

Komives, S. R. & Wagner, W. (Eds.). (2009). *Leadership for a better world: Understanding the social change model of leadership development* (2nd Ed). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Reviewed by Jamie Adasi

Introduction

Leadership for a Better World: Understanding the Social Change Model of Leadership Development provides a foundation and insight into the journey of creating and sustaining positive social change in today's complex world. It is no secret that higher education is looking to its current students to be the next generation of change agents, and this book seeks to address this specific need. The authors, a collection of leadership educators and scholars with varied student affairs experience, deliver a useful and practical tool situated in the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (SCM) applicable to several developmentally-different student contexts and experiences.

Theoretical Frame

From 1993 to 1996, a team of leadership educators known as "The Working Ensemble" met and collaborated in developing what is now widely used and well-known as the SCM, a leadership model for students interested in effecting positive social change for a better world. The ensemble included leadership researchers, scholars, and educators: Alexander Astin, Helen Astin, Tony Chambers, Cynthia Johnson, Susan Komives, Carole Leland, Nance Lucas, Raechele Pope, Denny Roberts, and Kathy Shellog. From these meetings, their 1996 guidebook on the SCM (Higher Education Research Institute [HERI]) was developed as a tool for leadership educators. While the original guidebook has been useful for both educators and students, there was a need for a student textbook on the SCM, *Leadership for a Better World* calls students to action and situates the SCM as a way of engaging with others across shared purposes in today's context. The authors also challenge students to partake in a journey, or the "becoming" process, through continued action and self-reflection.

The SCM holds the assumptions that leadership is a collaborative, values-based process open to all students, and identifies service as a key practice in helping students actualize their leadership potential (HERI, 1996). Furthermore, the two primary goals of the model are to enhance student learning through self-knowledge and leadership competence, and "to facilitate positive social change at the institution or in the community" (p. 19). *Leadership for a Better World* integrates these concepts and helps students identify key actions for engaging in socially responsible leadership through the "Seven C's" of Citizenship, Collaboration, Common Purpose, Controversy with Civility, Consciousness of Self, Congruence, and Commitment which all lead to the eighth C of Change. This book brings these elements together through its' in-depth analysis of the SCM.

Elements of the Book

Leadership for a Better World is divided into five parts and written in a manner that captures students' experiences and asks them to critically examine what social change is; societal/community, group and individual values from the SCM that influence social change; and what it means to be a change agent in today's world. The template for each chapter includes

case studies, discussion questions, and journal probes integrated throughout the book so the reader is able to connect the content to their lived experiences.

Part 1, which includes Chapters 1 through 4, sets the stage by presenting what social change means and introduces the SCM. Chapter 1, by Wendy Wagner, discusses what is meant by social change, why students should get involved in social change, where personal conviction lies within creating change, possible pitfalls in the journey towards social change, and ends with a description of what it means to engage in socially responsible leadership. This overview helps the reader answer, “Why does social change *really* matter?”

Chapter 2, by Kristan Cilente, provides a relevant and succinct history and overview of the SCM. This chapter is particularly helpful in engaging students who may be new to this model of leadership or who may not see this type of leadership as valuable within a positional or hierarchical leadership context. Specifically, this chapter hones in on how students might go about implementing the social change model in general and on their respective campuses.

In Chapter 3, José Luis-Riera introduces the case study approach to understand how to put the SCM to work. This chapter then introduces three case studies, *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Starving for Attention*, and *Clear Haziness*. *An Inconvenient Truth* is presented with SCM applications and the latter two case studies are introduced to help the reader apply and synthesize the specific sections of the SCM in each of the subsequent chapters.

Part 1 ends with Chapter 4, in which Nurridena Workman brings the act of change to the forefront as the main objective of the SCM. This chapter highlights transformative change; a variety of models of change for the individual, group, and community/societal level; new approaches to change; and resistance to change. Likewise, this chapter helps students explore how change influences themselves and the larger community surrounding them on a deeper level. Readers are encouraged to read all four chapters in sequence to help them fully understand why social change is necessary and what change actually means before digging into each “C” of the SCM.

Part 2 through 4 explore each of the SCM’s seven “C’s” or values, clustered by the community/societal, group and individual dimensions. The authors make a special note that these dimensions can be explored in any order, but encourage readers to start with the community/societal dimension. As readers have just examined change from Part 1, this presentation flows nicely in facilitating continued reflection on social change while immediately moving towards the community/societal context. This may also help readers from collectivistic society’s/upbringings connect with the model even more as it begins with the community as an emphasis.

Part 2—consisting of chapter 5—examines the societal/community dimension and author Jennifer Bonnet asks the reader “Toward what social ends is the leadership development activity directed?” (HERI, 1996, p. 19). This chapter defines community and calls the reader to critically think about what citizenship means for them in today’s world. The chapter’s author does a great job of situating citizenship within the context of today’s students with her take on multicultural citizenship, coalition-building, global citizenship and the use of technology in connecting students with today’s issues.

“Understanding groups is key to accomplish shared purposes” (p. 192). The group dimension and its corresponding values of Collaboration, Common Purpose and Controversy with Civility are examined in detail in Part 3. In Chapter 6, Jordan England explores collaboration and why it is an essential pillar of the SCM. This is a chapter that relates to every student’s experience with any type of group project or teamwork as it stresses what collaboration is versus what it is not and how it can be manifested to work in teams.

Chapter 7’s author, Alex Teh, provides the framework for why groups exist, how groups can effectively work in creating a common purpose (shared vision, aims and values), challenges in creating and maintaining common purpose within groups, and ends with a connection to the other C’s. In this chapter, Common Purpose is described as the thread that links the individual, group and societal values together; for without it, there is nothing tying together a group and what it aims to do.

In Chapter 8, Cecilio Alvarez deconstructs controversy with civility—the last value of the group dimension—as a goal of creating dialogue within groups that promotes the inclusion of different voices and opinions in a civil manner. This chapter identifies the key differences between conflict and controversy with civility, presents the positive value of controversy within groups, and ends with some personal reflection on the reader’s core values and beliefs in engaging across different perspectives.

Parts 2 through 3 laid the foundation for understanding Part 4 which hones in on the individual values—consciousness of self, congruence and commitment—of the SCM, and emphasizes “Learning and personal development [as] a lifelong process” (p. 296). The reader is encouraged to engage in mindfulness of self and of self in relation to others as no leader can effectively engage in group work without understanding themselves first. In Chapter 9, Justin Fincher delves right into the importance of consciousness of self by examining aspects of individual identity. This chapter also includes practical ways for the reader to engage in consciousness of self, and ends with connecting this value to the other C’s of the SCM. The discussion questions, journal probes and application of the case studies at the end of this chapter provide essential practices for situating students in this work in the comfort and privacy of their own minds.

Chapter 10’s Tricia Shalka focuses on congruence which takes the conversation of understanding one’s values to the next level. Congruence is described as “an easy concept to understand, but much more difficult to put into daily practice” (p.335). This chapter explores what it means to be congruent, some of the challenges of living in congruence and how the reader can be challenged to maintain congruence within a group setting.

Co-authors Ashlee Kerkhoff and Daniel Ostick explore commitment in Chapter 11, the last of the individual values that drives the group process. This chapter emphasizes how the reader can sustain commitment over time through creating a system of “Balanced self-renewal...” (p. 381). Furthermore, this chapter is especially effective at integrating all three individual values and asking the reader to examine the motivations, passions and actions that inspire them to stay committed.

One concept that the reader will not forget after reading *Leadership for a Better World* is mindfulness. The beginning of this book calls students’ attention to the importance of social

change; Part 5 synthesizes the entire book and concepts of the SCM to understanding how to become a change agent. In a daunting task, William Jones and Marybeth Drechsler write chapter 12 by offering a real assessment of both the challenges and rewards of becoming a change agent through its concentration on empowerment, leadership self-efficacy, and gaining practical experience in creating and sustaining positive social change. The authors make sure to leave readers with the practical tools needed to utilize this model.

Finally, the epilogue brings the entire focus of the book back to the reader—the person that has courage and that can make a difference. The SCM is disseminated to the reader as “a framework for engaging in life in ways that matter” (p. 445).

Best Target Audience(s)

Leadership for a Better World is applicable to many audiences, but it is specifically useful for college students who are engaging in the process of leadership in both direct and indirect ways. This commitment can be through group involvement, taking a leadership course or being involved in the leadership of a group or organization that a student may be connected with. This book is also helpful as an update to the SCM guidebook, and therefore, would be practical for leadership educators and scholars, and anyone interested in a leadership model created for college students that is applicable within many group contexts.

Uses of Book

There are many ways that *Leadership for a Better World* can be used in practice. This book could be integrated into the curriculum of different areas of study. While the premise of this book is that of the SCM and could, therefore, be situated into many leadership courses, *Leadership for a Better World* also draws from a variety of theoretical frameworks such as psychology, sociology, and business. As a result, its usefulness spans a variety of areas of study. Additionally, this book is beneficial and practical for any student working within a student group or organization, and can serve as the foundation for how the group chooses to interact with one another, their advisor(s), other student groups, and their larger institutional/community contexts. Furthermore, this book could be instrumental in the development of a peer-facilitated leadership development program at different campuses. A team of peer educators at the University of Maryland, known as the Peer Leadership Council (PLC), uses the SCM and this book as the foundation of its program. Through on-going developmental group training and enacting peer-facilitated leadership development workshops, the PLC works collaboratively to educate all Maryland students on the SCM, while living the SCM values and learning and growing from these values as individuals and as a team. This is just one example of how institutions have been adopting the SCM as the core of their student leadership programs, and this book provides the framework for students to both learn from and educate others on this form of leadership.

Critique

Leadership for a Better World proves to be a thought-provoking, practical and meaningful tool for students and educators interested in creating positive social change. This book further pushes the envelope of understanding post-industrial leadership constructs, and again, situates the SCM within the student experience. The layout of the content presented in this book also addresses any critics who may be wondering why this leadership model is relevant

and important for today's college students. Although it may seem lengthy with its 462 pages, it is an easy read that can be entered at many different points depending on the focus of the reader or instructor.

With such a comprehensive overview of the SCM, students may be overwhelmed by the vast amount of theories and models presented in this book. The reader may leave certain chapters wondering which theory or model they should use in their daily practice, in addition to the SCM. While this may be a concern for some readers, this book was created to help students situate the SCM within their experiences, hence the variety of theories/models used to help students better understand the SCM. Likewise, this in-depth overview situates the SCM in a deep body of knowledge and literature only emphasizing its usefulness. Furthermore, with 15 authors, one might become concerned that this book may be hard to follow; however, the authors do an incredible job of using one synchronized voice which is apparent with the templating of each chapter.

Additionally, while the case study analysis approach proves to be useful in applying the SCM, unless facilitated through homework, as well as in-class or group-based discussions, it may be difficult for a student to keep up with the two case studies throughout the reading. Furthermore, it would have been interesting to see how social change efforts interact and are similar to social justice efforts. This could have been valuable for students who may not identify what they are doing as leadership, but whom are working within their own communities to effect change. Noticeable, the authors do examine social change with a critical eye by including concepts such as root causes, marginality, and many pitfalls that come with this type of work. It is the expansion of these concepts that might help marginalized students further connect to the SCM on a deeper level.

Nevertheless, as an introductory text to the SCM, *Leadership for a Better World* does a great job of putting social justice issues in context for students whom are new to the model. After reading this book, if the reader believes that he or she still does not understand the SCM, then this person has not read the book. Lastly, the authors do an incredible job of synthesizing the often mentioned "theory-to-practice" by going in depth on each concept so that the reader is given many outlets to use the SCM in their real lives. This book will continue to influence the lives of many as readers deconstruct what leadership was and where leadership is going as we all strive for a better world.

Reviewer

Jamie Adasi is a Masters student in the College Student Personnel program at the University of Maryland, College Park working as a Graduate Coordinator for Human Resources within the Department of Resident Life. Jamie looks forward to engaging in work around leadership development and social justice for college students as she pursues a career within student affairs and higher education.

Adasi, J. (2011). Every college student can lead. [Review of the book *Leadership for a better world*, S. R. Komives, W. Wagner, & Associates]. National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs. Retrieved from <http://www.nclp.umd.edu>