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Emergent leaders as managers of group emotion

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Abstract

This article proposes a new role for emergent group leaders, that of the manager of group emotions. This description of leadership suggests that individual group members take leadership by providing certainty and direction during times of ambiguity. They are able to assume a leadership role by making an interpretation of the emotional response that best serves the group's needs, and then modeling that response. By modeling a particular emotional response, the leader resolves ambiguity and catalyzes the group to act. Simultaneously, they are able to increase group solidarity by creating shared emotion within the group and communal action. The idea of leadership as group emotional management is not tied to one specific individual, but rather, allows leadership to be enacted by different group members at different times. Leader emergence and leader success would be subject to several conditions, such as the emergent leader's degree of empathy, group norms of emotional expression, and ambiguous feedback regarding the group's performance. Qualitative analysis of group observation reveals several examples of group emotional management that are used to develop the concept. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

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1. Introduction

A growing body of research has recently begun to examine the role of emergent leaders and emergent leadership within groups (De Souza & Klein, 1995; Druskat & Pescosolido, 2001; Hollander & Offermann, 1990; Neubert, 1999; Nygren & Levine, 1996; Pescosolido, 2001; Smith & Foti, 1998; Taggar, Hackett, & Saha, 1999; Wheelan & Johnston, 1996). Interest in emergent (or informal) leaders can be at least partially attributed to the recent rise

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in self-managing work teams (SMWTs) (Lawler, 1998) and the consequent need for leadership to emerge from within groups rather than being imposed upon them externally (Beekun, 1989; Cohen, Ledford, & Spreitzer, 1996; Druskat & Kayes, 1999).

Research to date on emergent group leaders has focused primarily on either the conditions that allow an individual to emerge as leader (e.g. personality traits and behaviors) (Druskat & Pescosolido, 2001; Taggar et al., 1999) or on the outcome effects of emergent leader behavior upon the group (e.g. effects upon group goals and group efficacy) (De Souza & Klein, 1995; Pescosolido, 2001). Little research to date has focused on the roles that emergent leaders play within groups and the behaviors that they enact, and if those roles and behaviors are different from those of formal leaders either within groups or external to groups.

This article develops the idea of emergent leaders playing the role of “emotional manager” for the group. I propose that one form of emergent leadership is to help group members resolve and make sense of ambiguous events by modeling particular emotional reactions to those events. Consequently, the emergent leader is able to set the “emotional tone” for the group, and influence how group members will interpret and react to events that impact the group. I also suggest that although formal leaders may engage in management of group emotion, this is of particular importance to the informal or emergent group leader. This is because informal leadership is essentially a process of influence (Hollander, 1961), and because leaders that emerge from within the group do not have access to the formal organizational punishments and rewards that formal leaders use to shape behavior.

This article will attempt to describe group emotional management and how it occurs within a group. I then will draw upon qualitative descriptions of several emergent leaders in action in order to demonstrate how informal leaders manage group emotion, as well as illustrate the conditions that may facilitate this type of informal leadership. The paper will end with a further description of the role of emergent leaders as managers of emotion, and some theoretical and practical implications of the proposed theory.

2. Emergent leaders as managers of group emotion

Various theories of leadership have had components (behaviors or traits) that are linked to the display and management of emotions (see Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000; George, 1995; Westley, 1991). However, most leadership theory and most organizational theory in general, only deal tangentially with the topic of emotion. Theory and research on emotion has historically focused on: (1) relatively stable or low-level affective states such as liking, satisfaction, and commitment, or (2) emotions during specific critical organizational events such as organizational change and corporate layoffs (Asforth & Humphrey, 1995). For example, early studies of group interactions performed by Bales (1950), Bales and Hare (1965), and Bales and Slater (1957) consistently identified two emergent leaders within the group, one who was primarily task focused and a second who was primarily socioemotionally focused. Other studies based on leadership behaviors have also raised the issue of the management of group emotion, although few deal directly with managing or influencing group emotions.

For example, the Ohio State leadership studies identified the behavior factor of consideration for group members (Bass, 1990); similarly, the Michigan State studies identified the factor of employee-oriented behavior (Kahn & Katz, 1960). In both of these cases, the leader is described as engaging in behaviors which could at some level affect the emotions of group members. For instance, these leaders are described as taking a personal interest in group members, identifying with the concerns of group members, making special efforts to put group members at ease, and expressing appreciation of group member efforts (Bass, 1990; Kahn & Katz, 1960). While one could make a link between these types of behaviors and the management of group emotion, the behavioral theories of leadership do not directly address the management or influence of group emotion as being a necessary action for group leadership. Instead, the focus of the “relational” or “employee-oriented” aspects of these behavioral theories was on dyadic interpersonal relationships between a manager and his or her employee. Very little mention is made in these theories of managing a group of people or being aware of group-level emotional dynamics.

Trait-based theories of leadership also skirt the issue of the management of group emotion. The trait-based theories of leadership include traits such as emotional balance, interpersonal skills, social nearness, and maintenance of group cohesion (Bass, 1990), all of which have a socioemotional component. The emotional aspect of leadership recognized in the trait-based research often focuses upon the promotion of positive feelings and cohesion within the group, and the control of the expression of negative feelings. As such, the leadership trait literature indirectly raises the issue of the management of group emotions by looking at how leader personality traits influence the expression of emotions within groups. However, these theories are limited in their use of emotion as they focus almost solely on the expression and encouragement of positive affect, and do not allow for the effective use of negative affect such as sadness, frustration, or anger within a group setting.

Charismatic theories of leadership are also linked to the emotions of group members as they emphasize emotion, values, and the importance of leader behavior in “making events meaningful for followers” (Yukl, 1999). However, none of these theories specifically address the question of how the group leader affects the overall group emotion (Kelly & Barsade, 2001), and the effect that either leader emotion or leader influence over group emotion can have upon group processes and performance.

In past research, the bulk of leadership research has focused on formal, established leaders within groups and organizations. Recently, however, research has begun to focus on the role of emergent leaders within groups (De Souza & Klein, 1995; Druskat & Pescosolido, 2001; Neubert, 1999; Pescosolido, 2001; Taggar et al., 1999; Wolff, Pescosolido, & Druskat, 2002). Emergent leaders can be defined as group members who exercise influence over the group (Hollander, 1961, 1964, 1985). The key distinction between emergent leaders and formal, established leaders is that emergent leaders do not have formal organizational authority or power (De Souza & Klein, 1995; Druskat & Pescosolido, 2001; Pescosolido, 2001); rather, they lead by influencing group processes, beliefs, and norms.

I propose that a key role for these emergent group leaders is that of the manager of the group’s emotion. Although the role of emotion in organizational studies has long been neglected (Asforth & Humphrey, 1995; Fineman, 1993), its role in organizational phenomena

has recently begun to be the subject of analysis and inquiry (see, for example, [Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000](#); [Barsade & Gibson, 1998](#); [Druskat & Wolff, 1999](#); [Fineman, 1993](#); [George, 2000](#); [Goleman, 1995](#)). While various theories of leadership have had components related to the display and control of emotion, previous research and theory has failed to fully articulate the role that emotion might play in group leadership.

Past leadership theory has focused more on the leader's individual attributes and behavior than on the role the leader fills in the group. [Jones \(2001\)](#) highlights the difficulty of focusing on the traits and behaviors of individuals when he states that leadership "occurs only when followers believe they have found in some individual a solution to the problems that confront them." This suggests that a given group may require very different and distinct traits and behaviors from its leadership over time. It also suggests that two different groups in very similar situations might require very different behaviors from their leadership. The idea of the leader acting as the manager of group emotion is offered in the spirit of developing leadership theory that helps groups find "a solution to the problems that confront them."

I propose that one role of a group leader, especially an emergent group leader, is to interpret ambiguous situations and then to model an appropriate emotional response. This modeled emotional response resolves immediate problems of ambiguity and emotional expression that the group needs to confront for it to move forward.

When an ambiguous event occurs within a group context, group members often look to a group leader to help make sense out of that event. They may turn to this group leader for a variety of reasons: the leader may serve as a parental figure for the group, the leader may have the greatest amount of knowledge and experience, the leader may have the greatest understanding of the larger organization and its likely behavior, or the leader may be the individual who is the most reassuring and has the most positive relationships with other group members. In any case, the group leader models an emotional response to the situation, showing the other group members what an "appropriate" or "acceptable" response would be. This response allows other group members to interpret and express their own emotional reactions in an otherwise ambiguous situation. The emergent leader's response is considered "appropriate" by other group members and is used as a model for their own response in part because of the "idiosyncrasy credits" held by the emergent leader ([Hollander, 1964](#)). Idiosyncrasy credits are allotted to those who contribute to the group's primary task and show loyalty to group norms. [Hollander \(1964\)](#) found that the idiosyncrasy credits held by emergent leaders enabled them to deviate from group norms, giving them the opportunity to bring about innovation and shape group behavior.

I propose that group leaders manage group emotional responses by first empathizing and identifying with the collective emotional state of group members, and understanding what factors in the situation are causing this emotional state. They then craft a response to the situation that is causing the emotional reaction, and communicate their response to the group both verbally and by taking action. In this manner, the leader is able to simultaneously address the situation and set the emotional tone and context for other group members to generate their own emotional responses, and thus the leader is able to influence group members' future behavior.

Throughout this article, I use phrases such as “group emotion” and “group emotional state.” Although at first glance these phrases may be reminiscent of McDougall’s (1920) now outdated concept of “group mind,” recent research and theory (Bartel & Saavedra, 2000; Kelly & Barsade, 2001) has begun to examine the collective nature of emotions within groups. The idea of collective or group emotion can be discussed due to the ability of emotions to be “contagious” within groups (Barsade, 2001; Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994). In other words, one group member’s displayed emotion is often able to influence other members within the group until all group members are experiencing a similar emotional state. It is within this context of social influence that I raise the issue of the emergent leader as the manager of the “group emotional state.”

3. Methodology

The incidents described here were observed during a field study on the emotional dynamics of groups (Pescosolido, 2000). The fieldwork encompassed group observation of 20 different groups, which was followed by whole-group critical incident interviews with each of those groups. A theoretical sampling procedure was used as described by Strauss and Corbin (1995) to identify two types of groups that the author had access to, and also to maximize the opportunities to provide dense material for the development of theory. The groups were either semiprofessional jazz music groups (meaning that while the groups were paid for their performances, members held “9 to 5” jobs to meet the bulk of their financial needs), or collegiate rowing crews. It was expected that the use of these groups would lead to observation of intense emotional situations within a group context, as well as the factors leading to the expression of intense emotion within a group and how such expressions of emotion were resolved.

All of the groups were observed for at least one complete practice or performance session, lasting from 2 to 4 h. All of the jazz groups were observed during performances, while the rowing crews were observed primarily during practice sessions, although some rowing crews were observed at both practice and performance sessions. During the group observation periods, extensive notes were taken regarding which group members took initiative, which ones were treated with respect, how group members talked about incidents that might affect their task performance, how they expressed emotion within the group context, and the observable emotional tone of the group.

Each group also participated in a group interview afterwards where they described a recent “critical incident” in their group’s life together (Druskat & Pescosolido, 2001; Flanagan, 1954; Motowidlo et al., 1992; Ronan & Latham, 1974). Specifically, the group members were asked to describe, in great detail, a recent experience where they “all felt that the group clicked.” Although the only prompt regarding the date of the event was that it needed to have occurred within the past 6 months, 14 of the groups (70%) chose to discuss a particular aspect of the practice or performance session that the interviewer had just witnessed.

Group interviews lasted from 45 to 90 min. During the critical incident interview, the interviewer limited his questions to those necessary to draw out more detail about the

incident. Subsequently, the interviewer was limited to asking the following questions: “what led up to the event,” “who did and said what to whom,” “what happened next,” and “what were you thinking or feeling at that moment,” and “what was the outcome.” Although the CIIT method provides a retrospective account of behavior and thoughts, validity and reliability of event descriptions are strong (Motowidlo et al., 1992; Ronan & Latham, 1974) because the interviewer probes for highly detailed responses. Several groups (dependent upon the group’s availability and willingness to continue) were observed for multiple practice/performance sessions, and subsequently, were involved in multiple group interviews.

The transcripts of these interviews and the field notes regarding group member behavior were analyzed to identify examples and illustrations of a group leader acting as the manager of the group’s collective experience of emotion. These examples are used here to add further description and explanation to this role of the group leader, which has been underexplored by previous research.

4. Determinants of managing group emotion

There are several factors thought to influence an emergent leader’s ability to influence group emotions. These factors fall into three main categories: factors regarding the group’s context, factors regarding the group’s norms, and factors regarding the leader’s individual abilities and characteristics. What follows is a description of how each of these factors influences an emergent group leader’s ability to manage group emotion, along with examples that illustrate the process of managing group emotion.

4.1. *Group context: ambiguity*

When an ambiguous event occurs within a group context, group members often look to the group leader to help make sense out of that event (Hollander, 1961). They may turn to the group leader for a variety of reasons: the leader may serve as a parental figure for the group (Freud, 1922/1959), the leader may have the greatest amount of knowledge and experience (Yammarino, 1996), the leader may have the greatest understanding of the larger organization and its likely behavior, or the leader may be the individual who is the most reassuring and has the most positive relationships with other group members. In any case, the group leader models an emotional response to the situation, showing the other group members what an “appropriate” or “acceptable” reaction would be. This allows other group members to make sense of and express their own emotional impulses in an otherwise ambiguous situation.

Proposition 1: *Emergent leaders will be more likely to engage in management of group emotion when the group receives ambiguous performance feedback from relevant stakeholders.*

An example of the group leader helping other group members make sense out of an emotionally ambiguous situation occurred with one of the jazz groups that was observed. It

was relatively early in the evening's performance and the group was playing very well to a small audience. While the audience had been demonstrative of their appreciation of the group's performance at the very beginning of the gig, part way through they (the audience) had begun to grow very quiet. The musicians appeared to react to this, as they began to look at each other more frequently, casting glances that appeared to express concern or a question. They also became less vocal with each other for this short time period. After several minutes of this situation, Bobby, the trumpet player, stepped forward for a short solo. However, during this solo he exuded a strong sense of confidence, from the expression on his face to the style of his playing. This display of confidence had a rapid effect on the other members of the group, who began to once again look out towards the audience, talk with each other as they were playing, and seemed to regain the confidence with which they had started the performance.

Talking with the group later on about their performance, the group members indicated that they had been very aware of that time period in the show as being a critical part of their overall success for the night. When asked what had happened, group members revealed that they had been unsure how to interpret the audience's growing silence. As one member expressed, "We weren't sure if they liked it, or if they didn't like it, you know? Usually, when folks like the music, they tell us. They start clapping or moving or calling out—but these folks, they just went quiet. We didn't know what to think!" Later on, a different group member expressed the opinion that Bobby "really knows how to read an audience," and that consequently, his behavior in the conduct of his solo piece gave comfort to the other group members. "We could see that he wasn't upset about the situation. And you know he can tell when an audience is with you and when they aren't. So when Bobby stepped out like that, well I could just tell from the way he did it that he thought everything was just fine."

In this case, the group was faced with an ambiguous response from its audience. The stillness on the part of the audience could have been interpreted as being a result of either great interest in and appreciation of the group's performance, or a lack of those same things. The group trusted Bobby to interpret the audience reaction and model an appropriate response to that reaction. While Bobby was not the official leader of this group, his acknowledged ability to "read the audience" and understand their reactions to the group's performance placed him in a leadership position once the group's performance began. Consequently, other group members often deferred to him during performances regarding questions of tempo, music selection, and the timing of breaks. Clearly, he had a large amount of influence over the group and its performance dynamics, and so could be considered a group leader (De Souza & Klein, 1995; Hollander, 1961).

Throughout the overall sample, incidents of the emergent leader interpreting an ambiguous situation were mentioned in 4 of the 10 jazz group interviews, and in 8 of the 10 rowing crew interviews (60% of the total sample). Interestingly, the times when emergent leaders of rowing crews interpreted ambiguous feedback occurred almost entirely within the context of practice sessions, suggesting that this rarely occurs when concrete feedback (i.e. winning or losing a race) is available. The lone time when an emergent leader of a rowing crew was able to provide a distinct and different interpretation of concrete performance feedback is illustrated below.

4.2. *Group characteristics: norms of emotional expression*

Emergent leaders take advantage of particular group norms in order to establish and use their ability to manage group emotion. The most important of these are group norms regarding communication and the expression of emotion within the group setting. Emotional expression has been suggested as a key factor in overall group development (Bennis & Shepard, 1956), as impacting persuasion within a group (Mackie, Asuncion, & Rosselli, 1992), and as a key indicator of experienced psychological safety within a group (Edmondson, 1999). When a group has norms that allow for or encourage the expression and communication of emotion, then emotional contagion between group members is more likely to occur (Asforth & Humphrey, 1995; Barsade, 2001; Hatfield et al., 1994; Kelly & Barsade, 2001; Le Bon, 1896/1982). If individual emotional reactions are not expressed or shared within the group, then emergent leaders will not be able to influence fellow group members via the display of emotion.

However, many organizations operate under the belief that emotions and emotional expression are the “antithesis of rationality” (Asforth & Humphrey, 1995), and as such, have attempted to control and repress the expression and even the experience of emotions within the organization (Stearns & Stearns, 1986). This control has been taking place since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, and indeed is a key aspect of the bureaucratic organization where a major focus is to make the organization as objective and rational as possible (Weber, 1946).

Most organizations employ some sort of formal or informal controls over the expression of emotion in the workplace. However, these “feeling rules” vary by occupation (i.e. between the wait staff and the cooking staff), often as a result of their contact with customers or other stakeholder groups either external or internal. Additionally, feeling rules can vary between organizations, as some organizations have public reputations based at least in part on the emotional displays of frontline employees (for example, the joking behaviors that typify employees of Southwest Airlines as compared with other air carriers). As such, the rules that govern the expression of emotion are generally learned through employee socialization in the context of a specific job and a specific organization (Asforth & Humphrey, 1993; Humphrey & Ashforth, 1994).

Traditionally, organizations have tried to control member behavior to promote rationality over the expression of emotion. However, Asforth and Humphrey (1995) suggest that certain organizational tasks (such as the management of group dynamics, creative processes, and occupations requiring high amounts of emotional labor) may benefit from an environment that allows for greater expression of and discussion of emotions. The recent popular success of management books espousing theories of “emotional intelligence” (e.g. Goleman, 1995) suggests that managers may be looking for a way to change the “feeling rules” for their particular department, and consequently, facilitate their ability to communicate their emotional responses to employee performance and external events.

Proposition 2: *Emergent leaders will be more likely to engage in management of group emotion when the group has developed norms that allow and encourage the expression of emotion within the group context.*

Another group leader helped her rowing crew through a potential crisis situation by redefining the crew's goals and thus casting its performance into a new light. Jackie had been elected as the captain of her boat, a position that carried few responsibilities and no authority, but nevertheless was a mark of respect and leadership from her teammates. This collegiate women's rowing crew was fairly inexperienced, although the crew had been practicing for quite a while and engaging in informal races with other local crews, no member of the crew had ever been to an official race. At their first official race, all nine crew members were full of confidence and enthusiasm, optimistically talking about bringing home medals and tossing their coxswain into the river after the race (a customary victory celebration for rowers). It was clear to all who had contact with them that morning that they expected to do well, and that they were full of joyous anticipation.

The crew raced well considering its level of experience and practice; however, most of the other teams were more experienced, and Jackie's team placed sixth out of eight boats. As the boat crossed the finish line, there was a disappointed silence within the boat, as the team had been expecting to finish much better than it had. A few members exchanged dispirited glances. The mood of the rowers was apparent even from the shoreline. Suddenly, Jackie began to cry out loudly and excitedly, exclaiming that the crew had beaten its local rivals, the team that it often engaged (and generally lost to) in scrimmage races. The women's spirits took an immediate upturn as they all began cheering because they had beaten their local rivals. Several of the members of this crew later described this experience as the best thing that occurred to them during their spring season, suggesting that it gave them confidence, resilience, and the realization that bringing home medals was not the only reason that they participated in the sport.

In this case, Jackie's ability to reshape the group's emotion helped the group as a whole in several ways. Rather than feeling completely defeated and losing confidence in themselves and their ability, the members were able to take stock in their efforts, continue as a group, and find ways to improve their performance over the remainder of their racing season.

In an interview after this race, Jackie asserted that her actions were definitely shaped by the group's norms. She retrospectively realized the impact that her actions had upon the group, and talked about the positive effects that had come from the change of heart that the group experienced at the finish line. However, she also said that the situation occurred because the group regularly expressed emotional reactions to events its members experienced. "The boat that I was on in high school, we were very uptight, very focused. We never would have let on that we were upset by coming in sixth, we would have just all decided individually that we had to work harder, or that we were worthless, or whatever. This group though, we always are talking about everything, about how we feel about everything that happens to us as a group. So when I saw (the local rivals) behind us, and I got excited that we had beat them, I knew that the others would want to know about that. I mean that was a really good thing, and I knew that they would be excited about it too! I never would have been able to cheer like that for sixth place in my old boat . . . they would have been all 'yeah, but we still blew it.' But with this boat, we all look for ways to keep each other up, so I knew they would want to know that this was good and this was exciting."

In this case, the group's history and well established norm of allowing and even encouraging emotional expression and communication allowed this individual to feel comfortable expressing her own emotional reactions, and thus bringing to light new information and a new perspective on the group's performance. By showing her own emotional reaction to this new information, she encouraged the other group members to change their own perspectives to a more positive view of their performance. Consequently, the group as a whole felt encouraged by its performance, and left the competition feeling resolved to work harder over the next several weeks.

This relationship between openness of communication, especially emotional communication, and the ability of an emergent leader to manage group emotions was documented in the other groups as well. A scale designed to measure the prevalence of group norms of emotional expression was delivered to the groups before the observation and interview session took place. This six-item scale was adapted from the "Open Group Process" and "Internal Fragmentation" subscales of the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire on Work Group Functioning (Seashore, Lawler, Mirvis, & Cammann, 1982).

This scale was designed to measure two aspects of emotional expression within the group. First, it was designed to measure the individual's perception of his/her own ability to express emotions ("I say what is on my mind when I am with my teammates"). Secondly, this scale was designed to assess the individual's perception of other group members' willingness to express their emotions within the group context ("my teammates are afraid to express their true feelings" [reverse coded]). The scale was aggregated to the group level, which may be justified empirically by the significant ICC *F*-statistic ($M=3.9$, $S.D.=1.09$, $\alpha=.72$, ICC *F*-statistic = 3.60, $P<.01$) (Shrout & Fleiss, 1979).

The ICC test has been discussed as difficult to pass because significance requires both high within-team agreement and low between-team agreement (see James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1984). A Pearson's *R* correlation was computed between the observation of emergent leaders managing group emotion and the group aggregate score for each of the 20 groups on the scale of norms regarding open emotional expression. This correlation was significant ($r=.53$, $P<.05$), further suggesting that emergent leaders take advantage of norms of emotional expression within the group in order to manage the group's emotional state.

4.3. Leader characteristics: charisma and empathy

Charismatic and transformational theories of leadership have emphasized the importance of the leader's emotions, values, and behavior in "making events meaningful for followers" (Yukl, 1999). Indeed, some criticisms of charismatic leadership theories have suggested that these theories overemphasize the need for the leader to emotionally manipulate people in order to generate a ground swell of support for the leader (Hogan, Raskin, & Fazzini, 1990; Sandowsky, 1995). While these theories of leadership do directly address the issues of leader and follower emotions, they typically do so from the perspective of a dyadic leader-follower relationship rather than looking at the effect of the leader upon the group as a whole (Yukl, 1999).

Weber first introduced the concept of charismatic leadership in 1946. His discussion of charisma referred to it as being both a trait of the individual leader as well as an interactive process between actors (Mitzman, 1969). Wasielewski (1985) and Yukl (1999) further reinforce this interactive aspect of the relationship between charismatic leaders and their followers by suggesting that charismatic leadership is intimately tied to the leader's ability to model and redefine emotion and emotional responses. Wasielewski (1985) says that the ability of charismatic leaders to identify, empathize with, and model emotions and emotional behavior is critical to their success, and that they gain legitimacy by modeling emotions for their followers.

Charismatic leaders gain legitimacy and power not only by identifying the emotions that are present in the situation, but also by modeling them in order to accentuate the meaning and intent of their communication, vision, and goals. However, there is little empirical evidence on how leaders use emotions to influence followers, what forms this influence process may take, and the characteristics of leaders, followers, or the situation that lead to effectiveness in influencing group emotions.

Empathy would certainly be one important factor in an emergent leader's ability to manage the emotional state of a group. This is because empathy allows the leader to read, interpret, and understand the emotional reactions of individual group members (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). Empathy has been proposed as an important prerequisite to effective leadership, particularly emergent leadership (Bell & Hall, 1954; Wolff et al., 2002). Empathy is important to an emergent leader's ability to manage group emotion, not only because it allows a leader to read and to understand group member emotional reactions, but also because it helps the leader craft an appropriate emotional response (Batson & Coke, 1981; Hoffman, 1984).

Proposition 3: *Emergent leaders who exhibit both charisma and empathy will be more likely to engage in the management of group emotion.*

An example of an emergent leader using personal charisma and empathy to manage the group's emotion was found in another of the rowing crews. This particular group was a highly competitive, collegiate men's team. The crew was the school's "lightweight" team, meaning that its members all weighed less than 155 pounds. While this group was very successful against other lightweight teams, during their daily practice sessions, it usually fell behind their "open-weight" teammates—who were taller, stronger and heavier young men. Sean, the informal leader of the lightweight rowers, led the group in thinking that its open-weight teammates should be regarded as competition. His conviction was such that for the lightweights every practice session came to hold the emotional intensity and importance of race day, even though the coach began to explicitly discourage competition between the two squads. It was not unusual to see this young man turn around in the middle of a practice, and exhort his teammates to row faster, or encourage them by emphasizing how close they were to the open-weight crew. By the end of the spring racing season, the lightweight team had improved to the point where it would occasionally beat the open-weight team in practice sessions. After these victories, the celebrations of the lightweight team, led by Sean, could easily be confused with the celebrations of their victories on the actual racecourse.

Other members of the lightweight team talked about Sean as one who helped to frame their emotional responses as a group. Several group members mentioned his almost relentless optimism as being a key to the group's success. "We were down by a few seats and not gaining anymore, and I was ready to just quit because I was so tired and I didn't think we would be able to do it. Then I would hear Sean yell back 'That's it! We've almost got them!'" Then I would realize that, yeah, we were a few seats down, but that meant that we were only a few seats away from being in front. He is always really good at keeping us up like that."

One of the reasons Sean was acknowledged as a leader of this group was because of the enthusiasm he showed and his personal commitment to the team and its goal. He personally held very high standards for the group's performance, as evidenced by the fact that he believed it should be able to beat a boat that was composed of individuals who were significantly larger and stronger than the lightweights. Other team members referred to his personal commitment to the team's success and his frequent assertions that it could perform at high levels as being key factors underpinning their own commitment to and confidence in the group. Additionally, group members revealed that they looked to Sean for leadership because of his empathy, both in and out of their performance context. "No matter what we are going through, no matter how badly you feel during practice, you look at his face and you can tell that he is feeling it just as much as you are. He has been there before, and knows exactly what we are all feeling."

As the emergent leader for this team, one of Sean's primary roles was to help it reframe its performance situations so that the group members would be encouraged rather than disheartened. He appeared to do this by focusing on key bits of information, while ignoring others. For example, rather than focusing on the fact that the team was a few feet behind another boat, he would focus on the fact that it was in fact closer than they had been a few moments before. Sean was conscious of this role that he played on the team, saying, "You never, ever, say that you have lost ground. You tell them where you are in relation to the other boat, and if they can do the math at that point, well then that's their call. If you're behind, then you're gaining. If you're close, then you're right with them. If we're dead even, I say that we are up by just one seat, or up by just the bow ball. I always try to make them think that we are moving on the competition."

In the case of the lightweight team, Sean's ability to influence the emotions experienced in the group helped to contribute to the group's success over the course of its racing season. His ability to get the other group members to think of the open-weight crew as competition, rather than as just another boat on the river at the same time as they were, undoubtedly made the crew work harder during its practice sessions than it otherwise would have. Additionally, his expressions of optimism and conviction that the crew could overtake its opponents kept the crew working hard during several situations when it would have been "easier" for the team to give up.

During group interviews, five of the jazz groups and eight of the rowing crews made mention of an emergent leader exercising empathy with his/her fellow group members. Additionally, 6 of the 10 jazz groups and all 10 of the rowing crews mentioned an emergent leader enacting charisma, through exhortation and demonstrating a personal commitment to

the goal. Of the six jazz groups that made mention of an emergent leader's charisma, three of them also specifically mentioned that individual's empathy. This suggests that emergent leaders can capitalize not only on their ability to express emotions and emotional messages (seen here as charisma), but also on their ability to perceive and understand the experience of other group members. Management of a group's emotional state, then, depends upon an emergent leader's ability to convince others of the validity of a particular emotional response and also on that leader's demonstration that he or she has accurately understood their goals, their hopes, and their fears.

5. Conclusion

This article reports on a group leadership role that has been previously discounted, that role being the manager of the group's emotional state. I have described how emergent leaders within groups use their behavior to communicate messages to group members regarding group performance and contextual events. Additionally, they do so in a way that sends a clear message to the group members regarding an appropriate emotional reaction to those events. As a result, group members take cues from the leader's behavior and craft emotional interpretations of the situation, which then guide their own individual behavior. This then suggests that one way in which emergent leaders influence group member behavior and group performance is through their management of the group's emotional state.

Discussion and exploration of this role is particularly suited to emergent leaders within groups and teams, as emergent leaders rely upon processes of influence in order to have an effect upon the group of which they are a part. Because they are emergent rather than formal, they must rely upon this type of influence process rather than upon formal processes of rewards and punishments. Additionally, emergent leaders are thought to be especially empathetic and responsive to follower needs (Wolff et al., 2002; Yammarino, 1996).

By putting forth initial observations and propositions regarding the management of group emotions, I hope to lay the groundwork for more formal studies of the emotional management process. These would take the form of more focused, hypothesis testing studies. These studies would examine, among other things, (1) the clarity/ambiguity of performance; (2) the measurement of communication and group norms about communication, especially regarding emotional communication; and (3) the personality characteristics of emergent leaders.

Care should be taken in setting up future studies to ensure that research assumptions do not preclude finding links between a leader's emotional display and variables such as leader personality, organizational characteristics, group performance, etc. As noted by Humphrey (2000), the organizational environment, job characteristics, and individual differences all influence emotional displays in the workplace. Organizational environments have different rules, both formal and informal, regarding the expression of emotion. Humphrey suggests that many emotional displays can be classified as secondary work behaviors, behaviors that are

influenced by the work but are not crucial to accomplishing the task, and as such, are heavily influenced by characteristics of the task itself.

For example, Humphrey argues that typing would be a primary work behavior, but that the emotional reactions that employees display while typing, such as sighing with boredom or expressing irritation over a typing mistake, would be classified as secondary work behaviors. The degree to which occupations elicit strong secondary work behaviors and the type of emotion elicited are likely to vary by the type of occupation. Occupations that require direct contact with a client, continuous interaction with team members, or that evoke intense emotions (such as working in a hospital emergency room) are all likely to have high levels of emotional displays. Consequently, it may prove beneficial for future investigators to compare leadership and emotional expression across a wide range of organizational environments, types of tasks, and types of leaders.

Additionally, care should be taken that the types of emotional expression are not proscribed too closely to find meaningful links with leadership behavior and whole-group dynamics. Staw and Barsade (1993) allude to a history of managerial assumption and “folklore” that positive affect leads to high performance, despite the general lack of empirical evidence supporting such a claim. Consequently, it is important that researchers not be lured into the trap of thinking, as many managers may think, that research should focus on the effects of positive affect and ignore expressions of negative affect. Depending upon the overall context (group performance, organizational expectations, individual and job characteristics, etc.) the expression of negative emotion (anger, frustration, sadness, etc.) may prove just as fruitful to group performance and certainly will provide research material that is just as rich as the expressions of positive emotion.

Finally, care should be taken to undertake research that explores the role of leadership within an “interacting group” (Yukl, 1999), and not just as part of a dyadic relationship involving one individual leader and one individual follower. One way of accomplishing this may be by framing studies in terms of leadership behaviors, rather than treating an individual as the sole group leader. Consequently, studies should focus on behaviors that are enacted within the group rather than on individual group members and their personal styles and characteristics. Another way to approach analysis of an interacting group would be by using the group as the level of analysis, for example, through the use of textual analysis of group discussions, rather than using more individual-level data collection procedures such as individual questionnaires and scales.

The concept of the emergent leader as the manager of group emotions takes a step towards understanding how leaders influence interacting groups. Most leadership theory, particularly charismatic/transformational leadership theories, focus on leadership as a dyadic process rather than as a process involving a whole, interacting group (Yukl, 1999). That is, most leadership theories focus on the relationship between the leader and an individual follower, however, this focus on the dyad neglects the fact that both leader and follower are individual members of a larger group. Yukl (1999) suggests that it is important to understand how leaders influence group processes “because they are necessary to explain how a leader can influence the performance of an *interacting* group” (p. 295, emphasis added). By gaining a greater understanding of the characteristics and situations that influence the management of

group emotion, we will gain a greater understanding of the influence processes that are used by emergent leaders as they interact with whole groups, and not just as they interact with individual group members.

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