Effect of Team Co-membership Change on Change in Interpersonal Affect in the Workplace: The Moderating Role of Emotion Regulation Ability

ABSTRACT

Given that teams are complex dynamic adaptive systems, membership change is prevalent in them and can have a significant impact on interpersonal relationships. However, much of the research on team co-membership change has focused on its effect on team-level outcomes like overall affective tone. Thus, little is known about its influence on the change in interpersonal affect between team members at the dyadic level. Drawing on social identity theory, the current study investigates the effect of two team co-membership change conditions – 1) commencement of team co-membership and 2) conclusion of team co-membership on change in interpersonal affect and the moderating role of emotion regulation ability in this relationship. A randomized natural experiment is adopted to test the hypotheses. Results of multilevel modeling confirm that focal employee's interpersonal affect for the co-member increases on commencement of team co-membership (i.e., when co-member joins the same team as the focal employee) and it decreases on conclusion of team co-membership (i.e., when the co-member is removed from the same team). Additionally, focal employee's and co-member's emotion regulation ability moderated the relationship between the conclusion of team co-membership and focal employee's decrease in interpersonal affect for co-member such that the decrease was smaller when both their emotion regulation abilities were high. Overall, our findings challenge the implicit assumption in the teams literature that team membership change influences affect between team members uniformly or as a shared phenomenon that is experienced consistently by all members.

Key words: team membership change, interpersonal/dyadic affect, natural experiments

Most team research in the management literature has largely depicted teams as stable entities in which memberships do not change over time (Mathieu et al., 2017; Mortensen & Haas, 2018). However, in many contemporary organizations teams are becoming increasingly dynamic and temporary, with decision makers forming and disbanding them depending on work demands (Li & Van Knippenberg, 2021). Furthermore, they also tend to be porous and fluid during the course of their own lifetime, with dynamic shifts in membership occurring as team members move on and off teams due to turnover, promotions, specialized project work, or transfers (Arrow & McGrath, 1995; Mathieu et al., 2014, 2018). In fact, due to the prevalence of team fluidity in organizations, Edmondson (2012) highlighted the phenomenon of 'teaming' – a flexible, transient form of collaboration in which a diverse set of employees come together to accomplish common goals as and when needed. This burgeoning team dynamism in organizations provides greater opportunity for pairs of employees to work together temporarily as teammates, which in turn can influence their instrumental and affective relationship with each other (Trainer et al., 2020).

While prior research has demonstrated that team membership change affects team-level outcomes like performance and effectiveness (Choi & Thompson, 2005; Hirst, 2009; Lewis et al., 2007; Li & Van Knippenberg, 2021), we know very little about how such changes impact dyadic relationships, particularly the way individuals feel about one another as a result (Liden et al., 2016). This is an important question as changes in team membership leads to colleagues transitioning between being teammates with one another to being colleagues who do not share a common team affiliation with one another, which can have critical implications for their interpersonal or dyadic affect. However, much of the empirical and theoretical work on team membership change has focused on team-level outcomes like aggregate group affect or team

affective tone (Tanghe et al., 2010, Collins et al., 2013), thereby ignoring its impact on interpersonal affect between team members or their affective relationships (Li & Van Knippenberg, 2021).

Furthermore, recent research on interpersonal relationships in the workplace has demonstrated that affective ties between focal employees (henceforth referred to as 'ego') and their social others (henceforth referred to as 'alter') can act as an antecedent of subsequent instrumental ties between them as one's feelings of like or dislike towards others can impact whether one seeks them out for instrumental purposes or not (Casciaro & Lobo, 2015). Taken together, this suggests that changes in team co-membership status can significantly influence the interpersonal affect between two employees, which, in turn, can impact their instrumental relationships. Thus, in this study we examine how affect changes between pairs of individuals (i.e., between ego and alter) as their team co-membership status changes. Specifically, we investigate dyad-level affect change in two team membership change situations:1) upon the *commencement of team co-membership*, i.e., when a pair of colleagues begin working together on the same team and 2) upon the *conclusion of team co-membership*, i.e., when a pair of colleagues cease working together on the same team.

To explore this question, we draw on Social Identity Theory (SIT) as it provides insight into how the experience of common team membership can affect the interpersonal relationships of team members. According to SIT, individuals define themselves in terms of their group membership and ascribe characteristics that are typical of the group to the self (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This social identification leads individuals to engage in in-group favoritism whereby they view their own group and its members in a positive light in comparison to other referent outgroups and their members (Turner et al., 1987; Haslam & Reicher, 2006). Thus, applying this

logic to team membership change, we propose that ego's positive affect for alter will likely increase after the commencement of team co-membership due to the proclivity of team members to exhibit in-group favoritism for those with whom they share a common social identity. Conversely, dissolution of a common social identity is likely to result in out-group discrimination whereby the affective evaluations of the members of the outgroup will become less positive in order to enhance the relative social standing of their own group. Therefore, it is likely that ego's affect for alter will decrease, and in certain cases even become negative, after the conclusion of team co-membership due to the cessation of their common team affiliation.

Furthermore, we draw from the emotional intelligence literature to explore the factors that might modulate the changes in affect that occur as a result of team co-membership changes. Heading the call by affect researchers to examine the specific components of emotional intelligence as opposed to the higher order construct (e.g., Jordan, Ashkanasy, & Daus, 2008), we examine how an individual's emotion regulation ability – defined as "the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions" (Gross, 1998: 275) – impacts how affect changes between ego and alter as they, 1) come together as teammates on a newly formed team, and 2) stop working on the same team upon the dissolution of the team. Specifically, we propose that ego's emotion regulation ability will attenuate the change in affect they feel for alter when their team co-membership status changes because individuals high in emotion regulation ability are adept at engaging in effective emotion management strategies like coping and cognitive reappraisal (Joseph & Newman, 2010). Conversely, we argue that the emotion regulation ability of a teammate (i.e., alter) will amplify the change in affect ego feels for that teammate when their co-membership status changes as high emotion regulation ability enables individuals to form

trusting and high-quality social relationships with others which are less likely to decay or worsen upon the conclusion of team co-membership (Lopes et al., 2011; Kuemper et al., 2013).

To test our theory, we employ a randomized, natural experiment in which social settings (Feld, 1981) are randomly assigned and reassigned: the allocation and reallocation of participants to different teams at different time points (Kleinbaum, 2018). In doing so, we try to address the 'selection problem' that has posed a challenge to causal identification of peer effects in prior work (Mouw, 2006). Our conceptual model is illustrated in Figure 1.

Our study offers contributions to multiple streams of research. First, by examining the influence of team membership change on change in generalized interpersonal affect between pairs of teammates, we move beyond the implicit assumption in the teams literature that team membership change influences affect between team members uniformly or as a shared phenomenon that is experienced consistently by all members (Bartel & Saveedra, 2000; Rink et al., 2013). However, since teams are complex adaptive systems with dynamic interactions between team members, we challenge this assumption and posit that different members of the same team may well perceive or experience different levels of positive or negative affect towards an individual who is either added or removed from their team and that their affect towards this individual may change to a different degree too. (McGrath et al., 1993; Park et al., 2020). Thus, instead of focusing on team membership change as an individual or team level phenomenon, we examine this phenomenon at the dyadic level (Rink et al., 2013). Second, we contribute to the social networks literature, which has called for more research into the factors that impact the quality of relationships between coworkers over time. Specifically, our research adds to the work that has been done on how exogeneous shocks change networks. To date, network research has examined how exogeneous shocks affect the social networks of individuals (e.g., Allatta &

Singh, 2011; Burkhardt & Brass, 1990; Jo, Harrison, & Gray, 2021; Stuart, 2017), with little focus on how such shocks impact relationships at the level of the dyad. This work addresses this omission and suggests that team context has an impact on the decay and strengthening of ties. Third, we contribute to the literature on emotion regulation ability by examining the role that it plays in the evolution of relationships over time. Although ample research suggests that emotion regulation ability plays a direct role in relationship quality (e.g., Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schutz, Sellin, & Salovey, 2004; Lopes, Salovey, Cote, & Beers, 2005), much of this work has focused on the concurrent effect of emotion regulation ability in an unchanging context. This study therefore contributes to the work on emotion regulation ability by examining the role it plays in relationship evolution in an environment characterized by change.

Theory and Hypotheses

Affect in Workplace Relationships

Management scholars have long recognized that workplace relationships are imbued with affect and thus, have frequently defined them in terms of their affective content (Krackhardt & Porter, 1985). The dominant approach to capture the affective content of social relationships so far has been the use of relational behaviors such as friendship as they are likely to be saturated with affect (Casciaro, 2020). For example, friendship is a relational construct believed to have strong affective undertones. One drawback, however, of examining relational behaviors as a measure of affect is that it is an indirect, and relatively coarse, measure of interpersonal affect (Casciaro et al., 2021; Lopez-Kidwell et al., 2018). That is, multiple forms of affect could be present in each friendship relationship, and the measurement of a friendship tie does not uncover them. A more direct approach to capturing affective content in relationships, which is also a commonly used approach in contemporary organizational research due to its universality

(Casciaro & Lobo, 2008; Labianca & Brass, 2006; Umphress et al., 2003), is to define affective relationships in terms of ego's like or dislike of alters. In line with this, Labianca and Brass (2006) highlight that although individuals intend to be rational and calculative in their assessment of interpersonal relationships, they usually form global like or dislike feelings towards others. Given the universality of affective conceptualization of social relationships, the current study adopts this approach to examine the change in interpersonal affect between team co-members.

Team Co-Membership Change and Generalized Interpersonal Affect

We posit that social identity theory (SIT) is a useful framework with which to explain how changes in the team co-membership status of two employees can lead to a subsequent change in affect within the dyad. According to SIT, an individual's self-concept is affected not only by his or her unique personal characteristics but also by his or her membership in social groups, such as work teams or organizations (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Haslam, 2004; Hogg and Terry, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Social identification reflects the perception of oneness with or belongingness to a group, whereby the individual defines him or herself in terms of the group of which he or she is a member (Haslam et al., 2003; van Dick et al., 2005). This collective identification turns the group psychologically into a part of the self, and thus lies at the core of the attitudinal, behavioral, and perceptual effects of group membership (van Knippenberg, 2000; van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 2003).

A central tenet of SIT is that the status or prestige of the group one belongs to has a significant impact on the self-concept of an individual, with membership in high status groups leading to higher levels of self-esteem (Hogg & Terry, 2000). SIT suggests that the group-based identity individuals form as a result of their affiliations results in the categorization of one's "in-

group" as well as "out-groups" (Chattopadhyay & George, 2001). The theory posits that positive individual self-concepts are maintained by intergroup comparisons in which one's in-group compares favorably to referent out-groups (Chattopadhyay et al., 2004; Hirst et al., 2009). This inherent motivation to self-enhance by perceiving one's own group in a positive light in comparison to other referent groups is referred to as *in-group favoritism* (Abrams & Hogg, 2000; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). In-group favoritism can significantly affect the feeling one has for individuals who are perceived as one's teammates. Laboratory research using the minimal group paradigm illustrates that the mere assignment of individuals to a common team in an experimental setting is sufficient to generate ingroup favoritism, resulting in higher cooperation and cohesion among those placed on the same team (Connor et al., 2020; Gaertner & Insko, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This effect persists even when group assignments are explicitly made randomly (Otten & Wentura, 1999; Pettersen & Blank, 2003). Thus, regardless of the individual characteristics of team members, the mere assignment of employees to distinct teams makes them favor the members of their in-group and develop positive interpersonal affect towards them (Ellemers et al., 2004; Van Bavel & Cunningham, 2009).

Indeed, literature suggests that those who belong to the same team form a so called "psychological group," which stimulates the development of positive feelings (i.e., liking) towards each other due to their shared social identity (Chattopadhyay et al., 2001; Cairns et al., 2006; Rink et al., 2013). For example, several contemporary studies have demonstrated that common group membership or collective identity leads to enhanced positive interpersonal affect and reduced interpersonal or emotional conflict between members of the in-group due to their mere categorization into common groups (Balliet et al., 2014; Boone et al., 2020; Chattopadhyay et al., 2008; Tarrant et al., 2009). Furthermore, empirical findings also suggest that the positive

affect between two teammates is not dependent on prior perceptions of interpersonal liking or acceptance, and it occurs even when there is no significant interaction between them (Ambady et al., 2000; Xiao & Van Bavel, 2019). As Ashforth and Mael (1989: 26) note: "Dion (1973) demonstrated that one may like other group members, despite their negative personal attributes, simply by virtue of the common membership."

Applying SIT logic to the context of team membership change, we argue that two coworkers— who were previously not teammates—that get placed on the same team are likely to experience a change in interpersonal affect for one another as a result of a change in their team co-membership status, which leads to the formation of a psychological group. Specifically, ego is likely to experience increased positive affect for alter after being placed on the same team due to the tendency for individuals to exhibit in-group favoritism for those with whom they share a common group membership. These arguments are consistent with recent empirical findings which suggest that the mere activation of a new social identity – in this case shared team membership – may be enough to override other forms of implicit prejudice towards minority ingroup members and to stimulate positive feelings towards them (Scroggins et al., 2016).

Moreover, given that individuals who are placed on a common team are also likely to experience an increase in the amount of interaction they have with one another, it is likely that this increased interaction could be a significant predictor of ego's increased positive affect for alter (Barsade & Knight, 2015; Shi et al., 2012; Zajonc, 2001). We therefore control for change in frequency of interaction between ego and alter in our analyses to isolate the in-group favoritism mechanism theorized above. All in all, the ingroup favoritism phenomenon posited by SIT suggests that team membership change leads to change in interpersonal affect between ego

and alter primarily due to the formation of a shared social identity. Thus, ego's positive affect for alter will increase after the commencement of team co-membership.

Hypothesis 1: Controlling for change in frequency of interaction, ego's positive affect for alter will increase after the commencement of team co-membership.

The corollary to in-group favoritism is out-group discrimination. That is, just as common team membership can lead to cooperation, cohesion, and positive affect among teammates, SIT suggests that individuals form negative evaluations of those categorized as members of an out-group (Haslam, 2004). Outgroup discrimination is another means by which one can enhance the relative standing of their own social group and thereby, improve the value of their social identity (Ellemers et al., 2004). Evaluations of out-group members are often strategically framed to optimize one's self-evaluation (Chattopadhyay et al., 2004; Turner, 1975). Thus, the motivation to discriminate against out-group members is rooted in the same drive for self-enhancement that underlies in-group favoritism. Indeed, out-group discrimination and in-group favoritism can be thought of as two sides of the same coin in that they both achieve the same end via different means, and these two phenomena often work in tandem (Chen et al., 2016; Brewer, 2017). In addition to demonstrating the in-group favoritism phenomenon, research using the minimal group paradigm also demonstrates that individuals arbitrarily placed on experimental teams tend to exaggerate the negative qualities of the outgroup (Gaertner & Insko, 2001; Nosek & Banaji, 2001; Smith, 1999; Tajfel, Flament, Billig, & Bundy, 1971). Subsequent research has also demonstrated that individuals see out-group members in a negative light. Specifically, these studies suggest that focal individuals exhibit less positive feelings, or in some cases even exhibit negative feelings (e.g., antipathy), for outgroup members (Cikara et al., 2014; Cronin et al., 2011; Hamley et al., 2020; Xiao & Van Bavel, 2019). Individuals are also less likely to engage in

prosocial behaviors toward outgroup members as compared to ingroup members (Goette et al., 2012; Simpson & Willer, 2015).

Applying this logic to the context of team co-membership change, we reason that when an alter is removed from ego's team it is likely that ego's positive affect for alter will decrease due to the out-group discrimination that is likely to occur upon the dissolution of a common shared social identity. This suggests that, at the dyadic level, ego's positive affect for alter will decrease, or in certain cases even become negative, when ego and alter cease sharing a common team affiliation. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2: Controlling for change in frequency of interaction, ego's positive affect for alter will decrease after the conclusion of team co-membership.

Emotion Regulation Ability

Although we expect changes in team co-membership to have a direct effect on changes in dyadic affect levels, we posit that the way in which individuals manage their affect is likely to function as a boundary condition for these relationships. We therefore focus on emotion regulation ability as a moderating construct. Emotion regulation has been defined as "the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions" (Gross, 1998: 275). According to the ability-based model of emotional intelligence (EI) proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997), EI consists of four dimensions, namely – ability to perceive and express emotions, ability to facilitate thoughts using emotions, ability to understand and reason with emotions, and ability to manage or regulate emotions. Out of these four EI dimensions, emotion regulation ability is considered as the most complex dimension by researchers and is believed to affect the way in which

individuals manage their own emotions as well as those of others (Kluemper et al., 2013; Mayer et al., 2001).

In fact, due to the lack of theoretical and empirical clarity on EI, there has been a growing call by researchers in recent years to focus on discrete dimensions of EI instead of gestalt EI scores (Elfenbein, 2008; Kluemper et al., 2013). For example, Jordan, Ashkanasy, & Daus (2008) encouraged researchers to explore the specific branches of EI rather than the higher order construct to understand their distinct effect on various individual or team-level outcomes. This is also backed by recent meta-analytic work (Joseph and Newman, 2010), which demonstrates the usefulness of examining EI dimensions independently and finds that emotion regulation ability is the one dimension of EI that has a direct significant relationship with job performance. Indeed, given the critical influence of emotion regulation on job performance and its ability to induce and sustain positive affective states in individuals, it is described as the "apex" dimension of emotional intelligence (EI) by Joseph & Newman (2010). Similarly, several studies in management and related fields have also independently examined the impact of emotion regulation ability on various outcomes to obtain greater theoretical clarity rather than focusing on the global EI construct (e.g., Cote et al., 2011; Kluemper et al., 2013; add more citations). Thus, we focus on both ego and alter emotion regulation ability as the boundary condition for the relationship between team co-membership change and interpersonal affect.

Furthermore, the focus on emotion regulation ability as an independent construct also finds theoretical support in emotion regulation theory (Gross, 1998), which enumerates the ways in which individuals can regulate their emotions both before and in response to a precipitating event. Gross (1998a, 1998b) suggests that individuals regulate their emotions at two points, a) before an event – using antecedent focused strategies and b) in response to an event – using

response-based strategies. Antecedent focused strategies intend to change one's felt emotions and involve examples like choosing what aspects of a situation to pay attention to or modifying the situation in order to adjust one's emotions. Response focused strategies target one's emotional responses (i.e., expressed emotions), rather than inner feelings, and involve examples like regulating one's emotional reactions/expressions to the situation or suppressing them altogether. Both antecedent and response focused strategies, thus, influence the regulation of one's emotions in response to workplace events. Hence, given the theoretical and empirical support for exploring emotion regulation ability as a stand-alone construct, we investigate its moderating influence on our two primary hypotheses.

The Moderating Effect of Ego's Emotion Regulation Ability

Research on emotion regulation ability suggests that individuals with superior emotion regulation ability have a greater general capacity for self-control, including the control of impetuous behavior, and thus can effectively modulate their response to negative events (Lopes et al., 2004; Kluemper et al., 2013). Indeed, empirical studies demonstrate that high emotion regulation ability allows individuals to engage in more effective emotion management strategies like coping and cognitive reappraisal instead of less effective ones like emotion suppression that drain cognitive resources and are largely thought of as having negative repercussions (Butler et al., 2003; Joseph & Newman, 2010). By doing so, high emotion regulation competence enables these individuals to retain critical cognitive and emotional resources and thereby, cope effectively with negative events by modulating their emotional reactions to them (Lopes et al., 2006; Williams, 2007). Furthermore, individuals high on emotion regulation ability are also more likely to develop positive perceptions of others and in turn, report greater satisfaction with their social relationships, higher perceived peer support, and fewer negative interactions with

other individuals (Lopes et al., 2003; Mayer et al., 2008). This suggests that high emotion regulation ability influences employees' perceptions of others and the extent to which they can modify their emotional response to precipitating events.

While most research on emotion regulation and emotional intelligence, has focused on how emotion regulation ability can modulate employees' emotional reactions to workplace events (Nevin, 2021; Trainer et al., 2020) and affect their social perceptions of others (Beal et al., 2013; Lopes et al., 2003), our focus in this paper is unique in that we combine these foci by examining how emotion regulation ability modulates one's affect towards other individuals in the wake of a precipitating event (i.e., team membership change). Building on Gross's (1998) emotion regulation theory, we suggest that upon conclusion of team co-membership, egos with high emotion regulation ability are more likely to engage in effective emotion management strategies like cognitive reframing and coping which allows them to selectively focus on the positive aspects of their social relationship with alters rather than the loss of shared social identity. This selective attention to certain aspects of the team membership change event, enables them to authentically monitor their emotions and thereby attune them to dampen their decrease in positive affect for alters that don't share the same social identity as them (Cote, 2005; Liu et al., 2010). Indeed, this is also in line with empirical findings obtained by Joseph & Newman (2010) and Gross and colleagues (Gross & John, 2003; Richards & Gross, 2000; John & Gross, 2004, 2007), which highlight that individuals with high emotion regulation competence regularly use reappraisal as an emotion management strategy and thus are more likely to experience positive emotions and abate their negative emotions in response to precipitating events. On the contrary, they found that individuals with low emotional regulation ability frequently use suppression as

an emotion management strategy and thus, are more likely to experience negative emotions and express those intense negative emotions in response to workplace events.

Similarly, research on emotional labor, which is subsumed under the broader concept of emotion regulation, also support our claims (Gabriel et al., 2015; Grandey, 2015). Studies in this domain suggest that employees high on emotion regulation ability tend to engage in deep acting – which involves deliberate regulation of one's emotions to seem authentic and is tantamount to reappraisal in the work setting – and thus, are more likely to dampen their negative feelings towards customer service events and customers in general, exhibit superior service performance and receive higher tips from customers (Grandey, 2000; Grandey et al., 2004; Hulsheger et al., 2015). Contrarily, employees low on emotion regulation ability tend to engage in surface acting – which involves regulation of one's emotional expressions for the sake of fulfilling their job duty and is tantamount to suppression in the work setting – and thus, are more likely to experience intense negative affect towards customer service events, exhibit poor service performance and receive fewer tips from customers (Ashtar et al., 2021; Chi et al., 2011; Liu, 2010).

Taken together, these results suggest that high emotion regulation ability will enable ego to engage in effective emotion management strategies like cognitive reappraisal and coping; and selectively pay attention to certain aspects of the conclusion of team co-membership (i.e., the possibility of obtaining valuable resources from alter now that she is working in a different team or department) rather than focusing on the loss of common social identity. Therefore, high emotion regulation ability is likely to temper ego's decrease in positive affect for alter at the conclusion of team co-membership.

Hypothesis 3 – Ego's emotion regulation ability will moderate the relationship between the conclusion of team co-membership and ego's decrease in positive affect for alter such that the decrease will be smaller when ego's emotion regulation ability is high.

While individuals high in emotion regulation ability are more likely to modulate or down-regulate their decrease in positive affect towards alters who are removed from the same team, we argue that they will be more likely to intensify or up-regulate their increase in positive affect towards alters when they are placed on the same team. Research suggests that individual differences exist in the way people regulate their positive affect, just like they do in the regulation of negative affect (Gross & John, 2003; Quoidbach et al., 2015). Depending on one's emotion regulation ability, individuals either engage in savoring strategies (i.e., strategies to maintain and enhance one's felt positive affect (Bryant, 2003)) or in dampening strategies (i.e., strategies to decrease or diminish one's positive emotional experience (Wood et al., 2003; Quiodbach et al., 2010)). In a series of experimental studies, scholars found that, on exposure to positive events, individuals with high emotion regulation ability were prone to deploy savoring strategies like directing attention to the precipitating pleasant event or engaging in positive rumination about it, and thus, were more likely to report greater felt positive affect, subjective well-being, and life satisfaction (Szczygieł & Mikolajczak, 2017; Quiodbach et al., 2010; 2015). In contrast, those with low emotion regulation ability had a greater propensity to engage in dampening strategies, like focusing on negative or unrelated details of the current positive event or engaging in negative rumination and therefore, were likely to report diminished positive affect, lower subjective wellbeing, and lower life satisfaction (Neils et al., 2011; Quiodbach et al., 2010). This suggests that when experiencing positive events, while most individuals will report an increase in felt positive affect, individuals with high emotion regulation ability are

more likely to exhibit greater use of savoring strategies and thus report a greater increase in positive affect as compared to individuals with low emotion regulation ability.

Applying this logic to team membership change, we argue that upon commencement of team co-membership (i.e., when alters who started out on a different team are placed on the same team as ego), most egos are likely to report an increase in positive affect towards these alters due to their shared social identity as predicted in Hypothesis 2. However, in the wake of a positive team co-membership event, egos with high emotion regulation ability are likely to engage in savoring strategies by deliberately directing their attention towards the common team identity they share with alters and the benefits that can ensue as a result of it. Deployment of these savoring strategies will in turn enhance their felt positive affect towards alters when they join the same team as ego. This is also in line with management research that suggests that high emotion regulation ability enables employees to maintain and enhance their positive affect in response to precipitating positive events and thereby accomplish positive work outcomes like enhanced creativity, job performance, and cooperation from one's coworkers (Alam et al., 2019; Diener et al., 2020; Hulsheger et al., 2015; Parke et al., 2015). On the other hand, egos with low emotion regulation ability are likely to engage in dampening strategies like negative rumination or distraction and thus report a lower increase in positive affect towards alters who are placed on the same team as ego. Thus, ego's emotion regulation ability will bolster the relationship between the commencement of team co-membership and ego's increase in positive affect for alter.

Hypothesis 4 - Ego's emotion regulation ability will moderate the relationship between the commencement of team co-membership and ego's increase in positive affect for alter such that the increase will be greater when ego's emotion regulation ability is high.

The Moderating Effect of Alter's Emotion Regulation Ability

Interpersonal affect between individuals is impacted not only by one's own emotional responses but also by the emotional responses of social others (Lopes et al., 2011, 2004; Netzer et al., 2015). We therefore propose that alter's emotion regulation ability will also moderate the relationship between team co-membership change and change in ego's affect for alter. Although we expect ego's positive affect for alter to decrease upon conclusion of team co-membership due to lack of shared social identity, we posit that this decrease will be smaller to the extent that alter's emotion regulation ability is high.

Research suggests that the emotion regulation of individuals can color the emotional tone of social interactions in the workplace and thereby influence the motivations and expectations of others to engage in those interactions. This is likely because individuals use others' emotions as a guide for their own behavior, decipher people's intentions from their emotional cues, or mimic others emotion through emotional contagion (Furr & Funder, 1998; Lopes et al., 2004, 2005). For example, expressions of positive emotions by a focal individual may evoke favorable responses from social others whereas display of negative affect may motivate others to minimize interaction or cut off the relationship altogether. Additionally, the ability to regulate emotions might also promote or facilitate flexible focus of attention necessary for seamless communication and social interaction, use of effective social interaction strategies, and the coordination of numerous skills required for effective social behavior (Lopes et al., 2004; Mayer et al., 2008). As a result, individuals high in emotion regulation ability can make a positive impact on the emotions of others and develop positive affective relationships with them (Kim & Yoon, 2012; Lopes et al., 2005).

In line with this reasoning, empirical evidence also demonstrates that emotion regulation ability is strongly and positively associated with higher quality of social interactions (Lopes et al., 2004; 2005), lower conflict (Lopes et al., 2011), and more trusting relationships (Williams, 2007). For example, employees high in emotion regulation ability have been found to form positive relationships with others (Chi et al., 2011; Kim & Yoon; 2012), be less antagonistic with their coworkers (Gabriel et al., 2020) and receive more social support in the workplace (Schutte & Loi, 2014). Furthermore, management scholars have also observed that employees with superior emotion regulation skills are likely to engage in higher levels of prosocial behavior, display more organizational citizenship behaviors, and go above and beyond to help their peers and customers (Cote et al., 2011; Grandey, 2015; Kluemper et al., 2013). Taken together, this highlights that employees' high in emotion regulation ability can effectively influence the emotions of those around them and consequently build strong relationships which would be unlikely to decay or worsen in the wake of precipitating events in the workplace.

Similarly, in the context of team membership change, we argue that alters high in emotion regulation ability will be more likely to evoke positive emotions in ego. This coupled with their tendency to engage in prosocial behaviors will enable them to form trusting, strong and long-lasting relationships with ego. Therefore, upon conclusion of team co-membership, it is less likely that ego's relationship with them would decay or dissolve completely. Thus, though ego's positive affect for alter might decrease on the conclusion of team co-membership, we propose that this decrease will be smaller when alter's emotion regulation ability is high.

Hypothesis 5 - Alter's emotion regulation ability will moderate the relationship between the conclusion of team co-membership and ego's decrease in positive affect for alter such that the decrease will be smaller when alter's emotion regulation ability is high.

In addition to modulating the decrease in ego's positive affect for alter upon conclusion of team co-membership, we posit that alter's emotion regulation ability will also moderate the relationship between the commencement of team co-membership and ego's increase in positive affect for alter. As previously argued, we expect alters' tendency to build high quality social relationships, as a function of their superior emotion regulation ability, to have a moderating effect on ego's increase in positive affect for them, such that ego's positive affect for alter will increase more when they both come together on the same team. Due to their ability to influence the emotional valence of social interactions, alters high in emotion regulation ability are likely to quickly form trusting, positive bonds with ego (Williams, 2007; Lopes et al., 2005). Furthermore, their prosocial tendencies and frequent display of OCBs are also likely to evoke positive emotions in ego and create favorable impressions of them (Cote et al., 2011; Kuemper et al., 2013; Gabreil et al., 2020). As a result, the value of having an alter who is high in emotion regulation ability on the same team will quickly become evident to ego and he or she will likely form an especially positive view of the alter soon after joining a team with him/her.

We, therefore, postulate that the natural increase in positive affect produced in response to the commencement of team co-membership will be stronger when alter is high in emotion regulation ability due to the alter's capability to effectively manage social relationships and inspire positive feelings in ego.

Hypothesis 6: Alter's emotion regulation ability will moderate the relationship between the commencement of team co-membership and ego's increase in positive affect for alter such that the increase will be larger when alter's emotion regulation ability is high.

Methods

Research Setting & Participants

To empirically test the proposed theory, we examined the team change dynamics among students in a full-time, residential MBA program at a large university in the southeastern United States. Work in the program was largely team-based. Students were randomly assigned to a team for the first four week of the program. Teams were randomly reassigned after the fourth week. Thus, a vital feature of this research setting is one that is available in few other empirical contexts: a randomized, natural experiment in which a highly salient social condition was randomly manipulated for all members of the cohort (Chakravarti et al., 2014; Kleinbaum et al., 2015, 2018). Data were collected during the first eleven weeks of this cohort-based program. Sixty-nine of the 79 students in the cohort participated in all phases of the study, for an effective response rate of 87%. However, given the dyadic nature of the study, a total of 2676 team co-member dyads were formed as a result of random team reassignment. We refer to the four weeks corresponding to the first team assignment period as Time 1, and the subsequent period after the reassignment as Time 2.

The random team reassignment led to four possible dyad-level conditions: 1) commencement of team co-membership (ego and alter start out on different teams and then join the same team), 2) conclusion of team co-membership (ego and alter start on the same team and then separate), 3) no change in team co-membership (ego and alter stay on the same team throughout) and 4) no co-membership at any point (ego and alter were never on the same team). This random assignment and movement of team members between different teams solved the *selection problem* that has posed a challenge to causal identification of peer effects in prior work (Mouw, 2006). Furthermore, all dyads were also asked to report their generalized interpersonal affect for each other before and after the incidence of team co-membership change by completing a cohort-wide sociometric survey, where respondents were asked to report their

generalized affect for everybody they felt capable of reporting on in the cohort (i.e., both teammates and non-teammates). This resulted in a total of 2676 dyadic observations.

It is important to note that the critical source of exogenous variation that we exploit in this study is the reassignment of team members to different teams between Time 1 and Time 2, which occurred as a part of the planned MBA program structure. This assignment by stratified random process ensured that random chance would leave some team comember dyads (ego and alter) experiencing team membership change (that is, moved from one team to another), whereas other dyads would be randomly assigned to the same teams (not experience team membership change). This temporal variation provides a solution to the *reflection problem* of causal inference (Kleinbaum, 2018). Additionally, though this strategic research site might be considered imperfect, it compares favorably with more natural organizational settings, in which team membership changes occur for reasons that are decidedly not random—and which, therefore, are likely endogenous to the variables of interest—because the exogenous, longitudinal change in team co-membership permits the cleanest identification of the causal effects of team co-membership change on interpersonal affect that is possible.

Measures

Change in ego's generalized interpersonal affect for alter: All respondents completed two sociometric surveys where they were provided with a list of all students in the cohort and asked to report their generalized affect for each alter they felt capable of reporting on.[1] Respondents

[1] We chose to use a "roster" method as opposed to a free recall method in our questionnaire design. The roster method provides each respondent with a comprehensive list of actors in the network (Wasserman & Faust, 1994), whereas the free recall method requires respondents to generate their own list of ties. The roster method is effective in guarding against inaccurate respondent recall (see Bernard, Kilworth, Kronenfeld, & Sailor, 1984), thus resulting in higher data reliability (Marsden, 1990).

were asked – "How do you *feel* about each person?" A 5-point Likert scale was used with anchors from "dislike a lot" to "like a lot" (Casciaro & Lobo, 2015). Respondents completed this survey at the end of the third week of the program (i.e., during Time 1) and at the end of the eleventh week (i.e., during Time 2). To capture the change in ego's interpersonal affect for alter, we calculated a change score by subtracting ego's affect for alter during Time 2 from ego's affect at Time 1.

Commencement of team co-membership: This team co-membership change condition represents that ego and alter were not on the same team at Time 1 but were on the same team at Time 2. Thus, their team co-membership commenced at Time 2. It was dummy coded with zero indicating that ego and alter were not on the same team and one indicating that they were on the same team.

Conclusion of team co-membership: This team co-membership change condition represents that ego and alter were on the same team at Time 1 but were not on the same team at Time 2. Thus, their team co-membership concluded at Time 2. It was dummy coded with zero indicating that ego and alter were not on the same team and one indicating that they were on the same team.

Emotion regulation ability: The managing emotion dimension of Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) scale was used to measure emotion regulation ability of ego and alter (Kluemper et al., 2013; Mayer et al., 2002). Respondents completed this instrument during a classroom activity in the second week of the program. The main purpose of this scale is to measure an individual's ability to regulate their own feelings and the feelings of others in social situations (Farh et al., 2012). It is assessed by having participants choose from among more or less effective means to regulate emotions in internal and interpersonal situations (Lopes et al., 2004). The scale exhibited an acceptable level of internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.87$).

Control variables: We control for covariates in each multilevel model that might provide alternative explanations for our hypothesized effects. We controlled for whether ego and alter were of the same gender, same race and had the same major (1 = same, 0 = different) because homophily characteristics can influence interpersonal affect between individuals (Maloney et al., 2019). We included other two team comembership change conditions (no change in team comembership and no team comembership at any point) as controls, since being on the same team and not being on the same team at both time points can also have an impact on ego's affect for alter (Trainer et al., 2020). Furthermore, given that frequency of interaction between ego and alter can also be one of the reasons for change in interpersonal affect, we control for change in frequency of interaction between time 1 and 2 (Casciaro & Lobo, 2008). Respondents' extraversion can also play a critical role in whether they can form high-quality social relationships with others and thus, we also control for both ego and alter's extraversion (Lopes et al., 2004). Lastly, in order to make sure that the moderating effect of ego and alter's emotion regulation ability on the relationship between team comembership change and ego's positive affect for alter is over and above the effect of overall emotional intelligence on change in interpersonal affect, we also control for ego and alter's total emotional intelligence, which comprises of perceiving, facilitating, understanding and regulating emotions dimensions (Lopes et al., 2004; 2011).

Analytical approach

Data was analyzed using linear mixed effects modelling with random intercepts, also referred to as multilevel modelling (MLM), because the structure of our data required an analytical method accounting for nonindependence across observations. Mixed effects models can be applied to a wide variety of contexts wherein the data exhibit nonindependence, including

network, team, or dyad level data (Maloney et al., 2019; Snijders and Kenny 1999, van Duijn 2013). We used the lme4 package (Bates et al. 2015) in the open-source platform R (R Development Core Team 2009) to run our analyses. Our sample possessed multiple sources of nonindependence: dyad, ego, alter, and team. Furthermore, dyad level regression models are usually susceptible to two main issues: common person effects and autocorrelation, which must be addressed for estimates to be consistent (Kleinbaum, 2018). Thus, we include a random intercept for ego and alter to correct for common person effects, around undirected ego-alter dyad to correct for autocorrelation and around the team to account for team-level non-independence (Kleinbaum, 2018). Accordingly, inclusion of random intercepts in the model for each of the sources of nonindependence allowed us to understand how much of the variance in our outcome variable was accounted for at the dyadic and team level (Maloney et al., 2019).

Results

Table 1 contains the means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations of the study's variables. The results of the multilevel modelling (linear mixed effects model with random intercepts) are found in Table 2. Model 1 includes only the controls. Model 2 presents the hypothesized direct effects along with moderators and the controls. Model 3 includes direct effects, interaction terms and the controls.

Hypothesis 1 states that controlling for change in frequency of interaction, ego's positive affect for alter will increase after the commencement of team co-membership. A positive coefficient for commencement of team co-membership in Model 3 of Table 2 indicates this relationship was positive and statistically significant, thus supporting Hypothesis 1 ($b = 0.31$, $p < .01$). Hypothesis 2 posits that controlling for change in frequency of interaction, ego's positive affect for alter will decrease after the conclusion of team co-membership. In Model 3 (Table 2)

the coefficient for conclusion of team co-membership had a negative and significant association with ego's interpersonal affect for alter, thus supporting Hypothesis 2 (b = - 0.27, p < .01).

Hypothesis 3 states that ego's emotion regulation ability will moderate the relationship between the conclusion of team co-membership and ego's decrease in positive affect for alter. The moderation effect, found in Model 3, is positive and significant (b = 0.12, p < .01). The interaction is plotted in Figure 2. A simple slopes test (Aiken & West, 1991) indicates that the relationship between conclusion of team co-membership and ego's decrease in positive affect for alter is weaker for egos high in emotion regulation ability (+1 SD; b = 0.18, p < .05) than for those low in emotion regulation ability (-1 SD; b = -0.06, p < 0.05). These results therefore lend support for Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 4 states that ego's emotion regulation ability will moderate the relationship between the commencement of team co-membership and ego's increase in positive affect for alter. The interaction coefficient for this moderation effect in Model 3 is statistically non-significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is not supported.

Hypothesis 5 states that alter's emotion regulation ability will moderate the relationship between the conclusion of team co-membership and ego's decrease in positive affect for alter. The moderation effect, found in Model 3, is positive and significant (b = 0.13, p < .01). This relationship is plotted in Figure 3. A simple slopes test indicates that the relationship between conclusion of team co-membership and ego's decrease in positive affect for alter is weaker for alters high in emotion regulation ability (+1 SD; b = 0.20, p < .01) than for those low in emotion regulation ability (-1 SD; b = -0.04, p < 0.05). This pattern of results therefore provides support for Hypothesis 5. Lastly, Hypothesis 6 states that alter's emotion regulation ability will moderate the relationship between the commencement of team co-membership and ego's increase in

positive affect for alter. The interaction coefficient for this moderation effect in Model 3 is statistically non-significant. Thus, Hypothesis 6 is not supported.

Furthermore, the variance components obtained from MLM (see Table 2) allowed us to explore the relative variance explained across levels and indicate that the largest variance in change in ego's interpersonal affect for alter due to team co-membership change is explained at the dyadic level.

Discussion & Theoretical Implications

This study provides support for the proposition that team co-membership change influences change in interpersonal affect between team members. Our results indicate that when ego and alter join the same team, ego's interpersonal affect for alter increases, whereas when the alter is removed from the same team as ego, ego' interpersonal affect for alter decreases. These effects are robust even after controlling for change in frequency of interaction, thereby highlighting that interpersonal affect between team co-members changes by the mere change in social identity or shared team membership and irrespective of the strength of tie between them. In addition, emotion regulation ability of ego and alter was found to weaken the relationship between conclusion of team co-membership and ego's decrease in interpersonal affect for alter such that the decrease was smaller when ego and alter's emotion regulation abilities were high. This suggests that the negative ramifications of conclusion of team co-membership i.e., lack of shared social identity, can be attenuated to the extent that ego and alter regulate their emotions effectively.

Furthermore, these results have several theoretical implications for teams, emotion regulation and social network literatures. Despite the substantial work on interpersonal

relationships and group affect in teams' literature, much of it has focused on traditional teams with static membership (Li & Van Knippenberg, 2021). However, the little research that has explored the effect of team membership change on affect, has mainly focused on the emergence of uniform affective tone (i.e., consistent interpersonal affect between team members) in teams (Lewis et al., 2007). As a result, scant research attention has been paid on the impact of team co-membership change on interpersonal affect or affective relationships between team members, particularly at the dyadic level. Furthermore, the mechanism or theoretical processes through which team membership change influences change in interpersonal affect and the boundary conditions for this relationship are yet to be theorized and examined. Thus, we push the envelope by moving beyond the uniform group affective tone argument prevalent in the literature and demonstrate the team co-membership change not only influences overall team affect but also interpersonal affect at the dyadic level.

Our study also highlights that team membership change influences the quality of affective relationships between coworkers over time, which in turn has potential to influence future instrumental relationships (Casciaro & Lobo, 2015). Importantly, our research adds to the work that has been done on how exogeneous shocks change social networks. Most network research to date has examined how exogeneous shocks affect the social networks of individuals (e.g., Jo, Harrison, & Gray, 2021; Kleinbaum, 2018; Stuart, 2017), with little focus on how such shocks impact relationships at the level of the dyad. This study suggests that exogenous shocks like change in team co-membership have an impact on the decay and strengthening of ties.

In addition to contributing to teams and network literatures, our study also challenges the dominant assumption in both psychology and management literatures that suggests that affective change or change in interpersonal attitudes is often slow and unresponsive to explicit external

cues (Trainer et al., 2020; Xiao & Van Bavel, 2019). By demonstrating that team co-membership change can cause swift changes in feelings of like or dislike (i.e., generalized interpersonal affect) towards other group members, we highlight that affective change is also sensitive to external cues.

Lastly, we contribute to the literature on emotion regulation ability by exploring how emotion regulation can impact those who have a social relationship with the focal employee. Much of the research in this domain, focuses on intrapersonal effect of emotional regulation (Lopes et al., 2004; Kidwell et al., 2020). In this paper, we extend the focus to interpersonal effect of emotion regulation, such that two individuals high in emotional regulation ability can form high quality relationships beyond the formation and dissolution of their team membership and thus, minimize the decrease in interpersonal affect due to the loss of shared social identity. Moreover, much of the extant work on emotion regulation ability has focused on its concurrent effect in an unchanging context. Our study therefore moves beyond this context by examining the role it plays in relationship evolution in an environment characterized by change.

Despite its strengths, our study also suffers from some limitations. While exploitation of a randomized, natural experiment – in which team members were randomly reassigned to teams between Time 1 and Time 2 – enabled us to obtain the cleanest identification of the causal effects of team co-membership change on interpersonal affect that is possible. We acknowledge that studies of MBA students may lack the external validity to generalize readily to other kinds of organizations. Thus, future studies should try to replicate the findings of this study by conducting a field experiment or quasi-experiment. This would help generalize the findings and address the external validity concerns that student data poses. Also, though we articulate the social identity mechanisms through which team co-membership may influence change in

interpersonal affect. We don't explicitly test this mechanism by including a mediator in our conceptual model. Thus, future studies should empirically investigate potential mechanisms or mediators that can help explain the effect of team co-membership change on change in interpersonal affect.

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Table 1 - ***Means, Standard Deviations, and Bivariate Correlations of Variables***

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Same Gender	0.55	0.50	--												
2. Same Race	0.82	0.39	.113**	--											
3. Same Major	0.18	0.38	-0.001	-.074**	--										
4. Ego's Extraversion	65.44	22.33	-0.017	.117**	.064**	--									
5. Alter's Extraversion	65.50	23.50	-0.019	.193**	.056**	-0.021	--								
6. Average of Ego's Other EI Dimensions	99.09	9.62	-.050*	-.065**	0.020	.200**	-0.027	--							
7. Average of Alter's Other EI Dimensions	98.51	9.97	-0.027	-.065**	0.036	-0.033	.181**	-0.022	--						
8. Ego's Change in Frequency of Interaction with Alter	2.99	1.34	0.025	.185**	0.004	.050*	.123**	.043*	.062**	--					
9. No Change in Team Co-membership	0.03	0.18	0.015	0.031	0.027	-0.005	-0.005	-.059**	-.040*	.204**	--				
10. Commencement of Team Co-membership	0.03	0.17	-.047*	-0.008	-.042*	0.012	-0.012	0.035	0.016	.212**	0.032	--			
11. Conclusion of Team Co-membership	0.05	0.22	-.078**	-0.031	0.008	-0.007	-0.005	0.008	0.008	.156**	-.043*	-.041*	--		
12. Ego's Emotion Regulation Ability	98.59	7.91	-0.032	.202**	-0.004	.129**	-0.009	.284**	-0.003	.108**	0.032	0.013	-0.026	--	
13. Alter's Emotion Regulation Ability	97.71	7.82	-0.018	.246**	-0.014	-0.002	.144**	-0.005	.285**	.063**	-0.004	0.001	-0.005	-0.013	--
14. Change in Ego's Interpersonal Affect for Alter	0.24	0.87	0.027	0.0322	-0.008	0.029	-.063**	0.029	-.089**	.066**	.048*	.074**	-.113**	.047*	.066**

* $p < .05$ (2-tailed)
** $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

Table 2 – Results of Linear Mixed Effects Modeling with Random Intercepts (MLM)

	Change in Ego's Generalized Interpersonal Affect for Alter					
	Model 1		**Model 2**		**Model 3**	
Predictor Variables						
Constant	1.48**	(0.56)	1.94*	(0.77)	2.07***	(0.77)
Control Variables						
Same Gender	0.07**	(0.03)	0.05*	(0.03)	0.06*	(0.03)
Same Race	0.10	(0.06)	0.10†	(0.06)	0.10	(0.06)
Same Major	0.06†	(0.03)	0.06†	(0.03)	0.06†	(0.03)
Ego's Extraversion	0.01*	(0.002)	0.01*	(0.002)	0.01*	(0.002)
Alter's Extraversion	0.00	(0.001)	0.00	(0.001)	0.00	(0.001)
Average of Ego's Other EI Dimensions	0.01†	(0.05)	0.01†	(0.01)	0.01†	(0.01)
Average of Alter's Other EI Dimensions	-0.01†	(0.003)	0.004	(0.003)	0.004	(0.003)
Ego's Change in Frequency of Interaction with Alter	0.25**	(0.01)	0.26**	(0.01)	0.26**	(0.01)
No Change in Team Co-membership	0.11	(0.10)	0.15*	(0.08)	0.15*	(0.08)
Independent Variables						
Commencement of Team Co-membership			0.14**	(0.08)	0.31**	(0.13)
Conclusion of Team Co-membership			-0.24***	(0.06)	-0.27**	(0.09)
Moderator Variables						
Ego's Emotion Regulation Ability			-0.002	(0.01)	-0.002	(0.01)
Alter's Emotion Regulation Ability			-0.01	(0.003)	-0.01	(0.003)
Two-Way Interactions						
Conclusion of Team Co-membership x Ego's Emotion Regulation Ability					0.12**	(0.01)
Commencement of Team Co-membership x Ego's Emotion Regulation Ability					0.004	(0.01)
Conclusion of Team Co-membership x Alter's Emotion Regulation Ability					0.13**	(0.01)
Commencement of Team Co-membership x Alter's Emotion Regulation Ability					-0.001	(0.01)
Variance Components						
Dyad	0.16		0.19		0.23	
Ego	0.10		0.13		0.16	
Alter	0.03		0.04		0.04	
Team	0.04		0.05		0.07	

Note. Standard errors in parentheses; $N = 2676$. Variance components represents the relative variance explained at various levels. Two-tail tests are reported. EI stands for Emotional Intelligence.

† $p < .10$
* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

Figure 1 – Conceptual Model

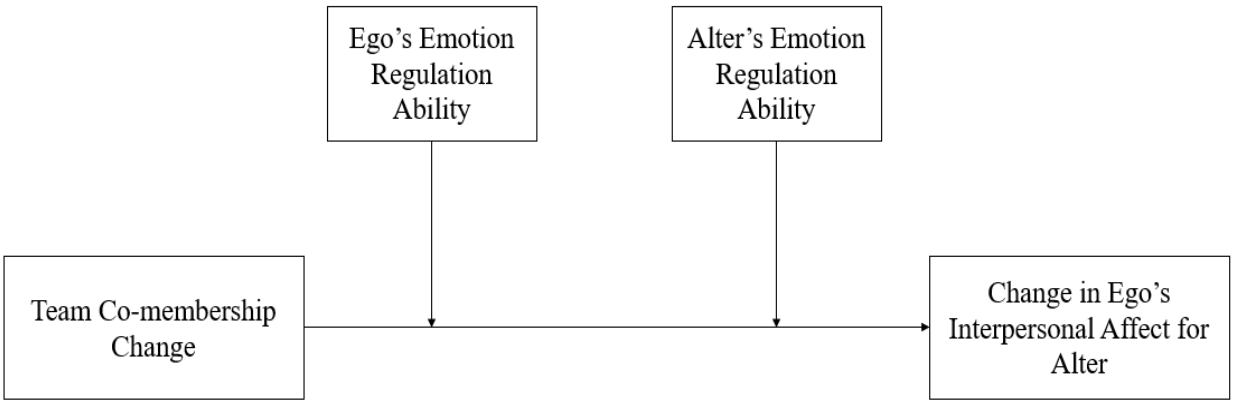

Figure 2 – Ego's Emotion Regulation Ability Moderates the relationship between conclusion of team co-membership and ego's decrease in interpersonal affect for alter

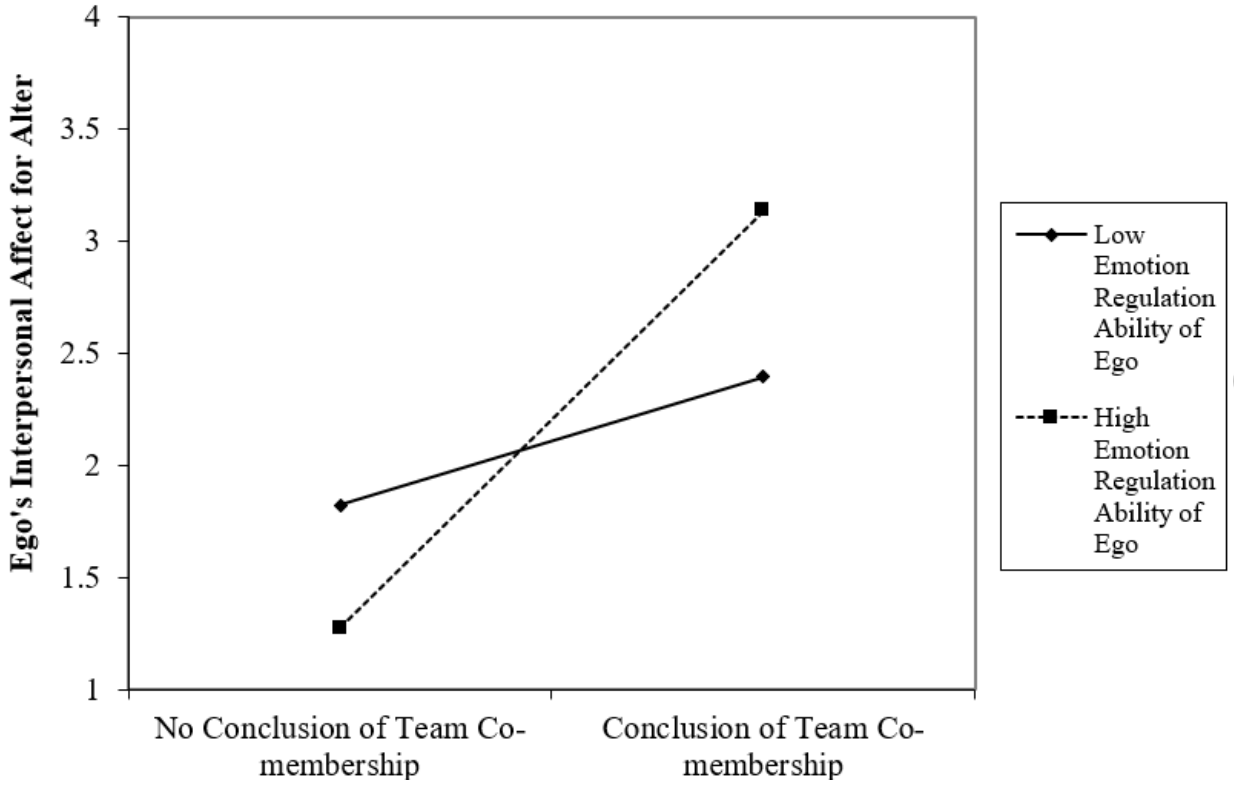

Figure 3 – Alter's Emotion Regulation Ability Moderates the relationship between conclusion of team co-membership and ego's decrease in interpersonal affect for alter

