

Insights from the Multi-institutional Study of Leadership

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Introduction

About the Multi-institutional Study of Leadership (MSL)

- An international research program.
- One of the largest studies of college student leadership.
- More than 350 institutions with over 610,000 student participants to date.
- Focus on understanding the influences of higher education in shaping socially responsible leadership capacity and other related student outcomes.
- Covers more than 400 different variables, including the following:

leadership efficacy	academic college experiences
social perspective-taking	formal leadership training experience
mentoring relationships	community service involvement

- Data also include responses to the open-ended survey question:

"Please provide a brief definition of what the term leadership means to you."

Integrating qualitative and quantitative analyses, we can consider models and schemes for coding definitions and analyzing relationships with other variables.

Literature Review

Four Definitions of Leadership (Grint, 2010) as Summarized by Webster (2013)

Definition	Description
1. Leadership as Position	Position-based leadership assumes it is <i>where</i> people operate that makes them leaders. This view usually takes the form of authority in a formal hierarchy (e.g., the general or CEO). This definition implies that the character of the leader is less important than their position.
2. Leadership as Person	This definition of leadership emphasizes the importance of the person's character. Person-based — or character-based — leadership says it is <i>who</i> you are that makes you a leader.
3. Leadership as Result	With this definition of leadership we look at the results of leadership. Results-based leadership focuses on <i>what</i> leaders do.
4. Leadership as Process	The process-based definition of leadership considers the relationship between leader and practice. It is what leaders <i>do</i> that matters.

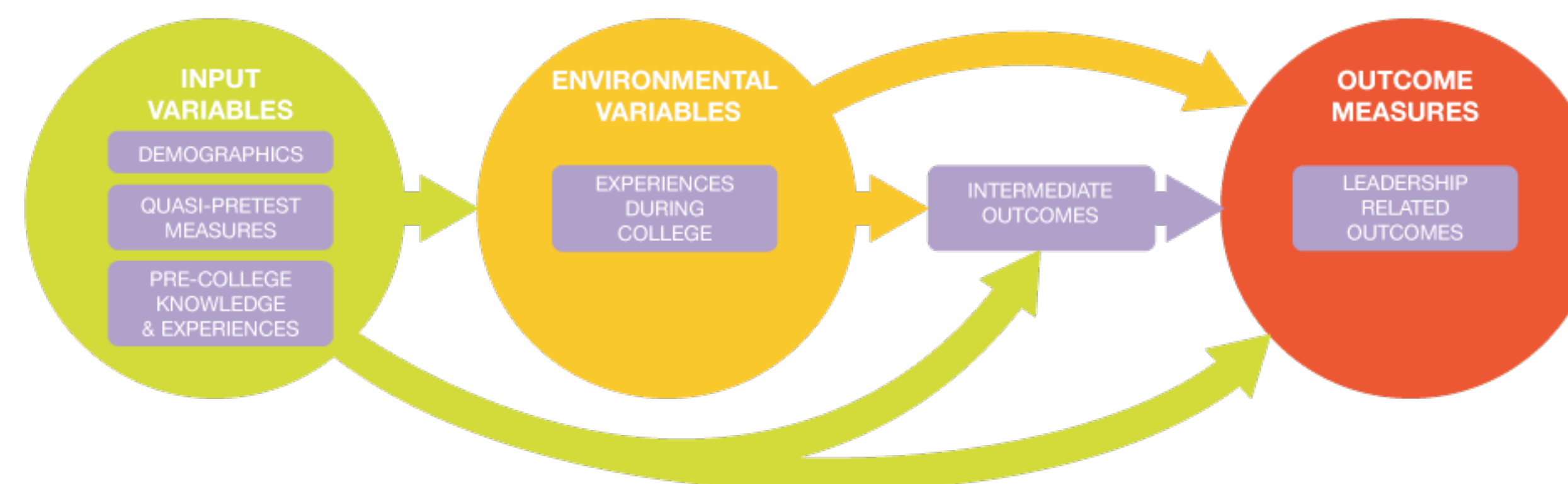
Komives and Colleagues' (2005) Leadership Identity Development (LID) Model as Summarized by Ballard (2014)

Stage	Description
1. Awareness	When we are children, we become aware that some people are called leaders. There are leaders in our culture, our community, our home. We develop the concept that some people are leaders.
2. Exploration/Engagement	As we grow older, most children and teenagers become involved in groups. We become active participants or followers in various group activities. We begin to develop relational skills, learning to interact with others.
3. Leader Identified	At this stage we recognize that some positions are for leaders. They direct us and get things done. Komives found high school students and some first year college students were at this stage.
4. Leadership Differentiated	At some point we realize the position leader may or may not be the actual leader. We realize leadership can emerge from followers. We enhance our group skills and participate more actively in group decisions. People who are already in formal leadership roles may feel empowered by their growing awareness of leadership and its possibilities.
5. Generativity	We move beyond awareness of leadership processes to a larger sense of responsibility to the greater good. Leaders may become more compassionate and caring.
6. Integration Synthesis	We know we are leaders, we have the capacity to lead, and we seek opportunities for self-improvement as a natural part of our lives.

Methods/Methodology

Methods for Studying Data from Virginia Tech

- Data collected as part of MSL 2015.
- Total number of respondents for this sample was 1,686 college students.
- Of those, 1,570 provide an answer to the request for a definition of leadership.
- Collected definitions coded using Grint's (2010) framework for definitions of leadership, as well as Komives and colleagues' (2005) Leadership Identity Development (LID) model.
- Two researchers independently coded the first 100 definitions, counted the discrepancies in ratings, calculated the inter-rater reliability to be 83%.
- Inter-rater reliability of 83% considered to be sufficient for this exploratory research.
- SPSS was used to calculate descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations, focusing particularly on the MSL variables associated with Leadership Education.



Results

Table 1. Coding Definition Results Relative to Grint's (2005) Four Definitions of Leadership, (n=1,570)

Position	Leadership Approach		
	Person	Result	Process
20%, n=314	29%, n=458	24%, n=375	71%, n=1,122

Table 2. Coding Definition Results Relative to Komives and Colleagues' (2005) Leadership Identity Development Model (n=1,570)

Leadership Identity Development (LID) Level					
Awareness	Exploration	Leader Identified	Leadership Differentiated	Generativity	Integration Synthesis
< 1%, n=1	0%, n=0	< 1%, n=6	95%, n=1,497	4%, n=62	< 1%, n=4

Table 3. Sample leadership definitions and their relationship to Grint's (2010) approaches to leadership and the Leadership Identity Development (LID) model provided Komives and colleagues (2005)

Leadership Definition	Position	Person	Result	Process	LID Stage
"To me leadership is being able to bring people together to collectively reach an agreed upon goal. To inspire and encourage individuals and the group as a whole and to embrace differences within that collective. A leader should be approachable by colleges [sic] but firm with the power to make final decisions that has been appointed to them."	X	X	X	X	4
"Set the standard by example. Push others to do better and be better, while also pushing yourself. Getting done what needs to get done."		X	X	X	4
"Motivating and guiding yourself or a group through and obstacle or challenge to the end goal."			X	X	4
"Coordinating others."				X	3
"How one person influences others to a greater common good."				X	5
"I think leadership is something learned over time and while theories and can be taught, an effective leader has years of experience of both leading and following."				X	6
"Leadership is recognizing a goal and working to bring you and your team there."			X		4
"Joining people's talents and efforts to positively and effectively accomplish a goal."			X		4
"A person who inspires others through either direct or indirect contact and sets an example for others to follow."	X				4

Conclusion/Recommendations

Definitions of Leadership Align with Previous Findings

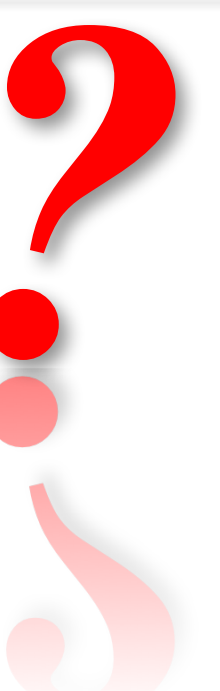
- Classification of leadership definitions reflect what scholars might expect.
- The dominant perspective of respondents, using Grint's (2010) framework, is "leadership as process" (71%).
- The dominant perspective of respondents, using Komives and colleagues (2005) (LID) framework, is "leadership differentiated" (95%).

Further Exploration

- Additional analysis is warranted to uncover the most important predictors of a student's definition of leadership.
- Future exploration of significant correlations between variables and leadership definitions include data from the following questions:
 - Since starting college, have you ever participated in a leadership training or leadership education experience of any kind (ex: leadership conference, alternative spring break, leadership course, club president's retreat)? (ENV10)
 - Since starting college, to what degree have you been involved in the following types of leadership training or education?
 - Leadership Conference (ENV10A1)
 - Leadership Retreat (ENV10A2)
 - Leadership Lecture/Workshop Series (ENV10A4)
 - Positional Leader Training (ex. Treasurer's training, Resident Assistant training, Student Government training) (ENV10A5)
 - Leadership Course (ENV10A7)
 - Living-Learning Leadership Program (ENV10A12)
 - Women's Leadership Program (ENV10A15)
 - Leadership Minor - Since starting college, have you been involved in the following types of leadership training or education? (ENV10A8)

Questions for Discussion

- How do you expect leadership education students to change as a result of participation in your program(s)?
- Do your leadership education activities most emphasize leadership as position, person, result, or process?
- What insights can we gain from a student's personal definition of leadership?
- What definition of leadership would you hope your students would provide?



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