, we begin to see the inequities that exist. Specifically, one reason why the playing field is not level is that the types of [EQ] that women are supposedly good at are not valued as much as the types of [EQ] that men are supposedly good at” (see Thory 2012, 223). This analysis speaks to “doing” gender, which defines gender as “a recurring accomplishment to manage behavior

in light of normative or idealized practices expected for masculinity or femininity.”

Though men and women are placed into stereotyped roles, their day-to-day behaviors do not always fit into any gendered category, but portray tendencies deemed “feminine” and “masculine” differentially across various situations, while nonetheless being judged against these culturally-placed categories (Thory 2012, 225-226). Due to this constant judgement of gender performance, it is the opinion of this author that the “master stereotype” of the more emotional woman (McRae, et al. 2008, 144) may be what leads women to being more emotionally intelligent: recognizing, assessing, and regulating emotions in a productive manner.

If women are more emotionally intelligent and, as studies suggest, more emotionally intelligent employees and leaders are valued highly, the importance of women rising to the top levels of organizations should be better recognized and the number of women leaders should rise – though this is not the case just yet. Seeking to determine who wins the gender wars of leadership, researchers John Gerzema and Michael D’Antonio conducted a study to define the values and traits that make for effective leaders in business, politics, government, and community, and assess the extent to which these can be assigned to traditionally “feminine” and “masculine” traits and characteristics across a global stage. They surveyed 64,000 people from thirteen countries (Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States); these countries constitute 65% of the world’s gross domestic product and embody a wide range of cultural, geographical, political, religious, and economic diversity. The study

first appraised how respondents felt about the current state of the world (example survey question: *The world is becoming more fair.* [74% disagree]), followed by two separate surveys aimed to define “masculine” and “feminine traits” and measure attitudes about these traits. One survey asked half the global sample to classify 125 behavioral traits (words like committed, curious, fun, humble, innovative, intelligent, and self-reliant) as “masculine,” “feminine,” or neither. The same list of words was presented to the other half of the survey population, who were asked to rate the importance of the traits to specific *virtues*: leadership, success, morality, and happiness. The researchers chose leadership, success, morality, and happiness because they felt those words “captured the essence of what human beings commonly mean when they talk about a good life for themselves and society” (Gerzema & D’Antonio 2013, 4-11).

The researchers found consistency for each survey across the entire sample, and among the findings reported, one of the most compelling was the results of the statement, “The world would be a better place if men thought more like women.” Two thirds of those surveyed (a global average of 66%) - including the majority of men (63%) - agreed (Gerzema & D’Antonio 2013, 7).



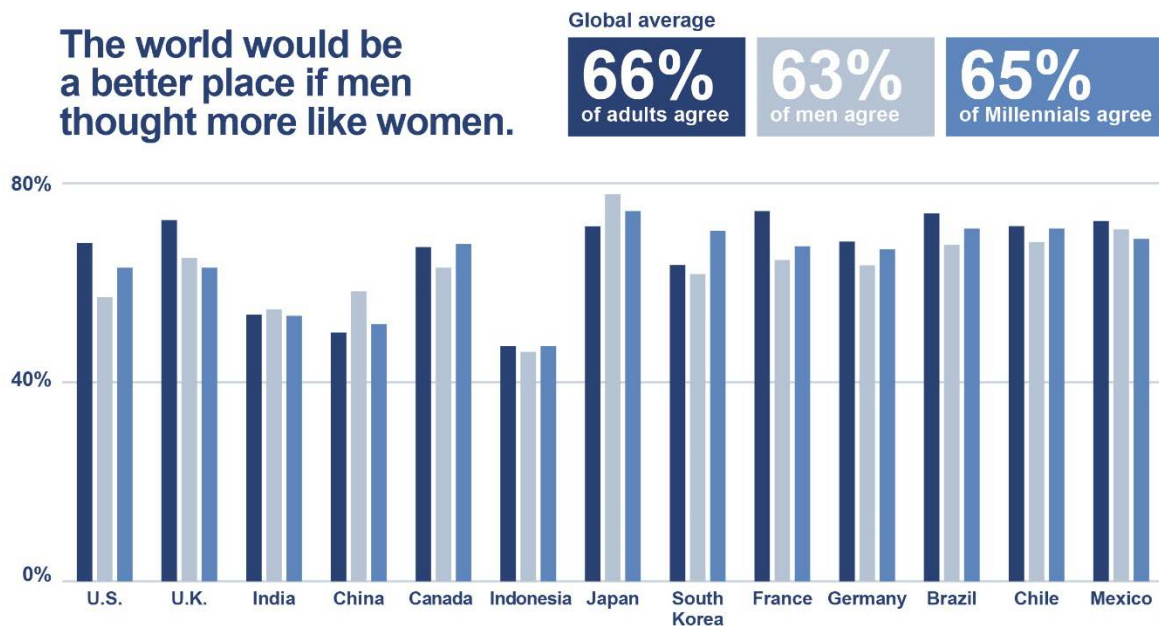


Figure 4

As shown in Figures 5 through 8, the findings also showed that for all four virtues, the traits more strongly related to each were the traits deemed “feminine” by survey respondents (Gerzema & D’Antonio 2013, 3-9):

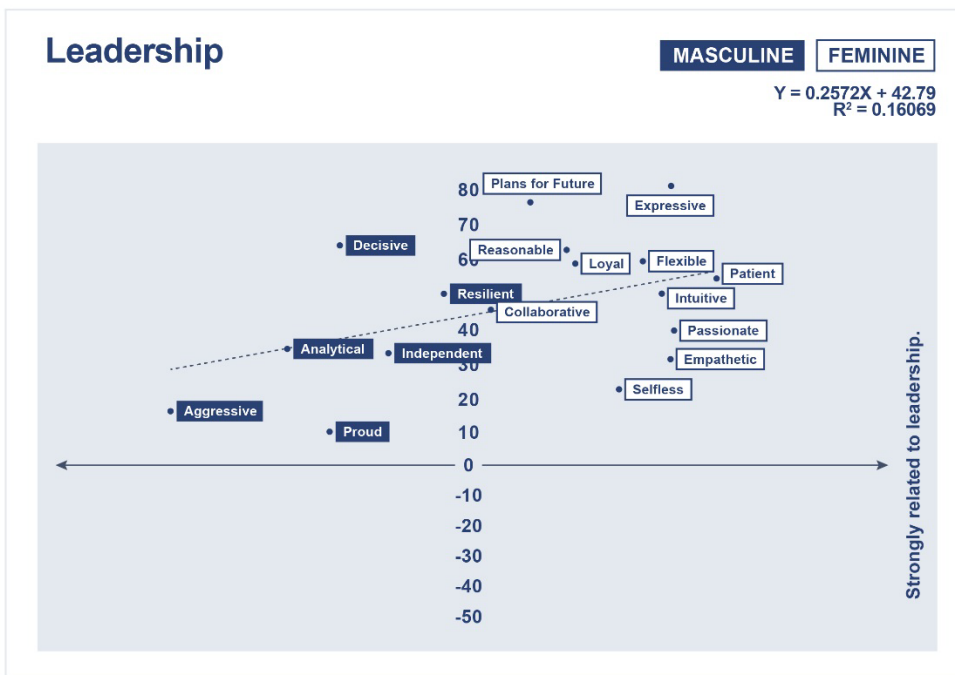


Figure 5

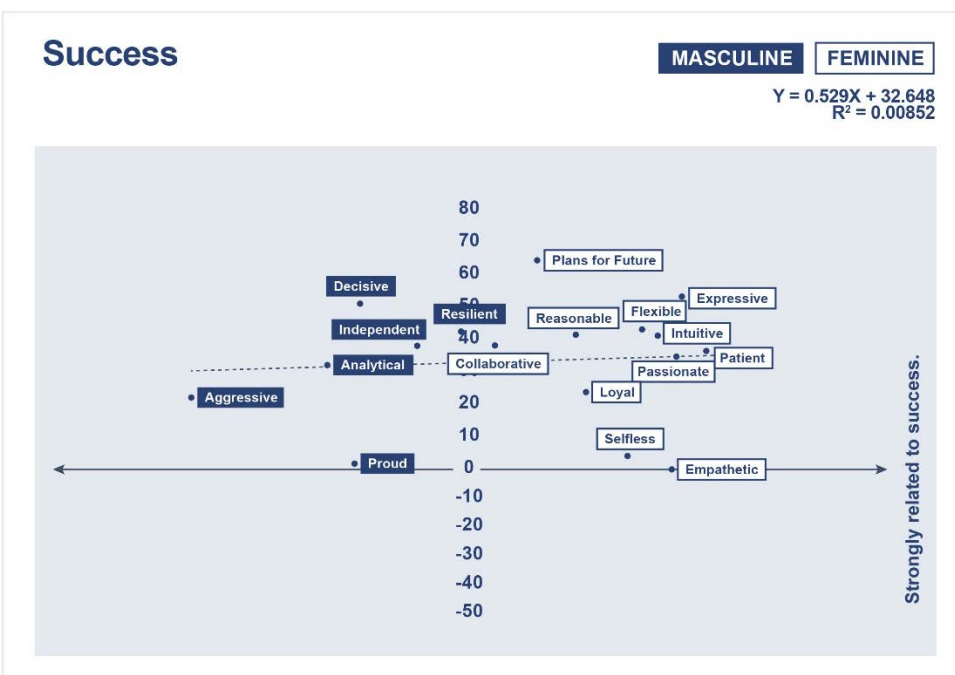


Figure 6

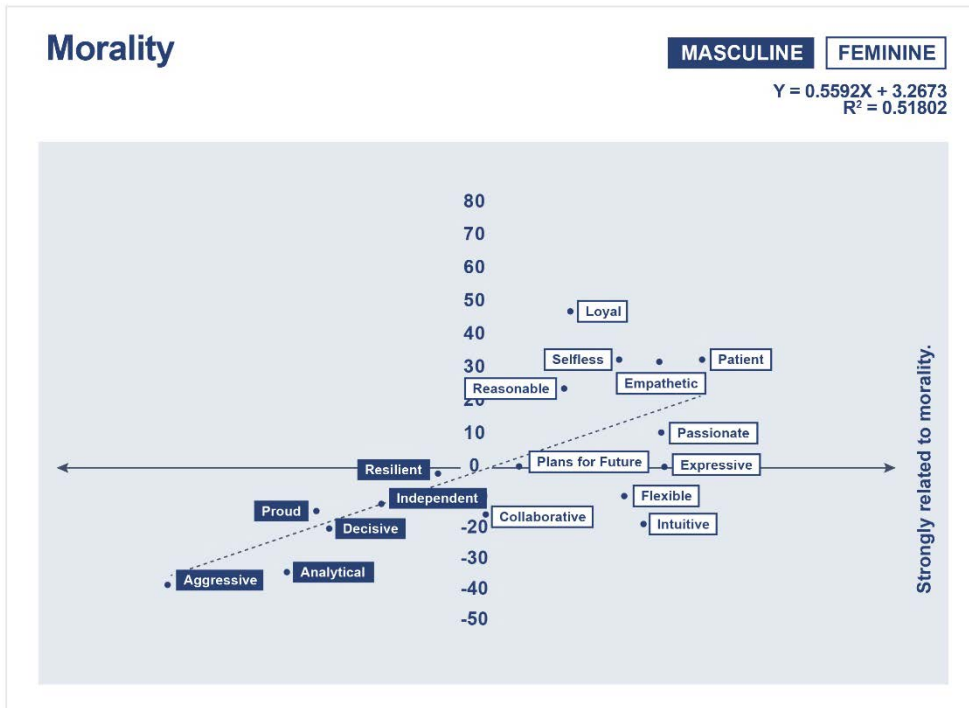


Figure 7

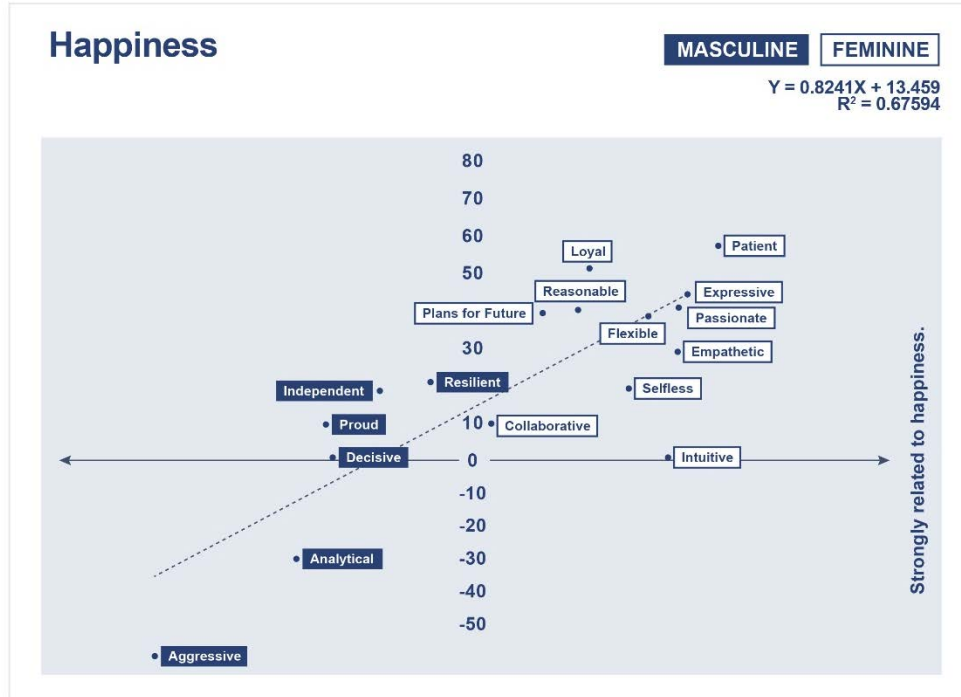


Figure 8

*The Athena Doctrine* indicates that our future *is* female (or possibly, should be female) and that the globally consistent views we have regarding what are considered “feminine” traits are the characteristics that will create progress in the 21st century. The authors note, “We live in a world that’s increasingly social, interdependent, and transparent. And in this world, feminine values are ascendant. Powered by cooperation, communication, nurturing, and inclusiveness, among others, institutions, businesses, and individuals are breaking from old masculine structures and mind-sets to become more flexible, collaborative, and caring” (Gerzema & D’Antonio 2013, 255). Gerzema and D’Antonio are not explicitly speaking to women possessing the essential traits of high EQ, but the traits associated with strong relationships to leadership, success, happiness, and morality were mostly “feminine,” and those are also traits associated with EQ. Yet, still, women are less likely than men to be in leadership positions. What are the barriers?

## **Rules and Roles**

The roles and rules culturally assigned to men and women are always being renegotiated and the values of these traits constantly transform. Research suggests that the rise of feminization in the workplace has influenced a rise in the demand for “feminine” characteristics in employees and among leaders – characteristics such as warmth, connection, openness, and empathy (Thory 2012, 227). These characteristics are associated with transformational leadership, a focus on interpersonal relations, and work satisfaction from interpersonal warmth, which are more likely associated with female leaders. Conversely, male leaders are generally

associated with transactional leadership, which focuses on task achievement and performance outcomes (Ellemers, et al. 2012, 167).

The characteristics of “feminine” qualities of EQ (cooperation, empathy, and interpersonal skills) that translate into well-received leadership styles (like transformational leadership) have been deemed more effective in workplace organizations for both men and women. Unfortunately, when women leaders fail at these traits of high EQ and fail to attend to the emotions of their subordinates they are rated more poorly for that lack of attention than when men behave in the same manner (Thory 2012, 228). For men *and* women, the traits of higher EQ that equate to more feminine styles are more favored, but when men adopt these more feminine EQ traits, men benefit – perhaps at a detriment to women. In gender renegotiation, a man “doing” female gender becomes more emotionally literate and exudes “feminine masculinity” (he possesses “feminine” characteristics of EQ). Here we find the “emotionally literate man”, which should propel women up with their “natural” feminine skills since men have adopted these natural skills. But, women tend lose out in the end because the already favored men are now possessing these highly favored skills, and men are not judged poorly for *not* “doing” male gender. Further, these traits are seen more positively when men are performing them.

Conversely, when women take on the “masculine” traits of EQ and leadership style, they are viewed as “too male” and assessed more harshly for failing at “doing” female gender. Thory explains: “This is because gendered emotion norms are

imposed more forcefully on women; negative consequences of violating these norms are more salient, particularly in relation to performance recognition and career development.” This bias affects women in promotion opportunities, management development, and ease at attaining a mentor with the necessary empathy and insight. And, when women excel as transformational leaders in sectors deemed “feminine,” a concern is raised that these women cannot elude the “feminine” leadership style (Thory 2012, 230-231). Ellemers (2012) presents similar findings in that expectations of gender performance alignment become normative, such that people are expected to fall in line with their own gender-assigned working styles to be seen as “good” leaders. Women who display agentic leadership behaviors (control, assertiveness, competitiveness, independence, courageousness) experience negative effects with regards to their chances of being hired, promoted, and evaluated positively in performance reviews (Ellemers 2012, 167).

In sum, the traits associated with a higher EQ skew towards “feminine” characteristics, but still women fare less well in workplace, political leadership, and career achievement than men. With only 21 women holding CEO positions in Fortune 500 companies (Fortune.com 2016) and just 19 holding Head of State or Head of Government positions in parliaments (UNWomen.org, 2016), it is difficult to understand how the dominance of “feminine” traits has not translated into a larger and faster growing population of women in important leadership positions. Research suggests that along with cultural norm, stereotype, and prejudice, the specific expectations and challenges placed on women, implicit discrimination, and gendered

leadership norms placed on women may be contributing factors to the slow crawl of women leadership. Where “masculine” leadership styles are today deemed “good” (Powell 2011, 2), yet the “feminine” approach is shown to be preferred when surveyed independently (Gerzema & D’Antonio 2012, 3-9), women are expected to display “feminine” traits to succeed and also need to display “masculine” traits for promotion to leadership, which is a strong contradiction. Ellemers sums it up well: “Together, these beliefs and expectations put female leaders in an impossible position, where they are damned if they do, and damned if they do not” (Ellemers 2011, 169).

### **Additional Barriers**

As shown above, stereotypes, prejudice, and societal rules play a role in the barriers for women to excel. Other factors shown to prevent women from succeeding as leaders are the *glass cliff effect* and the *queen bee effect*, discussed below.

When analyzing the women who did break through the proverbial glass ceiling, it has been found that women are disproportionately placed into executive level and board positions when companies are in turbulent economic downfall. These promotions place them on a “glass cliff”. The glass cliff phenomenon can also be found in all levels of business leadership, with female attorneys leading risky legal cases and in women contesting unwinnable political elections, as well as shown instances of selection into performance groups. For example, the glass cliff was seen in school-aged band member selection for a poorly performing music festival. These samples

show that the glass cliff phenomenon is in effect during the course of a woman's life and career, not just when she is put into a leadership position.

The glass cliff is attributed to several possible explanations: 1) blatant sexism, implicit bias, and setting women up as scapegoats, 2) strategically placing someone in charge that is visibly different than prior leaders, possibly as an attempt to try something new, and 3) positive gender stereotyping that women possess the unique abilities necessary to handle crisis. Evidence has not been presented that determines which, if any, of the three potential reasons causes this phenomenon, and perhaps it is a combination of all three. Regardless, the glass cliff effect brings about the phrase "think crisis – think female," which contrasts the tendency our society has to "think manager – think male." Additionally, Ellemers et al. infer that women who strongly identify with, and value, their own gender group may emphasize their "feminine" leadership qualities and unwittingly limit themselves in the advancement of their own careers. And, research suggests that women are more inclined to take leadership positions in these failing companies because they view it as their only chance, where men are likely to have more opportunities for less risky roles (Ellemers et al. 2012, 172-173).

Another barrier to women's advancement into high level leadership positions is attributed to the *queen bee effect* – the possibility that some highly successful women with leadership roles downplay their own gender identity and display "masculine" qualities of leadership to be successful. Ellemers et al. argue that these



women purposefully act differently than other women as an attempt to heighten themselves, which may unintentionally belittle other women in their organization, as well as women as a group. This phenomenon suggests that these women may not feel that gender identity is relevant to their work, thereby finding it useful to act in a more masculine manner. It is especially common in settings dominated by men and seen in the few women who have managed to make it to the top tiers of those organizations; these women feel they have set themselves apart from the other women. It is suggested that the queen bee effect is contingent to the degree of women's representation and gender bias in an organization (Ellemers et al. 2012, 176-179).

In sum, there is a clear disconnect between the high value placed on “feminine” EQ traits and leadership styles and the success (or lack thereof) of women who display these traits and styles. Argued above, EQ has been shown to be important indicator of workplace success, research suggests that women generally display higher EQ than men, and despite that (and *The Athena Doctrine* survey results that worldwide, the majority of people believe that the world would be a better place if men thought more like women), women are far less likely than men to be in leadership positions in the workplace or politics. Several barriers may underlie this, and it may take a strong shift in thinking among men and women towards women and women leaders to break these barriers down.

A reason for this disconnect, which may serve as an additional barrier, is the likelihood of *reporting bias*: the possibility that what people report in surveys (like in *The Athena Doctrine* or in Gallup polls) is not what they actually feel. The two-thirds of survey respondents in the Gerzema & D'Antonio research who agreed with “the world would be a better place if men thought more like women,” and those that placed the leadership traits determined to be “feminine” traits at a higher value than “masculine” may not really value those traits or feel that way in real-world scenarios. This could explain why survey results and research indicate a high value on EQ, and particularly “feminine” traits of EQ, while in reality, “masculine” traits of leadership and EQ are advancing people – especially men – in the workplace.

Further, another possibility for why women are not advancing at greater volumes professionally, may be that people *value* these “feminine” traits of EQ, but still do not find that they are the right qualities for an effective leader. What this means is that placing symbolic value on something as “good” does not necessarily translate into choice. We know that carrots are a healthy choice for a snack when we are hungry (and most of us value health and healthy choices), but when picking a snack, we are likely to choose chips rather than carrots. We place value on healthy foods, but pick the unhealthy snack when given a choice. Similarly, survey respondents may value cooperation and empathy in a leader, but choose a leader that is focused on task-completion and aggression to actually “get the job done.”

## So, is the future female?

It does seem that employers and leaders are now versed in the importance of EQ and see that the “feminine” approach to EQ and leadership is the approach for the future, which has propelled men to adapt to this style and, in turn, continue to dominate the leadership sphere. This is not to say that no men should be promoted or reach career success for the benefit of women, but that it is well documented that more diverse work teams and leadership provide substantial benefits to organizations. Increased diversity, whether it be gender or in other facets, is associated with high levels of innovation, creativity, and performance in organizations. Therefore, business, government and nonprofit organizations should be inclined to increase diversity (Lucas and Baxter 2012, 65). Propelling women up in their careers, promoting women to higher levels of organizational leadership, and electing and appointing more women into government positions will result in more success for our businesses, governments, and organizations. With more female leaders comes more transformational leadership and the characteristics of high EQ that have been suggested to be the most desired and effective traits for leaders. If our future shifts female, and we can view the best person for the job as just that – the best *person* for the job – business, government, and nonprofits may propel at exciting rates. If “the world would be a better place if men thought more like women,” as endorsed by nearly two-thirds of respondents surveyed (Gerzema & D’Antonio 2013, 7), we owe it to ourselves to continue to place women in leadership roles and allow women to take charge of our businesses and government.

## Conclusion

EQ is the ability to recognize and understand emotions both in oneself and in others, the ability to assess, process, and regulate these emotions accurately and appropriately, and the ability to harness emotions for growth both personally and intellectually. High EQ is a valuable asset for all people in all stages of life and is especially valuable in the workplace. Research indicates that EQ is among the highest, if not *the* highest, indicator of workplace flourishing and success and that supervisors, leaders, and hiring managers should pay close attention to the EQ skills, characteristics, and competencies employees and potential employees have when evaluating people for hire, promotion, projects, and election. The traits of a high EQ are especially important when evaluating leadership and career potential across gender, and if “the future is female,” as this author believes, employers, governments, and boards are remiss not to see the implications of holding women back from professional success. Sheryl Sandberg, author of *Lean In* and among the top echelon of women leaders notes, “These things matter – not just for women, but for us all. Research shows that gender equality is as good for business as it is for individuals. Diverse teams and companies produce better results and higher revenue and profits, which lead to more opportunity for *everyone*, not just women” (WSJ.com, 2016). The body of work that proves a more diverse workforce and diversity in leadership positions is substantial, and the body of work that I have presented detailing the importance of EQ in life and work further shows how important it is for our future to be female. Research indicates that there is a positive correlation effect between the percentage of women in executive positions and

financial performance in US based companies (cf. Carter, Simkins, & Simpson, 2003; Erhardt, Werbel, & Shrader, 2003; Krishnan & Park, 2005; Welbourne, Cychota, & Ferrante, 2007) and that organizations will perform better when a wide range of skills, knowledge, and expertise are brought to the table (Ellemars et al. 2012, 166). With the qualities of empathy, cooperation, conscientiousness, reliability, patience, and honesty skewing towards both women and high EQ, a shift towards a more “feminine” leadership style may be on the horizon, and it may be just what our future workforce needs to thrive and excel in our ever changing society.

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*Rule your feelings, lest your feelings rule you - Publilius Syrus, first century BC*

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## **Further research**

Further research is required on this topic: additional empirical evidence on the importance of high EQ in the workplace, the causal model of competing explanations on performance in addition to EQ, empirical evidence supporting feminine EQ traits as a predictor for organizational success, and further evidence that business is more successful with diverse leadership teams. Further, additional hypothesis and research surrounding “the future is female” and the implications of a shift to a majority of world leaders and CEOs being women. Finally, it is critical to further explore the factors contributing to the low representation of women leaders despite the demonstrated value of their skill sets.

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