

General Patton and Lieutenant Winters: a contrast in leadership

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Theoretical background

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) has received an increasing amount of focus in recent years from psychological, sociological and organizational scientists (Côté, 2014). However, while researchers from these various disciplines have endeavored to explain the variance between outcomes of interest (e.g. effectiveness as a leader) and a person's general mental ability or personality, the way these scientists have conceptualized EI has not always been in complete agreement (Livingstone and Day, 2005).

The most popular competing models in existence fall into one of two general categories: ability-based or mixed-model (Mayer *et al.*, 2000, 2008). The ability-based conceptualization of EI views EI as a set of several skills or capacities related to perceiving, understanding, facilitating and managing emotions, and views EI as a classically defined intelligence or aptitude (like traditional IQ). This ability-based conceptualization posits that EI can be developed over time or through training (Van Rooy and Viswesvaran, 2004).

The mixed model view of EI, on the other hand, tends to conceptualize EI as a conglomeration of traits, characteristics, competencies and/or self-perceptions (Livingstone and Day, 2005). EI under the mixed model umbrella is typically assessed through self-report instruments. Specific, prominent conceptualizations of EI in the realm of mixed models include those by Bar-On (2000), Goleman (1995, 1998) and Petrides and Furnham (2001).

Examination of findings from two separate meta-analyses suggests that the ability-based view of EI is the more scientifically valid means of conceptualizing EI (Van Rooy and Viswesvaran, 2004; van der Linden *et al.*, 2017) – and it is this view of EI that undergirds this video case study exercise. This ability-based view of EI suggests that EI comprises five abilities (Britt and Lin, 2017):

1. detecting and understanding one's own emotions (self-awareness);
2. regulating and managing one's own emotions (affective self-regulation);
3. using emotion to facilitate thinking and decision making;
4. detecting and understanding emotions in others (emotion perception); and
5. influencing and helping others manage their emotions (interpersonal).

When discussing EI, it is also important to examine specific outcomes EI is purported to produce; EI has been linked to greater leadership effectiveness across a number of studies and in a variety of contexts (Antonakis *et al.*, 2009; Daus and Ashkanasy, 2005; Kerr *et al.*, 2006; Melita Prati *et al.*, 2003). Specifically, data suggest that EI may promote more effective decision making in stressful situations (Hess and Bacigalupo, 2011; Fallon *et al.*, 2014) and appear to aid in intuitive decision making in times of crisis (Sayegha *et al.*, 2004). EI has also been linked to efficient and effective organizational and culture change leaders (Chrusciel, 2006; Smollan and Parry, 2011), as well as leaders who are effective at conflict resolution and constructive conflict management (Jordan and Troth, 2004; Schlaerth *et al.*, 2013). Research also shows that there is a significant predictive relationship between a person's level of EI and his/her transformational leadership behaviors, although the strength of these relationships varies between studies (Barling *et al.*, 2000).

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Leader EI has also been linked to important follower outcomes such as group satisfaction (Zampetakis and Moustakis, 2011) and increased creativity (Zhou and George, 2003; Castro *et al.*, 2012). EI has also been shown to facilitate stress resilience (Schneider *et al.*, 2013). Finally, Sharma *et al.* (2013) even linked EI to increased partner outcome satisfaction in negotiations, although not necessarily better economic value.

While leader EI has been linked to several positive outcomes, recent research also suggests that EI may have a dark side (Davis and Nichols, 2016; Austin *et al.*, 2007; Kilduff *et al.*, 2010). EI may help many people become more effective leaders, but high EI may also help some become better at manipulating others. In other words, EI can be used to help subordinates and the organization to which one belongs, but it appears that it can also be used to benefit or promote oneself at the cost of others and the organization (Grant, 2014).

Preparing for class discussion

This video case study is designed to be an in-class exercise that augments assigned reading(s) on the topic of EI.

The exercise uses clips from the film *Patton* (McCarthy and Schaffner, 1970) and the HBO series *Band of Brothers* (Ambrose *et al.*, 2001).

Student preparation outside of class involves completing reading(s) assigned by the instructor. These readings should provide information on the construct of EI. Suggested readings on EI include:

- Britt, K.P. and Lin, E.X. (2017), "Emotional intelligence and leadership: from controversy to common ground", in Smith, B., Cornwell, B., Bond, E. and Eljdid (Eds), *West Point Leadership*, Rowan Technology Solutions, New York, NY.
- Caruso, D.R., Mayer, J.D. and Salovey, P. (2002), "Emotional intelligence and emotional leadership", in Riggio, R.E., Murphy, S.E. and Pirozzolo, F.J. (Eds), *Multiple Intelligences and Leadership*, LEA's Organization and Management Series, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ, pp. 55-74.

Learning objectives supported by the case

The intent of this exercise is to help students be able to:

- summarize the attributes comprising EI;
- understand the behaviors that are indicative of EI;
- evaluate the argument that EI impacts leader effectiveness; and
- apply knowledge of EI to facilitate leader growth and development.

Case materials and class preparation

The teaching of this case requires the use of video clips, as well as potentially the creation of slides and handouts (at the discretion of the instructor). The videos required for this specific case exercise are not only located on an on-line video streaming site (links provided later in this case note), but can also be downloaded by interested instructors here: www.dropbox.com/sh/8kld0wgfio6s28m/AAA-wdx-cl7o2rSxbVAqN0g-a?dl=0

Samples of suggested slides and handouts for use in the conduct of the exercise are not only located in the Exhibits 1 and 2 of this case note, but can also be downloaded by those interested here: www.dropbox.com/s/kh9w3jvez6xi47k/Dark%20Side%20of%20EI.pdf?dl=0

Teaching the case (assumed 75 min class)

1. 10 min: play video vignettes – begin by showing the clip featuring General George S. Patton (clip 1 runs from 26:28 to 26:50 and clip 2 runs from 1:23:39 to 1:27:54). The clip can be

found online here: <https://vimeo.com/261059500>. The clip of General Patton runs a total of 4 min and 41 s in length.

After presenting the video clip on General Patton, it is recommended that instructors play the *Band of Brothers* clip depicting Lieutenant Winters interacting with Private Blythe in Carentan (Episode 3 from 21:24 to 25:57). A copy of the clip can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/261060025>. The clip is 4 min 33 s long.

These clips depict two military leaders facing similar situations. Each leader interacts with a subordinate suffering the effects of “shell shock” or PTSD. The leaders respond in considerably different fashion and their behavior suggests (at least initially) two different levels of EI.

2. 10 min: it is recommended that instructors divide their class into groups and direct them to discuss internally with each other which leader had more EI. Instructors may wish to use a PowerPoint slide similar to that in Exhibit 1 to prompt and guide student conversations.
3. 10 min: ask groups to present their answers on which leader possessed more EI and to support their stances. During this discussion, the instructor may have to prompt students to base their assessment of the leaders on the components comprising EI (as detailed in the assigned reading). It is recommended that instructors use a slide (or chart on a board) similar to that in Exhibit 2 to guide student discussion[1].

Experience suggests that the majority of students will argue that LT Winters possesses more EI than General Patton. After all, LT Winters was wounded and still maintained control of his emotions during a turbulent time in such a manner so as to empathize with his subordinate and positively affect Private Blythe’s physical and mental state (LT Winters “checks” each of the boxes comprising EI in the assessment slide in Exhibit 2). It also seems fairly obvious that General Patton is an emotional man. Patton is apparently overcome by emotion (both sadness and anger) on several occasions during the clip, culminating in his loss of control and subsequent physical assault on a soldier suffering from PTSD. However, the instructor may wish to challenge some of these observations as they specifically relate to General Patton. Instructors may wish to ask students if having an audience can influence people’s behaviors and if a leader’s scope of responsibility might impact the outcome he or she is hoping to achieve. As a senior leader with an audience, perhaps General Patton took the actions he did because of the effect they would have on the many (all those observing) rather than the effect they would have on the few (the soldier he “assaulted”). That is, perhaps news of the incident would spread and discourage others from potentially malingering (instructors might refer to the first portion of the *Patton* clip where there were two incidents of self-inflicted wounds as evidence that some soldiers do try to avoid duty and that this could have been an issue the general was focusing on). LT Winters, on the other hand, did not have a large audience and his only concern was getting his one soldier healthy to directly benefit the smaller unit Winters was in charge of.

As mentioned previously, instructors should be prepared to prompt students to ground their analysis on the assigned reading(s). Some students may equate perceived charisma or “leaders that are nice” with leaders who possess high levels of EI. While there may be a positive correlation between these attributes, conflating the concepts limits students’ understanding of EI.

4. 10 min: after having a discussion about which leader possessed more EI, the instructor may wish to present additional information that could influence students’ assessment of General Patton’s behaviors. Instructors may choose to provide handouts containing the information provided in Exhibit 3 (although presenting this information on an overhead slide is also feasible).

Exhibit 3 contains historical information that suggests Patton may have understood the effect his appearance and behavior could have on those around him and that suggests Patton (possibly) possessed a higher level of EI than many would initially believe.

5. 10 min: after presenting the additional information from Patton’s biography, the instructor may wish to ask students if groups wish to change any part of their original assessment. During this portion of class, some students will argue (or the instructor may mention if students do not) that evidence suggests that perhaps Patton was more emotionally intelligent than originally thought. After all, past accounts would suggest that Patton was very self-aware and able to self-regulate. Historical evidence suggests that Patton took great care in how he appeared to others and cultivated a specific persona – suggesting his

actions may have been a calculated display designed to elicit a specific response from those around him. Perhaps, Patton's displays of sadness and anger in the video vignette were some sort of performance – put on to achieve a desired effect. During this portion of the discussion, instructors should be prepared to play devil's advocate as experience suggests many students will "double down" on their original assessment. This portion of class may also lend itself to discussing perceptions and attributions.

6. 20 min: now the instructor can ask the question, "Does EI make for a better or more effective leader?" This can be done as an open-ended question, by a show of hands, or even using electronic polling technology. The intent is to get students to think for a moment and decide whether EI is something leaders need/should have. Often students unanimously agree that EI is something leaders need to be effective, but experience suggests that they will be very vague in their justifications. Instructors may want to prompt students to define what "effective" means when discussing leadership to help them address the question. Often the discussion on this topic depends on what other leadership theories or topics students have covered in the course. Instructors may want to specifically prompt students to consider the other theories of leadership/topics covered in the course (suggested links to other topics include, but are not limited to, transformational leadership, authentic leadership and motivation). Others may want to focus on more general leadership outcomes such as employee satisfaction or ability to accomplish the mission. Common discussions in this vein tend to conclude that more emotionally intelligent leaders may lead to more satisfied followers and an improved ability to accomplish assigned tasks due to things like enhanced follower motivation, cohesion, trust, resilience, better decision making, etc.

After prompting for examples of how/why EI leads to leader effectiveness, instructors may adjust the question and ask "So leaders with EI are always more effective?" Instructors can now distribute the reading on the "dark side" of EI (www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/01/the-dark-side-of-emotional-intelligence/282720/). While EI is often cited as a desirable quality in leaders, recent research suggests that it can also be abused and perhaps lead to leaders be less effective (Austin *et al.*, 2007; Kilduff *et al.*, 2010). The paper can allow for several minutes of discussion that encourages students to examine leadership literature with a critical eye. A discussion about the "inverse U" has proven effective – exploring whether too much EI (or too much of anything) may prove to be detrimental. It is also possible to link the concept to a discussion of toxic leadership, if instructors so choose. This line of inquiry often leads to the question of how leaders can determine if someone with high EI is going to be an effective leader or not. Suggested approaches to handling this line of inquiry include a discussion of personality types or even the concept of "character" as potential moderators – suggesting that leaders with certain personality types or those with strong character may use their EI for the benefit of others (thereby proving more effective), while those with other personality types or those with character flaws may use their EI for more selfish reasons (thereby proving to be less effective). Depending on how instructors choose to run their class, students can access the dark side of EI article online, or be provided handouts.

7. 5 min: summarize discussion and ask students to provide three to four key takeaways from the lesson.

Alternate method/additional suggestions

In lieu of the "dark side of EI" discussion (or perhaps in combination with), instructors may wish to conclude their class with several overarching questions designed to challenge students' thinking about the utility of EI as a leader characteristic and to apply what they covered in the assigned reading and what they discussed earlier in the class. These questions could also be assigned as a take home writing assignment or perhaps used to prompt online discussion for out of class engagement with peers, the instructor and the course material. Suggested questions are located in Exhibit 4.

Note

1. The verbiage in Exhibit 2 may have to be adjusted based on the theoretical reading instructors choose to use.

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Further reading

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Exhibit 1

Break into groups:

- answer the question "which leader demonstrated more EI?";
- support your assessment using knowledge gained from the assigned reading and evidence from the movie clips; and
- be prepared to support and defend your team's answer.

Exhibit 2

Components of Emotional Intelligence	Patton	Winters
Detecting and understanding one's own emotions (self-awareness)		
Regulating and managing one's own emotions (self-regulation)		
Using emotions to facilitate thinking and decision making		
Detecting and understanding emotions in others (Emotion Perception)		
Influencing and helping others manage their emotions		

Exhibit 3

"While on stable duty one afternoon, he [Patton] noticed that a horse had been left untied and in its stall. Patton stalked off to find the man responsible for this breach. Locating him at the far end of the stable building, he chewed him out, then, as punishment, ordered him to run to the horse's stall, tie the animal down properly, then run back to him. The soldier obediently turned, then walked – albeit rapidly-toward the stall.

"Run, dam you, run!" Patton bawled after him.

The soldier broke into a run, but the incident preyed on the young second lieutenant's conscience. "Damn it" would have been fine, but "damn you," he decided, was just plain wrong. When the soldier ran back after the tying the horse, Patton summoned all bystanders together and apologized to the soldier, not for having cursed, but for having cursed him [the soldier].

Had Patton done nothing more than chew out the soldier, his men would have pegged him as just another second lieutenant throwing around what little weight he had. However, by chewing him out and then apologizing, in public, for having crossed the line, Patton initiated his steady rise into the realm of army legend and lore.

It was, of course, a minor incident. But Patton quickly discovered that he has a natural talent for converting minor incidents into the stuff of minor myth. As he was drilling his troops one day, Patton was suddenly bucked off his horse. He instantly remounted, only to have his horse rear back. But this time Patton held on and the horse fell. Patton extricated his leg from under the animal and sprang to his feet just as the horse also rose and, throwing back its head, caught Patton just above the eyebrow, opening an ugly gash. With blood running down his face and onto his sleeve, Patton spent another twenty minutes completing the drill. He did not even pause to wipe his face. On schedule, he dismissed the men, retired to wash himself, then, as scheduled, taught a class at the school for noncoms, after which, as scheduled, he attended a class for junior officers. Only after having completed these duties did he visit the fort surgeon, who, with considerable admiration for the young man, stitched up the wound.

It is embarrassing for an officer to be thrown by his horse, and Patton had lost control of the animal not once but twice. Yet, by refusing to even acknowledge his wound, he transformed potential humiliation into a tale told for quite some time in the Sheridan barracks.

Other than the accident itself, there was nothing accidental about Patton's actions. He was deliberately modeling himself as an exceptional officer. On another occasion, he expressed his annoyance that "for so fierce a warrior, I have a damned mild expression," and he began practicing before a mirror to cultivate what he would later call his "war face": the hard, glowering

image that looks out from so many wartime photographs of the general. Patton was known to practice this war face his whole life, putting it on prior to appearances before troops, much as actors put on their makeup before setting foot on stage” (Axelrod, 2006, pp. 26-8).

Exhibit 4

Additional questions:

- Does EI make someone a more effective leader?
- Is it possible to be an effective leader without EI? Why or why not?
- If EI is important for leaders, what is the most important component and why?
- Is EI important as a follower? Why?
- How can leaders improve their EI?

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Abstract

Synopsis – This video case study exercise uses excerpts from the movie *Patton* and the HBO series *Band of Brothers* to juxtapose two military leaders (General George S. Patton and Lieutenant Dick Winters) as they face strikingly similar situations – each interacts with a subordinate experiencing “battle fatigue” (a.k.a. shell shock, PTSD) during the Second World War. Patton appears to lack emotional intelligence (EI) as he apparently loses control and strikes a soldier he believes is demonstrating cowardice. Winters, on the other hand, takes a much different approach when dealing with a subordinate in a similar situation. This case exercise is designed to augment assigned theoretical readings and increase student conceptual and practical insight into the construct of EI.

Research methodology – The analysis of film and biographies is based on historical figures.

Relevant courses and levels – The case is best used with undergraduates in management or leadership courses who may lack the contextual background to discuss certain aspects of leadership. Specifically, the case is designed to explore the elements that comprise EI as well as how EI may affect a leader’s effectiveness. The case study can also be used to challenge common conceptions of how EI may manifest and to discuss the potential “dark side” of EI.

Theoretical bases – This case study exercise centers on the concept of EI, with an emphasis on providing a robust understanding of the concept, including how context may come into play and how EI may have a “dark side.” The exercise could also be used to facilitate discussion of multiple topics normally covered in undergraduate management or leadership courses such as personality, perception and attribution, authentic leadership, toxic leadership, transformational leadership and motivation.

Keywords Leadership, Management, Leader development, Emotional intelligence, Dark side of emotional intelligence