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The Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Career Commitment and Decision-Making Process

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The relations between career decision-making self-efficacy, vocational exploration and commitment, and emotional intelligence were investigated. Furthermore, the extent to which sex moderates the relationship between emotional intelligence and career decision-making self-efficacy and between emotional intelligence and vocational exploration and commitment was also examined. Findings revealed that emotional intelligence as measured by the Empathy, Utilization of Feelings, Handling Relationships, and Self-Control factors is positively related to career decision-making self-efficacy and that the Utilization of Feelings and Self-Control factors were inversely related to vocational exploration and commitment. Findings, however, failed to reveal sex as a moderator of the relationship between emotional intelligence and the career variables under investigation.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, career decision making, career exploration, career commitment, career behaviors

Recently, the role of emotional experience and expression has received attention in the career development literature. For example, Kidd (1998) argued that affect, in addition to cognition, is a critical determinant in career choice and behavior. Similarly, Caruso and Wolfe (2001) asserted that emotion assumes a crucial role in career development, selection, and the workplace. As such, the emotional aspects of career development and the importance of assessing emotional processes in career counseling research and practice are of interest.

The Role of Emotion

Based on the historical movement toward contextualized concepts of emotions and intelligence, Young, Valach, and Collin (1996) proposed a contextual-

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ist action theory of career development, in which emotion plays a central role. According to this theory, emotions exist within the context of the whole and the whole comprises many interwoven and interrelated parts, all of which are interpreted within the contexts of current events and dynamics of the person. More precisely, the role of emotion in the construction of career is understood by the action theory approach to career development in which career is constructed through everyday action (e.g., language in conversations with others). Young et al. further stated that emotion is related to one's purpose, goals, plans, and needs. As such, they proposed three reasons for the importance of emotion in explaining and understanding the construction of career: (a) Emotion motivates and energizes action. Given that certain career actions are regarded as frustrating, challenging, or boring, then one must be energized by emotion to initiate and sustain those actions. (b) Emotion controls and regulates action. That is to say, people rely on their internal processes to make decisions about their actions. (c) Emotions are able to access, orient, and develop narratives about careers. More precisely, because career is constructed from issues of concern in one's life, then emotion is used when constructing and developing narratives about career.

To illuminate the role of emotion in the construction of career, Young, Paseluikho, and Valach (1997) investigated the ways in which emotions serve to energize action and provide context and meaning to the construction of career by analyzing conversations between parents and their adolescents. Findings of their analysis demonstrated how rival constructions of career and mutual feelings of tension and disappointment emerge when parents and their adolescents lack similar goals. The authors noted that the mutual feelings of tension revolve around the daughter's choice to be different and separate from her mother, whereas the mother consistently persuades her daughter to adopt her values and standards. Anger sustains the daughter's rebellious efforts toward her mother's criteria for career choice and motivates her to distance herself from her mother. The mother responds with concern, which motivates her to persist in advice giving with the expectation of increasing her daughter's opportunities for career choice success.

Young et al. (1997) further emphasized that the role of emotion, in energizing and motivating action, is implicated in career exploration and decision-making activities in terms of how "career possibilities" and "career undesirables" are appraised emotionally by parents and their adolescents. Young and Valach (1996) reasoned that emotion has been neglected in the vocational psychology and career development literature. They asserted that career is strongly connected to emotions, and, therefore, awareness of emotion in understanding career is essential.

Likewise, Kidd (1998) argued for greater attention to the role of emotion in career development. More specific, she emphasized that emotional experience, expression, and communication be considered when discussing career decision-making skills, career management skills, and career resilience. Supporting the influence of emotion in career decisions, Carson and Carson (1998) noted previous literature discussions in which the underlying theme was that career suc-

cess is psychologically driven. Armed with this belief, they investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and career commitment, and, as predicted, a positive relationship was revealed. Similarly, Cooper (1997) reported that those who trust and use their feelings effectively could achieve a more successful career. Given the arguments advanced for the fundamental role of emotion in the construction of career and the limited research on the role of emotion in the career development process, an investigation of the role of emotion as related to career behaviors is warranted. More specific, the extent to which affective tendencies and capabilities, as reflected by EI, are related to career exploration and commitment, as well as career decision-making self-efficacy of college students, is a major focus of this study.

EI

In understanding the role of emotion in career-related actions, researchers have introduced EI as a critical variable to career success (e.g., Goleman, 1995) and have argued that its role may be even more important than that of cognitive intelligence. The construct of EI was introduced in the past decade both to academia (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) and to the lay public (Goleman, 1995). According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), EI subsumes Gardner's (1983) interpersonal intelligence (i.e., ability to understand other people: what motivates them, how they work) and intrapersonal intelligence (i.e., capacity to form an accurate model and understanding of oneself and to use the model to operate effectively in life). Salovey and Mayer, therefore, defined EI as a subpiece of social intelligence that entails the capacity to (a) efficiently handle psychological and social problems, (b) accurately express emotions and correctly assess the emotions of others, (c) self-regulate one's own sentiments, and (d) use one's emotions to achieve one's goals. The ability to monitor one's own landscape is thought to lead to greater insight and self-knowledge. Those who are described as emotionally intelligent are thought to possess a more fine-tuned attunement in emotional self-awareness (Goleman, 1998). Consequently, proponents of this construct argue that those who evidence higher EI are better equipped to incorporate emotional experience into thoughts and actions. It seems reasonable then that the ability to guide one's thinking and actions, through the use of emotions, would be related to how efficacious one is likely to feel when considering career-related actions and tasks. In other words, proponents of EI would likely argue that emotional experience could be used to assist in the career exploration and decision-making process.

Research on the EI construct has documented gender differences. For example, Sutarso, Baggett, Sutarso, and Tapia (1996) found women to have higher means on the three EI subscales of Compassion/Empathy, Self-Awareness/Self-Control, and Attunement as compared to men. Schutte et al. (1998) also found that their sample of women scored significantly higher than their male sample on a measure of EI. Similarly, Tapia (1999) reported gender differences, with females scor-

ing significantly higher on EI as compared to males. These differences are explained by noting that women have generally been found to be more supportive, empathetic, and emotionally self-aware than are men (Sutarso et al., 1996).

Conversely, Bar-On (1997) found no significant differences between males and females on his measure of EI. However, Bar-On did note small gender differences in the factorial components of his measure. That is, women were more aware of their feelings and those of others, related better interpersonally, and behaved more socially responsible. Men, on the other hand, evidenced stronger self-regard, were more independent and flexible, and demonstrated better coping ability with immediate problems of a stressful nature. This inconsistency in the research makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the specific patterns or stereotypes of men and women when EI is considered. In addition to exploring the relationships between EI and career behaviors, a secondary purpose of this study is an examination of sex as a moderator of the relationship between EI and career exploration and commitment as well as career decision-making self-efficacy.

Career Exploration, Career Commitment, and Decision Making

Career exploration is regarded as purposive behavior and cognitions that provide access to information in one's external environment and thereby assist in decision making and vocational adjustment (Blustein, 1989). The application of Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory to career decision making is indicated by one's confidence in his or her ability to successfully perform career-related tasks (Hackett & Betz, 1981). Individuals with low self-efficacy percepts for career decision making as compared to those with high self-efficacy may experience greater anxiety for decision-making tasks as well as avoidance of such tasks. When considering career exploration and career decision-making behaviors, empirical evidence has noted that persons who proceed without the benefits of exploration are less likely to experience effective decision-making and job implementation outcomes than those who have participated in exploratory behavior (Greenhaus & Sklarew, 1981; Grotevant, Cooper, & Kramer, 1986). Similarly, career commitment has been implicated as yet another important construct in the career development literature. In the broader context, commitment is described as a display of affirmation and confidence in ideas that are consistent with other beliefs and behavioral manifestations (Marcia, 1980). As related to the vocational domain, commitment to career choice refers to certainty and self-confidence about one's choice and a positive outlook regarding one's vocational future (Blustein, Ellis, & Devenis, 1989).

Indeed, there has been much investigation on the career exploration, commitment, and decision-making processes, particularly as they relate to variables that are thought to influence these behaviors. More recently, EI has been sug-

gested as an alternative explanation of career development outcomes and/or career choice (e.g., Carson & Carson, 1998; Menhart, 1999). Thus, in accordance with previous literature discussions, which have underscored the influence of emotions in career development, two hypotheses were advanced: (a) Students who demonstrate higher EI exhibit greater career decision-making self-efficacy, and (b) students who report higher EI express greater clarity and confidence for vocational exploration and career choice commitment. Given the documented inconsistency regarding sex differences in EI, the following research question was considered: (a) Are the relations between EI and vocational exploration, vocational commitment, and career decision-making self-efficacy moderated by sex?

METHOD

Participants

The participants in the study were 288 (162 female, 121 male, and 5 unreported; 201 Caucasian, 32 Asian, 18 African American, 10 Hispanic, 4 biracial, 3 Native American, 14 other, and 6 unreported) college students currently enrolled in a Midwestern university representing the following academic levels: 27% ($n = 78$) freshman, 17% ($n = 49$) sophomore, 22% ($n = 63$) junior, 27% ($n = 78$) senior, 5% ($n = 14$) graduate, and 2% ($n = 6$) unreported. Participants' self-reported grade point averages ranged from 1.5 to 4.0, with a mean of 3.2 ($SD = 0.43$). The participants' mean age was 22.32 ($SD = 5.62$).

Procedure

With permission granted and in compliance with institutional review board policy, students were solicited from English, psychology, economics, music appreciation, and computer science courses during a regularly scheduled class meeting. These courses were targeted such that a representative group of undergraduate students could be identified.

Instrumentation

EI. The Emotional Intelligence Inventory Revised (Tapia, 2001), which is a revision of work based on two previous instruments (Acker et al., 1996; Tapia & Burry-Stock, 1998), was used to assess EI. Respondents indicated the extent to which each of the 41 items best described them using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never like me*) to 5 (*always like me*). Higher scores reflect higher

EI. The Emotional Intelligence Inventory Revised provides a total score and four factor scores. According to Tapia (2001), the four factor scores are characterized as (a) Empathy, which includes 12 items assessing perception, appraisal, and expression of emotion ($X = 44.27$, $SD = 6.23$); (b) Utilization of Feelings, which comprises 11 items categorized as understanding and analyzing emotions and employing emotional knowledge ($X = 40.70$, $SD = 5.23$); (c) Handling Relationships, which includes 9 items reflecting an emotional facilitation of thinking category ($X = 31.22$, $SD = 5.46$); and (d) Self-Control, which includes 9 items describing regulation of emotion ($X = 30.55$, $SD = 5.54$). The total score and four factor scores (Empathy, Utilization of Feelings, Handling Relationships, and Self-Control) range from 41 to 205, 12 to 60, 11 to 55, 9 to 45, and 9 to 45, respectively. Using Cronbach's alpha, Tapia reported internal consistency reliability coefficients for the total score and four factor scores as .81, .74, .70, .75, and .67, respectively. A total scale test-retest reliability of .81 was revealed over a 2-month interval. Content validity was obtained by relating the items to the components of EI as outlined by Salovey and Mayer (1990; see also Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Evidence of construct validity is indicated by the four-factor model, which supports the underlying dimensions of EI as described by Mayer and Salovey (1997).

Vocational exploration and commitment. Progress in committing to career choice was assessed by the Vocational Exploration and Commitment Scale (VECS), which is a 19-item subscale of the Commitment to Career Choices Scale (Blustein et al., 1989). Respondents indicated the extent to which each statement accurately reflected their attitudes and behaviors by using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never true about me*) to 7 (*always true about me*). Whereas higher scores indicate an uncommitted posture, lower scores reflect a highly clarified and confident level of commitment to career choice. Scores range from 19 to 133. Using Cronbach's alpha, Blustein et al. (1989) reported an internal consistency reliability coefficient of .91 and test-retest reliability over a 2-week and 4-week interval of .90 and .92, respectively. Factorial validity across two samples indicated that the VECS is unifactorial. Evidence of construct validity was established through correlations in the expected directions between the VECS and measures of career exploration, occupational certainty, and identity formation, as well as number of occupations under consideration (Blustein et al., 1989).

Career decision-making self-efficacy. The Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale–Short Form (CDSES-SF) (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996) was used to measure self-efficacy expectations for career decision-making tasks. Participants indicated confidence in their abilities to complete career decision-making tasks using a 10-point scale ranging from 0 (*no confidence*) to 9 (*complete confidence*). The CDSES-SF consists of 25 items. Scores range from 0 to 225, and higher scores reflect greater confidence in career decision-making tasks. Betz et al. (1996) reported an internal consistency reliability coefficient of .94 for the total scale

score. Adequate support for the construct validity of this scale has been established through correlations between CDSES-SF and vocational identity (Betz et al., 1996) and between CDSES-SF and fear of commitment (Betz & Serling, 1995).

RESULTS

Pearson product-moment correlation analyses were employed to examine the relations between the four EI factors, career decision-making self-efficacy, and vocational exploration and career choice commitment. Findings of these analyses revealed the following statistically significant relationships and further supported the hypotheses that higher EI is related to higher career decision-making self-efficacy and greater clarity and confidence for vocational exploration and career choice commitment. Specifically, each of the four EI factors was positively related to career decision-making self-efficacy: Empathy, $r = .14$, $p < .05$; Utilization of Feelings, $r = .38$, $p < .01$; Handling Relationships, $r = .14$, $p < .05$; and Self-Control, $r = .32$, $p < .01$. Using Cohen's (1977) guidelines, the relationship between career decision-making self-efficacy and the Empathy and Handling Relationships factors is reflected by a low effect size, and the Utilization of Feelings and Self-Control factors yielded a medium effect size.

Statistically significant inverse correlations were found for vocational exploration and commitment and two of the EI factors: Utilization of Feelings, $r = -.32$, $p < .01$, and Self-Control, $r = -.43$, $p < .01$. These inverse relationships represent a medium effect size.

Further examination of the correlational matrix, as shown in Table 1, revealed a statistically significant inverse relationship between vocational exploration and commitment and career decision-making self-efficacy ($r = -.52$, $p < .01$). This significant inverse relationship reflects a large effect size.

To determine whether sex moderates the relationship between EI and career decision-making self-efficacy, and between EI and vocational exploration and commitment, separate multiple regression analyses were conducted on each of the four EI factor scores, with career decision-making self-efficacy and vocational exploration and commitment serving as separate dependent variables. The first four analyses considered career decision-making self-efficacy as the dependent variable, and the independent variables were (a) one each of the four EI factor scores, (b) sex, and (c) the interaction between the EI factor score and sex. Vocational exploration and commitment served as the dependent variable in Analyses 4 through 8, and the independent variables were (a) one each of the four EI factor scores, (b) sex, and (c) the interaction between the EI factor score and sex.

Findings of these analyses, as shown in Table 2, revealed all four EI factors to be predictive of career decision-making self-efficacy; however, only the Utilization of Feelings and Self-Control EI factors emerged as significant predic-

Table 1
Intercorrelations Between
Emotional Intelligence Factors and Career Variables

Variable	2	3	4	5	6
1. Career decision-making self-efficacy	-.52**	.14*	.38**	.14*	.32**
2. Vocational exploration and commitment		-.01	-.32**	-.03	-.43**
3. Empathy			-.30**	.39**	-.11
4. Utilization of feelings				.53**	.19**
5. Handling relationships					-.03
6. Self-control					

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

tors of vocational exploration and commitment (see Table 3). Neither a main effect of sex nor the interaction of sex and one each of the four factor scores was significant in the analyses. These findings are reported in Tables 2 and 3.

DISCUSSION

The career activities of career decision-making self-efficacy and vocational exploration and commitment were both significantly related to aspects of EI. Precisely, the positive correlation between all four EI factors and career decision-making self-efficacy suggests that greater EI is associated with increased efficacy for career decision-making tasks. In other words, students who indicated higher ability to perceive, access, and generate emotions to assist thought and to understand and regulate emotion reflectively were more likely to report greater confidence in their career decision-making tasks.

In considering Goleman's (1995, 1998) assertions, we suppose that emotional experience can be used to assist in the career decision-making process. Goleman argued that processing emotional experiences is different from processing cognitive information. Whereas the cognitive or intellectual processing in the brain occurs in the newer layers at the topmost center of the brain, the neocortex, the emotional centers of processing in the brain are in the older subcortex area of the brain (Goleman, 1995, 1998). The construct of EI theorizes that both the cognitive and emotional centers of the brain are working together, establishing communication between the rational and emotional (Goleman, 1998). This view of how the brain processes information relative to our emotions is significant in relation to emotional self-awareness and efficacy when faced with any decision-making task. Perhaps the present findings can be interpreted to suggest that the role of emotion is worthy of consideration when attempting to understand one's self-efficacy for career decision-making tasks.

Table 2
Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis
for Variables Predicting Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy

Predictor Variable	B	SE B	β	R ²	ΔR^2
1. <i>n</i> = 274					
Step 1: empathy	0.46	0.20	.14**	.02	
Step 2: sex	0.02	3.79	.00	.02	.000
Step 3: Empathy \times Sex	0.06	0.52	.05	.02	.000
2. <i>n</i> = 274					
Step 1: utilization of feelings	2.26	0.33	.38***	.15	
Step 2: sex	-0.38	3.48	-.01	.15	.000
Step 3: Utilization of Feelings \times Sex	-0.28	0.67	-.18	.15	.000
3. <i>n</i> = 274					
Step 1: handling relationships	0.86	0.36	.14*	.02	
Step 2: sex	0.58	3.74	.01	.02	.000
Step 3: Handling Relationships \times Sex	0.45	0.73	.24	.02	.001
4. <i>n</i> = 273					
Step 1: self-control	1.62	0.29	.32**	.10	
Step 2: sex	0.09	3.58	.00	.10	.000
Step 3: Self-Control \times Sex	0.59	0.58	.29	.11	.003

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

The inverse relationship found between the Utilization of Feelings and Self-Control EI factors and vocational exploration and commitment suggests that students who reported greater understanding and analysis of emotion as well as self-regulation of emotion were more likely to display a highly clarified and confident level of career choice commitment. Conceivably, individuals who are less attuned to understanding, analyzing, and regulating emotions experience difficulty and/or an inability to commit because they are less aware of how to use their emotions to guide their thoughts and actions, which would result in an uncommitted stance.

The inverse relationship found between career decision-making self-efficacy and vocational exploration and commitment suggests that greater certainty about one's choice and outlook regarding one's vocational future is associated with greater confidence in ability to complete career decision-making tasks. This finding was not surprising but rather is consistent with existing literature, which has suggested that high career choice commitment and extensive exploration would be related to greater confidence in ability to attain career goals (Brown, Darden, Shelton, & Dipoto, 1999; Harren, 1979). It seems reasonable that career choice commitment, a display of one's affirmation and confidence in ideas that are consistent with career behaviors, would be related to one's confidence for making

Table 3
Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis
for Variables Predicting Vocational Exploration and Commitment

Predictor Variable	B	SE B	β	R ²	ΔR^2
1. <i>n</i> = 271					
Step 1: empathy	-0.02	0.14	-.01	.00	
Step 2: sex	-1.88	2.52	-.05	.00	.002
Step 3: Empathy \times Sex	-0.42	0.34	-.49	.01	.006
2. <i>n</i> = 272					
Step 1: utilization of feelings	-1.23	0.22	-.32***	.10	
Step 2: sex	-0.90	2.35	-.02	.10	.000
Step 3: Utilization of Feelings \times Sex	0.02	0.45	-.02	.10	.000
3. <i>n</i> = 271					
Step 1: handling relationships	-0.08	0.24	-.02	.00	
Step 2: sex	-1.66	2.48	-.04	.00	.002
Step 3: Handling Relationships \times Sex	-0.41	0.49	-.33	.01	.003
4. <i>n</i> = 271					
Step 1: self-control	-1.42	0.18	-.43**	.18	
Step 2: sex	-0.73	2.25	-.02	.18	.000
Step 3: Self-Control \times Sex	0.20	0.37	.15	.19	.000

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

career decisions. This is to say that individuals who are highly committed are likely expressing readiness and confidence in the career decision-making and implementation process.

Although previous research has noted inconsistencies regarding sex differences when examining EI, the present findings failed to reveal sex as a moderator of the relationship between EI and the two career variables. It would appear then that any noted sex differences in EI are not large enough to affect the direction and/or strength of the relation between the predictor (i.e., EI factor score) and criterion variable (career behavior). Findings of the regression analyses revealed that all four EI factors were predictive of career decision-making self-efficacy. These findings indicate that greater confidence in one's ability to successfully complete career-related tasks is associated with higher ability to perceive emotions, to use emotions to assist in thought, to understand emotions, and to regulate emotions in self and others to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

Although all four EI factors were predictive of career decision-making self-efficacy, only the Utilization of Feelings and Self-Control factors emerged as significant predictors of vocational exploration and commitment. The main effects of the Utilization of Feelings and Self-Control EI factors found in the regression analyses for both career decision-making self-efficacy and vocational exploration

and commitment suggest that the strength of the relationship between career behaviors and EI is reflected primarily by these two EI factors. In other words, persons who are able to label their emotions effectively and to understand complex feelings, and who are able to stay open to feelings that are both pleasant and unpleasant in self and others, evidence a highly clarified and confident level of commitment to career choice and report high confidence in their abilities to successfully perform career-related tasks.

CONCLUSIONS

In general, the results of the present investigation converge with the literature and further support the suggestions of Young et al. (1996) and Kidd (1998) that emotion serves to explain career development outcomes and behaviors. To some extent, our findings suggest that emotional experience and expression can be used advantageously to accomplish career-related tasks. In other words, the combination of behavioral aspects (i.e., exploration and commitment) and affective tendencies and capabilities deserves attention when considering career outcomes.

Goleman (1995) reported that neurological research supports the indispensability of emotions in rational decision making. Whereas rationality is located in the neocortex region of the brain, the limbic system houses emotional responses. Providing evidence for this notion, Goleman described a corporate lawyer who suffered damage to the limbic system while his cognitive functions remained intact. This lawyer, according to Goleman, experienced great difficulty in making the simplest daily life decisions (e.g., choosing between french fries and mashed potatoes). Complex decision making for the lawyer was ultimately impossible because he was without emotional preference and consequently unable to use experience in his decision-making process. Seemingly, acknowledgment and understanding of both behavioral and affective elements are critical to enhancing career decision-making tasks. Of particular note is that scholars have argued that positive affective disposition (i.e., EI) can be taught and learned (e.g., Caruso & Wolfe, 2001; Elias, Hunter, & Kress, 2001; Goleman, 1995). Armed with this belief, effective regulation of emotion in self and others and the use of feelings to motivate, plan, and achieve one's career goals are worthy of consideration when attempting to cement one's efficacy for career planning and choice behaviors.

In sum, the associations found between EI and career behaviors in the present study call attention to the practical importance of EI in career counseling and assessment. Menhart (1999) examined the importance of EI assessment in career counseling and found emotional tendencies and capabilities to be positively associated with interview outcomes. Further arguments in favor of EI assessment in career development, selection, and training are provided by Caruso and Wolfe (2001), who professed that how a person manages her or his emotions and the emotions of others in the workplace can significantly affect job satisfaction and

performance. Although Caruso and Wolfe underscored the important role of EI in career assessment, it is important to note that they argued on behalf of an ability measure of EI as compared to self-report measures of EI. In other words, recent debate regarding the validity of the EI construct has raised question as to whether emotional competency is just a repackaged version of traditional personality traits. They maintained that ability measures of EI assess persons' actual performances rather than their self-reported skills and that performance on these ability tests is only slightly related to personality traits, unlike self-report measures that tend to be related to well-established personality traits, namely traits composing the Big Five factor model.

Given the arguments that EI can be taught and learned and the research that supports the critical role emotion assumes in career development, planning, and selection, career counseling practitioners may want to consider the role of emotional abilities, as measured by performance tests, in assisting clients with their career planning and in addressing clients' work adjustment and job satisfaction concerns.

Several limitations of this study should be considered. First, our sample participants represented one Midwestern university and were primarily Caucasian. In the interest of diversity, future research should include students from diverse backgrounds and multiple geographic regions. Second, our focus on a student population and the exclusion of other young adults comparable in age who have chosen alternatives to educational pursuit (e.g., vocational training, workforce) limit the generalizability of our findings to undergraduate college students largely. Future research could improve on the generalizability of the findings by including non-college student groups. Third, the use of self-report measures may limit the accuracy of responses. More precisely, as noted above, self-report measures of EI assess perceived EI, whereas performance assessments describe persons' actual abilities, problems, and potential. Hence, future research might focus on both perceived and actual EI, as both may be important contributors of adaptation ability. That is, what one perceives to be true may be as important as that which is actually true.

Despite the aforementioned study limitations, the most obvious strengths of the present investigation suggest that emotional experience and expression may play an important role in the career process and that career commitment and decision making may be more than just a cognitive exercise. Hence, attention to the emotionality of career commitment and decision making is critical given the complex interplay between judgments, feelings, and actions that has been noted in the emotion literature. Notwithstanding its "pop culture" status, career counselors may want to consider the emotional aspects of effective career development and how the role of emotion might be used to inform career interventions.

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