

## **ABSTRACT**

FRYE, DAVID A. Emotional Leadership: How Students Make Meaning of Emotion in their Undergraduate Leadership Experience. (Under the direction of Dr. Audrey Jaeger.)

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways that students make meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences in order to understand their preparedness in and perspectives on the skills claimed to be needed in the knowledge economy. The researcher developed a Conceptual Model of Emotional Leadership which established a set of emotion-rich leadership situations that became the basis for interview questions student leader experiences. The experiences of twelve student leader participants from North Carolina State University demonstrated that students take four approaches to making meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences: (a) perceiving leadership as a stressor; (b) constructing an image of themselves as an effective leader; (c) finding fault with others' actions; and (d) building relationships. In addition, the student participants were found to use some Emotional Intelligence abilities to support and facilitate their leadership behaviors.

The findings indicate that both students and practitioners could benefit from a better understanding of Emotional Intelligence. In addition, the Conceptual Model of Emotional Leadership could be the beginning of an evolving model of emotional leadership.

Emotional Leadership: How Students Make Meaning of Emotion in their  
Undergraduate Leadership Experience

by  
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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Carrie. We keep it moving.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Dave Frye is a higher education administration professional working as the Associate Director of The William & Ida Friday Institute for Educational Innovation on North Carolina State University's Centennial Campus. In his role, he works with researchers, graduate students, and staff members to develop and refine the Institute's operations process and procedures to meet the changing needs of the Institute. He received his associate degree in Applied Science, with honors, from Onondaga Community College in 1992. He then received his bachelor degree in Music Education, summa cum laude, from Youngstown University in 1997. In 2003, he received his Master's degree in Higher Education from North Carolina State University. His research interests include leadership development, technology in educational settings, and higher education.

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This dissertation has been a part of my life for many years now, and I can not help but agree with others who have travelled this road—it has been a journey. I can look around my house and see that my nightstand, end tables, desk, computer, closets, bookshelves, shed, and attic all hold “souvenirs” from my journey to complete the dissertation. And like all good adventurers, I found some wonderful people along the way. To my ever patient and supportive committee members and guides, Dr. Audrey Jaeger, Dr. Carol Kasworm, Dr. Hiller Spires, and Dr. Deb Luckadoo, I thank you. The pep talks, the emails, the phone conversations, and the meetings were invaluable, and each helped me take the next step toward my goal. You have challenged me to elevate my thinking and to consider the meaning of each word and phrase. You have helped me to understand the complexities nuances of qualitative research, and you pulled me back from wrong turns in my study.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Background

The transition to a more global, knowledge-based economy is changing the ways that people work (Uhalde, Strohl, & Simkins, 2006). As rapid and accelerating improvements in telecommunications and transportation open markets beyond national borders, opportunities and problems are created for businesses and workers alike (Freeman, 2006). The resulting changes mark an economic transition for America from an industrial society to a knowledge-based society, where the emphasis has shifted from creating and transporting physical goods to creating, developing and distributing knowledge. The environment is more fast-paced, constantly adapting in response to new opportunities and threats (Switzer, 2008). Business structures are changing and corporations are eliminating positions to simplify their organizations and reduce layers of bureaucracy in an effort to be more adaptable to the new global, knowledge-based economy.

The significance of the knowledge-based economy for workers lies in the difficulty to prepare for the changes in the workplace environment. Unlike the last economic transition to the industrial age when skills could be taught on the job, workers cannot easily enter into a knowledge economy without advanced knowledge and skill development (National Center on Education and the Economy [NCEE], 2007). Preparation for knowledge jobs goes beyond training workers to become experts at specific, simple or repetitive tasks. Instead, it requires formal education in content- and industry-specific knowledge, and the development of the cognitive, analytical and intellectual skills needed to obtain, understand and utilize

new knowledge in the new workplace environment (NCEE, 2007; Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills [P21CS], 2008; Uhalde et al., 2006).

As the economy changes, business structures, organizations and the way people work also change. Increased value is placed on the mastery of “soft skills” (Porter, Ketels & Delgado, 2007), such as the ability to understand, interact, work productively, and relate well to others (NCEE, 2007; Switzer, 2008; Uhalde et al., 2006). For example, the workplace is more diverse. Culture, gender, nationality, ethnicity, age, language differences, and even location and time zones add to the complexity of the knowledge-based job environment (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). Workers in these environments need the ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds, with diverse experiences, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Switzer, 2008). They need to be able to work with others to overcome personal differences, empathize with colleagues, be inclusive of others (Shankman & Allen, 2008), and leverage different perspectives (P21CS, 2002).

Workers also find themselves working in teams more often. While working in teams is not a new concept, in this new environment the focus is no longer on individual performance as part of the team. Instead, expectations and accountability are placed on the performance of the team as a whole (Switzer, 2008). As such, the abilities to work with others in teams and collaborate (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; P21CS, 2008) are critical for knowledge workers. Teamwork and collaboration skills include interpersonal communication skills and the ability to understand and direct others. Leadership skills are also critical (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006), including the ability to influence and guide others toward a common goal, leverage strengths of others (P21CS, 2002), motivate others,

empathize, listen to others, inspire trust, be transparent, and inspire others (Shankman & Allen, 2008).

Knowledge workers also need the ability to manage themselves. As organizational structures are flattened and middle management is reduced, workers have greater autonomy, complexity, and ambiguity, but they also have higher performance expectations (Freeman, 2006). To work within the new workplace structures, they must be able to adapt to stress, manage their own learning and skills development, and learn from their mistakes (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). Knowledge workers also need to be flexible and adaptable to the new environment (NCEE, 2007; P21CS, 2008; Uhalde et al., 2006), while having initiative, optimism, and dependability (Shankman & Allen, 2008). In short, knowledge workers must be able to be productive and effective in support of a team; find initiative and inspiration working alone with limited direction, focus, or support; understand and collaborate with diverse people, views, and perspectives; and lead, motivate, and inspire others.

The growing complexity of today's economy has extended the requirement for post-secondary education to new career fields and entry-level positions. This, in turn, has created new expectations for higher education as a producer of educated, talented, knowledge workers. Four significant shifts in higher education can be seen that reflect changes seen in the knowledge workplace: developing new partnerships and increased teamwork; learning to work within a globally diverse environment; developing initiative and flexibility needed to address ambiguity in future change; and providing knowledge-based leadership to their community. Such changes result in new institutional culture, environment, curriculum, and course content that change the college experience for students.

Changes seen in the knowledge workplace are also apparent in changes to higher education's longstanding efforts to help students be effective in college and prepare for life and work after graduation. Concepts of teamwork, working with diversity, self-management, and leadership have been discussed as a focus of student affairs programs for decades, resulting in numerous iterations and descriptions of these concepts. *The Student Learning Imperative* (American College Personnel Association, 1994) describes college-educated people as having a clear sense of identity, self-esteem, confidence, and aesthetic sensibilities, as well as the ability to understand and appreciate differences, make decisions, resolve conflict, and apply knowledge to problems encountered in all aspects of life. Chickering (2001) asserts that in order to effectively contribute to society, students need to be open and empathetic to others' ideas and points of view, aware of personal biases, able to address unproductive behaviors, and provide leadership while working in diverse groups. To reach their greatest potential while in the college setting, research shows that students must have a positive self-concept and realistic appraisal of themselves, an understanding of and ability to deal with racism, self-management skills, leadership experience, and demonstrated community service (Sedlacek, 2004). Colleges and universities, in turn, should seek to prepare and equip students with these skills and experiences, as they not only support college success, but also future development as citizens who make positive contributions to their communities (Chickering, 2006; Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

Indeed, the skills needed by college students and those needed by workers in the knowledge economy have significant similarities and overlap. Based on a review of the literature above, these similarities were synthesized in four broad categories: (a) self-

management, self-awareness, and an understanding of identity; (b) flexibility and initiative to manage ambiguity and uncertainty; (c) leadership to motivate others; and (d) understanding of global and diverse ideas and points of view. These broad concepts of self-awareness and self-management, flexibility and initiative, leadership and understanding different points of view, provided background and context for the proposed study of how students make meaning of emotion in leadership.

A common thread found in the skills needed by college students in the knowledge economy is that of emotion. Self-management, self-awareness, and an understanding of identity involve the use, understanding, and management of emotion in oneself (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Flexibility and initiative to manage ambiguity and uncertainty in resolving conflicts, problems and uncertainty includes managing emotions in self and others (Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2001). Leadership and motivating others involves the use, understanding, and management of emotion in oneself and others (Caruso et al., 2001). Understanding of global and diverse ideas and points of view incorporates managing emotions in self and others (Goleman, 2001). Given that emotion plays a role in each of the skills described above, the current study used emotion as the focus for exploring student leadership experiences. Student leaders are active, involved, and well connected to the university community. As such, they have increased opportunities to practice self-awareness, self-management, flexibility, adaptability, and tolerance of different ideas or viewpoints, the same skills stated as needed in the knowledge economy.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways that students made meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences in order to understand their preparedness in and perspectives on the skills claimed to be needed in the knowledge economy. The exploration of emotions and emotional skills and abilities was not easy to discuss, and therefore required a structure to support exploratory discussion without leading or directing the topics that students discussed. A Conceptual Framework of Emotional Leadership was developed by this researcher for this purpose, through a synthesis of literature on emotional intelligence, emotion, and leadership. The emotional leadership framework brought together leadership experiences and activities in which emotion were previously observed to play a role, thereby providing the framework for exploration of emotion in leadership experiences.

## **Research Questions**

- How do students make meaning of emotion in their student leadership experiences?
  - How do students discuss their leadership behaviors in terms of emotion?
  - How do students understand, use and manage emotions in their leadership experiences?

## **Conceptual Framework**

The study explored the ways that students make meaning of emotion in their experiences as college student organization leaders. The study was based on emotional leadership, the view of leadership experiences, behaviors, and skills through the theoretical lens of emotional intelligence (EI). Emotional intelligence is a model of four abilities that describe the understanding and management of one's own and others' emotions (Mayer, &

Salovey, 1997). These include the ability to perceive emotions, ability to access and generate emotions to assist thought, ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, ability to regulate emotions reflectively to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Caruso et al., 2001). Emotional leadership brings together previous research on the role of emotion in leadership and research on EI abilities in leadership behaviors and processes. The Conceptual Model of Emotional Leadership was developed by this researcher to establish context for this study of emotion in leadership.

The first step in developing the Conceptual Model of Emotional Leadership was a review and analysis of literature based on the Mayer & Salovey (1997) ability-based model of EI. The researcher discovered, however, that the EI model was too general to provide context for the current study of emotion in leadership and that a narrower area of focus was necessary. The researcher then conducted a literature search on the use of EI abilities in leadership situations, which then led to studies on emotion in leadership situations. These studies, while related, were from disparate and varied fields of study. A research synthesis was conducted to identify themes and consolidate this research into a working conceptual model. The synthesis found that the literature consistently discussed three leadership experiences in terms of emotion. These included: (a) leader emergence when a formal leader was not present; (b) formal leader working with a group; and (c) formal leader working with individuals. These experiences, the related leader behaviors and the corresponding emotional intelligence abilities were the key components of the Conceptual Model of Emotional Leadership and conceptual framework (see Figure 1). A brief overview of each of these key components is discussed below.

## **Leader emergence**

Emerging leaders and informal leaders are individuals who step into leadership roles when a group is faced with ambiguity or instability. These leaders make use of EI abilities to understand and manage emotions in order to provide certainty and stability to the group where there was none, to further the group goals, to direct group tasks, to prioritize issues facing the group, and to improve group performance (Humphrey, 2002; Pescosolido, 2002; Wolff, Pescosolido, & Druskat, 2002).

## **Formal Leader Working with the group**

When working with a group, leaders are responsible for managing the planning, decision-making, and conflict resolution. Leaders who can successfully guide their group through these processes demonstrate the EI ability to manage the emotions of others and themselves (George, 2000; Herbst, Maree, & Sibanda, 2006).

## **Formal Leader Working with followers**

The interaction between a leader and a follower is distinct from the relationship between a leader and the entire group. In individual interactions, leaders can influence the follower's performance, productivity, and sense of job satisfaction (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002; Pirola-Merlo, Hartel, Mann, & Hirst, 2002; Wong & Law, 2002), and, conversely, the interaction between the leader and follower can enhance the leader's performance (Bono & Ilies, 2006; Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; Humphrey, 2002; Rubin, Munz & Bommer, 2005). The leader's ability to influence the follower is connected to his EI abilities to recognize and understand the emotions of the followers.

## **Significance**

The current study has significance for practice, policy, theory, and research. The findings indicate that both students and practitioners could benefit from a better understanding of Emotional Intelligence. While the thoughtful use of EI abilities would further support students' leadership efforts, practitioners could also benefit from a better knowledge of the EI abilities. Practitioners have the time and access needed to coach students in the use of EI abilities in their leadership roles. Universities should carefully consider the discussion and inclusion of Emotional Intelligence models in any required leadership training programs, and they might also consider policy that emphasizes a student's participation in an active leadership role in addition to leadership training.

The Conceptual Model of Emotional Leadership, developed for this study by this research, effectively provided the structure necessary to probe for emotion in student leadership experiences without directly asking the student about emotions or emotionally intense leadership experiences—questions that could have potentially confused the participants, biased the study, and skewed the results. The Model also proved effective during the analysis and discussion of the data, and it could be the beginning of an evolving model of emotional leadership. Finally, this study was able to suggest further avenues of research on the role of EI in student leadership, including how different types of organizations, organizational cultures, and environments could affect the way students make meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Introduction**

Today's knowledge economy has affected change in business structures, organizations and the way people work. These changes have created new expectations for higher education for educated, talented knowledge workers and resulted in significant shifts in institutional culture, environment, curriculum, course content, and the skills gained by students during college. New skills can be summarized in four broad categories: (a) Self-management, self-awareness, and an understanding of identity; (b) flexibility and initiative to manage ambiguity and uncertainty; (c) leadership to motivate others; and (d) understanding of global and diverse ideas and points of view.

To explore such skills in the college setting, a conceptual framework of emotional leadership was developed. The conceptual framework synthesized diverse bodies of research on emotional intelligence, emotion and leadership to establish a set of leadership experiences, related leader behaviors and abilities that provide context for this study.

The conceptual framework for the proposed study started from an integrated review of relevant literature on emotional intelligence as the foundation for perceiving, utilizing, understanding and regulating emotion (Caruso et al., 2001) in student leadership experiences. Emotional intelligence models, research, and assessment tools were discussed and the Mayer and Salovey (1997) model of emotional intelligence was identified as the specific EI model used in this study. Next, a research synthesis summarized current literature on emotion and leadership. The synthesis drew conclusions from related studies in different fields and highlights similarities and overlapping concepts in a summary model that directed this study

and could direct future research on emotional leadership (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997).

Emotional leadership served as the conceptual framework for this study as it provided the context in which this study explored how students made meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences.

### **Overview of Emotional Intelligence**

The study of the specific concept of emotional intelligence began in 1990, when Salovey and Mayer suggested that emotional intelligence was defined as the following:

A set of skills hypothesized to contribute to the accurate appraisal and expression of emotion in oneself and in others, the effective regulation of emotion in self and others and the use of feelings to motivate, place and achieve in one's life. (p.185)

Developed from the social intelligence research of Gardner (1983), Salovey and Mayer (1990) identified emotional intelligence as a new model of intelligence, for which a body of research already existed without a consolidating model. Since 1990, research on emotional intelligence has evolved, resulting in three models to describe and define emotional intelligence, each with differing approaches to emotional intelligence characteristics, implications, uses, and assessment methods. These models include the Bar-On (Bar-On & Parker, 2000) model of EI, Goleman's (1998) model of EI, and the Mayer and Salovey (1997) model of EI. The divergence of these models can best be explained by the characteristics and skills that each uses to describe emotional intelligence.

Two of the models are categorized as mixed models, as they include a variety of personality traits, characteristics, and skills to define emotional intelligence (Caruso et al., 2001). Bar-On's (Bar-On & Parker, 2000) mixed model focuses on five conceptual

components of emotional and social intelligence: intrapersonal components, interpersonal components, adaptability components, stress management components, and general mood components (Bar-On & Parker, 2000). These five components are then divided into 15 subcategories within the model, representing personality factors that effect emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 1997). Goleman's (1998) mixed model of emotional intelligence focuses on twenty-five emotional competencies and the level to which they have been integrated into work-related skills and abilities, specifically related to emotional awareness, self-control, innovation, optimism, understanding others, conflict management, collaboration and cooperation (Goleman, 1998). The third major model of emotional intelligence is an ability-based model that focuses on a set of cognitive abilities to define emotional intelligence. In this model, Mayer and Salovey (1997) describe emotional intelligence as being composed of four branches: "1) the ability to perceive emotions, 2) the ability to access and generate emotions to assist thought, 3) the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and 4) the ability to regulate emotions reflectively to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Caruso et al., 2001, p. 56).

### **Bar-On model of emotional intelligence**

The Bar-On model of emotional intelligence developed out of his clinical practice and experiences, which inspired the question, "Why do some people succeed in possessing better emotional well-being than others?" This question later developed into the research question, "Why are some individuals more able to succeed in life than others?" (Bar-On, 1997). To conduct research that would inform these questions and test his conceptual model of non-cognitive intelligence, Bar-On began developing an instrument in the early 1980s that would

later become the Emotional Quotient inventory (EQ-i). The development of his model and his test, by Bar-On's (1997) own account, happened over the course of seventeen years. Initially, he identified clusters of emotional and social competencies based on literature and his professional experience. He honed these clusters of competencies further through a combination of statistical analysis and theoretical considerations which resulted in the published version of the EQ-i and the Bar-On model of emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2005).

In the Bar-On model, "emotional-social intelligence is a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands" (Bar-On, 2005, p. 3). The model consists of five components which are (a) intrapersonal, (b) interpersonal, (c) stress management, (d) adaptability, and (e) general mood. Each component is made up of related competencies, skills, and facilitators, fifteen in all (Bar-On, 2005). The EQ-i is a set of scales clustered around the five components and each scale is able to assess the competencies, skills, and facilitators. For example, the adaptability scale is able to assess the participant's ability to effectively problem solve and adapt to new situations.

A major component of the test development both prior to and after publication was norming the test and validating it. As a result, the Bar-On EQ-i became popular and widely implemented, in part, because of its extensive testing and resultant high validity and reliability. The EQ-i has been used in numerous settings by researchers, corporate trainers and human resource departments, and emotional intelligence coaches. The concept of

emotional intelligence is particularly popular in the corporate and workplace setting. Aside from its in-house use for corporate assessment and training, researchers have used the EQ-i in studying the relationship between emotional intelligence and such workplace concepts as performance predictors (Bar-On, 1997; Bar-On 2005; Bar-On, Handley, & Fund, 2005; Handley, 1997), negotiation success (Brauchle, 2004), sales performance (Beekie, 2004; Mulligan, 2003), career burnout (Ricca, 2003), and organizational management (Weisinger, 1997). Additionally, the Bar-On model of emotional intelligence and the EQ-i have been used in both K-12 and higher education settings to study emotional intelligence in students (Dawda & Hart, 2000; Jaeger, 2003; Reiff, Hatzes, Bramel, & Gibbon, 2001; Scheusner, 2002), administrators (Crawford, 2003), and teachers (Haskett, 2003). Bar-On's model and assessment tool are used to look at the potential for success, finding connections between emotional intelligence and high levels of performance. Aside from informing research questions across a broad range of settings, the EQ-i data collected from every test administered continues to be used to inform the ongoing development of the Bar-On model of emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2005).

### **Goleman model of emotional intelligence**

Goleman (1995) first introduced his perspectives on emotional intelligence, in the context of human performance throughout life, in his book *Emotional Intelligence*. This book popularized the concept of emotional intelligence among the general public and the business community, and it led to the publication of popular articles in magazines such as *Time* and *Harvard Business Review* (Goleman, 1998). At this point in Goleman's career, his model of emotional intelligence had not yet been developed. Instead, he presented

anecdotes, observations, and life stories that demonstrated the application of his concepts to personal life. These concepts were described as “abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations” (Goleman, 1995, p. 34) that developed from “groundbreaking brain and behavioral research” (Goleman, 1995 p. 11), including the developing Salovey and Mayer model of emotional intelligence (1990). The Salovey and Mayer model (1990) would later serve as a foundation for research that would result in the Goleman (1998) model of emotional intelligence.

Goleman’s model (1998) evolved from an initial focus on the application of emotional intelligence to life in general to a more specific focus on workplace performance. It began from a research study in which 188 corporate competency models were analyzed to identify types of abilities most commonly seen in star performers in the workplace. The results of the study showed three types of skills most commonly seen in these competency models: technical skills, cognitive abilities, and competencies demonstrating emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998). Goleman analyzed the competencies demonstrating emotional intelligence and identified five domains or dimensions and 25 competencies that comprised emotional intelligence. Later statistical analysis of this model suggested collapsing it to four domains and 20 competencies (Goleman, 2001). The most recent iteration of the Goleman (2001) model of emotional intelligence also includes an assessment component, the Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI), a 360-degree assessment instrument that was designed specifically to be used in the workplace as a way to look at and predict success. (Emmerling & Goleman, 2003). Studies utilizing the ECI as their main assessment tool have looked at the connection between emotional intelligence and performance of managers and

leaders (Brooks, 2003; Byrne, 2004, Cavallo & Brienza, 2002) and in workers (Stagg & Gunter, 2002). The ECI, in its latest form, is still relatively new, having only been developed in 2001 and has not yet been tested enough to assess its levels of reliability and validity (Cherniss, 2000; Emmerling & Goleman, 2003).

### **Mayer and Salovey model of emotional intelligence**

The Mayer and Salovey (1997) model of emotional intelligence was developed as a theoretical framework to bring together existing research related to “how people appraise and communicate emotion, and how they use that emotion in solving problems” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 190). This existing research, while related, was fragmented across a variety of publications. For example, much of the research used in developing the model of emotional intelligence was found in descriptive studies that supported the development of scales, measures and tests of constructs such as emotional expressiveness, affective communication and sensitivity, empathy, mood regulation, and impression management (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Analysis of the literature showed that it was related to a common “set of conceptually-related mental processes involving emotional information [that] include: appraising and expressing emotions in the self and others; regulating emotion in the self and others; and using emotions in adaptive ways” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, pp.190-191).

Unlike the previously mentioned models of emotional intelligence, this model was conceived of and continues to be developed within the context of literature on intelligences. Within this context, it has been aligned with models of multiple intelligence (e.g. Gardner, 1983; Sternberg, 1985), and connected most closely to the subset of research focused on social intelligences. The development of the model has benefited from its placement within

the longstanding tradition of intelligence research. First, it has been subject to refined, rigorous standards that have shaped the conceptual and theoretical stages of its development. Additionally, debate and scrutiny of the model by other intelligence researchers (e.g., Conte, 2005; Davies, Stankov, & Roberts, 1998; Locke, 2005) continue to provide new perspectives from which to assess and refine the model. Researchers have debated the appropriateness of calling this theoretical concept an intelligence, if it is just another way of describing social intelligence, and the true nature of the abilities associated with Mayer and Salovey's model (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). Mayer and Salovey responded to those critiques in 1993, arguing that their ability-based model demonstrates that emotional intelligence is a type of intelligence. In 2000, they published their findings that demonstrated that the current iteration of their model of emotional intelligence met the traditional standards for an intelligence (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999).

The current Mayer and Salovey model of emotional intelligence defines emotional intelligence as four sets, or branches, of abilities: “1) the ability to perceive emotions, 2) the ability to access and generate emotions to assist thought, 3) the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and 4) the ability to regulate emotions reflectively to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (Caruso et al., 2001, p.56). (See Appendix E) The first of the four branches in this model is identifying, or perceiving emotions. This branch targets several distinct abilities, such as recognizing and realizing personal feelings, expressing emotions accurately, recognizing the difference between real and fake emotions, and understanding emotions in others' actions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The next branch of this model looks at abilities necessary for using emotions, both intrapersonal and

interpersonal, most often as a means to facilitate interpersonal interaction. Target abilities in this branch include using emotions to create the necessary mood or level of excitement, using others' emotions to assist in decision making, and targeting attention to and away from important events by capitalizing on emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

The third branch of the Mayer and Salovey model of emotional intelligence addresses abilities used in understanding emotions. In this branch, the focus is on understanding relationships through emotions, realizing the meaning that emotions and emotional acts say, and comprehending more complex meaning within yourself and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The final branch of the model concentrates on managing emotions. This branch discusses the power of managing personal emotions and those of others during confrontation, discussion and debate. At the core of this branch is the ability to actively assess personal emotions and detract from them in order to keep control (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

The current iteration of the Mayer and Salovey model of emotional intelligence marks a move within this model's development from purely theoretical research to studying the practical significance and importance of EI (Mayer & Salovey, 2004). To this end, a series of EI measurement scales were created (Mayer & Salovey, 2004), that included the Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MEIS) and more recently, the Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT). The MEIS was the first effort at operationalizing the four-branch model of emotional intelligence. Through its use, evidence was gathered that substantiated EI as a traditional intelligence (Mayer et al., 1999). The MEIS was later refined, resulting in the current scale for measuring EI, the MSCEIT. The MSCEIT includes "eight tasks: two to measure each of the four branches of EI" (Mayer &

Salovey, 2004, p. 200). While it has gone through a revision since it was first introduced (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2003), the MSCEIT has proven to be an effective tool in measuring EI, as it is sufficiently easy to administer, has high reliability, and demonstrates reasonable validity across the many types of validity measures (Mayer & Salovey, 2004).

The four-branch model and the MSCEIT have been used in further exploration, clarification, and debate of emotional intelligence as a model of intelligence (Caruso et al., 2002; Mayer et al., 1999; Mayer et al., 2003, Salovey & Grewel, 2005; Schutte, Ree, & Carretta, 2004). Research has also focused on the constructs, validity and reliability of the MSCEIT (Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Mayer et al., 1999, Mayer et al., 2003; Mayer & Salovey, 2004; Palmer, Gignac, Manocha, & Stough, 2005;), resulting in findings of reasonable reliability and validity for the specified purposes of the MSCEIT (Mayer & Salovey, 2004). Additionally, the model and test have been applied to the workplace setting, as studies have considered its relationship to employee performance (Day & Carroll, 2004; Mayer et al., 2003; Wong & Law, 2002), and leadership potential (Lopes, Salovey, & Strauss, 2003; Rubin et al., 2005). It has also been studied commonly in college students for its relevance to social interactions (Lopes et al., 2003), relationships (Brackett, Rivers, Shiffman, Lerner, & Salovey, 2005; Lopes et al., 2003), mental health (Extramera & Fernandez-Berracal, 2006), academic success (Barchard, 2003), and everyday behaviors and lifestyle decisions (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004), as well as its connection to the visual arts, poetry (Morris, 2005), and music (Resnicow, Salovey, & Repp, 2004). The Mayer and Salovey (1997) model is based on the initial research on emotional intelligence, and through

its development, it continues to contribute to the ongoing discussion of emotional intelligence as a scientifically-developed ability-based model with which to compare other models of emotional intelligence.

Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability-based model of emotional intelligence offers advantages to this study over the aforementioned mixed models. First, the Mayer and Salovey (1997) model has been developed and refined under strict scrutiny in the rigorous and controversial academic discipline of intelligences. It has held up to the numerous critiques and debates, and evolved in response to valid arguments as a result of the researchers' focus on utilizing a scientific approach to developing their model. This willingness to adapt also allows for research on new perspectives on emotional intelligence, such as the focus of the current study on how college affects emotional intelligence. Additionally, the model only considers abilities of emotional intelligence, as opposed to a mix of abilities and personality traits and characteristics as seen in the Bar-On and Goleman models. As such, it provided a clear foundation upon which to build a model of emotional leadership.

### **Emotional Leadership**

Emotional leadership refers to a growing body of research that studies the role of EI abilities in leadership behaviors and practice. For the purpose of this study, emotional leadership is defined as the subset of leadership behaviors that have been shown to be related to EI abilities. As such, this chapter proceeds with a targeted review of existing studies that investigate the use of EI abilities and emotions in leadership. Through analysis and synthesis

of the specified literature, a conceptual model was developed to summarize the current knowledge on emotional leadership and provide the conceptual framework for this study.

### **Conceptual model of emotional leadership**

In order to clarify the concept of emotional leadership into a manageable framework for this study, an analysis and synthesis of emotional leadership literature was conducted. Upon identifying current and relevant research, open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) of key themes from the research was used to identify emotion-rich leadership situations (see Figure 1). These included leader emergence, a formal leader working with the organization or group as a whole, and a formal leader work with followers. Once these emotion-rich situations were established, open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was again used within each category to identify themes of relevant leadership behaviors and the EI abilities related to those behaviors. Finally, a summary of these specific EI abilities was developed to provide a broader perspective of EI abilities identified in the current literature on emotional leadership. By developing a conceptual framework that looks at broad leadership behaviors and EI abilities, as well as specific examples of how these abilities and behaviors are related, this model provides a framework to investigate the overarching research question of how students make meaning of emotion in leadership.

Emotion-rich Leadership Situations	LEADER EMERGENCE	FORMAL LEADER WORKING WITH THE GROUP	FORMAL LEADER WORKING WITH FOLLOWERS
<p><b>Leadership behaviors in emotion-rich leadership situations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing direction</li> <li>• Creating a sense of certainty and security</li> <li>• Analyzing group problems</li> <li>• Prioritizing team issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making decisions</li> <li>• Resolving conflicts</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Motivating the group</li> <li>• Establishing group vision and identity</li> <li>• Developing group goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving follower performance</li> <li>• Establishing relationships with followers</li> </ul>
<p><b>EI abilities used in emotion-rich leadership situations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing emotions</li> <li>• Understanding emotions</li> <li>• Expressing emotion to evoke positive emotional response</li> <li>• Empathizing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing group emotions</li> <li>• Managing leader's own emotions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing emotions</li> <li>• Understanding emotions</li> <li>• Identifying emotions</li> </ul>
<p><b>EI abilities discussed in Emotional Leadership Literature</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to perceive emotions in themselves and others</li> <li>• Ability to access and generate emotions in themselves and others</li> <li>• Ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge in themselves and others</li> <li>• Ability to regulate emotions in themselves and others</li> </ul>		

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Emotional Leadership developed for this study by the researcher.

### **Emotion-rich situation: Leader emergence**

Research on behaviors exhibited by emerging leaders focuses on two different leadership scenarios, emerging leaders and informal leaders (see Figure 1). In the first case, emerging leadership, researchers have looked at the behavior of a person who is in the process of emerging from the group to take on a leadership role. In the second, the research focuses on the behaviors of a person who has completed this process and taken on an informal leadership role. Emotional intelligence abilities are seen in both cases.

For example, Pescosolido's (2002) qualitative study of emerging leaders identifies one way in which a person emerges from the group as a leader. When the group is faced with ambiguity, the individual who steps up to provide direction, thereby creating a greater sense of certainty and security, is then seen by the group as a leader (Pescosolido, 2002). In his observations of twenty different groups and subsequent group interviews,

Pescosolido found that one of the ways in which an emergent leader is able to provide certainty during ambiguous situations is by modeling an appropriate response for the rest of the group. In other words, if a situation arises in which the group members are unsure of how to act or respond, the individual who demonstrates how to act is perceived as a leader by the rest of the group (Pescosolido, 2002). Pescosolido argues that these individuals are participating in management of group emotion as they step into their leadership role.

Other behaviors that have been identified as central to emerging leaders are empathy and charisma (Humphrey, 2002; Kellett, et al., 2002; Pescosolido, 2002). Emerging leaders have capitalized on their ability to recognize and understand the experiences of other members (empathy) and also their ability to express emotion in such a way as to evoke a

positive emotional response in the other members (charisma). Not only have these abilities been linked to emerging leader behaviors, but they have also been identified as predictors of leadership emergence (Humphrey, 2002). As such, emerging leaders have been shown to use two branches of emotional intelligence abilities – Understanding Emotions and Using Emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Individuals in informal leadership roles also use these two emotional intelligence branches. Their use, however, produces different outcomes. During the process of leader emergence, for instance, the individual's emotional intelligence abilities allow them to stand out from others in the group. Once the individual has taken on the role of informal leader, the emotional intelligence abilities are then put to use in support of general leadership thought processes and behaviors including, but not limited to, analysis of problems and prioritizing team issues (Wolff et al., 2002). For example, in a longitudinal study of self-managing teams, Wolff et al. (2002) found that empathy served as a basis for informal leader behavior. These leaders were socially perceptive and able to understand the emotions of the other team members. Abilities such as these were identified as necessary for informal leaders to display suitable behaviors in situations with followers that required empathy (Wolff et al., 2002).

Emerging leaders and informal leaders are individuals who are able to make use of their emotional intelligence abilities in order to provide certainty to the group, to further the group goals, to direct group tasks, to prioritize issues facing the group, and to improve group performance (Humphrey, 2002; Pescosolido, 2002; Wolff et al., 2002). Empathy, in particular, is an important ability for an emergent or informal leader to possess (Humphrey,

2002). It is based on perceiving and understanding others' emotions, and informs the use of the leader's and others' emotions in a variety of leadership situations. Based on this research, it is clear that two branches of emotional intelligence abilities – understanding emotions and using emotions – are put to use as individuals emerge as a leader within a group.

### **Emotion-rich situation: Formal leader working with the group**

The behaviors exhibited by leaders have a large impact on the group as a whole (see Figure 1), and a leader's success or perceived success by the group is, in large part, based on the leader's ability to manage their own emotions and the emotions of their group members (Daus & Ashkanasy, 2005; Prati, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003). Leaders use emotional intelligence abilities in many situations including decision making, conflict resolution, motivating the group, establishing an identity for the group, and developing group goals (Ashkanasy, 2004; Carmeli, 2003; Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; George, 2000).

Leaders are responsible for managing group processes such as planning, decision making, and conflict resolution within the group. The leaders who can successfully guide their groups through these processes can significantly influence their groups' performance (Humphrey, 2002). In a study of senior managers in the workplace, Carmeli (2003) used questionnaires which assessed manager emotional intelligence as well as job performance and work attitudes. The relationship between emotional intelligence and performance and work attitudes was analyzed, and it was found that emotional intelligence is positively related to positive work attitudes and improved task performance (Carmeli, 2003). Additionally, it was found that emotional intelligence abilities were helpful in improving decision-making

processes and in maintaining planning flexibility. Such findings demonstrate that emotional intelligence abilities play a role in the group processes that are traditionally thought to be cognitive ability driven tasks. The study was limited however in that it did not identify which emotional intelligence abilities play a role in these processes.

The performance and/or success of a leader in the group processes or in other areas of leadership is sometimes an elusive construct that is difficult to identify. Indeed, there are several emotional leadership studies that look not at specific outcomes to measure success but rather consider the perceived success of a leader as stated by group members (Bono & Ilies, 2006; Humphrey, 2002; Kellett et al., 2002). “People have particular behaviors in mind that they associate with leadership and are able to categorize others as leaders or non-leaders by observing their behavior” (Kellett et al., 2002, p. 527). Research that looks at the use of emotion and emotional intelligence by leaders indicates that the perception of someone as a leader is affected by the leader’s emotional intelligence (Humphrey, 2002; Kellett et al., 2002).

A series of studies conducted on the effect of positive emotion on the group by Bono and Ilies (2006) found that a leader’s positive emotional displays positively affected the followers’ perception of leader effectiveness and success. Bono and Ilies (2006) focused on leader charisma as the positive display of emotion, which influenced the followers. Although these studies do not specifically identify emotional intelligence abilities, the study of leader charisma as an influencing behavior is informative to this study since charisma involves the use of one’s own emotions and those of others (Pescosolido, 2002).

Leaders use charisma and other positive emotions toward other ends as well. An analysis of the literature suggests that emotional intelligence plays a central role in providing a vision or set of collective goals for the group (George, 2000). In her analysis of emotion, mood, and leadership literature, George (2000) states that the creation of a unifying vision for the group is a creative process, and an individual's creativity is often enhanced by positive thinking and positive moods. She then links the positive thinking and use of positive moods to emotional intelligence, suggesting that leaders with high emotional intelligence will better be able to harness positive emotions and moods to create long term goals for their organization (George, 2000).

One of the few studies that investigates the use of emotional intelligence abilities by leaders to inspire their followers was conducted by Herbst et al., (2006). The study participants were managers within a higher education institution in South Africa, and the study focused on improving the South African education system. The findings are relevant to this study, however. First, the researchers used the MSCEIT as the emotional intelligence assessment tool. This tool is based on the Mayer and Salovey four branch model of emotional intelligence that is being used in the current study. Second, Herbst et al's (2006) study found that the ability of the participants to manage their own emotions and those of others was the best predictor of their ability to "inspire a shared vision in others." (Herbst et al., 2006, p. 606).

Although the category of emotional leadership behaviors associated with working with the group has yet to be extensively studied, limited research suggests that the emotional

intelligence abilities of managing one's own and other's emotions helps a leader to inspire and promote the group's vision (George, 2006; Herbst et al., 2006; ).

**Emotion-rich situation: Formal leader working with followers**

The final category of leader behaviors in which emotional intelligence abilities have been used is the behavior exhibited by leaders when they are working with a follower (see Figure 1). The interaction between leader and follower is one of the major focal points in current leadership literature (Kellett et al., 2002), and several researchers have designed studies around this interaction and the use of emotion and emotional intelligence abilities (Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2000; Bono & Ilies, 2006; Gardner & Stough, 2002; Kellett et al., 2002; Newcombe & Ashkanasy, 2002; Rubin et al., 2005; Wong & Law, 2002). Not only can a leader influence a follower's performance through the use of emotional intelligence, but followers have been found to react to the leader's emotions and mood (Bono & Ilies, 2006; Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; Humphrey, 2002).

Studies report that leader emotional intelligence does affect followers, but in the case of follower productivity, the literature varies. Two studies that looked at the effect of leader emotional intelligence on follower performance and productivity found that a leader's use of emotional intelligence can have a substantial influence on followers' task performance and productivity (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002; Pirola-Merlo et al., 2002). These researchers concluded that the management of the followers' emotions and mood was a way in which leaders influenced follower performance.

Those findings were not substantiated in a study conducted by Wong and Law in 2002. In their study of 146 supervisor-subordinate pairs who worked in government

administration, Wong and Law (2002) found that while the use of emotional intelligence by the leader did improve the follower's sense of job satisfaction, they did not have any relationship with the follower's job performance. This seemingly discordant finding, at the very least, necessitates further study, and Wong and Law (2002) postulate that the finding may be skewed by the work culture of government administration. Regardless, these studies indicate that a leader's ability to manage the emotions of their followers influences performance even if that influence is an indirect effect of enhanced positive mood (Wong & Law, 2002).

A leader who has the ability to recognize and identify the emotions in a follower has a greater capacity for developing and building relationships with that follower (Rubin et al, 2005). Newcombe and Ashkanasy (2002) study this aspect of emotional leadership from a different perspective. They study the follower's perception of leaders, and they found that the leader-follower relationship is significantly influenced by the perceived leader behaviors (Newcombe & Ashkanasy, 2002). For instance, the perception of non-verbal displays of warmth positively affected the leader-follower relationship, which helps to establish the importance of emotional displays and cues from the leader.

Another study completed by Rubin et al. (2005) supports these findings. In their study of 145 managers of a large biotechnology/agricultural company, they were focused on the performance of the leaders rather than the followers, and they found that the ability to recognize the emotions of others, specifically, improved the leader performance. Their data shows that these leaders were able to build stronger relationships with their followers by

understanding the followers' emotions (Rubin et al., 2005) and highlights the importance of the leader-follower quality.

### **Summary of emotional leadership**

The study of emotional leadership offers a new perspective to understanding leadership behaviors by considering their relationship to emotion and EI abilities. Studies have been conducted in a variety of settings and using different methods and assessment tools, and yet, there is a clearly identifiable overarching theme of leadership behaviors related to EI abilities. These leadership behaviors, when considered as a whole, relate to EI abilities across all four branches of the Mayer & Salovey emotional intelligence model (Caruso et al., 2001). These include: (a) The ability to perceive emotions in themselves and others; (b) the ability to access and generate emotions in themselves and others; (c) the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge in themselves and others; and (d) the ability to regulate emotions in themselves and others (Caruso et al., 2001). This review and synthesis of literature and research on emotion in leadership and emotional intelligence served as the conceptual framework on which the proposed study was based. From this conceptual model the leadership experiences, leader behaviors, and their corresponding EI abilities, and the more general EI abilities related to emotional leadership provided a foundation to address the overall research questions. Additionally, this conceptual framework offered structure to the study by providing a context of information-rich moments, events and leadership behaviors that elicited meaningful data in this study's exploration of the ways that students make meaning of emotion in their leadership experience.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

The growing complexity of today's knowledge economy has changed business structures, organizations and the way people work. Such change has created new expectations for higher education as a producer of educated, talented knowledge workers and resulted in significant shifts in institutional culture, environment, curriculum, and course content, and the skills gained by students during college. These new skills can be summarized in four broad categories: (a) self-management, self-awareness, and an understanding of identity; (b) flexibility and initiative to manage ambiguity and uncertainty; (c) leadership to motivate others; and (d) understanding of global and diverse ideas and points of view.

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways that students make meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences in order to understand their preparedness in and perspectives on the skills claimed to be needed in the knowledge economy. To explore these skills in the college setting, a conceptual framework of emotional leadership was developed. The conceptual framework synthesized diverse bodies of research on emotional intelligence, emotion and leadership to establish a set of leadership experiences, related leader behaviors and abilities that provide framework for this study.

### **Case Study Design**

A case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon that is embedded in a real-life context (Yin, 1994) and allows the researcher to look into personal viewpoints, informal networks, and the complexities and processes in individuals' lived experiences (Marshall &

Rossman, 1999). This study utilized a multiple case study design in order to explore the phenomenon of emotion in the real-life context of multiple students' leadership experiences. Emotional leadership, the conceptual model upon which this study was based, provided a framework of emotion-rich leadership experiences and corresponding leader behaviors to explore how students make meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences. Information-rich cases for this study were identified through a purposeful sampling strategy. Finally, the multiple case study design provided a manageable research strategy that was structured by the bounds and limits of each student case, but also flexible as needed to respond and adapt to emerging data during data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1991).

### **Site Selection**

The site for this study was North Carolina State University (NC State), a public, land-grant university in the southeastern US. The process for selecting this site was two fold. First, NC State was considered as a site of convenience in terms of proximity, access, and familiarity to the researcher. The researcher has experience with the campus as a result of previous involvement as a student and employee of the university and has discussed potential access with university administration.

Upon further examination of NC State as a potential location for this study, it was found that the university provides an information-rich context for the study. As early as the 1990s, NC State started looking at how it could change to meet the needs of a changing economy. A new strategic plan was finalized in 2006, setting forth its goal to help students develop new skills through significant and varied opportunities both in and beyond the classroom. (North Carolina State University, 2006; Oblinger, 2008).

To refine the location to a more manageable size, student organizations at NC State community were explored, as they were likely to have a concentration of students with significant experience in student leadership roles. The researcher began by reviewing registered student organizations as listed on the website of NC State's Student Organization Resource Center (<http://www.ncsu.edu/sorc/>). The list included over four hundred registered student organizations, organized in fourteen categories: Arts; College/Departmental/Academic; Ethnic/Multicultural/Diversity; General College Fraternities and Sororities; Governing/Representative; Honorary; International; Political/Social Action; Professional; Religious/Spiritual; Service; Special Interest; Sports/Recreation; Student Media/Publications. Overviews of the organization on the NC State's Student Organization Resource Center website and student organizations websites in each of these categories were reviewed to identify a category of student organizations that would be likely to have a concentration of students with significant leadership experiences.

The category of governing/representative organizations was chosen as including organizations with the greatest potential for students with significant leadership experience. Students in these organizations have been elected or appointed to their positions, which suggests significant past experience to support their election or appointment. NC State has sixteen student organizations listed in this category. Two of these organizations were removed from the site selection, as they are only open to freshmen and sophomore students. The remaining fourteen organizations represented a manageable, information-rich site from which to sample experienced student leader participants for this study.

## **Participant selection**

Initial participant selection used a purposeful, criterion-based sampling design in which the twelve participants met a set of criteria (Patton, 2002) that suggested participants have had significant leadership experiences to discuss in interviews. Sampling criteria included the following: (a) student was currently, and had previously been, in a position that is responsible for leading other students within a college student organization; (b) student was previously in a non-leadership position within a college student organization; (c) student was in a team or small group leader and (d) student completed at least two full years of college. In sampling participants based on these criteria, the researcher ensured that students in the initial sample had leadership experiences that could be explored in terms of emotion initial interviews. One participant did not meet all of the sampling criteria and was, in fact, a second semester freshman at the time of his interviews. He was selected for this study based on his adviser's recommendation that despite his lack of formal experience, he had extensive experience working in informal leadership roles with numerous organizations on campus.

Prior to contacting participants, the study was reviewed by NC State's Institutional Review Board to ensure the study activities would not be harmful to the participants (see Appendix D). The sampling process began with the researcher contacting student organizations' staff advisors and student leaders to request a small block of time during one of the organization's meetings. The researcher used this time to introduce himself and provide an overview of the study to the student organization leaders. The study overview included the purpose of the study, activities and time commitment for participants and criteria for selecting participants. Benefits of participation in the study and the steps that

would be taken to ensure unobtrusiveness to the organization and confidentiality of participants were also discussed (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Once the study was explained, and questions answered, the researcher collected the contact information of interested participants and left his contact information for students who decided later that they were interested in participating in the study. This process of obtaining access by way of face-to-face meetings was purposefully chosen as the first step in establishing a level of trust and rapport with the participants to encourage the comfortableness and openness in interviews (Janesick, 1994) that was needed to explore emotional leadership experiences. Before data collection began, the researcher followed up via phone or email to confirm that they did the sample criteria (or that the exception was acceptable), distribute and review informed consent forms and discuss issues of confidentiality, reciprocity, and benefits with each individual participant. Initial sampling was completed when twenty interested participants that met the sampling criteria had been identified. The goal of the study was to find twelve participants, but the researcher felt that twenty interested participants provided a fail-safe should some of the participants back out at a later date.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection strategy was designed to maintain a focus on the ways that students make meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences. To establish an information-rich context for collecting data about emotion in leadership, a secure online leadership survey and two interviews built from the three types of leadership experiences described in the EL model: (a) leader emergence, (b) formal leader working with the group, and (c) formal leader working with individuals. Each method of data collection was

designed to inform future data collection methods in this study. For example, student leadership profile surveys gathered information about leadership experiences that later became the basis for engaging the student in the initial interviews. Initial interviews provided details about students' leadership experiences that were then probed more deeply in follow-up interviews when necessary.

### **Leadership profile surveys**

Data collection began with a short secure online leadership profile survey given to each participant (see Appendix A). This survey was the initial entrée to each individual case. It focused on the students' leadership background, demographic information, and leadership experiences. It also served as a tool to confirm once again that participants met the sampling criteria described above. Finally, it served to weed out students who decided that they did not want to participate. Eight of the initial interested students ultimately dropped out by not fully completing the survey or by not completing the survey at all. Twelve students completed the online survey in full. The survey asked for number of years of leadership experience, leadership training participation, and demographic information including age, gender, race, year in college, and academic major. The survey then asked for six leadership experiences that the students would be willing to explore in an interview and that they felt had been significant to their leadership development. The six experiences were based on the three types of leadership experiences described in the EL model: (a) leader emergence; (b) formal leader working with the group; and (c) formal leader working with individuals. The survey asked for two experiences in each category. These six experiences were then used as the context for the initial round of interviews.

### **Initial and follow-up interviews**

Interviews were scheduled via phone or email, and interviews were held at a time that was convenient for each participant. The researcher found interview locations that were familiar and convenient for the participants but also private to ensure confidentiality and avoid potential distractions. For instance, some of the participant preferred to conduct the interviews off campus, and the researcher allowed the participant to pick an appropriate venue.

Interviews were on average sixty to ninety minutes in length. Initial interviews were semi-structured based on the interview protocol in Appendix B, but when necessary, the researcher asked follow up questions that encouraged the participants to be more descriptive about their experiences. Follow-up interviews were also semi-structured based on data points culled from the initial interviews. At the onset of each interview, the researcher explained the interview structure and gave participants the opportunity to review the informed consent form prior to the beginning of the interview questions. All interviews were tape recorded with the consent of the participants, and the researcher made written notes to supplement and highlight the tape-recorded data.

During initial interviews, the researcher explored the leadership experiences provided by the students to better understand how the students make meaning of their leadership experiences. Students were asked to describe their perceptions of the overall leadership experience, their roles and actions, and the roles of others in the leadership experience (see Appendix B). Upon review and initial analysis of the interview transcript and researcher

notes, a follow-up interview was conducted to probe more deeply into potentially emotion-related aspects of their leadership experiences. Data from this follow-up interview completed the data collection for each student. It also helped to confirm and disconfirm emergent themes from other student interviews and direct the focus of future interviews with other students (Merriam, 1991).

The interviews focused on leadership experiences that were associated with emotions, and explored those areas to better understand how students make meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences without asking directly or influencing their answers. This approach placed the interviews in the context of emotional leadership and allowed students the opportunity to discuss their experiences and explore the way they make meaning of these experiences without direct questions related to emotional leadership.

### **Data Management and Confidentiality**

Organized and well-planned management of the data gathered in a complex multiple case study is critical to effective data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A case record was developed throughout the study that included several classifications of data: student leadership profile surveys, interview tapes and transcripts, and researcher memos and journaling. To ensure confidentiality, all data collected was labeled with designated pseudonyms, and overly obvious specific leadership titles, names of organizations, and identifying demographic characteristics were not included in case summaries or public reports. Additionally, all hard copies of data and study materials, including surveys, consent forms, correspondence, transcriptions, tapes, memos, and notes, were stored in a locked file cabinet or, during transport, a briefcase accessible only by the researcher. Digital data was

encrypted and password protected. Individual interviews were recorded on a tape recorder or on a laptop with the consent of the participants, and cassettes were labeled with the date, time, and designated pseudonym of the subject (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Interview recordings were transcribed by a third party for increased efficiency and reviewed twice by the researcher to confirm transcription quality. Before transcription began, that third party signed a confidentiality form. Additional data from interviews was recorded as researcher memos immediately after meetings were complete, in an established, isolated, on-site location to assure timely recording of data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Finally, field notes were entered into a research journal to reflect upon daily data collection, research methods, and ongoing analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

### **Researcher Perspective and Bias**

Understanding bias was critical to ensuring that the proposed study reflected the voices of the student participants being studied and limited the influence of my personal beliefs and perspectives. My personal biases come from two sources: my experiences working with student leaders and student organizations, and my research on emotional leadership for this study. In the late 1990s, I worked as the staff advisor to several student groups at two different universities. In these roles I developed a belief that student leadership experiences were an important component of college student development. I observed different leadership styles and advantages and disadvantages of each. I also watched students change over time and believe that their leadership experiences contributed to these changes.

While working with these student groups, I was exposed to and began to do research on emotional intelligence theory. I identified potential connections between the emotional

intelligence literature and the student leaders I observed and worked with. Continued research on emotional intelligence and emotional leadership has added support to this belief, and it has helped me gain perspective on the role of emotion in leadership. This study will need to be conducted with constant reflection on these personal biases. My beliefs about student leaders and student organizations, as well as the role of emotional leadership in organizations must be acknowledged and considered throughout the study to allow for a credible description of how students make meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences.

### **Credibility and Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, care must be taken to avoid influencing the study and data with personal biases, assumptions, and perspectives (Patton, 2002). In this study, the researcher built in three specific steps that increased trustworthiness and research credibility. First, as the overall research design was developed, the researcher reviewed each section for any mention or indication of his assumptions, experiences, and beliefs. The researcher's perspectives and biases were considered while developing the initial interview protocol and the leadership profile survey, and leading questions that appeared in initial drafts of these documents were removed because of this constant reflection and review. The same careful consideration by the researcher was continued through the data collection and analysis processes. Upon completion of interviews, the researcher reflected on his potential influence on the data, and he made note of any recommendations for subsequent interviews.

Second, prior to data analysis, the researcher bracketed the conceptual framework to avoid the possibility for biased coding. After the first round of open coding, the researcher

reviewed the highlighted statements and emerging themes, looking specifically for hints of researcher bias or assumptions. In addition, the researcher revisited the interview transcripts often to confirm that the data supports the codes. Comparing the bracketed conceptual framework and the researcher bias statement with the written transcript and the emerging themes provided a level of extraction for the researcher (Merriam, 1991).

Finally, the researcher conducted member checks between the first and second interviews. Taking the data and analysis back to the study participants and asking if it was credible assisted in clarifying the student's voice (Merriam, 1991). Member checks took the form of summaries of key points from the interview.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in this multiple case study began with individual case analysis. At this stage of analysis, cases were treated individually, building categories and subcategories for each case. Data from surveys and interviews was first analyzed using open coding as a means to break down the data into categories and subcategories for further analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Each set of categories and subcategories was then analyzed using axial coding to confirm the initial categories and begin to develop preliminary themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) from the relationships seen in the data from the survey and interviews. Initial coding was iterative, continued through and responded to all stages of data collection, including leadership surveys, initial interviews, and follow-up interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Final individual case analysis began upon completion of data collection. Theoretical comparison (Patton, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1994) was used to compare categories established during initial data analysis with behaviors seen in the

Conceptual Model of Emotional Leadership, and the Mayer and Salovey (1997) Model of Emotional Intelligence to identify similarities and differences between the models and the individual cases (Patton, 2002). The exploratory findings from individual case analyses were presented as profiles of the student (Yin, 1994), highlighting key leadership experiences and the ways they made meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences.

Once individual case analyses are complete, cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1991) were conducted to develop a summary of the findings from the case studies (Patton, 2002). The cross-case analysis discussed key elements (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1991) of all participants' leadership experiences, comparing and contrasting individual cases (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) to create a composite of the individual cases. This multi-layered presentation of the case study helped to demonstrate the complexities, intricacies and nuances found when exploring the ways that students make meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences.

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

Chapter four presents the findings from an exploration of how students make meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences. The study was based on a Conceptual Model of Emotional Leadership, developed for this study through a synthesis of research on emotional intelligence in leadership, as previously discussed in Chapter Two. Based on the Mayer and Salovey (1997) model of emotional intelligence, the Conceptual Model of Emotional Leadership presents emotion-intensive leadership situations, behaviors and EI abilities as a framework in which to explore the ways that students make meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences.

Using this framework, the researcher focused participants' discussion of their leadership experiences on those emotions from a tacit perspective, without explicitly asking the participants to describe their emotions or feelings. Interviews explored participant-selected critical leadership experiences that related to the emotion-intensive leadership situations. Those situations were identified in the aforementioned Conceptual Model of Emotional Leadership that was developed for this study. This study explored the following research question and two supporting questions:

- How do students make meaning of emotion in their student leadership experiences?
  - How do students discuss their leadership behaviors in terms of emotion?
  - How do students understand, use, and manage emotions in their leadership experiences?

The findings of this study illustrate that the participants made meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences through four distinct approaches. The four approaches to making meaning of emotion in leadership experiences that emerged from the findings are as follows: (a) perceiving leadership as a stressor; (b) constructing an image of themselves as an effective leader; (c) finding fault with others' actions, and (d) building relationships with other leaders. This chapter includes profiles of each of the twelve participants, a detailed discussion of the participants' four approaches to making meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences, and a summary of the findings from the study.

### **Overview of Participants**

For this study, a purposive, criterion-based sample (Patton, 2002) of student leaders of large student organizations at North Carolina State University was utilized to ensure the inclusion of students with information-rich leadership experiences. Twelve student leaders that met the following criteria participated in the study: (a) multiple years of experience in a student leadership organization; (b) experience in a formal leadership role; (c) exposure to leadership training. One student leader that participated in the study did not meet the criteria due to one year of experience with university student leadership. However, he was included in the study on the recommendation from other participants and leadership organization staff advisers that he did have numerous leadership experiences with large student organizations.

The twelve participants ranged in age from 19 to 22. Eight of the student leaders were female, four were male, and there was racial diversity in the group. Six of the students were white, and the others were African American, Indian, or Asian Americans. All of the participants had informal leadership experiences and leadership training. With the exception

of Hal, at the time of the interviews, the participants each held an elected leadership position. Hal had recently lost the election for a second term in his position. (To maintain confidentiality for each student leader, their names and the names of their organizations have been replaced with a pseudonym or general term such as, “the group.”) The following student profiles provide participant demographic information, an overview of their leadership training experiences, a review of key leadership experiences, and each student’s perspectives on the role of a leader. (See Appendix D for a matrix showing how the participant’s description of their leadership experiences map onto the different approaches the students took to making meaning of their emotions in their leadership role.)

### **Student Profiles**

#### **Elizabeth**

Elizabeth was a white female in her senior year, majoring in Biological Sciences, working toward a career as a doctor. As a freshman and sophomore, she did what she thought a good student would do. She worked to get good grades, joined organizations that would add to her resume. Those groups included student government, an honor society, and a few academic organizations. In general, she floated through school and focused on having an enjoyable time. At the end of her sophomore year, she went on an alternative spring break trip, and that experience dramatically changed how she viewed herself as a leader. From that point forward, she shifted her focus to take on leadership roles that would allow her to bring similar life-changing experiences to other students.

After her intense and rewarding spring break trip as a sophomore, Elizabeth volunteered to lead an alternative spring break trip in hopes of giving other students the same

impactful experience. As the trip's leader, she placed the needs of others before her own, and she overworked herself to ensure the other students had the life-changing experience she had on her first trip. She admitted enjoying the second trip much less, but she felt that sacrifice was worthwhile because she was able to impact others through her work.

Elizabeth saw the role of a leader as someone who provided opportunities for others. She often placed others first and took on more than she could reportedly handle, all to make sure tasks were completed in her way. She was a self-proclaimed "chronic volunteer."

When working in a leadership group, she would finish her own work, and then volunteer to help her peers complete their work too. While the extra work was draining and difficult for Elizabeth, she was willing to do it to ensure that the group was successful.

At the time of the interview, Elizabeth was trying to find a balance between overworking herself and continuing to have a positive impact as a leader. She liked to keep herself ahead of deadlines and was not comfortable working on a project at the last minute, even if others she worked with preferred that way of working. On many projects, Elizabeth chose to step into the project leader role and assign duties and deadlines simply to make sure the group got the work done on time. When her group members resisted her challenging schedules and deadlines, she did the work of others rather than compromising.

While Elizabeth felt success with her assertive and proactive approach to leadership, she wanted to stop working in this manner. She learned to step back from her need to get things done on her time frame in her leadership roles and learned to be more accepting, collaborative and flexible. Her experiences of doing too much for everyone else created stress and problems for her, and she did not want to deal with those self-inflicted problems

again. Becoming a leader changed Elizabeth's thoughts about her future. Once, she planned to become a doctor, but with the profound experiences she had in service to others as a leader, she felt the need to make a shift in her future to incorporate this aspect of her college career into her future.

### **Nancy**

Nancy was an African American female senior who was majoring in social work. As a leader, Nancy placed emphasis on developing future leaders and training other student members. To accomplish that, she became the executive board member of a student organization which selected and trained students to attend state, regional, and national leadership conferences. Students who wanted to attend and present at these conferences were required to submit applications that she then reviewed. She took great pride in creating a new system to ensure impartiality in selecting the strongest candidates. Finally, she worked to build the selected students into a team that represented their organization and university well. She found personal satisfaction when her students had a successful conference experience. Part of her mission to develop new leaders involved pushing them to try new things. She felt it was her responsibility as a leader to push them to try new things, but also provide enough support that ensured that they would be successful.

A leader, in Nancy's view, was responsible for making long-term improvements in the organization, rather than just maintaining the status quo or making changes for the short-term that would not have a lasting impact. In one of her leadership positions, Nancy took it upon herself to add to the duties of her position. When a new person came on to train for Nancy's position, Nancy spent extra time in the training. She felt that it was important that

the new person continued the tradition of high performance and that the new person recognized the value of that position within the organization.

Nancy thought of a leader as someone who was not afraid to do things differently from past practices. In fact, she saw that understanding as a necessary leadership trait, one that would make the organization or group better. She was not afraid to fight for her position or her views on a controversial issue, even if it was unpopular. In one of her leadership positions, Nancy stood up to the rest of the group when she thought they were making a bad decision. Ultimately, the group acted in opposition to Nancy's wishes. She was angry and disappointed, but she pushed aside her personal feelings for the good of the group, taking on additional responsibilities, and trying to help her group figure out how to proceed and finish out the rest of the academic year.

## **Jay**

Jay was a white male in his senior year majoring in Political Science. Jay's interest in leadership centered on politics and government, so he was heavily involved with the campus student government. He said that he had little interest in being the most visible leader, and instead preferred to work as the "man behind the scenes." In this way, he perceived that he had power to lead and make decisions in the organization leader's name. However, he did not have to deal with the public scrutiny or accountability that comes with being the leader of the organization.

Jay's past experience in the political world included work with the deputy mayor of a large metropolitan city in the southeast and a federal nuclear regulatory commission. His position at the time of the interview was working with the student body president. Jay had no

formal leadership training, but believed himself to be savvy at managing others and managing situations so everyone came to the decision he wanted. He found success in taking on greater responsibility than someone in his position traditionally had. To cement his position in an organization, he worked hard to be the “go to” person by sacrificing his social life and remaining on call at all times. He builds on this reputation so that others think of him as someone who is indispensable and can be relied upon to make difficult decisions. After an incident when hate speech was painted on campus after the election of President Obama, Jay helped the student government officers think through their response, including how to address the situation. The event took precedence over his other daily activities, even to the point of him writing and sending out emails during a class. At a time when an appropriate but careful response was necessary, Jay stepped up to help the organization leaders figure out their response and actions.

Despite his lack of formal leadership training, Jay said that he knows how to manage others in a way that makes them feel appreciated and understood. However, when describing interactions with others, he demonstrated that he is more focused on his own experience.

While other students described the impact they could have on others, Jay’s leadership choices were more about power and advancement. He was putting in the time to build a resume of experience, so he could move up to higher government positions at the college level and beyond. He placed himself in a king-maker role, a leadership position that is critical to his organization. To maintain this position, his top priority was his work, and he readily admitted that his work comes before his friends, family, and school.

## **Velma**

Velma was a female of Persian/Indian descent. She majored in Biochemistry. As an undergraduate student, she was quite active on campus, and she participated in multiple extracurricular activities including club sports, academic clubs, and honor societies. In addition, she was a residence advisor for one year. She held leadership roles in nearly all of these organizations. To Velma, a leader should increase effectiveness with efficiency. She often employed this strategy in her leadership roles, but she suggested that her ideas about efficiency changed during her years as a leader.

In some of her early leadership roles, she thought that efficiency meant getting the job done, rather than delegating and sharing duties with her followers. For example, she and her fellow co-president led the gymnastics club for three years. She found that initially, they had difficulty communicating effectively with their group. In addition, she and her co-president were not yet comfortable delegating tasks to the group. In subsequent years, she and her co-president learned how to be better leaders and include their group in the activities and work of the organization.

As a leader, Velma tried to be carefree and relaxed, focusing on the positive aspects of her experiences and finding ways to learn from her mistakes. Getting caught up in the personal problems of others is a distraction and took up too much energy and time. Instead, Velma tried to find other ways to build relationships with her peers and followers, adapting to work with them better. While she was surprised by follower reactions to her own behaviors, she attempted to find solutions that she could look back on as positive or

satisfactory. She admitted to having a difficult time with one of her peers, but she framed those difficulties as a learning experience.

### **Paul**

Paul was a white male sophomore majoring in Criminology. As a leader, Paul viewed himself as a relaxed, laid back person. He is someone who accepted events or occurrences as they happen, rather than becoming overly upset or involved. His attitude about unfolding events was in direct contrast to his peers. It was important to Paul that he to be different, flexible, even a bit rebellious. In his role as group dissident, Paul was able to bring up issues that the group overlooks. During a meeting, for example, Paul noticed that one of the members had something to say but was having a difficult time inserting himself into the conversation. Paul singled this person out and gave him the opportunity to speak. In the end, that person's statement swayed the rest of the group, and Paul felt that he had taken the initiative to include all viewpoints.

Paul found satisfaction in keeping a level head during a crisis situation. During a group event, for example, he realized that the student leader in charge of the event had failed to order enough food. Paul described how the student leader was getting increasingly upset about the situation, and he stepped in to take charge and ration the food. While the other leader lost her perspective, Paul remained calm and handled the situation, and he did this by realizing that the event was of no great importance. Paul tried not to take anything too seriously or to assign anything too much significance. His leadership experiences, however, tend to revolve around upholding rules and laws and as such, he participates in organizations that feed into on his interest in criminology.

Paul saw the benefits of being relaxed in his leadership role, but he does get frustrated when others do not agree with his decisions. Paul described an experience when he had a disagreement with his advisers. During the summer months, Paul trained for a marathon, but that marathon occurred on the same day as his organization's training day. When Paul informed his group and the advisor that he was going to run the marathon rather than attend the group training, his advisor expressed extreme disappointment and was angry at Paul. Instead of shrugging off the adviser's displeasure, Paul felt angry at the unwarranted and extreme reaction. However, Paul framed this experience as a learning experience, deciding that had he communicated with his advisor better, they would have understood Paul's position. He learned that the delivery of a message is just as important as the content of it.

### **Anne**

Anne was a white female senior majoring in Business Management. She held leadership positions in several campus organizations including a volunteer oriented group and a campus planning organization. To Anne, leadership was a stressful endeavor, because it required skills in managing others, working through difficult issues and problems. She was goal and product oriented and saw success in the completion of projects or tasks. As a leader, she viewed her role as manager, employing time management strategies like lists and prioritizing, delegating and motivating her followers. She did all of that to make sure everything goes smoothly.

When asked about an experience in which she emerged as a leader, Anne described a classroom situation. For one of her classes, Anne had to work on a project with a group of her classmates. Because Anne was a high achiever, she was the student that stepped forward

to lead the group. She assigned tasks and checked on the progress and quality of the work being done. She went on to discuss the aspects of that leadership experience that did not go well.

One of her greatest leadership challenges was managing the members of her team. During her various leadership roles, she focused on the development of her communication and leadership style. Over the two years, she learned that open and honest communication with team members is critical to the smooth operation of the organization. She described different situations in which her team members argued during a meeting, and as the group leader, she had to step in and work with each member to manage the situation. In addition, she described a situation in which one of the team members sent out an angry email, which created more conflict. Anne had figure out a way to work with the student who was angry and teach that student how to communicate more effectively.

Anne, so focused on success, had to come to terms with what she saw as failure when a follower would not discuss his feelings with her. She knew he was angry about something, but he refused to talk to her about it. In her role as leader, she learned that people do not always listen, nor do they always want to be helped. While she accepted that this type of interaction happens and could happen to anyone, she also wondered if the role of president was the right position for her. These difficulties push Anne to think that a lower leadership position may be better suited for her.

### **Mike**

Mike was a white male sophomore majoring in Applied Sociology. Despite his status as a sophomore, Mike had already held a variety of leadership positions, founded an

organization, and participated in leadership training programs. As a gay student, Mike focused on gender identity and sexuality awareness on campus, and many of his campus organization experiences deal with educating his peers about these issues. For example, Mike participated with the university student government in an unofficial role, and he believed that it was his duty to make sure that the gay student voice on campus was represented. In fact, Mike described himself as “Gay for pay.” In other words, as a gay student leader, it was his job to be openly gay and to take an active role in representing this voice on campus. Mike felt that it was his duty to speak out whenever other students in the organization are demonstrating intolerant or prejudiced behavior.

Mike was reflective as a leader, trying to learn from experiences in class, with friends, or in other roles, to inform how he thought about his actions as a leader. He was interested in leadership and often thought about it. He was recognized by advisers as an up-and-coming leader and felt as though he was being groomed and encouraged to do great things. He has been invited to meetings and trainings that are uncommon for students his age to attend. He has been through leadership training which has helped him develop his personal leadership vision.

As a leader, Mike was more interested in his own feelings and actions than he was about his followers. More often than not, when reflecting back on an incident, Mike focuses on how he felt rather than on how the other person may have reacted. When he does speak about others, he mentions the adults that he encountered in his leadership positions, such as advisers or administrators. He wanted to be seen as a peer to these adults rather than as a student. He was still proving himself as a leader to himself and others.

Mike's leadership role was unique among the other study participants. Mike was been elected or appointed to this position, but instead chose to work for a cause that will serve the community. As such, he did not have the support that is found by others by being part of an organization. He also did not have prescribed organization goals or structured tasks and expectations that allow him to feel a sense of short-and long-term accomplishment. Instead, he simply pushed himself to work more and work harder, even to an admittedly unhealthy level, in order to make a difference for his cause.

### **Brenda**

Brenda was an African American female in her senior year majoring in Communications. She held several leadership positions in an academic organization, in a student hall council organization, and in a health and wellness group. Brenda's main approach to leadership was to be confrontational. That approach included speaking her mind or saying hard truths, regardless of how it makes other people feel. She openly admitted to enjoying confrontation with others.

To Brenda, a leader should set high expectations and hold followers to high standards. For example, Brenda once took the initiative to organize the group, plan, and coordinate some activities in her residence hall. While she planned these programs and events, she also took on the additional work of the hall council, since the other students were not putting in the effort. Brenda confronts these students about their poor effort, and then simply took over their work. When she had problems with another student, she preferred to dismiss them and take on the work herself. She was not interested in giving followers a second chance, but rather saw the process of confronting them about problems as her method of leading. She

identified the issues, asked them to respond, and asked them to consider her comments.

Brenda continued to take on leadership roles and was working her way up into higher leadership positions in a student housing organization. She spoke about her leadership experiences in terms of the burdens and hardships she faced. She focused on the negative side of her leadership duties which include the difficulties in keeping everyone on task, the extra work that she takes on because others neglect to do the work or do a poor job, and the annoying people with whom she must work.

### **Sally**

Sally was a white female junior majoring in Chemical and Textile Engineering. She had been elected to a leadership position in a student government organization for two years in a row. In addition, she participated in an academic organization that focused on her field of interest. Sally's prime motivation in being a leader was to champion her pet cause—saving the environment. Being a leader gave her the opportunity to influence and educate others about the environment. In fact, that was how Sally became a leader. She was a member of a committee that traditionally was not active. It focused on an issue about which Sally is quite passionate, so she stepped in to provide more energy and vision for the group. She wanted to increase environmental awareness, so she developed skills and behaviors that would help her as she tried to organize the work and the members. While that effort was not her official role in the group, she wanted to see the group succeed, so she took on a greater leadership role.

Sally participated in and demonstrated various leadership behaviors, from managing her team to training future leaders. For instance, she described how she consulted with a new

committee leader, gave him guidance in his new role, and encouraged him to act with confidence. Her motivation in filling these leadership roles was not about being a leader. Unlike many of the other study participants, Sally expressed no interest in developing her leadership skills. Everything she did in her capacity as a leader was to further her cause. Indeed, she felt that her contribution to the cause was taking on a leadership role to help make the organization run more smoothly.

### **Mai**

Mai was an Asian female senior majoring in Zoology. She held leadership positions in her hall council for two years and in a student governing body for one year. Before she held those positions, she was a general member of both organizations for multiple years. Mai made meaning of her leadership through the connections and positive interactions she made with others. For example, Mai once joined an organization in large part because one of the group's leaders came up to her during an event and thanked her for coming. The positive interaction helped Mai feel that she could be a part of the group. In another instance, Mai enjoyed her experience in a group because she was able to work with a friend.

To Mai, a leader was hard-working and went beyond what was expected. While Mai tried to do this, she also expected others to do the same. In addition, Mai looked forward to the recognition and praise she receives when she works hard. Mai described her early work in the hall council. She joined the group, and she quickly noticed that the other members and the residence advisers were not active. She felt that the Council's work was important to the residence hall, so she started doing more and more work for the council. Ultimately, Mai

was disappointed when the council members and residence advisers failed to recognize her extra work. Instead, she felt that they almost took credit for the good work she was doing.

To be a good leader, Mai invested a lot of her time and energy into the group. In addition to being recognized for her strong efforts, she expected to be treated as an equal and wanted to be respected by her peers. At times when she did not receive the recognition and support she expected, Mai felt upset with the group. Her reaction to this feeling was to pull away from the group, demoting it to a lesser priority. She was aware that this reaction conflicted with her view of a hardworking leader, and she struggled with her withdrawal from the group since she defines herself as the leader who works the hardest for the organization.

### **Hal**

Hal was an Asian-American male junior majoring in Business Administration. He held leadership positions in a student governing organization and in a leadership development organization. In addition, he participated in other organizations on campus that were volunteer-based as well as business-oriented organizations. Hal had a strong interest in leadership development, and in addition to his work in the leadership organization, he attended multiple leadership workshops sponsored by a campus leadership development center. At the time of the study, Hal had lost an election for his current position, and he was disappointed with the results while also wondering what to do next. His disappointment colored his discussions of leadership, and he focuses on the role of others in supporting him.

He looked at leadership as a supportive role. A leader, according to Hal, performs work necessary to support the team and organization. Hal valued loyalty and trust in the

people he works with, and he tried to have a friendly relationship with those around him too.

This expectation of friendliness among leaders was so strong that he was surprised, confused, and hurt when he did not have positive interactions or support from his peers.

Hal talked about leadership successes in terms of the relationships that he had with others. He talked about the support, friendship, and respect that came with a good working relationship, and he compared that to the way in which some of the team members did not seem to value his contribution. In addition, he questioned others' motives for being leaders and holds expectations that all leaders should love the organization they are in and love the role they hold as leaders.

### **Katie**

Katie was a white female junior majoring in accounting. She held leadership positions in a student governing organization and in an honor society. In addition, Katie participated in other academic and honor societies on campus, as well as an alternative spring break program. She participated in leadership training programs sponsored by some of her organizations, and she attended a leadership program hosted by a leadership development center on a different campus.

At the time of her interview, Katie had recently moved into the role of president in her organization, after the previous president resigned unexpectedly. She saw her new role as one that should focus on building relationships and making connections throughout the group. She specifically made an effort to address lingering hard feelings, distrust, worry, and disagreement with the organization's leadership change, and she attempted to work through those issues with her peers in frank discussions and team building activities. These activities

gave her the opportunity to learn more about the rest of the organization, and she specifically took the initiative to share personal information with the group in an effort to make more meaningful connections with the other members. Her leadership behaviors build on this principle of making connections and supporting others, whether it was a small gesture or a difficult discussion.

### **Findings**

The participants of this study used four approaches to make meaning of emotions in their leadership experiences. Those approaches included: (a) perceiving leadership as a stressor; (b) constructing an image of themselves as an effective leader; (c) finding fault with others' actions, and (d) building relationships with other leaders. A brief overview of each approach and the contexts in which these approaches were applied are presented below and in Table 4.1.

The participants of this study made meaning of emotions in their leadership experiences by *perceiving leadership as a stressor*. They focused on the emotions that they experienced from the pervasive and ongoing stresses of leadership, as well as the emotions that occurred due to the stress of specific situations. Participants anticipated and even accepted some negative emotions simply as part of the stress of leadership. In some cases, the stress was connected to the role of being a leader and the workload, energy, and difficulties of taking on such a significant role in addition to the normal responsibilities of a student. In other cases, stresses developed from a specific incident or event. In both cases, the participants developed techniques and strategies to cope with the emotions they experienced due to leadership stress.

Participants also made meaning of emotions in their leadership experiences by *constructing an image of themselves as an effective leader*. In taking this approach, they made meaning of their emotions by presenting their behaviors and feelings, both negative and positive, as an aspect of effective leadership. Some participants constructed their image of an effective leader around the impact they had on their peers and the community.

Table 4.1: Participants' approaches to making meaning of emotion and contexts in which those approaches were applied.

<b>Approach 1:</b> Perceiving leadership as a stressor
<b>Context 1:</b> The pervasive stress of being a leader
<b>Context 2:</b> Situation-specific stresses
<b>Approach 2:</b> Constructing an image of an effective leader
<b>Context 1:</b> Having an impact
<b>Context 2:</b> Establishing and maintaining control
<b>Context 3:</b> Learning from shortcomings and failures
<b>Approach 3:</b> Finding fault with others' actions
<b>Context 1:</b> Poor performance of others
<b>Context 2:</b> Unexpected reactions from others
<b>Context 3:</b> Disagreement with others' decisions
<b>Approach 4:</b> Building relationships with other leaders
<b>Context 1:</b> Learning about others
<b>Context 2:</b> Giving and receiving support
<b>Context 3:</b> Accepting differences

Others viewed the role of an effective leader as someone who could maintain control of themselves and others. Finally, some participants' image of an effective leader included an understanding that they learn from mistakes and missteps as a way to develop and improve for the future. By constructing images of themselves as effective leaders, the participants were able to understand, justify, and manage the emotions they experienced as a necessary to being effective in their leadership roles.

In addition, participants made meaning of emotions in their leadership experiences by *finding fault with others' actions* and connecting their emotions to the problem situations that were the fault of their peers, fellow leaders, and organization advisers. In some cases, this occurred when members of their organization performed poorly, and the participants had to take on extra work to avoid failure and deal with the individuals that did not perform well. In other instances, students' emotions were the result of unexpected reactions from their team members. These most often took place when the participants were giving and receiving feedback from their peers and advisers. Finally, some of the emotions were the result of disagreeing with others' decisions and the processes in which those decisions were made.

Participants used the act of *building relationships with other leaders* as an approach to making meaning of the emotions in their leadership experiences. The processes in which student leaders built relationships evoked both positive and negative emotions that were used to make new connections and build relationships among the participants and other leaders.

One of the ways participants built relationship with other leaders was by learning about their peers' interests, histories and personal lives to find commonalities. Participants also related to their peers by understanding, accepting and adapting to differences in leadership

styles. Finally, the participants made connections with other leaders that they supported or mentored new leaders and when they received similar support from other leaders.

### **Perceiving Leadership as a Stressor**

One approach that participants used to making meaning of their emotions was to perceive leadership as a stressor. In doing so, they were able to understand negative emotions such as anxiety, apprehension, frustration, and anger by reminding themselves that leaders inherently experience more stress due to greater responsibilities, more difficult decisions, and heavier workloads than other students.

Participants perceived leadership as a stressor in two contexts--when dealing with the pervasive stress of leadership, and when handling situation-specific stresses. They recognized that stress was pervasive in a leadership role. They needed to cope and manage stress over the long term. They often struggled with the pervasive stress of the leadership role and sought ways to escape their leadership role before they became overwhelmed by their leadership position. They also recognized that many leadership situations generated short-term, intensive stress in the moment, and some participants developed techniques to manage their emotions during those situation-specific stresses.

**The pervasive stress of leadership.** The role of student leader was consuming for the participants. At times, the constant stress and responsibilities of being a leader in a student group caused participants to become frustrated, annoyed or disappointed with some or all of their peers and group members. The constant stress and responsibilities filled the time they had available beyond classes and coursework. Participants acknowledged that a sense of stress went hand-in-hand with being a leader, and they developed strategies to

manage the negative emotions that came with the pervasive stress of leadership. They did this in four ways. Some participants sought to change their perspective or alter their perception of their leadership role. Others developed structures and processes in an effort to limit the stress. When the stress became nearly unbearable, participants managed their emotions by temporarily escaping their leadership role and spending time doing non-leadership activities.

Some of the participants dealt with anxiety, anger, and frustration by attempting to change their perspective or altering their perception of the leadership role. For example, Mike said:

For me, if I'm really stressed, I start attributing things negatively to everyone...

[Instead, I should ask myself,] "What happens when you have a good day? How would you look at it then?" I look at it as I can change my [negative] emotions.

Mike understood that his overall mood affected how he might perceive events or actions of others. If he was feeling happy, it may have been easy to ignore or forgive a peer's thoughtless remark. If, on the other hand, he was already feeling anxious or nervous, that same thoughtless remark may make him feel angry. In his role as leader, Mike acknowledged to himself that his mood could affect his actions and decisions, and his awareness and self-reflection of this dynamic was one of the ways he managed his negative emotions.

Anne also managed the stress of leadership by reframing her perspective on her leadership role. Anne's stress as a leader stemmed from a history of sometimes failing to reach her goals to her level of satisfaction. She suggested that she managed the worry and

anxiety of that stress by focusing on her past successes. Instead of letting stress about failure overwhelm her and affect her current performance, Anne reminded herself to look at the whole picture of her leadership, noting that the sum of successes in her college career outweighed the failures. She said:

I looked back on my leadership experiences and saw what I accomplished, and I learned not to let things bog me down and not take things as personally sometimes. Part of it is that I have done it, and I did a pretty decent job at it. I could have done better but with the time allowed and the stuff that happened, I'm never going to be perfect.

Looking at the bigger picture was Anne's way of changing her perspective. When placed against the backdrop of her entire successful leadership career, Anne could not view the situations as a failure. In so doing, she found a way to resolve her feelings and limit stress of attempting to be a perfect leader. Mike and Anne both exemplified the type of leader that used thoughtful self-reflection to change their perspective and manage the negative emotions that come with the pervasive stress of leadership.

Another way students sought to manage the pervasive stress of leadership was by developing processes and routines that would keep them from feeling out of control, behind, or unorganized. Processes and routines, such as creating a list or setting self-imposed deadlines, allowed the participants to balance negative emotions from stress with the positive emotions they felt when they successfully completed a process. Anne was also a good example of this type of leader. Over her three years in leadership roles, she had developed processes to control most of her stress. She said:

I think if I set smaller goals, I feel more accomplished than if I have a list of fifteen goals that need to be done, and I'm checking off one every two months. That list does not look like you've done much. But if you set four or five and you've completed those within a certain time, you can move on to your other ones. Always keep those in mind; but if you do the ones you've set [out to do, it] will boost your confidence and you feel like you've done something.

This technique allowed her to feel comfortable with chaos, as it provided a structure as tasks, responsibilities and activities piled up. She went on to say,

I like the feeling of chaos sometimes, especially when you're trying to get used to it.

I can handle, "Okay, this needs to get done now." I like that feeling of being rushed sometimes or feeling like you have a lot to do. And then when you get something done you are like, "Okay, that's done, check," and you can see what you've got done.

I can handle it. I can dive into it and be okay. I'm not saying it's not stressful. And at the end of the day, I'm not like 'Oh my gosh, what did I just do? That was so much work.' It's a good overall experience.

Elizabeth is another leader who developed routines and processes to manage the stress of being a leader. She used careful time management to give herself plenty of leeway to complete a project or goal. She said:

I think I just get very stressed out when I feel that it's not done on time. I'm involved, and I do a lot of things so I don't want to feel like I'm always cramming it in last minute. I just feel like if I get it done early I can look over it. I don't want to be rushed.

Elizabeth was aware that she was unhappy and anxious if her projects were completed at the last minute or were completed late. She used her awareness of those negative emotions as motivators to get her work done well ahead of the deadline, thus avoiding feelings of anxiety and nervousness. For this type of leader, managing time and workload was the key to tempering the ongoing stress that accompanied the leadership role.

Some participants found it helpful to manage stress by leaving the leadership environment to spend time with people who were not involved in their organizations. This time away in a different environment or with friends outside of the organization provided balance to the stress. For instance, Katie found it helpful to spend time with friends that were not involved in the group she led. She described how she was able to gain perspective and better understand her negative emotions by stepping away from the group to socialize with other friends. She described it this way:

I love the people here [in my organization]... Sometimes, I've got to get away from it... I see them all the time, and I enjoy hanging out with them. But I have that other set of people who could care less about [my leadership activities]. It's nice to have those people who don't really know all of the [group's problems and issues].

Anne gave another example, in which the opportunity to spend time with her friends outside her student group provided a much-needed sounding board for the anger and disappointment that came from the stress of being a leader. She said:

I know that I can vent [to them] about leadership... When I'm really upset, I'll talk to my friends outside of [the group] just to kind of vent. I can say every angry thing I

want, and then I kind of relax some, and then go talk to [the group's] adviser when I have a cooler head, and I am not venting.

Finally, some of the participants managed the pervasive stress of leadership by participating in physical activities as a way to escape their leadership environment. For example, Elizabeth saw running as especially helpful at times when she was feeling the greatest amount of stress from her leadership role. At these times, she would lose focus and become less productive and motivated as both a leader and a student. She said, "I zone out in front of the computer, Facebooking, I'm not doing my homework, and I need to do something, I just need to breathe, I need some relief." Running was a way to get motivated and pull her out of these high-stress instances.

Katie also used running as an escape, a time when she allowed herself to be alone and away from others. She said:

Running is my little stress relief... I get stressed out and grab my ipod and go for a very long run and forget everybody else around me. I know sometimes I look angry and pissed off at people – other people I know say, "You look really intense." I find that in running, I'm in my own little world, don't mess with me. But it's just stress relief.

Paul found cycling as a means to manage the stress of student leadership. Unlike others, he noted the importance of being outside while exercising and the impact of his surrounding physical environment in coping with his stress. He said:

I handle a lot of stuff internally, which I don't know if it's good, but that's another reason I exercise a lot. [It] is because of [the] stress, [that I like] cycling outside.

Nature's actually a part of the de-stress process for me.

In all of these examples, the negative emotions that came with stress were expected by the participants. They believed that stress was a part of being a leader. In fact, the student leaders in this study professed to feeling overwhelmed, out of control, or helpless at times. Awareness and acceptance of these emotions helped them develop effective strategies to manage the pervasive stress of leadership.

**Situation-specific stresses.** Participants were able to make meaning of their emotions by perceiving leadership as a stressor at times when there were situation-specific stresses. Student leaders in this study described specific situations that made them anxious, frustrated, or angry. They were able to be prepared for and manage those sudden emotions by reminding themselves that leadership was a stressful endeavor. Participants suggested that intense emotions from high-stress leadership activities were managed with two different techniques. Some students used strategies designed to help them pause and collect their composure to avoid reacting poorly. Other student leaders relied on the presence and input from others to help them manage the situation-specific stress.

As situations arose that evoked strong and immediate emotional reactions, some participants identified ways to deal with these emotions in the moment. These participants looked to control their reactions, using techniques that helped them to pause, step back from the situation, and collect their composure. For example, Mike said, "When someone pisses you off, you count to ten. I love it. It's straight out of my communications textbook." Paul

used a similar technique to manage his stress in the moment. “I just take a deep breath and understand that it’s not a life-threatening situation.” Both Mike and Paul were examples of the type of leaders that focused on these times as an opportunity to use their leadership skills to manage their negative emotions rather than feel overwhelmed.

Similarly, Jay managed his frustration with the group’s inefficiency by giving himself time to think before reacting negatively. He said, “I have to wait, and I have to slow down when it's not working... I can't get bogged down in an argument.” Mike, Paul, and Jay all exemplify the type of student leader who dealt with the intense stress of a specific situation by reminding themselves to pause and regain their composure before they acted in a way that would have caused more stress.

Another way that participants managed their emotions during specific, stressful situations was by relying on friends to support them and keep them in control of their emotions. When they were dealing with anger or frustration, they looked to their friends to keep them from becoming too emotional or acting in a way that contributed to the stress of the moment. For example, when Brenda experienced anger and exasperation, she recognized her emotions, but did not control or manage them. Rather, she relied on her friends to step in and help her. Brenda said,

[I have trouble] keeping my cool because I can be a hothead at times. When I feel myself get hot, and I’m looking at a person [who is making me angry], I think, “I’m about to slap this person.” Most of [the time] my roommates are around, so they’re like, “Go ahead, and step back.” I don’t hide my emotions at all. The person I’m

usually pissed off at can probably see it as well because I'm not a person who masks anything.

Participants also relied on their friends when experiencing disappointment or sadness during stressful times. For example, after Hal had lost an election, he looked to his friends to help him overcome his disappointment and sadness. He said,

They were there to support me... It was a special moment definitely. You have friends that are there to support you and just to let me know that I would still be special to them.

Participants prepared for and accepted both the ongoing pervasive stress and the sudden, situation-specific stresses that came with being a leader. To manage the ongoing, pervasive stress, they developed strategies that helped them work with and sometimes escape this stress. At the same time, they implemented techniques that helped them respond to situation-specific stresses. However, even with all of their effort and awareness, stress was seen as an impediment to their work and a challenge to manage.

### **Constructing an Image of Themselves as an Effective Leader**

Participants constructed an image of themselves as an effective leader in order to make meaning of the emotions they experienced in their leadership role. For instance, the participants were able to appreciate and justify both the positive and negative emotions that they experienced when realizing the impact their role had on others. They were also able to take pride in the way they managed emotions when they had to control themselves and others. Finally, the image of themselves as an effective leader allowed them to reframe their mistakes into learning opportunities, thereby overcoming disappointment and sadness.

**Having an impact.** Participants constructed an image of themselves as effective leaders, in part, by working in leadership roles that had an impact on others in their community. They felt pride in having an impact in two different contexts. Some students worked to have an impact on individual students in their organization. Other student leaders focused on having an impact on the campus community as a whole. In both cases, the image of themselves as an effective leader allowed them to make meaning of the intense emotions they felt when making mistakes, managing a heavy workload, or succeeding in having a positive impact on fellow students or the community

Some participants chose to work in leadership roles that allowed them to have an impact on individual students. Elizabeth, for example, had an impact on individual students by creating a meaningful experience for them. As a sophomore, Elizabeth participated in a service-oriented spring break trip and found the experience to be meaningful and life-changing. She said:

After that trip I just felt so enlightened. I know I learned how much more I needed to learn about myself to grow. I was just floored at the feelings I was feeling as far as service. When I got back to school... I wanted to do everything.

She led subsequent Spring Break trips for the following two years to help create equally meaningful experiences for other students. The positive feelings that she received from this leadership role were a significant motivator for Elizabeth. When talking about her efforts during the interview, Elizabeth's tone changed. She was excited and much more animated while she spoke, indicating her joy with the impact she had on her fellow students.

Those feelings of joy and pride were tempered for Elizabeth when she became a leader and engaged in future service learning trips. When she took on the leadership role, she anticipated that each trip would be as enjoyable and meaningful as her first trip. She found, though, that the positive emotions that she felt in her leadership role were not nearly as intense or gratifying, as when she was a participant. She also realized that her increased responsibilities brought on a level of anxiety that she had not experienced when she was simply a participant. She said, “I was freaking out just because I thought, oh my gosh, I’m responsible for all these people! When I went on my first trip, I was only responsible for myself.”

The happiness that came from helping other individual students motivated her to continue in this leadership role and made up for the anxiety and frustrations that came up in her job. On the last day of one of her trips, a few students expressed what the trip had meant to them. She said:

They were great. The one thing I wanted to get out of that trip is I wanted those people to feel how I felt on my first ASB trip, and that was that it’s changed my life. During the last reflection, I totally got that from some people. I was like, that’s it! That’s why I did this.

Some of the participants found that they could have an impact by taking on a role with responsibilities to the campus community as a whole. For example, Paul, a member of the campus honor council, identified the importance of having an impact on the campus community. When discussing his position, Paul spoke with satisfaction about the responsibility to represent his peers and about the authority given to him to make

decisions that upheld community standards, saying, “I like the responsibility. I feel really important. I feel like I’m really contributing to the greater good. That’s why it’s really fulfilling.”

In contrast, Paul felt anxiety in connection to this important responsibility. He knew that he would have to make decisions that would affect the future of a fellow student, but he also felt responsibility to be effective in his role. He said, “You have to make this decision in your head. You have to keep in mind that you’re representing 30,000 people. It’s kind of a big weight.” When these responsibilities created anxiety and stress, Paul, like other student leaders who saw their role as having an impact, reminded himself that he was working for the greater good of the campus community. He was part of a group that upheld the honor code for the university. The importance of the role outweighed the negative emotions Paul experienced when he had to make difficult decisions. He said:

You learn how to make decisions. Sometimes decisions aren’t easy. There will be times where it’s emotional and parents are involved... It’s some pretty crazy stuff. I really like it. It’s one of my favorite things.

Mike was another example of a student leader who constructed an image of himself as an effective leader, in part, though the impact he had on the campus community. He took on a leadership role in an effort to better the campus community as a whole. Unlike Paul, Mike’s leadership role was less formal, prescribed and directed. Instead, Mike made a thoughtful choice to take on leadership roles as a gay male student leader, activist, and advocate for gay rights within his peer groups. He saw the need for such a person on campus, saying:

I tend to look at this as a societal problem. If we have one instance [of hate speech], then yes, you can look at it as one or two students acting out. But when I walk through the tunnel every day and see ‘Faggot’ or ‘We don't like gay people,’ we have to look at this and start saying, hey, maybe we should treat this in a different way.

This choice to take on an advocate-leader role created a struggle for Mike in seeing himself as an effective leader. First, he took pride in his ability to lead, to be knowledgeable, and to have the skills that allowed him to impact other student leaders around this social justice issue. He felt that if he could change student leaders’ thoughts and behaviors, they would also impact the greater campus community in his cause. He said:

I don't know how to describe it. It's an ‘aha’ epiphany moment. You just see that student who pauses, they think and then they get it. That's one of the most rewarding things. ...Yes, I feel like I see other students that have those moments, they think more critically and don't take things just at face value. I can see that.

However, Mike’s perceived failures were especially poignant for him, since he believed so strongly in this issue. It was more difficult for Mike to shrug off mistakes or small failures. He once watched as two students thoughtlessly made homophobic remarks after Mike had carefully discussed the issue with them. Mike said:

That was a very trying moment because I had been talking to them about homophobia and their language and how they make bigoted statements within the [group]. And they [still] don't see how that's unacceptable. I tend to internalize problems like that and look at it as a reflection of myself...And say what am I not doing right, because this student doesn't see it [my] way.

The importance of having an impact on the community was substantial for Mike. When his efforts did not achieve the results that he expected, he felt an intensified burden of sadness and disappointment in himself and others. He was able to temper these feelings of failure by reflecting on other successes, but in the moment, the importance of having an impact made any setbacks feel like failure.

When thinking of themselves as effective leaders that had an impact on others, participants' emotions, both positive and negative, were intensified. They took pride in their important leadership work either with individuals or for the campus community as a whole, and their successes often balanced out the anger, frustration, or anxiety caused by the role through the knowledge that they are making an impact in their role.

**Establishing and maintaining control.** Participants made meaning of their emotions by constructing images of themselves as leaders who could control their own emotions and the emotions of others during difficult situations. Participants felt this was an ability that an effective leader should possess, and they made that clear when they portrayed themselves as the “leader in control.” They stated that they controlled their emotions when problems arose, and they demonstrated different approaches, motivations, and understandings of strategies to stay in control when they encountered problems.

Some student leaders established and maintained control of themselves by purposefully remaining calm and positive when others were panicked or overwhelmed, thus allowing them to fix problems and complete the work of the group. Some student leaders controlled their own negative emotions in an effort to support others in the group. Other student leaders controlled their own and others' emotions in a way to engineer their desired

outcome despite a dissenting peer. Finally, some student leaders used a display of their own intense emotions to control others who would rather avoid confrontation.

Some student leaders constructed an image of themselves as an effective leader by maintaining control of their own emotions while others were overwhelmed. For example, Paul saw himself as an easy-going leader with a positive attitude. He did "...not take things too seriously... It's this idea in my head that everything is going to work out." When problems came up and others became anxious, angry, or frustrated, he kept the situation in perspective to make sure he did not engage in these negative emotions. "Even if something isn't going as planned, it doesn't seem like the end of the world for me by any means." He took pride in his ability to remain calm and resolve problems when others were unable to do so. He said:

I understand what happens when people aren't rational... Everyone gets real riled up about stuff. It's like the most important time to think rationally is when no one else is... I'm pretty good at thinking rationally in that kind of situation. That's something I take pride in.

His enthusiasm in relating this success story illustrates that this was Paul's view of how an effective leader manages himself and others in difficult situations.

Velma also valued control in a leadership role, viewing herself as unflappable, someone who managed her emotional response to difficult situations. She said, "It takes a lot. I don't really get upset." Like Paul, she chose to not get caught up in others' negative emotions, but she rationalized it differently. Velma viewed getting upset as a waste of time and energy. She said:

I think I've learned you can't make someone care. Because if you're going to get upset, then you can be channeling all that energy into just being efficient and getting things done. I mean you can spend three hours upset or you can spend thirty minutes and just get done what you need to get done.

In both cases, Paul and Velma did not let others' emotional reactions to difficult situations affect them. They felt it made more sense for a leader to simply fix the problem and get the work done.

Some students controlled their emotions in an effort to be supportive to the group. For example, while Mai felt that a leader should control negative emotions in difficult situations, her motivation in doing so was to be supportive of others, rather than to get the work done. "Overall I try to not hurt people's feelings. It takes a lot for me to confront people too... I hold back a lot. I try not to hurt people as much as possible." In this way she felt that she was acting as a leader should act. She put her peers' feelings first and controlled her own emotions when problems arose, avoiding confrontation and complaints about others' work.

Some student leaders felt that they maintained control of their own emotions and established control of others' emotions to engineer a desired outcome. Jay felt that he managed others during arguments or confrontations by paying close attention to their behaviors. He then tried to control the interaction to get others to agree with him. He said:

[I can tell that] I've been able to disengage them and bring them back down. And then get them to see my point of view, my perspective, and start working towards what I want to accomplish. And in the end, it's what I want and not what they want,

but because I use “I-messages” it feels like to them they’re getting a bit more. Their body language changes. They’ll go from crossing their arms to just having their arms down. Or if they’re sitting, their body language will adjust and also their [comments] will start to change.

Brenda also felt that she was able to establish control of others’ emotions to engineer a desired outcome. However, unlike Paul, Velma, Mai, and Jay, she chose to use negative emotions, such as displays of anger and frustration, to control problems and difficult situations. She valued confrontation as an important tool to ensure work was done the way she wanted it done. She said, “I’m a very confrontational [leader]. I think I actually enjoy it sometimes. It doesn’t bother me.” She acknowledged that the enjoyment she found in this approach is unusual among her peers. However, she valued taking an aggressive approach as a tool to maintain control since others rarely argued back. She said:

Most of them didn’t like it but they weren’t going to say anything to me. I know that for sure... Maybe that’s why I never have a problem. I make sure that when I have a concern, I know what I’m talking about. And I can back it up so they don’t have much to say.

While displays of and successes with emotion control differed among student leaders, it was clear that the participants valued the ability to establish and maintain control as a trait of an effective leader.

**Learning from shortcomings and failure.** Participants understood that being a leader meant that they would fail or make mistakes at times. While they hoped to avoid such occurrences, they found ways to make meaning of their feelings of sadness, frustration, and

disappointment in making mistakes. When reflecting on shortcomings and failure, some participants made meaning of their emotions by acknowledging their feelings, but quickly shifted their focus to positive emotions. These emotions included hope, excitement, and satisfaction, because they believed they could learn and grow from their mistakes. Some participants did not view shortcomings as an opportunity to learn and grow, but instead they dealt with the negative emotions by telling themselves that the failure was beyond their control. Instead of taking total responsibility for the shortcoming and dwelling upon the failure, these participants acknowledged their failure, but also felt that they had done their best.

Some student leaders made meaning of their negative emotions after failure by looking for the positive side to the situation. For example, when Hal lost the re-election for his leadership position, he said, “I feel pretty bad. I feel really bad about that. But I'm looking forward to moving on and continuing my active involvements on campus.”

Another good example of a leader making meaning of mistakes as positive opportunities could be seen with Velma. As a new leader she was unprepared for the administrative duties of her role, and she had not been trained to understand the processes and procedures for these administrative duties. Rather than dwell on her disappointment, she shifted her focus on the improvements she made after these mistakes. She said:

Yes, [the failure] was a big [disappointment], but it just meant that we knew why it was important. And the next year we were on top of our game and found a calendar and made sure that we found the forms and knew what was due. And we [were successful] the second year.

While failures and mistakes created frustration and tension for the participants, they presented these situations as opportunities that would contribute to their leadership growth and learning. In this way, negative emotions such as sadness and disappointment became part of the positive experience of learning from mistakes that then contributed to their construction of an image of effective leadership.

Some participants made meaning of the sadness and frustration they felt from their shortcomings and failures by viewing them as something that was beyond their control. In doing so, they were able to maintain their image of themselves as an effective leader, even when acknowledging shortcomings and mistakes. For example, Anne demonstrated frustration with her peers when they would not work with her to resolve their problems. She said:

There's a point where you can only do so much and people are going to do what they want to do no matter what you have to say. You can't control everybody. There comes a point that you've done what you could do. You've tried. You've made an effort. If they don't give anything, you really can't do much. I try to not take it too personally.

Anne expressed her frustration with this situation, but she also justified her emotions as the result of something that was not within her control.

Velma also felt some shortcomings were beyond her control when she was addressing a problem with a group member. She had to accept the negative feelings of the other person as they reacted to Velma's criticism and acknowledge that they were beyond her control. She said,

You can't change a person's personality. So if somebody is going to feel that way then you have to learn to accept it and know that it's not you and be okay with that.

Be okay with someone being upset with you if you need to tell them something.

Velma resolved her frustration by accepting that she was not responsible for another leader's actions.

In summary, the act of constructing images of themselves as effective leaders allowed students to understand, rationalize, and resolve emotions that might otherwise be difficult to manage. The process of constructing images of themselves as effective leaders was iterative and developmental. Their images of effectiveness provided an approach to making meaning of emotions they experienced as leaders. At the same time, their leadership experiences played a role in the ongoing development of their images of themselves as effective leaders.

Participants took pride in being the kind of effective leader who had an impact on others. They also felt that maintaining control of their emotions and sometime the emotions of others was an important aspect of effective leadership. They related incidents when they were able to maintain control when others were unable to do so, as a way to convey their own leadership effectiveness. Finally, when they did not achieve their goals or they made mistakes as leader, they resolved their feelings of disappointment by quickly framing their mistakes as positive leadership experiences.

### **Finding Fault With Others' Actions**

The behaviors, actions and decisions of others were often the source for emotions of frustration and disappointment, as well as intense feelings of anger at times. When others performed poorly, reacted unexpectedly, or made poor decisions, the participants were able

to understand their negative feelings by finding fault and placing blame on others' behaviors. However, they were not often able to manage their negative emotions as easily as they had through other approaches to making meaning of their emotions. As such, they found themselves still carrying unresolved feelings of frustration and anger about these incidents.

**Poor performance of others.** Student leaders often encountered other student leaders or peers who performed tasks poorly. When that poor performance affected the participants, they felt anger, frustration, and disappointment and blamed these feelings on the fault of others' actions. Participants managed these emotions in different ways based on the extent to which the other student leader performed poorly. Some of the participants simply expressed anger and distress when they encountered another student leader not following through with proposed actions or taking credit for others' work. Other participants found themselves frustrated when they encountered an incompetent peer but did not confront the peer about their poor performance. Finally, some participants openly acknowledged their disappointment in a peer's poor performance by confronting that person. No matter how the participants chose to deal with their peer's poor performance, the participants felt varying degrees of anger, frustration, and annoyance in these situations. However, they also felt pride in the fact that they were able to handle their own work or any additional work that others had neglected. As leaders, these students felt responsible for group work that was not completed, so despite their frustration, the participants tried to compensate for the poor performance of group members.

Some of the student leaders felt anger and distress when they encountered another student leader who would not follow through with their plans. Brenda, for example, was

especially angry with people who acted as though they were involved during meetings but then did not take action or follow through. She said:

I hate when people try to give their input at meetings, but they don't show up to any events. They don't even come to one event! I'm like, why are you trying to boast like you're so dedicated when you're not? Why fight for something when you don't even come to it? I was like, if that's the case then just shut your mouth, and don't say anything!

In other instances, student leaders acknowledged their significant frustration when another student leader or peer took credit for work that another person had completed. For example, Brenda encountered people who would take on more work than they could complete. It made her angry to have these people burden the group with extra work and then take credit for the completed project after other people stepped in to finish the project. She said:

That just drives me crazy when people bite off more than they can chew. When it comes to the end of the day we still have to get it done and you said you were going to get it done and you know what the timeline is. If you can't do it, then don't bite off more than you can chew. That just pisses me off. And the people who try to pass off work as their own and they try to present it and act like they did the work. I'm just like no, no, no. That pisses me off. Don't take credit for something you didn't do.

Brenda's feelings were similar to those of the other participants, but unlike other participants, she did not hold back. Instead, she readily displayed her anger with her peers' behavior and

the intensity of her anger helped her to demonstrate the importance of the issue of poor performance.

Nancy provided another example of a student participant who felt angry when someone took credit for work done by others. The president of Nancy's organization had suddenly resigned. As a leader in the group, she voluntarily started taking on some of the responsibilities of the president. However, she felt like she was neither recognized nor compensated for the extra work she did as the group elected a new president. She said:

We all kind of had to step in and just take over the duties of the president until we were able to elect a new one. So I kind of felt like I was president because I helped run the meetings... [The new president] got the position because no one else wanted it and not because she deserved it. Because of that she had a title, extra money and someone like me doing her job for her. So that was just kind of frustrating.

Mai also provided an example of this type of frustration when a group member would not perform up to Mai's expectations. In this case, Mai continued to do the work of the group, and she was angry that her efforts went unrecognized while the other group member got the credit. She said:

I don't like it when people take credit for things they don't do. The president only showed up every now and then, [and when she did], I was like, really, you're not president – I'm technically president now. Even though I don't have that title, I've been doing the work.

Some participants also felt frustrated when they perceived others as being completely incompetent in their assigned role. For example, Nancy had an issue a peer who was not performing his job well. She described how she felt when she continually encountered the same problem. She said:

I spent a lot of money because we travel. We go to places and we need things done and I have to spend money for conferences. If I'm having to spend my own money, I need reimbursements, and you're supposed to do it in this time. If you're not doing it in a fast enough time, I'm going to get frustrated. I wouldn't have to be reimbursed if you [did your work] like you said you were going to do it or if you knew how to do the stuff that you were supposed to do. That was frustrating.

Nancy recognized her frustration at the situation, but she chose not to share her feelings with the person who was letting her down. Instead, she let her emotions impact her relationship with him.

In other instances, participants were frustrated and angry at another person for not doing the work and simply stopped asking that person to do any work. Velma, for instance, felt frustrated when someone did not do the work they said they were going to do, and after this happened a few times, she gave up on that person all together. She said:

I trusted you to do it and you didn't do it... Then later on in the trip, I just stopped asking them to do stuff and just did it [myself] because it's like, you give them a chance, you give them a chance, and then the third time it's like, alright, it's my fault for being stupid.

When she delegated to someone who failed to do the work, Velma regretted her choice and acknowledged her responsibility as the leader to complete the work no matter what.

Anne also stopped delegating to a poor performer in her group as a way to manage her frustration. Instead she used her feelings of frustration to motivate herself to get the work done. She said, “I was angry and a little upset, and [I] just realized that no one else was going to step up, and obviously they haven’t yet. So I needed to do something and just kind of get it done.”

Other times, participants felt more disappointment than frustration when others did not perform expected responsibilities of their leadership roles. For example, Nancy’s organization had expectations that group leaders would attend and participate at events planned by the group. When one of the members continually did not attend, she was disappointed with him and became frustrated with the group as a whole. She said:

He didn’t have a reason not to be there. Other people had families and personal things going on at home and they would come and talk to me in advance. He just didn’t show up. And the week before that, [at a big event] he didn’t show up. I was like this is not acceptable if I have to come to all the programming events. Or if I have to help you guys out in your positions and you are expecting me to be there, I would expect the same. So that is where it’s kind of been frustrating for me.

Finally, some participants perceived their frustration and disappointment with others’ poor performance, and also shared their emotions with the offending student leaders. For example, Mai experienced a time when she felt disappointed in a team

member. While she helped to pick up the extra work, she also made sure to sit down with this person and discuss her disappointment. She said:

For someone to be so interested in my position, and who had talked about it for a whole semester, I expected a lot more from him, a lot more commitment to get his work done well, a lot more focus. And then also because he had been in so many other types of organizations... I expected a lot more organization from him because of that. And I discussed that with him. I said this wasn't work that I expected from him.

In this situation, Mai had trained someone to take her place, but he was performing his assigned tasks poorly. Mai was disappointed in this person, but she also took the time to meet with him and share her concerns with his performance as a way to manage her emotions.

**Unexpected reactions from others.** Participants usually tried to avoid unexpected reactions in their leadership experiences. However, in some cases, the participants were surprised by the way other student leaders or even advisers reacted to their decisions or feedback. Sometimes the participants found that other people misunderstood remarks and over-reacted, so the participant spent time trying to come to an understanding with the other person. In these situations, the participants not only had to make sense of the emotions of the other people, but they also had to manage their own emotions that were evoked by the unexpected reactions. Other times, student leaders managed their emotions in an unexpected situation by dismissing the other person's reaction as unfounded or unnecessary. In these cases, the students considered their own actions, and when they could see nothing wrong

with the way in which they had conducted themselves, they felt it acceptable to dismiss any negative emotions that they may have felt from the situation.

Some participants, upon experiencing a surprising reaction to her words, spent time trying to come to an understanding with the other person. For instance, Velma had to confront a fellow team member with whom she found it difficult to work. The team member responded in anger, and Velma, upon seeing this unexpected reaction, suggested that she used patience and understanding to calm the team member's anger so they could find a way to work together. She said:

It just kind of blew up. I don't know. It could have been something I said, and I told her I didn't mean it in that way if I came across in that way. But after a while we sorted through it ...I said, "I'm not asking you to do this all by yourself and fix it. I'm here, I'm going to help you. I can – you know, we can work on this together." And it kind of settled down and we worked through it.

Other participants felt taken aback by an unexpected reaction, but then dismissed that reaction as unfounded. For example, in her role as leader, Anne had to deal with an angry team member. Over her years as a leader, she learned to approach unsatisfied team members directly. When she approached this team member, however, he refused to discuss the source of his anger. His reaction surprised and frustrated Anne because she could not help fix the problem. His reaction also embarrassed her as this encounter was noticed by the other members in the group. She said:

I could tell [he] was upset at me or whoever at the conference. And I was like, "Are you okay?" He was like, "No, I'm fine." I said "You've been looking off,

and I've been watching you all day, and I don't think you're okay. I want to know what's going on because maybe I can help you get through it." He was not really receptive to that. I was like, "Well, if you aren't going to tell me then I'm going to go on like everything is okay." There are some people who won't talk to you or tell you anything.

I got upset with him for not telling me what was wrong. He's kind of hinted at stuff or there are cryptic clues of why he's upset but he won't actually tell me.

I'm not upset that he won't tell me, it's just that everyone else in the group is noticing it, and I wish I could make it better. If it's something the group is doing or something is going on, if he would let me know, maybe I could fix it.

While Anne talked about her frustration that he would not talk to her, she had even greater frustration that she was unable to resolve the problem. She used this unexpected reaction and behavior to understand her failure to fix this problem.

Velma also provided an example of a passive approach to handling unexpected reactions. She described a situation in which she failed to anticipate how others would react to her comments on the design of an event flier. She said:

The feedback that we had given for the fliers was, 'We would like it if it had less words in it.' And then there was just uproar... The students really thought it was a personal attack and reacted very differently than I would have imagined.

In this situation, Velma felt that her feedback was reasonable. The unexpected response from others was the cause for the disagreement and the anxiety for Velma, but upon reflection, she felt she could not have acted in another way.

Participants were even more taken aback when advisers responded in an unexpected way. Student leaders had a higher expectation of understanding and supportive responses from their staff advisers. Paul, in particular, was surprised at his adviser's unexpected disapproval and intense confrontation when Paul chose to forego the group training in order to participate in a sporting event. The intensity with which the adviser showed his disapproval not only surprised Paul, but it made him angry and resentful. He said:

I didn't think [my decision] was going to be a big deal, but everything went chaotic. They were like, "We're really disappointed." ... I didn't really appreciate that. I felt like I was being interrogated or something. These are people that I feel close with. They're advisers and stuff. I understand that it was disappointing for them, but they'll be all right.

The part of this interaction that affected Paul the most was the intensity with which his advisers reacted. Paul thought that his decision was of little importance. Thus, when his advisers were, in Paul's opinion, disproportionately angry, Paul dismissed their behavior as unfounded.

In other cases, participants concluded that the situation was not their fault or that it was beyond their control. Shedding themselves of responsibility gave them a simple way to divest themselves of the negative emotions. For example, Brenda described a time when she confronted and complained to another student leader, and that leader did not show remorse as Brenda anticipated. Instead, the other leader dismissed Brenda's complaints. Brenda said:

She just kind of had an “I don’t care” attitude. She’s like, “Whatever.” She just didn’t care, and we were just like “Well, we said our peace. Goodbye.” As long as I got to say what I had to say off my chest, I’m good.

In this situation, Brenda was frustrated, and attacked the problem directly. When her normal approach did not work, she dismissed the person and the situation. The unexpected and dismissive reaction from the other person disappointed Brenda and frustrated her further.

She was ready to confront and complain to the other leader, and instead she ended up with a less than satisfying exchange.

**Disagreement with others’ decisions.** Student leaders made meaning of their emotions by disagreeing with some of the decisions they observed other leaders making.

While the participants often felt frustration and annoyance in these situations, they managed their emotions in a variety of ways. Some of the participants allowed the decisions to stand without comment, and they internalized their own displeasure. Other participants made a point to argue with the decision maker in hopes of changing the outcome. In these instances, the participants ultimately backed down if they realized they could not change the outcome, admitting further frustration and disappointment at their inability to alter the decision.

When some of the participants heard decisions with which they did not agree, they allowed the decision to stand without comment. Mai, for example, became increasingly frustrated at the decisions the organization president was making and at the way he was treating the rest of the group. As a member of the group’s leadership team, not only did she disagree with his decisions, she took issue with his refusal to consider other opinions voiced by the group. She said:

So for [the leader] to act high and mighty and say that he can make all these decisions on his own, but yet doesn't include all the other people who work just as hard or even harder, I didn't feel like that was very appropriate. I have always been a team player in that you discuss it with everyone and everyone has the same knowledge and knows what's going on and stuff.

When she described this situation, Mai was clearly agitated, her voice rising in pitch and volume, while she shook her head. She did not voice her dissenting opinion to the president in that moment. Instead, she managed her negative emotions by characterizing the president's behavior as bad leadership and reminding herself that in her leadership role, she would behave differently.

Sally disagreed with the actions or decisions made by another, but also avoided direct confrontation when one of her team members wanted to penalize Sally for missing a deadline by six minutes. While Sally openly disagreed to the rest of the group, she did not press for a satisfactory resolution, and instead, she walked away from the situation wondering about the other person's true feelings. She said:

Sometimes she can be very happy and then other times she can just be mean. I guess it's just hard to tell with her when she's serious and when she's being sarcastic. I remember one time I came to the office and it was the day after [our meeting] and the applications were supposed to be submitted. They were supposed to be submitted at midnight of that day. I submitted mine at 12:06 a.m. and some other people obviously told [her]. She was thinking, I think we should just throw out every one who's turned theirs in late. I told her I didn't agree, but

she sounded very serious about it. She's like 'that's my opinion.' I still cannot figure out if she was being serious or not. It just bothered me that she was being that way.

In contrast, some participants spoke up when they heard decisions with which they did not agree. Jay, for example, experienced times when he disagreed with the organization leader, and he confronted the president directly to share his concerns. He took satisfaction in the fact that he voiced his opinion in these situations. However, once he understood that he could not change the president's mind, Jay resolved his frustration by reminding himself that the leader makes the final decision. Jay described a particularly intense debate, saying:

The discussions will get heated, and ultimately, I have to back down because I work for him. Ultimately it's his call and I'm just there to provide advice and general council to him. If he says don't do it, well, I can't do it.

Some participants were more argumentative when they disagreed with the group or a group member. Nancy, for example, once disagreed with most of the other members of her group about the selection of a new president and their desire to select the current treasurer/finance officer for this position. She said:

I was looking at it from the standpoint that [the president] resigned. Someone [else had] to move into his position, but the finance position that she is leaving is more important and vital to the organization... That's what I looked at... Why not think of it in that way? No one really saw it that way but me, so that was frustrating.

After the decision was made, and some time had passed, Nancy felt that her concerns had been justified, and that her fears had played out. She said, “I fought them tooth and nail up until the end... Because the new finance person’s not going to know what to do. And that’s what’s happened. The person just doesn’t do the job right.” Moving the finance person into the president’s position resulted in some difficulty for the organization as Nancy had predicted. In this situation, Nancy managed her anger by balancing it with the satisfaction that she had been correct.

In these instances, the participants made meaning of negative motions such as frustration, anger and disappointment as a component of working with others as a leader. In some instances, they were able to resolve their emotions positively, whether through confrontation, discussion, or simply realizing that they were right. Regardless of the outcome, the participants saw their emotions as stemming from issues that were the fault of others actions.

### **Building Relationships with Other Leaders**

Participants made meaning of emotions in their leadership experiences as a necessary component of building relationships with other leaders. When building these critical relationships, participants justified the intense emotions of joy, happiness, and even sorrow or disappointment as part of the process needed to build and strengthen relationships. The study participants found that learning about their peers’ histories, interests and personal lives brought them closer by finding commonalities among the individuals in their group. In addition, the formal and informal support that they found by being part of a group provided not only feelings of joy and happiness, but also a sense of belonging that helped them to deal

with the intense emotions they experienced when interacting with other leaders in their group. Finally, they found that learning to understand and accept differences helped to establish connections and ease tensions within their organization.

**Learning about others.** Student leaders work with other student leaders and other students every day. While participants sometimes found the actions of other leaders frustrating, they discovered that they could manage that frustration by taking the time to learn about the other leaders. Not only did they manage any frustration, they often found satisfaction in the better relationship that resulted when they had reached a better understanding with the other leader. Some participants were more passive in their approach to learning about other leaders. They reflected on the actions and differences that they observed in another. Other participants were more active in their efforts to learn about others. Not only did they carefully consider the actions of the other leader, but they also shared personal information with the other leader in an effort to find some common ground.

Some participants described instances when they were frustrated with the actions of another leader. In some of these instances, the participants handled that frustration by trying to understand and accept those actions. For example, Hal worked with people who had different reasons for being part of the group than he did. These differences frustrated him, and he wondered, “Do they really love [this group] or do they just love it for the resume line and the compensation that comes with it... It really frustrates me if someone does that just for compensation.” Even though Hal disliked some others’ reasons for being a leader, he found a way to understand them and relate to them by admitting, “I mean, who am I kidding? I probably would do it for my resume too. But it’s just sometimes you do, but you just love

it too and you want to do that. Just not to put on your resume.” As a leader, Hal valued passion and commitment in his fellow group members and leaders, but he also accepted that other leaders might have different priorities. Learning this about other leaders and accepting this behavior helped Hal temper his frustration.

Katie, like other participants, also found that better knowledge of another leader not only helped her relate to the other person, but it also gave her the opportunity to adjust her tone or attitude toward another leader. For instance, she found that she could interact more effectively with her followers if she understood more about their personal history. Learning and knowing something about their histories kept Katie from feeling frustrated or angry at other leaders’ seemingly strange behavior. She said, “[It helps] if I know that someone is having a horrible day, that it might be because of other stuff behind it, and not necessarily schoolwork being crappy, but family issues or stuff like that also plays into it.”

Nancy provided another example of the value of taking the time to learn about others. In this instance, Nancy’s efforts to learn about another leader not only helped her work more effectively and provide better direction for others, but her new understanding brought satisfaction and contentment. She took a group of students to a national conference. She learned about their personal lives, their histories, and what it was about the conference that made them feel excited and motivated to be more active in the group. She described one student in particular; a student who often felt that he was outside the group. While at the conference, this student found other students with similar interests, and he felt that he suddenly belonged. Nancy took pleasure in his obvious enjoyment of the event she helped put together. She said:

[Many students are] so dorky and stuff like that. You can be the campus outcast, but when you take them to a conference they see all these other people that are just like them, and it's like they're at home. Just seeing people feel like they belong was really cool to see. I had a kid who did that last year. He was really emotional. He felt like he had found a home. It was really cool. At [the conference] we do a wrap up session and at the end of the day we go around and make a big line and give a toast and say what the best thing was. The guy was like "[This organization] is why I'm staying on campus even though it's more expensive for me to live on campus than it is off, [this organization] is the only reason I am living here again. I like this conference. It taught me a lot, and I can't wait to be more involved with it. I can't wait to go to the next one."

In this situation, Nancy understood that she had helped to create an experience that motivated this follower to stay in the group and to be a good worker. The participants made the effort to learn about others, and they used the information to make appropriate responses to others or adjust the way in which they handled different group members.

Learning about others and finding common ground was such a helpful exercise that some student groups specifically planned activities that provided opportunities for the student leaders to share personal information with their peers. When student leaders had a shared emotional experience, they found that they had created a bond with other members in their group. This bond helped them to be more effective as leaders by establishing stronger relationships with their group members. Katie, for example, described how her group organized team building activities to strengthen relationships within their group. She said:

We had a lot of team building activities and diversity things where everybody is kind of crying. In a way that helps. You don't want to say, yes, it's a good thing to bring your members to tears, but you realize from the little things that you share between people that you never know of and conversations get started. Just little things like that and really connecting with the group. I know when I got back after that I felt at home sitting in front of the [group].

As leaders, the participants found that understanding the emotions of their followers and helping the followers understand their leader's emotions was essential in creating strong relationships within the group. Training exercises often gave the leaders and their followers the opportunities to learn about one another and discuss feelings and experiences in a safe environment. Katie described a training exercise that helped her feel more affection toward some of the members of her group:

[The exercise] gets into more personal questions and it touches race, religion, sexuality, so forth. I know for me personally, my mom passed away from cancer at the beginning of my sophomore year. That was one of the questions that a lot of the [group] members didn't know about me. "Cross the 'line' if you've had a parent pass away." A couple of other people did too, and I had no clue about that type of stuff. You just have those little bonds when people come up to you afterwards. Sometimes people want the questions asked and other times they don't. It's one of those things where you say, what happens at retreat stays at retreat and don't use anything negatively towards anybody. With that activity when you see which people are actually standing in the middle with you and when

you sometimes think, “Oh, I’m the only one who’s had this.” You realize you are not alone and there are all these other connections.

In this instance, Katie described how the sharing of personal stories and experiences made it possible for her group members to feel compassion toward one another. The participants understood that the sharing of emotion could be helpful when leading others. Not only did it help the participants understand their group members and create positive relationships, but it made them appear more connected to the group as well.

**Giving and receiving support.** Participants made meaning of their emotions by relating to others in situations in which they were supporting new leaders and in situations when they were being supported by fellow leaders. In some instances, the participants supported or coached new leaders as part of their leadership position. Some participants provided support for a fellow leader by advising them on a difficult situation. Other participants found satisfaction and took pride in receiving praise from older and more experienced leaders. Finally, the participants took pleasure in praising their fellow leaders for good work.

The primary way student leaders made meaning of their emotions while giving or receiving support to others was by mentoring new student leaders. For example, Nancy worked hard to mentor the new students in her organization. Part of her leadership role involved choosing, training, and taking students to state, regional and national conferences. She found great pleasure when these students had meaningful experiences and successful programs at the conference. She felt it was her role to push the students into situations that

might not initially be comfortable because dealing with new experiences would, she believed, lead to personal growth. She said:

It was just interesting trying to build a community. It's not as easy as people think. It came down even to making seating arrangements, so that people who were in the delegation that were already close friends didn't end up in the same room together. You can request roommates, so I [thought] I can do it this way: Nan doesn't really know Sarah that well. Sarah doesn't know Nan that well, so let's put them together. And I'm putting Sarah and Martha together because Sarah and Martha are already roommates and best friends so they already know each other. This is about networking. The whole idea behind conferences is going there and making new friends, learning new things and bringing it back to the community. So just giving people the opportunity to come together in that way.

Nancy used this opportunity to help her peers get to know one another and establish her group's identity. She did this by recognizing that many of her followers would feel uneasy about being paired with someone they did not know, but that once her followers got to know one another, the group would be better for it. Nancy felt joy and satisfaction with her mentoring efforts, as she made connections and shared these developmental moments with new leaders.

Sally also experienced similar feelings of joy and satisfaction when she coached her group's newly elected leader to take her place. She felt passionately about the group's mission, and in encouraging the new leader to take bold steps. She was not only able to

make connections to him, but also develop greater connections to the leadership group. She said:

I want to make him grow as a leader... I just want to see him do the best he can. I told him at the beginning of the year that he's the leader of this committee so don't be afraid if someone is too ambitious. Don't be afraid to say no, we can't handle that.

Sally recognized that the new leader was unsure of himself at first, and she found satisfaction in her ability to help him find the confidence he needed to lead effectively. She said:

He seemed kind of timid at first and didn't know what to do [because he] was never in a leadership position [before]. I just let him know that, "You know, as the Chair, you are in a leadership position. If people are getting off topic, don't be afraid to say 'okay guys, let's get back on topic.'" You know? He seems a lot more able to lead a group now than he did at the beginning of the year.

Some participants supported others by advising them in difficult situations. As leaders, they were often aware when their group members were unhappy or angry, and they felt responsible for helping members deal with the situation. Anne once had a member who expressed anger in inappropriate emails to the group. Instead of disciplining the member, Anne used the situation as an opportunity to talk to the member about appropriate conduct and email etiquette. Anne coached the member and helped her understand that sometimes it is better to pause before rashly responding in anger. Anne said:

I could tell she was really angry when she wrote [those emails]. I told her I was guessing she realizes now that maybe she shouldn't have written that when she

was angry.... I understand being angry. It's a hard thing to learn to step back, and to write it in a way when you're angry. But we just want to get some answers and not be attacking [each other] and be professional about it.

In Anne's view, as the group leader, it was her responsibility to handle this situation, since the member responsible for the emails was upset, and since that member's emails were upsetting the rest of the group. Anne was able to relate to the emotions and behaviors of the unhappy group member, which in turn allowed Anne to provide useful advice to the member about managing his emotional responses in the future.

Some student leaders developed connections with others by giving or receiving praise and recognition. As leaders, the participants engaged in formal and informal recognition activities including large award ceremonies, leaving notes for one another, or simply acknowledging good work with a handshake or thanks. When the leaders made the effort to acknowledge each other and make positive remarks, the participants felt joy, satisfaction, and pride. Simple moments of recognition especially resonated with the participants. These moments felt genuine and often inspired the student leaders to work harder or participate more. Mai, for example, decided to join a student organization because the group's advisor praised her for good work. This informal recognition, and Mai's resulting happiness, influenced her decision to become even more involved in the group and ultimately take on a leadership role. She said:

I did really like the fact that certain people did come up [and speak with me]. I know the advisor came up and said 'Wow, you came out of nowhere. Thanks for continuing to come to our meetings.' That meant a lot.

Mai went on to describe the way older students also made her feel proud by recognizing and acknowledging her. She said, “There are those individuals who make it [worthwhile] when they say, ‘Hey, you know, thanks for coming,’ and stuff like that.” These simple, personal interactions gave Mai feelings of happiness that helped her connect with the group. When Mai re-enacted how the other leaders thanked her for attending, she added a warm smile, and was able to convey genuine pleasure. The older students made Mai feel included and delighted that her presence was noticed and appreciated. She felt that these simple gestures made on the part of the older student leaders helped motivate her to remain in the group and give her a greater sense of satisfaction about being in the group.

Nancy also remembered how a more experienced leader was able to make her feel comfortable and excited about being a member of the group. It was the president who encouraged her and supported her as she became more involved and took on a leadership role. She said:

I was really close to the president. He was the president last year, and he was one of the people that actually sort of helped me develop as a leader. When I came into [the group] he was one of the people that kind of just made sure I was comfortable and really encouraged me to open up and emerge as a leader. I was really shy and didn’t know too many people and was very quiet and very reserved. By the end of my first year in [the group], I ended up running for an executive position and got it.

Nancy, too, valued the steps this leader took to make her feel connected. She went from feeling shy and anxious to feeling exhilarated and delighted by her experiences.

Hal provides another good example of taking pleasure in praise from others. He found the most meaningful recognition in spontaneous gestures, and he planned to incorporate that type of behavior into his future leadership roles.

I mean giving a gift and saying ‘Hey, thank you so much for your hard work.

Here’s a gift.’ That’s not really meaningful to me. But when just one person comes up to shake your hand or give you a hug or whatever and talk to you about what you have done, it’s really pretty inspiring. It’s inspiring to you to the point that maybe I should challenge myself to do more. And to continue to be involved and continue to pitch in and lend a hand.

Finally, participants understood that giving recognition to others also resulted in positive emotions. Some of the student leaders specifically incorporated group traditions around praise and recognition to build positive feelings among their members. Katie’s organization started a recognition tradition in an effort to let each other know that they are doing a good job in their position. She expressed her happiness when someone told her that she was doing well. She said:

Every year we started doing this little thing where you have little mailboxes set up and everyone puts their names on them and the members just drop you little notes.

I had notes that said ‘Katie, you really stepped into this role now. I see you as [the leader] and you’re no longer [just a member of the team]. You are doing an amazing job with this.’ Little things like that helped out a lot.

**Accepting differences.** Student leaders expected to encounter people with different work styles, opinions, and motivations. These perceived differences often resulting in frustration,

anxiety, insecurity, and anger. Participants made meaning of these emotions and managed them in four different contexts. First, some participants acknowledged the differences to themselves, and then they found ways to adjust their own behaviors and actions. Some of the participants noticed the differences, and upon reflection decided that a different approach could enhance the work. Other participants worked to accept the differences, and went so far as to expect dissenting opinions as a way to limit their own disappointment or frustration. Finally, some of the participants made an effort to be aware of different opinions or ideas, and when they noticed these differences, they would engage the others in a discussion.

Some of the participants found that the best way to handle differences in work styles or actions was to adjust their own behavior. For example, Velma struggled with the way other people chose to update her and give her progress reports. Velma had difficulty trusting someone else to get work done. It was never clear to her if the work was getting done because the other person did not send Velma frequent updates on the project. Velma had to deal with this frustration and anxiety. Ultimately, she adjusted to the other person's work style. She said:

The other team leader was really terrible with the communications. I said, 'Please copy me on email. Like we are doing things twice every single time because I don't know that you're doing it.' And then she said, 'Well, you just get stressed. If I tell you three weeks ago that I'm going to do it, I'll do it.' And I said 'Okay.' That was really hard for me to know because a lot of people out there are like 'Oh, I'll do it' and then three weeks later they don't so that's just been the experience. So trying to unlearn that behavior and learn to trust her.

Other participants also found that they could learn from the other people they worked with and adjust to make the experience more enjoyable. These participants were exposed to different leadership styles and work styles, and the participants often tried to incorporate behaviors that they observed in others to be more effective leaders themselves. For example, Velma worked with a leader who was active, knowledgeable, and thorough. Those traits made her feel insecure about her own abilities, but since she also wanted to emulate his work style, she enjoyed a positive working relationship with him. She said:

I felt at times that I wasn't doing enough and I'd say, '[Bert], I'm sorry. Like I feel like I'm no help. I don't know what's going on,' and he was like, 'It's okay,' you know, and he would help me, and he was like, 'I'm working on the budget. I wanted to let you know what's going on.' He really kept me on my toes and tried to help me learn what was going on.

Mike provided another example of student leaders adjusting their behaviors in order to accept different work styles. He became frustrated with his interactions with a campus administrator who was awkward and stilted in his manner of speaking and presenting. Mike expected the experienced administrator to be much more practiced and to have easier manners. He was frustrated in meetings with this administrator who, Mike felt, was not listening to him because this administrator made poor eye contact. To deal with his frustration and find a way to have more effective interactions, Mike spent some time trying to figure out why the administrator acted as he did. He said:

When you are talking to him, he is looking somewhere else and is not engaging.

It doesn't mean he's not listening because I've realized that's just how he

communicates. I sort of looked into it because that just frustrated me. He wasn't a very good communicator, and I felt like as someone who is basically the CEO, you would think that he would have phenomenal interpersonal skills.

Understanding how other people act and feel helped Mike gain context for his emotions in interactions with others, and subsequently, he used this understanding to adjust his own behaviors, ensuring more positive interactions in the future.

In other cases, participants understood their leadership and work style differences could enhance their relationships with others because their skills could complement those of the other person. Hal, for example, worked with another leader who had similar interests. Hal and the other person had different work styles, but he said, "We blend well, and the things that we say to each other just compliments [the] other. And she's really good to work with. And I'm good to work with."

Participants cultivated an awareness of others or of group dynamics in order to manage the emotions of a group and help them understand each other's differences. In taking the active approach, they found that they could help their group work together. Katie managed her peers' frustration during a meeting in which decisions could not be made. She found ways to provide direction and calm their frustrations in order to bring the group together toward a solution. She said:

At one point... everybody started arguing. That wasn't working so we took a break and came back to it at the next meeting. We came up with more of a Rubik for it and a more standardized of [our group].... I made them cookies to make them a little happier, and it's a long meeting. We went back at that point and

made them put their individual numbers down and then compile that as a group to see where it stands.

Katie understood that her group was starting to feel frustrated and annoyed with one another, and she called for a break. Her awareness of the tension and high frustration levels in the room allowed her group to come back after a break and start to make better decisions.

Paul also demonstrated a cultivated awareness of different opinions, and he tried to create a discussion around the difference of opinions. In one instance, he recognized a peer's frustration during a meeting through that person's nonverbal cues. A member of Paul's organization was upset but the member did not feel comfortable speaking in opposition to the group. Paul saw the member's expression and called on him to speak to the group. Paul said, "I could tell he was kind of disappointed and his thing wasn't being said. What he wanted to say wasn't being said. I didn't know anything about him. I could just tell by his facial expressions." In this way, Paul demonstrated his ability to perceive the emotions of others, and he also felt some satisfaction in his ability.

Finally, participants managed their frustration by developing an understanding of the different priorities held by others. In fact, these participants purposefully expected others to have different opinions and priorities. These participants found that expectations of differences helped to lessen any feelings of disappointment or frustration that resulted from others' differences. For example, when planning an important event, Paul understood that people might not view his event to be as important as he did. Instead of feeling upset that his priorities were not the same as others, he prepared himself and shielded himself from disappointment by allowing for these differences and by being aware. He said, "I was like,

okay, I can understand some people aren't going to be as passionate about this as I am.

Everyone has different interests and everyone has different commitments.”

Similar to Paul, Sally, also dealt with disappointment at a lackluster response from her group members about an event that was important to her but not to them. Sally was not happy about other leaders skipping her activity, but she found that she could accept these differences as long as the others were doing something else worthwhile. She said, “It would kind of irritate me if I knew someone was at home watching TV while they could be helping, but I know they're all busy.” Understanding that others work differently and have different priorities helped the participants deal with emotions like frustration, disappointment, and anger.

### **Summary**

The findings of the study demonstrated that the student leader participants made meaning of the emotions in their leadership experiences by understanding them as an inseparable component of leadership. The participants took four approaches to connecting the emotions they experience to their role as a leader. They made these connections by: (a) perceiving leadership as a stressor; (b) constructing an image of themselves as an effective leader; (c) finding fault with others' actions, and (d) building relationships with other leaders. The findings of the study show that students perceived leadership as a stressor, and in so doing, they anticipated and even accepted some negative emotions as a necessary component of the role of leader. In some cases, the negative emotions were thought of as part of the stress from a specific event, activity or incident. In other instances, the ongoing and cumulative stress of leadership gave meaning to their emotions. Participants understood why

they might get mad, frustrated, happy, or excited more easily and intensely, as it was part of the stress that comes with the territory for a leader.

The participants also made meaning of emotions by constructing images of themselves as effective leaders. As part of being an effective leader, the importance of having a positive impact on their peers and community allowed the participants to understand and rationalize intense emotions from their work, as well as justify volunteering to take on significant responsibility and difficult work in their role as a leader. Participants also felt that effective leaders had to be able to establish and maintain control in difficult situations, which helped them manage their own emotions and understand those of others. Finally, participants were able to make sense of mistakes and failures as learning experiences that would help them in the future, because their image of an effective leader was someone who learned from mistakes.

The third approach students in this study used to make meaning of emotion was to find fault with others' actions in order to understand and resolve negative emotions that were the result of other people's choices, actions and behaviors. Some emotions were the fault of the fallout from others' poor performance, while other emotions were caused by unexpected reactions from their team members. Other negative emotions were the result of disagreeing with others' decisions and the contexts in which those decisions were made.

Finally, the findings of the study show that students understood and appreciated positive emotions and tempered their negative emotions as a result of being able to relate to and build relationships with other leaders. Positive emotions came from the commonalities they found with others when they learned about their peers' interests, histories and personal

lives. These commonalities helped the participants temper their emotions during difficult times because they learned about, understood, and accepted others' differences. Finally, they were able to appreciate the positive feelings that were the result of mentoring young leaders, giving and receiving support, and feeling connected to their fellow leaders.

Understanding how students make meaning of their emotions in leadership experiences is a complicated challenge, as it involves the exploration of personal feelings throughout a number of different types of leadership situations. To best learn about emotion in the student participants' leadership experiences, this study was designed to provide an opportunity for students to describe critical leadership experiences without explicitly being asked to discuss emotions. Participants' descriptions of critical leadership experiences and their behaviors as leaders led to opportunities to explore emotions within a comfortable, familiar topic. Most participants were able to draw connections between their emotions, their leadership experiences and the techniques and strategies that they used in emotion-rich leadership situations. The findings in this chapter, however, extend the students' discussion beyond simple techniques and strategies and present four overarching approaches that these students used to make meaning of emotions in their leadership experiences.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### Introduction

This qualitative multi-case study explored the ways that college student leaders made meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences. To this end, this study explored the approaches that students used to make meaning of emotion, the contexts in which the approaches were applied, and the leadership behaviors and EI abilities used in those contexts. The study was guided by the following research questions:

- How do students make meaning of emotion in their student leadership experiences?
  - How do students discuss their leadership behaviors in terms of emotion?
  - How do students understand, use, and manage emotions in their leadership experiences?

Chapter five presents the discussion of this study of emotion in student leadership. The chapter presents key findings against the backdrop of a Conceptual Model of Emotional Leadership. As previously noted, this model, based on the Mayer & Salovey (1997) emotional intelligence model, was developed for this study to identify emotion-intensive leadership situations and related leadership behaviors and emotional intelligence (EI) abilities as a framework for exploring emotion in leadership experiences.

The findings in chapter four illustrate that the participants made meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences through four approaches: (a) perceiving leadership as a stressor; (b) constructing an image as an effective leader; (c) finding fault with others'

actions; and (d) building relationships with other leaders. Each of these findings is discussed below against the backdrop of the Conceptual Model of Emotional Intelligence and related literature on emotional intelligence.

### **Perceiving leadership as a stressor**

Student leaders sometimes made meaning of emotion by perceiving leadership as a stressor in their life. The stress of leadership was perceived as an ongoing, pervasive presence of stress in a leader's life. Stress was, in essence, an expected component of a leadership role, and as such, strategies were developed to manage it.

When student leaders made meaning of emotions by perceiving leadership as a stressor, they used emotional intelligence to understand complex feelings (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) that occur in the context of the pervasive, ongoing stress of being a leader. In this context, the participants discussions suggested the use of two emotional intelligence abilities: (a) perceiving emotions and (b) using emotions to facilitate thought (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). First, they were able to perceive the emotions which resulted from the stressful leadership activities and situations and accurately identify that emotion. Second, after identifying their emotions, participants were able to use them to facilitate and encourage specific problem-solving strategies which they used to rethink, take control of, and find relief from the ongoing stress of being a leader.

### **Situation-specific stresses**

Leaders have been found to use EI abilities to analyze and prioritize the tasks and issues facing a group (Wolff et al., 2002, Pescosolido, 2002). While literature has focused on the value of a leader's analysis and prioritization of problems in terms of group management,

the student leaders in this study discussed the importance of analyzing and prioritizing their own, individual problems as a way to understand and manage their emotions. For example, one student reflected on a day when he was feeling stressed, and every interaction he was having with his peers was creating greater stress and anxiety for him. In this instance, he stepped back and considered why so many problems were happening on one day. He analyzed his own actions and feelings and realized that he was the source of his group's problems that day. Due to his stress about upcoming deadlines, he was anxious and frustrated, and he was letting those emotions impact his interactions with others in his group. No one could do anything correctly or fast enough for him, and he reacted to their work with frustration rather than appreciation. By identifying his emotions and understanding how the emotions were impacting his work, he was able to resolve the issues he was creating.

To resolve those problems, he decided that he didn't need to reduce his stress or change his emotions. Instead, he chose to change his actions so that he was acting as he would when he was not stressed, anxious or frustrated. In this instance, the participant described how he was able to identify his emotions, and use this emotional knowledge to detach from his emotions, adjust his behaviors, and resolve the problems he was creating within the group by being negative to others.

### **Pervasive stress of leadership**

Leaders are responsible for managing group processes such as prioritizing and planning, and the leader who can successfully guide their group through these processes can significantly influence their group's performance in emotion-intensive situations (Humphrey, 2002). In the current study, participants discussed abilities such as prioritizing

and planning. However they discussed abilities such as prioritizing and planning. However, they discussed those, again, in terms of their own needs and performance. For example, some of the student leaders in this study were aware that they did not perform as well under pressure and last minute stress. In an effort to avoid situations when stress-induced anxiety would impact their leadership abilities, they employed time-management strategies, made lists, or worked diligently to plan ahead, prioritize and avoid last-minute work. They also avoided working with others that would not plan ahead to avoid any last-minute stress. By implementing these proactive measures to avoid pressure and last-minute stress, these participants appeared to demonstrate the ability to perceive their emotions, use them to analyze and prioritize their responsibilities, and generate strategies to alleviate their stress and improve their group's performance.

### **Constructing an image of an effective leader**

The behaviors exhibited by leaders have a large impact on their perception as a leader (Daus & Ashkanasy, 2005), and individuals have particular, individualized behaviors that they associate with effective and ineffective leaders (Kellet et al., 2002). The participants in this study held similar perspectives, but applied their concepts of effectiveness to themselves. In so doing, they constructed iterative and evolving images of effective leadership that assisted them in understanding emotions that they experienced in their leadership roles.

The perceived effectiveness of a leader is based, in part, on the leader's ability to manage and understand their own emotions and the emotions of their group members (Prati, et al., 2003). Participants in this study suggested that they understood this construct of leadership effectiveness when they described themselves as effective leaders who understood

their own complex and sometimes conflicting emotions. In addition, they appeared to have the EI ability to regulate their emotions when they provided the group with a sense of stability by establishing control during intense, chaotic, or difficult situations. Finally, participants showed that they could regulate their emotions and those of their group when they experienced setbacks or failures by placing a greater emphasis on positive emotions and reducing the importance of the negative emotions associated with failure (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

### **Having an impact**

Participants' images of themselves as effective leaders were developed, in part, by the impact they have on other students and the campus community as a whole. They saw themselves as having an impact when they led high-intensity extra-curricular experiences; when they influenced campus-wide policy and rules; and when they affected social change among students on campus. In these leadership roles, it appeared that they had the EI ability to understand and analyze their own emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) in order to manage the increased intensity of emotions that came with high-impact leadership roles. Frustrations and disappointments were greater when leaders failed to have the desired positive impact on their peers, and joy and happiness were also increased when they felt success in having an impact on the campus. In either case, their ability to understand and analyze these emotions in themselves and others provided them with the emotional knowledge to behave as they perceived an effective leader would when having an impact on campus. These EI abilities of understanding and analyzing emotions, and employing emotional knowledge to inform

positive behavior, are important to leaders in decision-making, developing vision and establishing purpose and goals (Carmeli, 2003; George, 2000).

Carmeli (2003) found that EI abilities to analyze and understand emotions were helpful in improving decision-making processes. Similarly, the participants in the current study suggested that the ability to understand complex feelings was useful in internal decision-making processes. For example, one participant, as a member of the university honor council, was faced with the decision to have a student expelled. The participant saw his role on the honor council as being one of importance, and he greatly enjoyed being a leader who was charged with interpreting rules for the greater good of campus. However, his role also meant sometimes making decisions that would have a negative impact on an individual student, such as expulsion. In this case, the council chose to expel the student, and the participant resolved his conflicting emotions by acknowledging that the student had done wrong, and the decision was fair and in line with community standards. By being able to understand how these conflicting emotions of joy from being in this role, and sadness for potentially ending a fellow student's academic career, he was able to make a decision and also make meaning of the sadness and joy caused by that decision.

When developing a shared vision for a group or organization, leaders use EI abilities to understand and manage their own and others' emotions (George, 2000). Participants in this study appeared to use the same EI abilities to develop a vision for having an impact in their campus community. For example, one participant was passionate about his vision for improving the campus community for gay students. He viewed taking on this leadership role as the type of behavior that made him an effective leader. He worked closely with other

leaders to educate them on actions that were derogatory to gay students. He invested time not only in formal meetings, but also in informal setting, specifically addressing others' actions and explaining why their choice of words or actions were offensive. He invested a great deal of time in educating these students because he not only saw them as the leaders who could extend the impact of his work, but he also saw them as colleagues and friends. However, he struggled with disappointment when, after all of his work, he saw them at dinner treating another gay student poorly and making jokes at his expense. The realization of his lack of impact on these students was disappointing for him, so much that he disappointed himself when he was unable to find the energy to address the situation at the time. However, he later reflected on this experience and the disappointment he felt, to realize that his vision was to impact change so students would not experience this type of disappointment. He used that emotional knowledge to energize himself, move past his disappointment and increase his efforts toward achieving his vision of affecting change in his campus community.

Research on emotion in leadership also suggests that EI plays a central role in providing a collective goals for a group (George, 2000). In her analysis of emotion, mood, and leadership literature, George (2000) states that the creation of goals and vision for a group is enhanced by emotional intelligence, suggesting that leaders with high emotional intelligence will better be able to create goals for their organization. The experience of participants in the current study echoed this research. This was apparent in a participant's use of EI abilities to understand conflicting emotions of excitement and disappointment as

she worked to develop a vision for a group of students taking a service-learning trip during Spring Break.

The participant's experience in attending a previous trip such as this had a 'life-changing impact' on her, and now, as the group leader, she was very excited to have a similar impact on other students. However, she experienced numerous problems with bringing the group together and taking on a new role as leader instead of her previous experience as a group member. As such, her excitement for the trip was tempered by the disappointments she experienced when she did not feel that she had developed a vision or goals for the trip. It seemed that she was able to understand these incongruous emotions of excitement and disappointment, but was unable to use this emotional knowledge to manage her emotions and reconcile the feeling that she could still be seen as effective even though the 'life-changing experience' she had on her first trip was not repeated for her on this trip.

### **Establishing and maintaining control**

Student leaders in this study made meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences by constructing an image of themselves as effective leaders because they were able to establish and maintain control of themselves and others in emotionally-intense situations. As effective leaders, participants in this study saw themselves as maintaining a higher level of emotional control than other leaders. In some cases, this meant that they were able to maintain calm when others could not. In other cases, it meant that they could manage a confrontation by controlling and directing others actions and decisions. In these leadership situations where they maintained control, the participants appeared to have the EI ability to

reflectively regulate their emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) to disengage from otherwise intensely emotional situations, and maintain control of themselves and others.

The EI ability to reflectively regulate emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) has been shown to be valuable to leaders in keeping control as they need to provide certainty and security to the group (Pescosolido, 2002). When the group is facing a challenge, the individual who can manage their emotions to create a greater sense of certainty and security, is then seen by the group as an effective leader (Pescosolido, 2002).

The participants of this study also identified the importance of managing emotions to provide certainty and security. Some participants seemed to demonstrate the EI ability to regulate their emotions and used it to detach from emotionally-intensive situations in which everyone was “Out of control.” They saw this as “The most important time to be rational,” when others were not. In doing so, they were able to provide direction, establish control, and ensure that the necessary work was completed. For example, one participant discussed using these skills during a dinner activity that his group had sponsored for hundreds of people on campus. Just before the event was to begin, the group realized they had not purchased enough food. Several people panicked, including the student that was in charge of the event. When he saw her running around, crying, he decided that he needed to be calm and help to figure out a solution rather than act as others were doing. He found others who appeared calm and rational, discussed solutions, and then presented the solutions to the student in charge and executed. They purchased additional food from a different restaurant and resolved the issue calmly. In this instance, the participant seemed to show the EI ability to

reflectively regulate his own emotions and analyze the emotions of others to identify peers that would help him be effective in this situation.

Another way participants felt that they were able to use the EI ability to reflectively regulate emotions in themselves and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) was during conflict, as they sought to manage the conflict and reach a resolution of their liking. Leaders who are high in emotional intelligence are better able to understand and manage their own emotions, so they may be more likely to constructively resolve conflicts and generate and maintain a sense of cooperation and trust (George, 2000). Some of the participants in the current study managed their own emotions during conflict, but not always constructively or with cooperation and trust as a desired outcome. Instead, they used they engaged negative emotions such as anger to confront others and control a situation to achieve their desired outcome. One participant aggressively confronted another leader when she felt that they were taking over a project and dictating what needed to be done. When the other leader assigned a list of tasks to the participant without asking for input first, the participant responded by refusing to do those tasks and made it clear that she was angry with the lack of collaboration on the project. By confronting the other leader directly and expressing her anger with him, the participant was able to get the other leader to change her approach to the project. While this does not align with the findings in previous research about high emotional intelligence supporting constructive resolution of conflict, it does demonstrate the participants ability to regulate their emotions and those of others to attain a resolution. The perceived effectiveness of this EI ability allows these participants to make meaning of such negative emotions as useful to their effectiveness as a leader.

## **Learning from shortcomings and failure**

Student leaders in this study made meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences by constructing an image of themselves as effective leaders even when they experienced setbacks and failures. When experiencing setbacks and failures, the study participants separated themselves from the idea of being a failure and instead looked at the failure or setback as a group issue and protected their view of themselves as an effective leader. In some cases, the participants looked past the failure to opportunities and positive outcomes for themselves. In other cases, they dismissed the setback or failure as something that was beyond their control, and therefore not their fault. In these situations where they experience setbacks and failures, the participants seem to demonstrate the EI ability to reflectively regulate and manage emotions in themselves and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) by replacing a potentially negative situation with a positive perspective.

The EI ability to reflectively regulate emotions of oneself and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) has been shown to be critical to leaders in managing emotions of group members, a key responsibility for group leaders (Humphrey, 2002). The participants of the current study reinforce the importance of managing emotions of group members. When discussing any group setback or failure, they quickly change the negative perspective to a positive, highlighting the opportunities and potential for growth throughout the group that is created in these situations. Additionally, participants manage group emotions by maintaining their perceived image as an effective leader, a fundamental component of successful leadership and influence (Bono & Ilies, 2003). This is most often seen when participants separated themselves from a setback or failure, characterizing it as a problem that was

unresolvable or beyond their control. For example, one participant experienced frustration when her efforts to help a group member with a personal problem were poorly received. She tried to assist him numerous times with this problem since it was affecting his behavior and that of others in the group. However, when she talked to him and offered help, he flatly refused, saying that there was nothing wrong. Even though she and others in the group could see by the change in his behaviors that there was something wrong, she was unable to resolve the problem due to his unwillingness to engage her in discussion. Instead of seeing this as a failure in her leadership experience, she viewed it as a situation that was beyond her control and one that she made every effort to fix.

In this instance, the participant seemed to show the EI ability to perceive the emotions in one of her group members. However, she appeared to be unable to use that emotional knowledge, and instead continued with the behaviors that she felt made her an effective leader. Because of her myopic view on handling this situation, she was later able to resolve the failure as acceptable since she had done everything she could do. Instead, she had actually only done everything she thought an effective leader would do, due to her inability to understand his emotions, and her own, in this situation.

### **Finding fault with others' actions**

When participants in this study made meaning of emotion by finding fault with others' actions, they appeared to use varying degrees of EI abilities. In finding fault with others' actions, the participants were able to identify their own negative emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) when another leader's poor performance adversely affected themselves or the group and when they disagreed with decisions made by other leaders. In some instances, the

participants appeared to be able to express their emotions both to themselves and others, but in nearly all instances, the participants did not appear to use any EI abilities to resolve or manage their negative emotions. Instead, they simply identified, described and discussed instances of poor performance in others and situations in which they did not agree with others' decisions.

### **Poor performance of others**

Sometimes student leaders found fault with others' actions when others performed poorly in their leadership roles. Some of the study participants discussed their anger they felt in instances when another leader took credit for work they did not complete or when another leader was incompetent. It appeared that, in these instances, the participants of the study may have had the ability identify their emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) related to others' poor performance but neither addressed nor resolved their frustration and anger with any members of the group.

Higher-level EI abilities of regulating and managing emotions have been seen to contribute to smooth and non-contentious group interactions, and these abilities are also used to preempt or resolve conflict (Lopes et al., 2004). While the literature highlights the high level EI abilities that leaders could use to successfully resolve the negative feelings felt by group members when they see others performing poorly, the student leaders in the current study did not appear to make use of these higher branches of EI abilities. Instead, they seemed only able to identify their anger and frustration when they noticed another performing badly.

For example, participants described instances when other leaders took credit for work they did not perform or when other leaders did not complete tasks assigned to them or performed those tasks incorrectly. They easily identified their emotions of frustration and outright anger, saying, “That pisses me off. People shouldn’t take credit for something they didn’t do.” The participants did not, however, express the use or management of their emotions to successfully confront the other leader and resolve the issue. In some extreme cases, the participants simply gave up on the other leader all together and tried to avoid future interactions with that leader.

When making meaning of their emotions by finding fault with others’ poor performance, few student leaders confronted the offending team member or expressed their anger or disappointment. Rather, the majority of the participants made meaning of their emotions by finding fault and placing blame on others’ poor performance and bad decisions. And although the participants made sure to point out their ability to take on extra work or to continue working despite others’ bad decisions or poor performance, research shows that ongoing frustrations within the group can lead to long-term negative effects on both group performance and individual performance (McCull-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002). The participants inability to recognize the need to address these frustrations demonstrates limitations in their use of emotional intelligence when making meaning of emotion in their student leadership experience.

### **Disagreement with others’ decisions**

When participants were confronted with what they perceived to be bad decisions, they only described lower level EI abilities of identifying, and sometimes expressing, the

emotions that they felt as a result of these bad decisions. Some of the student leaders in this study went on to express those emotions accurately in hopes of changing the group decision, while others remained silent. The participants who expressed those emotions seemed to have the EI ability to understand their emotion and even recognize the fact that their emotion would likely transition into a different emotion (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) depending on the outcome of their confrontation over the bad decision.

Participants appeared to make the decision to speak up or stay silent about a contentious issue based on their position in the group. Some participants seemed to feel duty-bound to express their dissenting opinion when they disagreed with their group's actions. This was especially apparent when the participants in this study regarded the other leaders as their equals. In these cases, they "fought tooth and nail" to keep their group from making a misstep. If the participants were in a subordinate position, many still felt obligated to express their opinion publicly, but they accepted being over-ruled. In these instances, especially, the participants' anger or disappointment transitioned into satisfaction, often a grim satisfaction, that they had at least stepped up to confront a bad decision in the first place. For these students, it appeared that they had the ability to understand their emotions, but they did not have the ability to use that emotional knowledge to inform their decisions as a leader.

### **Building Relationships with Others**

Sometimes, participants in this study made meaning of their emotions by building relationships with others. They understood and analyzed their own emotions and, often more importantly, the emotions of others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) when they were making the

effort to learn about their team members or followers. In the context of learning about others and accepting differences, the participants were often able to understand and analyze their own emotions in the situation, and then employed that emotional knowledge in an effort to improve the cohesiveness and teamwork of the group. Finally, while the participants supported other members and received praise themselves, they described the ability to perceive and express emotions both to themselves and to others.

### **Learning about others**

Participants not only made direct efforts to learn more about their peers, but they also used this information to understand differences and similarities in an effort to improve teamwork and leader effectiveness. In doing so, participants appeared to have the EI ability to understand and analyze emotions and use this emotional knowledge (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) to build relationships with other leaders.

Participants created opportunities for group members to learn about each other and make connections with new people. These experiences resulted in strong emotions for themselves and others, and participants reported that such experiences facilitated greater connections with the group leader and others in the group. For example, one participant led an exercise to encourage her group to share personal history with one another as a way to make connections and begin to develop group cohesion. The exercise started with non-intrusive questions, which encouraged group members to participate. As the exercise progressed, discussion topics became more personal. By the end of the exercise, the participant and others were opening up and sharing personal information on personal,

emotional topics. The resulting shared expressions of emotion created close connections among group members and helped them begin to establish an identity as a group.

Another participant organized a small group of students to attend a leadership conference. To build a sense of group identity, she organized the students in hotel rooms with people they did not know. While she knew that it would be uncomfortable at first for them, her intent was to develop new connections among the conference group. The new experience was seen as a success, as students returned from the conference feeling like they had found a new home with their new friends in the organization.

In both cases above, the study participants were purposeful in placing themselves and their group members in situations that would affect everyone's emotions. By incorporating such experiences into the group development process, the leaders brought their respective groups together through positive, shared emotional experiences. This ability to recognize the emotions of others, specifically, has been shown to improve leader performance, as these leaders are able to build stronger relationships with their followers by understanding the followers' emotions (Rubin et al., 2005).

Participants in the current study made meaning of emotion in their student leadership experiences by building relationships with others. They often built these relationships by giving and receiving support to one another as a way to motivate and encourage potential leaders of the future. Participants created opportunities for new leaders to take on a new role and coach them to help them gain confidence, resolve problems, and take risks. The participants also found great joy and satisfaction when they received recognition for their hard work from other members of their group, and they made meaning of these emotions as a

result of the relationships they built throughout their group. In these situations, it seemed that they used the EI ability to perceive, appraise, and express emotion (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) as they gave support to other leaders and received praise for their work.

The interaction between a leader and a follower is distinct from the relationship between a leader and the entire group. In individual interactions, leaders can influence the follower's performance, productivity, and sense of job satisfaction (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002; Pirola-Merlo, Hartel, Mann, & Hirst, 2002; Wong & Law, 2002), and, conversely, the interaction between the leader and follower can enhance the leader's performance (Bono & Ilies, 2006; Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; Humphrey, 2002; Rubin, Munz & Bommer, 2005). The leader's ability to influence the follower is connected to his EI abilities to express emotions and perceive and appraise the emotions of the followers.

The participants of the current study supported these previous findings, as their interactions positively affected both the leaders' and followers' performance. The support given to new leaders was often simple discussion, advice and consultation. However, the sincerity of these interactions, and the feelings of happiness and joy from receiving acknowledgement from group leaders was invaluable for motivation of new leader. While the participants often acknowledged the importance of these efforts, they often did not acknowledge the value of their position as a leader in motivating and encouraging others in the group.

Similarly, participants realized great joy from simple acknowledgement from their group members. Gestures such as notes of thanks and thank you cards were discussed as some of the most helpful motivation in helping the participants overcome difficult times.

For both the participants and other students in their groups, the relationships they built allowed them to understand one another and use the emotional knowledge they had gained through their leadership experiences together to have significant impact when providing support and motivation.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the findings from chapter four were discussed against the backdrop of emotional leadership. Student leaders' approaches to making meaning of emotions were considered in the context of emotional intelligence abilities and related leadership behaviors. Connections were made between emotional intelligence abilities and participants' approaches to making meaning of emotion, and behaviors that students discussed in terms of emotions often echoed the leadership behaviors previously shown to be important to leaders in emotionally-intense situations. In some cases, the participants described lower levels of EI abilities, such as the ability to express emotions and perceive emotions in others. In other instances, students discussed what appeared to be high levels of EI abilities, as they managed their own emotions and those of others to turn potentially negative situations into positive experiences. However, in all of the four approaches, students presented and discussed EI abilities as skills they used to make meaning of emotion.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **Introduction**

Chapter six presents the final chapter in my study of how students make meaning of emotions in their leadership experience. Conclusions of this study and implications for practice, policy, theory, and recommendations for future research will be presented in this chapter. Both the conclusions and implications are informed by the findings presented in previous chapters and by the emotional leadership and emotional intelligence literature.

In the previous chapters, the following findings were presented:

1. Students make meaning of their emotions by perceiving leadership as a stressor.
2. Students make meaning of their emotions by constructing an image of themselves as an effective leader.
3. Students make meaning of their emotions by finding fault with others.
4. Students make meaning of their emotions by building relationships with other leaders.

### **Conclusions**

#### **Perceiving leadership as a stressor**

The first finding of this study is that students make meaning of their emotions by perceiving leadership as a stressor. In discussing their emotions around this approach, the students discussed strategies and techniques that they used to manage or combat the perceived stress of leadership. They used self-reflection techniques to rethink their stress by placing it in a broader context. In looking at a bigger picture, comparing their current stress

to another excessively stressful incident, they were able to remind themselves that the stress they experienced need not be overwhelming. They also developed and used planning and prioritizing techniques to keep themselves from failing behind or feeling the stress of an unattainable deadline. Finally, they found ways to escape from their leadership environments when they perceived that they needed a break from their leadership role.

These behaviors that emerged from the data aligned with specific EI abilities. When students made meaning of emotion by perceiving leadership as a stressor, they were able to perceive the emotions brought on by stress such as anxiety, frustration, and anger. In addition, they were able to express those emotions to themselves and others. Finally, they were able to use those emotions to encourage specific problem-solving techniques that assisted in relieving that perceived stress from leadership. Leaders have been found to use EI abilities to analyze and prioritize the tasks and issues facing a group (Wolff et al., 2002, Pescosolido, 2002), and Humphrey (2002) found that the leader who can successfully guide their group through these processes can significantly influence their group's performance in emotion-intensive situations.

From these behaviors and the suggested EI abilities used by the participants, I can conclude that students who participate in leadership activities can expect to experience emotions due to the stress of their leadership role, but accurately perceiving, expressing, and using those emotions will assist them in effectively managing the stress of being a leader.

### **Constructing an image of an effective leader**

The second finding of the study is that students made meaning of their emotions by constructing an image of themselves as effective leaders. The behaviors exhibited by leaders

impact others' perception of them as a leader (Daus & Ashkanasy, 2005), and individuals have particular behaviors that they associate with effective and ineffective leaders (Kellet et al., 2002). The perceived effectiveness of a leader is based, in part, on the leader's ability to manage and understand their emotions and the emotions of their group members (Prati, et al., 2003). EI abilities of understanding and analyzing emotions, and employing emotional knowledge to inform positive behavior are important to leaders in decision-making, developing vision and establishing purpose and goals (Carmeli, 2003; George, 2000).

Students discussed emotions around their views of effective leadership by focusing on three different contexts. First, they experienced complex and sometimes conflicting emotions around their view that effective leaders engage in behaviors that have an impact on fellow students or the campus community as a whole. Second, they discussed effective leaders as those who establish or maintain emotional control during an intense, chaotic, or ambiguous situation. Third, they described how they managed their own and others' emotions when they worked through self-reported failures and shortcomings. In each context, the students framed their behaviors as the actions of an effective leader.

EI abilities were discussed by leaders engaged in these behaviors. Participants were able to understand and analyze the complex and conflicting emotions they experienced around their desire to have an impact on others. In so doing, they were able to balance the anxiety that came with responsibility and difficult decisions with the satisfaction and joy at making a difference in their community. Participants were seen to reflectively regulate their emotions when attempting to establish or maintain control in a difficult situation. Regulating their emotions allowed them to disengage from the intense emotions brought on by that

situation and provide a sense of certainty for others involved. Finally, the participants discussed their ability to employ emotional knowledge when learning from their own shortcomings and failures. From these findings, we can conclude that students have their own ideas about what skills and abilities are needed to be effective as a leader, and they will try to engage in behaviors that demonstrate their effectiveness as a leader. This conclusion shows a unique aspect of the student leadership experience. The role of student leader is more flexible and adaptable than leadership roles seen in business or industry environments. Such opportunities for creativity, learning and exploration are not as readily or consistently available in other non-student leadership environments. As students, the participants had the flexibility to develop perspectives, explore new leadership approaches and techniques, and create their view of effective leadership for themselves. By employing emotional knowledge, understanding and analyzing emotions, and reflectively regulating their emotions will help the student leaders succeed in those leadership behaviors that they perceive to be effective.

### **Finding fault with others' actions**

The third finding of the study is that students make meaning of emotions by finding fault with others' actions. Research shows that ongoing frustrations within the group can lead to long-term negative effects on both group performance and individual performance (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002). The EI abilities of regulating and managing emotions, however, have been seen to contribute to smooth and non-contentious group interactions, and these abilities are also used to preempt or resolve conflict (Lopes et al., 2004). Students discussed their emotions around this finding fault with others' actions in three different ways. First, they discussed the ways that emotions were the result of others'

poor performance. Second, they described intense emotions when they received an unexpected reaction to something they said or did. Finally, they identified negative emotions that they felt when disagreeing with others' actions.

This finding is an interesting contrast to the three other findings. The EI abilities that the students discussed in the context of finding fault were mainly the lower-level EI ability of perceiving emotions and expressing emotions. McColl-Kennedy and Anderson, 2002, on the other hand, suggests that the behaviors that would be exhibited by a high functioning leader involve the higher level EI abilities of understanding and analyzing emotions and reflective regulation of emotion. These abilities have been linked to the ability to resolve disputes and conflicts and make decisions that will further the group's goals and improve performance (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002) While some of the students did demonstrate the EI ability to understand their own emotions when disagreeing with other leaders, more often, participants simply found fault with the actions of others. In the case of this finding, we can conclude that students will experience a variety of negative emotions when they do not like the actions taken by others. While they will be able to perceive their own displeasure, they may not have the EI abilities needed to resolve their own negative feelings in such situations.

### **Building relationships with other leaders**

The fourth finding of the study is that students make meaning of their emotions when building relationships with other leaders. They do this in three different contexts. First, they experienced intense emotions when engaging to learn about others. This kind of engagement facilitated greater connections between members and among the group which led to the strengthening of the group's identity. Similarly, the students felt intense, but mixed,

emotions when they made efforts to understand and accept the differences they perceived in others. These differences often centered around task management, work philosophy, and the level of awareness that different opinions held value. Finally, the students made meaning of the joy and satisfaction that they experienced by giving support to others and receiving support and recognition from friends, fellow leaders, or mentors.

Two specific EI abilities were shown in the behaviors exhibited by the participants when building relationships with others. When the participants discussed their emotions in terms of learning about others, they described their ability to accurately express their emotions and employ those emotions to make personal connections with others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). They also employed their emotional knowledge when they accepted the differences they perceived in others which encouraged their consideration of multiple points of view. Finally, the participants showed that they could understand and analyze their emotions when giving or receiving support from others. By understanding and analyzing their own pleasure at receiving praise or support, they were more apt to mentor or praise a younger team member (Rubin et al., 2005).. We can conclude that students who engage in leadership activities will experience positive emotions by strengthening and building relationships with other leaders, and their ability to express their emotions, employ their emotions, and understand and analyze their own emotions and those of others will only lend greater support to their efforts at building relationships.

### **Implications for Practice**

The current study focused on student leader experiences, and as such, the study can provide insight for practitioners such as student organization advisers, student organization

support staff, professors and professionals who teach leadership development courses, and other student affairs professionals who provide leadership training. Practitioners provide student leadership training in both formal and informal settings. For example, college campuses often have specific or formal programs based in student leadership centers. Many student organizations have training sessions or retreats, and academic departments sometimes require leadership development courses. Student leaders also receive training from organization advisers through informal discussions and interactions.

This study suggests that student leaders do use EI abilities in their student leadership roles. It follows that practitioners should have an awareness of the concept of emotional intelligence. Such an awareness of models of emotional intelligence, can inform the leadership development and training sessions that practitioners may be called upon to give to student leaders. Practitioners rely on numerous leadership and student development models, and the inclusion of emotional intelligence models will add another dimension to their understanding of student leadership and the individual experiences of students.

Additionally, practitioners with a good grasp of EI abilities can model appropriate and effective leadership behaviors for their student leaders. Modeling is an important component of the role of student affairs professionals, as it provides an opportunity to help students learn and understand effective leadership behaviors by experiencing them first-hand (Evans et al., 2010). By including emotionally intelligent behavior in their modeling and engaging in candid discussions about their own use of EI abilities, student affairs practitioners could assist student leaders in understanding and developing an understanding of EI as a component of leadership .

Modeling appropriate leadership behaviors can go hand in hand with the practice of coaching student leaders about EI abilities. Consistent coaching and practice will help students become more self-reflective and self-aware which in turn will help them become more effective leaders (Shankman & Allen, 2008). Grant (2007) suggests that on-going coaching is a more effective way to teach emotional intelligence to managers than short intensive programs. Student organization advisers, especially, have the long term access to student leaders which would allow the advisers to coach the student leaders during specific, emotion-intensive situations. Such extended periods of involvement with student leaders provide advisers a unique opportunity among student affairs professional. Advisers have the time to consider new and creative approaches that address the numerous perspectives, approaches and understandings necessary to developing the whole student (Evans et al., 2006). Integration of EI concepts into student development activities offers a creative approach to coaching and modeling that could provide new insights for students and advisers, and draw connections between the otherwise varied aspects of student development.

In this study, for instance, participants could quite easily identify and verbalize their unhappiness about how other team members or leaders performed. However, many tended not to want to engage in any confrontational behaviors. Instead, they resorted to complaining or placing blame elsewhere when projects failed. Practitioners could, through leadership development activities, coach student leaders on how to use their EI abilities to constructively confront another student. Based on responses from this research, conflict and mediation are key leadership skills that could use additional exploration through the use of emotions. With training, student leaders could gain a better understanding of the EI abilities

that will support their effective leadership. In summary, practitioners should incorporate EI concepts in their training and development sessions as well as model EI abilities to their student leaders, and, when possible, coach student leaders in ways to utilize EI abilities and emotional knowledge in their leadership roles.

### **Implications for Policy**

The shift to a more global, knowledge-based economy from an industrial based economy (Uhalde et al., 2006) requires workers and college graduates with different types of skills. As outlined in chapter one and chapter two of this study, these skills include (a) self-management, self-awareness, and an understanding of identity; (b) flexibility and initiative to manage ambiguity and uncertainty; (c) leadership to motivate others; and (d) understanding of global and diverse ideas and points of view. One of the common threads in these skills is emotion management.

Policy directives around emotional intelligence in leadership should be considered at an institution level, not at a state or federal level because models of emotional intelligence is not developed enough yet to suggest that EI is helpful at a global scale (Mayer & Cobb, 2000). However, university policy-makers interested in helping their students to gain the necessary skills for the new global, knowledge-based economy and career opportunities should consider making leadership training and development a requirement for students. In addition, these training experiences should incorporate the concepts from EI models as effective leadership incorporates the use of EI abilities (Caruso et al., 2001).

In addition, the leadership experiences required by the university should be more than short intensive leadership development courses. Students actively engaged in leadership

positions have the opportunity to practice the leadership principles and techniques in real life situations (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007). For example, one of the more introspective and thoughtful student leader participants in this study discussed how he was able to take leadership techniques taught in a Communications class and use them to ease a difficult relationship through thoughtful consideration and an attempt to understand the actions of another leader. The practice of concepts and techniques taught in development courses can lead to a richer understanding of others and more effective leadership (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007).

### **Implications for Theory**

This study is based on the Conceptual Framework of Emotional Leadership, developed for the study, and based on the Mayer and Salovey (1997) Model of Emotional Intelligence. The Conceptual Model of Emotional Leadership considers three aspects of emotion in leadership. First, the model identifies emotion-rich leadership situations seen in previous research and literature on emotion in leadership. Next, the model identifies leadership behaviors that have been seen to take place in these emotion-rich leadership situations. EI abilities inherent in these behaviors, again identified and suggested through the synthesis of research and literature on emotion in leadership, make up the third aspect of emotion in leadership identified by the model.

The model provides a useful structure for understanding and exploring emotion in leadership, as evidenced by its use as the framework for the current study. By using this model, the researcher was able to focus student discussion about their leadership experiences on emotion-rich situations. The model also allowed the researcher to dissect an otherwise

complicated pair of loosely connected concepts, emotion and leadership, into more tangible constructs such as behaviors and abilities. Finally, the study found EI abilities used by the students during the leadership situations and behaviors, and the study's findings can be incorporated back into the model to expand and refine it. Continued use of this model as a framework for exploring emotion and leadership and the ongoing synthesis of new research into the model (both qualitative and quantitative), will help to advance theory development in the study of emotion in leadership.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research on specific types of student organizations should be conducted and should focus on the uniqueness of the groups' environment and culture. The mission, activities, goals, organizational structure, and group training exercises of Greek Life organizations, for example, will be significantly different from those of GBLT groups. The group environment and organization characteristics can influence displays of emotion (Humphrey, 2000), and future research could explore how the environments and cultures of different types of student organizations could have an effect on how students make meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences.

In addition, future research should also consider focus on especially emotionally intense leadership positions such as peer advisors, residence advisors, or peer leaders. These unique positions have the potential for exposure to more emotionally complex situations, and they receive different types of university support, compensation, and training than other types of campus student leaders. The findings of this study suggest that student leaders use EI abilities in their leadership experiences, but future research that looks at how students in

more emotionally-intensive positions make meaning of emotion in their positions would provide further insight on how EI abilities with a focus on high emotion incidents.

Finally, this study focused on the behaviors and EI abilities described and discussed by the participants in their current leadership positions. The study did not, however, explore if the students were aware of their use of EI abilities or how they may have learned some of their leadership techniques or strategies that incorporate the use of EI abilities. This research would benefit from a follow-up study that used a pre- and post-assessment of EI abilities, such as the Mayer & Salovey MSCEIT to evaluate the students' use of EI abilities before and after their leadership roles. This research would also benefit from research that explores the connections between EI abilities and other leadership models that are used in leadership development programs, classes, and training. Such research would shed more light on the impact of student leadership experiences on students leadership development and the way they make meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences.

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## APPENDICES

**Appendix A: Student Leadership Profile Survey**

Name/Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: (Junior, Senior...)\_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic major: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list student organizations in which you've held a leadership position and the amount of time you (have) held that position: Please do not include position titles.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please list student organizations of which you were/are a member in a non-leadership capacity and the amount of time you participated as a group member:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please list any leadership training programs that you have participated in during your college experience:

\_\_\_\_\_

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In the following section, please list six leadership experiences that you have had as a college leader that you would be willing to discuss in an interview. I'm looking for leadership experiences that you feel have been significant to your development as a leader.

Provide two experiences for each of the following types of leadership situations:

A. A situation where you've assumed a leadership role in the absence of a formal leader. (Please briefly describe two instances.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

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B. A situation where you, in a formal leadership role, have worked with a group of other students in a formal leadership role. (Please briefly describe two instances.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. A situation where you, in a formal leadership role, have worked with an individual group member, one-on-one. (Please briefly describe two instances.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Thank you for filling out this survey. I will be contacting you within the week to schedule an interview. The interview will last roughly an hour, and it will focus on three of the six experiences that you have listed above. I greatly appreciate your participation in this study. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email, [dave\\_frye@ncsu.edu](mailto:dave_frye@ncsu.edu), or by phone, 539-9688.

## Appendix B: Initial Interview Protocol

Purpose of this interview: To explore leadership experiences and how students make meaning of emotion in these situations.

Leader Emergence Experience: \_\_\_\_\_  
(A situation where you've assumed a leadership role in the absence of a formal leader)

1. Can you describe the experience for me?
    - a. Tell me about your role in this situation and the things you chose to do
  2. Why did you choose this experience to discuss today?
  3. Can you discuss some specific roles you took on for the group?
    - a. How did you accomplish these roles?
  4. Looking back on this experience, why do you think you chose to act as you did in this situation?
    - a. How did others influence your actions?
    - b. How did the environment and setting influence your actions?
  5. How did past experiences influence the way you chose to handle the situation as you did?
    - a. Did you model this behavior after someone?
    - b. Did you build upon past experiences? Training? Reading?
  6. How has this situation played into your leadership development?
  7. What have you learned from this experience?
  8. How have you changed as a result of this experience?
  9. How would you handle this situation today? If that is different, why?
- 

Working with Groups Experience: \_\_\_\_\_  
(A situation where you, in a formal leadership role, have worked with a group of other students in a formal leadership role.)

1. Can you describe the experience for me?

- a. Tell me about your role in this situation and the things you chose to do
  2. Why did you choose this experience to discuss today?
  3. Can you discuss some specific roles you took on for the group?
    - b. How did you accomplish these roles?
  4. Looking back on this experience, why do you think you chose to act as you did in this situation?
    - c. How did others influence your actions?
    - d. How did the environment and setting influence your actions?
  5. How did past experiences influence the way you chose to handle the situation as you did?
    - e. Did you model this behavior after someone?
    - f. Did you build upon past experiences? Training? Reading?
  6. How has this situation played into your leadership development?
  7. What have you learned from this experience?
  8. How have you changed as a result of this experience?
  9. How would you handle this situation today? If that is different, why?
- 

Working with Individuals Experience: \_\_\_\_\_  
(A situation where you, in a formal leadership role, have worked with an individual group member, one-on-one.)

1. Can you describe the experience for me?
  - g. Tell me about your role in this situation and the things you chose to do
2. Why did you choose this experience to discuss today?
3. Can you discuss some specific roles you took on for the group?
  - h. How did you accomplish these roles?
4. Looking back on this experience, why do you think you chose to act as you did in this situation?
  - i. How did others influence your actions?

- j. How did the environment and setting influence your actions?
5. How did past experiences influence the way you chose to handle the situation as you did?
    - k. Did you model this behavior after someone?
    - l. Did you build upon past experiences? Training? Reading?
  6. How has this situation played into your leadership development?
  7. What have you learned from this experience?
  8. How have you changed as a result of this experience?
  9. How would you handle this situation today? If that is different, why?

## Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

### North Carolina State University INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Emotional Leadership: How students make meaning of emotion in leadership

Dave Frye

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Audrey Jaeger

#### **What are some general things you should know about research studies?**

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

#### **What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of this study is to explore the ways that students make meaning of emotion in their leadership experiences. This study will concentrate on one type of extra-curricular experience, student organization leadership, since students in these roles have an intensity of exposure to situations involving non-cognitive abilities during their leadership experiences. The study is also focus on emotion in leadership experiences, as it is closely related to both the non-cognitive skills needed in college, and the personal skills needed in the knowledge economy.

#### **What will happen if you take part in the study?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to commit approximately two (2) hours of time for the following activities:

1. A leadership profile survey will be sent to you to fill out via mail or email. This will take +/- fifteen (15) minutes to complete.
2. You will be interviewed, and topics that you brought up in the leadership profile survey will be discussed. This will last about sixty (60) minutes.
3. A summary of the key points brought up in the interview will be mailed or emailed to you to review. This will take about fifteen (15) minutes to complete.
4. You will be interviewed a second time as a follow-up to the first interview. This will last about thirty (30) minutes.

The interviews will take place in a place of your choosing so long as it is quiet and has some privacy.

**Risks**

Because of the personal nature of the information in this study, every step will be taken to offer you a safe, comfortable experience. The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. Throughout the study, you will be identified by a pseudonym. Written, electronic, and audio data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. Finally, audiotapes will be destroyed immediately following the conclusion of the study, and no reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.

**Benefits**

For participating in this study, you will receive valuable feedback on your leadership style. At the beginning of the study, you will also be given a brief overview of emotional intelligence. This leadership concept will be used to understand the events and activities discussed during the study, and it will offer you a new perspective that you can use to continue assessing and improving your leadership skills.

**Confidentiality**

The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. Data will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet, locked briefcase, or passcoded computer. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. You will NOT be asked to write your name on any study materials so that no one can match your identity to the answers that you provide

**Compensation**

You will not receive anything for participating.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Dave Frye, at dave\_frye@ncsu.edu.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514), or Joe Rabiega, IRB Coordinator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-7515).

**Consent To Participate**

“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may withdraw at any time.”

**Subject's signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Investigator's signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D: Participant, Approach and Context Matrix**

<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>APPROACH 1:</b> Perceiving leadership as stressor		<b>APPROACH 2:</b> Constructing an image of themselves as an effective leader			<b>APPROACH 3:</b> Finding fault with others' actions			<b>APPROACH 4:</b> Building relationships with other leaders		
	<b>Context 1:</b> Pervasive stress of being a leader	<b>Context 2:</b> Situation-specific stresses	<b>Context 1:</b> Having an impact	<b>Context 2:</b> Establishing and maintaining control	<b>Context 3:</b> Learning from shortcomings and failure	<b>Context 1:</b> Poor Performance	<b>Context 2:</b> Unexpected reaction from others	<b>Context 3:</b> Disagreement with others' decisions	<b>Context 1:</b> Learning about others	<b>Context 2:</b> Giving and receiving support	<b>Context 3:</b> Accepting differences
Elizabeth	●		●								
Nancy						●		●	●	●	
Jay		●		●				●			
Velma				●	●	●	●				●
Paul	●	●	●	●			●				●
Anne	●				●	●	●			●	
Mike	●	●	●								●
Brenda		●		●		●	●				
Sally								●		●	●
Mai				●		●		●		●	
Hal		●			●				●	●	●
Katie	●								●	●	●

## Appendix E: The Four Branches of Emotional Intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997)

### The Four branches of EI:

1. Perception Appraisal and Expression of Emotion
2. Emotional Facilitation of Thinking
3. Understanding and Analyzing Emotions; Employing Emotional Knowledge
4. Reflective Regulation of Emotions to Promote Emotional and Intellectual Growth

#### Perception, Appraisal and Expression of Emotion

Ability to identify emotion in one's physical states, feelings, and thoughts.

Ability to identify emotions in other people, designs, artwork, etc. through language, sound, appearance, and behavior.

Ability to express emotions accurately, and to express needs related to those feelings.

Ability to discriminate between accurate and inaccurate, or honest vs. dishonest expressions of feeling.

#### Emotional Facilitation of Thinking

Emotions prioritize thinking by directing attention to important information.

Emotions are sufficiently vivid and available that they can be generated as aids to judgment and memory concerning feelings.

Emotional mood swings change the individual's perspective from optimistic to pessimistic, encouraging consideration of multiple points of view.

Emotional states differentially encourage specific problem-solving approaches such as when happiness facilitates inductive reasoning and creativity.

#### Understanding and Analyzing Emotions; Employing Emotional Knowledge

Ability to label emotions and recognize relations among the words and the emotions themselves, such as the relation between liking and loving.

Ability to interpret the meanings that emotions convey regarding relationships, such as that sadness often accompanies a loss.

Ability to understand complex feelings: simultaneous feelings of love and hate or blends such as awe as a combination of fear and surprise.

Ability to recognize likely transitions among emotions, such as the transition from anger to satisfaction or from anger to shame.

#### Reflective Regulation of Emotion to Promote Emotional and Intellectual Growth

Ability to stay open to feelings, both those that are pleasant and those that are unpleasant.

Ability to reflectively engage or detach from an emotion depending upon its judged informativeness or utility.

Ability to reflectively monitor emotions in relation to oneself and others, such as recognizing how clear, typical, influential or reasonable they are.

Ability to manage emotion in oneself and others by moderating negative emotions and enhancing pleasant ones, without repressing or exaggerating information they may convey.