DESIGNING UNDERGRADUATE INTERNSHIPS TO FOSTER ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

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Undergraduate internships are among one of the several high impact practices (HIPs) related to deep learning, self-reported gains, and effective educational practices (Kuh, 2008). HIPs, as measured by the National Survey on Student Engagement, utilize active learning practices, and share several traits: "they demand considerable time and effort, facilitate learning outside of the classroom, require meaningful interactions with faculty and students, encourage collaboration with diverse others, and provide frequent and substantive feedback" (National Survey on Student Engagement, 2018, p. 1). Other cited benefits of undergraduate internships include: providing a preview of careers (Bailey, Barber, & Nelson, 2016), developing abilities and skills that increase employability (Landrum & Harrold, 2003), and offering "meaningful professional direction after graduation" (American Psychological Association, 2013). Nonetheless, there have been challenges to developing outcomes research that captures the student growth that occurs in internship experiences, and other HIPs. Brownell and Swaner (2010) identify some of the main limitations, which include research that too broadly defines the practice, lack of comparisons with different groups, lack of matched comparison and nonparticipant groups, reliance on self-reported, quantitative measures, and a lack of cross-institutional comparisons and longitudinal studies. With respect to internships more specifically, the course objectives, length, structure, and requirements of internships often vary both within and between disciplines, and across higher education institutions. Thus, the wide array of practices can present a barrier to meaningful comparisons. Nonetheless, the challenges should not prevent practice researchers from sharing models and curricula that have a theoretical basis, and for which ultimately can be used for comparison to other curricula.

Here we (1) draw from relevant college impact studies, and research from undergraduate leadership programs that point to a link between internships and socially responsible leadership, (2) we discuss the constructs of social responsibility, leadership identity, and

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moral identity, (3) share a description of our *professional mentor* model that emphasizes ethical decisionmaking and professional identity through a year-long, required capstone internship for psychology majors, and (4) provide concluding remarks on best practices for internships centered around professional and leadership development.

COLLEGE IMPACT STUDIES ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Several college impact studies have documented a positive predictive relationship between socially responsible leadership and student activities such as service participation, field work, and off-campus experiences and internships. Many of these studies frame student leadership developmentally as an emergent skill or capacity in which all students are potential leaders, not just those who have been predisposed to pursue campus leadership roles and activities (Astin & Astin, 1996). This approach also represents a clear departure from corporate-driven leadership models that emphasize experiences that parallel government or business roles to a more liberal arts based model defined by growth in core values and beliefs related to working cooperatively with others. Overall, the past decade has seen broad consensus among educators that socially responsible leadership should be a core outcome of college (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007; Dugan & Komives, 2010).

To capture student leadership development in all students, Wielkiewicz (2000) developed the Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Scale-III. The instrument contains two scales that tap separate leadership attitudes and beliefs. Those who endorse *hierarchical* leadership hold views that favor a more traditional leadership style, with the leader's effectiveness and efficiency as determinants of an organization's success. Whereas the *systemic* thinking scale taps endorsement of a whole organization approach where adaptability to change, communication, and cooperation of members is stressed. Research has indicated a relationship between the *systemic* thinking scale and students' academic engagement and development. In one study, after grouping students into categories based on the degree to which they endorsed the different leadership processes, significant differences were found in the contributions students attributed to five college experiences. Specifically, internship and fieldwork, were significantly endorsed by students who perceived themselves as *high systemic* thinkers either alone or in combination with *high hierarchical* thinking. Moreover, the *high systemic* thinking group had higher grade point averages than students in any of the other groups (Thompson, 2006).

Similarly, Dugan and Komives (2010) examined the influence of higher education experiences on college students' perceived capacities for socially responsible leadership using the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (Tyree, 1998) derived from a social change model of leadership. The Socially Responsible Leadership Scale taps eight core values that represent student's knowledge and capacity, they are further divided into individual-level values (consciousness of self, congruence, commitment), group-level values (collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, citizenship), and a societal level value (change). The social change model for leadership development grew out of efforts to create college programming that "instilled in students a strong sense of civic responsibility and a desire for social change" (Astin, 1996, p. 4). Regression analyses of cross-sectional data from a large nationwide sample of college seniors (N = 14, 252), from 50 institutions, revealed three variables as the strongest predictors of socially responsible leadership: engaging in sociocultural conversations with peers, mentoring relationships with faculty, and community service. The outcome measure of collaboration, defined as "to work with others in a common effort; constitutes the cornerstone value of the group leadership effort because it empowers self and others through

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trust (Dugan & Komives, 2010, p. 526)" was significantly influenced by internships, membership in student clubs, peer mentoring, and mentoring by student affairs staff. Though internships were not as strong of a predictor of capacity for socially responsible leadership as other activities, we believe that sociocultural dialogue, faculty mentoring, and service to the community could easily be embedded as components of internship curriculum therefore strengthening student growth.

In a recent large scale study that sampled first-year students at 17, four-year colleges and universities across the United States, Kilgo, Ezell-Sheets, and Pascarella (2015) compared the effects of participating in different kinds of HIPs in higher education. Also, employing the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale, the researchers identified internships, as well as active and collaborative learning, as having positive effects. Internships were also found to be a significant predictor for inclination to inquire and lifelong learning, as measured by the Need for Cognition Scale (Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein, & Jarvis, 1996).

Taken together, the aforementioned studies provide evidence of positive predictive links between socially responsible leadership capacities and broader community work, including internships. Yet, these studies were not designed to tease apart what aspects of these programs and curricula are most effective in producing socially responsible leadership. They are also based on students' subjective attitudes and beliefs instead of objective evaluation of change. Finally, the research measures often have different theoretical underpinnings, so while they are capturing students' perceived self-development in the realm of leadership, leadership is defined differently or left to interpretation. Narrower practice research examining the relationship between different types of internship programming and socially responsible leadership is necessary to determine what combination of pedagogy and experience is optimal, as well as to identify factors in the curriculum that might promote development. Thus far, the college impact studies point to several important factors that can be further explored. More specifically, interactions with faculty, staff, and peers, and exposure to different groups might be specific areas to embed in curriculum design. In other words, staff and faculty mentoring, student-to-student dialogue, and multicultural experiences and discussion might be conceived of as best practice when considering internship design.

UNDERGRADUATE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Rather than broadly focusing on campus correlates of self-reported socially responsible leadership, research examining undergraduate leadership programs, where students receive a major or a minor, has attempted to more narrowly define and examine the developmental processes that support leadership. For example, Riggio, Cuilla, and Sorenson (2003) distinguish among three different historical approaches to leadership development in undergraduate programming: those guided by a business or management model with an emphasis on cultivating organizational leaders, multidisciplinary programs with roots in civic engagement, social responsibility and the common good, as exemplified in the previously discussed social change model (Astin & Astin, 1996), and a third liberal arts model that advocates for a broad, multidisciplinary educational experience. Favoring the third model, Riggio et al. (2003) go on to outline several elements of a liberal arts leadership curriculum, including; coursework on leadership theory, ethics coursework, experiential coursework, group dynamics, and an emphasis on learning about leadership through different disciplinary perspectives. Interestingly, in a longitudinal study examining participation in undergraduate leadership education across 10 institutions, Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, and Burkhardt (2001) found that volunteering, class group projects, and internships were the three common elements that directly impacted student development. Three measures were positively

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affected by internship participation: leadership understanding and commitment, commitment to civic responsibility and multicultural awareness.

Moving away from a questionnaire methodology, Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella and Osteen (2005) employed a grounded theory approach and conducted an in-depth interview study with a small ($N = 13$) sample of undergraduates who were nominated as exemplars of relational leadership to examine the development of a leadership identity. This work draws more closely from psychosocial and cognitive developmental theory as opposed to student affairs research. Emerging from Komives and colleagues' study was a six-stage process that identified several shifts in student's development of a leadership identity: (1) awareness, (2) exploration/engagement, (3) leader identified, (4) leadership differentiated, (5) generativity, and (6) integration/synthesis. Some of the essential developmental influences that fostered the development of a leadership identity included adult influences, peer influences, meaningful involvement, and reflective learning. At the end of the third stage is when students begin to value their interdependence with others. Prior to that stage, students view themselves as largely dependent on others. The leadership identity development model provides an outline of the developmental changes that may occur during late adolescence when students are generally forging an identity. One might propose that coursework aimed at getting students to consider what it means to have a professional identity *vis* a *vis* an internship could be a first step in this process, particularly for students whose trajectory is unlike the students Komives et al. interviewed. What stands out in this work is that many of the students in the interviews discussed self-confidence coming as a result of feeling special to adults, as well as situations that allowed them to establish interpersonal efficacy. Contrast this with students who may not have had these experiences suggests the potentially vital role that faculty mentors and internship supervisors may have on students. It has been observed that more students are attending college with inadequate academic preparation. Along with this, some students may have ambivalence toward campus engagement. This highlights the need for designing required courses all the more important in terms of potential impact.

Up until now much of our discussion has centered largely on connecting campus activities that support leadership development using models that tend to stress social responsibility as part of leadership. Many of the models of leadership place greater value on cooperation and socially situated leadership as compared to a top-down, traditional, or hierarchical leadership approach. As pointed out by Dugan and Komives (2010) it has been fairly recent that socially responsible leadership has become a core outcome of higher education. Perhaps, alternative leadership constructs might be considered in terms of both research and practice. Shifting from a self to a community-centered orientation and recognition that certain activities have supported that development is important, but leadership potential may also be measured by a person's ability to identify, reason, and react to human problems in an ethically sensitive manner. We believe that the moral identity construct also has a place in discussions about leadership potential in late adolescence.

Moral Leadership

Moral reasoning and ethical behavior are often marketed as outcomes of an undergraduate education, especially in the liberal arts, however, exactly how these qualities factor into undergraduate leadership development is unclear. Hornsby (2007) argues that acquiring these skills is "often relegated to specialized moral issues or professional ethics courses and is rarely found as an assessed learning outcome in undergraduate colleges and universities" (p. 1). Arguably, the theory and research on moral motivation and commitment (e.g., Rest, 1983; Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999) might have utility when considering leadership

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development in the context of an internship program even though the original intent of this work was to deliberately focus on later development by examining moral values in professionals. Professional identity, as with leadership identity is viewed on a developmental continuum ranging from "self-interest and concreteness to more other-oriented and more abstract ways of making sense of the self in relation to others" (Bebeau & Thoma, 2013, p. 475). Though this work is not couched in the language of leadership, but professional identity—many of the qualities of "exemplary professionals"—moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral character and implementation – might be embodied in ethical leadership. Bebeau and Thoma (2013) when concluding about their research indicate, "The main question then is not whether young people are self rather that other-centered, but the degree to which societal influences may be inhibiting, rather than enhancing, the development of the moral self (p. 496)." Perhaps it is a bold aspiration, but we feel that undergraduates can develop a professional identity that encompasses some of the leadership and professional aspirations discussed in previous models in the context of an internship instead of waiting until they are in a profession. Below we outline our internship model that includes some of the following main elements: it is evidence based, emphasizes service to community, exposes students to professional standards and values in real-world setting, requires frequent practice at ethical decision making, and regular reflection of ones' professional identity. In addition, the faculty member overseeing interns shifts to a *professional mentor* throughout the capstone year.

INTERNSHIP MODEL OVERVIEW

Institutional Background

The psychology undergraduate internship program is housed at a medium-sized, master's liberal arts institution located in the Northeastern United States. As a regional school, the student populations draws from the mid-Atlantic states. Female students are typically overrepresented at the university, and in the psychology major (>75%). Approximately 76% of the population identifies as Caucasian, remaining percentages include: 8% Hispanic, 7% Black, 2% Asian, and 6% other or 2 or more races. On average about 40% of incoming full-time freshman are first-generation college students. Class sizes at the institution are capped at 30 students, and the internship seminar is capped at fifteen, typically there are two sections.

Preparation

Prior to the capstone course students have completed the majority of the general education requirements in the liberal arts. The internship process begins approximately 10 months prior to when students begin course and site work. The faculty member in charge of the internship meets with the cohort as a group during the fall of their junior year to go over all the prerequisites for enrolling in the capstone course for their senior year. Students must complete courses, background clearances, resumes, and medical requirements in order to be enrolled in the course and corequisite internship for the fall. In the spring semester, students schedule one-on-one meetings to discuss their interests with the faculty member. After discussing potential options, students schedule interviews with sites that have openings. In addition, students are told to review an internship manual which includes objectives of the internship, and outlines the responsibilities and roles of the student, site, and university. A contingency of the program, is that the site supervisor must have a minimum of a master's degree. Site supervisors also receive the practicum manual for review. Students generally obtain internships in one of four broad categories: educational settings, healthcare and counseling, business and nonprofits, and criminal justice and law. In some cases students change sites during the second semester due to shifting professional interests or lack of fit.

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Structure

The capstone internship is a year long, and each semester students are enrolled in a two-credit corequisite professional ethics seminar that meets once a week for 2 hours, they also receive two credits for the internship, which requires them to complete 100 hours during each 15-week semester. Students receive letter grades for their performance in both the seminar and at the site. The site supervisor provides an evaluation and recommended grade based solely on their performance at the site at the end of the semester. In past years, the internship was also counted as a service-learning course, and though the requirements for that designation have changed at the university, the service-learning approach remains a part of the internship curriculum. The notion of service is also a core value of the institution.

Student Outcomes

As outlined in the syllabus, the seminar course is designed to:

> Foster and develop a sense of professional identity, understand and reflect on ethical decision making processes, and engage students in critical thinking about the application of psychological theories and concepts. Consistent with the university's mission, the course requires students to contemplate what it means to be a reflective professional and engaged citizen. The primary outcome of this course is to provide a forum for the discussion of the application of the major psychological theories, concepts, ethical and professional issues the student may encounter during his/her placement in a community agency. It is designed to enable students to formulate ethical decisionmaking models and develop a sense of professionalism through reflection and discussion, consistent with the goals presented in the American Psychological Association Guidelines for the undergraduate psychology major (2013).
>
> Student Learning Outcomes
>
> 1. Students will become familiar with the ethical codes of the American Counseling Association and the American Psychological Association and use these codes as guidelines in solving specific problem situations.
> 2. Students will identify and examine the basic ethical principles involved in a variety of ethical dilemmas.
> 3. Students will develop the ability to make ethical professional decisions.
> 4. Students will distinguish ethical from unethical professional behavior.
> 5. Students will develop the ability to honestly evaluate his/her own performance at the practicum site.
> 6. Students will reflect on their personal and professional values and their relationship to social issues to develop insight into their own and others' behavior and mental processes.
> 7. Students will identify the ways in which psychological theory, concepts, counseling skills and techniques are applied in the professional settings.
> 8. Students will understand the roles and responsibilities of entry level professionals in psychology.
> 9. Students will develop tolerance for ambiguity and exposure to diverse populations.
> 10. Students will develop a meaningful professional direction for life after graduation.
> 11. Students will develop skills necessary for positions of advocacy and leadership in the profession and community.

Assignments

To meet these outcomes, students write four, 5-6 page reflection papers throughout the semester. The papers must address the following issues: (1) connects practicum experience or observation to a psychological theory and concept, (2) discussion of how student managed tolerance for ambiguity, including the steps and reasoning they used toward resolution, (3) discussion of a diversity- or inclusivity-related issue, (4) identification of a potential or real ethical issue including a reference to how it relates to the American Psychological Association or American Counseling Association Code of Ethics, and (5) discussion of personal and professional values or discussion of development as a professional. At the end of the semester, students have a final 10–12 page paper, which requires critical reflection based on a set of more comprehensive

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prompts related to course outcomes, including an evaluation of their performance in the seminar and at their internship site.

Students also have bimonthly required chapter readings from *Issues and Ethics in the Helping Professions*, and post online discussion questions and responses related to the reading (see Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 2014). Examples of content covered include: professional ethics, values, multiculturalism, client right and counselor responsibilities, confidentiality. Every other week a student or a pair of students is required to professionally present the chapter to the class, and must incorporate one role play and one ethical case study for discussion. On the off weeks, students debrief about their experiences. This provides an opportunity for students to learn about other placements and discuss issues peer to peer. Typically this is started by an open-ended question that requires students to connect a concept from the previous chapter to their internship and to provide an overview of their recent responsibilities.

Faculty Role

The research on HIPs has stressed the value of various kinds of campus and off-campus social interactions. Our conception of the capstone year is that the faculty who oversees the interns must be willing to serve as a career guide and mentor. They must be able to assess where students are developmentally, and provide formative assessment in areas that may not be typical of their role in other courses. They must also feel comfortable engaging with community partners and supervisors. Though contact with supervisors is typically through email or phone, it is not uncommon for the faculty member to visit new sites or have conference calls to lay out requirements or discuss an issue with an intern.

Conclusions

While universities tout the merits of internships for building professional skills, increasing employability after graduation, and marketing their programs, one often overlooked benefit is the role that internships play in promoting capacities or skills in leadership development. As faculty, with backgrounds in social and educational psychology, we see how internships and other community experiences offer tremendous pedagogical opportunities to model and strengthen critical analyses of the way concrete experiences are tied to abstract concepts taught in the classroom. In our seminar, the students' coconstruct meaning as they reflect on experiences they have in the community, discuss their values and beliefs as they relate to their profession, and begin to forge a professional identity. In our internship model much less emphasis has been placed on the notion of leadership, even though it is discussed and reflected upon both implicitly and explicitly in students' assignments and discussions. Instead, ethics and professionalism serve as the backbone of the coursework. Yet, we see clear anecdotal evidence of emerging professional identities and leadership potential. Paralleling the moral motivation perspective, faculty draw a clear distinction between external aspects of the role as compared to more internalized values and standards that direct professional behavior (see Bebeau & Thoma, 2013, p. 479). We noted that some of the studies we reviewed focused exclusively on students who either self-identify or have been identified as campus leaders within student affairs. Given the population of students we serve, this might exclude students who have leadership potential but perhaps do not show traditional signs of campus engagement which may be due to circumstances outside their control, such as family and work commitments. For these students, it is vital to have HIPs as part of the required curriculum to foster their development.

In sum, evidence suggests that internships are important vehicles for developing socially responsible leaders. Practice research that can identify and measure the elements of internship that support student leadership growth

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may improve efforts to design the most effective high-impact curricula. Here we argued that our *professional mentorship* model, provides one promising example.

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