Involvement and Leadership: A Descriptive Analysis of Socially Responsible Leadership

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The development of students as leaders remains a central goal for institutions of higher education as evidenced by mission statements and the increased presence of leadership development programs on college campuses (Astin & Astin, 2000; Boatman, 1999; Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 1999; McIntire, 1989; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). Additionally, research indicates that college students can and do increase their leadership skills during the college years (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), and that this increase can be attributed in part to collegiate involvement (Astin, 1993). These findings complement the growing number of leadership models that specifically target college students, including the relational leadership model (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998), the social change model (Higher Education Research Institute [HERI], 1996), the leadership challenge/ Student Leadership Practices Inventory (Posner, 2004; Posner & Brodsky, 1992), and the leadership identity development model (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2004; Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005). In most cases, however, a gap exists between research on college student leadership and the models used in practice. Researchers' use of general measures of leadership development rather than those tied to existing models has contrib-

uted to a scarcity of empirical studies grounded in the theory that informs leadership practice. The purpose of this study is to examine leadership development as well as the role of involvement in leadership learning using the social change model.

The Social Change Model of Leadership Development

The social change model of leadership development (HERI, 1996) was created specifically for college students and is consistent with the emerging leadership paradigm. This perspective, also referred to as the postindustrial paradigm, suggests that leadership is a relational, transformative, process-oriented, learned, and change-directed phenomenon (Rogers, 2003; Rost, 1993). Similarly, the central principles associated with the social change model involve social responsibility and change for the common good (HERI). These are achieved through the development of eight core values targeted at enhancing students' level of self-awareness and ability to work with others (HERI). The values include consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, common purpose, collaboration, controversy with civility, and citizenship. These values function at the individual (i.e., consciousness of self, congruence commitment), group (i.e., common purpose, collaboration, and controversy with civility), and societal (i.e.,

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citizenship) levels. The dynamic interaction across levels and between values contributes to social change for the common good, the eighth critical value associated with this model (HERI). The social change model was selected as a conceptual frame for analysis because of its broad applicability and identification as one of the most well-known student leadership models (Moriarty & Kezar, 2000).

Research on Student Involvement and Leadership

In the early 1990s Astin (1993) successfully linked leadership development to involvement, defined as the investment of psychosocial and physical energy in the collegiate environment. Additional studies have explored the influence of particular types of involvement (e.g., community service, positional roles, organizational membership, and participation in formal programs) on various measures of leadership. This approach is supported by Kezar and Moriarty's (2000) finding that type of involvement has differential influences on development based on student background. Specifically, they found that involvement in positional leadership roles (i.e., election to a particular office) was the strongest extra-curricular predictor of leadership ability for White men, and significant for African American women as well (Kezar & Moriarty; Moriarty & Kezar, 2000). Conversely, non-positional leadership experiences were significant predictors for White women and African American men (Kezar & Moriarty; Moriarty & Kezar). Volunteering was the only significant predictor for African American men, whereas White women benefited most from active membership in student organizations (Kezar & Moriarty; Moriarty & Kezar). Another study examining the influence of community service on three measures of leadership development found a significant positive relationship across populations (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, and Burkhardt (2001) examined involvement in a formalized leadership program. They found participants demonstrated significant growth across leadership skills and several leadership-related measures including civic responsibility, multicultural awareness, understanding of leadership theory, and personal and societal values (Cress et al.; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999).

The purpose of this study is to link empirical research on leadership to a leadership development model. Measures associated with the social change model of leadership development are used to examine the leadership development of college students. Additional attention is paid to the influence of involvement in community service, positional roles, student organizations, and formalized programs on socially responsible leadership. This research extends the knowledge regarding leadership development and may provide a valuable link between leadership theory and practice.

METHOD

For this descriptive study I examined college students' leadership development as measured by the social change model. I also tested the null hypothesis that there are no mean differences across the eight constructs of the social change model based on participation in community service, positional roles, student organizations, or formal leadership programs.

Sample

Participants represented undergraduate students at a large, doctoral/research intensive university in the western United States. A random sample of 100 undergraduate courses

was selected from the total course offering. Permission was granted to administer the instrument in 60 of these classes resulting in a total of 912 participants representing each of the 10 undergraduate colleges. Of that number, 859 submitted completed instruments. This study followed institutional protocol and obtained informed consent from all participants prior to completion of the instrument.

The sample accurately reflected institutional demographics, although more women (51.9%, $n = 443$) completed the instrument than men (48.1%, $n = 410$). The majority of participants identified themselves as full-time students (86.5%, $n = 741$) rather than part-time (13.5%, $n = 116$). The racial/ethnic background of participants was as follows: 64.2% Caucasian ($n = 530$); 18% Asian/Pacific Islander ($n = 149$); 7% Hispanic ($n = 58$); 5.7% African American/Black ($n = 47$); 4.1% multiracial ($n = 34$); and 1% American Indian ($n = 8$). Age was reported as a categorical variable. Participant age and year in school are reported in Table 1.

Instrument

The social change model was operationalized using the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS). This instrument is comprised of eight separate scales, each of which measures a particular value associated with the social change model (Tyree, 1998). Sample questions from each scale are provided in Table 2. The SRLS contains a total of 103 items on which participants self-report using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Negative items were reverse-scored. The internal reliability for each scale was as follows: consciousness of self = 0.82, congruence = 0.82, commitment = 0.85, common purpose = 0.82, collaboration = 0.77, controversy with civility = 0.69, citizen-

ship = 0.92, and change = 0.78. For this particular study Cronbach alphas ranged from a high of 0.90 on citizenship to a low of 0.71 on controversy with civility.

Additionally, participants were asked to indicate if they were involved in a variety of college-related experiences including: (a) community service, defined as volunteering time in the campus or local community; (b) positional leadership roles, defined as any formal position within an organization that had a specific set of responsibilities; (c) student organization membership, defined as active participation in a nonpositional role in a student group; and (d) formal leadership programs, defined as participation in a retreat, workshop or any other leadership experience designed to enhance learning.

TABLE 1.

Representation of Age and Year in School, Within Sample ($n = 859$)

Category	N	%
Age		
17 or younger	5	0.6
18-20	251	29.4
21-23	303	35.4
24-29	170	19.9
30-39	73	8.5
40 or older	53	6.2
Year in School		
Freshman	90	10.5
Sophomore	135	15.8
Junior	257	30.1
Senior	341	39.9
Other	31	3.6

TABLE 2.

Sample Questions by Scale for the
Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (Tyree, 1998)

Scale	Item
Consciousness of Self	• The things about which I feel passionate have priority in my life.
	• I am comfortable expressing myself.
Congruence	• I take a stand when I believe in something.
	• My behaviors are congruent with my beliefs.
Commitment	• I find it difficult to follow through on tasks. *
	• I am willing to devote time and energy to things that are important to me.
Common Purpose	• I work well when I know the collective values of a group.
	• I belong to groups with which I do not have much in common. *
Collaboration	• I believe that better outcomes result when many people work together.
	• Working in groups tries my patience. *
Controversy With Civility	• Hearing differences in opinions enriches my thinking.
	• When there is a conflict between two people, one will win and the other will lose. *
Citizenship	• There is little I can do that makes a difference for others. *
	• It is important to me that I play an active role in my communities.
Change	• I am comfortable initiating new ways of looking at things.
	• I work well in changing environments.

* Negatively scored items.

RESULTS

Prior to the principal analysis, descriptive statistics were computed to generate and compare means and standard deviations across the eight constructs. This procedure allows for examination of overall results. Results were as follows: consciousness of self = 3.90 (*SD* = .49), congruence = 3.98 (*SD* = .50), commitment = 4.16 (*SD* = .45), collaboration = 3.84 (*SD* = .48), common purpose = 3.90 (*SD* = .44), controversy with civility = 3.70 (*SD* = .42), citizenship = 3.73 (*SD* = .60), change = 3.82 (*SD* = .50).

For the principal analysis I employed multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to explore mean differences across the eight leadership constructs based on involvement status (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). MANOVA was required for analysis in this study due to the interrelated nature of the eight scales (Hair et al.). Four separate MANOVAs were run using the Pillai-Bartlet trace given its strength against violations of normality and homogeneity of dispersion (Hair et al.; Olson, 1976). The eight leadership values serve as the dependent variables with involvement status serving as the independent variable. The MANOVAs revealed significant mean differences for involved and not involved students across the following involvement

experiences: community service (Pillai-Bartlet trace = .12, F = 13.71, p < .05), positional leadership roles (Pillai-Bartlet trace = .06, F = 7.03, p < .05), student organization membership (Pillai-Bartlet trace = .06, F = 6.70, p < .05), and formal leadership programs (Pillai-Bartlet trace = .06, F = 7.05, p < .05).

The MANOVA results were followed up at the univariate level using independent samples t-tests to examine between group differences more closely (Hair et al., 1998). Table 3 provides means and standards deviations for involved and uninvolved students across each of the scales and involvement experiences. Participants involved in community service scored significantly higher than uninvolved peers on the following measures: consciousness of self (t = –2.56, p < .05), congruence (t = –2.31, p < .05), commitment (t = –2.87, p < .05), collaboration (t = –2.73, p < .05), common purpose (t = –3.51, p < .05), and citizenship (t = –9.26, p < .05). Participants involved in positional leadership roles scored significantly higher on commitment (t = –2.11, p < .05), collaboration (t = –2.31, p < .05), common purpose (t = –3.09, p < .05), and citizenship (t = –6.06, p < .05). Students who were involved in campus organizations had significantly higher scores on common purpose (t = –2.20, p < .05) and citizenship (t = –5.78, p < .05). Finally, participants involved in formal leadership programs scored significantly higher than uninvolved peers on common purpose (t = –2.60, p < .05) and citizenship (t = –6.33, p < .05).

DISCUSSION

Overall mean scores across the eight scales associated with the social change model reveal relatively high numbers. Participants' scores were highest on commitment (M = 4.16) and lowest on controversy with civility (M = 3.70)

and citizenship (M = 3.73). High scores may be an indicator of a philosophical fit between the values associated with the model and students' values and perceptions of leadership. They may also be an indicator that the critical values associated with the social change model are particularly familiar to students on this campus. Examining the levels at which these values operate reveals that students score higher across the individual values (i.e., consciousness of self, congruence, and commitment) and lower along the group (i.e., collaboration, common purpose, and controversy with civility) and societal (i.e., citizenship) values. This may be reflective of developmental processes. The leadership identity development model suggests understanding group and societal values requires increasingly complex levels of thinking and meaning-making (Komives et al., 2004; Komives et al., 2005).

Multivariate analysis revealed significant mean differences between involved and uninvolved students across each of the four types of involvement. Univariate analysis further differentiated results revealing that different types of involvement were associated with different scores along the social change model. Although this study did not include differences based on race and gender, findings are consistent with Kezar and Moriarity's (2000) conclusion that type of involvement affected the type of development along general measures of leadership.

Univariate analysis also indicated that of the four types of involvement examined within this study, community service was the most influential. Involvement in service was related to significantly higher scores across the largest number of scales. Positional leadership roles contributed to differences as well, with involved students demonstrating significantly higher scores on scales associated with the

TABLE 3.

Means, Standard Deviations, and t Values for Each Scale by Type of Involvement
(*n* = 859)

Leadership Constructs	Not Involved		Involved		t Values
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	
Community Service					
Consciousness of Self	3.85	0.48	3.93	0.50	−2.56*
Congruence	3.94	0.49	4.02	0.51	−2.31*
Commitment	4.12	0.46	4.20	0.44	−2.87*
Collaboration	3.77	0.51	3.89	0.45	−3.73*
Common Purpose	3.84	0.45	3.95	0.43	−3.51*
Controversy With Civility	3.68	0.43	3.72	0.41	−1.37
Citizenship	3.53	0.60	3.89	0.55	−9.26*
Change	3.79	0.49	3.85	0.51	−1.63
Positional Leadership Roles					
Consciousness of Self	3.89	0.49	3.90	0.51	−0.30
Congruence	3.99	0.50	3.97	0.51	0.33
Commitment	4.14	0.45	4.22	0.47	−2.11*
Collaboration	3.18	0.49	3.90	0.46	−2.31*
Common Purpose	3.87	0.44	3.98	0.44	−3.09*
Controversy With Civility	3.69	0.41	3.73	0.43	−1.03
Citizenship	3.66	0.60	3.94	0.57	−6.06*
Change	3.81	0.49	3.87	0.54	−1.51
Student Organization Membership					
Consciousness of Self	3.90	0.50	3.89	0.49	0.28
Congruence	3.98	0.51	3.98	0.50	−0.04
Commitment	4.14	0.46	4.19	0.45	−1.56
Collaboration	3.82	0.50	3.87	0.45	−1.58
Common Purpose	3.87	0.45	3.94	0.43	−2.20*
Controversy With Civility	3.70	0.42	3.88	0.40	−0.45
Citizenship	3.64	0.61	3.88	0.55	−5.78*
Change	3.82	0.49	3.82	0.52	−0.12
Formal Leadership Programming					
Consciousness of Self	3.88	0.49	3.92	0.49	−1.02
Congruence	3.98	0.51	3.99	0.48	−0.31
Commitment	4.14	0.45	4.20	0.45	−1.92
Collaboration	3.81	0.50	3.87	0.44	−1.71
Common Purpose	3.87	0.45	3.95	0.44	−2.60*
Controversy With Civility	3.69	0.43	3.72	0.39	−1.13
Citizenship	3.63	0.61	3.90	0.55	−6.33*
Change	3.80	0.50	3.86	0.49	−1.60

*p < .05.

group and societal levels. Involvement in student organizations and formal leadership programs demonstrated limited influence on student leadership, but did have a positive influence on the scales of common purpose and citizenship.

Although citizenship was among the lowest scored scales (M = 3.73) for students in general, it was the most positively affected through involvement experiences. Each of the involvement types explored in this study had the most dramatic influence on the citizenship scale. This suggests that involvement of any kind included in this study assists in helping students to recognize the need to connect individual and group leadership to the broader needs of the community. Conversely, none of the involvement types explored here affected the scales of controversy with civility and change. This is particularly troubling given controversy with civility emerged as the lowest scale for students in general.

Implications

Implications from this study are applicable for both leadership development educators and student affairs staff in general. The results illustrate leadership as measured by the social change model and validate the important role of involvement. This information is useful both in shaping programmatic design and in meeting individual student needs. Additionally, as an exploratory study linking leadership measures to a particular model, it provides a much needed bridge between leadership theory and research.

Although students had relatively high scores across each of the scales associated with the social change model, controversy with civility and citizenship emerged as the lowest constructs. Additionally, development across the group and societal levels were lower than those across the individual levels. This suggests

a need for student affairs staff, regardless of functional area, to engage students in dialogue more effectively around these topics. How are group experiences structured? Are students encouraged to engage in healthy conflict? Do staff members assist students in connecting the impact of leadership experiences to the broader community? Komives et al. (2005) have asserted that student affairs professionals have the potential to play an enormously powerful role in shaping the meaning-making capacity of students. However, attention must be directed at developing leadership capacity across all values, not just ones that are more easily affected.

The results from this study highlight the significant relationship between community service and leadership development. Service emerges as a potent vehicle through which socially responsible leadership may be achieved. Student affairs staff at all levels of an institution would benefit from rethinking how they link leadership and service both programmatically and structurally. Are leadership and service treated as unique and distinct experiences on campus? Findings from this study would suggest an influential relationship that should be taken advantage of as much as possible. The interweaving of service into leadership and other involvement experiences has the potential to increase leadership learning dramatically. An expansion of the quality and quantity of service programs grounded in critical reflection may significantly contribute to developmental gains in socially responsible leadership.

Although nonpositional involvement such as service, student organization membership, and involvement in formal leadership programs were each related to higher scores on particular scales, the scope of influence was limited for student organization membership and involvement in formal programs. It seems

intuitive that because organization membership contributes to common purpose, it should contribute to other outcomes as well. Professionals should consider the degree to which they engage nonpositional members of student organizations in conversations and training related to leadership development. Is the assumption made that these students do not need training and development at the individual level? Additional attention should be paid to group processes as well. How are students encouraged to collaborate with one another or engage across differences? Similarly, staff running formal leadership programs should examine the role they might play in assisting in the development of a broader range of outcomes. Perhaps programs might have a broader impact on development if they focused on specific outcomes such as consciousness of self or controversy with civility rather than a wide range of outcomes.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations associated with this study provide clear directions for future research. First, the use of a descriptive methodology paints an interesting picture of leadership development and the role of involvement as measured using the social change model. However, it does not examine longitudinal outcomes associated with particular experiences. Future studies should examine how the social change model influences student development over time. Do involvement experiences demonstrate differential affects when studied over the course of the collegiate experience? How do specific types of formal leadership programs (e.g., certification programs, emerging leadership workshops, cultural leadership retreats, etc.) affect development and do they contribute to developmental gains on different measures?

Second, data in this study represent only a single institution. Although the sample is appropriate to generalize to the broader institutional student population, it may not be generalizable to other institutions. Further studies should consider examining measures of the social change model using a multi-institutional sample. The establishment of a national normative data set would contribute significantly to the leadership knowledge base. Similarly, a national, multi-institutional study may provide the necessary numbers to more accurately examine involvement experiences in conjunction with other demographic variables such as race.

Finally, the use of the social change model of leadership development as the conceptual frame for this study provided a meaningful student model from which to ground research. However, as a value-based approach to leadership, the model takes a particular stance in its philosophy of student leadership development. Data in this study may not be generalizable or useful to institutions that adopt fundamentally different leadership philosophies. Further research should consider comparisons of leadership development across other student leadership models as a means to support programs that operate from different frameworks.

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Student Leadership Process Development: An Assessment of Contributing College Resources

Michael D. Thompson

Leadership development is a prominent theme and objective in higher education (Smart, Ethington, Riggs, & Thompson, 2002), especially for residential liberal arts institutions, which tend to emphasize and market the benefits of dual living-and-learning environments that facilitate the cultivation of leadership-related attributes. Evidence of such may be observed in the mission statements of numerous well-respected liberal arts institutions in which leadership development is a focal point (e.g., Beloit College, 2005; Colgate University, 2005; The College of Wooster, 2005; Colorado College, 2005; Davidson College, 2005; Occidental College, 2005).

Despite the holistic nature of emphasizing leadership, in that mission statements are intended to be all-inclusive to the student body, research on leadership development and attributes primarily has been focused on students currently engaged in campus experiences and programs (e.g., student government,

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