Using Involvement Theory to examine the relationship between undergraduate participation in extracurricular activities and leadership development

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Background & Setting

- **Reforms in higher education helped raise awareness of shortcomings in higher education. (Koljatic & Kuh, 2001)**

- **Leadership Development is included in the mission statements of many institutions of higher education.** (Astin & Astin, 2000; Boatman, 1999)

- **Extracurricular participation contributes to leadership outcomes.** (Ewing, Bruce, Ricketts, 2009; Layfield, Radhakrishna & Andresen, 2000; Birkenholtz & Schumacher, 1994)
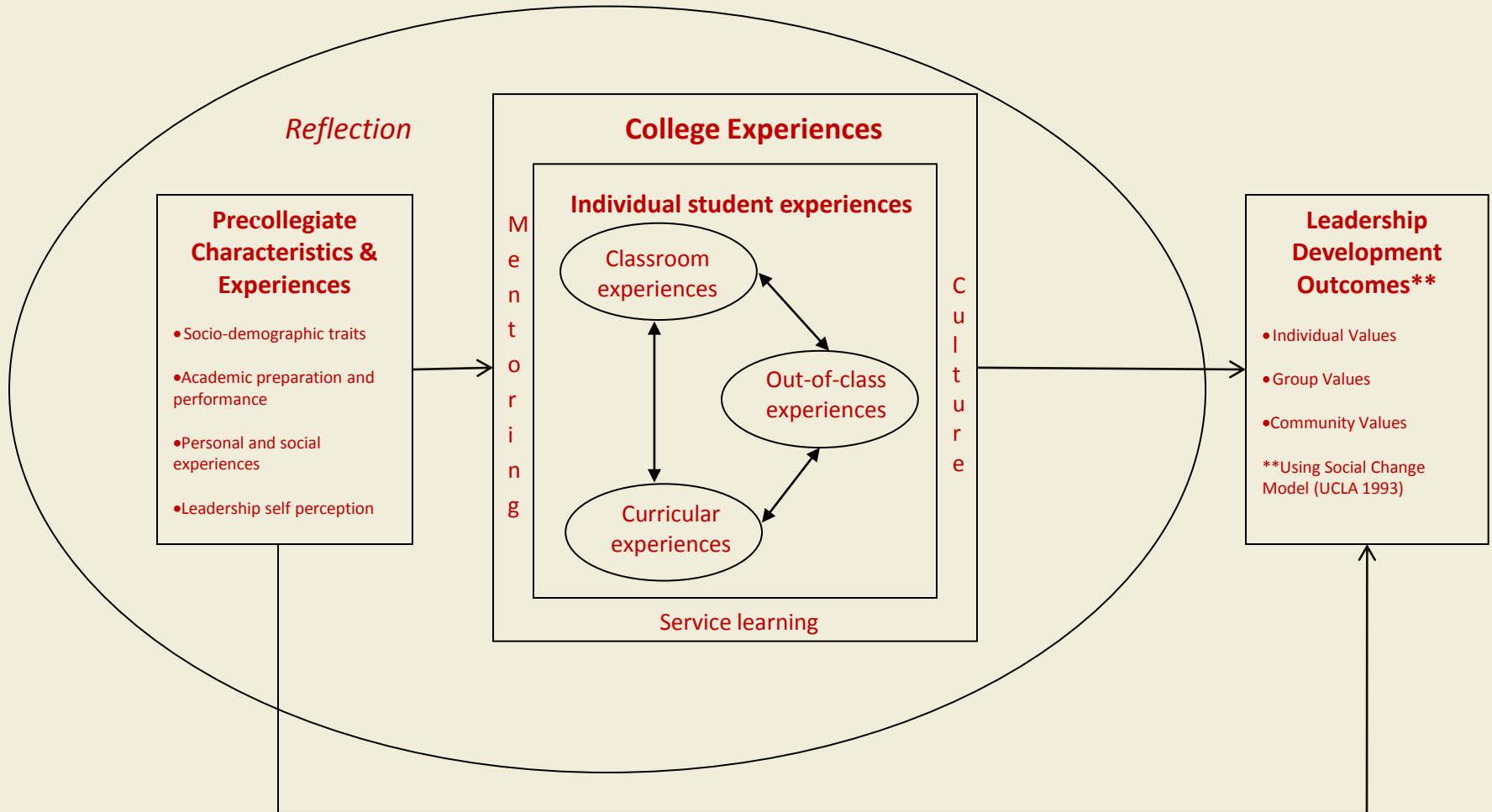
Involvement Theory (Astin, 1993)

Investment of **physical and psychological energy** that occurs along a continuum.

Both **quantitative** (e.g. how much time a student spends on an activity) and **qualitative** aspects (e.g. how focused the student is on the activity).

Conceptual Framework

Reflection

Precollegiate Characteristics & Experiences

- Socio-demographic traits
- Academic preparation and performance
- Personal and social experiences
- Leadership self perception

College Experiences

M e n t o r i n g

Individual student experiences

Classroom experiences

Out-of-class experiences

Curricular experiences

C u l t u r e

Service learning

Leadership Development Outcomes**

- Individual Values
- Group Values
- Community Values

**Using Social Change Model (UCLA 1993)

*Model adapted from Terenzini and Reason (2005)

Methods
Subjects & Instrumentation

- **Subjects**

  - Full-time, traditional-age, senior students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) at Iowa State University (*N*=969)

- **Instrumentation**

  - Web-based questionnaire

  - Researcher-designed survey instrument, included an existing instrument (SRLS-R2) and researcher-designed questions

  - Three sections: precollegiate experiences, collegiate experiences, and leadership development

  - Face validity and content validity established

Methods
Data Collection & Analysis

- **Data Collection**

  - Survey was distributed five times during April, 2011. (Dillman, 2006)
    - Non-response error (Lindner, Murphy & Briers, 2001)

  - Demographic and academic information was obtained from university records.

- **Data Analysis**

  - Reliability established

  - Descriptive statistics: frequency, mean, medium, mode, standard deviations

  - Inferential statistics: chi square, *t* test, ANOVA, Tukey post hoc

Methods
Limitations

- Data Collection at one fairly homogeneous College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

- 20% return rate

    - Students who responded were more likely to:

        - female

        - entered the university directly from high school

        - higher GPA

- **In spite of these limitations, the analysis offers insights for institutions who aspire to increase student leadership outcomes.**

Research Questions

- Does membership in an extracurricular club or organization influence individual values of leadership development?

- Does the number of extracurricular clubs and organizations in which a student participates influence individual values of leadership development?

- Does the amount of time a student participates in extracurricular clubs and organization influence individual values of leadership development?

- Does serving as an officer in an extracurricular club or organization influence individual values of leadership development?

- Does the involvement index influence individual values of leadership?

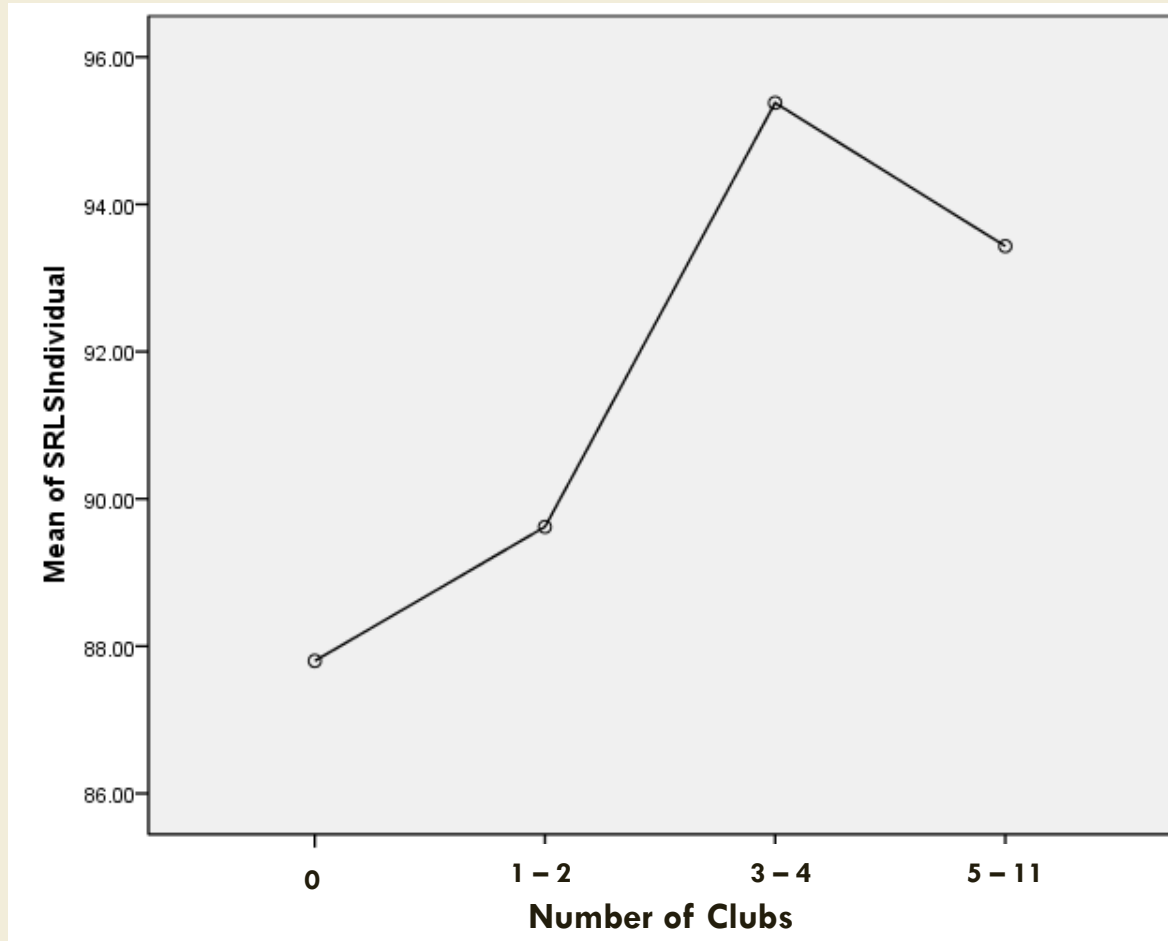- Does gender influence individual values of leadership development?

Results
Club Membership

- **Students who belonged to clubs scored higher**
  - individual values scale (p $\leq$ .045)
  - congruence scale (p $\leq$ .017)
  - commitment scale (p $\leq$ .036)

- **No statistical differences**
  - consciousness of self scale (p $\leq$ .095)

Results
Number of Clubs

Results
Time Spent

No statistically significant differences in individual values leadership based on hours per week spent participating in extracurricular clubs and organizations.
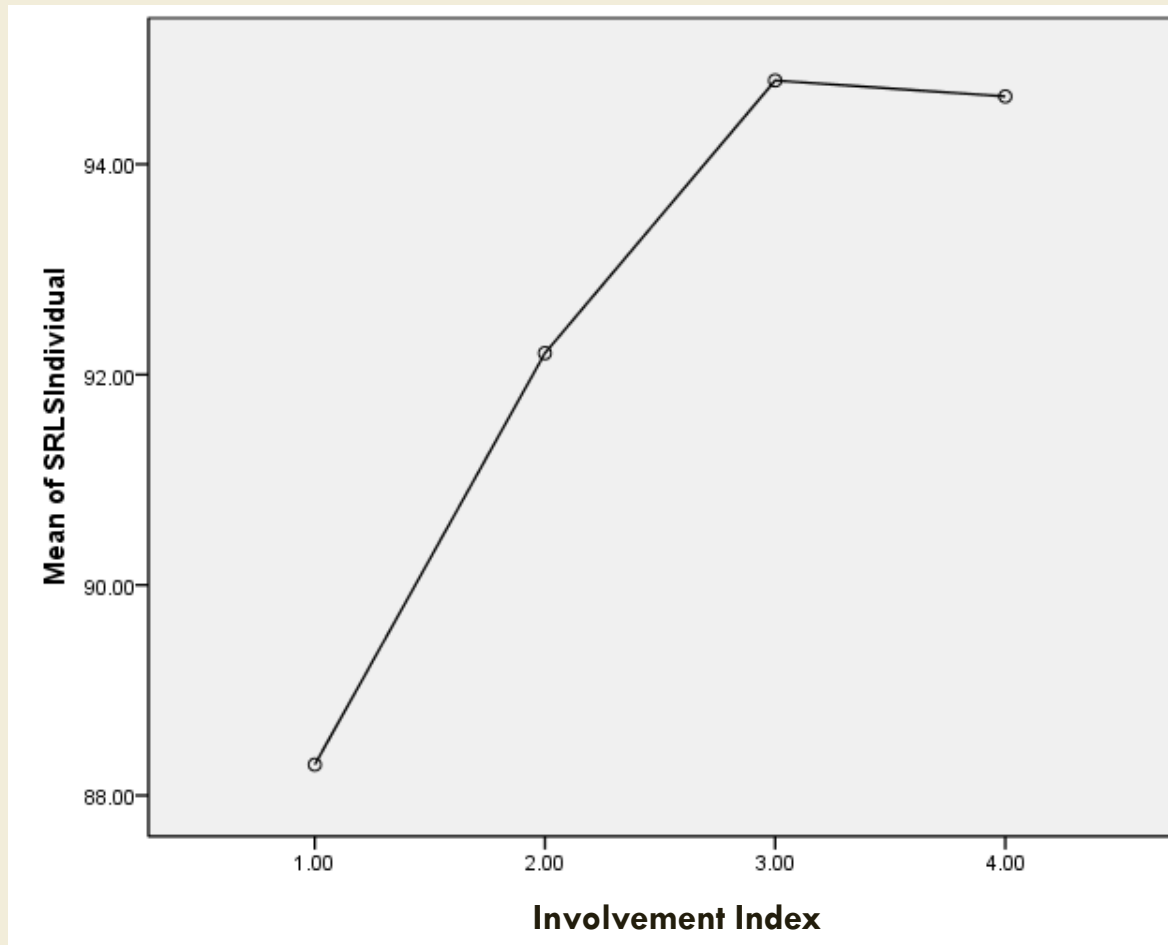
Results
Serving as an Officer

- **Students who served as an officer in a club or organization scored higher**
  - individual values scales (p $\leq$ .008)
  - consciousness of self (p $\leq$ .022)
  - commitment (p $\leq$ .003)

- **Serving as an officer did not affect**
  - congruence scale (p $\leq$ .087)

Results
Involvement Index

Conclusions

- CALS students are highly engaged in extracurricular clubs and organizations.

- Both qualitative and quantitative indicators of extracurricular involvement are important influences of leadership outcomes.

- Threshold of 3-4 clubs or organizations is the optimal participation for leadership.

- Serving as a club officer resulted in higher levels of leadership outcomes.

Recommendations

- Institutions should include the role of extracurricular clubs and organizations as they develop plans to reach leadership outcomes.

- Students should be encouraged to become active in 3 – 4 clubs or organizations.

- Leadership training offered to club officers should be offered to all members.

Questions?