

# Looking Down: The Influence of Contempt and Compassion on Emergent Leadership Categorizations

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By integrating the literatures on implicit leadership and the social functions of discrete emotions, we develop and test a theoretical model of emotion expression and leadership categorizations. Specifically, we examine the influence of 2 socio-comparative emotions—compassion and contempt—on assessments of leadership made both in 1st impression contexts and over time. To demonstrate both internal and external validity, Studies 1a and 1b provide laboratory and field evidence to show that expressing the discrete emotions of contempt and compassion positively relates to perceptions that an individual is a leader. Study 2 tests the mechanism explaining these associations. Specifically, we show that in a leadership emergence context, contempt and compassion both positively relate to perceptions that the expresser is a leader because each provides cues matching the implicit theory that leaders have higher intelligence. Our findings add to a growing body of literature focused on identifying the processes through which leaders emerge in groups, showing that emotions are an important input to this process. We discuss the implications of our findings and how they might guide future research efforts.

*Keywords:* emotions, leadership, contempt, compassion, implicit theories

Do emotions influence perceptions that a person is a leader? Decades of research on impression formation have established that discrete emotions are powerful inputs in person perception, influencing judgments of traits such as competence, warmth, and status (Conway, Di Fazio, & Mayman, 1999; Knutson, 1996; McArthur & Baron, 1983; Mignon & Mollaret, 2002; Mondillon et al., 2005; Tiedens, 2001). Though an important domain of impression formation in organizations involves leadership perceptions—perceptions that a target is, or could be, a leader (Mueller, Goncalo, & Kamdar, 2011; Taggar, Hackett, & Saha, 1999)—research has not yet explored whether and how discrete emotions relate to the categorization and emergence of leaders. Instead, the leadership literature has focused on the role

that personality traits and demographic characteristics such as gender, race, and culture play in promoting leadership impressions and emergence (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ensari & Murphy, 2003; Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Foti & Hauenstein, 2007; Offermann, Kennedy, & Wirtz, 1994; Sy et al., 2010). So the question remains, do individuals' emotions influence whether they are perceived as leaders? If so, what qualities of discrete emotions play an important role in influencing leadership categorizations—that is, judgments that a target fits the category of “leader,” resulting in the target's emergence as a leader—and why?

Emotionally expressive cues convey interpersonal information about the expresser (Knutson, 1996; Montepare & Dobish, 2003). The literature has generally shown that perceptions of positive traits such as dominance, competence, and warmth are elicited by emotions of opposing valence, such that both positive discrete emotions, such as happiness (Berry, Pennebaker, Mueller, & Hiller, 1997; Knutson, 1996), and negative discrete emotions, such as anger (Tiedens, 2001), can promote perceptions of the same positive traits. As emotions signal aspects of the expresser's social position, task-related skills, and ability to form relationships with others, it is likely that they also communicate information about the expresser's leadership abilities. Moreover, since positive traits such as competence and warmth are associated with both positive and negative emotions, these findings suggest that the valence of the emotion alone may not be a consistent predictor of leadership categorizations and emergence. Rather, we propose that when social perceivers categorize targets as leaders, they look to the social information conveyed by the emotion and not merely the emotion valence.

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The socio-functional approach to emotions (Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Keltner & Kring, 1998; Oatley & Jenkins, 1992) argues that emotions convey information about the expresser's role- and position-based characteristics. More specifically, certain emotions carry comparative information about the expresser's relative value and access to essential resources in comparison with others in his or her social group. These emotions may serve as markers of relative access to resources and ability to contribute to group success and, as a result, play a role in establishing social hierarchies. A socio-functional view would suggest that emotions conveying comparative, hierarchical information about a person's leadership *relative* to other members of a group will best predict leadership categorizations. Indeed, this view is also commensurate with theories of leadership emergence and implicit leadership theories in which members compare a target's skills with those of others in a given group to determine the target's relative leadership competency and whether the target matches the category of being a leader (e.g., Hogg, 2001; Offermann et al., 1994). Hence, we propose that *socio-comparative emotions*—emotions that convey comparative information about the expresser's relative value and superiority—are important predictors of perceptions that a target is a leader and will predict leadership emergence.

Emotions which convey an implicit downward social comparison, and thereby imply the expresser's relative advantage, should promote leadership perceptions regardless of their valence. To test this possibility, we explore one negative and one positive discrete<sup>1</sup> downward socio-comparative emotion: contempt and compassion. Contempt and compassion both convey the superior position of the expresser relative to the perceiver. Specifically, contempt is a negative emotion that conveys disregard for and social distance from another person (Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Morris & Keltner, 2000), whereas compassion is a positive emotion which indicates concern for and an ability to alleviate the suffering of another (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010). By conveying this relative information, these socio-comparative emotions match people's implicit theories of the typical characteristics leaders hold and, thus, prompt the perceiver to regard the expresser as a leader. Therefore, in this article, we test the proposition that emotions that convey a downward social comparison and highlight the expresser's superiority are more likely to result in leadership categorizations and emergence.

### Leadership Judgments and the Perceptions of Intelligence

Influential work undertaken by Lord and colleagues (e.g., Foti & Lord, 1987; Lord & Alliger, 1985; Lord, Foti, & de Vader, 1984; Lord & Maher, 1991) has highlighted the influence of implicit leadership theories on a perceiver's tendency to engage in leadership categorization, the process of categorizing a given person as a leader. Their notion, based on theories of cognitive categorization (Rosch, 1978) and person perception (Cantor & Mischel, 1979), is that due to the influence of media exposure, cultural and socialization experiences, and prior interactions with leaders, people form implicit leadership theories that encompass their overall notions about the skills, behaviors, and abilities that are most representative of leaders. Implicit leadership theories serve as heuristics that allow perceivers to match targets' behaviors to perceiver's preexisting leadership expectations (Lord et al., 1984)

and thereby allow perceivers to subsequently categorize targets as leaders. Such implicit leadership theories consist of associations—often implicit and automatic—between particular target characteristics and the category of “leader.”

Lord and colleagues have long noted that the extent to which each leadership characteristic relates to leadership perceptions is partially determined by contextual variations (e.g., Lord et al., 1984). Work groups—groups that value and reward performance on a specific task—provide one context which has garnered increasing importance in the practical and scholarly domain pertaining to organizations. In work group contexts, an individual's intelligence is viewed as highly predictive of individual and group task success (Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972; Van Vugt, 2006), and people hold strong expectations that leaders will succeed at their various tasks (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985). As such, behaviors indicating intelligence or cognitive ability are the most closely related to overall leadership judgments in task groups (Driskell, Olmstead, & Salas, 1993). For example, in functional groups, or groups with a specific task-related goal, research shows that perceptions of intelligence are more proximal predictors of leadership categorizations compared with targets' attempts to hierarchically dominate the group (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009). In sum, there is strong evidence that in group contexts, leadership is likely to be awarded to those who signal their intelligence, cognitive ability, and task-related expertise.

However, even though leadership is often bestowed based on the group's overall assessment of the individual members' intelligence, it is difficult for individuals and groups to accurately detect intelligence (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Paulhus & Morgan, 1997). Indeed, “there is a great deal of difference between a person being intelligent and appearing intelligent” (Geier, 1967, p. 317), and individuals often act in ways that signal enhanced intelligence (Murphy, Hall, & LeBeau, 2001), irrespective of their actual cognitive ability. Thus, group members can only attribute leadership abilities on the basis of what they believe each teammate's intelligence to be (Berger et al., 1972; Driskell & Mullen, 1990). Past research highlights the use of external cues such as nonverbal behavior (Imada & Hakel, 1977; Mehrabian & Williams, 1969), speaking style (Driskell et al., 1993), personality traits (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Paulhus & Morgan, 1997), and demographic or physical characteristics (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Judge & Cable, 2004) in assessments of a target's intelligence. Discrete emotional expressions, revealed through facial expres-

<sup>1</sup> The emotions discussed in this article are all discrete emotions. Discrete emotions are defined as distinct feeling states (Russell & Feldman Barrett, 1999) that are intense (Forgas, 1999), fleeting (Frijda, 1993), and elicited by specific causes or stimuli (Lazarus, 1991). These emotions are composed of different components, including cognitive appraisals, nonverbal facial expressions, and physiological experiences, and they serve specific functions (Ekman, 1993). They differ from moods, which are more diffuse, less intense, not attributed to a specific cause, and potentially longer in duration than emotions (Frijda, 1986) and trait affect or dispositional affect, which refer to a person's relatively stable inclination to experience positive or negative affect (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Socio-comparative emotions may include any discrete emotions whose underlying appraisal dimensions inherently involve comparisons with other people. For purposes of parsimony, we have chosen one positive and one negative example of emotions conveying downward comparisons with others to examine here. However, our arguments are intended to generalize to other downward comparative emotions as well.

sions, voice tones, physiological changes, and verbal articulations, can also act as social signals that allow perceivers to extrapolate expressers' intentions, roles, and traits (e.g., Ekman, 1993; Fridlund, 1994; Izard, 1977; Keltner, Ekman, Gonzaga, & Beer, 2009). Emotions may thereby serve as a source of category-consistent (or inconsistent) data for observers to compare with relevant attributes of the implicit theory that leaders are "intelligent."

### Contempt, Compassion, and Leadership Judgments

Contempt and compassion, two oppositely-valenced discrete emotions that carry unique diagnostic value by implicitly communicating the expresser's privileged standing vis-à-vis the target of the emotion, may be especially relevant to judgments related to intelligence and leadership potential. At first glance, contempt and compassion seem antithetical to each other: Compassion is a prosocial, positive emotion that involves feeling for and wanting to help others in distress (Goetz et al., 2010), whereas contempt tends to have an antisocial flavor and serves to derogate and reject its targets (Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Izard, 1977). However, these emotions also share many similarities. Both contempt and compassion are elicited by their targets' failures (Frijda, 1986; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985); are driven by moral, often negative judgments about others' behaviors (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Hutcherson & Gross, 2011; Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999); and, in turn, involve a socio-comparative facet that highlights the expresser's advantage in contrast to the target of the emotion. Functionally, both these emotions serve a social-distancing purpose, allowing those who express them to draw clear self–other distinctions between themselves and their targets (Fischer & Manstead, 2008; Goetz et al., 2010).

Contempt indicates the expresser's feelings of superiority and dominance with regard to a target who is implied to be inferior, incompetent, or even worthless (Ekman, 1994; Izard, 1977). Contempt conveys an expresser's relative value through its signals of disapproval and condescension (Darwin, 1872/1965; Izard, 1977), which indicate that the target is inferior to the expresser with regard to general ability, morality, or social skills (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011; Rozin et al., 1999) and comparative inability to reach goals (Miller, 1997). In this way, contempt functions to diminish interaction with individuals who cannot contribute in a meaningful way to the group. As such, in work group contexts, the mere ability of a person to express contempt, with its distancing and derogatory judgments of others' incompetence and ineffectiveness, will likely highlight the expresser's relative superiority (Keltner, Young, Heerey, Oemig, & Monarch, 1998; Merten, 1997) in the salient domain of cognitive skills and intelligence. Since intelligence is a trait associated with the typical leader (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Offermann et al., 1994), especially in task-related group contexts (Driskell et al., 1993), expressing contempt is likely to have a positive effect on perceptions that the target is a leader and, thus, influence emergent leadership.

*Hypothesis 1:* Expressions of contempt positively relate to perceptions that the target is a leader.

Compassion is defined as the feeling that arises in response to others' failures, suffering, or distress, and the subsequent desire to ameliorate this suffering (Goetz et al., 2010; Lazarus, 1991). In displaying compassion, the compassionate expresser conveys a

categorical self–other distinction, thus inherently suggesting that he or she is in a better (safer, happier, more secure) position than the target of the compassion and has the ability or the resources to provide help to the target (Nussbaum, 1996). Indeed, this understanding of the expresser's advantage relative to the target of compassion is reflected in the expresser's heightened sense of self-efficacy (Mikulincer, Shaver, Gillath, & Nitzberg, 2005), coping and care-taking ability (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005; Oveis, Horberg, & Keltner, 2010), and determination to alleviate the target's suffering (von Dietze & Orb, 2000). Together, these feelings may then increase social distance and drive subtle hierarchical differentiation between the expresser and the suffering other. In addition, compassion arises through moral judgments of whether targets are seen as deserving of help (Harris & Fiske, 2006). Past research highlights that targets who are seen as being worthy of sympathy and compassion are usually warm but not competent (Fiske et al., 2002) and have, for no fault of their own, fallen to a position where they need help and assistance (Rudolph, Roesch, Greitemeyer, & Weiner, 2004). The simple fact that compassionate expressers engage in such judgments may implicitly signal to perceivers that they feel entitled to do so, and are thus higher up in the pecking order (cf. Yzerbyt, Leyens, & Schadron, 1997).

This combination of relative standing and the capacity to provide psychological and material resources to assuage the target's distress may enhance perceptions of the compassionate expresser's ability to provide help and assistance to others. The ability to provide help is generally associated with higher amounts of prestige and social standing (Flynn, Reagans, Amanatullah, & Ames, 2006; Mueller & Kamdar, 2011) and indicates that the person giving help is smarter and more capable than the person receiving the help (Lee, 1997, 2002). This is because the mere ability to provide task-related help to another indicates that the helper has a greater knowledge and understanding of the specific task (Lee, 2002). Furthermore, being seen as someone who can provide emotional help can reinforce the view that the helper has a relatively greater position, social standing, and value, which in a task context may be overgeneralized to include what is valued broadly such as knowledge of the task. In sum, expressing compassion can imply that expressers have a relatively higher amount of the knowledge and intelligence required to provide help, which may in turn cause the expressers to be seen as leaders.

*Hypothesis 2:* Expressions of compassion positively relate to perceptions that the target is a leader.

### Studies 1a and 1b: Contempt, Compassion, and Leadership Categorizations

Studies 1a and 1b test the hypotheses that downward socio-comparative emotions—here, specifically, contempt and compassion—relate to leadership impressions, using two different settings, laboratory and field, to triangulate and thereby enhance the validity of our results. Specifically, in Study 1a, we used videotaped interactions as part of a naturalistic study in which we explored the influence of emotional displays of contempt and compassion on first impressions of leadership as rated by external coders. In Study 1b, we extended the effects beyond the laboratory by corroborating the manner in which expressing contempt and compassion shaped peer-ratings of emergent leader perceptions in a sample of student work-groups over the course of several weeks.



We also wished to compare the effects of contempt and compassion with those of two additional discrete emotions that past studies have shown may be similar to the emotions in our study: anger, a negative emotion similar to but distinct from contempt (Ekman & Friesen, 1988; Fischer & Roseman, 2007), and love, a positive emotion that belongs to the same emotional family as compassion but is also distinct from it (Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987). All four of these emotions (i.e., anger, love, contempt, and compassion) are similar in that they are other-directed and other-oriented (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), yet they are different, as neither anger nor love involves social comparisons. Hence, we included anger and love as comparisons to establish differential validity and to dismiss the possibility that our results were driven by the valence or the other-directed nature of the emotion. Furthermore, by showing that neither love nor anger relates to leadership categorizations and emergence, we provide some assurance that it is the downward socio-comparative nature of each emotion which contributes to our findings.

## Study 1a

### Method

**Participants and procedure.** A total of 100 (49 male and 51 female) participants from a large, private university in the southwestern United States took part in a videotaped interview study to receive course credit. Their ages ranged from 18 to 22 years, and the sample's ethnic composition was 90% Caucasian, 5% Black, 2% Asian American, and 3% other (or unknown).

During the videotaping session, each participant was instructed to talk about a task-related, emotionally-laden subject: the positives and negatives of coming to college. We chose this as our interview question because it carried a task-related component (e.g., classes and coursework at college, as well as the inherently task-related nature of education) while also encouraging emotional expression. Participants were interviewed by a female undergraduate research assistant, who sat across from the participant, below and to the left of the camera so that her image was not recorded and eye contact was maintained through the entire interview. The research assistant was instructed to remain engaged with the participant throughout the entire interview; however, her verbalizations were limited to emotionally-neutral, content-free comments (e.g., "Uh huh"; "Yes, I see"). Interviews varied in length with a mean length of 116.77 s ( $SD = 96.69$  s).

**Social perceptions.** Eight raters split across two groups rated each participant; one group coded expressed emotions, and a second separate group judged the leadership qualities of each participant. All the independent raters were naïve in that none knew the research questions being addressed. They were similar in age to the participants but did not know any of the participants. All judgments of emotions and leadership were made on 9-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*extremely*).

**Discrete emotion ratings.** We trained four independent raters how to recognize four discrete emotions (anger, contempt, compassion, and love). Training consisted of a set of group instructional sessions in which the coders were trained to code levels of emotions by studying pictures and videotapes; they were trained using a behavioral coding system that takes into account facial expression, verbal tone, and body language. For instance, the facial

expression of contempt involves looking down on a target and a unilateral tightening and raising of the lip corner (Ekman & Friesen, 1988), while the compassion expression includes oblique eyebrows, a fixed gaze (Keltner & Buswell, 1996), as well as the forward tilt of the head and a relaxed lower face (Eisenberg, McCreath, & Ahn, 1988). Anger was coded as having contracted and raised eyebrows, compressed lips, stiff and unyielding body language, and a raised voice. Expressions of love included Duchenne smiles, open handed gestures, and a forward bent of the body (Gonzaga, Keltner, Londahl, & Smith, 2001). Each coder subsequently viewed 10 participant interviews, rating each and discussing any discrepant ratings. After training, coders individually rated the remaining 90 participants. We calculated intra-class correlation coefficients finding acceptable inter-judge reliability for each emotion (all intraclass correlation coefficients [ $ICCs$ ] > .73).

**Leadership judgments.** We instructed another four coders to rate leadership for each of the participants. Perceptions that the target is a leader comprised three questions adapted from Lord et al. (1984; e.g., "To what extent does this person fit your image of a leader?"). Inter-rater reliability assessing the agreement between the four raters for all participants ranged from .71 to .87 for each of these items. These three items were then averaged ( $\alpha = .98$ ) to create a single leadership composite measure.

**Control variables.** We also controlled for two theoretically-relevant variables: gender and physical attractiveness. In terms of gender, prior work suggests that gender activates implicit leadership theories that influence leadership categorizations (Eagly et al., 1992). For instance, men are expected to be more agentic, closely mirroring societal expectations for leaders. Women, on the other hand, are expected to act in a communal manner, which is inconsistent with leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In addition, we controlled for the participants' levels of physical attractiveness. In general, physical attractiveness is a valued characteristic (Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991) that is prone to halo effects, such that more physically attractive people tend to make more favorable impressions on others (Riggio, 1986) in terms of social skills (Eagly et al., 1991), status (Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001), and leadership (Offermann et al., 1994). We also controlled for the length of interview to ensure that increased exposure to the participant did not influence coders' leadership judgments.

### Results and Discussion

Means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients, and inter-correlations among study variables are shown in Table 1. To examine the effects of expressing socio-comparative emotions on first impressions of leadership, we tested our hypotheses using regression analyses, entering control variables (sex, length of interview, and physical attractiveness, as well as anger and love) in Step 1 and the two socio-comparative emotions—contempt and compassion—in Step 2. These results are summarized in Table 2.

An examination of individual parameters revealed that our two hypotheses were supported. Expressions of contempt were positively and significantly associated with perceptions that targets fit the image of a leader ( $\beta = .55, p < .01$ ), thus providing support for Hypothesis 1. Furthermore, as predicted by Hypothesis 2, compassion was positively associated with perceptions that the target is a leader ( $\beta = .38, p < .01$ ). In terms of the non

Table 1  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Study 1a Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Sex: 0 = female, 1 = male	0.48	0.50	1							
2. Facial attractiveness	4.47	1.21	-.09	1						
3. Length of interview	116.01	96.86	.09	-.04	1					
4. Contempt	2.06	1.48	.04	-.05	.57**	1				
5. Compassion	1.73	1.03	-.06	.02	.49**	.20*	1			
6. Anger	1.71	1.15	-.10	-.03	.42**	.56**	.13	1		
7. Love	2.12	1.21	.03	-.05	.38**	.05	.70**	.06	1	
8. Perceptions of leadership	3.88	1.85	.01	.22*	.41**	.21*	.28**	-.22*	.11	(.98)

Note. N = 100.  
\* p < .05. \*\* p < .01.

socio-comparative control emotions, anger was significantly, but negatively, related to perceptions that the target is a leader ( $\beta = -.48, p < .01$ ), whereas expressions of love did not significantly relate to judgments of leadership.

Study 1a used a laboratory methodology in a setting that evoked task-related expectations (e.g., discussing college) to show that the two emotions which involve downward social comparisons, contempt and compassion, both positively contributed to perceptions that the target is a leader. The results from Study 1a support our predictions regarding the positive influence of socio-comparative emotions contempt and compassion on perceptions that the target is a leader as assessed by two different sets of coders, a method which eliminates single source bias. Furthermore, by using third-party coders, we were able to precisely establish the association between the expression of emotions and perceptions of leadership, a link which is not possible to make when using field methodology where the observed emotional expression can result from having achieved credibility as a leader in the eyes of followers. Indeed, this methodology confirms that our findings were not simply driven by perceivers' motivated perceptions, that is, by using two

sets of outside observers, we were also able to eliminate the possibility that leadership perceptions reflected biased, post hoc rationalizations constructed to justify an emergent hierarchy. Last, a further strength of Study 1a is that the coders' judgments of leadership were made independent of task performance (only in a task-relevant context). This allowed us to demonstrate that expressions of contempt and compassion were sufficient to cue attributions of leadership, independent of performance cues, thus enabling us to rule out alternative explanations of our findings.

### Study 1b: Socio-Comparative Emotions and Leadership Emergence in a Group Context

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of the two socio-comparative emotions on perceptions that the target is a leader in a setting where leadership emergence was possible—that is, where participants had the opportunity to lead a specific task. Whereas Study 1a showed evidence of a directional relationship between expressions of contempt and compassion and leadership perceptions in first impression contexts, we were also interested in the external validity of these associations. Hence, we sought to replicate our findings in a more naturalistic, field setting, and we conducted Study 1b in a longitudinal student group context. This study also enabled us to investigate whether socio-comparative emotions influence perceptions of leadership and leadership emergence over time.

### Method

Fifty-one participants (64.7% male) in 11 four- or five-person teams worked together to analyze a current strategic or organizational problem facing a company of their choosing as part of a 5-week long introductory management course at a large mid-Atlantic business school. We collected data in two waves of surveys during this 5-week course: The first survey was conducted during the 2nd week of the course, when the team assignments took place, and the second wave of data was collected when the project was nearing completion, during the 5th and last week of the course. We separated waves of data collection to diminish single source bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Participation in the study was voluntary; however, in exchange for their participation, students were eligible for cash prizes (two raffles of \$100 each).

**Measures.** We used the same measures as in Study 1. At Time 1, we collected round-robin data within each team asking team

Table 2  
Hierarchical Regression Analyses Identifying the Relationship Between Contempt, Compassion, and Perceptions of Leadership in Study 1a

Variable type	Leadership	
	Step 1	Step 2
	$\beta$	$\beta$
Control variables		
1. Sex: 0 = female, 1 = male	.01	-.01
2. Attractiveness	.22*	.22*
3. Length of Interview	.13	-.22
4. Anger	-.28*	-.48**
5. Love	.10	-.06
Predictor variables		
6. Contempt		.55**
7. Compassion		.38**
df	100	100
$\Delta R^2$	.13*	.24**
$R^2$	.13	.36

Note. Standardized coefficients are reported; two-tailed tests (N = 100 at the individual level).  
\* p < .05. \*\* p < .01.

members to assess one another on the degree to which each person exhibited the specific emotions of contempt, compassion, anger, and love in their interactions with other people, both in and out of the team context. At Time 2, we collected round-robin data by asking each team member to assess the degree to which the other team members were seen as leaders using the same three-item Lord et al. (1984) measure. Three raters also coded for levels of physical attractiveness using the faculty seating chart that included photographs (all ICCs > .68).

## Results and Discussion

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations among all major individual level variables. We proposed that contempt and compassion would both positively relate to perceptions that the target is a leader when controlling for gender, attractiveness, warmth, anger, and love as well as for random variance at the team level. Because individuals in our sample were nested within groups, we employed SAS PROC MIXED to generate a multi-level model controlling for non-independence of observations and random group level variance that might influence the results beyond variance at the individual level (Singer, 1998). To control for random variance related to group membership, we treated group as a random factor in the analysis (Nezlek & Zyzniewski, 1998). In addition, we grand-mean-centered all variables in our analysis (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998).

We ran a multi-level model controlling for random variance at the group level, as well as gender, physical attractiveness, anger, and love to assess whether contempt and compassion each independently related to perceptions that targets were leaders. Table 4, Model 2, presents results of a multilevel model showing that both contempt,  $\gamma = .31$ ,  $t(34) = 3.26$ ,  $p < .01$ , and compassion,  $\gamma = .35$ ,  $t(34) = 2.89$ ,  $p < .01$ , positively and significantly relate to perceptions that the target was a leader; however, the four control variables—gender, attractiveness, anger, and love—were not significantly related to perceptions that the target was a leader.

Overall, the findings from Study 1b demonstrated that initial expressions of contempt and compassion had a positive influence of leadership perceptions and emergence over a longer time frame and in real groups. In this study, we found that expressing contempt and compassion during early interactions predicted emergent leadership judgments later in the lifecycle of the group as well. By using both the longitudinal design and round-robin data

Table 4  
*Multi-Level Models Identifying the Relationship Between Contempt, Compassion, and Perceptions of Leadership in Study 1b*

Variable type	Leadership	
	Model 1	Model 2
Control variables		
1. Sex: 0 = female, 1 = male	-.11 (.272)	-.25 (.251)
2. Attractiveness	.11 (.118)	.02 (.107)
3. Anger	-.18 (.119)	-.17 (.113)
4. Love	.12 (.131)	.07 (.112)
Predictor variables		
5. Contempt		.35** (.121)
6. Compassion		.31* (.101)

Note.  $N = 51$ . Unstandardized coefficients are reported; standard errors are in parentheses. Two-tailed tests ( $N = 51$  at the individual level).  
\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

collection methods in this study, we are able to ensure that our findings were generalizable beyond a single rater's perceptions. In general, the results support our central proposition that emotions with an inherent downward comparative component carry information that has a bearing on perceivers' perceptions that the target is emerging as a leader. Most important, these studies confirm that valence alone is not sufficient to determine whether someone is seen as a leader; rather, the socio-comparative nature of these emotions allows for richer inferences and uniquely predict judgments of emergent leadership.

However, we also argued that expressing downward socio-comparative emotions relate to leadership categorizations because they conveyed the expressers' high intelligence—a prototypical characteristic of leaders. Because we did not actually measure this dimension of people's implicit theory of leadership, perceptions of intelligence, we employed Study 2 to overcome this limitation and show that perceived intelligence mediates the downward socio-comparative emotion-emergent leadership categorization link.

## Study 2: Intelligence as a Mediator of the Socio-Comparative Emotions-Leadership Emergence Relationship

We had three primary aims in Study 2. First, we explored the role that various implicit leadership theories, especially intelli-

Table 3  
*Descriptive Statistics for All Major Variables in Study 1b*

Variable type	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
Control variables								
1. Sex: 0 = female, 1 = male	0.65	0.48						
2. Attractiveness	4.24	1.12	-.58**					
3. Anger	2.34	0.98	-.04	.04				
4. Love	3.64	0.95	.01	-.01	-.31*			
Predictor variables								
5. Contempt	2.59	1.16	.00	.13	.42**	-.20		
6. Compassion	4.84	0.93	-.22	.17	-.30*	.36**	-.27*	
Outcome variable								
7. Leadership	4.90	0.78	.05	.06	-.18	.22	.24 <sup>†</sup>	.36**

Note.  $N = 51$ .

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

gence, play in the downward socio-comparative emotions—emergent leadership perceptions link. Overall, we argue that expressions of contempt and compassion indicate a target's relative superiority to another, specifically in terms of perceived intelligence. Recall that, according to implicit leadership theory, perceivers use featural cues to categorize social targets as leaders (or not). The featural cues conveyed by socio-comparative emotions—specifically, contempt and compassion—resemble cues of superiority, ability, and intelligence relevant to leadership. Social perceivers may over-generalize expressions of these emotions to mean that targets have relatively high amounts of resources and skills to bring to their tasks, including high intelligence. Furthermore, the comparative nature of these emotions facilitates categorization based not only on the particular content of featural cues but also on the highlighted differences between the target and the self (or between the target and an inferior referent). The perceived presence of these qualities evokes perceptions of intelligence, an essential dimension of the overall implicit leadership theory because it is associated with team leadership skills such as setting standards for performance, organizing activities, solving problems, and gathering information (Dansereau & Yammarino, 1998; Hollander, 1985). Through this process, we propose that expressions of contempt and compassion lead to perceptions of intelligence, which in turn lead to perceptions of leadership:

*Hypothesis 3:* Perceived intelligence mediates the relationship between contempt and perceptions that the target is a leader.

*Hypothesis 4:* Perceived intelligence mediates the relationship between compassion and perceptions that the target is a leader.

Our second goal was to include a series of theoretically relevant control variables that may account for our hypothesized associations and allow for important comparisons. Specifically, when testing the manner in which perceptions of intelligence mediated associations between contempt, compassion, and leadership judgments, we also evaluated two other implicit leadership theory dimensions directly implicated by the two target emotions. For instance, due to the unique hierarchical and exclusionary message embedded in contempt, contemptuous individuals could be perceived as domineering, authoritative, and dominant—attributes that directly map onto the negative implicit leadership theory factor of tyranny (Offermann et al., 1994). Furthermore, displays of compassion could be likely to map directly onto the implicit leadership theory factor of sensitivity (Offermann et al., 1994), as it is composed of attributes relevant for maintaining trust and improving interpersonal relationships, such as being helpful, understanding, and sincere—qualities conveyed through expressions of compassion. However, if contempt and compassion are significantly related to perceptions of intelligence even when controlling for these other matching implicit leadership theory dimensions, then we can conclude with confidence that both emotions influence leadership ratings through a common mechanism—perceived intelligence—driven by their downward socio-comparative nature. Study 2 employed a field methodology to fill this gap.

Additionally, we wanted to demonstrate the influence of socio-comparative emotions on leadership perceptions above and beyond demographic characteristics, personality traits, and actual cogni-

tive abilities, all of which have been linked with leadership perceptions in prior research (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Foti & Hauenstein, 2007; Offermann et al., 1994). Thus, we controlled for the personality traits of extraversion and conscientiousness, which past research has shown are strong predictors of perceptions of leadership both in initial interactions and over time (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). Furthermore, since we were interested in understanding the role of *perceived* intelligence on perceptions of leadership, we also controlled for participants' actual intelligence as assessed by an objective measure—in this case, the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT; Graduate Management Admissions Council, 2009), which assesses verbal, mathematical, and analytical skills. We hypothesized that individuals who displayed contempt and compassion would be viewed as leaders by their group members, even when controlling for their demographic characteristics (i.e., sex and age), personality traits, and actual cognitive ability.

Third, we investigated the role of two emotions which convey a different type of social comparison. As described earlier, contempt and compassion indicate a *positive* relative comparison between an expresser and a target, or a downward social comparison with the target. However, social comparison can be not only downward—conveying superiority—but also upward—conveying inferiority. To understand the bearing of this type of comparison on emergent leadership judgments, we also included one positive and one negative other-directed emotion—admiration and envy—that conveyed *negative* relative comparisons (or upward comparisons) between the expresser and the target. Envy, which is felt “when a person lacks another's superior quality, achievement, or possession and either desires it or wishes that the other lacked it” (Parrott & Smith, 1993, p. 906) conveys the expresser's disadvantage with regard to the comparative other. Admiration, a positive emotion defined as feeling respect and warm approval toward another, usually in response to exceptional displays of achievement and success (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988), signals a desire to emulate the admired person and improve the self (Algoe, Haidt, & Gable, 2008)—that is, it conveys the other's advantage over the expresser. Because these emotions imply *upward* comparisons with the target, our argument suggests, they are unlikely to prompt inferences of target intelligence or leadership. Including envy and admiration in our models allows us to test whether these, too, affect perceptions of intelligence and thereby leadership categorizations and emergence. If not, that provides further support for our argument that downward socio-comparative emotions provide uniquely salient information that affects whether one is seen as a leader.

## Method

We employed a sample of Master of Business Administration (MBA) students enrolled in a core management course at a large west coast business school. Two hundred and twelve participants (65.1% male) in 39 four- to six-person teams worked together in a context in which leadership emergence was possible. On average, participants were 28 years of age ( $SD = 2.21$ ) with 4.91 years of work experience ( $SD = 1.79$ ). Participants responded to an online survey about their teammates. We collected data in a single wave, 3 weeks into the course, at



which point the teams had completed two graded assignments together.

**Measures.**

**Discrete emotions and perceived leadership.** We used many of the same measures as in Study 1b. Specifically, we collected round-robin data within each team, asking team members to assess one another on the degree to which each person exhibited the specific emotions of contempt, compassion, anger, love, envy, and admiration when interacting with teammates. Similar to Study 1b, we collected round-robin data by asking each team member to assess the degree to which the other team members were seen as effective leaders. In the current sample, peers showed acceptable level of agreement regarding target characteristics (all ICC2s > .70).

**Implicit leadership factor: Perceived intelligence.** To build upon Study 1a and 1b, we assessed the specific content of participants' implicit leadership theories to determine why contempt and compassion related to perceptions that the target is a leader. As discussed earlier, the primary quality of "good leadership" in a task context is *intelligence* (Offermann et al., 1994). Thus, we measured team members' perceptions of one another's intelligence by having each member rate every other member using a questionnaire item assessing the extent to which each member thought the target teammate was "intelligent (that is, he or she is clever and knowledgeable)." Because group members showed acceptable level of inter-judge agreement, ICC2 = .72, we then aggregated all peer ratings to create a single perceived intelligence score for each target participant. Prior research has used this method, as it allows for the calculation of inter-judge reliability (Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005; Anderson, Srivastava, Beer, Spataro, & Chatman, 2006; Saavedra & Kwun, 1993).

**Alternative implicit leadership factors.** We wanted to compare the effects of intelligence, the leadership factor most relevant to the expression of contempt and compassion, with two other implicit leadership theories that carry similar information. Specifically, Offermann et al. (1994) and others suggest that the leadership categories of tyranny and sensitivity are most clearly related to contempt and compassion expressions, respectively. We asked participants to rate each teammate using a single item to assess the extent to which they thought the teammate was "tyrannical (that is, he or she is controlling and seeks power)" as well as "sensitive (that is, he or she is sympathetic, understanding and sensitive)." (ICC2s for both ratings were greater than .70.)

**Results and Discussion**

We employed the same analytic strategy used in Study 1b, multi-level modeling, to account for non-independence. Parameter estimates represent the extent to which individual level predictors relate to individual level perceptions of leadership capability, controlling for random group level variance.

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations among all major variables in the study. We proposed that contempt and compassion would positively relate to perceptions that the target is an emergent leader, even when controlling for demographic, personality, and intelligence variables, as well as other socio-comparative emotions.

Table 6, Model 2 presents results of a multilevel model showing that both contempt,  $\gamma = .25, t(129) = 2.10, p < .05$ , and com-

Table 5  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Study 3 Variables

Variable type	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Control variables																
1. Sex, 0 = female, 1 = male	0.72	0.45														
2. GMAT	693.28	33.83	.20**													
3. Age	27.65	2.22	.24**	.07												
4. Extroversion	4.78	1.48	-.04	-.11	-.02											
5. Conscientiousness	5.64	1.07	-.14*	-.18*	.03	-.01										
6. Sensitivity	4.99	0.95	-.18*	-.08	.05	-.07	.01									
7. Tyranny	2.13	0.93	-.09	-.08	-.04	.17*	-.03	-.41**								
8. Anger	2.58	1.11	-.12	-.11	-.07	.05	-.01	-.41**	.62**							
9. Love	4.12	1.14	-.11	-.02	-.06	.19*	.02	.38**	-.17*	-.15*						
10. Envy	1.79	0.72	-.12	-.09	.02	-.05	.00	-.13	.50**	.57**	-.16*					
11. Admiration	5.04	0.75	-.06	-.10	.03	.11	.03	.46**	-.31**	-.40**	.45**	-.21**				
Mediator																
12. Intelligence	5.77	0.72	.18*	.12	-.08	.08	.18*	.08	-.16*	-.19*	.17*	-.32**	.21**			
Predictor variables																
13. Contempt	2.38	1.03	-.02	-.02	.00	-.05	-.03	-.42**	.60**	.76**	-.32**	.58**	-.45**	-.20**		
14. Compassion	5.14	0.90	-.08	-.08	.01	.10	.16*	.59**	-.37**	-.47**	.50**	-.27**	.63**	.36**	-.53**	
Outcome variable																
15. Leadership	4.55	1.07	.06	-.05	-.11	.21**	.11	.19*	.06	-.07	.33**	-.20**	.31**	.59**	-.11	.43**

Note. N = 212. GMAT = Graduate Management Admission Test.  
\* p < .05. \*\* p < .01.



Table 6  
Multi-Level Models Identifying the Relationship Between Contempt, Compassion, and Leadership Perceptions

Variable type	Intelligence	Leadership	Leadership
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Control variables			
1. Sex: 0 = female, 1 = male	.32** (1.33)	.47** (.151)	.23 <sup>†</sup> (.123)
2. GMAT	.01 <sup>†</sup> (.001)	-.00 (.001)	-.00 <sup>†</sup> (.002)
3. Age	-.04 <sup>†</sup> (.021)	-.07* (.029)	-.04 <sup>†</sup> (.024)
4. Extroversion	.00 (.034)	.08 <sup>†</sup> (.047)	.09* (.038)
5. Conscientiousness	.10* (.045)	.062 (.062)	-.01 (.050)
6. Sensitivity	-.06 (.069)	.11 (.093)	.14 <sup>†</sup> (.077)
7. Tyranny	.07 (.072)	.30** (.100)	.18* (.083)
8. Anger	-.02 (.074)	.05 (.103)	.10 (.087)
9. Love	.05 (.06)	.10 (.079)	.03 (.076)
10. Envy	-.35* (.093)	-.50** (.129)	-.26* (.121)
11. Admiration	-.03 (.090)	.20 (.125)	.29* (.109)
Mediator			.80** (.088)
Predictor variables			
13. Contempt	.18* (.085)	.25* (.118)	.15 (.108)
14. Compassion	.32** (.084)	.42** (.118)	.18 <sup>†</sup> (.103)

Note. Unstandardized coefficients are reported; standard errors are in parentheses. Two-tailed tests ( $N = 212$  at the individual level). GMAT = Graduate Management Admission Test.  
<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

passion,  $\gamma = .42$ ,  $t(129) = 3.59$ ,  $p < .01$ , positively and significantly relate to emergent leadership perceptions even when controlling for random group variance, sex, GMAT scores, age, extroversion, conscientiousness, perceptions of sensitivity, tyranny, and emotions including anger, love, envy, and admiration. This replicates the findings from Studies 1a and 1b and confirms our primary prediction. Further, team members' expressions of anger,  $\gamma = .05$ ,  $t(129) = 0.49$ , *ns*; love,  $\gamma = .10$ ,  $t(129) = 1.32$ , *ns*; and admiration,  $\gamma = .20$ ,  $t(129) = 1.60$ , *ns*, were unrelated to perceptions that they were leaders, although envy was significantly and negatively associated with these perceptions,  $\gamma = -.50$ ,  $t(129) = -3.84$ ,  $p < .05$ .

We next sought to demonstrate that perceived intelligence would mediate the relationship between emotion expression and ratings of emergent leadership. Bauer, Preacher, and Gil (2006) have proposed that demonstrating mediation using nested data requires a first model showing that the independent variable or variables (e.g., contempt and compassion) relate to the mediator (e.g., intelligence), and a second model showing that the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable (e.g., leadership categorization) is reduced when including the mediator in the model. Having already shown that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables was significant, we ran these two additional multi-level models, each controlling for random group variance, gender, GMAT, age, extroversion, conscientiousness, leadership factors of sensitivity and tyranny, as well as emotions including anger, love, envy, and admiration.

As seen in Table 4, Model 1, regressing intelligence onto expressions of contempt and compassion revealed that compassion,  $\gamma = .32$ ,  $t(129) = 3.76$ ,  $p < .01$ , and contempt,  $\gamma = .18$ ,  $t(129) = 2.11$ ,  $p < .05$ , positively and significantly related to perceptions of intelligence. Table 4, Model 3, shows that the

relationships between contempt and emergent leadership,  $\gamma = .15$ ,  $t(128) = 1.36$ , *ns*, and compassion and emergent leadership,  $\gamma = .18$ ,  $t(128) = 1.77$ ,  $p = .079$ , diminished to non-significance when intelligence was included in the model; at the same time, intelligence was significantly and positively associated with emergent leadership,  $\gamma = .80$ ,  $t(128) = 9.10$ ,  $p < .01$ . A Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) supported our hypothesis that the relationship between contempt and perceptions that the target is a leader via intelligence perceptions was significant ( $z = 2.06$ ,  $p < .05$ ). A second Sobel test also suggested that the influence of compassion on perceptions that the target is an emergent leader via intelligence perceptions was also significant ( $z = 3.47$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In addition, we employed a macro developed by Bauer et al. (2006) to calculate the simple indirect effect and a 95% confidence interval of this effect, using SAS PROC MIXED to control for variance of the slopes and intercepts. Specifically, we found that the simple indirect effect of compassion on perceptions that the target is a leader through intelligence was significant and the Monte Carlo confidence interval did not overlap with zero ( $\gamma = .26$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $SE = .07$ ; Monte Carlo confidence interval = .109, .402;  $\alpha = .05$ ). We also found that the simple indirect effect of contempt on perceptions that the target is a leader through intelligence was significant and the Monte Carlo confidence interval did not overlap with zero ( $\gamma = .14$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $SE = .07$ ; Monte Carlo confidence interval = .003, .285;  $\alpha = .05$ ). Hence, given the cross-sectional nature of our data, we found a degree of support for our central explanatory argument: that the positive relationship between contempt and emergent leadership, as well as that between compassion and emergent leadership, appear to have mediated by perceptions of participants' intelligence. That is, team members appear to use expressions of these emotions as signals of intelligence, which in turn fosters perceptions that the expresser is a leader and predicts emergent leadership.

We included four different emotions in our model to control for potential third variables. Specifically, we included love, anger, envy, and admiration. Again, in the full model including intelligence, the emotions anger and love did not predict leadership. We consider this strong evidence that emotion valence is not sufficient to account for perceptions of leadership. Interestingly, envy and admiration both significantly related to perceptions that the target was a leader above and beyond perceptions of intelligence. Though unexpected, these results highlight the differential validity of our findings. First, for admiration, there was no effect on leadership without intelligence in the model, and admiration did not predict intelligence (see Table 6, Model 1). Thus, the positive effect of admiration on leadership categorizations does not, as predicted, mirror the effects of contempt and compassion. Second, envy also clearly operated differently from contempt and compassion. Envy did lead to lower ratings of intelligence; however, because envy remained a significant (negative) predictor of leadership perceptions even when intelligence was included in the full model, we can see that intelligence did not mediate the relationship between envy and leadership perceptions (see Table 6, Model 3). Hence, the relationship of envy and admiration expressions to perceived leadership does not appear to reflect the activation of the *intelligent* implicit leadership theory dimension. Instead, the negative effects of envy and positive effects of admiration on perceptions that the target was a leader apparently operate through different mechanisms, as we discuss in the General Discussion.

## General Discussion

To date, research on perceptions of leadership has tended to focus on the role of demographic characteristics, dispositions, and group composition, while emotional antecedents of leadership categorization have been under-researched. Considering the simultaneous influence of socio-comparative emotions on attributions of leadership, across three studies, we found evidence for clear pathways between expressions of contempt and compassion and leadership categorizations. Study 1a examined leadership perceptions in a first impression context, and results confirmed that both contempt and compassion influenced attributions of leadership. Study 1b replicated and extended these findings to a natural setting where ratings were made during two discrete time periods, at the start and the end of a 5-week long course. In this study, we found that expressing contempt and compassion during early interactions predicted leadership emergence later in the lifecycle of the group, a finding that is especially relevant in modern organizations that have flatter, team-based structures and lack formal leadership. In general, these two studies point to the potency and functional value of expressing socio-comparative emotions in social interactions. At first blush, it may seem surprising that two such different emotions as compassion and contempt could have such similarly positive effects on leadership perceptions. The two emotions differ not only in valence, but in their social functions—compassion has a prosocial function and motivates helping behavior, whereas contempt is antisocial and serves to derogate its targets. We proposed that, even given these differences between the two emotions, each conveys information that the expresser is relatively more intelligent, and this relates to the expresser being seen as a leader because intelligence cues match people's implicit beliefs that leaders in a task context are smarter and more knowledgeable than other members in the group. Indeed, the findings from Study 2 suggested that the relationship between the two socio-comparative emotions and leadership categorization was mediated by perceptions of the expressers' intelligence. We cannot be definitive about the nature of causality due to the cross-sectional nature of our data, but our findings are nevertheless consistent with the argument that perceptions of intelligence, a prototypical characteristic of leaders, may mediate the relationship between these two socio-comparative emotions and judgments of leadership. Study 2 also established that this pattern is unique to downward socio-comparative emotions: Similar relationships were not found for either upward socio-comparative emotions (admiration and envy) or non-comparative emotions (love and anger).

Integrating the leadership, emotions, and social comparison literatures expands each. First, we found that expressions of downward socio-comparative emotions have a particularly important influence on leadership categorizations in group contexts. These findings depart from the broader leadership literature, which has largely explored how gender composition (Berdahl, 1996; Kent & Moss, 1994) and individual differences such as extraversion, conscientiousness, intelligence, and physical attractiveness (Brunell et al., 2008; Foti & Hauenstein, 2007; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994; Van Vugt, 2006) influence leadership perceptions and emergence. Second, our research also contributes to a more thorough understanding of the social functions and interpersonal effects of emotions by demonstrating the functional similarities of two seemingly divergent interpersonal emotions, compassion and contempt,

that share a comparative flavor. Third, unlike prior work that either focuses on initial *or* longer-term perceptions that the target is a leader, we explore through our three studies whether the emotional factors that predict preliminary perceptions of leadership in first impression interactions also relate in the same way to leadership perceptions developed over time in natural settings. Furthermore, by focusing on contempt and compassion, we make a unique contribution by integrating leadership, emotion, and social comparison theory, a conceptual link that has yet to be explored (Greenberg, Ashton-James, & Ashkanasy, 2007). Specifically, we theorize and test the notion that the expression of downward socio-comparative emotions promotes perceptions of leadership because these emotions indicate the expressers' *relatively* high intelligence or ability to perform the task.

## The Pathways Between Emotions and Leadership

In addition to establishing the effects of downward socio-comparative emotions on leadership perceptions, our studies raise some interesting questions for future research. For example, the surprising and discouraging finding that displaying contempt positively influences leadership categorizations deserves further attention, especially given that contempt has been shown to be the key damaging emotion in marital interactions (Gottman, 1993). However, some more recent research highlights its positive interpersonal effects in the workplace. Melwani and Barsade (2011) found that receiving contempt caused targets to work harder and perform better on a series of different tasks. Our article highlights another potentially functional outcome of this antisocial, dysfunctional emotion, at least in the short run. As we illustrate, contempt conveys strength and dominance along with increased access to resources; it causes perceivers to acknowledge the expresser's superiority and enables expressers to place themselves above others (Miller, 1997). We note, however, that culture can moderate reactions to discrete emotions (Bagozzi, Verbeke, & Gavino, 2003). As such, showing contempt may only have these types of positive effects in Western cultures that value self-enhancement, power and achievement (Koopmann-Holm & Matsumoto, 2011) as well as autonomy and uniqueness (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Expressing contempt is consistent with the endorsed values and display rules of these cultures (Koopmann-Holm & Matsumoto, 2011), and this is probably a prerequisite for its beneficial implications for expressers. In cultures that prize self-effacement or humility, we would expect contempt expressions to be a poorer strategy for augmenting one's appearance of leadership (cf. Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999).

Though we did not make any specific predictions about love or anger in the models, we found that, in general, these emotions did not show any associations with leadership in all three of our studies (other than the unreplicated, negative effect of anger on leadership perceptions in Study 1a). We interpret these null findings as encouraging support for our arguments about the importance of socio-comparative emotions: Though love and anger appear superficially similar to compassion and contempt, they do not convey comparative information and thus do not foster leadership perceptions.

In Study 2, we also examined the effects of expressions of envy and admiration, two socio-comparative emotions that involve upward social comparisons, or comparisons whereby the target of the

emotion expression is in an advantaged position relative to the expresser. Interestingly, both admiration and envy did relate to perceptions that expressers were leaders, but in different ways. Specifically, in the full model that also included perceptions of intelligence, envy was negatively and admiration positively related to perceptions that the expresser was a leader. On the one hand, each socio-comparative emotion (i.e., envy, admiration, contempt, compassion) related to leadership categorizations, suggesting that merely making a comparison with another may influence leadership categorizations. However, because the upward socio-comparative emotions (i.e., envy and admiration) were not mediated by perceptions of intelligence, other mechanisms are likely to account for the relationship between each upward socio-comparative emotion and related leadership categorizations.

Though it was outside the scope of the current study to identify the mechanisms through which envy and admiration—our two upward social comparison emotion control variables—related to leadership categorizations, considering the fundamental aspects of each emotion may offer some insights. Envy expressions occur because expressers experience displeasure at a teammate's relatively superior outcome in a mutually valued domain (Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007). Expressing envy indicates that comparison others have achieved a relatively superior outcome and may even signal expressers' relative failure. Because failure is viewed as not only unexpected but inconsistent with the overall view of leadership (Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987; Meindl et al., 1985), expressing envy may promote the view that expressers lack leadership. Future research should test this association. In contrast, admiration related to leadership categorizations in our final model only when including perceptions of intelligence; in the model without intelligence (see Table 6, Model 2), admiration was unrelated to leadership categorizations. When present, the positive link between leadership and admiration may occur because admiration, which involves a display of positive emotion in regards to another's relative achievement or success (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Ortony et al., 1988), may be also seen as ingratiating, a behavior that is associated with gaining more promotions at work (Cable & Judge, 2003; Westphal & Stern, 2006). Hence, it is possible that participants expressed ingratiation through admiration and were seen as leaders because they had gained influence by winning favor with more powerful team members. However, given that the effect emerged only when controlling for intelligence, even this causal explanation is limited and speculative. Future research should further examine the association between admiration and perceptions that the target is a leader.

### Strengths and Limitations

One of the strengths of our studies is that we obtain highly consistent results even though the studies were conducted in multiple, geographically diverse settings. Another strength is the consistency across data collected experimentally, cross-sectionally, and longitudinally including both coded and round-robin measures. These differing research designs and methodologies serve the purpose of constructive replication (e.g., Gordon, Slade, & Schmitt, 1986) and enhance the ecological validity of the work. The student workgroups allowed us greater methodological control and enhanced response rates, and mimicked organizational teams in that they were legitimately working together on a set of relevant,

important, and consequential team tasks. In addition, using both undergraduate and master's-level student samples enhanced our ability to generalize our results across populations, suggesting that our findings would replicate in organizational settings as well. Finally, these complementary methodologies enabled us to not only replicate our findings but do so in a manner that addressed the shortcomings of each. For instance, the experimental context and external coders employed in Study 1a strengthen our findings by reducing bias from retrospective self- or other-reported emotions, whereas the use of round-robin data in Studies 1b and 2 established that our findings were generalizable beyond a single rater's perceptions.

Despite our progress in understanding the influences of contempt and compassion on leadership perceptions, we also realize that our studies were subject to methodological limitations. A major limitation of our model showing the indirect effect of contempt and compassion to perceptions of emergent leadership through perceptions of intelligence (as described and studied in Study 2) is that we were able to capture only a cross-sectional depiction of the relationships among these variables. Although the results are in line with our hypotheses and prior research, we certainly cannot rule out the possibility of reverse, or mutual causality. Indeed, as suggested by Lord, Brown, Harvey, and Hall (2001), intelligence and leadership perceptions may simultaneously and reciprocally be activated in social perceivers' minds. Because our cross-sectional data cannot shed light on the precise causal association among emotions, intelligence and leadership, we rely on existing theory to support the mediation analyses and propose that a longitudinal study that assesses expressed emotions, perceptions of intelligence and leadership categorizations and emergence would better allow us to make stronger causal inferences. We will leave that for future research and can only conclude from this study that prior theory and our data suggest that contempt and compassion expressions influence leadership categorizations and emergence through perceptions of intelligence.

Another limitation of our work is that many of the effects we have identified are subject to boundary conditions and moderation by other interaction variables. For example, compassion and contempt expressions may operate differently in contexts where group members experience extreme stress or failure. Specifically, research in the domain of social support suggests that demonstrating transferring and exchanging compassion, through offering resources, help and time may serve the important role of buffering stress (Etzion, 1984). Compassion may therefore become an even greater asset and corresponding desirable leadership quality when groups experience stress. On the other hand, the opposite may be true for contemptuous expressions. Contempt may work as a hierarchy-building strategy in teams that have high levels of cohesion, wherein using contempt as a means to exclude straying group members may actually enhance cohesion and solidarity (Merten, 1997). However, in teams that are experiencing high levels of interpersonal stress and decreased cohesion, expressing contempt may backfire and exacerbate the stressful situation. In this case, targets may view the expresser as not being able to provide needed resources to the group.

Furthermore, we explored expressions of contempt and compassion directed toward individual group members. Yet, it is also possible that members may express contempt and compassion toward other groups—expressions which may also promote per-



ceptions that a target is a leader, but for different reasons. Specifically, expressing contempt or compassion toward another group may serve to promote group identity and solidarity (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Hence, showing contempt and compassion toward other groups may also cue implicit leadership theories, but probably not associated with intelligence. Rather, expressing contempt and compassion toward other groups may relate to leadership categorizations by cueing implicit leadership prototypes associated with being a coach and competitor (Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007). Future research should explore this possibility.

## Conclusion

In some ways, our findings may be seen as discouraging. After all, most of us would probably prefer to avoid leaders who express contempt—particularly if it is directed our way. However, it is probably not too surprising that contemptuous individuals are seen as leaders, given the self-aggrandizing, superiority-asserting connotations of that emotion. What is perhaps more surprising—and, to us, quite gratifying—is that compassion also leads to greater perceptions of leadership. Someone who is concerned for others, and who intends to help, is also seen as more likely to be a leader. This more positive view, which allows for a more sensitive interpersonal style, reassures us that perceivers are considering more than just dominance in their judgments of potential leaders, and offers the opportunity for those seeking leadership to reach it without compromising their caring for others.

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