College Student Leadership & Social Change

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College Student Leadership

- Connections between leadership development and civic involvement
- Growth in four areas (Cress, et al., 2001)
  - Leadership understanding and commitment
  - Civic responsibility
  - Multicultural awareness and community orientation
  - Leadership skills
Civic Engagement & Social Change

• Increasing calls to educate students for civic and community engagement
• Renewal of civic engagement at the heart of higher education’s mission and purpose
• Creating leaders for social change
Social Change

• Holistic engagement in factors promoting change in community and society:
  – Reflection on personal responsibility for change
  – Suggesting solutions to community problems
  – Discussing community solutions with others
  – Acting on community and social problems outside of the classroom
Purpose of the Study

- Prior studies have not investigated whether
  - Students’ participation in co-curricular leadership is associated with students’ engagement in social change
  - Students’ participation as leaders in different types of co-curricular activities yields different relationships with engagement in social change
Research Questions

• Is students’ participation in leadership positions associated with engagement in social change?

• Is leadership in particular types of student clubs or organizations positively associated with students’ engagement in social change?
Conceptual Framework

Social Change Model of Leadership Development

Astin & Astin (1996)
Methods

• Instrument:
  – SERU survey
  – Civic and community engagement module (20% randomly assigned)

• Participants:
  – 213,160 undergraduate students, spring 2011, nine large public research universities
  – 38.1% response rate, $n = 81,135$
  – 20% randomly assigned to civic engagement module ($n = 15,611$)
Measures

• Demographics: age, gender, race/ethnicity, first-generation

• Leadership antecedents:
  – Interest in opportunities for leadership and community work

• Social change antecedents:
  – Acknowledging personal differences; appreciating the world from someone else’s perspective; comfort/ability to work with people from other cultures
Measures

• College Experience:
  – Academic Major
    • STEM
    • Arts/Humanities
    • Social Sciences
    • Business
    • Medical
    • Education
    • Undeclared (Referent)
  – Credits and GPA
Measures

• Academic Activism
  – Reflect on community or social issues as a shared responsibility
  – Discuss and navigate controversial issues
  – Reflect upon the solution of an issue or challenge
  – Reflect on your individual responsibility for community or social issues
  – Define an issue or challenge and identify possible solutions

• Appreciate the world from someone else’s perspective
• Implement a solution to an issue or challenge
• Acknowledge personal differences
• Interact with someone with views that are different from your own
• Act on community or social issues
Measures

• Engagement in social change: how often students engaged in the following tasks outside of class:
  – Reflect on community or social issues as a shared responsibility
  – Reflect on your individual responsibility for community or social issues
  – Implement a solution to an issue or challenge
  – Reflect upon the solution of an issue or challenge
  – Define an issue or challenge and identify possible solutions
  – Discuss and navigate controversial issues
## Leadership Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek fraternity or sorority</td>
<td>1114</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic (e.g. math club, philosophy club)</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service (e.g. Special Olympics Volunteers Club,)</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governing bodies (e.g. student government, IFC, etc.)</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious (e.g. Korean Campus Ministry)</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy (e.g. Amnesty International, etc.)</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus sports clubs (e.g. rugby club, Kendo club)</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing group (e.g. school band, dance team)</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honor society</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media (e.g. campus newspaper, radio station)</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>1.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreational (e.g. chess club, bike club)</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political (e.g. Young Republicans, College Democrats)</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus varsity team (e.g. basketball, softball, soccer)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>.7</td>
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</table>
Procedures

• Factor analysis: 24 items
  – Social change ($\alpha = .95$)
  – College experiences
    • Academic activism ($\alpha = .95$)
  – Leadership antecedents
    • Diversity recognition ($\alpha = .90$)
    • Diversity skills ($\alpha = .84$)
• Linear regressions predicting social change
## Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>.13***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>.29***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus Sport Clubs</td>
<td>-.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus Varsity Team</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governing Bodies</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Fraternity or Sorority</td>
<td>.06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honor Society</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing Group</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>.18*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreational</td>
<td>-.12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>.16***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>.11***</td>
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</table>
## Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>.09***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Activism</td>
<td>.39***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>-.06***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for Leadership</td>
<td>.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Model 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for Community Work</td>
<td>.12***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity Recognition</td>
<td>.24/25***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity Skills</td>
<td>.09***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

- Leadership is positively associated with students’ engagement in social change
- Leadership in the following groups is also significant:
  - Advocacy
  - Greek
  - Political
  - Religious
  - Service
Recommendations

• Examine the experiences of students in the five groups positively associated with social change
• Infuse similar values/goals/opportunities into other student organizations
• Students who participate as leaders in any organization can effect social change
Recommendations

• Increase student engagement in organizations that enhance student awareness and responsibility for social change
• Examine the means through which students engage in social change through these activities
Thank you!

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