

The Social Change Model of Leadership: A Brief Overview

By Wendy Wagner

A major portion of the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) uses a measure of the Social Change Model (SCM) to study leadership as an outcome of the college experience. To fully understand the results of the MSL, it is therefore important to be familiar with the approach to leadership development advocated by the SCM. The purpose of this article is to describe its background and key assumptions, as well as the seven central values for leadership development programs and the overarching dimension of change that are at its core.

In 1993, Helen and Alexander Astin, working through the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California Los Angeles and a grant from the federal Eisenhower Leadership Development program, gathered ten leadership specialists and student affairs professionals from across the country to create a model of leadership development for undergraduate college students. Calling themselves "The Working Ensemble," this group met six times in two-day working sessions, discussing what knowledge, values, or skills students need to develop in college in order to participate in effective leadership focused on social change. The result was the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996).

The SCM was presented at numerous professional conferences and the Guidebook (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996) was provided at no charge for several years as a deliverable from the grant and continues to be distributed at cost from NCLP. Kezar, Carducci, and Contreras-McGavin (2006) observe "The social change model of leadership development and the seven C's of social change have played a prominent role in shaping the curricula and formats of undergraduate leadership education initiatives in colleges and universities throughout the country" (p. 142).

Key Assumptions

The SCM, like many of today's emerging leadership theories (Burns, 1978; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998; Rost, 1993), emphasizes a nonhierarchical approach to leadership. Some of the "key assumptions" upon which the model is based best describe this approach:

- Leadership is collaborative. Effective leadership is based on, collective action, shared power, and a passionate commitment "to social justice" (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996, p. 11).
- Leadership is the process a group experiences as it works collaboratively toward a goal. It is not the acts of an individual with authority.
- Leadership is based on values. To have the trust necessary for collec-

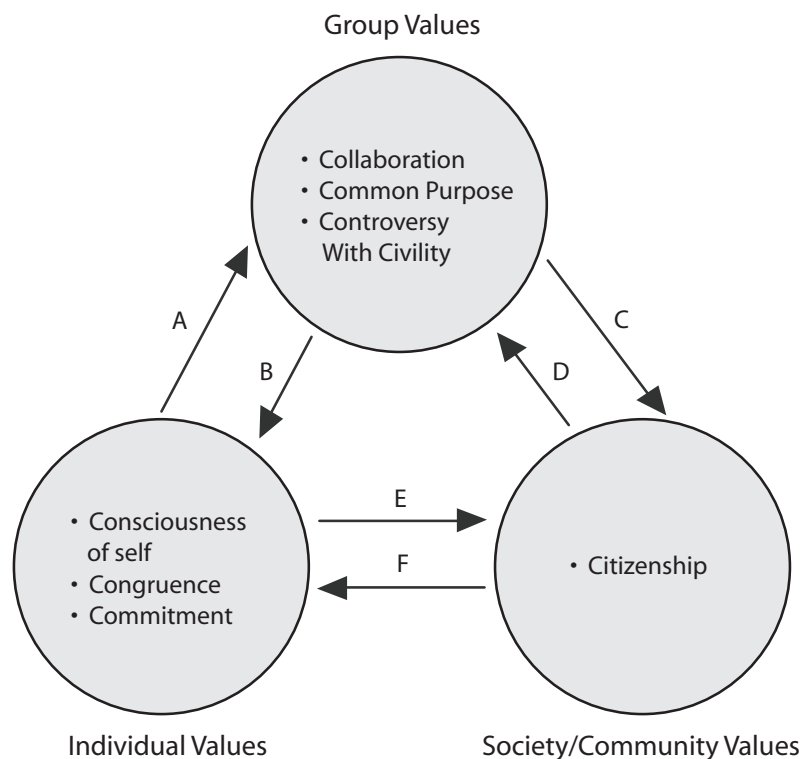
tive action, students and groups must be clear about their values and consistent with their actions.

- All students can do leadership. Leadership development is not reserved for students holding leadership positions, but is for any student wanting to engage with others to create change.
- Leadership is about change. Effective leadership involves being able to accomplish positive change for others and for the community.

(Adapted from Higher Education Research Institute, 1996, p. 10)

The SCM is unique in that it was created specifically for the college undergraduate. No longer do college and university leadership educators have to rely on adapting corporate leadership models to fit into the undergraduate learning environment.

Diagram of the Social Change Model



Seven Critical Values of Leadership

The working ensemble eventually concluded that there were seven “critical values” (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996, p. 21) to leadership development. As each begins with the letter C, these have come to be known as the “Seven C’s.” The Seven C’s are grouped into three categories:

- **The Individual:** What individual qualities should our programs attempt to develop? What personal qualities support effective collective action and social change?
- **The Group:** What processes do students need to learn in order to work effectively in groups? How can collaboration foster individual development and social change?
- **The Community/Society:** How can involvement in positive change in the community promote group collaboration and develop individual character?

(Adapted from Higher Education Research Institute, 1996, p. 19)

Feedback Loops

Notice that each level is inextricably tied to the others. Learning and development at the individual level helps facilitate the leadership process at the group level. Likewise, participation in collaborative group processes provides experience and feedback that enhances a person’s development at the individual level. These “feedback loops” exist among all three levels of the model.

Resources

Several SCM resources are available through the National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs. A *Social Change Model of Leadership Development Guidebook (Version III)* is the ensemble guidebook for understanding and using the model in leadership development programs. Additionally, a group at St. Norbert College who also had an Eisenhower grant, led by Ensemble member Kathy Shellog, developed *An Application Guidebook for the Social Change Model of Leadership Development*, which

The Seven C’s: The Critical Values of the Social Change Model

INDIVIDUAL VALUES

Consciousness of Self	Being self-aware of the beliefs, values, attitudes, and emotions that motivate you to take action. Being mindful, or aware of your current emotional state, behavior, and perceptual lenses.
Congruence	Acting in ways that are consistent with your values and beliefs. Thinking, feeling, and behaving with consistency, genuineness, authenticity, and honesty toward others.
Commitment	Having significant investment in an idea or person, both in terms of intensity and duration. Having the energy to serve the group and its goals. Commitment originates from within, but others can create an environment that supports an individual’s passions.

GROUP VALUES

Collaboration	Working with others in a common effort, sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability. Multiplying group effectiveness by capitalizing on various perspectives and talents, and on the power of diversity to generate creative solutions and actions.
Common Purpose	Having shared aims and values. Involving others in building a group’s vision and purpose.
Controversy with Civility	Recognizing two fundamental realities of any creative effort: 1) that differences in viewpoint are inevitable, and 2) that such differences must be aired openly but with civility.

COMMUNITY VALUES

Citizenship	Believing in a process whereby an individual and/or a group become responsibly connected to the community and to society through some activity. Recognizing that members of communities are not independent, but interdependent. Recognizing individuals and groups have responsibility for the welfare of others.
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Since it is a key assumption of the SCM that the ultimate goal of leadership is positive social change, “change” is considered to be at the “hub” of the SCM.

Change	Believing in the importance of making a better world and a better society for oneself and others. Believing that individuals, groups and communities have the ability to work together to make that change.
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(Adapted from Higher Education Research Institute, 1996, p. 21; Tyree, 1998, p. 176; and Astin, 1996, p. 6-7)

provides learning activities related to the "Seven C's." The SCM was the theme of *Concepts & Connections Volume 4, Issue 2* (available in PDF form at no charge to NCLP members). In 1998, Maryland doctoral student Tracy Tyree completed a dissertation that created a survey instrument to measure each of the seven C's, as well as Change (Tyree, 1998). These eight scales, collectively called the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS), were subsequently revised (Appel-Silbaugh, 2005; Dugan, 2005) to reduce the number of question items from 105 to 68 while maintaining reliability and validity, resulting in the SRLS-Revised 2 (SRLS-R2). Either of these scales is available at no charge from the National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs to aid in research and assessment of college student leadership programs. A web-version of these scales with reports using national normative MSL data will be available through site licenses Spring 2007. For information on any of these resources, visit www.nclp.umd.edu or write wwagner@umd.edu. ■

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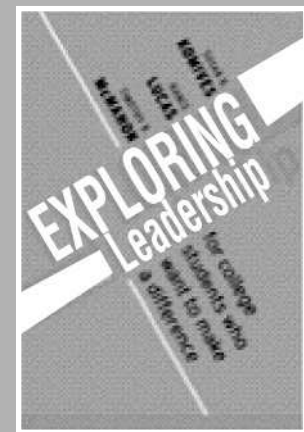
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