

# A Leadership Identity Development Model: Applications from a Grounded Theory

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*This article describes a stage-based model of leadership identity development (LID) that resulted from a grounded theory study on developing a leadership identity (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005). The LID model expands on the leadership identity stages, integrates the categories of the grounded theory into the LID model, and develops how the categories of the theory change across stages of the model. The model has implications for working with individuals as they develop their leadership identity and for facilitating groups as they develop empowering environments for shared leadership. Connections to related scholarship and stage-based implications for practice are explored.*

The extant literature on student development theory (e.g., Baxter-Magolda, 1998; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; King & Kitchener, 1994; Perry, 1981) and post-industrial leadership theory (e.g., Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Greenleaf, 1977; HERI, 1996; Rost, 1993; Terry, 1993) is significant. However, until recently, there was no research on the process of student leadership development that integrated these student development and leadership development perspectives. The leadership identity development (LID) theory (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005) and this LID model address the

research gap on student leadership development. This article expands on the earlier LID theory by building a LID model.

## Student Development Theory

To better understand student leadership development, an intersection of student development and relational leadership, it is instructive to review both student development and relational leadership literature. Student development is an enhancement of identity towards complexity, integration, and change (McEwen, 2003a). Identity is defined as the sense of a continuous self (Erikson, 1968). The study of social identities (e.g., race, sexual orientation, gender, class) and the interactions among identities (Jones & McEwen, 2000; McEwen, 2003b; Weber, 2001) are well established in the literature. Identity may also be applied to the process of leadership and how one comes to adopt a leadership identity, which is informed by two key families of developmental theory: psychosocial and cognitive.

Chickering's psychosocial theory (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) positions the vectors of "moving through autonomy toward interdependence" and "developing mature interpersonal relationships" before the vector of "establishing identity". Chickering underscores

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the importance of relationships as foundational to establishing a personal identity. The final vectors, “developing purpose” and “developing integrity” attest to the importance of developing commitments in a pluralistic world, the context in which leadership is practiced (Chickering & Reisser).

Cognitive development theory focuses on the thought processes involved in identity development. Students able to be reflective in their thinking have a stronger sense that knowledge is constructed in social contexts. They understand that it is their responsibility to make sense of the world (King & Kitchener, 1994). Students who take responsibility for constructing their reality in the world have achieved self-authorship (Baxter-Magolda, 1998; Kegan, 1994). Self-authorship is characterized by realizing one’s autonomy and recognizing one’s interdependence with others (Kegan). Both psychosocial and cognitive developmental stages have elements that are congruent with the developmental processes necessary to establish leadership identity.

### Relational Leadership

Post-industrial approaches to leadership in today’s networked world depend on trusting relationships among people working together toward shared goals (Allen & Cherrey, 2000; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Rost, 1993). The importance of relationships cannot be overstated. “Relationships are the connective tissue of the organization. . . . over time, these new relationships, built on trust and integrity, become the glue that holds us together” (Allen & Cherrey, p. 31). The reciprocal nature of these relationships provides a context for post-industrial scholarship in leadership which values collaboration (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; HERI, 1996), ethical practices and moral outcomes (Ciulla, 1998), credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 2003), and authenticity (Avolio &

Gardner, 2005; Terry, 1993). Komives et al. (1998) used the term “relational leadership” to describe this approach to leadership. They asserted “leadership is a relational process of people working together to accomplish change or to make a difference that will benefit the common good” (p. ix).

### Leadership Development Theory

In the last 20 years, college campuses have expanded the number and scope of curricular and co-curricular leadership programs (Howe & Freeman, 1997; Roberts, 1997; Schwartz, Axtman, & Freeman, 1998). Building on the work of the Interassociational Task Force on Leadership (Roberts & Ullom, 1989), the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS, 2003) offers a leadership standard that describes three approaches to leadership programs: leadership training, leadership education, and leadership development. Leadership development involves engaging with learning opportunities in one’s environment over time to build one’s capacity or efficacy to engage in leadership. This developmental approach entails moving from simple to more complex dimensions of growth.

Asserting that leadership can be learned and taught, Brungardt (1996) reviewed the literature on leadership development. He observed that most of the research was categorized in two primary groups: “leadership development theory and learning leadership theory” (p. 84). Leadership development theory explored how leadership develops “throughout the span of a lifetime” (p. 91). This research clusters into four categories: “early childhood and adolescent development, the role of formal education, adult and on-the-job experiences, and specialized leadership education” (p. 84). These categories affirmed the role of parents, teachers, work supervisors and meaningful tasks in helping people learn

leadership. The research on leadership education extends beyond that of experience to examine the role of specialized leadership education interventions. Courses, seminars, retreats, workshops, and other educational interventions demonstrate that leadership can be learned and taught, although the impact of these leadership education programs was often not assessed (Brungardt; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhart, 1999). Both life span development and leadership education need to be linked to help leadership educators understand educational interventions that make a difference across the life span of leadership development. The LID research links development with the process of leadership to assist educators in their facilitation of student leadership development (Komives et al., 2005).

## THE GROUNDED THEORY STUDY

The LID grounded theory study (Komives et al., 2005) is the foundation upon which the LID model is built. The purpose of the grounded theory study of LID was to understand the processes a person experiences in creating a leadership identity (Komives et al., 2005). Grounded theory methodology was chosen because the researchers wanted to situate LID in the students' experiences (Creswell, 1998). Thirteen diverse students at a large mid-Atlantic university were identified through an expert nomination process as exhibiting relational leadership (Komives et al., 1998). Students selected for the study worked inclusively with others, were conscious of group process, empowered themselves and others to heightened involvement, committed to ethical processes, and were able to work toward common purposes, that is, they engaged in relational leadership (Komives et al., 1998). Intensity sampling, a type of purposeful sampling, was used to identify

those who evidenced the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2002). The participants included eight White students, three African American students, one Asian American student, and one African student who immigrated as a child. Five were women, eight were men and most students were fourth- or fifth-year seniors. Students participated in three interviews with one of the members of a five-person research team. Credibility and trustworthiness of the study were ensured through methods such as member checking and peer debriefing (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin) and constant comparative analysis (Merriam & Associates, 2002), student data were organized into one central category and five influencing categories.

## Grounded Theory Findings

The grounded theory study resulted in the identification of a developmental process of how students situate themselves in the construct of leadership over time (Komives et al., 2005). The central category of the Developing a Leadership Identity theory was leadership identity. The six stages in the central category are presented in the LID Model (see Figure 1). The five categories that influenced the development of a leadership identity were: broadening view of leadership, developing self, group influences, developmental influences, and the changing view of self with others. Students' broadening view of leadership changed from perceiving leadership as the external other, as positional, and then as non-positional, as well as a process. Developing self included deepening self-awareness, building self-confidence, establishing interpersonal efficacy, applying new skills, and expanding motivations. Group influences included engaging in groups, learning from membership continuity, and changing perceptions of groups. The developmental influences that

FIGURE 1. Leadership Identity Development Model

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

figure continues

facilitated the development of a leadership identity included adult influences, peer influences, meaningful involvement, and reflective learning. Developing self and group influences interact to influence the category of a changing view of self with others. This category contained properties of being dependent, independent or dependent, and interdependent with others. Students' movement through the stages was informed by their experiences in each of the categories. For a pictorial depiction of the grounded theory see Komives et al. (2005).

### LEADERSHIP IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL

The LID model represents an application of the grounded theory of LID (Komives et al, 2005). This article integrates the categories of the grounded theory into building a LID

model and tentatively applies the grounded theory to illustrate and further develop how the categories of the theory change across stages of the model. In addition, it expands upon the implications for practice of the LID theory and the LID model.

### Structure of the LID Model

The LID model is stage-based and entails students progressing through one stage before beginning the next (see Figure 1). Researchers have long recognized that the term "stages" is more complex than a linear representation might imply. Stages are linear, but they are also cyclical. Even as development through the stages occurs, development proceeds in a circular manner. A helix model of development allows for stages to be repeatedly experienced, and each return is experienced with a deeper and more complex understanding and per-

FIGURE 1. *continued*

The KEY	4 Leadership Differentiated			5 Generativity		6 Integration/Synthesis
	Emerging	Immersion	Transition		Transition	
<i>Transition</i>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shifting order of consciousness</li> <li>• Take on more complex leadership challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joining with others in shared tasks/goals from positional or non positional group roles</li> <li>• Need to learn group skills</li> <li>• <i>New belief that leadership can come from anywhere in the group (non positional)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks to facilitate a good group process whether in positional or non positional leader role</li> <li>• Commitment to community of the group</li> <li>• <i>Awareness that leadership is a group process</i></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active commitment to a personal passion</li> <li>• Accepting responsibility for the development of others</li> <li>• Promotes team learning</li> <li>• Responsible for sustaining organizations</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued self development and life long learning</li> <li>• Striving for congruence and internal confidence</li> </ul>
"Holding a position does not mean I am a leader"	"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"	"Leadership is happening everywhere; leadership is a process; we are doing leadership together; we are all responsible"	"Who's coming after me?"	"I am responsible as a member of my communities to facilitate the development of others as leaders and enrich the life of our groups"	"I need to be true to myself in all situations and open to grow"	"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"> <li>• Recognition that I cannot do it all myself</li> <li>• Learn to value the importance/talent of others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn to trust and value others &amp; their involvement</li> <li>• Openness other perspectives</li> <li>• Develop comfort leading as an active member</li> <li>• Let go control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learns about personal influence</li> <li>• Effective in both positional and non positional roles</li> <li>• Practices being engaged member</li> <li>• Values servant leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on passion, vision, &amp; commitments</li> <li>• Want to serve society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsor and develop others</li> <li>• Transforming leadership</li> <li>• Concern for leadership pipeline</li> <li>• Concerned with sustainability of ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Openness to ideas</li> <li>• Learning from others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sees leadership as a life long developmental process</li> <li>• Want to leave things better</li> <li>• Am trustworthy and value that I have credibility</li> <li>• Recognition of role modeling to others</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaningfully Engage With Others</li> <li>• Look to group resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeing the collective whole; the big picture</li> <li>• Learn group and team skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value teams</li> <li>• Value connectedness to others</li> <li>• Learns how system works</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value process</li> <li>• Seek fit with org vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustaining the organization</li> <li>• Ensuring continuity in areas of passion/ focus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipating transition to new roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sees organizational complexity across contexts</li> <li>• Can imagine how to engage with different organizations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Older peers as sponsors &amp; mentors</li> <li>• Adults as mentors &amp; meaning makers</li> <li>• Learning about leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicing leadership in ongoing peer relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responds to meaning makers (student affairs staff, key faculty, same age peer mentors)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begins coaching others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responds to meaning makers (student affairs staff, same age peer mentors)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared learning</li> <li>• Reflection/retreat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re cycle when context changes or is uncertain (contextual uncertainty)</li> <li>• Enables continual recycling through leadership stages</li> </ul>
Interdependent						

forming of the stage (Perry, 1981). Development is not only cyclical, but also complex. The achievement of each stage is influenced by a myriad of contextual factors in the environment and by each individual's variation in readiness (King, 1994).

*Transitions.* Each stage ended with a transition that signaled the beginning of the next stage. The transition marked a shift in thinking, a gradual process of letting go of old ways of thinking about leadership to trying new ways. Transitions marked a more reflective than active period. Students signaled the readiness to shift toward the next stage, without yet having complete access to the thoughts or behaviors of the next stage. Environmental factors, such as strong group membership, learning about leadership, and the presence of mentors, were important influences in facilitating movement through

transition to adoption of the new stage.

*Phases.* Stages three (leader identified) and four (leadership differentiated) had a high level of complexity, and researchers identified two phases of movement in each stage. The emerging phase encompassed an experimental adoption of the new ways of being and thinking. In this phase, the student was "trying on" the new way of being, often tentatively. The immersion phase signaled greater ease in the stage, a time to practice the new stage, and a more complete adoption of the new way of exercising leadership, including the use of new skills.

## INTEGRATING CATEGORIES INTO THE LID MODEL

The grounded theory presented six stages of the central category of leadership identity and discussed each stage's connection to the other

five categories (Komives et al., 2005). The LID model expands upon the categories, integrates these categories into each stage to more fully illustrate the stages, and offers concrete suggestions about how to apply the grounded theory in practice.

### Stage One: Awareness

Stage one, awareness, involved a beginning recognition that leadership was happening “out there somewhere.” As children, students became aware of national and historic figures who were leaders. Leaders were also authority figures in their lives such as their school principals or mothers. Some students were not very aware of leaders or leadership at all. Donald said, “I mean, maybe [I was aware] a little bit but . . . it didn’t really connect, I guess.”

*Developmental Influences.* Adults were integral in making these students feel special, sponsoring them into interesting challenges and opportunities and serving as role models. Even as children, they were confident working with adults. The family, particularly parents, was important in this awareness stage and played a critical role in teaching norms, building confidence, and serving as a building block of support. Key experiences with adults modeled involvement and leadership.

*Developing Self Interacting With Group Influences.* Students’ sense of self was forming and they were flattered and affirmed when a teacher or other adult singled them out for recognition. They had little sense of self or personal identity. They were largely uninvolved beyond school.

*Changing View of Self With Others and Broadening Views of Leadership.* Students’ view of themselves in relation to others was dependent, particularly on the adults in their lives such as parents, teachers, or elders in religious institutions. Their view of leadership

was as an external other, and they said, “Other people are leaders,” and “I am not a leader.”

*Transition.* The transition from stage one usually began with recognition by an adult of the student’s leadership potential. Corey reflected, “My mother used to say all the time ‘you’re going to make a difference one day.’” The recognition of their potential encouraged the students to think more about what leadership was and to recognize the leaders around them.

### Stage Two: Exploration/Engagement

In stage two, students began to experience themselves interacting with peers by seeking opportunities to explore their numerous interests. They sought new friendships in group settings such as scouts, choir, sports, band, dance lessons, and religious youth groups.

*Developmental Influences.* Adults continued in a key role and taught important life lessons. Adults set high expectations and held them to high standards. Adults played a key role as affirmers and sponsors in this stage. They encouraged the student to get involved and consider taking on more responsibility such as leadership roles. Christine was inspired by an adult who told her: “You, personally, are very important to the group, and without you it wouldn’t be the same group.” Older peers also became models in this stage. Ray described the importance of peer role models:

I started to get involved in student government . . . looking up to people in the seventh grade that were . . . actually president of the middle school and things like that. . . . I really looked up to them a lot. . . . I remember thinking that they had everything together and knew what was going on.

*Developing Self Interacting With Group Influences.* Through these involvements



students were developing skills, building a realistic self-concept, and building self-confidence. They were particularly focused on interpersonal peer relationships. They recognized that this development happened in groups. A number of these groups had infrastructures that gave participants responsibilities and some participants became interested in those positions.

*Changing View of Self With Others and Broadening Views of Leadership.* Students continued to view themselves as largely dependent on others, particularly adults. Their view of leadership was of an external other that now included adults they knew like their teacher, scout leader, or choir director. Older peers now began to be viewed as leaders as well.

*Transition.* In the transition, students began to recognize that they had leadership potential, and this recognition was often reinforced by admired elders, older peers, and role models. They were often given special attention or responsibilities by adults or older peers in recognition of this potential. Corey remembered,

When I received the Martin Luther King Humanitarian Award [in junior high school], I was like I guess I'm doing something good, so it reinforced the whole thing about possibly being a good leader. I didn't necessarily identify myself as a good leader at the time. I was very humble about that.

Attributions of them as leaders, meaning others labeling them as leaders, made all the difference, and as Ed said, "I feel more authorized to go ahead." Ultimately, the shift in their consciousness was motivated by a desire to make a difference and to do something meaningful. They wanted to try on new roles, take on increasing responsibility, and identify needed leadership skills.

### Stage Three: Leader Identified

Students in this stage believed that leadership was a position, and therefore, the person in that position was the leader. If one was not the positional leader, then one was a follower or group member and looked to the leader for direction. They believed the responsibility of the leader was to get the job done. All participants held these leader-centric views while in high school and entered college in stage three.

The complexity and duration of this stage signaled two distinct phases: emerging and immersion. In the emerging phase, students identified new skills and ways of relating as they moved into the stage. Students looked to older peers or more experienced group members as models for how to get things done. Jimmy noted, "I always had someone older than me that I would look at. I don't know if it was because of the age, or just the experience, or what it was." As students became more comfortable and confident in stage three, they entered the immersion phase where they moved in and out of member and leader roles in different organizations. They "tried on" different leadership styles in this phase; they explored more effective ways to involve members, delegate tasks, and accomplish goals while concurrently believing they were responsible for the outcome. Ed reflected that, "Just being exposed to so many different ways of leading or different leaders and that there are just different ways of thinking about what leadership really is made me think of how I would fit in with it."

*Developmental Influences.* The role of adults serving as mentors, guides, and coaches was an essential part of this stage. Becky described a bad situation during which, "My mentors for [a project] didn't motivate us and didn't support us and bashed us down instead of empowering us" and the entire group fell

apart and quit. Conversely, supportive mentors helped them in high-risk situations. Older peers were increasingly important in this stage and became role models. Becky described a club president she admired:

He listens first of all, he's a great listener, which is so hard to come by. He listens to every word you have to say and he may hate what you're saying, but he will absolutely listen to it. . . . makes me feel I can do it.

Similarly, Ed describes his admiration of his orientation assistant who got him involved at the beginning of his first year: "This is what I'd like to be like . . . if there was something she wanted to do, she just kind of went and did it. And so I wanted to be like that, I wanted to take on those characteristics." Those following primarily a dependent path as followers began to see the value of being a good group member. They looked to the leader as a model and for group direction and held leaders responsible for group outcomes.

Relating to diverse peers was essential to interpersonal skill development in this stage. Becky described:

I was always working with the same kind of people with all the exact same perspective on everything [in high school]. But coming here and working with different people has really given me a different perspective of what people that are different than myself can bring into a group.

Learning to relate in diverse groups was an experience White students in particular felt they needed. Jimmy observed, "I had to learn in my talking about different races or cultures. . . . first it was very difficult for me to be comfortable in a group setting like that."

*Developing Self Interacting With Group Influences.* Participants recognized their responsibility in groups and became aware of

their leadership potential. They viewed groups as hierarchical organizations and were cognizant of roles, structures, and processes to accomplish group goals. They eventually narrowed the number of group involvements to those that had meaning for them. For several students, one group became their core group. The continuity of membership in their group provided on-going relationships to engage in conflict resolution, plan and accomplish goals, and practice new skills. Jayme described the African immigrant community: "I think it keeps you grounded if you always remember to be involved in your own community."

*Changing View of Self With Others and Broadening Views of Leadership.* Participants' views of themselves in relation to others led them to experience leadership in one of two pathways: They felt independent when they held leadership positions (self as leader) and felt dependent when in follower roles (self as member). They could and did engage in both pathways, but saw their relationships differently in each. All students believed in leader-centric, positional, and often hierarchical views of leadership in this stage. Regardless of whether students followed an independent or dependent path, they solidified their beliefs that leaders do leadership and it was the members' job to follow the leader. Describing how she alone put out her high school yearbook, Becky recalled,

I think that in high school I became more of the manager type, [the] "get-jobs-done-person" through yearbook. Those who believe that the theory of leadership . . . is empowering, relational and all that . . . there was *none* of that in me being the yearbook editor!

Their identity was to acknowledge either that, "I am *the* leader," that is the person in the positional role or "I am not *the* leader, I am



just a follower,” a person in a member role. Leadership identity in this stage was largely defined by the context of one’s role in a designated group.

*The Key Transition.* Events occurred during stage three immersion that sparked a shift in the students’ consciousness, or the way they thought about themselves in relation to others. This shift changed their view of leadership. As students spent time in stage three, they began to take on more complex leadership challenges that promoted the recognition that they could not do everything themselves and that the talents and skills of group members were vital for organizational success. Angela stated,

I realized that high school is way too big for you just to depend on yourself, you have to work with others, and share a dependency with others. Not only for yourself, but for things to get accomplished . . . that was the first time I probably looked and had to ask other people for help.

These realizations formed the basis of this key transition in the LID model. This transition was also signaled by some who preferred shared leadership roles such as co-chair, co-captain, or co-presidency roles. They described how those shared positional roles helped them learn to collaborate with a partner. Older peers played an increasingly important role now as sponsors and peer mentors in this transition.

Reflective learning was critical. Some learned the language of leadership through workshops or classes that enlightened the examination of their approaches to leadership. Ed was an example of someone who had been behaving at the next stage and the language he gained from leadership coursework facilitated his shift once he was able to label his beliefs and practices. Conversely, others like Angela started thinking in new ways, which

led them to consciously practice new behaviors. Regardless of how it happened, as students transitioned from stage three to stage four, they left behind beliefs that “only leaders do leadership” and embraced a new consciousness that people in groups work interdependently in the process of leadership.

### Stage Four: Leadership Differentiated

In stage four, participants differentiated their view of leadership and saw it as what an individual did as a positional leader, but also saw leadership being exhibited by non-positional group members. Leadership also began to be thought of as a process as evidenced by Ed’s comment that “the process of leadership is much more important than the outcome.” If they were in a positional role they sought to engage in shared, participative leadership; they saw their role as a facilitator and community builder within the group. Co-captain of a sports team, Marie told us, “I see myself more in the light of a team player than I do as in like the leader of a team, but maybe that’s how through being a strong team player, I do my leadership.” As a group member they knew they could be what several described as “a leader without a title.”

In the emerging phase of this stage, participants recognized that leadership came from anywhere in the group. If they were in a membership role in the group they felt a new sense of empowerment. Christine said, “I think I’m just realizing that it’s less important whether everyone knows whether you are the position or whatever . . . I can make change without having a name tag.” In this emerging phase they struggled to define what leadership now meant. Some found it hard to label this leadership. Becky said,

I kind of just consider myself as a person that goes up there and talks and takes initiative, and then I can really work with

people together to do something, not that I'm leading them, but I'm working with them.

In the immersion phase, they gained confidence in working toward building the feeling of community in the group. In this phase they shifted from trying to find community in a group to forming communities within groups. As they practiced in this stage they solidified their personal commitment to be an engaged and effective group member. Marie marveled at the effectiveness of a well functioning group:

I have a wonderful executive board to work with and I think that's the key. . . . I mean there's no way you could do it by yourself, and then the people they had were competent, responsible, like everything you could ever dream, if you asked for something, and it got done. You didn't have to check up on it. It just got done.

*Developmental Influences.* In this stage adults and older peers continued as mentors and became meaning makers as well. Students sought adults to process leadership experiences for deeper understanding and to learn how to respond more effectively next time. Ray commented on one advisor, "She has a close relationship with all the students. She understands where students are coming from when they voice their concerns." They also now turn increasingly to same-age peers for support, particularly linking with those who also possess a leadership identity. Sammy felt understood in an honor society of student leaders and described the process of "meeting all these other people that were wonderful."

*Developing Self Interacting With Group Influences.* Participants were keenly aware of new personal awareness, particularly around the ability to work with diverse others. Ray commented, "I've just been really exposed to a broad range of viewpoints and that's kind

of helped me to mature and helped me to be a better person in interacting with people too." A commitment to this interdependence required new group skills. They needed to learn teamwork, develop trust, and develop the talent in individual members. Becky said, "I've gained trust in other people. . . . I just took a few years to figure that out." They learned to operate from personal influence. Joey learned how important it was to "network, network, network." They sought to create an environment that supported interdependence. The concept many students used for this interdependence was community. They viewed their groups as complex organizations and began to see that their organizations were part of a larger system. They sought to collaborate with other organizations and formed coalitions around shared goals.

*Changing View of Self With Others and Broadening Views of Leadership.* Stage four began students' awareness of the interdependence of people working together in a group. This interdependence transcended the remaining stages of the LID model. This stage started the recognition that one could be a leader regardless of one's role in the group. Leadership identity began to be internalized. They did not have to be *the* leader to acknowledge that "I am *a* leader" as a stable characteristic of self.

*Transition.* The transition out of stage four began with a growing awareness that they had a passion or were making a commitment to some transcendent goals and purposes. They wanted to contribute their time and energy to serve larger purposes. They sought congruence among individual and organizational values. They were concerned about continuity in their core organizations. They began to question "who is coming after me?" and began to develop and coach younger peers in the leadership development process.

### Stage Five: Generativity

In stage five, students showed an ability to look beyond themselves and express a passion for their commitments and care for the welfare of others (Erickson, 1968). The choices they made based on their interests in stage three now became commitments to more transcendent purposes. Ed observed, "I have a passion for peace and justice or a sensitivity to what is going on. . . . that's where I see my leadership going in some type of service in that respect." Their personal philosophies of leadership took shape; Marie echoed what many felt when she said that she now saw, "any kind of leadership that I've had as an act of service . . . the true motivation is 'how can I serve the group? How can I serve others?'"

Further, they were concerned for the sustainability of their groups. They were particularly interested in teaching and developing younger peers who needed their support, affirmation, and mentoring to develop their leadership capacity. Jimmy described his excitement with his fraternity role as an "opportunity to . . . develop these students in this organization, in this brotherhood, [it] really appealed to me." They were ready to accept that role as a model and mentor for others. Corey said, "Well, I did this for them which means I did my job, because someone else did it for me."

*Developmental Influences.* Advisors and other adults were sought in a meaning maker role. There was a new openness to feedback from these adults and serious reflection on how they might incorporate that feedback to be more effective. Reflection with peers was also central. After receiving a long email from a fellow fraternity president from another campus, Jimmy had reflected on many topics so "I had to sit down at the computer until about five o'clock [in the morning] typing away like, an analysis of my life, like 'who am

I, where am I now, you know where am I going?'"

*Developing Self Interacting With Group Influences.* Participants could now identify beliefs and values embedded in their actions that led to an articulation of their passion for causes, for change, and for long-term personal goals. They also acknowledged that they had become the elders in some of their groups and had a responsibility to develop others. Joey said, "I realize that I was in their position at one point, you know and I kind of learned from that. But I'm in a different role than I was. I kind of see the growth in myself." This required new skills of teaching, coaching, and counseling others. Becky valued these skills, "[You] not only act it out yourself, but kind of help others act to do it, and teach it, and to help others learn."

*Changing View of Self With Others and Broadening Views of Leadership.* This stage deepened students' commitment to the interdependence of people working together. In addition to knowing that all people can do leadership in a group, their view of leadership was that it is a process and a responsibility of group members to the group.

*Transition.* Participants' role as mentors and sponsors of others led them to the transition of internalizing their own personal leadership identity. Many of these students described this transition in the leaving-college process. They knew they were moving on and were reflective about what aspects of their own development were essential and were portable wherever they would go. They identified being open to new ideas and valued learning from others. They particularly reflected on the role of personal values and the importance of personal integrity. James accentuated the importance of values-based leadership with this analogy:

If leadership were a car, what would

ethical behavior and integrity be in that car? One, it would be the steering wheel . . . and it would be the oil, because everything you do that makes a car run. . . needs to be done with the sense of purpose but an ethical purpose.

This transition was a reflective time. Meaning makers, often student affairs educators, helped them identify these foundational beliefs, synthesize their leadership philosophy, and anticipate transitions.

### Stage Six: Integration/Synthesis

Those students in stage six had integrated their view of themselves as effective in working with others and had confidence they could do that in almost any context. They did not need to hold positional leader roles to know they were engaging in leadership. If they said, "I am a leader," they meant they could work from anywhere in the organization to accomplish its purposes. They recognized they would always have a great deal to learn from others and were open to the continual process of self-development. As they encountered new contexts, they assessed these situations to find their fit and their role in the new group. Marie described this as "a recycling." They identified this stage as a commitment to life-long development and were committed to the congruence of their beliefs with their actions. It was important to them to be trustworthy and to have credibility with others in a group context. Ed described this as a "mutually beneficial way of being."

*Developmental Influences.* Participants saw the value in processing experiences with someone (whether an adult or peer) with a focus on values that were embedded in their actions. In new contexts, they sought out environments and new peers who were congruent with their values. Those who had transitioned to new contexts knew they had to be involved in something to contribute to

those new communities or they would not be happy with themselves.

*Developing Self Interacting With Group Influences.* Jayme's observation that, "I can't run out and care about everyone else, and not care about who I am. Because in some fashion or form, I won't connect with the other people I'm helping," signaled the commitment to ongoing self-development. They saw the complexity of organizations across different contexts and knew they would need to assess those contexts to determine how they could be most helpful. Becky said she now asks, "What is the vision and what is the mission of this organization?"

*Changing View of Self With Others and Broadening Views of Leadership.* In addition to the interdependence of self with others in a group, they now saw the interdependence of groups in a system. Their personal confidence with people and diverse contexts led them to an identity as a leader. They knew they could work effectively with others in group settings toward shared objectives.

## DISCUSSION

Students held hierarchical views of leadership when they came to college. The students' philosophy of leadership entering college appeared to be more consistent with such traditional leadership approaches as trait, behavioral, and situational theories where "leadership" and "leader" are interchangeable concepts. As they began to view themselves as interdependent with others, they shifted their view of leadership to something many in a group do and as a process among people, which is more consistent with the post-industrial view of leadership (Rost, 1993).

In their conceptual model, Komives et al. (1998) asserted that relational leadership comprised five key elements: purposeful,

process-oriented, inclusive, empowering, and ethical. Data from this study supported the value of those five elements and demonstrated how they connect in a developmental theory (Komives et al., 2005). The LID model illustrates that these relational leadership model elements particularly fit the final three stages of LID wherein the view of self in relation to others is interdependent.

The LID model's developmental influences were critical to changing consciousness about self and others and moving into more complex identity stages. Modeling from peers and adults was particularly important. Sims and Manz (1982) examined how modeling principles implicit in social learning theory have been used in conjunction with deliberate interventions to change leader behavior. Sims and Manz place value on modeling in organizations to help an individual (a) establish new behaviors, (b) change the frequency (increasing or decreasing) of existing behaviors, and (c) provide behavioral cues about what behaviors are appropriate in a given context or culture. To negotiate the crucial transition from leader identified to leadership differentiated, students need the right combination of challenge and support (Sanford & Adelson, 1962). As they emerged into the next stage they experienced a mentor or mentors, particularly true for the students of color in this study. The importance of this level of support for minority students in a predominantly White environment has been identified by other researchers (Allen, 1992; Guiffrida, 2003). For all students, the existence of close adult relationships facilitated their development.

Experience with people different from themselves was a crucial pathway to the interdependent stages of leadership identity. Understanding difference enhanced participants' self-efficacy to work with diverse

people and diverse ideas toward group goals. This experience could either be as a member of a minority group or through a significant relationship with another who was part of a minority group (e.g., as a caretaker of a person with a disability or through a partnership with a person of another race). Students shared numerous experiences of what they learned through their "constructive engagement with otherness" (Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Parks, 1997, p. 54).

The transition process was critical to movement through the leadership development stages. The interview process revealed how the students' views of leadership in transition evolved from subject to object (Kegan, 1994). Reflection on one's stage occurs from the subjective when one is in the stage and from the objective when one has surpassed the stage. For example, in transition, students were able to describe themselves in earlier stages remarkably well as objects. Kegan asserted that differentiation happens first, followed by integration, as students first make into object what they are not. The process of moving from subject to object occurs in the transition out of one stage and into the emerging phase of the next. The time of transition could be a time of negativity as students seek to reject or find dissonance with their old selves. It is during differentiation that students are most at risk for retreat or escape (Perry, 1981). Finally, when the self is secure again, integration is achieved, and it is represented by immersion in a stage. Students could then revisit the tasks of an earlier stage and understand the stage from a higher level of complexity.

LID stage three, leader identified, corresponded with Kegan's (1994) third order of consciousness, which he termed "socialized." LID stage four, leadership differentiated, corresponded with Kegan's fourth order of



consciousness, “self-authoring.” The key shift in both models was the transition from the third to the fourth stage that involved a shift to recognizing one’s interdependence with others. Aspects of the environment such as the mentoring role of adults and learning the language of leadership were critical to this transition. This shift to the LID fourth stage (or the Kegan fourth order) appeared also to correspond with Chickering’s (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) vectors of “developing mature interpersonal relationships” and “establishing identity”. Velsor and Drath (2004) describe these Kegan (1994) orientations as self-reading, self-authoring, and self-revising.

Developing a leadership identity was also informed by social learning theory. Bandura (1997) presented four sources of influence that promote the development of efficacy:

enactive mastery experiences that serve as indicators of capability; vicarious experiences that alter efficacy beliefs through transmission of competencies and comparison with the attainment of others; verbal persuasion and allied types of social influences that one possesses certain capabilities; and physiological and affective states from which people partly judge their capableness, strength, and vulnerability to dysfunction. (p. 79)

Efficacy for leadership was a central cognitive variable and contributed to self-confidence (McCormick, 2001) that in turn related to the development of identity. Leadership identity developed across the central category through reflecting on meaningful experiences, modeling others, being encouraged by others, and successfully handling emotional cues. Bandura asserted that experiences are the “most influential source of efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster what it takes to succeed” (p. 80). Each stage of developing

leadership identity was reflective of social learning theory.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The LID Model has implications for developing the leadership capacity and identity of individual students and for developing the capacity of groups to be supportive environments for shared, relational leadership. Leadership educators need to concurrently work with individuals to facilitate movement across the LID stages and design appropriate learning experiences for groups, which may have stage-based needs. Day (2001) suggested that, “Leadership development can be thought of as an *integration* strategy by helping people understand how to relate to others, coordinate their efforts, build commitments, and develop extended social networks by applying self-understanding to social and organizational imperatives” (p. 586). Educators cannot make people change, but can create environmental conditions that facilitate learning and support students and their groups as they struggle with that learning (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999).

### Recommendations for Practice

The focus of this research was on how an individual develops a leadership identity. Identity development is connected to the changing nature of relationships with others. Day (2001) asserts that “the primary emphasis in leadership development is on building and using interpersonal competence” (p. 585). Developmental interventions targeted at expanding identity development are indicated in the LID model and support much of the current educational and developmental strategies used on college campuses (Baxter Magolda, 1998, 1999; King & Kitchener, 1994). Expanding self-awareness at each stage is critical. Connecting self-awareness with



intentional strategies to build self-efficacy for leadership is a central aspect of developing a confident leadership identity. Unfortunately, “leadership training designers have not yet focused on the leadership self-efficacy construct” (McCormick, 2001, p. 31). The following recommendations apply across the LID model and may help students build self-awareness and self-efficacy.

*Assessment.* As an indicator of student views and connections to the stages in the model, educators might ask: “What did you used to think leadership was and what do you think it is now?” This question may signal Kegan’s (1994) subject-object shift and be an indicator of their state of consciousness about themselves with others and their view of leadership.

*Advisors and Mentors.* Students need advisors and mentors to provide a safe place for them to reflect and make meaning of their experiences as they make this significant journey. These “threshold people” (Daloz et al., 1997) are critical to the affirmation and support needed to develop self-confidence and shape a leadership identity and are critical in the Kegan (1994) model of the subject-object shift. Caring adults in the form of advisors, student affairs educators, faculty, administrators, and community members help students process past experiences and predict or plan for future actions. The ability to engage with an adult who offers a combination of challenge and support (Sanford & Adelson, 1962) and who models more complex ways of thinking about leadership facilitates shifts in students’ order of consciousness. Similarly, peers are essential to student LID. The lesson is to prepare older students to be mentors and peer meaning makers. One suggestion is to find ways to encourage them to accept their peer model and sponsor roles in all the contexts in which they operate and challenge students to realize their own power and

influence and use it responsibly.

*Role of the Group.* The leadership identity theory and LID model also provide support for the developmental environment of the group or organization and for expanding the group’s capacity to engage in leadership. Encouraging groups to use leadership-differentiated perspectives will likely provide an environment that facilitates students in stage three (i.e., leader identified) to adopt more interdependent perspectives. It may be useful to talk with students about setting expectations and group norms for constructive interaction. The social change model of leadership (HERI, 1996) provides the following recommendations: (a) teach students how group roles can contribute to task completion and relationship building; (b) provide them resources on how to deal with non-functional group members; (c) help students develop their own systems of accountability and indicators of success; and (d) model processes of collaboration, controversy with civility, and establishing shared vision.

The LID model may prove useful in explaining why some individuals are frustrated in particular group experiences. For example, it may be that individuals in stage four, leadership differentiated, who find themselves in a stage three, leader identified, organization with a positional leader who is clearly in charge and directive, could feel constrained and may even feel a power struggle with the positional leader. Conversely, a person identifying in stage three who is a member of a stage four organization might wonder why the leader never seems to make any decisions since the leader often seeks consensus from the group for decisions. This leader could seem weak and indecisive to a person expecting a stage three leader-centric approach. What follows are further recommendations that depend upon specific leadership stages in the LID model.

Some recommendations that are presented

within a stage below should actually be introduced in the previous stage to encourage the student toward that next stage. Introducing an essential concept or skill from the next stage should help students move into a transition of appreciating that attitude or experiencing that behavior. For example, team skills are essential to be effective in stage four, leadership differentiated, but may be introduced in stage three (leader identified immersion) to raise awareness of the importance of new ways of relating to others in groups. In addition, all stages benefit from processes that promote reflection and deepening self-awareness (Baxter-Magolda, 1998; King & Kitchener, 1994).

*Stage One: Awareness.* In this early awareness stage, adults can use more explicit language that includes concepts such as leaders or leadership. They can help motivate youth by talking about making a difference and accomplishing goals. Noting diverse leaders and leadership styles is essential. Adults, particularly family and teachers, need to help individual students identify areas of interest so they can transition into becoming involved in activities that use their skills, hold their interests, and help them to form new friendships. Adults can affirm and encourage youth to think about exploring diverse involvement opportunities.

*Stage Two: Exploration/Engagement.* Finding compatible groups in which the student can belong and make friends is key to this stage. Older peers can be helpful to get students involved in new activities. Adults need to begin affirming the specific things students do well so they can learn to label their skills and identify desirable behaviors, and identify areas for further growth and development. Building students' sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy to achieve goals is instrumental. Sponsoring a student into deeper involvement is affirming.

*Stage Three: Leader Identified.* In the emerging and immersion phases of stage three, it is important to connect older peer sponsors and mentors with entering students and to help students find organizations that fit their values and interests. Membership in groups provided tremendous learning experiences. Sammy observed: "Once I got involved, it was just a snowball effect after that." We recommend the design of group project experiences that intentionally teach effective group process such as expectation setting, shared responsibilities, and processing discussions and design leadership programs to teach stage based skills such as organizing productive group meetings, motivating members, delegating, and establishing group goals. It appears that some leadership skills sequence and provide the foundation for more complex applications of those skills. For example, learning to delegate in stage three may be a precursor to trusting others which is central to group work and the group community concept of stage four.

The key transition from stage three to four is facilitated by teaching the language of leadership, helping students learn the contributions others make to group process and to value diverse styles and ideas, and encouraging students to reflect on what they used to think leadership was (object) and what it is to them now (subject). Reflecting with students on their incongruities promotes the transition. For example, it may be useful to pay particular attention to students who use stage four language but may still act in stage three ways or those who clearly behave in the interdependent ways of stage four but are using stage three language. One possibility is to ask students to reflect on what they specifically admire about select adults and older peers. Student affairs professionals can offer support by providing an anchor for students on both sides of the bridge between the third and the fourth stages (Kegan, 1994).

*Stage Four: Leadership Differentiated.* In stage four, educators could teach stage-based skills such as teamwork, building group community, and handling group conflict. They can teach communication skills such as active listening and empathy, and identifying the commonality of purpose with other groups. Further, educators could develop projects and coalitions that involve different groups working together for common purposes and create structures with co-chair or co-presidency roles or leadership teams whereby students can learn true collaboration. One involvement that facilitated the development of a leadership-differentiated identity was through a lasting commitment to a core group or groups. Students who were committed to a group over time seemed more likely to gain relational skills such as dealing with conflict, handling transition issues, and sustaining organizations. There is an important caveat for students who may join groups as a way to fill their resumes. The evidence is clear that students who stayed with the same organization for more than a year and saw the group at its best and worst were quicker to value generativity and sustainability and to find commitment in continuity. Upper-division students who made significant contributions to groups expressed a strong desire for those groups to succeed beyond their graduation. Membership in a group through time, at a level of depth, was present in all cases as students committed to generativity. A path to encouraging this development is to create environmental conditions in which students will make lasting commitments to groups.

*Stage Five: Generativity.* Assisting students in finding and developing personal passions can facilitate their values clarification in stage five and lead to the commitment to lifelong internalization and synthesis of their leadership identity. In stage five, educators could: (a) teach students how to mentor younger

students or new members; (b) set up structures or processes that build mentoring into the norming processes of the group; (c) help students identify their personal passions and commitments; (d) have students examine the processes their groups use to sustain their goals; and (e) teach students to see the perspectives of the system or context their groups inhabit. We recommend encouraging students to work across groups on campus- or community-wide issues. Students who functioned well in coalitions were more likely to learn about and understand the importance of systems. Educators can both model and encourage students to form coalitions among groups on key campus or community issues, to work with networks to create change.

*Stage Six: Integration/Synthesis.* In stage six, educators could ask students to identify their personal values about working with others in group settings and help students identify what talents and strengths they can offer any group across diverse contexts. At best, students may be only starting to move into stage six as they end their college careers. Indeed, the prospect of anticipating graduation may facilitate this stage as students think about transitioning from an educational context. Capstone courses and activities that help students reflect on a congruent sense of self may help their leadership identity solidify.

Limitations of the grounded theory, additional implications for practice, and recommendations for further research are described in Komives et al. (2005). In conclusion, the LID model provides a framework with applicability to designing educational programs and other learning experiences to foster leadership identity.

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