The Experience

Since joining my secondary group, I have seen the development of group norms, individual adherence to the norms, and leadership that has taken shape in order to motivate the group to follow them. I understand norms to be: “rules of behavior that are agreed upon and shared within a culture, and the prescribed limits of acceptable behavior.” Our group has developed some norms that we have all come to agree upon. The norms of our group are as follows: show up on time to group discussions, call ahead if you are going to be late, give feedback and be prepared to answer and ask a variety of questions, be polite and considerate of others, and take good notes to share with those who may have missed a meeting. These may sound like a list of rules that we wrote out/said but we have never actually laid out any rules to adhere to.

As the norms have been established within our group, I’ve seen myself take on two types of leadership styles. I have tried to be both the expressive leader and the instrumental leader. Only because, since the time I joined my secondary group until now, I have found it difficult to sit back and allow the others to take the lead and get the work started. Even in the beginning when we sat down to introduce ourselves to one another there was a long, awkward pause where no one spoke. Only a few random questions were asked here and there. I soon realized we would need someone to get things done as
there was much to do with very little time to do it. Therefore, I jumped into the role of the instrumental leader. However, since we have had more meetings together I have been able to step out of that position because one of the guys in our group took on the role. In doing that I was able to act as more of the expressive leader. I prefer this role because I see it as more beneficial to our group (especially for the international students).

Overall the norms our group has inadvertently agreed upon have been complied to by all the members of the group. Our group functions rather well together, even though we started out a little slow and there had been very few leaders. We haven’t needed to establish any negative sanctions because of overall compliance. However, we do use and maintain great positive sanctions when an individual works hard to help one or more of us to understand their point of view. It has been awesome to learn about another culture and build a small community within the group. Now, I have even gained experience in each leadership role and can see the value of a leader in a cooperative group situation. The norms may establish the identity of a group but I feel that it is the effective leader that sustains it.