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A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF HOW STUDENTS CONSTRUCT THEIR LEADERSHIP LEARNING FROM A HIGH-IMPACT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Abstract

The Maroon & White Leadership Program at Texas A&M University is a formal leadership program that involves students completing eight leadership experiences including leadership education, training, and development dimensions. Students also reflect on each leadership experience and meet with a leadership coach to synthesize the experience. In our content analysis of 134 reflections from 17 students, we found that students articulate learning in the developing self area of the leadership identity development model including deepening self-awareness, building self-confidence, establishing interpersonal efficacy, and expanding motivations. Applying new skills was not as evident from the reflections. Students also demonstrated a broadening view of leadership in moving to thinking of leadership as a process and not just a position.

Introduction

Leadership development is often a cited outcome for higher education institutions (Astin & Astin, 2000; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999) and there is evidence that students can increase their leadership skills during college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Furthermore, leadership is often cited as an outcome in mission statements of many colleges and universities as these institutions seek to develop students to be contributing members of society and employ leadership skills (Astin & Astin, 2000; Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2012). The process of learning and developing leadership can occur at many stages of a student's college journey as curricular and co-curricular leadership initiatives exist on college campuses to address the leadership needs of students. These efforts can sometimes seem disjointed as they are offered by various departments within colleges and universities that differ in their goals, aims, budgets, and resources (Allen & Shehane, 2016). There is a call for healthy curricular/co-curricular partnerships between institutional units that allow for scholarship to progress.

The Maroon & White Leadership Program at Texas A&M University is what could be defined as a formal leadership program or a program that is an "intentional collection of leadership experiences that are integrated into an overall experience designed with the purpose of developing or enhancing leadership skills, knowledge, and capacity" (Haber, 2011, p. 232). These formal leadership programs usually involve academic courses along with co-curricular experiences like retreats, service-learning, or even ropes courses. The purpose of the Maroon & White Leadership Program is to guide participants in developing their identity as leaders by engaging

in leadership development, education, and training opportunities while at the university (Allen & Roberts, 2011; Komives et al., 2006; Komives et al., 2007). The curricular piece consists of the fact that students complete leadership learning experiences that are led by faculty members in leadership courses across campus. Students also complete cocurricular experiences as they are involved in workshops, student organizations, and other leadership activities not related to course credit.

Participants of the Maroon & White Leadership Program are committed to honing skills, developing an appreciation for lifelong learning, and striving to be an engaged citizen post-graduation. Fundamental components of the program are that students engage in and reflect on, both in oral or written form, at least eight different leadership experiences which exhibit a balance of leadership training, education, and development experiences. Each student is paired with a leadership coach who facilitates this critical reflection process and supports the student's intentional, individualized, and holistic development as a leader. Komives et al., (2006) shared that "students need a safe place to reflect and make meaning of their experiences" (p. 415). Leadership coaches guide participants in reflecting about how they work within group contexts and what they are learning from these interactions, which is emphasized in the LID model. Coaches are critical to the affirmation and support needed to develop self-confidence and shape a leadership identity (Komives et al., 2006).

The Maroon & White Leadership Program is led by members of the Division of Student Affairs and is open to any Texas A&M University student who is interested in leadership development, education, and training experiences, and students do not need to be involved in leadership organizations, positions, or programs to participate. There are no prerequisites to join the program. To become a Maroon & White Leadership Fellow, students do need to have a 2.25 GPA, complete the program within 2-5 semesters,

meet with their leadership coach at least two times per semester, complete the eight designators of leadership training, development, and education, complete their leadership engagement project, and attend the induction ceremony. As of March 2019, there were 180 students actively participating in the program and 81 students have been inducted into the Maroon & White Leadership Society since the start of the program in 2014. There have been a total of 298 students who have participated at some level with the Maroon & White Leadership Program and 241 leadership coaches who have been involved.

Literature Review

The Maroon & White Leadership Program is highlighted as a high-impact experience for students. High-impact practices are those experiences designed by colleges and universities which lead to deeper engaged learning among other reticent outcomes. According to the work of Kuh et al. (2013, p. 10), key elements of high-impact practices include those experiences where (a) performance expectations are set at appropriately high levels, (b) there is a significant investment of time and effort by students over an extended period of time, (c) there are interactions with faculty and peers about substantive matters, (d) students are exposed to and must contend with people and circumstances that differ from those with which students are familiar,(e) there is frequent, timely, and constructive feedback, (f) students have periodic, structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning, (g) students have opportunities to discover relevance of learning through real-world applications, and (h)) students produce a public demonstration of competence. Higher education has challenged educators to develop courses, programs, and experiences that meet the aforementioned criteria (American Association of Colleges & Universities, 2007; Kuh, 2008). One way colleges and universities have set out to develop essential skills or learning outcomes

of students is through high-impact educational practices. Leadership experiences often overlap with characteristics of high-impact educational practices (Priest & Clegorne, 2015). Leadership educators should recognize the opportunity to engage students in high-impact educational experiences through the experiences they design for their students. While evidence of the impact of high-impact practices has been documented (Kuh et al., 2013), more research is needed to examine the outcomes of these experiences in leadership.

As with many aspects of leadership, clear boundaries of experiences are challenging to articulate. The terms leadership education, leadership studies, learning, skill development often yield conflicting answers (Sowcik & Allen, 2013). Allen and Shehane (2016) contend that in order to effectively assess leadership, a balanced approach to leadership education and learning is needed. Furthermore, clarifying language like defining the type of leadership program is seen as one of the most critical and often overlooked components of being able to assess leadership. Allen and Shehane (2016) classify experiences into three types: curricular, cocurricular, and hybrid experiences. Curricular refers to those experiences that are part of an academic curriculum and are credit bearing; they would also be listed on a student transcript. Cocurricular refers to experiences outside the classroom for which students do not receive academic credit. And, hybrid experiences are a blend of the two experiences. A formal leadership program would be a hybrid program and is defined as an "intentional collection of leadership experiences that are integrated into an overall experience designed with the purpose of developing or enhancing leadership skills, knowledge, and capacity" (Haber, 2011, p. 232).

Learning should be introduced as an outcome for leadership programs so they can be more intentionally designed, assessed, and evaluated (Allen & Shehane, 2016). Learning has been approached using five primary theories including cognitivism, behaviorism, humanism, social learning, and constructivism (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Allen

and Shehane (2016) outlined instructional strategies for each learning approach as well as ways to assess learning in each area. The constructivist orientation to learning involves the learner taking on new and meaningful experiences while the educator helps the learners make sense of these experiences following an activity. Learning is assessed and measured primarily through a qualitative framework using reflections or interviews (see Lahey et al., 1988). However, a challenge exists with programs that are more experiential in that there is usually little opportunity for real-time feedback, coaching, and repetition which are essential for deliberate practice (Ericsson et al., 1993). While programs designed for a constructivist approach might be ideal, these programs are difficult to design to ensure that learning has occurred and connections have been made.

The Maroon & White Leadership Program at Texas A&M University takes a constructivist approach to learning and is an opportunity for students to achieve learning by taking on new and meaningful experiences and make sense of these experiences through reflection. Students in the program participate in eight different leadership experiences among all three different leadership designators including leadership training (mostly focused at the behaviorism approach), leadership education (mostly focused on the cognitivism approach), and leadership development (mostly focused on the humanist orientation). Ultimately, the measure of learning is a constructivist approach because they are measured through the reflections they complete after each experience with the guidance of a leadership coach to help them make sense of their learning.

Students in the Maroon & White Leadership Program complete leadership experiences in the categorizations of leadership training, leadership education, and leadership development. Leadership learning is the outcome of all three components. Leadership training is defined as, "proficiency in demonstrating specific skills associated with the activity of leadership" (Allen & Shehane, 2016, p. 43). Even though there is a lack of agreement of

which skills should be focused on, skills including time management and conflict management are examples of skills that can be developed through training exercises. Activities that fall under the training designator include conferences, workshops, and online webinars.

Leadership education is defined as "the process of facilitating learning via planned and naturalistic experiences associated with the activity of leadership" and encompasses "formal/structured to informal/ unstructured interventions" (Allen & Shehane, 2016, p. 41). Programming included in leadership education ranges from study abroad to learning communities and classroom education. Leadership education is what we typically think of for students enrolled in collegiate leadership courses, but it could also be leadership seminars and talks about leadership.

In contrast to the group dynamic attributed to leadership education, leadership development is solely focused on individual growth. Leadership development is defined as, "new insights and progression, which can include an individual's motivations, values, identity, emotions, and potential in relation to the activity of leadership" (Allen & Shehane, 2016, p. 43). Activities that relate to leadership development include, "reflection, small group dialogue, and journaling" (Allen & Shehane, 2016, p. 43) and programming included in leadership development includes elected leadership positions, organizational roles, and involvement in organizations. According to Avolio and Gardner (2005), leadership development is aimed at many levels including the individual, dyadic, group, and strategic levels.

Student leadership learning opportunities include a variety of different formats including courses, multi-year programs, national leadership experiences such as LeaderShape, study abroad, and leadership workshops. Leadership training, education, and development experiences complement each other and contribute differently to how students learn leadership. Rarely do leadership learning opportunities offer combined training, education,

and development components into one experience. One could purport that the combination of all of these learning opportunities would enhance students' leadership learning. The purpose of this study was to examine how students construct their leadership learning from a high-impact leadership experience that purposefully involves leadership training, education, and development experiences and uses the guidance of a leadership coach as measured by student reflections and focuses on the constructivist approach to learning. A challenge to leadership programming is measuring the impact it has on the population it seeks to develop. It is important to examine the outcomes of leadership experiences of college students so that universities can continue to develop leadership skills of students that are important for the workforce and society (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2017).

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The Leadership Identity Development (LID) model serves as the theoretical framework for the Maroon & White Leadership Program and for this study. This theoretical foundation affords the program an opportunity to offer intensive and purposeful leadership mentorship, to gather rich qualitative data about leadership learning across campus, and to integrate theory and assessment seamlessly throughout the program. Researchers who developed this model were initially interested in how leadership identity developed over time, "specifically in terms of how one comes to the self-acceptance of knowing one can work effectively with others to accomplish shared goals from any place in an organization—that is, to engage in leadership and see oneself as a leader" (Komives et al., 2007, p. 393). A key finding from the study focused on developing the self, which includes "deepening self-awareness, building self-confidence, establishing interpersonal efficacy in working with others, applying new skills, and expanding one's motivations—from joining groups just to make friends to being involved in groups to make a valuable contribution" (Komives et al., 2007, p. 394). Furthermore, group influences

the importance of engaging meaningfully in groups are central to developing a leadership identity. Individuals who stay with the group over time see the value in learning from the continuity of group membership, and more importantly, see the group as an organization with structure and purpose rather than a collection of friends. As such, the students' perceptions change over time. Initially, they see themselves as dependent on others, then they moved to an independent view from others, and finally they see the need for interdependence with others.

The educational setting can create an environment that supports and facilitates learning for both students and groups. Education cannot force people to change, but it can help students reflect and make meaning of their lives (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). Identity development is connected to the changing nature of relationships with others. Day (2001) proclaimed that "the primary emphasis in leadership development is on building and using interpersonal competence" (p. 585). As such, a central component of the program for this study is the development of self as leaders. Understanding oneself as a leader does not equate to being able to lead others. Students must also engage in leadership with others to further understand the relational aspect of working in groups and organizations. Because students are engaging in eight leadership experiences, reflecting on those experiences, and gaining feedback from a leadership coach, we would expect there to be growth and progression among the stages (Awareness Integration/Synthesis) of the leadership identity development model (Komives et al., 2007; See Figure 1).
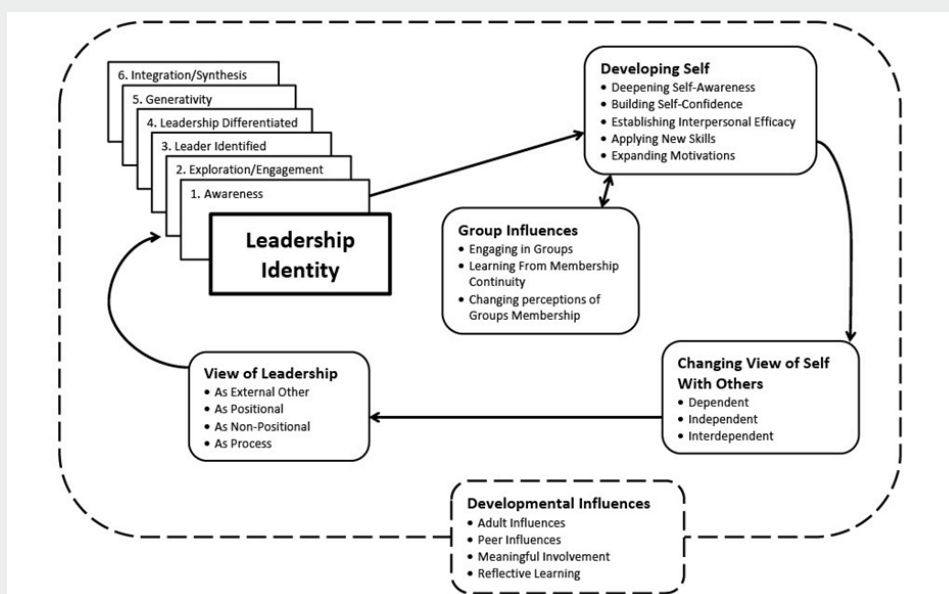

Figure 1. Developing a leadership identity: Illustrating the cycle. Reprinted from "Developing a leadership identity: A grounded theory" by S. R. Komives, J. E. Owen, S. D. Longerbeam, F. C. Mainella, & L. Osteen, Journal of College Student Development, 46(6), p. 599. Reprinted with permission.

Methods

Reflection, or reflective thought, as defined by Dewey (1910), is the "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 6). A valuable experience is without meaning unless the

experience is connected and applied. Student learning is deepened and strengthened when the abstract becomes concrete (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). Structured self-reflection has been found to increase students' knowledge of personal values (Branson, 2007). Reflection has been suggested as a way to measure learning in the constructivist approach (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Huba and Freed (2000) determined that short writing assignments serve as an appropriate way to measure changes in knowledge, attitudes, and skills. When a learner reflects upon their thoughts and emotions because of an educational experience or training program, the nature of the learning process helps the learner to construct meaning from information and experiences. Boud and Walker (1985) define reflection as "those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences to lead to new understanding and appreciation" (p. 19). Reflection may include the sharing of feelings, observations, ideas, and reactions regarding a learning activity. While reflection can take many forms, reflective writing is often used to get students to delve into subject matter at a deeper level. Students in the program for this study utilized reflection after each of their leadership experiences. Reflection could have occurred in written form or in oral form and then feedback provided by their leadership coach. Since students completed eight reflections as part of completing the Maroon & White Leadership Program requirements, there was a potential for all of these reflections to be reviewed for this study. Reflections were from various leadership designators (education, training, or development) as students in the program need to complete experiences from each of them to complete the program.

Examples of leadership education experiences include taking a leadership course, spending a semester at sea, participating in a student affairs conference, being a LeaderShape catalyst, studying abroad, and international excursions. Leadership training experiences consisted of things like a leadership summit difficult dialogue program, an orientation leader program, training program, being on a diversity panel, participating in a StrengthsQuest workshop, attending a leadership conference, participating in a gender specific leadership conference, and completing an internship. Examples of leadership development experiences include being on an advisory board of an organization, being a commander of a squadron, being in the band, serving as a camp counselor for a student-led organization, serving as an officer in an organization, being a director of a student organization, being a student worker, and completing an internship. Some experiences may overlap in each designator depending on the focus of the experience; the determination was made through the advisor of the Maroon & White Leadership Program and the student's leadership coach. It should also be noted that there were certain experiences in each designator that were further designated as signature or premiere. A signature program is a program that (a) is open to all or a large proportion of students, (b) relates to university learning outcomes and leadership common language and (c) has academic ties. Any program already approved as a high impact practice at the university would be a signature program by default. A premiere program is identified as those programs and organizations that are advised by a Division of Student Affairs staff member or are hosted by a Division sub-area. Students were required to complete at least four experiences that meet the criteria of premiere or signature among their eight total experiences.

This study used content analysis within the qualitative research paradigm. Content analysis has been defined as "a technique that enables researchers to study human behavior in an indirect way, through an analysis of their communications" (Fraenkel et al., 1999, p. 405). Content analysis allows the researchers to examine written documents unobtrusively to provide "a passport to listening to the words of the text, and understanding better the perspective(s) of the producer of these words" (Berg, 2001, p. 242). The unit of analysis was words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs within the reflective writing samples of undergraduate students who participated and

earned exemplary status in the Maroon & White Leadership Program. Abrahamson (1983) suggest that researchers begin by immersing themselves in the documents to identify the themes (inductive) and use some categorical scheme or theoretical/social construct for assessment (deductive). For this study, the five-member research team incorporated independent corroborative techniques (like inter-rater reliability) and detailed excerpts from relevant statements to document interpretations of patterns and themes during a peer debriefing session. After open coding (Strauss, 1987), the constant comparative method was used to integrate data (reflective writing samples) and theory using joint coding and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

A purposive sample consisting of reflections from students noted as exemplary from the population of students enrolled in the Maroon & White Leadership Program were used in this study. The units of analysis for this study were reflections from exemplary students. Exemplary students were determined by a panel of evaluators who assessed students through an exit interview and capstone presentation. Evaluators used a rubric grounded in critical reflection and the leadership identity development model (Komives et al., 2006) to determine exemplary status. At the time of this data analysis, there were 17 exemplary students. 134 reflections from 17 exemplary students were analyzed for this study. Students were assigned a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality of their reflections. IRB approval was obtained for this study and it was determined to be exempt.

Results

We will discuss the results by the themes that emerged from each of the three leadership experience designators of leadership training, leadership development, and leadership education. Outcomes of student learning from their leadership training reflections revealed two themes: skill development and process of leadership. Outcomes of student learning from their leadership development reflections revealed four themes: value of experiences, self-discovery, knowledge of leadership, and leadership skills. Outcomes of student learning from their leadership education reflections revealed three themes: knowledge of leadership, understanding and value of diversity, and confidence in leadership abilities.

Leadership Training. Learning within the leadership training designator can be categorized into two themes including skill development and process of leadership.

> Skill development. This theme includes students learning about and valuing skills in conflict/risk management, working with others who are different/diverse, networking, volunteer strategies, listening/recognition, developing and executing lessons, problem solving, and communication skills for leadership. Logan stated this in his reflection regarding listening:

> This experience contributed to my listening and recognition skills. I realized that in order to benefit others, I have to be willing to hear their stories and recognize their needs. It helped me understand that listening is an active skill that requires effort and an open mind...this directly translates to leadership.

> Students expressed both learning skills and learning to value certain skills of leadership. Liliana specifically reflected about valuing the skills of building respect with others as important in the world today:

> The world is constantly changing; people from different cultures are continuously forming a variety of relationships. Leaders can be found everywhere by anyone, and as the world evolves, leaders must be ready at all times. When leaders know how to respect others, work can be done effectively, and respect can be gained in return.

Furthermore, Lauren expressed learning about the value of gaining knowledge of different cultures:

As a leader, and especially in the world right now, we will be expected to interact with people from different cultures who have known different ways of life…a well-adjusted person can thrive anywhere, and that applies to interacting in different cultural contexts as well…I am now more conscious of international trade agreements, international slavery issues, and all sorts of international legality issues that affect the United States as well as Southeastern Asian countries.

Process of Leadership. This theme includes student learning about leadership as a process not just a position, a willingness to try new things and get out of their comfort zone, reaffirming the mission and vision for an organization, and strengths and decisions as a leader. Lauren discussed about how leadership is a process and that anyone can be a leader as she stated:

Leadership is not just about having the right morals and ideals. It's first and foremost about accepting personal responsibility for the problems that are going on around you, and taking steps to actively change them.

Meredith reflected on the leadership process and specifically the focus on leaders' strengths:

I have always thought that leadership developed solely from the personality of the individual, not that it doesn't play a huge part, but I feel that the true form of leadership comes from the strengths the individual uses to lead.

And, Meghan reflected about wanting to learn more about other people, because she believed this would help unlock her strengths as a leader:

Over the next few months I started meeting people from all different walks of life trying to connect with them and understand them better. I had realized that coming from a small town in Texas, I knew very little about other cultures and I wanted to completely eradicate this aspect of my personality. This mindset led me to study abroad in the middle east…by taking on so many diverse opportunities, I unlocked strengths which have completely shaped who I am as a person.

Leadership Development. Learning from within the leadership development area could be categorized into three themes: value of experiences, self-discovery, knowledge of leadership, and leadership skills.

Value of Experiences. This theme is characterized by students discussing how their leadership development experience was a catalyst for other leadership opportunities and how they have overcome personal leadership obstacles. Kisha reflected about stepping outside her comfort zone:

I was given the freedom to be creative and put my visions in action. I think if given the opportunity that every leader should exercise these. If you don't learn how to take chances and put yourself out there, you will miss many opportunities for development.

And, Kayla reflected on the value of failure and negative experiences:

I see myself as a stronger individual and leader as a result of this experience. I often try to block out this part of my leadership journey because there are very few positive aspects to it. However, I see now that it was essential in becoming the woman that I am today.

Meghan said she would take advantage of opportunities differently:

Something else that I plan to do differently because of this experience is to continuously take on challenges. Sometimes I underestimate my abilities and lose out on opportunities that could have been transformational.

Will learned about the value of picking an effective team as he stated:

I also have a newfound appreciation for picking an effective team. This does not mean picking only people who have the same personality or conflict resolution type; rather, it means only picking people who respect other points of view and are willing to prioritize picking the best solution over picking their solution.

Self-discovery. Within this theme, students reflected about discovering their personal leadership motivations, how their actions affected others, gaining knowledge of self, and confidence in themselves as a leader. Lily specifically discussed the characteristic of passion:

This experience has taught me that passion has a lot to do with your development as a leader. Being more passionate about what you do will get you further in anything you attempt. It might even be your motivation that will push you through in the long run.

Lesley wrote about the importance of recognizing and developing areas of weaknesses and blind spots:

I have also learned that my perfectionism sometimes causes difficulty when working with others. For instance, when working with my partner, we had to make many decisions about how we would spend our time with the freshmen. I struggled with compromising even on small details, because I wanted everything to be perfect in the way I envisioned. However, I have come to understand that my vision is often far from perfect and it is often better

to work with the ideas of others instead of wasting time arguing over small decisions.

Meghan discussed the realization of how actions and modeling the way as a leader inspired others to be more involved:

"…leading by example was the most effective way of keeping members involved and on track. I realized that the more passionate I was, the more inspired my members were; the earlier I was to meetings, the more likely they were to be on-time; the more prepared I was for meetings, the more involved my members were; the more I signed up for volunteer events, the more members I had volunteer."

Jessica further illustrated this realization of the importance of modeling the way by stating "Being genuine and transparent with those around you and modeling the way is necessary to establish strong, trustworthy relationships with others." Sarah felt like her confidence in leadership grew through her leadership development experience:

I see myself as capable of building better organizations out of existing ones. I know that it is possible for me to improve an organization from inside it through critically examining the organization's activities in comparison to its purpose. I am also more confident of my intuition in undefined circumstances—I can create a purpose where one is lacking, and seek guidance when I get too little. After having to find my own purpose in leadership last year, it was much easier than it would otherwise have been for me to take on executive leadership in First Wing this year. I am also much more comfortable about the idea of being in charge of the [program] this summer than I would have been without this exercise in autonomy.

Lily further reflected on how her confidence as a leader has grown:

From this experience I am not certain that I will completely act different, but my confidence about going into leadership positions has grown so much. I have so much more faith in what I am capable of accomplishing and that I can get there despite the fact that more people had experience. I hope to use this experience as something that will carry my confidence in the professional world when I feel like people are doubting my abilities or I start to question whether a leadership role was the right thing for me to do.

Knowledge of leadership. In the knowledge of leadership theme, students discussed gaining knowledge of leadership styles and approaches and a changing view of leadership. Sarah reflected on the value of being a relational leader:

I also know how much stronger a team is when they are brought together by social as well as occupational ties. As a leader in the future, I will value relationships above tasks. My first goal upon entering a new organization will be to establish relationships with each of my direct subordinates and with my coworkers. I know that with relationships of mutual trust established, common goals become important to both people. It hurts more to disappoint a friend than a colleague.

Other students reflected about the changing view of positional leaders as with Christine who said "…a role can still be leadership despite the title" or Chesney who stated "…To be a good leader, you also need to be a good follower." Chesney also learned that "It's not always about the goal…it's also about how you get there." Jessica reflected about the importance of trust to leadership: "By being transparent and genuine, a leader can establish a foundation of trust that the group can build on. This trust can make discussion and disagreement be received differently…"

Meghan described her learning in the following way:

I now view leadership in a more holistic sense. I understand, now, that leading a team of your peers to a common goal involves many moving parts and the success of your team depends mainly on the environment that you create.

Leadership Skills. While students reflected on actual leadership skills learned, they also reflected on the value of these skills to leadership. Specific leadership skills mentioned in the student reflections include communication, addressing conflict/compromise, understanding others, responsibility, ethics/character, establishing a shared vision, and adaptability through their leadership development experiences.

Jessica reflected on how her leadership development experience taught her about compromise:

The first was learning how to compromise. In all of my previous leadership positions, my ideas were usually met with enthusiasm and agreement. This did not often happen in our committee meetings. I always thought that I took criticism well, but being told flat-out that my idea would not work or that it would not meet a certain goals was tough to handle. I really had to take a step back and say to myself that it wasn't "my way or the highway." Compromise was a big part of our committee decisions and, now that I think back on our decisions, the success of our workshops was due to our, and my, ability to compromise.

In regards to establishing a shared vision, Samantha talked about learning to "see a vision to fruition." She also stated, "It

was a very new experience being the final decision maker. With the freedom came responsibility, as the success or failure of the event would fall on me."

Leadership Education. Learning within the leadership education designator can be categorized into three themes: knowledge of leadership, understanding and value of diversity, and confidence in leadership abilities.

Knowledge of leadership. Specific to knowledge of leadership, students discussed autocratic vs. democratic leadership styles, values, changing views of leadership, and the importance of assessment and reflection as a leader. Two students specifically mentioned gaining knowledge of leadership styles. Kirsten discussed the importance of knowing when to use which leadership style:

Knowing when to be more or less authoritative in decision making is extremely important for a leader. A leader who does not know what leadership model is appropriate for a situation can be one of two extremes if the wrong style is picked for too long. If the leader is not willing to make difficult decisions to motivate an ambivalent group, the group can suffer from taking far too long to make a decision or might not make a decision at all.

Jessica discussed the importance of adapting her leadership style to a situation:

Being able to adapt to situations and recognize that a person's leadership style and approach will be different for each situation is something that is really important. If a person is stuck in a certain mindset about leadership, they may not be able to see past that and do what is best in each unique situation. I have learned to better recognize different situations and adapt my leadership style to that situation.

Understanding and value of diversity.

Within this theme, students reflected on how diversity broadens one's perspective, productivity increases, value in seeking diverse groups, the fact that diversity is still an obstacle in society and without it we risk making errors in social and cultural settings. Payton reflected on having a better understanding of diversity and inclusivity:

Inclusivity and diversity doesn't mean everyone walking around on eggshells trying to avoid offending anyone. They mean coming to a place intellectually and emotionally where you can understand and appreciate the differences in where people come from and how they live.

Kisha reflected about the importance of understanding others' value systems:

I learned that every person's unique upbringing is what helps define the way they think. At first, I thought that when some students especially at Texas A&M University weren't being inclusive in their actions it was because they didn't care to. Now, I know that most just never thought that their actions were offensive and by simply being educated on the matter, it prevents them from doing these things in the future.

Yet, Samantha reflected on how she has grown to value the differences of others:

I have developed a sense of not only acceptance of people of different backgrounds or cultures, but I have tried to embrace a philosophy which allows me to truly appreciate the input of people from all different walks of life…Latinos have unique experiences which can serve as an asset to our society, an asset that needs to be acknowledged and cultivated.

Confidence in leadership abilities. Under this theme, it appeared that students gained confidence in their leadership abilities

by going through a leadership education experience. Students mentioned gaining confidence in their skills of dealing with change, debate and civil discourse, leadership styles, and trust in themselves. Specifically, Kirsten mentioned: "I am more confident taking a more authoritative position as a leader. …I think the biggest change in how I viewed my leadership ability is in my self-confidence." Samantha further reflected on her experience in the classroom with discussing controversial topics and how she will use this in working with another group:

My own experiences abroad will be helpful, but having taken this course I have experience openly discussing controversial topics. Day to day I never discussed hot button issues with people abroad unless I already knew them quite well. In contrast, during class I was able to observe and engage in extremely open and frank discussions. I will be certain to impress upon the participants that the rhetoric, body language, and tone we use is important. It is one hundred percent okay to be hesitant about new cultures.

Will reflected on a course that he took that involved a group project and how he gained confidence in his abilities:

I think the biggest change in how I viewed my leadership ability is in my self-confidence. I had served in leadership positions before that project, but I had either been put in a leadership position or had been lead by a competent leader with adult support. This was the first time I had ever been in a position where I had to figure out what authority I had within the group, and it definitely gave me confidence for the future.

Discussion/Conclusions/ Recommendations

College students have opportunities for leadership learning through leadership training, education, and development experiences in the Maroon & White Leadership Program. As we would somewhat expect, reflections from students in the Maroon & White Leadership Program exhibited outcomes characterized by the LID model (Komives et al., 2007). Specifically in the "developing self" component of the LID model, students appeared to exhibit aspects of deepening self-awareness, building self-confidence, establish interpersonal efficacy in working with others, applying new skills, and expanding one's motivations.

From the leadership training experiences, students learned about skill development and the process of leadership. Within the skill development area, students reflected on skills of working with others, which could also be considered as establishing interpersonal efficacy in working with others. Students talked about expanding one's motivations as we see that Meghan was going to study abroad because she wanted to think differently after having gone through a leadership training.

Within the leadership education designation, student reflections were characterized as learning knowledge of leadership, understanding and valuing diversity, and confidence in their leadership abilities. The understanding and valuing of diversity theme fits in with the LID model in terms of the establishing interpersonal efficacy in working with others. Students reflected on how they now recognize the importance of working with others who are different than them and can value their unique experiences. Students also discussed confidence in their leadership abilities. Part of the LID model of developing self indicates that students should build self-confidence. From the leadership training and leadership education reflections, students did discuss gaining confidence in their leadership abilities.

In the reflection about students' leadership development experiences, students reflected on

value of experiences and self-discovery. Kayla specifically had a deepening self-awareness as she discussed her failures, but can now see how these failures shaped her as a person. Lesley reflected on a deepening self-awareness for recognizing blind spots and the importance of working with others to overcome them. We also see within the leadership experience designator, students reflected on leadership as a process and identifying leadership as more than just a position as in Christine's statement that you can be a leader despite your title.

The one part of the LID model that may not have been as evident from the reflections about student leadership experiences is in applying new skills. The LID model is a framework for helping us understand how students develop as leaders. It is a cyclical model that would assert students should be able to apply new skills as they develop as a leader. This may be an area where the Maroon & White Leadership Program could focus on building within their program. Students complete a combination of eight leadership experiences as part of the program. Leadership educators within the program should formulate ways to better equip coaches to help students apply their new skills as a leader or help students better articulate how they are applying those new skills.

The theoretical framework worked well for this analysis and demonstrates the importance of formal education, training programs, and student development in the process to becoming authentic leaders. The oral and written reflections provide evidence of student leadership learning and progression through the leadership identity stages as a result of this leadership program. It should be noted; however, that the student reflections analyzed for this study were those that were considered "exemplary." The constructed learning of these individuals reflects those that were rated highly by a panel of judges. More research should be conducted to examine the learning of those students who did not rate as exemplary to see whether similar constructed learning occurs.

More research is needed to examine how the type of leadership experience (training, education, or development) impacts the leadership identity development of students. Also, the Maroon & White Leadership Program is a purposeful program designed to get students to reflect both orally and in written form about their leadership experiences and with the guidance of a leadership coach. To truly examine the impact of the program, more research should be conducted to compare students who are only doing leadership development, leadership education, or leadership training experiences without the added requirements of reflection and guidance of a leadership coach. Furthermore, research should also be focused on the impact of a leadership coach on a student's leadership journey. Given the impact of a leadership mentor or coach on a student's leadership identity development (Komives et al., 2006), more research should be conducted to examine the behaviors and characteristics of the leadership coach and the factors that affect the impact of their role in a student's leadership journey.

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