

LEADERSHIP IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT
A Grounded Theory and a Leadership Identity Development Model (LID)
 S. Komives, J. Casper, S. Longerbeam, F. Mainella, & L. Osteen (2004)
 University of Maryland College Park
 International Leadership Association • November 4-5, 2004 • Washington DC

Funded by the Burns Academy of Leadership and ACPA Educational Leadership Foundation

Understanding the process of leadership identity development is central to teaching leadership and facilitating the learning of leadership. Many today call for leadership based in ethical actions for moral purposes that transforms followers into leaders themselves (Burns, 1978; Rost, 1991, 1993). The work of the Eisenhower/UCLA ensemble Social Change Model (HERI, 1996), the relational leadership model of recent leadership books targeting leadership development for college students (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998), the principles involved in other leaderships books (e.g. Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Lappe & DuBois, 1994; Matusak, 1997) address the value of this approach. Many leadership educators think that college students are best informed by learning a relational-values approach to leadership which is inclusive, ethical, grounded in principles and values, and seeks collaborative processes in working with others toward a common vision or common purpose. None of these books however address a theoretical model of how this kind of leadership develops. How does one come to a commitment to efficacy in this paradigm? What environmental influences (e.g. peers; significant involvements – such as sports, theater, jobs, clubs; family; teachers/ advisors/ mentors) are involved? How does this leadership identity develop? **Research Question:** What processes does a person goes through to come to an awareness that he/she can make a difference and can work effectively with others to accomplish change? How does this relational leadership efficacy/identity develop?

METHODS

Expert Nominators: Campus programs staff, residence life, athletic advisors, band director, service learning office, honors program, ODK advisor, ethnic student organizations, leadership academy staff. **We told nominators:** We are seeking the best exemplars we can find of **relational leadership**; i.e. those who engage in being **inclusive, empowering, ethical, purposeful**, and are conscious of the **process** of leadership (Komives, et al, 1998); able to **work collaboratively** with others; think of themselves as **part of a team**; do not need to have held a formal position; these nominees **do not practice command-and-control strategies** or “boss” others around.

Participants: Theoretical intensity sampling; **13 participants:** 8 men & 5 women; 1 African, 1 Asian Am., 3 African American, 8 White/ Caucasian; 2 –sophomores, 5 -4th year seniors, 4 -5th year seniors, 2 -graduate students

Procedures & Data: Three interviews using life narrative and other protocols (1-2 hours each); Focus Group including a Model building activity (August 2001-May 2002); constant comparative analysis and open, axial and selective coding

SELECT FINDINGS/IMPLICATIONS

Grounded Theory: Core category was developing a leadership identity. Key categories were developmental components, individual factors, group factors, view of self in relation to others, and view of leadership.

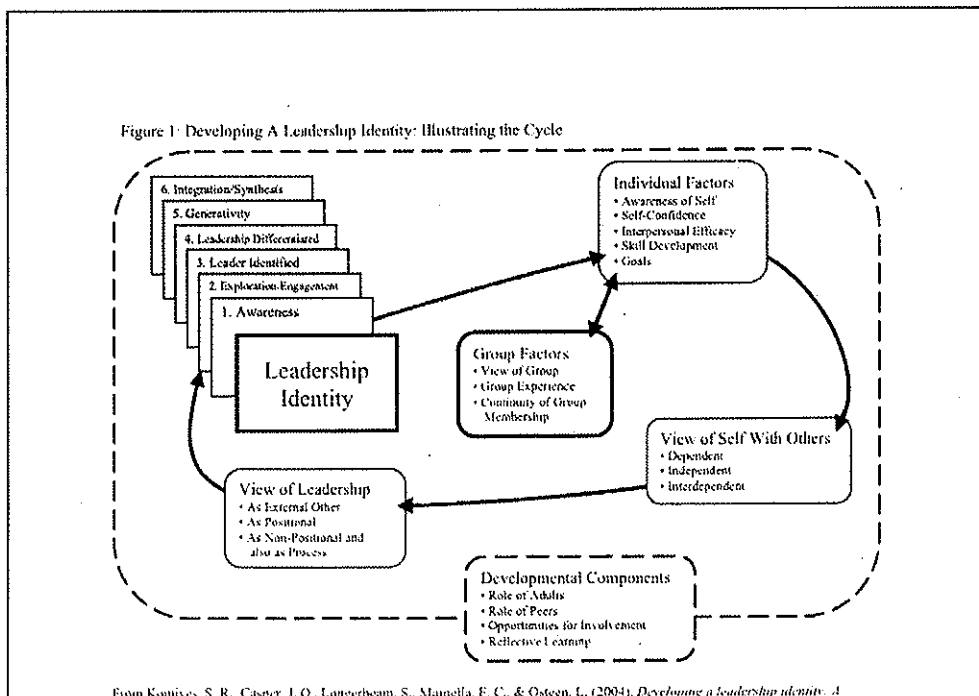


Figure 1: Leadership Identity Development Model

Stage →	1 Awareness		2 Exploration/ Engagement		3 Leader Identified	
	Transition		Transition		Emerging	Immersion
Key Categories						
Stage Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing that leadership is happening around you Getting exposure to involvements 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intentional involvements [sports, church, service, scouts, dance, SGA] Experiencing groups for first time Taking on responsibilities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trying on new roles Identifying skills needed Taking on individual responsibility Individual accomplishments important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting things done Managing others Practicing different approaches/styles <p><i>Leadership seen largely as positional roles held by self or others; Leaders do leadership</i></p>
View of Leadership	"Other people are leaders; leaders are out there somewhere"	"I am not a leader; other people do that"	"I want to be involved"	"I want to do more"	"A leader gets things done"	"I am the leader and others follow me" or "I am a follower looking to the leader for direction"
Individual factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Becomes aware of national leaders and authority figures (e.g. the principal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Want to make friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop personal skills Identify personal strengths/weaknesses Prepare for leadership Build self confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize personal leadership potential Motivation to change something 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positional leadership roles or group member roles Narrow down to meaningful experiences (e.g. church, sports, clubs, yearbook, scouts, class projects) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Models others Leader struggles with delegation Moves in and out of leadership roles and member roles but still believes the leader is in charge Appreciates individual recognition
Group factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uninvolved or "inactive" follower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Want to get involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Active" follower or member Engage in diverse contexts (e.g. church, sports, clubs, class projects) 	Narrow interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leader has to get things done Group has a job to do; organize to get tasks done 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve members to get the job done Stick with a primary group as an identity base; explore other groups
Developmental Components	Affirmation by adults (parents, teachers, coaches, scout leaders, church elders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation/watching Recognition adult sponsors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affirmation of adults Attributions (others see me as a leader) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role models Older peers as sponsors Adult sponsors Assume positional roles Reflection/retreat 	Take on responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model older peers and adults Observe older peers Adults as mentors, guides, coaches
View of Self with others	Dependent				Independent/Dependent	

<i>The KEY Transition</i>	4 Leadership Differentiated			5 Generativity		6 Internalization/Synthesis
	<i>Emerging</i>	<i>Immersion</i>	<i>Transition</i>		<i>Transition</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shifting order of consciousness • Take on more complex leadership challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joining with others in shared tasks/ goals from positional or non-positional group roles • Need to learn group skills <i>New belief that leadership can come from anywhere in the group (non positional)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks to facilitate a good group process whether in positional or non positional leader role • Commitment to community of the group <i>Awareness that leadership is a group process</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active commitment to a personal passion; • Accepting responsibility for the development of others, • Promotes team learning, • Responsible for sustaining organizations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued self development and life long learning, • Striving for congruence and internal confidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding position does not mean I am a leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I need to lead in a participatory way and I can contribute to leadership from anywhere in the organization"; • "I can be a leader without a title"; • "I am a leader even if I am not the leader" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Leadership is happening everywhere; we are doing leadership together; we are all responsible" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Who's coming after me?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I am responsible as a member of my communities to facilitate the development of others as leaders and enrich the life of our groups" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I need to be true to myself in all situations and open to grow" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I know I am able to work effectively with others to accomplish change from any place in the organization"; • "I am a leader"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition that cannot do it all myself • Learn to value the importance of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to trust and value others & their involvement • Openness other perspectives • Develop comfort with being an active member • Let go control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learns about personal influence • Effective in both positional and non-positional roles • Practices being engaged member • Values servant leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on passion, vision, & commitments • Want to serve society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor and develop others; • transforming leadership • Concern for leadership pipeline • Concerned with sustainability of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness to ideas • Learning from others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees leadership as a life long developmental process • Want to leave things better • Am trustworthy and value that I have credibility • Recognition of role modeling to others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningfully engage with others • Look to group resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing the collective whole; the big picture • Learn group and team skills/ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value teams • Value connectedness to others, inter-dependence • Learns how system works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value process • Seek fit with org. vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustaining the organization • Ensuring continuity in areas of passion/ focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipating transition to new roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees organizational complexity across contexts • Can imagine how to engage with different organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older peers as sponsors & mentors • Adults as mentors & meaning makers • Learning about leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practicing leadership in ongoing peer relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds to meaning makers (student affairs staff, key faculty, same-age peer mentors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins coaching others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds to meaning makers (student affairs staff, same-age peer mentors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared learning • Reflection/retreat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-cycle when context changes or is uncertain (contextual uncertainty), enables continual recycling through leadership stages
Interdependent						

Structure of the LID Model (see inside pages)

"Stages": The data identifies a "stage based" model. We use the term "stage" cautiously as there is no fixed beginning or ending but they represent positions in the evolution of this identity. The six "stages" are (1) awareness, (2) exploration/ engagement, (3) leader identified, (4) leadership differentiated, (5) generativity and (6) internalization/ synthesis. Students progress through a "stage" before moving on to the next "stage". When moving into new contexts, the student might engage with tasks evident in earlier stages but is aware of their preferences to function at the stages they have most recently experienced. This is a *stage based model* and not an *age based model*. Students were at different ages when they shifted their identity and engaged differently in the leadership evident of a next stage. Duration in a stage varies and one might be in stage 3 for a long time based on the context of leadership. The KEY shift in college seems to be from Stage 3 (leader identified) when one thinks "leaders do leadership" and even if one is a member of a group, one looks to the leader for direction and responsibility for the groups' outcomes. Stage 4 (leadership differentiated) is a shift of consciousness to the *interdependence* of people in groups and if one is in a positional leader role there is a commitment to engage in that in a way to develop others, engages participation, and shares responsibility; if one is a member there is an awareness of influence and the responsibility of every member to engage in leadership together. Commitment to the group as an organization emerges in stage 4. The move to stage 5 is an awareness of bigger purpose, passion and sustainability. Stage 6 is a keen personal awareness and internal congruence applied to different contexts; it was signaled in the study with few participants fully in that stage.

Transitions: Each stage ends with a transition; in this transition the old ways of thinking or being shift and new ways emerge. Transitions are usually times of reflection and decision to take some new action. They make meaning out of any dissonance that existed in that stage and form a bridge to the new ways of thinking. Transitions may occur if someone has been behaving at a higher stage and then identified that as a new way of thinking; or the person may start thinking a new way leading them into the transition to find new ways of behaving. Transitions (particularly stage 3 to stage 4) signal a shift in orders of consciousness (Kegan, 1994). The person becomes able to see self as object and recognize behaviors/ practices/ attitudes that no longer reflect their current way of thinking.

Phases: Stage 3 and 4 are comprised of two phases. These complex stages have an *emerging phase* that is a moving-into that stage and the trying on of new ways of relating, identifying new skills that are needed to handle that stage well, and getting comfortable. This phase is like trying on a new self. The *immersion phase* is a practice phase of becoming more skillful and informed, working better with others in the context of that way of thinking. This phase is fully into the stage.

Select Developmental Components: Adults shift in role over time in this model. In the early stages they affirm and sponsor. They then become models and the more active engagement of mentors. During college they continue as models, and mentors, but also become meaning makers and evolve into friends. *Family* play a key role in this process. *Older peers* (near peers) become role models in stage 2, this expands to peer sponsors in stage 3, and modeling and mentoring in stage 3 and 4. *Same age peers* are friends in stage 2 and 3; in stage 3 they are also teammates, group members or followers. In the interdependence of stage 4, 5, and 6, they become collaborators, team members, and peer meaning makers.

Self in relation to others: Students move from being **dependent** on others (primarily adults: Stages 1 and 2) to engaging in leadership situations with peers. Some do that in a dependent way (as a member of the group looking to the leader for guidance/ direction) or **independent** (as the leader giving direction to others). Stage 4,5, and 6 are all reflective of **interdependence** and the awareness of the connections among people.

Select observations: (These are a few of the many observations from the data; they only illustrate the findings):

- Learning the language of leadership in stage 3 facilitates movement to the transition to stage 4.
- Sports teams that emphasize cheering on teammates and contributing to a teams success through individual effort (e.g. swimming, track) model cultures where group support is important.
- Group projects in classes contribute to trust when successful and build resentment of others when not designed to be successful.
- Co-president or co-chair roles teach good collaboration skills
- Students of color successful in this PWI often had been apprenticed to adults or older peers as a leadership pathway.

Advice for Leadership Educators (only a few suggestions)

- Encourage students to stay with at least one key group to practice leadership in an ongoing context (go deep).
- Reward and support any student who makes group contributions; help them see that is doing leadership.
- Teach and design good group process experiences; make it intentional (e.g. expectation setting, process skills).
- Prepare older students to be mentors and peer meaning makers; and to accept their peer model and peer sponsor roles.
- Promote subject/object shift (Kegan, 1994); ask indicator questions like "what did you used to think leadership was?" and "what do you think it is now"
- Encourage shifts in consciousness-- "Plus one" behaviors to new attitudes and attitudes to new behaviors
- Promote personal reflection; build meaning making conversations; ask "what have you learned about leadership from this experience?"
- Develop stage appropriate skills to build capacity so students can progress through stages (e.g. learning to delegate in stage 3 may be a precursor to building trust which is essential in stage four).
- Promote strategies to link a group to other groups; form coalitions; work with networks for change (teaches systems perspectives)
- Anticipate transitions (i.e., seniors graduating) and help them move into generativity and into ways they will connect with new organizations in their new roles after college.

Select References

- Kegan, R. (1994). *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Komives, S. R., Lucas, N., & McMahon, T. R. (1998). *Exploring leadership: For college students who want to make a difference*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass
- Komives, S. R., Casper, J. O., Longerbeam, S., Mainella, F. C., & Osteen, L. (2004) Leadership identity development. *Concepts & Connections*, 12 (3), 1, 3-6.