

The Impact of a Sport Related Study Abroad on Global Mindedness

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Socio-cultural

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**20-minute oral presentation
(including questions)**

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Within education, many have embraced the idea of improving cultural understanding and competence by utilizing study abroad opportunities. "Educational institutions are strongly encouraged to provide opportunities for students to participate in exchange programs to broaden their perspective" (Lee, Pang, Wong & Chan, 2007, p. 877). In the 2009-2010 academic year, over 270,000 U.S. students studied abroad, with over half of those taking part in a short-term (eight weeks or less) program (Institute of International Education, 2012). Faculty and students alike recognize the importance of study abroad experiences in increasing cultural competency and related capacities (Kambutu & Nganga, 2008; Sinicrope, Norris & Wataname, 2007).

Features of study abroad in higher education include spending time in another culture in order to develop or improve foreign language skills, gain academic credentials, increase knowledge of another country, and improve global understanding (Bachner, 2000). Studies have found that students who study abroad have greater intercultural communication skills (Williams, 2005), stronger intercultural proficiency, and are more open to cultural diversity than those who complete their full degree on-campus (Clarke, Flaherty, Wright & McMillen, 2009). However, some note that short-term study abroad experiences have minimal impact on these and other factors (Zarnick, 2010).

For the most part, the results of research on study abroad opportunities are quite positive. However, each discipline is different, as is the study abroad experience associated with each field of study. The research in the area of sport-related study abroad opportunities is essentially non-existent, even though there are many programs offering these experiences. However, as sport is a global industry and technological advances are creating a world where current students are going to be required to interact with a number of different cultures in order to excel, it is important to assess sport-focused study abroad courses.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a difference in the global mindedness of students who have participated in study abroad opportunities and students who have not. In assessing the impact of global mindedness on a sport-specific short-term study abroad opportunity, the authors utilized Hett's (1993) Global Mindedness Scale. Surveys were sent to all graduates of one sport-related graduate program in the United States that has offered a study-abroad elective for over 10 years. Respondents will be divided into two groups: those who participated in the study-abroad course and those who did not. Surveys are still being collected and analyzed. Data collection will be complete by December 1, 2012. The authors plan to analyze the results using t-tests to compare mean responses for the entire scale and a MANOVA to assess group differences for each of the five theoretical dimensions of the Global Mindedness Scale (responsibility, cultural pluralism, efficacy, global centrism, and interconnectedness). The results of the study should indicate whether there is a difference in overall global mindedness, and/or specific aspects of global mindedness, between the students who participated in the study-abroad course and those who did not.

Additional factors have been considered and addressed through the survey, which may serve as moderator variables. For instance, in addition to participating in this specific study abroad course, has the alumni also lived abroad, travelled abroad other times, or worked with an international company, among others. The authors will also collect demographic information, including the year in which the student participated in this study abroad, with the goal of assessing whether global mindedness wanes as time passes. For instance, do alumni who participated in the study abroad in 2011 score higher on the global mindedness scale than those who participated in 2002?

In all, this presentation will discuss the study's findings, practical and theoretical implications, as well as opportunities for future research related to sport, education, and global mindedness. It is the authors' hope that this research will impact the field of sport management in various ways. At its most basic, this study will bring sport management research into a very important conversation about the value of study abroad opportunities, from which

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our field has been relatively silent up until now. Additionally, as sport in general continues to expand beyond our borders, the more students know about the global business of sport, the better prepared they may be to excel within the sport industry. If the data demonstrates a positive link between global mindedness and sport-related study abroad experiences, this could provide justification to sport management/administration programs that are looking to include an international component in their curriculum. In addition, it could offer programs a leg-up on the competition if they are able to effectively utilize study abroad experiences. Finally, the results of this research will lay a foundation for assessing sport-related study abroad programs. Many programs are already taking advantage of these opportunities, but little has been published in terms of assessing their effectiveness. If this research does show increased global-mindedness among those who have participated in a study abroad, then the researchers can move on to more specifically assessing what aspects of the programs are most effective at provoking this change.

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