SERVICE LEADERSHIP EMERGENCE THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING INTERNSHIPS IN HONG KONG

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Abstract

This article is about a Hong Kong–based summer internship program designed to foster service leadership attributes through service-learning. We report research based on interviews with interns and their partner organization representatives (PORs) and on written assignments as required by the program. We also report how the research informed the redesigning of the program. The research identified factors that support service leadership emergence, including servant leadership by PORs; appropriate intern responsibilities; support from other stakeholders; and interns' possession of a secure knowledge foundation. Conservation of resources (COR) theory underpins our explanation of how these factors enhance service leadership emergence, while self-determination theory (SDT) also explains the impact of servant leadership by PORs. We conclude by explaining the subsequent actions that have been taken to leverage the supportive factors.

Introduction

Internships involve students' practical engagement in workplace settings (Beard, 2007; Holyoak, 2013). However, the educational quality of internships varies considerably. Expediency can prevail over educational goals (Scheuer & Mills, 2016), with interns confined to routine clerical duties (Coco, 2000; Ross & Elechi, 2002) or even to production line work (Smith & Chan, 2015). When educational purposes prevail, interns are assigned knowledge-work assignments with reasonable time frames and task significance (i.e., social and organizational impact) and receive guidance, support, and meaningful feedback (D'Abate, Youndt, & Wenzel, 2009; Rothman, 2003, 2007; Woodside, 2017).

Among educationally oriented internships, some emphasize applying knowledge directly related to the degree major (Knemeyer & Murphy, 2002; Ross & Elechi, 2002; Zhang, 2013), while others emphasize opportunities to develop personal, interpersonal, and leadership skills (Beard, 2007; Chow & Lam, 2015; Clark,

2003; Cook, Parker, & Pettijohn, 2004; Degravel, 2011). Our article investigates the latter, developmental type in the form of an internship program ("the internship program") organized by a Hong Kong–based university ("University X") that offers opportunities to practice service leadership attributes in community organizations (Chow & Lam, 2015; Chung, 2012; Shek & Leung, 2015). Our research sought to add theoretical understanding and practical insight (Woodside, 2017) on how to provide empowerment and resource support for the interns to practice as emerging service leaders.

In the next section, we introduce the concept of service leadership (Chow & Lam, 2015; Chung, 2012; Shek & Leung, 2015) and explain the aims and design of the internship program. There follows a section on theoretical model development, covering servant leadership (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Spears, 2004), self-determination theory (SDT) (Bringle, Studer, Wilson, Clayton, & Steinberg 2011; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Deci, 1971; Deci & Ryan, 2000), and conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989). We explain two emergent conceptual models of service leadership emergence. The first model is based on SDT and proposes that if partner organization representatives (PORs) act as servant leaders, they address interns' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and thereby create conditions for interns to emerge as service leaders. The second model draws on COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) to represent how various factors can energize and affirm interns as they practice service leadership attributes, namely enactment of servant leadership by PORs; assignment to interns of appropriate service leadership responsibilities; support by stakeholders, such as other interns, service recipients, and regular employees; and a secure foundation of knowledge for the interns.

A methodology section explains our research study, in which we collected data from all 16 interns who joined the internship program in 2014 and from PORs at all 10 community organizations hosting internships that summer. In our findings' section, we relate case examples of service leadership emergence and otherwise to both the SDT model and the COR model. In our discussion and conclusions section, we emphasize practical implications, discuss generalizability to contexts beyond the host community organizations, and acknowledge the limitations of the research.

Program Background

The Concept of Service Leadership

The launching of the internship program was inspired by the idea that service leadership is an appropriate model for advanced economies, in which most employees work in service industries (Fung, 2015). Excellent service requires diagnosing, creating, and improvising solutions to meet distinctive needs of service recipients (Grönfeldt & Strother, 2006). However, workplace cultures that assume top-down leadership, unilateral command and control, layers of hierarchy, and subordinate obedience persist as legacies of the "factory era" (Atkinson, 2004, p. 105). Service-based or knowledge-intensive organizations require radically different leadership

approaches (Atkinson, 2004; Rost, 1991) that emphasize collaboration and mutual influence (Chung, 2012; Debeljuh & Destefano, 2005; Rost, 1991, 1994). In service leadership, frontline servers can propose, design, and improvise services that anticipate and respond to recipients' needs (Chung, 2012; Fung, 2015).

The Internship Program

Overall structure. The internship program began in 2013 and is open to students from all majors at University X. It became credit-bearing in 2016. Between 12 and 16 full-time internships at Hong Kong–based community partner organizations have been offered during each summer vacation. At the time of this research, the internship program was managed by a field coordinator working at "Unit S," which is responsible, university-wide, for coordinating service-learning–based courses or programs (see Howard, 2001). Interns received a stipend, conditional upon completing the internship and all the associated coursework assignments. With the exception of interns at one partner organization that paid the stipend itself (Site 9 in Table 2, see later), all other interns received the stipend from an independent charity that promotes service leadership education.

    Aims. The internship program aims to help interns develop 10 service leadership attributes. Table 1 maps these attributes against broader outcome domains for service leadership education. The latter, according to Shek and Leung (2015), comprise intrapersonal competencies such as problem-solving abilities (Ayres & Malouff, 2007) and emotional intelligence (George, 2000; Nelis et al., 2011); interpersonal competencies (Segrin & Taylor, 2007) such as relationship-building; plus moral character, caring disposition, self-leadership, and continuous self-improvement.

Table 1
Service Leadership Attributes Targeted by the Program

Service leadership attributes targeted by the internship program	Service leadership developmental domains (Shek & Leung, 2015)
Anticipating and solving problems	Intrapersonal competencies
Expressing original and constructive opinions	
Project coordination skills	
Active listening	Interpersonal competencies
Contributing to cohesiveness & close relationships	
Influencing others	
Undertaking delegated responsibilities	Moral character
Civic engagement	
Caring disposition	Caring disposition
Committing to continuous improvement	Self-leadership & continuous self-improvement

Placement structures. From 2014 onward, the internships have lasted eight weeks, full time. They have been individual-based, unlike the team-based service leadership internships arranged by some other universities (e.g., Chow & Lam, 2015). Nonetheless, if two or more interns in the program are based at the same site, they may undertake some tasks together. At their various sites, interns in the program may also collaborate with interns from other programs and universities.

Obtaining placements and enlisting PORs. Unit S has sought, with varying success, to enlist PORs who are willing to engage as co-educators (Godfrey, Illes, & Berry, 2005; Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2003; Papamarcos, 2005, p. 330) by providing full supervisory support, including induction, training, coaching, guidance, and constructive feedback.

Mini-missions. Prior to their commencement, Unit S works with PORs to draft provisional mini-mission statements for each internship. These are intended to ensure that the interns undertake projects that make a difference and empower them to practice service leadership attributes. For example, in 2014, intern M1 set up a surplus vegetable collection network, promoted "food cherishing" and "zero food waste" programs in the

community, and organized an exhibition based on associated community research. Interns F6 and F7 designed, promoted, and organized exercise-related community events for the elderly. It is intended that interns revise and update their mini-missions as their work progresses, in consultation with their POR(s) and Unit S.

Selecting and matching interns. Unit S selects students for the internship program on the basis of written applications, interviews, and team exercises. Criteria for selection include knowledge about and enthusiasm for civic engagement and prior service-learning experience. Selected students may attend a second screening interview by PORs and are matched with host sites on the basis of their preferences, prior experience, and cognate subject knowledge.

Preparation and review workshops. Prior to internship commencement, a preparatory workshop introduces the 10 targeted service leadership attributes (see Table 1) and includes discussions about the mini-missions. A one-day interim plenary review workshop is held half-way through the internship period. From 2015 onward, a plenary review workshop has been held at the end of the internship period.

Written and oral reflections. Interns are required to submit individual learning diaries on a fortnightly basis. These include reflections about their service leadership engagement, accounts of progress on mini-missions, and analyses of salient aspects of their host organization, such as its vision, mission, culture, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and directions for improvement. Each intern also submits a final reflective report, summarizing developmental engagement and areas of leadership transformation, identifying future developmental needs, self-evaluating performance on mini-missions, and suggesting ways to improve the internship experience. In addition, students make oral presentations at the interim and review workshops.

Theoretical Background, Research Questions, and Model Development

In this section, we review literature on servant leadership, self-determination theory, and conservation of resources theory and present propositions and two models up front, which in practice evolved through constant comparisons between emerging research findings and pre-existing theoretical concepts (Hallberg, 2006).

How PORs' Servant Leadership May Support Interns' Emergence as Service Leaders

Servant leadership appears to be an appropriate leadership approach for PORs. There are similarities and differences between the concepts of service leadership and servant leadership (Shek, Chung, & Leung, 2015). Both involve "a strong sense of care" (Shek & Chung, 2015, p. 230), "an active and proactive attitude that modern society expects from service providers and leaders" (Zhou, Chan, & Mickleborough, 2015, p. 137), and "a lifelong journey that includes discovery of one's self, a desire to serve others, and a commitment to lead"

(Hoshmand, 2015, p. 18, quoting Greenleaf, 1977). Yet whereas service leaders serve "everybody, everywhere, and every day" (Zhou et al., 2015, p. 137), servant leaders focus on putting followers first (Shek & Leung, 2015, p. 4).

Servant leaders meet the psychological needs of their followers by empowering them and providing them with direction, emotional support, feedback, and resources (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Grant, 2013; Greenleaf, Beazley, Beggs, & Spears, 2003; Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008; Sabbaghi, Cavanagh, & Hipskind, 2013; Spears, 2010; Trompenaars & Voerman, 2010; van Dierendonck, 2011). Enlisting PORs as co-educators is consistent with the expectation that they should act as servant leaders for the interns. However, Unit S only made this conceptual connection after reading Chiniara and Bentein (2016), and prior to 2016, absence of conceptual clarity may have impeded attempts to establish appropriate developmental contracts (Stuart, 1978) with PORs and interns. It turned out that some PORs did not adopt the roles of co-educator and servant leader. Our first research question, RQ1, is, How does servant leadership enacted by PORs contribute to interns' emergence as service leaders during the internship program?

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

SDT holds that autonomous motivation for growth through tackling challenges depends on satisfying psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci, 1971; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991, pp. 327–328). Figure 1 derives from Chiniara and Bentein, who studied the impact of servant leadership by supervisors on the need satisfaction and work performance of regular employees in a high technology company. Notwithstanding the different context of our own research, we shall next develop some matching propositions about how servant leadership (Liden et al., 2008) by PORs increases interns' readiness to practice service leadership by addressing their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.
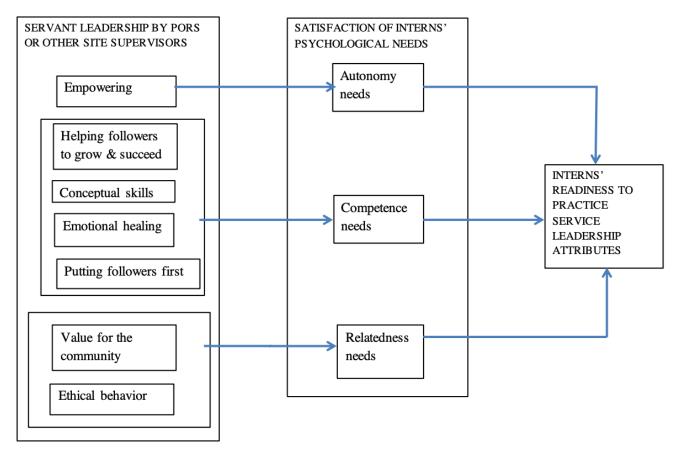
Figure 1. How Servant Leadership May Increase the Readiness of Interns to Practice Service Leadership.

Autonomy. This involves the self-perception that one is free to originate actions that are self-governed, self-endorsed, and self-owned (Ryan & Deci, 2006). According to SDT, people feel some autonomy, even when requested to act in particular ways, if they value those actions and regard the requests as reasonable (Gagné & Deci, 2005). People feel more autonomy when they also regard their actions as congruent with their overall values and beliefs, and they feel the strongest sense of autonomy when pursuing actions for their own sake (Ryan & Deci, 2006, p. 1563). Empowering followers is a key facet of servant leadership. Servant leaders empower followers by entrusting them with authority and discretion and by encouraging them to exercise voice, thereby meeting autonomy needs (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Liden et al., 2008). Hence:

> P1. PORs increase interns' developmental engagement by assigning them meaningful tasks with delegated authority and inviting their ideas and suggestions, i.e., by empowering them.

Competence. Felt competence equates to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) in that it entails the belief that one is effective and mastering salient capabilities. Besides being a prerequisite for psychological health and well-being (Deci, 1971), felt competence enhances vitality (Ryan & Deci, 2008; Sheldon, Ryan, & Reis, 1996). We consider that four facets of servant leadership (Liden et al., 2008) are salient in addressing followers' competence needs (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016). The first, helping followers to grow and succeed, involves providing

them opportunities to enhance skills that match their interests and aspirations. Second, putting followers first involves prioritizing followers' development over the expediency of using them as a "pair of hands." Third, followers' felt competence can be maintained, even when the latter cannot solve a particular problem independently, if a servant leader draws on conceptual skills to diagnose appropriate interventions to augment (and not dismiss) followers' efforts. Fourth, a servant leader may enact emotional healing to help recover followers' self-esteem, if, for example, the latter are dismayed because of their failure to achieve something (Liden et al., 2008). Hence:

> P2. PORs increase interns' developmental engagement by (a) aligning assignments with their interests and aspirations, that is, helping interns grow and succeed; (b) prioritizing interns' interests over expediency, that is, putting interns first; (c) providing timely interventions based on expert diagnosis of service requirements, that is, drawing on conceptual skills; and (d) helping interns recover self-esteem after mishaps, that is, emotional healing.

Relatedness. This need involves "the universal propensity to interact with, be connected to, and experience caring for other people" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004, p. 25). Opportunities to work interdependently with others and develop a sense of belongingness to a team encourages autonomous motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005, p. 355; Van Knippenberg & Van Schie, 2000). The quality of interpersonal interaction is important in meeting relatedness needs and requires a workplace climate characterized by psychological safety and high trust (Ehrhart, 2004; Schaubroeck, Lam, & Peng, 2011). Servant leaders help to create and sustain such a climate through ethical behavior, treating subordinates fairly and respectfully (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Liden et al., 2008). A servant leader's self-restraint and impartiality are conducive to conflict resolution (Jit, Sharma, & Kawatra, 2016). Another relatedness factor extends to bonds between organization members and the wider community. Servant leaders meet followers' relatedness needs by leading them in serving the community (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Liden et al., 2008). This is especially important with the internship program. Hence:

> P3. PORs increase interns' developmental engagement by (a) resolving conflicts in a fair and respectful manner, that is, ethical behavior; and (b) exemplifying community engagement.

Contextual and Personal Factors

RQ2 asks, How do appropriate intern responsibilities, stakeholder support, and a secure knowledge foundation support interns' developmental engagement as emerging service leaders? Concerning interns' actions in exercising responsibility and discretion and in relating to others (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Cunliffe, 2009), RQ3 asks, How and why do interns go about enacting (or otherwise) their own emergence as service leaders when presented with opportunities? The following section shall explain COR as a background theory for making sense of the interplay of contextual and personal factors.

Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

According to COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002), people are motivated to obtain, maintain, and develop resources. Job-based resources, such as formative feedback, social support, autonomy, and developmental opportunities, foster work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2005). Hobfoll (1989) identified personal characteristics (e.g., personal traits, skills), conditions (e.g., roles, supporting systems), and energies (e.g., time, money) as three kinds of resources.

Intended conditions. Unit S intends that interns are assigned meaningful responsibilities that involve creativity and analysis, organizing people and events, working in teams, and contact with the community. Meaningful roles of this kind, in contrast with back-up clerical or technical tasks, endow high-quality conditions for the interns, enabling developmental engagement as emerging service leaders as they develop close and constructive social bonds with PORs, peers, and the community. Intended supporting systems include servant leadership behavior by PORs in addressing interns' situational needs (Hobfoll, 1985), thus building and reinforcing their readiness to practice service leadership. Intended conditions also include support by co-workers in sharing information, giving advice, and offering encouragement.

Valued personal characteristics. Unit S intends that screening and preparation ensure that by the time students commence their internships, they already have a foundation of personal characteristics that can help them overcome obstacles to practicing service leadership. This includes prior service-learning experience, understanding of service leadership concepts, and salient domain-specific knowledge and skills. During the internships, interns increase their resources if they practice service leadership effectively.

Energies. From our earlier discussion of SDT, we infer that the most salient energies for interns in practicing service leadership derive from the experience that their needs for empowerment, competence, and relatedness are being met.

Spirals of resource gain or loss. Hobfoll (1989) argued that stress occurs under three situations: (a) threat of resource loss; (b) actual loss of a resource; or (c) lack of resource gain after resource investment. According to COR theory, people seek resource surpluses when they are not confronted with stressors (Hobfoll, 1989). Also, COR theory assumes the model of an embedded spiral (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993; Hobfoll, 2001). Thus, if an individual has resources, he or she is better able to gain more resources, such that "gain begets further gain." A favorable scenario for an intern involves appropriate responsibilities, a secure foundation of knowledge, servant leadership by PORs, and stakeholder support, all backing their efforts to acquire desired personal characteristics in the form of service leadership attributes. Ideally, these resources yield further resource gains by increasing interns' energy and readiness to address and overcome challenges that arise during the internships. Developmental engagement is likely to enhance interns' personal characteristics, that is, service leadership attributes, consequently increasing their energy resources. For example, interns may observe their own practical and social impacts, leading to a sense of affirmation that, in turn, increases their self-efficacy and hence their willingness and ability to tackle further challenges. Thus, resource gains in terms of energy and personal characteristics give rise to further resource gains (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993).

Preventing spirals of loss. Conversely, if an individual lacks resources, he or she is vulnerable to resource loss, with an ensuing "loss begets further loss" spiral (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993; Hobfoll, 2001). It is likely also that during internships, students will make mistakes and encounter mishaps, not least because they are typically newcomers to their host organization and to the community serviced by that organization. Psychological stress entailed by unfamiliar challenges may give rise to resource loss unless desirable conditions, such as servant leadership by PORs, stakeholder support, and/or possession of sufficiently developed personal characteristics, replenish an intern's reservoir of resources. This will enable the intern to recover and to rediscover energy to plan and engage in remedial and constructive actions, thus forestalling a spiral of losses. However, if such desirable conditions and/or personal characteristics are absent, a spiral of losses may ensue, with interns losing energy and confidence, and instead "withdrawing into their shell."

A resource gain model. Depicted in Figure 2, the spiral of resource gains assumes a cycle of readiness, engagement, recovery (if necessary), affirmation, and increased self-efficacy. The following proposition summarizes our discussion about the role of contextual and personal factors.

> P4. Interns' emergence as service leaders is induced and maintained by (a) appropriate task assignments that stretch interns' service leadership attributes; (b) PORs' servant leadership; (c) stakeholder support through sharing information, ideas, advice, and feedback; (d) interns' possession of a foundation of knowledge and experience that confers a sense of security; and (e) interns' willingness to address and overcome challenges.
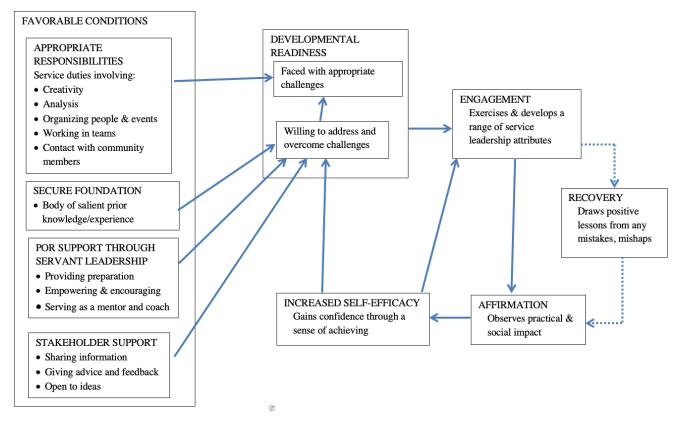

Figure 2. Expanded Model of Interns' Developmental Engagement as Emerging Service Leaders.

The Research

We conducted exploratory research with the pragmatic purpose (Cherryholmes, 1992) of improving the internship program.

Data Collection

All 16 internships undertaken in the summer of 2014 were investigated. Internship sites, PORs, and students' particulars are listed in Table 2, along with code names. Data were collected from interns and PORs via face-to-face interviews and documentary sources. This multi-source database enabled us to triangulate and cross-corroborate information (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009) and thereby enhance analytical validity (Creswell, 2013; Solansky, 2015).

Table 2.
Host Sites and Informants

Site no.	Host's mission domain	Code names		Students' details	
		PORs	Students	Year	Major
1	Elderly education	1a, 1b	F1	2	Social science
			F2	2	Social science
2	Surplus food distribution	2a	M1	2	Social science
			F3	1	Translation
3	University service-learning	3a, 3b	F4	2	Philosophy
			M2	2	Translation
4	Translation for ethnic minorities	4a	F5	2	Translation
5	Elderly recreation	5a	F6	2	Social science
			F7	2	Social science
6	Clothes recycling	6a	F8	2	Social science
			M3	2	Cultural studies
7	Social enterprise corporate services	7a	F9	2	Social science
			F10	2	Marketing
8	Language education	8a, 8b	F11	2	Social science
9	Rehabilitation/outdoor development	9a, 9b	M4	2	Social science
10	Advocacy for refugees	10a,10b	F12	2	English

Interviews were guided by a pre-designed list of open-ended questions about issues, such as opportunities to practice service leadership and how on-site guidance had been provided. PORs with more than one intern were asked to comment about each intern. The interviewer sought to elicit storytelling (Boje, 2001; Gabriel, 2000) about critical incidents (Bitner, Booms, & Mohr, 1994). These interviews were tape recorded, with informants' permission, and were transcribed from Cantonese into English. Several months afterward, the first and second authors jointly conducted a 60-minute interview with an employee from Unit S, who had

served as the field coordinator of the program, about all the internships in 2014. The second author took detailed notes at that interview.

Interviews. The second author conducted face-to-face, semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1996), each lasting 90–120 minutes, with the 16 students (4 males and 12 females) and with PORs from all 10 host organizations. These took place shortly before or after completion of the internships, on a one-to-one basis with the students and on a site-by-site basis with the PORs (i.e., if there were two PORs at the same site, they were interviewed together).

   Documentary sources. With students' permission, fortnightly learning journals and post-internship self-reflection reports were analyzed, as were performance appraisal reports by PORs about 9 of the 16 interns.

Data Analysis

The propositions presented earlier in this article evolved during data analysis, as the authors discovered salient literatures on servant leadership, SDT, and COR theory and engaged in constant comparisons and triangulation (Leech & Ongwuegbuzie, 2008) between accounts of interns and their PORs, theoretical insights, critical incidents, and general data patterns. Data were initially categorized according to the interview guide and then were marshalled to address the RQs and propositions. We conducted cross-site and within-site comparisons (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009) to identify similarities and differences about interns' experiences. We arrived at analyses of the appropriateness of tasks undertaken by each of the 16 interns, the social context in which such tasks were undertaken, the extent to which the POR(s) served as a co-educator(s), the extent of developmental engagement by the interns, and the quality of their developmental outcomes. These analyses were aggregated into Table 3. Descriptive and critical incident examples were compiled to illustrate similarities and differences among the various internship experiences and outcomes.

Table 3.
Comparisons of the Internship Experiences

Interns ?	F1	F2	M1	F3	F4	M2	F5	F6	F7	F8	M3	F9	F10	F11	M4	F12
APPROPRIATE TASK ASSIGNMENTS																
NOT clerical or technical	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓
Creative	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓
Organizing activities & events	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓✓
SOCIAL CONTACT																
Done in pairs or teams	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓
Contact with community	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	x	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SERVANT LEADERSHIP BY PORS																
Understood internship aims	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x	✓✓	✓
Set challenges	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓✓	x	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓✓
Encouraged intern to step out	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Gave back-up support	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓
Gave full preparation	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓
Supportive review & feedback	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓✓
Available & approachable	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	x	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
DEVELOPMENTAL ENGAGEMENT																
Assumed leadership roles	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓✓	✓
Went out of comfort zone	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓	✓✓
Empowered & autonomous	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	x	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓

Felt effective, achievement	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	x	✓	✓
QUALITY OF DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES														
Intrapersonal competencies	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	x	✓	✓✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓
Interpersonal competencies	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓✓	✓✓
Character development	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓✓	✓✓
Caring disposition	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓✓	x	x	✓✓	x	✓	✓✓
Enhanced self-confidence	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	x	✓✓	x	✓✓	✓✓

Key: ✓✓ = Very good; ✓ = Satisfactory; x = Unsatisfactory

Findings

Differences in Developmental Engagement and Developmental Outcomes

The bottom five rows in Table 3 broadly correspond to clusters of targeted service leadership attributes in Table 1. Ticks in these rows indicate the quality of developmental outcomes and hence the effectiveness of each internship. Among the internships, eight (those of F1, F2, F3, F4, F6, F7, M1, and M2) appeared very effective in facilitating service leadership emergence (indicated by a total of 9–10 ticks). Another five internships (those of M3, M4, F9, F10, and F12) appeared moderately effective (6–8 ticks), while the remaining three internships (those of F5, F8, and F11) appeared ineffective (no ticks). The patterns in Table 3 suggest also that these contrasting levels of perceived effectiveness may directly reflect the extent to which the interns were empowered to enact leadership roles. Thus, all eight very effective internships involved high levels of developmental engagement, indicated by high ratings (a total of 7–8 ticks) in the corresponding four rows in Table 3. All five moderately effective internships received moderate ratings (5–6 ticks) on developmental engagement, whereas the ineffective internships received low ratings (no ticks) on developmental engagement.

Impact of Appropriate Task Assignments

Although Unit S intended that the interns would be assigned challenging tasks and leadership responsibilities, the third row of Table 3 indicates that in practice, interns also performed clerical or technical work. Some PORs indicated they had initially assumed that it was acceptable to assign a predominantly clerical workload to their interns but that later on they had been persuaded otherwise. For example, POR1a explained that an intervention by the field coordinator from Unit S had convinced him to assign more challenging tasks to interns F1 and F2:

> I told [the field coordinator] about our proposed assignments, and thanks to her for her frank response that our initial arrangement may not meet the aims of this program. On reflection, I realized that if they wanted simple tasks, they would not need to go through this academic program. So, I adjusted the content and degree of difficulty of the job assignments and arranged for the interns to acquire the requisite job knowledge and skills in a short time. (POR1a, interview)

It appeared that interns at some other sites were less fortunate. For example, F11 reported:

> I did not have any project to lead and organize. [POR8b] seemed to forget about this aspect, so all the tasks were routine. This was not what I expected, and I have not learned much. During the first two weeks, [POR8b] talked

with me about my areas for improvement and it was good, but in the end, I was allocated routine tasks. [POR8a and POR8b] seemed to forget about this program. (F11, interview)

Three rows near the top of Table 3 indicate the appropriateness of the tasks assigned to the interns. The eight apparently very effective and developmentally engaging internships (those of F1, F2, F3, F4, F6, F7, M1, and M2) also received high ratings (4–5 ticks) on task appropriateness. Among the five apparently moderately effective and developmentally engaging internships (those of M3, M4, F9, F10, and F12), ratings on task appropriateness also tended to be moderate (2–4 ticks). Among the three apparently least effective and developmentally engaging internships (those of F5, F8, and F11), ratings on task appropriateness tended to be the lowest (0–2 ticks).

More interns could provide critical incident illustrations of how they practiced service leadership attributes when allocated appropriate responsibilities. For example, F12 described a non-routine selling situation, M1 set up a surplus food collection and distributing system and conducted a trial-run with service recipients, and F2 observed and improved upon a practice for instructing elderly clients in using information technology.

The Impact of the Presence or Absence of Servant Leadership by PORs

Table 4 contrasts the espoused practices of POR8b at Site 8 with those of POR2a at Site 2. As shown in the left-hand column of Table 4, POR8b admitted that she prioritized the immediate needs of the business, treated the intern (F11) as a free and convenient resource, and ignored the intern's needs. By contrast, as presented in the right-hand column, POR2a espoused having treated the internships as win-win opportunities, respected the needs and preferences of the interns (F3 and M1), and ensured that their work was challenging. The respective interns' comments confirmed that these espousals reflected contrasting levels of servant leadership behavior.

The labels in the seven rows in the middle band of Table 3 are indicative of various aspects or combinations of servant leadership behavior. Thus, "clear about internship aims" and "set challenges" imply empowering (c.f. P1); "encouraged intern to step out (of the comfort zone)" and "gave full preparation" imply helping followers grow and succeed (c.f. P2a) and putting followers first (c.f. P2b); while "available and approachable," "gave back-up support," and "supportive review and feedback" imply the POR's use of conceptual skills (c.f. P2c) and emotional healing (c.f. P2d).

The eight internships that appeared very effective and developmentally engaging (those of F1, F2, F3, F4, F6, F7, M1, and M2) also received relatively high ratings (8–13 ticks) on servant leadership by PORs, indicated by the seven rows in the middle band of Table 3. Among the five apparently moderately effective and developmentally engaging internships (those of M3, M4, F9, F10, and F12), the range of ratings on servant leadership by PORs was lower (4–11 ticks). Among the three apparently least effective and developmentally engaging

internships (those of F5, F8, and F11), ratings on servant leadership by PORs were consistently the lowest (0–3 ticks).

One general account of the beneficial impact of a POR's servant leadership was given by M4, who perceived that empowerment and emotional healing by POR9a supported him through a positive cycle of developmental engagement, recovery, and affirmation.

> I used to be afraid of failure or wasting effort, but in the internship, I was offered many opportunities to try new things and I stepped out to try new things. If something went wrong, [POR 9a] wouldn't scold me but instead would offer me great support and in due course, I had achievements. (M4, interview)

As a specific illustration, Table 5 identifies some servant leadership interventions by POR1b at Site 1, where interns F1 and F2 had been empowered to design and run classes for elderly citizens on the use of technology (they also conducted promotional events in the community). The classes did not always run smoothly, and on one occasion F1 and F2 called POR1b in to deal with complaints by some participants, who had become impatient while F1 and F2 were assisting other participants. POR1b used conceptual skills during the incident and also used emotional healing when debriefing F1 and F2 after the incident.

Impact of Stakeholder Support

Many examples were reported of contributions by other stakeholders besides PORs, which supported interns' progression through the stages of readiness, engagement, affirmation, and self-efficacy stages of development. Table 6 presents an account by intern F6 about how she engaged the support of peer interns and treasured the public reaction to her work. Table 7 illustrates how intern F3 was helped through a recovery stage by her immediate supervisor.

Negative Spiraling and the Importance of Support and Encouragement

As noted above, three internships (those of F5, F8, and F11) appeared ineffective. In these cases, absence of POR support, excessive assignment of clerical and/or technical work, scarcity of teamworking opportunities, and the respective interns' feeling of knowledge insufficiency detracted from their developmental engagement. Table 8 contains interns' accounts about their feelings of inferiority (F8), unpreparedness and fear of failure (F11), and social anxiety (F5), which appeared to perpetuate negative spirals of resource loss.

From the perspective of COR theory, it is interesting to compare the cases of F5, F8, and F11 with that of F3, who also expressed diffidence at several points during her internship, such as in the episode represented in Table 7. The difference between F3's case and those of F5, F8, and F11 is that F3 received support and encouragement from her immediate supervisor and her POR (POR2a), which appeared to restore her energy and

developmental readiness. F3 also described her experience of being an MC at two social gatherings for recipients of surplus food:

> On the first night, I was a bit nervous and so [POR2a] did most of the talking and I just backed up. [POR2a] encouraged me to talk more on the second night, so I was the only MC on the second night. [POR2a] had demonstrated how to draw the attention of the participants, so I was more confident on the second night. I still felt some fear, as everyone was looking at me, but there was a change in me. (F3, interview)

Table 4

Contrasting POR Stances on Servant Leadership

Non-servant leader practices (POR8b)	Dimension	Servant leader practices (POR2a)
"I don't have time to correct mistakes, so I assign low risk tasks to [F11] and this improves our tight human resource issue. Someone must take up the coaching role for her. But who? What to teach? We are too busy to talk to [F11]."	Putting followers first	"We needed to ensure that [M1 and F3] were willing and committed in taking up certain job assignments. I could afford meeting [M1 and F3] once a week for 2 to 3 hours discussion. I would offer more meeting time if I accept interns again."
"I told [F11] that she is alone and may feel bored but it is a real-life work environment. It is good for her to learn this earlier."	Helping followers grow and succeed	"I let each intern choose two projects based on their interests and capabilities. [M1] wanted the opportunity to start a project from scratch and he put a lot into it. I think that [F3] has changed herself to face challenges. I recognized this change in her and told her about that."
"Some fresh graduates expect to make decisions and get involved in job allocation. They want to have autonomy to mobilize human resources for project work, but the challenges here are not enough for them."	Empowering	"Each intern developed two project proposals. They determined their own work schedule. [M1 and F3] also handled day-to-day duties, being overall in charge and guiding the work on the spot. This required instant responses, quick decisions, organizing, and a sense of ownership and responsibility."
"I worry that I have not given [F11] enough care. When she left, I told her that I was afraid that I could not give what she wanted. But interns need to learn that in real life, not everyone likes to be interrupted for questions when they are busy."	Emotional healing	"We have many experiences of being rejected [by potential donors]. We need to coach interns if responses fall short of expectations. Last year, a group of students was rejected. I coached them and learned to become more sensitive to the emotions of students, who had been rejected."

Table 5

How a POR's Servant Leader Behavior Facilitated Interns' Service Leadership Emergence at Site 1

POR behavior	Stages	Illustrative quotes	Source
Conceptual skills	Recovery Affirmation	"We invited [POR1b] in. He knows the participants well and tried to explain the situation to them and we [F1 and F2] could then move on to help the other participants. People stopped complaining. They became friendly and could speak and laugh with us again."	F1, interview
Emotional healing	Recovery	"[POR1b] seemed worried that his intervention may have hurt our feelings. After the lesson, he told us, 'No need to feel bad as this is normal. Those who complained were behaving in their usual way and should not have enrolled for this class.' This is typical of how [POR1b] took care of our feelings and counseled us."	F1, interview
Conceptual skills	Recovery	"[POR1b] said that if I was too soft with them, some participants could take advantage. Because of his explanations, I immediately felt less tense. But afterwards I was vigilant in the presence of those particular participants."	F2, interview
Conceptual skills	Engagement Affirmation	"[POR1b] mentioned that some participants may wonder, 'Is it because you think that I am incapable that you are coming over to me?' So, I would observe from some distance to check out if they were OK. But as I helped them more, I found that they were nice and friendly."	F1, interview

Table 6

Illustration of How Stakeholder Support for F6 Contributed to Her Service Leadership Emergence

Stakeholders	Stages	Illustrative quotes	Source
Peer interns	Engagement	"I tried to establish a concept [for a poster]. So, the concept for the 'fun day' was joyfulness. Then I searched for information online. I tried to learn from others about poster development. I acquired the relevant materials and started to produce one for the event based on my own instinct and perceptions."	F6, interview
	Affirmation	"I invited comments from other interns on the colors and layout of the poster. Then I revised the output. They were satisfied, with only some comments for improvement on the content display. The general public also gave good comments on the posters and when I overheard their positive remarks I was very excited, as I didn't expect my work would be appreciated."	
General public	Self-efficacy	"I felt very happy ... I have become more confident in dealing with the graphic design work."	

Table 7

An Illustration of How Support by an Immediate Supervisor Contributed to Service Leadership Emergence for F3

Stages	Illustrative quotes	Source
Recovery	"I was very depressed because the first two bakery shops declined to complete the survey but I didn't give up. Instead, I cheered myself up and rehearsed my speaking skill before asking other bakery shops. Fortunately, two shops were willing to complete the survey and this gave me an opportunity to improve my communication skill so that I could complete my task."	F3, diary
Engagement	"Immediately after the unsuccessful attempt, I called [my immediate supervisor] to inform her. She said it did not matter to be rejected and it is common to face this problem. She told me that such failure is normal. That was a relief! But she encouraged me to keep asking, and she shared her own experience, saying that she had to be hard-working and persistent. Her sharing inspired me to continue and reflect on ways to improve."	F3, interview
Affirmation	"I accomplished something. I persuaded a bakery shop to donate their bread to us after closing time. Organizing this project was not an easy task, but luckily, my immediate supervisor and my partner [M1] helped me a lot and we cooperated with each other so well."	F3, reflective report

Table 8
Examples of Negative Spiraling

Apparent stressor	Illustrative quotes	Source
Feeling inferior	"I still feel a distance between POR6a and me. I feel that I have relatively little knowledge and so these feelings of humility, modesty, and inadequacy cause the distance. And [POR6a] is so knowledgeable and capable, and this perception of difference makes me feel the distance."	F8, interview
Feeling unprepared	"One of the English language teachers was absent, and my colleague asked me to take over the teaching during the first two hours. I was shocked at that moment. I have no experience in teaching, and I didn't think that it was appropriate for me to teach as I am not a professional. So, I decided to tell her my true feeling that I was not able to teach."	F11, diary
Fear of failure	"I wonder whether I should have been brave enough to take up the teaching role, but I was afraid of bad consequences. Also, POR8a and POR8b asked me to develop some ideas about promotions but they did not follow this up. In fact, I was a little bit scared as I do not know how to proceed with promotional activities. I had worries about what I could do. So, as they did not mention it again, I naturally remained quiet."	F11, interview
Social anxiety	"During one lunch time, I'd brought along my own food and colleagues from other departments came to our place and ate at a table. They asked me to join but I refused. At that time, I didn't want to bother them to move around to give me space as there was not much space. The next day, they asked me whether I was angry with them. And of course, my response was 'No.' In fact, having some distance with people will make me more relaxed. It will also help me finish tasks more accurately. I admit that I did not have the intention or time to develop interpersonal relationships."	F5, interview

Discussion and Conclusions

The research generated four propositions about factors that support the emergence of service leadership among students participating in a service-learning–based internship program in partnership with community organizations in Hong Kong. The main factors external to an individual intern comprise empowering servant leadership by PORs, reflected in meaningful and stretching task assignments with delegated authority (c.f., P1, P4a); other types of servant leadership by PORs (c.f., P4b) that help meet interns' needs for competence (c.f., P2) and relatedness (c.f., P3); and support from peer interns and other stakeholders (c.f., P4c). The main factors internal to an intern comprise possession of a securely felt foundation of competence (P4d) and his/her willingness to overcome challenges (P4e). Triangulated stories about favorable and unfavorable experiences obtained through interviews and document analysis offer broad support for the propositions. Further research could establish whether P1–4 are generalizable beyond service leadership internships to other kinds of service-learning experiences, especially those involving direct rather than indirect service (Connor-Linton, 1995).

Implications of the Research

We have made two main theoretical contributions. The first contribution demonstrates how the SDT-based model of Chiniara and Bentein (2016) applies to the role of PORs in supporting interns' emergence as service leaders by meeting their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Our second theoretical contribution is the creation of the developmental model in Figure 2, which emerged from the data and is informed by COR as a background theory. Since the primary purpose of the research was pragmatic (Cherryholmes, 1992), our remaining remarks focus on the practical applications that have stemmed from the analysis of the 2014 data.

The need for ongoing screening of PORs and internship sites. Although resources have not been available to conduct comprehensive analysis of the experience of subsequent cohorts, data about the effectiveness of each internship continues to be collected after completion of the practicums. Post-internship interviews are held with each POR, and focus group discussions are conducted with the students, and the resulting information is used to inform quality assurance, with P1–P4 as key criteria. A core priority has been to initiate and maintain internship collaborations only with those PORs who appear to understand, value, and practice the co-educator role.

In addition to reviewing existing PORs and internship sites, community organizations that have already collaborated on other kinds of service-learning projects are also considered as potential sites for the internship program. Prospective PORs who have not previously participated in the internship program receive a personal briefing, in most cases delivered face-to-face, about the principles underpinning the program and about the associated requirement for PORs to serve as co-educators. Even those PORs who have collaborated on the pro-

gram for a number of years need to be reminded to pay close attention to their co-educator role. It is also necessary through ongoing discussions with PORs to identify any changes to the agency's circumstances and the implications for the mini-missions available to the interns in future cohorts.

Credit-bearing status and longer orientation. To emphasize the academic components of the program, since 2016 the practicum program has become credit bearing, and resources became available to employ one instructor from the Management Department and one instructor from Unit S. The credit-bearing status of the practicum program has been legitimized by the expansion of the pre-internship orientation for students into a two-day workshop, parts of which are also attended by PORs. The aims of the redesigned orientation workshop are to provide a secure knowledge foundation (c.f., P4d), to align the interns' mini-missions and work assignments with the program goals of practicing and understanding service leadership attributes (c.f., P4a), and to establish rapport between interns and their PORs. The workshop includes sessions that provide fuller explanations of the attributes of service leadership (see Table 1), supported by "trigger" film clips and case scenarios for analysis and discussion. PORs introduce the background of their respective community organizations, and during a one-hour session, each student meets his or her POR to discuss plans for the internship.

Site visits by instructors. For the re-designed program, two visits by the instructors to each internship site are undertaken during the internship period to provide guidance and supervision both to the PORs and the students. Interns report their developmental progress on each of the service leadership attributes (see Table 1) and discuss any associated problems and opportunities. The instructors seek assurance that interns are not only serving the mission of the respective partner organization but also being assigned appropriate service leadership duties. For example, during one site visit, it came to light that two interns had spent much of the preceding week wheeling large trays of raw food to a kitchen location, where they cooked the food. On being confronted about this, the POR apologized and agreed that such duties should not have been assigned. In such cases, the instructors remind the POR about their co-educator role, and follow-up telephone calls are made to ensure that the POR assigns more appropriate duties.

Creation of peer learning communities. Given the importance of stakeholder support (P4c), at the orientation workshop the course instructors now launch an online learning community for each cohort using WhatsApp. Interns have used this for mutual encouragement. For example, in one cohort, at the beginning of the internship period, each intern posted photographs of their workplace and sent goodwill messages to the community. More substantively, interns have used the community as a source of practical help with problems and challenges across the different sites. For example, one intern sought ideas about how to plan a training event and received various suggestions about potential resources and activities. Another intern, who had been unable to recruit enough volunteers to support a community event, met the quota after sending a hypertext recruitment link to the WhatsApp group, which other members forwarded to their own personal contacts. Students have accordingly expressed their appreciation of the online peer community.

Screening and placing interns. The negative spiraling cases of F5, F8, and F11 suggest that a core belief in service leadership education, which holds that "everyone can be a leader" (Leung, 2015), should be revised to take account of both the context and the developmental maturity of the individual. Besides screening PORs

and internship sites, instructors continue to screen students as an additional means of reducing the likelihood of negative spiraling.

Another practical consideration concerns the degree to which interns feel that they have a sufficiently secure domain-specific knowledge foundation to assume service leadership responsibilities. For example, F1 and F2 felt confident about designing and providing training to elderly people about information technology because their prior studies had introduced them to the needs and concerns of elderly people. By contrast, F8 and F11 were inhibited because of their self-perceived knowledge gaps. It is important to identify major domain-specific knowledge demands in advance in order to avoid mismatches between interns and placements.

Limitations. The findings are based on a Hong Kong–based internship program with a relatively small sample. This may limit the generalizability of the research findings. Our study nonetheless provides insights to further explore how to internally motivate students and how to create and maintain desirable conditions to support students' leadership development. Another limitation is that we do not specifically analyze the impact of students' previous domain knowledge and service-learning experience on their current internship performance. Future research may explore more on this aspect.

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