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https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5z8670fm

ISBN

9783030349639

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Publication Date

2020

DOI

10.1007/978-3-030-34964-6_12

Peer reviewed

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Accepted version (before final copy-editing), Final version published as

Riggio, R.J., Eaton, L.G., & Funder, D.C. (2020). Skill in social situations: The essence of *Savoir-Faire*. In R. Sternberg & A. Kostić (Eds.), *Social intelligence and nonverbal communication* (pp. 333-358). New York: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Skill in Social Situations: The Essence of Savoir-Faire

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Abstract

This chapter introduces a measure of *savoir-faire* that represents the abilities required to engage others in interaction and to behave tactfully and successfully in social situations. Drawing on research in nonverbal and social skills, *savoir-faire* (which translates as "to know (what) to do") is a combination of abilities in expressing oneself verbally, engaging others in interactions, and sophisticated social role-playing. We assert that savoir-faire represents a core element of social intelligence and that it is associated with social effectiveness, broadly defined. Using data from a self-report measure of social skills, we extracted the measure of savoir-faire. We demonstrate how savoir-faire, so measured, predicts interpersonal behavior in laboratory-based social situations as well as important social outcomes (e.g., likability, breadth of social networks, and attainment of leadership positions).

Skill in Social Situations: The Essence of Savoir-Faire

Sociologists and social psychologists have long been interested in how individuals manage social impressions. This line of research began with the work of renowned U.S. sociologist Charles Horton Cooley (1902) and was followed up by the work of social psychologist, George Herbert Mead (1934). Both scholars examined the role of controlling and manipulating impressions in social interaction. Perhaps the strongest voice arguing that impression management is fundamental to human social interaction was the seminal work of Erving Goffman (1959) and his "dramaturgical approach," which portrayed social life as a "stage" and humans as "actors" engaged in elaborate role-playing behaviors. Modern social psychological research in impression formation owes much to the lifelong work of Edward E. Jones (1990), who elucidated types of strategic self-presentation.

Many early scholars showed interest in individual differences as well, describing impression management as an ability, an aspect of personality functioning, and as a skill. Cooley (1902) observed, "Some of them [girls] have a marked tendency to finesse and posing, while others have almost none. The latter have a less vivid personal imagination; they are unaffected chiefly, perhaps, because they have no vivid idea of how they seem to others, and so are not moved to seem rather than to be…" (p. 173). Carl Jung posted the concept of a persona as “a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and on the other to conceal the true nature of the individual" (1943, p. 190). Similarly, Goffman (1959) referred to the varying skills of social actors. The work of Jung and Goffman continue to be relevant, for example, toward understanding best practices in public relations (Fawkes, 2015).

In social-personality psychology, the most prominent line of research on individual differences is that of Mark Snyder (1974, 1987) on the construct of *self-monitoring*. Following

Jones (1990), self-monitoring refers to individual differences in strategic self-presentation. The construct of self-monitoring, and the self-report Self-Monitoring Scale, spawned an enormous amount of research. Individuals who self-monitor deliberately monitor their expressive behavior, with the goal of creating a favorable impression on others (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Although self-monitoring appears to support social effectiveness, outcomes related to self-monitoring have been somewhat inconsistent (Kudret, Erdogan, & Bauer, 2019; Rauthmann, 2011). For example, individuals with relatively high self-monitoring scores tend to appear less authentic when dealing with others (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005). Appearing authentic would seem to be an important part of social skills.

More than a century ago, Cooley observed, "To be normal, to be at home in the world, with a prospect of power, usefulness, or success, the person must have that imaginative insight into other minds that underlies tact and *savoir-faire*…This insight involves sophistication, some understanding and sharing of the clandestine impulses of human nature. A simplicity that is merely the lack of this insight indicates a sort of defect." (1902, italics added). In this chapter, we use empirical data to examine *savoir-faire*, which literally translated means "to know (what) to do". Savoir-faire has been used in the English lexicon as a label indicative of a sureness or tact in social behavior, a concept most closely related to what developmental psychologists refer to as social competence (dating back to Thorndike, 1920). Social competence refers to effectiveness in social interaction, including social skills, depth and breadth of social network(s), relationship quality, and functional outcomes of interpersonal encounters (Ladd, 1999; Rose-Krasnor, 1997). Savoir-faire, *knowing how to* act in a variety of social settings, is a distinct category of social skills necessary for social competence (Schneider, Ackerman, & Kanfer, 1996). Although savoir-faire has not been treated as a psychological construct per se, the social-skills model proposed by

Riggio (1986; Riggio & Carney, 2003) contains key dimensions that appear to fit Cooley's original description of this social skill.

The *Social Skills Inventory* (SSI; Riggio, 1986; Riggio & Carney, 2003) is a 90-item self-report inventory of social skill. The SSI items originate from a hierarchical model, the SSI measures both social and emotional social skills. Operating within each of these two domains, social and emotional, are three foundational skills that include expressiveness (i.e., encoding skill), sensitivity (i.e., decoding skill), and control (i.e., regulatory skill). Further research using the SSI supports the reliability and validity of the SSI model (Riggio, 2014; Riggio & Carney, 2003). The full social-skills model is displayed in Figure 1.

----------Insert Figure 1 about here ----------

Emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000), is conceptually related to emotional skills measured by the SSI. The MSCEIT abilities measure of emotional intelligence (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2003) contains subscales that assess *perceiving emotions* and *managing emotions*, which are analogous to the SSI domains of emotional sensitivity and emotional control. Whereas the emotional side of the SSI model likely relates to emotional intelligence, the social side of the SSI model represents core elements of social intelligence.

We propose herein that two of the social subscales of the *SSI* capture the essence of savoir-faire. *Social Expressiveness (SE)* represents the desire and ability to express oneself in social interactions, with representative items including enjoyment of social gatherings, initiating conversations, and using gestures to help get the point across. *Social Control (SC)* measures the desire to engage in skillful public speaking, leading group discussions, and easily adjusting to any social situation. SC is related to being tactful and socially adept—it allows skilled

individuals to adjust *their* personal behavior to fit in with what *they* consider appropriate in a social situation (Riggio, 1986). In this way, SC is conceptually related to self-monitoring (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Riggio, 1986), excluding other-directedness, which relates to the desire to impress others (Briggs, Cheek, & Buss, 1980; Snyder, 1974).

Savoir-Faire's Relationship to Global Personality Traits

In terms of the five-factor model of personality (Big 5; Costa & McCrae, 1992), global social skills are a facet of extraversion. However, it is clear from our previous description of savoir-faire that this construct is likely to implicate personal characteristics beyond extraversion. In addition to the gregariousness of the extravert, individuals with savoir-faire should possess the flexibility and cultural sophistication of the individual who is high on openness to experience. Individuals with savoir-faire should also possess a lack of social anxiety and affect intensity that would be present for an individual high on neuroticism; and, would possess the social awareness of the individual high on agreeableness. To the extent that the combination of skills of social expressiveness and social control is a reasonable representation of savoir-faire, we would not expect this set of social skills to fit cleanly into the five-factor personality traits (Flett, Blankstein, Bator, & Pliner, 1989; Gurtman, 1999; Riggio, Throckmorton, & DePaola, 1990; Schneider, Ackerman, & Kanfer, 1996). Rather, savoir-faire is expected to manifest in a broad set of social behaviors. Our analyses will examine 64 mid-level expressive social behaviors (e.g., is talkative), which combine into three domains, involvement, interpersonal positive affectivity, and confidence.

Involvement. One key aspect of savoir-faire is the ability to become successfully engaged or involved in a breadth of social interactions. As one element of our savoir-faire composite, social expressiveness should predict involvement in virtually any social situation. Moreover,

both social expressiveness and social control should facilitate networking and the development of social relationships. Prior research indicates that persons scoring higher on both SE and SC report larger social networks of close friends and acquaintances (Riggio, 1986).

Interpersonal positive affectivity. Individuals with savoir-faire should favor approaching interactions with others, and feel comfortable in a wide range of interpersonal settings. We expect individuals with relatively high savoir-faire scores to express positivity toward other people. As a result, we expect other people will act positively toward them in return. Previous research indicates that both SE and SC are related to social intelligence; particularly the ability to assess interpersonal relationships and understand the meaning of behavioral cues in different contexts (Riggio, Messamer, & Throckmorton, 1991).

Research has also shown these two SSI subscales are positively associated with observer and experimenter ratings of likability after 2-minutes of acquaintanceship (Riggio, 1986). Savoir-faire has been shown to be related positively with reports of positive emotion (Miller, 1986), results that are replicated in our data r=.36, p<.001 (Positive and Negative Affect Scale; Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, 1988). Moreover, persons possessing high levels of savoir-faire are more successful at both posed and spontaneous sending (encoding) of basic emotional expressions (Tucker & Riggio, 1988).

Confidence. Another essential aspect of savoir-faire is social confidence (Lawson, Marshall, & McGrath, 1979) and self-esteem (Riggio, et al., 1990). In these data, savior-faire is positively associated with social self-esteem r=.74, p<.001 (Bohon Self-esteem Scale; Bohon, 1991). Previous research indicates that these factors are negatively related to susceptibility to embarrassment and shyness (Miller, 1986). In these data, the savoir-faire construct is negatively

related to social anxiety (r= -.66, p<.001), as measured by the Self-Consciousness Scale (Fenigstein, A., Scheier, M. F., & Buss, 1975).

These individuals' level of social confidence may stem, at least in part, from relatively higher levels of verbal IQ, but certainly not fully from IQ (Englund, Levy, Hyson, Sroufe, 2000). SC (alone) has been found to be related positively with verbal SAT scores and the verbal subscale of the WAIS (Riggio, et al., 1991), Those results are replicated in these data, r=.18, p<.05 (IQ measured by the Shipley Institute of Living Scale; Shipley & Burlingame, 1941). However, the savior-faire construct (SC+SE) is unrelated to verbal intelligence in our data. Savoir-faire is related with abstraction intelligence (abstract reasoning), r=.21, p<.05, an association that remains virtually unchanged when controlling for verbal intelligence (r=.21, p<.01). Relations among emotional intelligence (i.e., MSCEIT), savoir-faire (SSI SC+SE), nonverbal decoding ability (e.g., Bänziger, Scherer, Hall, & Rosenthal, 2011), and multiple measures of traditional intelligence is an important arena for future research.

Savoir-faire and Social Outcomes

Savoir-faire should be related to positive social outcomes, such as social acceptance and the availability of social support. The bulk of the evidence to support this contention comes from the literature concerning peer relations in childhood (for a review of this literature refer to Ladd, 1999). There is both observational and experimental evidence to indicate that social competence include behaviors that enhance peer acceptance, friendship, and other positive interpersonal outcomes. The social skills acquired through experiences with peers during development affect later interpersonal competence, and individuals' long-term psychological adjustment (Ladd, 1999). It is likely that these processes, grounded in the social behaviors manifested by individuals with savoir-faire, continue throughout the lifespan.

Savoir-faire may be particularly important in highly unstructured social situations where role-playing skill is critical to social success. Persons possessing savoir-faire should make positive first impressions, particularly in situations where they are explicitly evaluated. Two studies examining students' performance in mock hiring interviews suggest that students possessing high levels of SC are rated as more "hirable" (Riggio & Mayes, 2002; Riggio & Throckmorton, 1988). In addition, there is recent evidence that savoir-faire (both SE and SC) predicts leader emergence in small groups (Riggio, Riggio, Salinas, & Cole, 2002). We will discuss the relationship between savoir-faire and leadership in more depth later.

Perhaps one of the more interesting findings from previous research is the strong positive relationship between savoir-faire, and overall perceptions of honesty of participants in a posed deception study (Riggio, Tucker, & Throckmorton, 1988). Persons scoring high on savoir-faire (SE and SC) in this study were more likely to be judged as truthful, regardless of whether they were lying or telling the truth. In other words, participants high in savoir-faire had an honest *demeanor bias* (Riggio & Friedman, 1983; Zuckerman, DeFrank, Hall, Larrance, & Rosenthal, 1979), that led to higher evaluations of honesty/credibility than persons with less savoir-faire.

Support for the Construct of Savoir-Faire

There is a good amount of piecemeal evidence that can be found to support the contention that this combination of social expressiveness and social control/role-playing skill is an important social skill for successful social interactions and satisfying relationships with others. We propose that savoir-faire is what developmental psychologists consider to be the heart of social competence, and in adulthood is a core element of the larger construct of social intelligence. In addition to the previous research examining the relationships between the SSI dimensions of SE and SC, we will present additional, unpublished research exploring the role

that savoir-faire played in three different social contexts, and then review research on savoir-faire in social relationships and networks, and leadership. We argue that these existing and well-validated self-report social skill measures do a good job of capturing a core element of social intelligence that we are labeling *savoir-faire*.

Savoir-Faire in Social Settings

The Riverside Accuracy Project

A series of studies was conducted as a part of the Riverside Accuracy Project (National Institute of Mental Health grant R01-MH42427 to David C. Funder), which has gathered a wide variety of data from a sample of 182 target participants (91 women and 91 men), all undergraduates at the University of California, Riverside. The specific aim of this study was to develop and test the Realistic Accuracy Model (Funder, 1995, 1999). Portions of this large data set have been used to examine a variety of issues germane to social and personality psychology, such as the determinants of inter-judge agreement (consensus) and self-other agreement (accuracy in personality judgment) (see Funder, Kolar, & Blackman, 1995; Eaton & Funder, 2003), emotional experience in daily life (Eaton & Funder, 2001; Spain, Eaton, & Funder, 2000), public and private self-consciousness (Creed & Funder, 1998), and the basis of self-esteem (Blackman & Funder, 1996). These studies do not overlap with the research presented in this chapter; all of the data analyses are new.

Overview. As part of this larger study, participants (targets) completed several self-report measures of personality, including the full *Social Skills Inventory* (Riggio, 1986; Riggio & Carney, 2003) (see Figure 1). The social expressiveness (SE) and social control (SC) scales were added together to create our target participants' *savoir-faire* score. These participants nominated two college friends, who reported about the personality of our targets. The two college friends'

personality ratings were averaged to provide a composite *friends-report*. Data from the first in-laboratory session is the cornerstone of the results we are reporting in this chapter. These data include *first-impressions* of personality and behaviors coded from three dyadic interactions (*Getting Acquainted*, *Cooperative*, and *Competitive*).

Session One. At the first session, opposite-sex student participants, not previously acquainted, arrived to separate locations where self-report measures were completed. These two students were introduced for the first time in the laboratory, and immediately began the first of three five-minute interactions (*Getting Acquainted*). Next, each participant completed personality ratings about their interaction partner (at five-minutes of acquaintanceship). Thereafter, the dyad participated in two additional five-minute interactions (*Cooperative* and *Competitive*).

Getting Acquainted Interaction. After the introduction, they were asked to sit on a two-person couch, in front of a visible video camera. The participants were instructed to "talk about whatever you'd like"; the experimenter turned on the camera and departed, to return 5 minutes later. Next, the participants completed several questionnaires. On one of these, they recorded their immediate first-impressions of their partner's personality using a form on which slightly abbreviated California Q-Sort items (Block, 1978) were rated using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=*uncharacteristic of partner* to 5=*characteristic of partner*).

Cooperative Interaction. A few minutes later, the same pair of participants were seated at a table, again in front of a clearly visible video camera. The participants were told that they would be "working together to build a model." They were provided with a set of Tinkertoy® pieces, consisting of circular wooden spools with holes, and colored dowel sticks of varying lengths. From the instruction manual, the pair was provided with a picture of the model they were to build. They were told they would have 5-minutes in which to complete the model. The

video camera was turned on and the experimenter left the room, and then returned after the five-minutes had expired.

Competitive Interaction. After the cooperative interaction, the same pair of participants remained at the table. The Tinkertoy® was removed from the table and was replaced with the popular sound-repetition Simon® game. This game consists of 4 multicolored buttons that light up accompanied by a tone. The game begins with one lighted button and a single accompanying tone. The player presses the button that was lighted, and then the game progresses to two lighted buttons/tones. The player is to then mimic the pattern. The game continues in this manner, in increasing complexity and numbers of tones until the player can no longer correctly mimic the pattern. Then the game begins again. The participants were instructed on the rules of the Simon® game and were told they would be competing against each other, playing the Simon® game, for a $1.00 cash prize that was placed on the table in front of the players. The experimenter then turned on the video camera and left the room, and returned after the 5-minutes had expired.

The videotaped behaviors were subsequently coded using a 64-item Riverside Behavioral Q-sort (RBQ; Funder, Furr, & Colvin, 2000). The RBQ was modeled after the California Q-Sort (CAQ; Block, 1978) designed to provide some behavioral cognates for the personality attributes the CAQ measures. This instrument allows us to code information about behavior on our videotapes at a psychologically meaningful mid-level of analysis. For example, the RBQ includes behaviors such as “acts irritated” or “expresses warmth.” These behaviors were rated by trained coders who sorted the 64 RBQ items into a 9-step, forced-choice, approximately normal distribution ranging from *not at all descriptive of the participant’s behavior* (category 1) to *highly descriptive of the participant’s behavior* (category 9). In this way, each of the 64 behavioral items received a rating from 1 to 9.

Four trained research assistants independently coded one randomly assigned participant, on one of the three videotaped interactions. The behavioral codes for each participant, in each session, were averaged across the four coders. As a preliminary quality control check, each coder's ratings were compared with the other three sets of ratings for the session, and were entered into the overall composite only if they correlated at least .30 with two other coders and at least .25 with the third coder. If a coder's RBQ failed to achieve this threshold, the participant was randomly assigned to another coder. This procedure ensured a minimum alpha reliability of .60 for each composite behavioral coding (for more information, see Funder, Furr, & Colvin, 2000). These behavioral ratings result in three principal components, displays of positive affectivity, involvement in the interaction, and personal confidence (Eaton & Funder, 2003).

Savoir-Faire Behaviors

Tables 1, 2, and 3 present the results for the *Getting Acquainted*, *Cooperative,* and *Competitive* interactions, respectively. In each Table we present significant positive and negative correlations between savoir-faire (SE + SC), each behavioral item and the three component scores. When a correlation was significant for any one of the three interactions, the direction of the relationship with savoir-faire was consistent. Across the three situations, the behaviors consistently and significantly correlated with savoir-faire are noteworthy. Positive correlates include, *exhibits social skills*, *is talkative,* and *volunteers a lot of information;* along with a host of behaviors pertaining to skill in nonverbal communication. These consistent behaviors include, *shows high enthusiasm and energy level, is expressive in face, voice or gestures,* and *is physically animated.* Consistent negative behavioral correlates include, *is reserved and unexpressive, exhibits an awkward interpersonal style, behaves in a fearful or timid manner, keeps partner(s) at a distance, expresses insecurity,* and *seems detached from the interaction.*

These data demonstrate that behaviors indicative of *involvement* in all three of our experimental social situations were associated with savoir-faire. Furthermore, the personality attributes associated with savoir-faire indicate that these individuals possess relatively greater social self-esteem, extraversion, warmth, assertiveness, and gregariousness. and ego-resilience. Previous research has shown savoir-faire social skills are associated with initiating conversation, engaging in self-disclosure, and willingness to provide social support. Individuals relatively high on savoir-faire are not concerned with expressing negative assertions (e.g., telling a companion they don't like a certain way he or she has been treated, turning down requests, confronting a close companion when he or she has broken a promise, etc.) (Buhrmester, Fuhrman, Wittenberg, & Reis, 1988). It is likely the case that, when expressing negative assertions, individuals with savoir-faire can choose among alternative ways of saying things, so that they express themselves in ways that are tactful and non-offensive (Daly, Vangelisti, & Daughton, 1987).

----Insert Tables 1, 2, and 3 about here -----

The *Getting Acquainted* interaction was unstructured, meaning that participants were only instructed to talk with each other for five minutes. The *Cooperative* and *Competitive* situations were structured. In each of these situations, participants were asked to complete a task (cooperative or competitive). The consistent positive correlations across the two structured interactions includes, *tries to control the interaction, dominates the interaction, initiates humor,* and *acts playful;* negative correlations include, *expresses agreement frequently* and *seeks advice from partner(s).* The personal confidence behavioral composite was consistently, positively correlated in the cooperative and competitive interactions. The Behavioral Q-sort does not have an item for coding leadership, per se. The collection of behaviors uniquely correlated in the two

task-related situations may be indicative of individuals who assume leadership roles in a task-related context.

Social Outcomes of Savoir-faire

One would imagine, from the previous discussion, that there would be a host of positive social outcomes for individuals high on savoir-faire. In the present study, we considered two types of social outcomes. First, we considered ratings provided by the participants' interaction partner (*first-impressions*). After only five-minutes of acquaintanceship, these ratings were highly favorable and conform to what would be expected. The interaction partners describe individuals relatively higher on savoir-faire as relatively more talkative, having social poise and presence, having a rapid personal tempo, having a wide range of interests, power oriented, assertive, and verbally fluent, among other attributes of a similar tenor. These attributions possibly underlie the findings of Riggio and Throckmorton (1988), who found that individuals high on social control were rated as more desirable job candidates in a mock interview, even after controlling for speaking errors (linguistic and content errors) and the applicant's style of dress.

However, first impressions may not necessarily stand the test of time. Therefore, we also examined the personality descriptions provided by the college friends of our participants. In general, the *friends-report* correlates of *savoir-faire* were highly similar to those of the interaction partners' descriptions, and highly similar to the participants' own self-report personality ratings. This would indicate that the behaviors associated with savoir-faire are readily visible to others, and lead to similar personality judgments, regardless of the length of acquaintanceship. This seems to imply that individuals with savoir-faire are easy to spot in a crowd and are likely to be judged in a favorable way by most of the people they know.

This present study is limited to interactions involving unacquainted opposite-sex dyads. Some of the behavioral manifestations of savoir-faire in our social situations may be context specific, generalizable only to this type of interaction partner. Further research is needed to determine which behaviors generalize to other interaction contexts and other types of interaction partners (e.g., unacquainted same-sex dyads). In light of such data, social skills training programs might be developed that specifically target for intervention universal behavioral markers of savoir-faire. Furthermore, it would be interesting and important to note the degree to which such interventions change context-specific behavior, and/or the degree to which such interventions alter both an individual's behavior and the individual's underlying personality structure (e.g., an individual's relative standing on the traits of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, and agreeableness).

Savoir-Faire and Leadership

As mentioned earlier, our SSI measure of savoir-faire (SE +SC) was found to be related to leader emergence in a laboratory setting. Elaborating on this study (Riggio, et al., 2003), 315 undergraduate students participated in small groups. In a prior session, all participants completed the SSI. Leaders were assigned based on their total score on the SSI, so that there would be a range of high, medium, and low socially skilled leaders. They then led their groups through two tasks: (1) a group discussion problem-solving task and, (2) a simulation of a small assembly line. Group members rated their leaders using the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire, Version XII-R (LBDQ; Stogdill & Coons, 1957). Trained judges viewed the videotaped group interactions and rated the leaders on their performance on both tasks. The two SSI components of savoir-faire, SE and SC, were both correlated with both the team members' LBDQ ratings (*r*s =

.32-.46), and with the trained judges' ratings – but only on the rating of the discussion task (*r*s = .42 and 46, for SE and SC, respectively). Correlations between savoir-faire and leader ratings on the assembly task were positive, but nonsignificant (see Riggio, et al., 2003). We can argue that the assembly task did not offer much opportunity for social interaction, so savoir-faire may not have mattered as much.

Given that the entire SSI was used in these laboratory studies of leadership an obvious question is whether the emotional scales of the SSI are also related to effective leadership. The answer is mixed. Yes, scores on the Emotional Expressiveness (EE) SSI subscale were significantly correlated with group members LBDQ ratings (*r'*s = .32-.42) and Emotional Sensitivity (ES) and Emotional Control (EC) were significantly positively correlated with judges' ratings of leaders during the discussion task (*r'*s = .34 and .40, respectively), but in other research on practicing managers/leaders, the emotion scales of the SSI rarely predict leader effectiveness, except in this way: followers tend to like emotionally skilled leaders, but the emotional skills rarely relate to leader effectiveness measured either objectively or through standardized leadership measures (such as the MLQ, which assesses transformational leadership; see Bass & Riggio, 2006). Yet, the SSI scales of Social Expressiveness and Social Control, either independently, or combined in our measure of savoir-faire, are consistently predictive of both follower ratings of leaders and standardized measures of leader performance. We surmise that emotional skills are important in a leader's appeal, and perhaps in their "charisma," but the strongest correlates of leader effectiveness consistently turn out to be the two scales that make up savoir-faire. For leadership, which is a complex social role, it is more about social intelligence than it is about emotional skill/emotional intelligence.

The most recent evidence that savoir-faire plays an important role in leadership comes from our longitudinal research with the Fullerton Longitudinal Study (FLS). This research, started in 1979 with 130 one-year-old children and their parents, began to look at the role that social skills/social intelligence (represented as the two scales assessing savoir-faire) played in predicting leader emergence and effectiveness as adults at age 29. The goal originally was to examine early precursors of leadership. In one study (Guerin, et al., 2011), we explored the well-known finding that extraverts are more likely to attain leadership positions than introverts, and also to examine the role that such individual differences played in effective leadership. We did indeed find that extraversion, as measured by the NEO Big Five personality inventory, predicted both our measures of leader emergence and leader effectiveness. However, the relationship between extraversion and effective leadership was completely mediated by the individual's possession of savoir-faire. In other words, the "advantage" that extraverts have in leadership disappears if they do not possess savoir-faire (see Guerin, et al., 2011).

Savoir-Faire: What It Is, What It Is Not, What is Next

The construct of social intelligence is no doubt quite broad. As Sternberg and Kostic point out in the Introduction, it includes the ability to understand, manage, and control social interactions. It incorporates both verbal behavior and nonverbal behavior. It cross-cuts other areas of individual differences, particularly traditional intelligence, personality, and communication skill. Our data indicates that a socially intelligent individual can get along well in a variety of social contexts. The behavioral correlates indicate that our measure of savoir-faire capture the defining essence of this social intelligence. These individuals enjoy social engagements and appear to benefit from social successes. Individuals with savoir-faire know what is appropriate in a social setting; they manage themselves and social situations with flexibility and grace; they possess a willingness to

enter new and novel situations; they are in control of themselves (self-possession) in social settings; and they are at ease in difficult situations (Merriam-Webster synonyms, 2019). In short, savoir-faire may represent most facets of social intelligence. Owed to the fact that social intelligence encompasses a large number of skills, future research is required to establish convergent and discriminant validity of savoir-faire against performance measures of social intelligence, emotional intelligence, and nonverbal tests of cognitive intelligence.

The SSI is a reliable and valid self-report measure that correlated in meaningful ways with behavior in our research. Nonetheless, self-report is limited in that scores represent the individual's impression of their social skill. A standardized performance test of savoir-faire would be a tremendous contribution to research and practice. Ultimately, we suggest that future research aim toward the development of a standardized aptitude or ability test for savoir-faire, one that could be used in tandem with the MSCEIT (emotional intelligence). Perhaps the greatest obstacle to this kind of test development lies in the very definition of savoir-faire. The behavioral performer is the test-taker, and the test-taker's social behavior is the unit of measurement. The BQ proved to be a valuable assessment tool for behavior in our research. Based on our BQ results, we conclude that the ideal circumstance would be structured (i.e., our cooperative and competitive situations). However, as compared to scoring standardized tests of intelligence and emotional intelligence (e.g., WAIS, MSCEIT), the BQ coding process is probably too time-consuming for applied contexts (clinicians, counselors, and industry) (see Funder, Furr, & Colvin, 2000).

What is *not* included in our construct of savoir-faire that could be part of the larger social intelligence domain? Recall that the SSI (see Figure 1) measures two social domains (emotional, social), with each possessing *three* foundational skills (expressivity, control, and sensitivity). The

SSI emotional domain was excluded from the computation of savoir-faire, not because these foundational skills are unimportant. The item content was not central to the savoir-faire construct.

The SSI social sensitivity subscale was also not included in the savoir-faire construct. However, an examination of social sensitivity as compared to savoir-faire is informative. Social sensitivity is quite different from savoir-faire. These two variables, in fact, are negatively correlated in our data (r=-.20, p<.009). The pattern of personality correlates for these two social skills illustrates a distinction worthy of deeper exploration in future research. Social sensitivity may capture social skills, motivated by a desire to withdraw from social interactions as gracefully as possible. For example, social sensitivity is positively related to public self-consciousness (r=.48, p<.001), social anxiety (r=.41, p<.001), and neuroticism (r=.42, p<.001).

Perhaps the most telling of the difference between the SSI measure of savoir-faire (SE+SC) and the SSI social sensitivity scale is the pattern of their correlates with the Davis Empathy Scale variables (Davis, 1983). The Davis measure of empathy includes four subscales. *Fantasy* captures an individual's inclination/ability to project their thoughts and feelings onto fictitious characters. The fantasy subscale was not correlated with SSI savoir-faire or social sensitivity. *Empathic concern,* measuring sympathy and concern for those less fortunate, is correlated positively with both savoir-faire r=.43, p<.001 and social sensitivity r=.33, p<.001. The *personal distress* subscale assesses unease and tension in interpersonal settings. Personal distress is correlated negatively with savoir-faire r=-.22, p<.001 and positively with social sensitivity r=.34, p<.001 (correlates are significantly different, Z= 4.908, p<.001). *Perspective taking* measures an individual's propensity to take the psychological perspective of others (spontaneously). Perspective taking was found to be correlated with savoir-faire r=.31, p<.001,

and was not significantly correlated with social sensitivity r=-.09, *ns* (correlates are significantly different, Z= 3.497, p<.001).

To reiterate, we do not wish to leave the reader with the impression that SSI socially sensitive individuals are lacking in social intelligence. We believe the difference between social sensitivity and savoir-faire may be found in individuals' motivation in social situations and attitudes toward entering social settings. By definition, individuals with savoir-faire possess a positive, approach-related relationship with people and social situations. Correlates of SSI social sensitivity are akin to general measures of sensitivity (Aron & Aron, 1997).

In summary, our research on the construct of savoir-faire suggests that it is a good representation of *social intelligence*. There are relatively few self-report measures of social intelligence, and the combination of the two SSI subscales – Social Expressiveness and Social Control – seems to do a good job in capturing the key elements expressed in social behavior. We look forward to future research on the savoir-faire construct.

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Author Note

Data gathering for this paper was supported by the National Institute for Mental Health Grant R01-MH42427 to David C. Funder.

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Table 1. *Behavioral Correlates of Savoir-faire: Getting Acquainted Situation*

Behavioral Q-sort Item	*r*
Positive Correlates	
Shows high enthusiasm and energy level	.29**
Is talkative (As observed in this situation)	.28**
Exhibits social skills	.28**
Is expressive in face, voice or gestures	.27**
Speaks fluently and expresses ideas well	.23**
Seems to enjoy the interaction	.23**
Speaks in a loud voice	.21**
Is physically animated	.20*
Appears to be relaxed and comfortable	.20*
Seems likable (To other(s) present)	.18*
Volunteers a large amount of information	.17*
Appears to regard self as attractive	.16*
Behaves in a cheerful manner	.16*
Negative Correlates	
Is reserved and unexpressive	-.39**
Exhibits an awkward interpersonal style	-.34**
Behaves in a fearful or timid manner	-.32**
Keeps partner(s) at a distance	-.28**
Expresses insecurity	-.28**
Shows physical signs of tension or anxie	-.28**

Seems detached from the interaction	-.26**
Expresses criticism	-.19*
Gives up when faced with obstacles	-.19*
Acts irritated	-.18*
Expresses guilt (About anything)	-.18*
BQ Component Correlates	
Involvement in the interaction	.39**
Positive affectivity toward partner	.08
Personal confidence	.13

Table 2. *Behavioral Correlates of Savoir-faire: Cooperative Situation*

Behavioral Q-sort Item	*r*
Positive Correlates	
Is expressive in face, voice or gestures	.31**
Is talkative (As observed in this situation)	.30**
Dominates the interaction	.24**
Shows high enthusiasm and energy level	.24**
Exhibits social skills	.23**
Is physically animated	.23**
Acts playful	.22**
Tries to control the interaction	.18*
Speaks fluently and expresses ideas well	.17*
Initiates humor	.17*
Volunteers a large amount of information	.17*
Negative Correlates	
Exhibits an awkward interpersonal style	-.36**
Behaves in a fearful or timid manner	-.36**
Is reserved and unexpressive	-.29**
Is unusual or unconventional in appearan	-.28**
Seems detached from the interaction	-.26**
Expresses agreement frequently	-.25**
Expresses insecurity	-.22**
Shows physical signs of tension or anxie	-.20**

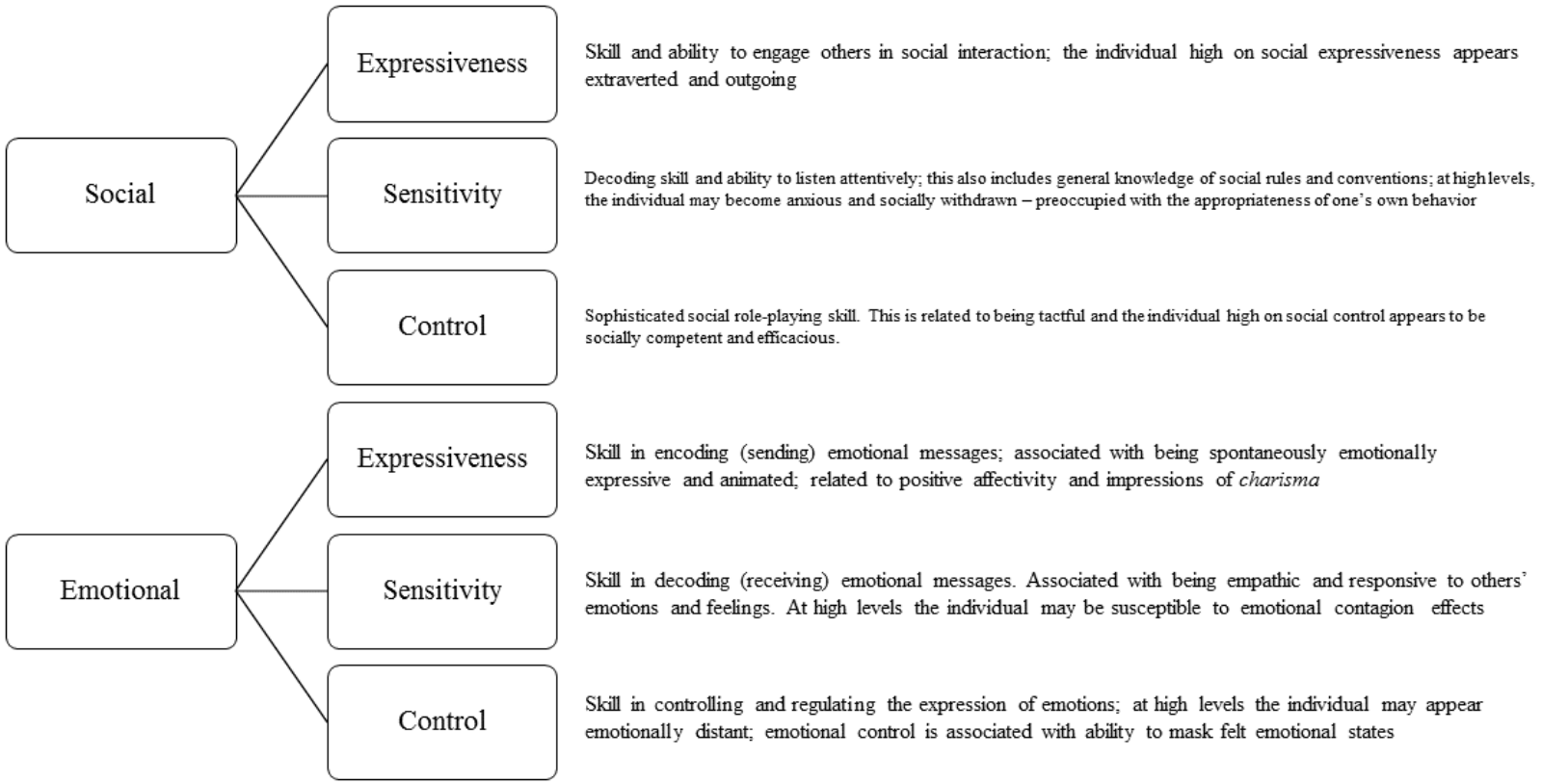
Seeks advice from partner(s)	-.19*
Seems interested in what partner(s) says	-.18*
Keeps partner(s) at a distance	-.16*
BQ Component Correlates	
Involvement in the interaction	.32**
Positive affectivity toward partner	-.10
Personal confidence	.18*

Table 3. *Behavioral Correlates of Savoir-faire: Competitive Situation*

Behavioral Q-sort Item	*r*
Positive Correlates	
Acts playful	.33**
Shows high enthusiasm and energy level	.32**
Is physically animated	.29**
Initiates humor	.23**
Volunteers a large amount of information	.23**
Is expressive in face, voice or gestures	.22**
Tries to control the interaction	.22**
Aware of being on camera or in an experi	.21**
Behaves in a cheerful manner	.21**
Speaks in a loud voice	.20*
Dominates the interaction	.19*
Says or does interesting things	.18*
Exhibits social skills	.18*
Is talkative (As observed in this situation)	.18*
Seems to enjoy the interaction	.17*
Negative Correlates	
Seeks reassurance from partner(s)	-.28**
Gives up when faced with obstacles	-.27**
Is reserved and unexpressive	-.27**
Expresses insecurity	-.25**

Seeks advice from partner(s)	-.24**
Exhibits an awkward interpersonal style	-.23**
Seems detached from the interaction	-.23**
Keeps partner(s) at a distance	-.22**
Behaves in a fearful or timid manner	-.20**
Partner(s) seeks advice from subject	-.19*
Expresses agreement frequently	-.18*
Blames others (For anything)	-.18*
Expresses criticism	-.18*
Self pity or feelings of victimization	-.17*
Acts irritated	-.16*
Talks at rather than with partner(s)	-.16*
Compares self to other(s)	-.16*
BQ Component Correlates	
Involvement in the interaction	.29**
Positive affectivity toward partner	-.02
Personal confidence	.16*

Figure 1. Model of Social Skills Measured by The *Social Skills Inventory*



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