Article

Becoming a Manager: Learning the Importance of Emotional and Social Competence in Managerial Transitions

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Abstract

This article explores how newly promoted managers develop emotional and social competencies to understand their and others' emotions and then use this understanding for personal growth and in their interactions with others. This study draws on five waves of semistructured interview data collected from 16 newly promoted managers in a large northeastern state agency. The findings suggest that new managers undergo a developmental process—*role exit, movement*, and *role entry*—as they make the transition from individual contributors to managers. At each stage of the process, their emotional and social competence (ESC) facilitates learning and moving to the next stage. In addition, throughout the process, new managers develop their ESC and utilize the benefits in their daily decision-making and management behaviors. The findings also suggest that organizational context is an important factor that defines the contents of ESC in the organization. Based on these findings, this study argues that organizations should help new managers understand the emotional aspects of managerial transitions in developing their selection and training practices.

Keywords

emotional and social competencies, managerial role transition, socialization

Introduction

Although public sector employees frequently view a promotion to a managerial position as a positive career experience, many new managers find this transition to be more challenging than they expected it would be and are therefore often frustrated and/or overwhelmed by the challenges of the transition. In many cases, individuals about to make such a transition have not thought in advance about how different their new managerial positions might be from their positions as individual contributors (e.g., accountants, computer programmers, policy analysts) and so, soon after making this transition, struggle with two issues. First, because public sector agencies generally promote individuals because of their excellent performance and expertise as individual contributors, rather than considering their potential as managers, individuals who are promoted often do not expect that not only will they need to develop a new set of skills and expertise to be effective managers, but that the skills and expertise that they developed as individual contributors will be less relevant to their performance as managers. Second, as is the case with many other role transitions, individuals do not expect that the transition involves more than simply taking on new responsibilities; rather it involves taking on a new identity (manager) and letting go of their previous identity

(individual contributor) (Maurer & London, 2018). As a result, new managers often feel disoriented, isolated, stressed, threatened, and/or uncertain about their ability to succeed in their new position during the early stages of their transition (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; Freedman, 1998; L. A. Hill, 1992, 2003, 2007).

That new managers struggle as they transition into these new positions is especially troublesome, given how important front-line managers are to the day-to-day functioning of government agencies. Moreover, given that many researchers studying managerial transitions identify this first transition period as critical to the future success of managers (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; L. A. Hill, 2003, 2007; Hogan, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2011; McCall, 2010), it is somewhat surprising that researchers who have focused on the emotional turmoil that new managers experience during this first managerial transition have not considered the role of emotional

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and social intelligence/competence (ESI/ESC) during this transition.

This article presents the results of a study that examined how managers in a large public agency, newly promoted from a professional position, managed the transition from individual contributor to manager. Examining data collected through five waves of semistructured interviews, the article focuses on these new managers' emotional reactions to this transition and how their ESC developed as they experienced this transition. It should be noted that all of these managers were promoted during an intensive hiring period in their agency, Department of ABC (DABC),[1] that resulted from a state legislative act that not only strengthened one of the functions of the agency but also set more stringent deadlines for completion of activities within that function. As a result, the agency hired 75 new auditors and promoted 31 auditors to management positions across eight regional offices and the statewide office of the affected division, thus increasing the number of front-line managers in the division by almost 80% within a year.

The next section of the article examines two literatures—the literature on managerial transitions and the literature on ESI/ESC. In addition, we also briefly examine the connection between management derailment and ESI/ESC, as the management derailment literature provides some important evidence for why ESI/ESC can be expected to influence managerial performance. This is followed by the research questions, the methodology, and the results of the study. The article concludes with a discussion of the results and the implications of the results for the study of the role of emotional and social competencies in managerial transitions as well as for promoting, training, and developing new public managers, followed by a discussion of the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

Managerial Transitions

While all transitions can be stressful (Ashforth, 2001; Conroy & O'Leary-Kelly, 2014), the transition to a managerial role can be especially stressful for individuals in professional, scientific, or technical positions because these individuals have developed a "professional identity"[2] that is associated with their professional, scientific, or technical expertise. That is, because of the nature of these types of positions, incumbents are likely to have had specific education and/or training for this position, as well as developed particular approaches to thinking and problem solving based on their education or training. Moreover, as noted above, newly promoted managers are likely to have been promoted because they demonstrated high levels of performance and, consequently, are more likely to have self-concepts defined, at least partly, by their prior successful performance (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; L. A. Hill, 1992, 2007; Maurer & London,

2018). Thus, a clear challenge in this role transition involves moving away from a deeply rooted prior professional role identity and developing a new managerial role identity (Freedman, 1998; R. E. Hill & Somers, 1988).

Several researchers have used stage models to examine the psychological aspects of work transitions. For example, drawing on Lewin's (1951) field theory, Ashforth (2001) describes role transitions as boundary-crossing events that involve role exit (unfreezing), movement, and role entry (refreezing). Similarly, focusing on work-related identity loss and recovery more generally, Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly (2014) discuss transitions as involving "separation (detaching from the old sense of self), transition (resolving ambiguity inherent to this indeterminate state), and reincorporation (establishing a new sense of self)" (p. 68). Alternatively, Maurer and London (2018) describe the role identity shift that managers experience in terms of a continuum and the degree of change in one's mind-set along the continuum. Individuals who make *incremental* shifts in their role identity "continue to function within the same identity they developed previously, still pursuing the same types of goals and thinking about their careers. . ., but with a higher level of learning and functioning on certain knowledge or skills"; making a "*substantial* role identity shift involves adding and enacting new leadership skills and goals. . . [although] there is a likelihood that people could continue to function primarily within the individual-level domain"; finally, making a "*radical* role identity shift involves a new configuration of goals, priorities, and mental models along with new skills and capabilities . . . a fundamental shift in how they think about themselves relative to their careers, work, goals, direction, and the skills or capabilities upon which they depend" (pp. 8-9, emphasis added). Interestingly, while these models differ, all authors emphasize the loss of orientation that individuals experience as their mind-set shifts from *who they were* to *who they are becoming*.

Other researchers have focused on the specific elements of the shift in mind-set that are required as one moves from being an individual contributor to being a manager (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; L. A. Hill, 1992, 2007; Maurer & London, 2018). Perhaps most importantly, making a successful transition requires new managers to understand the importance of interdependence, that is, working closely with peers and others outside their immediate work unit, as well as spending time with subordinates (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011). In addition, new managers need to make a shift in how they measure their personal success and how they derive personal satisfaction. As individual contributors, their success was based on their own performance, and personal satisfaction was derived from positive evaluations of this performance; as managers, they need to learn to measure their success in terms of their subordinates' performance and derive satisfaction from helping their subordinates perform at the highest level (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; L. A. Hill, 2007; Maurer & London, 2018). Drotter and Charan (2001) argue that "the

most difficult change for managers to make [as they move from individual contributor to new manager] involves values. . .they need to learn to value managerial work rather than just tolerate it" (p. 23).

In addition to examining the changes in mind-set that must occur for individuals making the transition from individual contributor to manager, some researchers have identified necessary changes in behaviors for new managers to be successful. Drotter and Charan (2001), for example, argue that one of the greatest behavioral challenges for new managers is learning to allocate their time with a specific focus on making time for others. Freedman (1998) discusses the behavioral changes as a "triple challenge" that managers face not only at this first transition but at each transition as managers move up the organizational hierarchy: "*letting go* of anachronistic responsibilities and competencies, *preserving* those that continue to be useful, and *adding* new, discontinuous responsibilities" (p. 131, emphasis added). Freedman argues that new managers need to let go of their technical work and the sense that they are acting independently, and to focus on (add) working with their subordinates—for example, helping subordinates understand the broader organizational goals as well as their individual assignments, giving them feedback, and ensuring that they receive appropriate training and development—as well as with key individuals outside the work unit who can influence the performance of the work unit, for example, providing them with information about the work unit and influencing them to support the work unit. In terms of behaviors to preserve, Freedman suggests that new managers should continue to (preserve) expect high performance and strive for excellence; however, this expectation now refers not just to the new manager but also to his or her subordinates.

Some researchers have also identified specific behaviors that are required during the transition. For example, Riordan (2008) provides a set of steps people can take to help them be more successful in navigating the transition from individual contributor to new manager as well as a set of questions people can ask themselves to assess their capability to navigate the transitions. In particular, Riordan notes the importance of increasing one's self-awareness both by being self-reflective and by asking others for feedback. She also recommends that individuals identify successful leaders who they can observe and who can serve as role models.

As noted above, a number of researchers studying managerial transitions have identified this first transition period as critical to the future success of managers (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; L. A. Hill, 2007; Hogan et al., 2011; McCall, 2010); this period is also the point at which many managers fail, sometimes referred to as management derailment (Hogan et al., 2011). Defined as managers "being involuntarily plateaued, demoted, or fired below the level of anticipated achievement or reaching that level only to fail unexpectedly" (Lombardo, Ruderman, & McCauley, 1988, p. 199), derailment became a serious focus of research in the

1980s, when the Center for Creative Leadership launched a series of studies to examine why some managers in high-level positions did not continue to move up the organizational hierarchy. In a recent chapter that both describes the extensive history of research on management derailment (including studies conducted prior to the Center for Creative Leadership's initial studies) and summarizes the current state of knowledge regarding the topic, Hogan et al. (2011) emphasize that findings from studies of management derailment have been remarkably consistent. They note that regardless of the methodology used, the type of organization or level of organizational hierarchy studied, or the national culture in which the study was conducted, most researchers have found that managers who derail are likely to allow their emotions to get in the way of using good judgment; are not able to build or lead a team; have troubled relationships with bosses, peers, and/or subordinates; and have great difficulty asking for feedback and learning from mistakes. While Van Velsor and Leslie's (1995) review of studies of derailment across time and cultures includes failure to meet business objectives, rather than allowing emotions to get in the way of good judgment as a primary theme, the strong message in much of the literature on management derailment is that a primary reason that managers derail relates to how these individuals interact with others; derailed managers are frequently described as being abrasive, aloof, arrogant, cold, and insensitive to others. This can be particularly troublesome in public agencies, given that public managers' interactions with employees have been found to influence how these employees interact with citizens (Eldor, 2018).

Given that behaviors and characteristic associated with management derailment are similar to behaviors and characteristics associated with a lack of ESI/ESC, there is reason to believe that ESI/ESC may be a key element that influences new managers' ability to make a successful transition. There has, however, been much controversy regarding ESI/ESC, with various streams of research and models using the terms in somewhat different ways. The next section provides a description of the various streams of research using the term "emotion and social intelligence" and briefly describes the controversies.

ESI/ESC

Since the early 1990s, much attention has been given to the notion of "emotional intelligence" (Ackley, 2016; Cherniss, 2010a) as an ability to accurately perceive and understand one's own emotions, as well as those of others, and to use that understanding to manage one's behaviors in interactions with others. Cherniss (2010a) argues that the concept of emotional intelligence builds on three premises: "that emotions play an important role in life[; that] people vary in their ability to perceive, understand, use, and manage emotions[; and that] these differences affect individual adaptation in a variety of contexts, including the workplace" (p. 111). While

Table 1. Four Conceptualizations of Emotional and Social Intelligence/Competence.

Key concepts	Models (focus) Salovey and Mayer (1990) (Cognitive abilities)	Bar-On (2006) (Competencies, skills, and facilitators)	Boyatzis (2016) and Goleman (1995) (Competencies)	Petrides, Pita, and Kokkinaki (2007) (Personality traits)
Awareness of one's own and others' emotions	Accurately perceive emotions • Identify emotions in oneself and in others	Intrapersonal • Being able to understand and express one's own feelings Interpersonal • Having empathy and being able to relate to others	Self-awareness • Being aware of one's emotions and their effects on others Social awareness • Being aware of others' feelings and emotions Relationship management • Being able to work well with others	Well-being Sociability Emotionality
Ability to use one's emotions in working with others	Use emotions • Direct one's attention to key events • Generate emotions to facilitate decision making and problem solving	Adaptability • Being able to problem-solve and adapt to change	Relationship management	Sociability
Understanding the source of one's emotions	Understand emotions • Recognize the source of emotional reactions • See the relationship among different emotions	Intrapersonal		
Managing one's emotions	Manage emotions • Be aware of emotions • Be open to experience a range of emotions, including negative emotions	Stress management • Being able to control one's emotions General mood • Having a positive outlook	Self-management • Being able to control one's emotions and impulses—are classified as aspects of emotional intelligence	Well-being Self-control

much of attention paid to the topic has been positive, there has also been much criticism, leading some researchers to describe emotional intelligence as one of the most controversial concepts in the social sciences (Cherniss, 2010a; McCleskey, 2014). Controversies focus on three key issues: (a) the lack of a consensual definition or set of assumptions about what emotional intelligence is; (b) concerns about the psychometric properties of the various measurement instruments associated with the different models of emotional intelligence; and (c) mixed empirical findings regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and performance, in general, and between emotional intelligence and leadership performance, in particular. Because we do not use any existing instruments for our data collection, we will only discuss the first and third issues here.

Definitions and models of ESI/ESC. In an attempt to make sense of the controversy regarding the lack of a consensual definition, a number of researchers have begun to differentiate among various streams of research associated with emotional intelligence (e.g., Ackley, 2016; Cherniss, 2010a, 2010b;

McCleskey, 2014). Although there is much similarity among the different typologies, Cherniss (2010a, 2010b) makes the most distinctions and identifies four different approaches to conceptualizing ESI. He notes that while there is much similarity in the specific elements of the different approaches, the key differences lie in the underlying assumptions of these approaches. Table 1 presents a comparison of the various elements associated with the four approaches by showing some of the similarities across these approaches. Here we briefly describe the underlying assumptions of the four approaches.

The first approach, developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990), sees emotional intelligence as a set of specific cognitive/mental abilities involving "the *ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information guide one's thinking and actions*" (p. 189, emphasis in original), and defines emotional intelligence as the integration of four specific abilities: (a) accurately perceiving emotions, (b) using emotions, (c) understanding emotions, and (d) managing emotions (Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2002). This model has clearly received the most attention from researchers in the fields of

industrial and organizational psychology and management (Cherniss, 2010a).

The second approach, developed by Bar-On (2006) and colleagues, is labeled a model of ESI, thus specifying that the two types of intelligences are intertwined. This approach defines ESI as "*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*" (p. 14, emphasis in original). Two key assumptions of this approach are that (a) "intelligence" is not limited to one's cognitive abilities and (b) these intelligences can be learned. This approach describes ESI as comprising 15 emotional skills that can be grouped into five composites: (a) intrapersonal, (b) interpersonal, (c) stress management, (d) adaptability, and (e) general mood.

Perhaps the most controversial of the approaches to ESI/ESC is the Goleman (1995) model. This approach has sometimes been referred to as a mixed-model approach, because it combines cognitive and noncognitive abilities, competencies, and dispositions. Indeed, although Goleman and colleagues use the term ESI, they emphasize the fact that their work focuses on competencies, defined as an individual's behaviors and characteristics that lead to effective performance (Cherniss, 2010a). Although the specific elements of the model have changed several times since it was first proposed, most of the key elements remain the same. Currently, the model comprises 12 competencies that are grouped into four clusters (Boyatzis, 2016). Two of the clusters—self-awareness, which involves being aware of one's emotions and their effects on others, and self-management, which involves being able to control one's emotions and impulses—are classified as aspects of emotional intelligence; two of the clusters—social awareness, which involves being aware of others' feelings and emotions, and relationship management, which involves being able to work well with others—are classified as aspects of social intelligence (SI).

The final approach, exemplified in the model proposed by Petrides, Pita, and Kokkinaki (2007), focuses on individual personality traits. As such, this approach defines emotional intelligence in terms of relatively stable emotion-related dispositions that cannot be learned. Focusing on emotion-related personality facets, these authors conclude that trait emotional intelligence comprises four components: well-being, sociability, self-control, and emotionality. This approach has received the least amount of attention in the management literature, which is likely due to its focus on personality as a set of fixed traits, rather than on abilities or competencies, which one can develop.

While Cherniss (2010a, 2010b) acknowledges that the lack of a consensus definition can create difficulties for researchers attempting to determine the impact of ESI on various organizational outcomes, he notes that this is not an unusual state of affairs in the social sciences, that is, most concepts in the social sciences have multiple definitions, and calls attention to the fact that "there is still considerable disagreement about how to define general intelligence even after 100 years of active research on the topic" (p. 113). He does, however, offer a potentially helpful solution, suggesting that researchers distinguish between the idea of having a consensus definition and the idea of allowing for multiple models. More specifically, he suggests that researchers agree to a common definition of ESI, "and then evaluate proposed models and measures in terms of that definition" (p. 114). The common definition he proposes is the one used by Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000) in their earlier writings, "the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others" (p. 396). In addition, he suggests that it would be useful to differentiate between "emotional intelligence" and "emotional and social competence," where emotional and social competencies refer to characteristics that are linked to (the consensus definition of) emotional intelligence and which lead to effective performance. In accepting this distinction, we believe that it is important to study the effect of emotional and social competencies on the transition from individual contributor to new manager.

Relationship between ESI/ESC and performance. Much of the controversy regarding ESI/ESC stems from strong claims made by Goleman and colleagues that ESI/ESC is more important than IQ (general intelligence) for leadership performance (Cherniss, 2010a; McCleskey, 2014; Walter, Cole, & Humphrey, 2011). The ESI/ESC–performance relationship debate has been especially heated in relation to leadership performance (Antonakis, Ashkanasy, & Dasborough, 2009; Walter et al., 2011). On one hand, some have argued that some of the most important leadership behaviors and outcomes are associated with emotional intelligence (Prati, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003). In a similar vein, researchers focusing specifically on SI have suggested that because "leadership is an inherently social phenomenon" (Zaccaro, 2002, p. 29), managers must possess a certain level of SI, and that because the social complexity increases at higher levels of the organizational hierarchy, managers at these levels need to possess higher levels of SI. On the other hand, some have argued that research studies have shown emotional intelligence adds little to explaining performance variance above what is explained by general intelligence and personality measures (Antonakis, 2003).

Cherniss (2010a) notes that there is, in fact, increasing evidence supporting the ESI/ESC–performance relationship, but that a key reason for differences in findings across studies relates to definitional (and measurement) issues discussed above; he, therefore, suggests caution in interpreting the findings of various studies. Of particular interest here is a meta-analytic study conducted by Joseph and Newman (2010) that found that competency-based measures, which they refer to as mixed-model measures, have stronger relationships with

performance than do (cognitive) ability-based measures. In addition, these authors found that the nature of the work performed influences the ESI/ESC–performance relationship. More specifically, they found a stronger relationship for high-emotional labor jobs, defined in terms of the frequency of customer/interpersonal interactions, than for low-emotional labor jobs.[3] Given these two findings, and the fact that management and leadership positions would be defined by some as high-emotional labor jobs (Humphrey, Pollack, & Thomas, 2008), we think it is important to investigate the role of ESC in managerial transitions, particularly for individuals transitioning from positions that could be classified as low-emotional labor positions, that is, positions that do not require a high level of interaction with customers, clients, or colleagues.

Research Questions

The literature reviewed above suggests that emotional and social competencies would be important to new managers for two reasons. First, the literature on managerial role transitions (and also the literature on organizational socialization, in general) clearly indicates that the transition from individual contributor to manager is a time of emotional turmoil for the new managers. Thus, one might imagine that it is important for new managers to develop their emotional intelligence/competence, both increasing their self-awareness regarding their emotional reactions to the transition and building their emotional self-control (self-management). Second, given the degree to which management derailment has been associated with lack of empathy (social awareness) and an inability to build a team (relationship management), one might assume that it is especially important for new managers to develop their social competence. We found no research, however, that addresses the role of emotional and social competencies in the transition from individual contributor to new manager. Arguably, both organizations and new managers would benefit from gaining a better understanding of this phenomenon. This study therefore asks the following research questions.

> **Research Questions 1:** What types of events and interactions mark the early stages of managerial transition from individual contributor to new manager? What emotional reactions do new managers have to these events and interactions?
>
> **Research Questions 2:** How do new managers' emotional and social competencies influence how they experience this transition and the actions they take in crafting their new role?
>
> **Research Questions 3:** How do new managers' emotional and social competencies develop as they move from the early stages of managerial transition to accepting their identity as a manager?

Method

Sample

As noted above, the sample is drawn from a population of newly promoted managers in a large state agency, which we refer to here as DABC. DABC is a regulatory agency that provides various services to its clients including local government agencies. The nature of its core function is highly technical so that its auditors are highly trained specialists equipped with technical knowledge. The state mandated the DABC to expand one of its core functions and, as a result, DABC promoted 31 auditors to managerial positions by early 2006. DABC provided the study's research team with the list of the 31 new managers.

From the list provided by the agency, the study sample, 17 out of those 31 managers promoted to their positions in 2006, was carefully selected in a stratified manner to ensure balanced representation across the regional and statewide offices as well as a balanced proportion between men and women. Thus, within each regional office, the new managers to be included in the study were selected to ensure a balanced ratio between men and women. Other than ensuring balanced representations across regions and between men and women, individuals were selected randomly in an attempt to avoid potential bias that may have been caused by using convenience sampling. As a result, of the initial 17 participants, nine are women and eight are men. At the beginning of the study, their average total tenure in DABC was 11.6 years and, although two of the new managers had only slightly more than 1 year of experience, on average, they had less than 1 year as manager. Table 2 summarizes the information about the sample drawn for this study.

Over time, the study experienced some attrition among the new managers, and three managers—two who left the agency and one who was on a personal leave—did not participate in this study beyond their departure (see Table 2). It is also worth mentioning that five of the 17 new managers were promoted from their entry-level managerial position to a senior managerial position during the study period.

Procedure

As noted above, this study draws on data collected during five waves of semistructured interviews following the promotion of a large cohort of individuals into first-line manager positions. The interviews were conducted between October 2006 and May 2010 by a research team consisting of two researchers who were trained as qualitative researchers and two others who had several years of experience conducting qualitative research in the field of public management. Interviews lasted approximately 1 hr. The first round of data collection was conducted using face-to-face interviews; subsequent waves were conducted by phone. Participation in the study was completely voluntary.

Table 2. Summary of the Sample.

ID	Sex	Location	Tenure (years)	Other job experience	Education	Pay grade (as of 2010)	Wave completed
1	M	City A	6	No information	Accounting	23	1
2	F	City A	6	5 years at a nonprofit organization	Accounting	27	4
3	F	City B	7	15 years at an accounting firm	Accounting	23	5
4	F	City B	3	6 years at an accounting firm	Accounting	23	5
5	F	City C	6	10 years at public organization	Business/Accounting	23	5
6	M	City D	8	No information	Accounting	27	5
7	M	City D	27	None	IT	27	5
8	F	City E	3	1 year	Accounting	23	5
9	F	City E	5	17 years at a bank	Accounting	23	5
10	F	City E	2	11 years at an accounting firm	Accounting	23	5
11	F	City F	17	None	Accounting	27	5
12	M	City F	12	None	Accounting	23	5
13	M	City G	35	None	Accounting	23	5
14	M	City G	25	None	Business/Accounting	27	5
15	M	City H	23	None	Accounting	23	5
16	M	City H	6	None	Accounting	23	2
17	F	City I	6	None	Accounting	23	5

Note. Tenure = Each participant's tenure at the DABC as of October 2006. DABC = Department of ABC; M = male; F = female.

Interview data were recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim.

Initially, the interview questions for each wave were designed to capture the participants' psychological challenges and adaptation to their new job, their role-learning, and identity construction. However, during the first wave of interviews, concerns emerged regarding how the new managers were coping with their emotional reactions to the transition. In fact, nearly all participants expressed negative emotional reactions (e.g., frustration) to their initial experience of being manager, leading the researchers to ask additional questions to learn more about their experience (e.g., "how did that [a certain episode] make you feel?" or "how did you deal with it [the emotion that the respondent mentioned]?").

After the first wave of interviews, the researchers consistently asked follow-up questions about the participants' emotional state compared with the previous wave. For example, those who expressed frustration or anxiety in the previous interview were asked whether they were still frustrated or anxious about their work and, if not, how they overcame that reaction and what they had learned in dealing with those experiences. The final interview was particularly designed to understand how the participants integrated their professional experience as a manager with their existing identities. Thus, each of the interview protocols included questions about how the participants handled difficult situations that involved their own and others' emotions. Table 3 summarizes information about the interview protocols.

Analysis

We analyzed the data using an inductive, iterative grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). First, each transcript

was reviewed and discussed by all four researchers on the team. Following the discussions, memos were written to capture key words; to summarize key cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses from each interviewee; and to develop an analytic framework for the next round of interviews. Second, following Strauss and Corbin's approach (1998), open coding was conducted to explore how new managers perceived and managed their emotions during their role transition. While analyzing the data, we paid careful attention to responses that included words directly indicating emotional reactions (e.g., "frustrated," "I felt," or "I was stressed out,") and anecdotes that might be expected to provoke an affective reaction (e.g., an example of interpersonal or intrapersonal conflict). Third, focused axial coding was conducted to build our understanding of the role of emotional and social competencies in the role transition process. We tried to identify the common patterns of how the participants' salient and significant (and mostly emotional) work experiences affected their role-learning. To ensure the validity of the codes, two researchers from the research team and one outside researcher reviewed and checked the codes. Throughout the process, *Atlas.ti v6.0*, a software package for qualitative data analysis, was used to manage transcripts, codes, and the conceptual relationships among the codes.

Results

The data analysis reveals that the study participants went through a role transition process similar to the one described by Ashforth's (2001) role transition model, that is, a process that involved *role exit, movement*, and *role entry*. In each phase of the process, the participants faced different challenges, and their emotional and social competencies played a

Table 3. Summary of Interview Protocols.

Wave	Period	Primary concerns
1st	October 2006-December 2006	Adaptation (social integration, in particular) and psychological challenges the participants experienced in performing their new job
2nd	February 2007-April 2007	Role-learning experiences focusing on challenges in solving daily problems at work as well as follow-up questions
3rd	May 2007-August 2007	Role-learning experiences focusing on follow-up on individuals' concerns identified in the second wave interview
4th	October 2007-December 2007	Role-learning experiences focused on the participants' learning of their role and the environment (e.g., how the participants' view of their work environment and their role in a relation to the environment had changed)
5th	April 2010-May 2010	Individuals' managerial identity construction process including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects (e.g., if the participants experienced perpetual personal growth from their job experience as manager or if they experienced any changes in their views of the managerial role and themselves)

critical role in helping them to overcome the challenges and move forward to the next step of role transition. In responding to the challenges at each stage, the participants utilized different strategies that resulted in certain outcomes. Table 4 summarizes the participants' experiences at each stage.

Study participants first experienced the *role exit* period where they discovered that their beliefs about their new job and their organization were no longer valid, leading them to struggle emotionally ("frustrated" or "disappointed") as they tried to adjust to their new role. During this period, many of the participants felt that they were not supported by their organization or that they were not competent enough to be managers. These negative emotions not only clearly demotivated the new managers to great extent but also helped them to disengage from their old role as individual contributors (i.e., auditors) by leading them to question their previous assumptions about their job and work environment as well as their sense of self-worth.

Questioning their current assumptions triggered a *movement* period, a *journey* between an ex-role and a new role (Ashforth, 2001). For the participants of this study, this journey allowed them to make better sense of their work environment and the expectations that others held for them as (new) managers, including being able to "work with people." Learning to "work with people" was a daunting task for most study participants whose prior work was highly technical and did not require substantial social interaction with others. To overcome the challenges of the transition, study participants frequently asked for advice, searched for information, and had conversations with other organizational members—particularly with individuals they identified as *role models*—to learn about their role as managers.

In the process, study participants became more aware of other organizational members' emotional reactions and learned to use their reactions as guides to help them know what appropriate or inappropriate behavior in the given specific situation was. Thus, as study participants' social awareness (social competency) increased, they were better able to

appreciate their social role as managers as well as the social meanings of various organizational events, and also to *evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses as managers* more objectively than in the earlier stage. Data indicated that managers who were more successful in their transition (measured, in part, by their further promotion during the study period) were also those who paid more attention to other organizational members' feedback on their performance and then proactively interpreted these cues in their work context, which helped the participants to continue to develop their ESC.

Ultimately, most of the study participants were able to craft their role as a manager by using the knowledge they learned from the earlier stages—the outcomes of their learning about themselves and their work environment—to perform their job more effectively during the *role entry* period, which is consistent with the Ashforth's (2001) model. As they carefully crafted their managerial role in relation to the contents of their role-learning and their existing identities, the ways that they performed their roles varied greatly at this stage, depending on how they viewed their role in the agency and their identity. For example, during this stage, most managers were able to regulate their own negative emotions to function effectively, but they utilized different strategies such as *reframing, acceptance*, and *separation* to do so.

During the transition process, as the new managers developed their emotional and social competencies, they learned the importance of these competencies as guides, both in identifying potential issues that could substantially influence their subordinates' performance and in choosing methods to respond to these circumstances. In particular, while most of the participants believed that they were effective at motivating their subordinates, the majority of participants identified dealing with others' negative emotions in a conflictual situation as the primary challenge they faced. In addition, only a few of the participants reported that they could successfully resolve issues related to incidents that demotivated their subordinates, and many felt that one of the most difficult parts of

Table 4. Summary of the Managerial Role Transition Process.

Stage	Role exit	Movement	Role entry
Challenges	Entry shocks Lack of sense-making	Understanding the importance of "working with people"	Managing (negative) emotions
Role of ESCs	Disengage from the old role	Guide and inform new managers about their role in the work environment	Identify issues and the methods to respond to them
Strategies		Sense-making Dialogues Role models	Utilize ESC to manage emotions and develop relationships Reframing, Acceptance, and Separation Motivation and Empathy
Outcomes	External attribution Self-doubts	Social awareness Self-assessment	Crafting a new role identity

Note. ESC = emotional and social competence.

their job was to deal with their subordinates' negative emotions. The details of the participants' experience at each stage are described below.

Stage 1: Role Exit

Entry shocks. Although the participants were initially excited about their promotion, by the first or second round of interviews, all but one stated that they had become "anxious," "overwhelmed," and "frustrated." The following two excerpts from one participant exemplify the typical pattern of the change in emotional reactions to taking their new role and the entry shocks the new managers experienced during their first year or so:

> So far, it's [being a new manager is] kind of stimulating and exciting. Challenging, but I am only two weeks into it. I don't know what shape I will be in three months or six months down the road. (An excerpt from the first interview with a new manager shortly after he was promoted; first wave)

> I would say it's definitely been much more stressful for me being new. There were a lot of new things. I was a new supervisor. I was new to statewide. I was new to the [IT] system. I was new to these types of audits. I had a lot of stress, a lot of stress on me because a lot of things that I was doing were new. . . .It wasn't easy. The first year has been extremely frustrating in certain ways. . . .I don't know why I thought I'd just be able to jump in and start supervising people and everything would go smoothly. (An excerpt from the second interview with the same manager 6 months after the first interview; second wave)

As the participant expressed, "being new" was very stressful and frustrating for most participants. The entry shock associated with "being new" was also a result of the discrepancy between their prior expectations about their new job and the reality of their work environment. At the beginning of this study, most of the new managers stated that they thought they should run their team based on rational decision making, using "hard evidence" and "clear" rules provided by upper

management. This is not surprising, given that their previous jobs as auditors were highly technical and "clear-cut" based on "numbers and facts." In these prior positions, the participants were trained to objectively evaluate "hard evidence" (i.e., "numbers and facts") and to follow the law rather than their personal beliefs. However, most new managers quickly found that the organization was not run in the way they expected and that many of the problems they regularly confronted were ambiguous and unclear. As one participant put it, if her previous role as an auditor falls into a "black and white" type of job, her current role as a manager falls into a "grey area" where "the rule may be different depending on the situation" (Wave 1). Some new managers were "disappointed" by the ambiguous nature of their managerial job and lack of "specific guidelines or rules" to handle such situations and saw that as an indication that they were not supported by their organization. They also believed that the existence of a "grey area" was part of "[unethical] organizational politics" that might allow someone "to get around a specific rule" in pursuit of self-interest. Thus, for most of the participants who were used to following "black and white" type of rules, the existence of a "grey area" was often seen as breaking their ethical code and reducing their professional integrity.

At the same time, their previous work environment did not require the participants to be social. DABC's auditors mostly worked in small task-force teams that included a few auditors and varied in composition for each audit. More importantly, team tasks were highly technical and did not require intensive social interaction, either with other organizational members or with their clients. In contrast, their new position required participants to be socially aware and sensitive to their work environment rather than simply focusing on the technical aspects of an audit project. As a result, the majority of managers became very anxious about their performance. In particular, many of the new managers expressed discomfort about not knowing what to do to address circumstances that were "not written [about] anywhere in the guidelines given by the agency" nor in "any management books." As one participant expressed,

What do you do when you are dealing with an upset client or a co-worker or whatever? . . .How do you deal with somebody when they are unapproachable? What do you do? Do you ignore them? How do you address that? That is an issue that happens with people . . . Are we going to let this person continue to bully everybody, back off? Do you know what I mean? (First wave)

Lack of sense-making. Initially, negative emotional reactions—such as "frustration," "anxiety," "disappoint[ment]," and "resentment"—clearly demotivated the new managers in this study. In the face of these uncomfortable emotions, study participants had difficulty making sense of their experience, especially as they had previously been very successful in this work environment and so they thought they knew the environment. Their unsatisfactory performance, in their own minds, made them question their own sense of self-worth as well as their previous assumptions about the role of managers and the agency's work environment. As a result, unproductive behavioral patterns emerged out of such negative emotions such as *blaming other organizational members* or *questioning their personal fitness* for the job.

External attribution. During the first wave of interviews, most of the participants identified their organizational practices (e.g., lack of "specific guidelines or rules" to lead a team or to resolve personnel issues) and/or organizational politics (e.g., a request from the upper management to "change the tone" of an audit report) as the source of their emotional distress. The majority of the new managers believed that they did not have any control over such a "difficult work environment," which frustrated them even further. More than half of the study participants also blamed their subordinates (e.g., characterized them as "inexperienced," "incompetent," or "difficult"). As one manager illustrated in an anecdote,

They had assigned me a couple of difficult examiners in that they had issues, they were not performing up to standard. . .It was extremely stressful for me, between me and the department . . .because those examiners complained against me. I did not pry into that. Everybody who has supervised them has had a problem with them, every single person. . .When they assigned me the person, I asked them, "You know what's going to happen?" Because I had worked with that person before, [I knew that the] quality of work [was] going to fall, and it [was] going to take longer to complete a task. Because I've had it before; every supervisor who has worked with that person has had it before. Every manager has had problems with him. (Second wave)

Self-doubts. The majority of the new managers were also "anxious" about their performance, although the degree of self-doubt varied. During the first or second wave of interviews, most of them stated that they were not sure if they were doing a good job as a manager and that they were very anxious about their performance (e.g., "I kind of feel like it is the blind [the participant] leading the blind [the new auditors in her team]"). Several of them questioned their personal fit

with the job and seriously considered finding another job during this period. In fact, two managers quit their job. Although we could not confirm why they quit (because they dropped out of the study), we could infer from their earlier interviews that they were not handling their frustration about their job performance very well. It should be noted that some of the participants who expressed self-doubt also blamed others for the difficulties they experienced.

Stage 2: Movement

Becoming socially aware of the work environment. In contrast to their interview responses from the first stage of the new managers' transition process, by the second and/or third wave of interviews, the majority of the study participants admitted that some of their initial frustration stemmed from the fact that they did not realize the importance of "work[ing] with people." As one participant stated in her second interview, she learned that "[for her subordinates,] there is nothing worse than having a horrible supervisor that you [her subordinates] don't want to be in the same room with" because the supervisor "does not treat people as people" but simply considers "employees to be people who get a job done." Many participants also stated that "work[ing] with people" required them to be aware of others' emotions. That is, they became aware that it was very important for them to understand that "a little [emotional] thing" could be critical in one's organizational life and, particularly, for their subordinates' performance. One participant shared her "eye-opening" experience:

We got a new staff member and she was assigned to me. She asked me a question: "What is a BIPCO?" I told her to look at [her] card. She took offense at that; but I didn't know [what BIPCO was either]. I did notice that she got quieter after that. She mentioned it in the gripe session; she told me I made her feel stupid. So, I apologized to her and explained to her I told her to look at her card because I didn't know. She didn't know I also refer to my card because I am also new. So, little issues could be important. I would never have thought anything of it and it affected her. (Third wave).

Most of the new managers in this study stated that they frequently sought feedback about their performance—often informally—from subordinates and other organizational members. These informal dialogues with other organizational members often provided the participants with valuable "insights" and "direction" as well as "feedback" about their performance as a manager. As one participant described,

[Shortly after I was promoted,] I had a conversation with a young lady that I was supervising . . . she said they [his subordinates] couldn't stand working for me. But, since then, I have grown and developed . . . I think that [the conversation with the subordinate] was certainly a turning point in my development . . . [Recently,] she [the subordinate] told me that if she could

choose, she would like to work on my teams any day, rather than other teams in the region. That [the change in her evaluation of him as a manager] meant a lot to me and it kind of made me feel like I'm going down the right road and I'm doing the right thing. (Fifth wave)

The participant from the excerpt above stated that at the time, he believed he was doing his best to help his subordinates, and so he was very shocked at the intensity of his subordinates' negative emotion toward him (i.e., "they couldn't stand working for me [him]"). Both the words and emotional reaction of the individual he spoke with helped him to understand that he was, in fact, not doing a good job. On the contrary, the second conversation with this subordinate, which included both positive feedback and a positive emotional state (i.e., "if she could choose, she would like to work on my teams any day, rather than other teams in the region"), made him feel "right," although the conversation may not necessarily have confirmed that he was *actually* doing a good job. Similarly, many other new managers in this study expressed that their feeling of doing "right" (e.g., "going down the right road" or "I'm doing the right thing") largely depended on hearing other organizational members' verbal feedback and being able to read their emotional reactions. The "right" or "gut" feeling allowed the study participants to construct a new set of assumptions about their new role and their organization. Moreover, a key to their ability to construct the new set of assumptions was their awareness of other organizational members' emotional reactions to their performance and their newly developed abilities to process those reactions effectively.

Self-assessment. All of the new managers in this study indicated that they frequently shared their frustrations and anecdotes with their colleagues or more experienced senior managers. Often, the new managers found out that other people experienced similar problems, as well as similar emotional reactions to those problems. Most of the new managers believed that hearing that others faced similar issues not only provided them with some level of relief, but it also allowed them to analyze their own emotions more objectively than they could at the beginning of this study and to understand these situations within the context of their organization.

At the same time, by the third wave of interviews, the majority of new managers of this study had accepted that their personal strengths as excellent auditors did not necessarily contribute to their successful performance as a manager. For example, one study participant reported that he initially thought that his knowledge in the field would be the source of his power as an expert and make him an effective manager. He regularly intervened in situations if he believed he had knowledge that could contribute to solving a problem. However, what he learned was that his subordinates saw these characteristics in negative terms, and that they saw him

as an "intense" person and a "difficult [boss] to work for." Many other managers reported similar stories and stated that they acted like a "micromanager" until they were able to "see the big picture." As illustrated by another participant,

> The first year where I kind of described that I wanted to come in and kind of change the world. I don't know when I kind of took a step back and realized that that wasn't the best approach . . . I think the initial one or two jobs I probably micromanaged too much and saw it wasn't working. I'll be honest, [now] I'm kind of a hands-off supervisor. There's a fine line. At the same time, if there's a newer examiner, I'm much more hands-on with training than if it's someone more experienced who I'm familiar with. I try to keep an open mind and keep communication; I might be hands-on if the person has a question and I want them to be able to approach. In the past couple years, I've gone from being a micromanager to a macromanager. I've laid back more. (Fourth wave)

In their terms, being able to "see the big picture" refers to gaining an understanding that their job is done collaboratively by a number of groups and that an important aspect of their role as manager is to actively manage these interdependencies.

These narratives emphasize the fact that building their managerial capacity required many of the new managers to learn more about their own emotions as well as to learn how to manage relationships. Interestingly, the managers who were more open about the struggles they experienced at the very early stage of their transition appeared to experience greater professional development over time. That is, the data analysis reveals that managers who recognized their struggles (e.g., interpersonal or intrapersonal conflicts or frustration about their own performance) were more active in seeking feedback and watching for subtle social cues (e.g., body language, gossip about other managers) in their attempts to overcome the challenges and identify areas they needed to strengthen or develop. Although receiving a promotion is not the sole indicator of one's success as a manager, two of the managers who appeared to have greater self-awareness about their own struggles and social awareness of others' emotions (i.e., paid more attention to social cues and feedback they received from other organizational members) were promoted again to a senior level manager during the study period, and could be labeled as exceptionally successful cases.

Stage 3: Role Entry

In later interviews, virtually all new managers expressed that they grew professionally and personally while learning about themselves. At this stage, new managers created an image consistent with their current self-image using the knowledge they learned about themselves and their work environment. For that reason, at this stage, the ways that they performed their roles varied greatly and utilized various strategies such

as *reframing, acceptance*, and *separation*, depending on how they viewed their role in the agency and their identity.

Managing one's own emotions

Reframing. Several new managers, including the two exceptionally successful managers, often used *reframing* as a strategy to manage their emotions in constructive ways. In the following excerpt, one of these managers described his concern with his excessive emotional commitment—arguably to a point of emotional exhaustion—to an issue related to one of his subordinates. He felt he spent too much time thinking about potential solutions and how he could guide and motivate the particular subordinate to improve the person's performance. While the participant was clearly frustrated, he could also recognize the positive impacts of having those negative emotions, as well as the importance of not allowing these emotions to interfere with his performance as a manager.

> I may take things too personally . . . I became like personally or emotionally invested in this and I almost felt like it was a personal knock on me that it was taking so much time . . . Maybe [it is ok] not to remove [my emotions] because they're good to have because it shows I care but maybe not allow them to cloud my judgment. (Fifth wave)

Acceptance. More than half of the new managers of this study, including the successful managers who could *reframe* their emotions, often managed their stress by learning to accept that "it's ok to be *not perfect*" from time to time. New managers, highly motivated and eager to succeed in their job, often pushed themselves too hard. However, at some point, they realized that they are also "human beings" and that they can only deal with a certain number of tasks at a time. They also realized that other organizational members often were able to empathize with their situation and understand their mistakes. Thus, they realized that it was more constructive for them to admit to and correct their mistakes than to deny their responsibility for what happened. As one participant described,

> I think they [subordinates and local government partners] have the ability to see that we're human beings. And we're doing what we do, and sometimes we make mistakes. If we do, [we need to] offer the right kind of guidance to be able to correct them and make things better. (Fifth wave)

Separation. Another approach a number of study participants used to manage negative emotions at work was distraction or *separation*. Many of the managers participating in this study expressed being highly committed to their job and noted that they often sacrificed elements of their personal life for their job performance. Some managers felt guilty when they had to leave the office for personal reasons, such as going on a honeymoon or taking maternity leave, because

they knew how hectic it would be for other colleagues and subordinates in their office to cover for their absence. However, the new managers also recognized that they became emotionally exhausted when they overinvested in their work (e.g., working too much overtime work or delaying their personal leave). In particular, several managers became aware that they were emotionally burned out and tried to resolve their stress by separating themselves from their work as soon as they got out of their office. For example, one of the managers in this study enrolled in a master's degree program to develop her expertise and, more importantly, to "rejuvenate herself." Some managers mentioned repeatedly during the interview that "this is just a job," which is an indication of their efforts to separate themselves from their job. This separation seemed to help prevent the new managers from experiencing emotional exhaustion as well as to regain the balance between their personal life and their work when they reached this state.

Managing relationships

Motivation. Managers are expected to know how to motivate their subordinates. Interestingly, the majority of the study participants believed that building a "collegial work environment" would help motivate their subordinates and identified a variety of ways to build collegiality, based on their own personal strengths and style. For example, some new managers stated that they created social venues (e.g., a party or an informal community of practice) where all subordinates could be socially integrated into a cohesive work group. Others tried to emphasize that they treated their subordinates equally, "rather than [as] 'I'm the manager, you're the subordinate'" (fifth wave). In the final wave of interviews, a number of managers discussed creating approachable and friendly characters, such as a "[unit] cheerleader," or "Uncle Mike around here [a friendly figure anyone might have in his/her family]." One participant described her efforts to create a collegial work environment that subordinates would see as "a fun place to work":

> I always say, there's me and another girl here that [are] the biggest cheerleaders here. [We are] about team, team, team, and trying to engage people and trying to take the things that motivate people and that type of thing, and I think just being involved in different things and, just showing the staff that it's good to be involved and good to take things on and do stuff like getting involved with different things that are happening in the office. (Fifth wave)

A common theme across the various motivation approaches is that by the fourth or fifth wave of interviews, approximately 3 to 4 years after their promotion, these new managers no longer believed that their job as manager was simply to focus on the auditing task, but rather understood that their job as manager involved dealing with their subordinates' frustration and other negative emotions and keeping

them motivated. In that regard, for these study participants, motivation was more associated with subordinates' emotions (intrinsic motivation) than with external rewards (extrinsic motivation). This was particularly important in this situation because the agency was experiencing several major organizational changes, including leadership changes resulting from a corruption scandal at high levels of the organization, sudden organizational expansions, massive transfers of employees from multiple offices to one new regional office, and several infusions of new hires in recent years. In such a turbulent work environment, it was extremely important for new managers to ensure that subordinates, including newly hired auditors, remained motivated and committed to their job by ensuring that they saw themselves as part of a cohesive team.

Empathy with action. As the new managers in this study began to form stronger managerial identities, it was clear that they became more cognizant of the importance of using empathy when trying to influence how other employees reacted to difficult situations. Simply showing empathy, however, often was not sufficient to be considered an effective manager; rather, subordinates often expected their boss to take actions that would help them. The data analysis reveals that resolving conflict associated with their subordinates' negative emotions was the most challenging task for most of the study participants. For example, Mary, one participant in the study, shared her experience where her boss organized a special audit team and put the least experienced auditor in charge of the team. This decision caused severe conflict in the team. Mary sympathized with her subordinates in the team and thought that her boss clearly had not taken into consideration the potential for conflict. However, she also believed that decisions about the composition of the audit teams technically belonged to her boss. Thus, she did not take any actions to alter her boss's decision; in fact, she reported feeling helpless in that situation. According to her, the audit ended up going poorly, and resulted in the (inexperienced) team leader being distressed for a prolonged period of time, even after the audit was completed.

Although not common in this study, some managers did share stories of successfully standing up for their subordinates and protecting the interest of their work unit in a difficult situation. One participant, Jane, told of a situation involving John and Tom, two of her subordinates. Tom and John had had interpersonal conflicts over an extended period of time because of their different work styles and, in fact, John formally asked upper management to assign him to someone else other than Tom. Eventually, John was demoted to a lower grade position because of Tom's evaluation of John's performance on an audit. Jane thought that this situation was not fair to John, as Tom had more seniority than John and had the power to take advantage of this situation. She went to the union and the human resource department to speak on his behalf and spent almost a week filing documents to reverse the decision. By actively demonstrating that she cared about her subordinates and would go beyond her job description to protect John, Jane was able to influence her subordinates' view of her as an effective managerial leader.

While most study participants reported their attempts to motivate their subordinates, not all were able to resolve conflicts effectively even though they saw this as an important aspect of motivating their subordinates. In fact, only a few of the managers in this study demonstrated this competency, which is not surprising considering the difficulty of developing and excelling in this competency. We could not determine from the interviews whether the managers who were more successful in resolving conflicts had developed this ability prior to being promoted or during the transition process. However, the data analysis did reveal that managers who were most proactive in engaging in dialogues and interactions with role models, and discussed their emotions and interpretation of organizational events with these individuals, were also most successful in developing positive relationships with their subordinates.

Discussion

This study examined the transition experiences of new public managers within a state agency who were promoted as a result of a state legislative act that mandated that the agency expand one of its functions. As these new managers transitioned from their role as individual contributors (auditors) to their managerial leadership roles, many were initially frustrated and anxious about the nature of the managerial role. As they began to understand the nature of the managerial job, however, the new managers recognized the importance of being aware of and managing their own emotional reactions to difficult situations to perform their job effectively. While not using specific terms used in the ESI/ESC literature, during the interviews, these managers described how they had developed their competencies to understand and manage emotions. They also described how they had become aware that their personal strengths as auditors, the very reason they were promoted to the managerial position, would not necessarily contribute to their strengths as managers. As such, the new managers began to develop self-management competencies, accepting that they "were not perfect" and learning to use their emotional reactions to events in more effective ways. Thus, rather than simply feeling frustrated or overwhelmed, these new managers began to think about how they could use their emotions for more effective problem solving. As the new managers continued through the transition, they developed a greater awareness of their own and others' emotions, as well as their ability to manage their emotions and relate to others' emotions more effectively while performing their job. The data analysis reveals that successful managers were more effective in understanding and using emotions at work than less successful ones.

Implications for the Literature

This current study, which examined how a cohort of new managers made the transition from their roles as individual contributors to managers, contributes to the literatures focusing on managerial transitions and on ESI/ESC, as well as the public management literature, more generally. First, while our findings are consistent with prior research that has found that new managers go through a transition process involving *role exit, movement*, and *role entry* (Ashforth, 2001), and that they experience a high level of emotional turmoil as they go through this process and craft their new professional identity (Ashforth, 2001; Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; L. A. Hill, 1992, 2003), none of this literature has specifically looked at the emotional and social competencies that are important for this transition. The findings of our study suggest that emotional and social competencies were important to the new managers both initially and as they continued their transition. At the early stages of their role transition, the new managers in this study experienced frustration, stress, and disappointment, and found that they needed to develop their self-awareness (understanding why they were feelings these emotions) and self-management (self-control and learning to express themselves) competencies to be more effective as managers. In addition, as these new managers transitioned from their role as individual contributors, where they only had to focus on their own job responsibilities (performance), to their role as managers, where they recognized that they were also responsible for others' job performance, many were somewhat surprised by the extent to which their new positions required them to deal with their subordinates' emotions (social awareness and relationship management). These findings suggest that future research focusing on the emotional aspects of new managers' transitions would benefit from considering the emotional and social competencies that facilitate managerial transitions at each stage (role exit, movement, role entry).

Second, although the literature on managerial transitions has been consistent in describing the emotional turmoil that new managers experience as they create their new managerial identity, there has been little attention paid to whether managers with scientific or technical professional identities experience this transition differently from managers with human service backgrounds or other backgrounds that require greater interpersonal interaction. One notable exception is Maurer and London's (2018) study that examines managers in organizations involved in technological innovation and the difficulty that managers with a strong technical professional identity experience in making a role identity shift from individual contributor to new manager. While the new managers in our study were not involved in technological innovation, they did have a strong technical identity, and our findings are consistent with Maurer and London's discussion of role identity shift, in that the new managers in our study had a difficult time moving away from their primary

identity as auditors. Arguably, Joseph and Newman's (2010) finding that emotional labor moderates the ESI/ESC–performance relationship, that is, that ESI/ESC has a greater effect on performance for positions with high levels of interpersonal interactions than for positions with low levels of interpersonal interactions, suggests that individuals who are promoted from highly technical positions (with low levels of interpersonal interaction) to managerial positions (with high levels of interpersonal interactions) will have greater difficulty in developing their managerial identity and making a substantial or radical identity shift. That is, because their ESI/ESC was less likely to influence their performance in their technical position, they may be less likely to understand why it is important for their managerial position. Future research on managerial transitions might focus on potential differences associated with the nature of the individual contributors' positions.

Third, our study findings support Cherniss's (2010a, 2010b) distinction between emotional (and social) intelligence and ESC. It is clear that the new managers in our study did not simply acquire the cognitive abilities to accurately perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions, they also developed a range of noncognitive abilities, competencies, and dispositions that allowed them to become more effective as managers. For example, our findings indicate that several of the most successful new managers engaged role models in dialogue to gain new insights about problems they faced, which involves both self-management and relationship management competencies. Moreover, as noted above, much of the skepticism regarding the importance of emotional intelligence for managers is based on studies that have found that emotional intelligence does not explain much variance beyond general intelligence and personality factors. These studies, however, have primarily used measures developed by Mayer and Salovey and colleagues, rather than competency measures. As Boyatzis (2016) notes, unlike cognitive abilities or personality, competencies can be observed by others, and thus can be the subject of coaching and feedback. Given that individuals' openness to feedback and coaching is, arguably, related to their self-management competencies, future research would benefit from examining the specific emotional and social competencies that facilitate managerial transitions.

Finally, the findings of this study suggest that managing emotions is an essential part of the managerial role in the public sector. The managers in this study spent a great deal of their time building interpersonal relationships with and motivating their subordinates, as well as managing conflict with their clients. This may confirm Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler's (2010) argument noting that "the public sector environment becomes a place where the feelings and emotions of various stakeholder play a major role in decision making, in policy formation and implementation, and in the daily life of public servants" (p. 75). In such a work environment, public managers' effectiveness may lie in their abilities to empathize with

followers, commit to the growth of people, and inspire their subordinates to internalize core public values (Hale & Fields, 2007; Hanson, 2011; Shim, Park, and Eom (2016); Shim and Faerman, 2017; Spears, 1995). Eldor (2018) further argues that core values of New Public Management (NPM), such as service orientation and responsiveness, are embedded in the expression of caring and compassionate attitudes by government employees, and the likelihood that public employees will express such attitudes is associated with how these employees are treated by their supervisors. Thus, while emotions have traditionally been considered "non-rational" and counterproductive in conventional studies in the fields of public administration/management, current research suggests that emotions and emotional and social competency are important topics in relation to public organization effectiveness and, thus, are important areas for research in public administration/management.

Implications for Practice

We believe that our analysis also suggests some important implications for managerial practice in the public sector. First and foremost, we believe that public sector organizations need to reconsider processes by which individuals are promoted to managerial positions. The new managers in our study mentioned repeatedly in the interviews that employees in this job classification were promoted based on test scores that reflect competence in their professional title, rather than competence or potential as a manager. While the new managers in our study did not specifically use terms from the ESI/ESC literatures, they clearly saw their emotional and social competencies as central to their managerial roles and began to evaluate their performance in terms of these competencies. As noted above, when individual contributors are promoted to managerial positions, it is important for them to "let go" of certain behaviors that were associated with their roles as individual contributors, while they add new managerial behaviors (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; Drotter & Charan, 2001; Freedman, 1998; Hogan et al., 2011), many of which are defined within the realm of ESC. However, as Hogan et al. (2011) describe, it is often difficult for organizations to identify those individuals who are likely to be successful in managerial positions because, to a large degree, individual contributors have had fewer opportunities to demonstrate the competencies they will need to demonstrate as managers. Our findings suggest that civil service systems should attempt to do more to bring ESI competencies into the criteria for selecting and promoting employees into managerial positions. Perhaps more importantly, consistent with the literature on managerial transitions, our findings suggest that human resource departments need to do more to prepare individual contributors for the transition to new manager, helping them understand that the transition involves both changes in behaviors and changes in their mind-set.

Second, once the new managers in our study began to identify with the managerial role, they clearly saw the value of having role models, that is, individuals who they could observe to learn about specific behavioral actions as well as engage in dialogue about the problems they were facing. In providing a set of key actions new managers should take to facilitate their transition, Riordan (2008) similarly identifies the importance of both "observing and learning from other successful leaders" and "being open to feedback and coaching" (p. 7). Taken together with our findings, we would suggest that public organizations should do more to encourage new managers to identify mentors and role models who can provide support, guidance, and feedback through the transition. While there is some disagreement in the literature regarding whether or not organizations should assign mentors to new employees and/or new managers, it was clear in our study that mentors and role models played an important role in the transition, particularly as the new managers began to understand how their actions influenced others' emotional reactions.

Limitations

As is the case with all studies of organizational behavior within public organizations, this study has several limitations that must be taken into consideration in interpreting the findings. First, this study examined a limited sample of new managers within a single agency in a state government. Moreover, these new managers were hired/promoted under very unique circumstances (i.e., a state legislative act that mandated a strict deadline for hiring of new staff). In addition, during the time period of the study, the agency experienced several major organizational changes. While each of these issues limits the generalizability of the study, the unique circumstances under which these new managers were hired/promoted is particularly important, given that these new managers were not only hired as a cohort but also as a part of a fairly large wave of hiring, which is not often the case in public organizations.

Second, the interview data collected for this study are subject to interviewer bias. As noted above, data were collected using a semistructured questionnaire. Given that the data were collected by several interviewers—with diverse training and ethnographic knowledge—interviews might have been influenced by the ways each researcher worded the questions and/or followed up on particular issues raised by the interviewees, thus limiting the interpretation of the results.

Areas for Future Research

In considering the findings and limitations of this study, several areas for future research emerge. Dealing first with the limitations, we have noted that the nature of the sample leads us to be cautious in generalizing beyond this sample. While the particular situation this agency faced presented us with a

unique opportunity to study a cohort of new managers, we suggest additional studies of new managers in a variety of public agencies to help us gain a better understanding of how new managers experience this role transition and the role of emotional and social competencies in making this transition. Such studies should also look specifically at organizational characteristics, particularly organizational culture, and examine how organizational culture influences both the expression of emotions in the organization and the capacity for new managers to develop their ESC.

Second, as noted above, the literature on managerial transitions has identified this transition as emotionally charged but has focused more on how managerial socialization processes bring these individuals back to an equilibrium point (e.g., Ashforth, 2001), rather than on how ESC influences this process. Arguably, many questions remain regarding the movement from the primary role of individual contributor to the role of manager, and how an individual contributor's ESC may influence his or her ability to leave one role and enter a managerial role. While there has been much less attention to managerial transitions in the public sector, both the public management literature and the general management literature would benefit from additional attention to the role of ESC in managerial transitions.

Finally, the research we have presented here has focused only on new managers, and some of the literature suggests that the transition from individual contributor to new manager differs from the transition from new manager to mid-level manager, and both are different from the transition from mid-level manager to upper level manager (Drotter & Charan, 2001; Freedman, 1998). It would be interesting to know whether the role of emotional and social competencies differs across these different types of transitions. Thus, additional research should examine the role of emotional and social competencies in managerial transitions at higher levels of the organizational hierarchy.

Conclusion

Despite the level of attention given to the importance of managers' ESI/ESC over the last decade, there has been little research on the role emotional and social competencies play in managerial transitions. The goal of the current study was to explore the role of these competencies in managerial transitions in public sector organizations. We believe this research contributes to an understanding of emotional and social competencies and their role in managerial transitions in several important ways. First, rather than focusing on the antecedents or outcomes of ESI/ESC with respect to management/leadership performance, our study has examined how learning the managerial role and developing one's ESC reinforce each other. Indeed, our findings indicate that new managers' transitions were heavily influenced by their ESC, that is, abilities related to their self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Moreover, our

findings suggest that as managers experience different stages of the transition (i.e., role exit, movement, role entry), different emotional and social competencies may be more salient, as they learn the role of emotions in organization life. While this research does not attempt to minimize the importance of rational and analytical thinking in managerial decision making, the findings suggest that managers' emotional struggles and efforts to break through the challenges triggered the role-learning necessary to forge new (managerial) identities and to be successful as new managers. We, therefore, argue that not only are emotional and social competencies important to the work of managers, but they are extremely important to develop a managerial identity. As such, given the important role that first-level managers play in the day-to-day functioning of public organizations, we believe our findings suggest that more attention should be paid to the evaluation of prospective managers' ESCs and to the development of these competencies in managers as they experience this transition. In making these advances in both theory and practice, we hope that this research might serve as a foundation for further research on the development of managers' ESC in public organizations.

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Notes

1. To preserve confidentiality, organizational and individual names in this article are pseudonyms.
2. Professional identity is defined as "the relatively stable and enduring constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences in terms of which people define themselves in a professional role" (Ibarra, 1999, pp. 764-785).
3. While most research examining emotional labor has focused on service and professional care workers and highlighted the need for these workers to display positive emotions to customers/clients, Humphrey, Pollack, and Thomas (2008) argue for a broader definition of emotional labor that includes work that managers do "to influence the moods, emotions, motivations and performance of their subordinates or followers" (p. 153). They use the phrase "'leading with emotional labor' to refer to the whole process in which leaders use emotional displays to influence their followers" (pp. 153-155).

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