STUDY ABROAD AND STUDENT-ATHLETE CHOICE

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The focus of this case study was a study abroad program for student-athletes at a high academically achieving, small liberal arts college in the mid-west region of the United States. The program is designed to maintain a culture of internationalism and multiculturalism by exposing as many student-athletes as possible to study abroad. I reviewed literature to extract an appropriate theoretical framework along with variables that aligned with the purpose of the study; structural and organizational characteristics of the institution, student's background and pre-college traits, interaction with agents of socialization and institutional environment, and quality of effort. I used the semi-structured interview process to interview 9 senior student-athletes (3 female, 6 male; 7 White, 1 African American/White, 1 Chilean/White) who participated in study abroad during the 2015-2016 academic school year at the researched institution and to interview 5 administrators who facilitate the athletic department at the institution. I found that certain critical elements emerged as necessary to create and maintain a study abroad program geared specifically to the needs of the student-athlete population. I also found strong implications for adaptable elements that could generate opportunities for student-athletes to study abroad at a higher rate. These elements serve as a recommended framework and set of initial guidelines for student-athletes and athletic departments nationwide.
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As long as I can remember, my heart and soul has been rooted in athletics. I had always been an amazing athlete, but was a poor and mediocre academic student. I actually started to believe that I was just another “dumb jock.” In 2001, I studied abroad at the TCU London Centre and my life was forever changed. I was no longer just an athlete. I was now exposed to theater, world travel, many different cultures and nationalities, and for the first time, I was a student who happened to be an athlete.

I want to start out by thanking God, for I am nothing without my Lord and Savior. I want to thank my husband, Johnathan, who has been right by my side for this entire journey. I love my children, Victoria and Johnathan Jr., with all of my heart. My family makes me happy and brings me eternal joy which has helped me stay focused enough to complete this for them to be proud of me.

To my grandparents, parents, sisters, nieces and nephew, thank you all for loving me through this and supporting me in everything that I do. Thank you to Monica and Sarena; Mom and Dad for letting me cry when my doctoral pursuits became challenging. I appreciate that you all heard me but told me hang in there. To Dr. Cinnamon Sheffield, thank you for mentoring me and setting the stage for this to happen. Dr. Marc Cutright, I appreciate you for all of your encouragement and support. I am so thankful for my committee members Dr. Dale Tampke and Dr. Jason Simon. Dr. Janace Clarke, thank you for being one of the first professors to convince me of my intelligence. I want to acknowledge the TCU athletic department, former Athletic Director Eric Hyman, former SWA Marcy Girton and former Track and Field Coach Monte Stratton for financially supporting my study abroad trip to London. God has truly blessed me!
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Study abroad is a well-known educational opportunity available to numerous college students as an academic experience where students leave the United States to engage in college education abroad (Corbin, 2012). Study abroad provides college students a unique experience for educational opportunities, diversity and openness to many cultures. It has become an increasingly important educational program in global learning and development, intercultural competence, intercultural maturity, and the intercultural sensitivity of students (Braskamp, Braskamp & Merrill, 2009). Although this commitment to academic internationalization varies from college to college, study abroad consistently appears as a primary means of developing global and intercultural competence among American students (Twombly, Salisbury, Tamunut & Klute, 2012). Institutions that provide study abroad programs have evolved to be more inclusive of students’ desired durations, topics of study, and the locations of the host countries.

Study abroad programs are becoming an integral component to many higher educational institutions and government led programs. Dolby (2007) stated that increased global awareness is a key educational objective of study abroad. Student engagement in education abroad experiences enhances global learning and development, which should now become an important component of almost every undergraduate college or university (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009). The influence of student engagement opportunities, such as programs like study abroad, has also become an increased goal of intercollegiate athletic departments across the nation. Due to public scrutiny of the recent and past incidences involving student-athletes, the public has growing concern for the educational benefits of participation in sports (Gayles & Hu,
Higher education institutions and athletic departments have the unique goals of enhancing student-athlete engagement and promoting their overall college experiences.

The rationale behind this case study is to explore the effects of study abroad participation on student-athletes, the personal and athletic impacts of such study, the development of global awareness, the expansion of cultural influences and social integration in the college setting. By using these concepts, the goal is to provide supportive information that would facilitate athletes’ participation in study abroad programs.

History of Study Abroad

The history of collegiate study abroad programs dates back to the eighteenth century with elite White college males taking tours in Europe (Bowman, 1987). Female students soon joined this opportunity during the early nineteenth century, and were exposed to museums and cathedrals (Bowman, 1987). Studying abroad for college credit became popular after World War II with the introduction of the G.I. Bill, which was created to provide diversity within mainstream university settings across the United States (Corbin, 2012). While diversity and research for study abroad programming increased, involvement for student-athletes has remained low. However, it is a goal of multicultural and international studies departments nationwide to increase the percentages of students studying abroad.

Statement of Problem

It is not uncommon in this era of study abroad for institutions to provide specific groups of students with a program abroad that is structured specifically to their interests and needs. These groups can be assigned by major or college such as business, nursing or fashion
students who visit a particular region of the world that exposes them to that industry. Another example of these groups are those that are structured with the intent to expose the students to multiple experiences such as religion, theater, or sociology. There are also those students who decide to study abroad independently of a group for the purpose of immersion in the country or countries visited. While there is research available on the aforementioned groups and many other similar programs, there is little to no research addressing the opportunities and circumstances surrounding the student-athlete population and their ability to study abroad.

Although current data show that study abroad has begun to attract and, to some extent, enroll greater numbers of underrepresented students and that it is becoming increasingly clear that simply offering a greater variety of study abroad programs will not broaden the demographic profile of who studies abroad or dramatically increase the number of students studying abroad. If ambitious participation goals are to be met, understanding the factors that contribute to study abroad participation is necessary. (Institute of International Education, 2007)

According to the latest Open Doors publication based on 2013/2014 data, White undergraduate females overwhelmingly make up the highest percentages of students who study abroad (Institute of International Education, 2015). The minority population of study abroad goers have been on a steady increase for the past 10 years capping at 5.6% during the 2013/2014 academic year. It is still in a low percentile compared to their White counterparts who make up 74% of study abroad participants (Institute of International Education, 2015).

The 2014/2015 NCAA Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report indicates that there were approximately 74,000 among the 480,000 student-athletes in Division I, II and III who studied abroad (Irick, 2015). Based on research from the current NCAA Growth, Opportunities, Aspirations and Learning of Students in College study (GOALS), only 10% of Division I and II student-athletes have/will participate in a study abroad while 33% of Division I and 22% of Division II note that they want to participate but cannot due to athletic obligation
(Paskus, & Bell, 2016). The Ohio State University Office of International Affairs partnered with
the Institute of International Education and the United States Department State Bureau of
Educational and Cultural Affairs to address the many circumstances surrounding student-athletes
and their study abroad opportunities. Their research states many issues that may affect student-
athletes’ ability to study abroad. Within this case study, many topics are explored in an effort to
answer the research questions.

Research Questions

This qualitative case study is designed to research student-athlete's’ participation in study
abroad and explore the effects of their individual experiences from those programs. The guiding
research questions are constructed to provide from the student-athlete, staff and administrative
point of view repeatable elements for other collegiate athletic departments across the country.

The guiding research questions for this study are:

1. What are the elements critical to creating and maintaining a successful study abroad
   program for student-athletes?

2. What are the adaptable elements of providing opportunities for student-athletes to
   study abroad?

In order to address and shape the results of the study, I provide information and literature
surrounding some of the issues that are prevalent when discussing student-athletes and study
abroad programs. In addition to the literature, a connection between the research questions and
the survey questions is explored.

Significance to Higher Education

Student-athletes have a distinct lifestyle which makes it increasingly difficult to become
involved in student engagement opportunities, particularly study abroad. The research suggests
that with some adjustments to current institutional policies and practices, the athletic department could be the change needed to advance diversity and overall numbers in international study. Higher education institutions are encouraging and even requiring study abroad programs as a part of curriculum for student development. As this report reflects, these colleges and universities must make provisions in order to be inclusive of student-athletes.

In 2005, the NCAA research staff implemented the second phase of their Study of College Outcomes and Recent Experiences (SCORE) project focusing on former athletes from the mid-1990s. The research staff were able to get 18 NCAA Division I institutions to participate in their study by facilitating the administering of surveys to their former athletes (Potuto, J. & O’Hanlon, J., 2007). It is important to note that the student-athletes valued their overall college experience, but it was also obvious from the survey results that they felt “shortchanged” from the academic perspective.

Athletic departments often organize co-curricular and special projects/events for the student-athletes so that they stay involved on campus and in the community. The SCORE survey revealed that student-athletes felt positive about their community and campus activity participation, and while they participated at a high rate, the reality is that their attendance was mostly required or mandated by athletics staff. Several of the SCORE survey questions addressed the issue of time constraints as it pertains to being an athlete and their ability to participate in educational opportunities on campus that were not mandated. Internships, research projects and study abroad were cited by 70% of respondents as educational opportunities that they could not have participated in due to time demands in athletics (Potuto, J. & O’Hanlon, J., 2007).
Athletic departments operate like extended families, but many administrators have never studied abroad. Therefore educating the staff on the logistics of international travel and studying in another country provides a level of comfort. Many NCAA institutions provide additional support to the student-athletes by way of coaches, administrators and academic resources. Within the SCORE survey, student-athletes were asked to evaluate the influence of positive persons on their academic goals while in college. Understandably, student-athletes’ college coaches and academic advisors both within and outside of the athletic department were viewed as most influential at 85% (Potuto, J. & O’Hanlon, J., 2007). It should also be noted that family, professors, teammates and roommates were viewed as highly influential of the students’ academic goals. With the support of athletic departments, particularly coaches and other athletic academic family, student-athletes could be more represented in the overall numbers of study abroad participants. This would suggest that the universities they represent have demonstrated concern for them from an educational standpoint, and not just as athletes (Potuto, J. & O’Hanlon, J., 2007). While this study is some 20 years old, there have been other NCAA research studies that mirror the sentiments of this survey meaning the same struggles are present or increasing.

Benefits of Study Abroad

There is a plethora of research available concerning students who study abroad, however there is little to none referencing student-athletes specifically who study abroad. This topic has yet to be thoroughly researched as a topic of student-athlete engagement or involvement. Due to this, much of the comparisons of research within this case study mostly references benefits from a student standpoint and only briefly focuses on the intercollegiate athletic component.
Revealed in the latest *Open Doors* (2015) research, 289,408 students from the United States studied abroad during 2012-2013, which has tripled over the past two decades (Institute of International Education, 2015). In addition to the growing numbers of student enrollment in study abroad, the programs’ nationwide have expanded to include varying durations, locations, and academic foci (Tarrant, Rubin, & Stoner, 2015). Students are able to choose their sojourn based on many varying factors such as amount of time to spend abroad, the country they want to visit, and different types of course instruction. Researched by Braskamp, Braskamp and Merrill (2009), their findings aligns with other literature in that it notes a couple of the strongest benefits of study abroad are under the umbrella of overall student global learning and development. The two theoretical perspectives the researchers use are human development and intercultural communication, both of which use the metaphor of a “journey in life” in describing a person’s progress in learning and development (Braskamp, Braskamp & Merrill, 2009). From the perspective of human development and how study abroad had contributed to the researched student’s, the domains of cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences were measured before and after their study abroad trip. The three domains are based on writings from Robert Kegan’s 1994 book *In Over our Heads*, which identified those domains as the journey one makes when relying on thinking, feeling and creating relationships with others in life (Braskamp, Braskamp & Merrill, 2009). As a result of their overall study, there were significant gains in certain parts of the three areas.

Based on the Braskamp, Braskamp and Merrill (2009) findings, and the cognitive domain, students revealed that their experience helped them learn how to analyze and understand cultural differences. Interpersonally, they gained a higher sense of self confidence and independence as a result of study abroad. While there was not a significant difference in a sense
of social responsibility within this research study, the students did grow more comfortable with other people who were unlike them and grew a greater commitment to assisting others growth globally (Braskamp, Braskamp & Merrill, 2009).

The intercultural communication theoretical perspective relates to acquiring the skill of effectively communicating in a global society and having a sense of intercultural knowledge. As a result of the study, students indicated that their sense of social justice and humanitarianism had heightened as well as their knowledge of cultural traditions and relations with others (Braskamp, Braskamp & Merrill, 2009).

Overall, as a result of this study and based on the evidence, study abroad is beneficial with collegiate students’ growth in areas of acquiring a knowledge of cultural differences and traditions. Study abroad also improved the students’ self-confidence and independence, thus contributing to their ability to grow and thrive in a global society.

Another benefit and intercultural influence as a result of study abroad is the student’s ability to have more openness to diversity. Much of the literature highlights the quality of attending college and how it assists in generally diversifying students beyond their comfort zone. Pascarella et al. (1996) wrote that from freshman to senior year in college, students demonstrate statistically significant shifts in the direction of greater social, racial, ethnic, and support for individual rights. Pascarella’s framework is largely based on several studies and research theories concerning openness to diversity by Alexander Astin. Parallel to Astin’s research, Pascarella’s (1996) analyses are major contributions to our understanding of how a student’s experiences of multiculturalism throughout college influences openness to diversity.

Research shows that time spent abroad and study abroad programs have been suggested as one educational method that could influence openness to diversity through personal growth,
change in worldviews and enhance student’s ability to embrace diverse cultures (Clarke, Faherty, Wright & McMillen, 2009). In a study conducted through the National Study of Student Learning (NSSL), there were interesting mixed results that specifically discussed the participation of intercollegiate student-athletes as it pertains to their exposure and diversity. In the article *Influences on Students’ Openness to Diversity and Challenge in the Second and Third Years of College* (2001), it was noted that athletics in itself had a negative impact on the first year student-athletes’ diversity within a college campus. However, the same study noted that by the junior year of college, student-athletes had formed positive and diverse relationships with their peers and teammate which could provide further opportunities for openness in other educational encounters (Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini & Nora, 2001). A study on African-American students who participate in intercollegiate athletics also associated a growth in openness and diversity once students have reached their junior year. That study supports the idea that diversity in team dynamic creates an affinity and greater respect for cultural and ethnic acceptance (Flowers & Pascarella, 1999). Thus student-athletes develop, through team sports, the ability to understand and appreciate openness and diversity which is what research concludes study abroad expands upon from an educational standpoint.

**Adaptable Elements for Student-Athlete**

The present global, societal and economic demands require universities to be more willing to expose students to other languages, cultures, and industries. It is believed that the institutions need to continue to reassess many of their approaches to the existing designs of study abroad. According to Allen Goodman, the Institute of International Education president, institutions need to make the options more accessible to different types of students such as
STEM majors and student-athletes (McMurtrie, 2012). Athletic departments have the potential to be a great resource for study abroad offices due to its large, controlled population of students on the college campuses. The NCAA suggests that colleges and universities are to maintain an environment in which the athlete and the athletics program play an essential role in the student body, thereby creating social bonds between and among student-athlete and non-athletes (NCAA, et. al., Umbach, Palmer, Kuh & Hannah, 2006). One of the most important factors in student learning and personal development is student engagement in educationally purposeful activities that contribute directly to desired outcomes (Astin, 1993b; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). Studying abroad is a student engagement activity that creates internationalization to the undergraduate curriculum and helps students develop global competence (White, Hollingsworth, Allen & Murdock-Sistrunk, 2011). Student-athletes represent a sub-group on college campus’ that seek to become more involved in activities that promote social experiences and integration.

It is essential to this case study to identify the main contributors and providers of student-athlete’s engagement opportunities. Research suggests that a coach, in company with parents and teachers, serve as mentors and guides in their athletes’ life decisions as well as serve roles similar to educator and lay counselor (Grant & Darley, 1993). Athletic administrators and coaches often work together to offer a wide variety of welfare programs in an attempt to develop these students beyond their athletic talents. The literature revealed that unlike their peers, student-athletes respond well to student engagement (Umbach, Palmer, Kuh & Hannah, 2006) however, it must be presented to them with a developed purpose (Gayles & Hu, 2009). In reference to the student-athletes’ exploration of study abroad opportunities, making that
connection between athletic administration and student-athlete support programs is imperative to their participation.

The literature suggests that time constraints heavily influence students’ participation in study abroad programs. Study abroad programs traditionally involve students spending a semester living in another country; however, short trips are increasingly becoming the norm. Approximately 38% study abroad during the summer, and 13% study abroad for eight weeks or less during the academic year (McMurtrie, 2012). In 2006, the NCAA reported that from their GOALS survey of 21,000 players, many reported themselves as spending close to or over 40 hours per week on their sport (Wolverton, 2008), which places limitations on outside activities. The 2010 GOALS survey showed that while there was a slight decrease in some Olympic Sports’ weekly athletic demands, in Division I FBS football the numbers are still the same as in 2006 which is 43.3 hours per week (GOALS, 2010). The results of the 2010 Gayles and Hu (2009) study, in their comparisons of student engagement on high and low profile sports teams, concluded that the time constraints associated with participation in college sports should lead to more intentional approaches to engage student-athletes in activities with their non-athletic peers. Sachau, Brasher and Fee (2010) developed three models of short-term study abroad programs specifically designed for sub-cultures of students who do not have the time and money for a long semester program. Their research supports the latest data released in Open Doors which states that as recent as the 2012-2013 academic year, 60% of study abroad students opted to sojourn for less than 8 weeks (Institute of International Education, 2015). Student-athletes’ schedules would require shorter study abroad opportunities, and it seems this trend aligns with the research surrounding all students that currently choose to study abroad.
Operational Definitions

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) – The overseeing organization that provides legislation and guidance to collegiate member institutions and amateur athletes.

Student-athlete – A collegiate student-athlete is a fulltime student that participates in an NCAA and university sanctioned sport.

Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) - Formerly Division 1-A, the highest level of football in the NCAA. FBS includes the largest and most competitive schools in the NCAA.

Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) – Is a committee made up of student-athletes assembled to provide insight on the student-athlete experience and to offer input on the rules, regulations and policies that affect student-athletes’ lives on NCAA member institution campuses.

Division I Autonomy Conferences – The 65 member institutions of the Atlantic Coast Conference, Big Ten Conference, Big 12 Conference, Pac-12 Conference and Southeastern Conferences. These conferences are the highest performing athletic conferences and the highest revenue generating conferences.

Limitations

The institution being studied is a Division III NCAA program and the athletic standards may or may not compare to Division II or Division I athletic departments or student-athlete athletic demand. This college was chosen due to an article released by the NCAA which referenced the college’s success rate with student-athletes studying abroad in 2011.
Another limitation of this case study is that it is only studying one institution and the results cannot be generalized to other programs. The provided suggestions may not be applicable to some institutions.

Delimitations

I used a simple institution study as opposed to a random sample for this study. I only had 48-72 hours at the testing site to interview students and administrators and gather information. The SWA for the athletic department is choosing a diverse pool of student-athletes on my behalf who have studied abroad for my study based on their availability.

Assumptions

I am assuming that the student-athletes being surveyed and questioned will answer truthfully and that they will give an honest representation of their experiences abroad.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Study abroad opportunities are seen as a means of education and socialization for students while in college. Research on study abroad and the experiences that it provides to students is vast and is steadily increasing. This chapter explores the existing literature and specifically examines 1) the existing research on the evolution of study abroad 2) study abroad and topics that affect student-athletes 3) the perceived benefits of study abroad 4) and the adaptable elements necessary to provide study abroad opportunities to all collegiate student-athletes.

History and Outcome Based Research on Study Abroad

Study abroad has become an increasingly important educational experience in global learning and development, intercultural competence, intercultural maturity and intercultural sensitivity of students (Braskamp, Braskamp & Merrill, 2009). According to the research, the today’s students are preparing for a future career in which businesses and relationships operate globally. There is a growing emphasis being placed on higher educational leaders to develop students from a more holistic approach by exposing them to education abroad. Whereas study abroad was once seen by universities as the domain for language majors or a way to internationalize a particular curriculum, it is now a source of acquiring international education and multicultural understanding within higher education (Norris & Gillespie, 2009).

The history of collegiate study abroad programs dates back to the eighteenth century with elite White college males taking tours in Europe (Bowman, 1987). Female students soon joined this opportunity during the early nineteenth century, and were exposed to museums and
cathedrals (Bowman, 1987). Studying abroad for college credit became popular after World War II (WWII) with the introduction of the G.I. Bill which was created to provide diversity within mainstream university settings across the United States (Corbin, 2012). The Council on International Education Exchange (CIEE) was also established at that time to restore international education and student exchange after WWII (Carlson, Burn, Useem & Yachimowicz, 1991). In 1978-1979 President Carter established the Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies. The purpose for the Commission was to make recommendations and direct public attention towards assessing the importance of foreign languages and international education programs (Burn, 1980). As a result of their research and investigation, the Commission determined that there was a great need for the students of America to be educated and well versed in foreign relations and languages. While the Commission believed the effort should come from many groups and individuals, they also believed that foreign language and international studies should be a central piece of formal and informal education (Burn, 1980).

There have been a few outcome driven studies produced in the 1980s and 1990s that have contributed greatly to the research of study abroad. These studies are noteworthy of being mentioned due to the small amount of existing outcome based research available. According to Sutton and Rubin (2004), leaders within higher education have been stringently demanding accountability and measurable student learning outcomes of study abroad. In higher education, this heightened accountability specifically directed toward student learning fueled in part by increased competition for student enrollment (Sutton & Rubin, 2004). The groundbreaking outcome based study was the Study Abroad Evaluation Project (SAEP) developed in 1982. The SAEP was constructed as a result of President Carter’s Commission on Foreign Language and
International Studies (Carlson, Burn, Useem & Yachimowicz, 1991). The purpose of the study was to provide systematic and comprehensive research about study abroad for educational policymakers and leaders. The guiding research questions for the study were: 1. Who chooses to study abroad? 2. What changes occur in the two groups of students over the time span of the junior year? 3. What characteristics of the individuals abroad contribute to variation in the changes observed? 4. What are the long term effects of the study abroad experience? As a result, there were many significant findings and implications that made this particular study such a contribution to the overall literature. There were two separate cohorts questioned for this study; cohort one were students who were attending an upcoming year long program within four European countries while cohort two was comprised of students who had graduated and had spent their junior year abroad in the same four European countries. The fourth question was posed specifically to the alumni for the purpose of learning the long term effects of their study abroad experience.

Based upon the findings, the SAEP concluded that American students who study abroad come from a household of professional level parents, are high achieving, more likely to be female, have academic majors in the social sciences or business, and had previously travelled abroad (Carlson, Burn, Useem & Yachimowicz, 1991). The changes that were prevalent between the two cohorts were their knowledge of international affairs and knowledge of and attitudes towards the host and home country. As to be expected, the research showed that the students had a higher knowledge of international affairs after their sojourn which proved to be the case in both cohorts. In addition to becoming more internationalized, the students also experienced challenges. The data gathered concerning the alumni and how study abroad impacted their overall occupations was divided into two subgroups called maximizers and
minimalists. The maximizers, which accounted for 59% of the alumni, represented those individuals who incorporated their European study abroad experience into their career and employment values. The other 41% of the alumni were named the minimizers due to their minimal usage of their study abroad experience in their job life. It was also noted that those adults who were considered maximizers predominantly obtained advanced degrees and were in professional/technical occupations (Carlson, Burn, Useem & Yachimowicz, 1991).

While this study is 25 years old, its outcomes helped to set the basis for further studies and to identify the student’s actual thoughts of their study abroad sojourn. It was also used as a base for the GLOSSARI project, which would also contribute to the increase of participation and the trends of study abroad. SAEP assisted in categorizing study abroad as an educational priority and as a benefit to student learning.

Another contributing outcome based research study that was more recent and impactful was the Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative or GLOSSARI Project launched in fall 2000. There are a few reasons why the GLOSSARI project was important to higher education outside of being one of few outcome based assessments focused on study abroad. It was a groundbreaking study because it assessed 16 of the 32 higher education institutions within the University System of Georgia (USG). The USG is also one of a small group of state systems that have a system-wide international education office which boasts an inter-institutional catalog of study abroad programs of approximately 275 international study opportunities. The overall purpose of the study was to compare outcomes between study abroad participants and non-participants (Sutton & Rubin, 2004).

The GLOSSARI project was comprised of six components: 1) Comparison of study abroad participants and non-participants 2) Comparison of pre-departure and post-departure self-
reported learning outcomes 3) Comparison of study abroad on course specific examinations 4) Comparison of academic performance measures 5) Correlation of learning outcomes and 6) Comparison of study abroad alumni and non-participant cohort self-reported learning outcomes. Of the 255 usable results, the sample was predominantly non-minority females. The results revealed that students who participated in study abroad had a better knowledge of world geography, cultural relativism, and global interdependence. There was no significant difference in participants and non-participants’ in reported dimensions of verbal acumen, interpersonal accommodations or cultural sensitivity.

Theoretical Framework

The general causal model for assessing change (GMAC) developed by Ernest Pascarella in 1985 and derived from his earlier work in 1980, serves as the theoretical framework for this study. This model is a derivative of work created by Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) which was the theory of student departure. Tinto theorized that students enter a college or university with a variety of patterns including personal, family, and academic characteristics and skills, and intentions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The theory of student departure is mostly focused on the roles of peers and faculty as an introspective influence on the student’s development. However, the theory does minimally integrate the external environment which includes family and friends who are not a part of the institution. Pascarella’s model equally synthesizes the institution’s structural characteristics and its environment, providing a conceptual framework for the student’s collegiate impact (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). GMAC has five main variables: structural/organizational characteristics of institutions, student background/precollege traits, interactions with agents of socialization, institutional environment,
and quality of student effort. Using the GMAC as a theoretical framework is essential to this case study for many reasons. The analysis helps to focus on the roles of athletic administration and how they either negatively or positively influence the students as agents of socialization. Pascarella’s model is also used as a framework to question the familial, institutional and departmental support for student-athletes who desired to study abroad. Finally, with using GMAC’s five main variables, the findings will help determine if study abroad contributed to the student-athletes’ satisfaction with their overall college experience.

NCAA, Athletic Departments and Study Abroad

The NCAA is divided into three divisions, each of which service different types of student-athletes. According to the NCAA website:

All three NCAA divisions emphasize athletics and academic excellence for their student-athletes; after all, the NCAA’s overall mission is to make athletics an integral part of the educational experience at all member schools. The differences among the divisions emerge primarily in how schools choose to fund their athletic programs and in the national attention they command. Most Division I institutions, for example, choose to devote more financial resources to support their athletics programs, and many are able to do so because of the large media contracts Division I conferences are able to attract, mostly to showcase the publicly popular sports of football and men’s basketball. (NCAA)

Each NCAA member institution follows the rules and regulations specified in the yearly bylaw manual for their division. Regulatory bylaws that are different throughout the divisions, however, much of the educational and athletic bylaws are the same or similar in nature. The biggest difference between Divisions I, II and Division III is scholarships. Division III philosophy calls for student-athletes to be treated the same as all other students in every facet of the educational experience thus; they do not receive athletics-based financial aid (NCAA). Division II is more similar to Division I in that many student-athletes receive all or a portion of athletics-based aid towards cost of attendance.
One of the most important requirements of the member institutions is graduation rates and reporting the data to the Department of Education. In the early 2000’s, the NCAA decided to implement a similar methodology for Division I athletes due to the organizations frustration with the federal rates and the way it “clearly understates and misstates graduation results” (Brown, 2014). The Graduation Success Rate (GSR) was developed in 2002 to more appropriately track transfers by adjusting their calculation in redistributing the graduation responsibility from the initial college to the receiving institution (Brown, 2014). Division I member institutions follow the GSR model by accounting for student-athletes based on their cohort entry term, institution and athletic-based aid. Low or subpar GSR can affect the coach, the team and the athletic department. Penalties range from warnings, suspension of post-season play, and the removal of scholarship(s) from sport program and GSR statistics remain on the head coaches NCAA profile throughout their career. Since the GSR’s implementation, Division I student-athletes are currently graduating at 12 points higher than in its inception (NCAA).

Division II and III do not use the GSR. Graduation rates are tracked by the NCAA using the Academic Success Rate (ASR) which was adopted in the mid 2000’s. The ASR is similar to the GSR, but due to the low athletic-based aid in these divisions, the ASR also includes student-athletes who do not receive athletic aid. Throughout all three divisions, student-athletes are notably graduating at greater numbers than their non-athletic peers across the country.

Study abroad has been linked to both high retention and high graduation rates. Higher graduation rates for students who study abroad can be observed across a wide variety of variables such as race, gender, major, parental income, SAT score, etc., writes Elizabeth Redden of Inside Higher Ed magazine (Redden, 2012). Based on a research study of the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and University of California San Diego, the data concluded that study
abroad participants graduated at a higher rate and within a timelier manner than their peers (Redden, 2012). The study also highlighted other interesting factors such as the correlation between study abroad participants and similar subsets of students who have lower graduation rates overall (Redden, 2012). Research from Indiana University at Bloomington, Minnesota Twin Cities and the University of Georgia found compelling and positive correlations between study abroad participation, which overall research shows minority students are harshly underrepresented (Redden, 2012), and graduation rates for students of color.

Student-Athlete Engagement

One of the most important factors in student learning and personal development is student engagement in educationally purposeful activities that contribute directly to desired outcomes (Astin, 1993b; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). Studying abroad is a student engagement activity that creates internationalization to the undergraduate curriculum and helps students develop global competence (White, Hollingsworth, Allen & Murdock-Sistrunk, 2011). For student-athletes, there are responsibilities, expectations, and challenges that add difficulty to them being involved in student engagement activities beyond their respective academic and sport requirements such as study abroad. These challenges include finances, time constraints, training duties, health concerns, lack of information, and NCAA restrictions. While many students experience some of these issues, student-athletes have a unique responsibility to the university which may inhibit their interest to participate in study abroad.

Financial Support through Scholarship

Few student-athletes receive athletic scholarships to fund their college career. “According
to recent statistics, about 2% of high school athletes are awarded athletics scholarships to compete in college,” thus athletes have many of the same financial struggles concerning study abroad as other students (NCAA, 2013). Socioeconomic status is a high indicator of a student's’ capability for study abroad. Research suggests that students who are eligible for federal financial aid are less likely to plan to study abroad (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2008). Not only does this mean that students whose families are in the low to mid-levels of socioeconomic status cannot afford to travel and study abroad, but it also suggests that they use the additional monies from federal aid to offset basic college costs. Essentially, the large percentage of collegiate athletes who receive partial or no scholarship money rely on additional aid to cover their educational expenses. Some studies also note that the financial concern to travel abroad extends beyond actual expenses (Brux & Fry, 2010). For a student-athlete that receives an athletic scholarship, the athletic aid would cover tuition and fees for study abroad. The university itself would set additional guidelines for covering expenses outside of tuition and fees such as room and board and additional expenses. Therefore, an institution could require a full scholarship student-athlete to pay for their own room and board abroad even if that is normally paid for when living on campus or within the city limits. Also, athletic scholarships cannot pay for other necessities needed to study abroad such as passports, international insurance, flights, public transportation passes, etc. Brux and Ngoboka (2002) noted that 20% of students in a study abroad questionnaire listed work responsibilities as a constraint. Travelling abroad is an economical struggle that continues to be a deterrent for all students to participate.

Student-athletes experience a high level of time constraints while in college. The NCAA has responded to public criticism by limiting the number of hours student-athletes spend on competition, practice, and conditioning (Gayles, 2009). Although the limits exist, athletes still
have other mandatory requirements of study hall, tutoring, and academic mentoring. Gayles (2009) writes that finding the proper balance between intercollegiate athletics and goals of higher education so that student-athletes experience positive gains in student learning and personal development has been an enigma unsolved by higher education (p. 315). In addition to academic and athletic time constraints, training throughout the year also restricts athletes from study abroad opportunities. Each sport operates on championship and non-championship season for the entire collegiate academic year. Therefore, even when a student-athlete is in their non-championship season, they are still required to train, condition, and even participate in competitions. Whereas other students study abroad for an entire semester, a student-athlete typically is not afforded a semester to be apart from their team and sport. There is the solution of the various summer study abroad programs, which is helpful to most collegiate athletic schedules; however, student-athletes have other factors that to consider such as maintaining a training regimen in the host country. Training capabilities may require a simple area to run or jog, or need advanced equipment and facilities such as a weight room or an aquatic center. Training responsibilities for a student-athlete are never ending and they are expected to condition and maintain high levels of fitness year round.

Student-athletes frequently suffer from overuse injuries, which are described as cumulative trauma or repetitive sport-related stress to the body according to the National Athletic Trainers’ Association (Yang, Tibbets, Covassin, Cheng, Nayar, & Heiden, 2012). Overuse and recurring injuries add challenges as well as further time constraints to the student-athletes everyday lives. Finding a rehabilitation facility abroad and gaining access to trainers in a host country could be even more difficult for a student-athlete than finding a place to train. Also, many of the injuries require some type of medical procedure, surgery or rehabilitation which
designates the non-championship season or summer to receive medical treatment. Recurring injuries are another potential restraint which limits student-athletes availability to travel internationally.

All student-athletes, sports teams, and institutions must abide by the bylaws of the NCAA. According to the NCAA Compliance Manual (2013), a student-athlete is permitted to participate in study abroad provided he/she receives written permission from the compliance services office prior to participation. Some of the provisions that may be a restriction for a student-athlete include progress toward degree, degree countable courses, and practicing or playing with international teams or players abroad.

Time Constraints and Duration of Study Abroad Trip

Student-athletes experience significant time constraints while in college. The NCAA has responded to public criticism by limiting the number of hours student-athletes spend on competition, practice, and conditioning (Gayles, 2009). Each sport operates on championship and non-championship season for the entire collegiate academic year. Even when a student-athlete is in their non-championship season, they are still required to train, condition, and even participate in competitions. Whereas other students study abroad for an entire semester, a Division I or II student-athlete typically is not afforded a semester to be apart from their team and sport. There is the solution of summer study abroad, which is helpful to most collegiate athletic schedules; however, student-athletes have to decide if there would be opportunities for them to maintain a training regimen in the host country. Training capabilities may require a simple area to run or jog, or need advanced equipment and facilities such as a weight room or an aquatic center. Training responsibilities for a student-athlete at the Division I level are never
ending and they are expected to condition and maintain high levels of fitness year round. Across all divisions, student-athletes who desire to participate in study abroad face the quandary of training with their team and maintaining proper fitness while away from school.

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Student-Athlete and Coaches Expectations

The present global society and economic demands require universities to be more willing to expose students to other languages, cultures, and industries. It is believed that the institutions need to reassess many of their approaches to the traditional design of study abroad. According to Allen Goodman, the Institute of International Education president, institutions need to make the options more accessible to different types of students such as STEM majors and athletes (McMurtrie, 2012). Students attribute institutional factors such as inadequate course offerings, information, awareness, advising, and long term planning have affected the low participation rates of study abroad programs (Brux & Fry, 2010). Athletic departments have the potential to be a great resource for international offices because it is a large controlled area on campus. Most
athletic departments have between 150-300 student-athletes, which poses great opportunity for study abroad participants. However, relationships need to be built with athletic administration, student-athletes, and coaches. In addition, policies and practices may have to be realigned to address these issues.

A coach, in company with parents and teachers, serve as mentors and guides in their athletes’ life decisions as well as serve roles similar to educator and lay counselor (Grant & Darley, 1993). Athletic administrators also contribute to the everyday lives of this unique group of students by being involved in their collegiate career from the recruiting process through graduation. In order to secure and nurture student-athlete participation in student engagement activities, it is imperative that coaches and administrative staff be involved. This process is referred to as the grooming process and involves activities and informational sessions designed to make the families more comfortable with the destinations and programs (White, Hollingsworth, Allen & Murdock-Sistrunk, 2011). Being that coaches and athletic administrators are so influential in the lives of the student-athletes, and many are not informed about study abroad, international office representatives could benefit from grooming them.

In the context of intent to study abroad, examples of social and cultural capital informing students’ decisions might be the availability of information about its perceived educational importance, social or family constraints, comfort in multicultural environments, awareness of and interest in international events and issues, previous travel abroad, and second language proficiency (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2008).

By assuring the support and comfort of these staff members, there is a potential that more student-athletes will be interested.
Many college presidents often think of athletics as the “front porch” of their campuses (Weaver, 2011). Collegiate athletic programs nationwide have the potential to raise institutional recognition, increase admission application rates, and generate revenue to an institution. The most obvious signs are the accelerated spending rates in athletics which is currently at a rate of two or three times that of the other areas in higher education, says Weaver (2011). An example of this phenomenon is Greg Schiano who is the former Rutgers football coach. He made $2.25 million per year and was instrumental in the $102 million stadium renovations made to the football stadium (Weaver, 2011). With millions of dollars invested into the football program and other needs of the athletic department, the expectations were certainly high. Due to these high expectations, student-athletes and coaches were expected to perform well and provide the university and institution with a high level of entertainment. Collegiate athletic coaches are some of the most powerful and praised administrators on campus, but they and their student-athletes live under a stressful and microscopic view. Coaches’ jobs rely heavily on their ability to train athletes and secure winning seasons. More importantly they are expected to graduate their players with degrees that will secure a job and future. Essentially, a coach’s job is dependent upon the physical and mental capabilities of their players. That insurmountable level of stress is then transferred on to the student-athletes. The student-athletes use their scholarship parameters as a gauge of their performance. Although athletic scholarships are only decreased or increased under dramatic circumstances, the potential for fluctuation is unnerving.

The university and its surrounding community also hold collegiate coaches and student-athletes to high performance standards. Although Division I schools are the top tier athletic programs, only about 10% are able to fully fund the needs of their department (Pine, 2010). Student fees and other general funds given to the entire institution assist with the budget
of an athletic department. Facility developments, athletic scholarships, and sponsorship needs are provided by the students and the surrounding community. A return on their investment is satisfied with winning seasons, and preferably, championships. Theoretically, both the coaches and athletes earn their payment on performance based outcomes thus making enrichment programs and student-engagement an after-thought.

NCAA Foreign Tour vs. Study Abroad

The NCAA and Division I and II athletic departments across the country allow student-athletes to participate in foreign tours. Foreign tours allows a collegiate team to travel abroad and compete against foreign teams. It is an opportunity for many athletes who normally would not be able to study abroad. According to the Division I compliance manual, Bylaw 17 states, “A member institution may participate in competition in any sport on foreign tours against non-American teams for 10 contests during an academic vacation period once every four years” (2016, NCAA Manual). Based on the team and departments goals, the foreign tour can be used as an educational experience for the athletes to gain knowledge of the country’s language, culture, food, heritage and living environment. However, the tour is mainly a competitively driven opportunity where the main focus is to compete well and showcase athletic talent. The foreign tour is funded through the athletic department or through funds raised by the team, but is of little cost to the athlete. For most student-athletes who are afforded the opportunity to play and travel abroad through foreign tours, it will be their only experiences abroad.

Conclusion

Due to the changes and vast opportunities of study abroad programs, it is necessary for
additional research particularly focused on student-athlete participation. Research and literature shows that there are many positive and significant benefits as a result of studying abroad. As noted previously, the research questions are related to exploring the elements critical to creating and maintaining a successful study abroad program for student-athletes as well as creating adaptable measures for the future.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter focuses on the research location, design, participant selection, and the collection of data necessary for analyzing the case study on student-athletes that study abroad.

Why a Case Study Research Method?

In 1995, Stake defined a case study as a study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances (Stake, 1995, pg. 1). Presently, there is substantial research on study abroad trends but little concerning student-athletes who study abroad. In a search for cases of concentrated populations of student-athletes who study abroad, it became apparent that there is minimal deliberate activity nationwide. This could be attributed to there not being a set model for athletic departments to follow, which I sought to change with this research. Also, the current research conducted on student-athletes heavily explores topics from an academic, athletic, gender, or ethnic standpoint.

Case study research is an appropriate qualitative approach for this particular study because it allows the investigator the opportunity to explore a bounded system over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and case-based themes (Creswell, 2007 et al., Creswell, Hanson, Clark & Morales, 2007). Thus, this particular research showcases a single instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) where the researcher focuses on an issue and selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue.

Why Qualitative Research Design?

Qualitative research was appropriate for this topic of study for several reasons.
Qualitative research encompasses learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world and the meaning it has for them (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative exploration is needed to study a group or population, identify variables that cannot be easily measured and to provide understanding to a complex or detailed issue (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative approach also assists with studying student-athlete engagement behavior and the contributing factors that affect them while studying abroad. Existing research on the topic of student-athletes and study abroad programs is extremely limited. Thus, we use qualitative research to develop theories when partial or inadequate theories exist or existing theories do not adequately capture the complexity of the problem being examined (Creswell, 2013). In a qualitative study, the researcher identifies questions that inform the approach or design used to collect and analyze the data (Creswell, Hanson, Clark & Morales, 2007).

The guiding research questions for this study are:

1. What are the elements critical to creating and maintaining a successful study abroad program for student-athletes?

2. What are the adaptable elements of providing opportunities for student-athletes to study abroad?

I conducted a case study of a private liberal arts college located in the Midwest region of the United States. According to Yin (2003), case studies are a method used to investigate the real-life contextual conditions pertinent to a specific phenomenon of study (pg. 13). This particular college was chosen because it had been identified by the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) as being highly successful in sending 60% of their student-athletes on study abroad sojourns, which matched the rate of their non-student-athlete participation respectively. Part of the athletic department's institutional mission is to “instill values of global citizenship, internationalism and multiculturalism among student-athletes” (2013). They strive each academic year to fulfill their mission’s goals.
Role of the Researcher

The role of a researcher in a qualitative study is to learn how the individuals of the study experience and interact with their social world, and the meaning it has for them (Merriam, 2002). It is also important that the researcher have an invested interest in the particular topic of the study (Creswell, 1994). Researching student-athletes that study abroad and the effects they experience from that is interesting due to my own opportunity to sojourn during my senior year of college in London, England the summer of 2001. As a track and field student-athlete at Texas Christian University, I was unable to attend the study abroad trip with my major department, fashion promotion/design, due to our sports’ national championship being held during the same time of the trip. Due to my sports’ requirements, I was unable to attend many of the institutions’ scheduled study abroad trips. I decided to take my trip with the theater department, as they were the only study abroad group left to travel with during that particular summer. I participated in a 6-week trip to London, England, which was focused on our student group exploring theater and history throughout the city along with class discussion following our assigned events. My time abroad exposed me to a global society and introduced me to working alongside international learners. Today, a large responsibility of my job as Director of Athletic Academics for Olympic Sports requires me to have an understanding and appreciation for students across the world. I develop relationships with student-athletes abroad months prior to them actually attending my institution as a student-athlete. The experiences I had in London has assisted me in the ability to make foreign student-athletes and their families feel comfortable within the United States because I inform them that, like their child, I was once living in a country unlike my own.

As a former student-athlete that studied abroad, I am cognizant that my experiences contributed greatly to my educational and athletic growth while in college and has helped mold
my professional career. I am aware that characteristics such as global awareness, leadership and career development are associated with study abroad and believe mine developed significantly directly as a result of my trip to London, England. Immediately following my 6 week stay abroad, the September 11 attacks on the New York World Trade Center, Pennsylvania and the Pentagon happened. While many around the world developed a disdain for Muslim people because of the attack, I had just developed positive relationships with Muslim families from Pakistan and Afghanistan who lived on my street in London. The exposure to different individuals ethnically and religiously impacted my views and global awareness on the overall circumstances following September 11, because I had met and became friendly with a small group of Pakistani and Afghan people. Within my role as an athletic academic advisor, I often speak with student-athletes who desire to study abroad but face the difficulty of finding the correct time during the year to participate in the program offerings. My own experience in study abroad and the interactions with student-athletes have compelled me to research this topic further.

Research Setting and Context

The research setting took place via teleconference or video conference due to my inability to travel. This private, liberal arts college is located in the Midwest region of the United States and was founded in 1874. The college is committed to high standards of scholarship and its special emphasis on internationalism, multiculturalism and scholarship according to its mission statement (2016). Its athletic department is a Division III member within the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). According to the college’s athletic website, “Over 60% of students study abroad with 80% of them staying away for a semester; the institution
works to ensure student-athletes have the same opportunities to study abroad as their peers (2016).” In 2011, the NCAA featured the college’s athletic department and some of its student-athletes who studied abroad. The article brought attention to the athletic department’s efforts and participant numbers in study abroad. According to the Institute of International Education (2015), total number of study abroad students ranks this college within the top 50 Baccalaureate Colleges among institutions.

Participant Selection

The Associate Director of Athletics and Senior Woman Administrator (SWA), at the studied institution has agreed to facilitate my field study on site at the campus. As an SWA, she is the highest ranking and senior woman on the athletic department’s staff. She has secured all necessary permissions from the Institutional Review Board concerning my study and visit to the college. During the 2015-2016 academic year, 68 junior class student-athletes studied abroad from the case studied institution. All 68 student-athletes were sent an invitation by the Associate Athletic Director/SWA seeking their participation in this research study. Those interested were invited to first, complete an intake form, using survey monkey, which detailed the basis of the study and asked specific questions about their race, gender, socioeconomic status, pre-college academic status and pre-college travel. The student-athletes were then contacted and interviewed either through Skype video conference or through telephone conference. The administrators that were also interviewed were chosen directly by the Associate Athletic Director/SWA. The coaches were chosen based on their availability (non-traditional season activity), and whether or not they had the time to participate. The administrators that were not coaches were chosen based on their relationship to the athletic department and this study. The
Athletic Academic Advisor, they only have one person in this role, and a Study Away Center advisor were suggested and chosen to assist with this research. Based on an interview with a student-athlete, the suggestion to interview a professor from the sociology department was made. The administrators were interviewed by telephone as neither of them chose to video conference. The final overall participants consisted of nine student-athletes and five administrators.

The sample of student-athletes that responded to the intake form process was 13 participants, only 9 agreed to be interviewed. Of the respondents, 66% were male and 34% were female. The larger portion of the respondents identified as White/Caucasian at 77% while 23% identified as multinational (1 Chilean American and 1 mixed with African American and White/Caucasian). All of the respondents performed well academically in high school garnering a 3.0 grade point average (GPA) and better upon graduation. Between the ranges of 3.5 and 3.99, 43% scored within that category while 44% graduated high school with a 4.0 GPA. All nine respondents had at least one parent or guardian that had a minimum bachelor’s degree. Of the respondents, 67% identified their families as being middle-class, 33% reported themselves as upper-class. Prior to college, 78% of the student-athletes had travelled abroad prior to college and the remaining 22% had not.

Study Abroad Student-Athlete Participant Questions

1. How did you learn about possible study abroad opportunities at your institution?
2. Describe to me how you decided to participate in study abroad?
3. Who was involved in the decision making process with you?
4. Who were these individuals and how was their opinion of your decision valued?
5. How did your decision to study abroad affect participation in your athletic sport or training regimen?

6. How did administrators within the international and athletic offices facilitate your decision to study abroad?

7. What types of experiences are most memorable during your time spent abroad?

8. Did any of those experiences relate to your sport or your position on an athletic team?

9. What were some of the cultural differences you recognized while studying abroad?

10. Did you learn any information about athletics’ teams or sports of the particular country visited?

11. Has your study abroad experience impacted you or changed your life? If so, please explain how?

12. Did you have any negative experiences while studying abroad? If so, please explain.

13. If you did not return back to your sport after your study abroad trip, why did you choose not to return?

Study Abroad Student-Athlete Support Administration/Staff Questions

1. How do educate student-athletes about study abroad opportunities at your institution?

2. Describe to me how you choose the participants who study abroad?

3. Who is involved in the decision making process with you?

4. What type of feedback and advice to you give to the student-athletes interested in studying abroad?

5. How does a student-athlete's decision to study abroad affect participation in your athletic sport or training regimen?

6. How do you facilitate a student-athlete’s decision to study abroad?

7. What types of experiences are the most memorable for student-athletes who study abroad?

8. Are any of those experiences different from non-athletic student’s experiences?

9. What are some of the cultural differences, including sports related information, you hear about from student-athletes who study abroad?
10. Has the student-athlete study abroad experience impacted you or changed your life as an administrator/staff member? If so, please explain how?

11. How do student-athletes fund their study abroad trips?

12. What are some new trends in student athlete behavior and study abroad trips?

13. What are some of the challenges student-athletes face either before or during study abroad?

14. Do you know why some student-athletes decide not to return to their sport after their study abroad trip?

During the interviews, I wrote a detailed summation of the interview and sought to identify recurring themes and topics. I also analyzed the results such as journal information, blog entries, print media, and any institutional and NCAA research pertinent to the study.

Significance to the Literature

The literature suggests that the NCAA, collegiate institutions, and athletic departments alike seek to provide student-athletes a better-rounded college experience outside of athletics. Study abroad could be the change needed for student-athletes to advance their social experiences and personal development opportunities. This case study seeks to provide information on the overall factors that influence student-athlete's participation in study abroad and develop opportunities for replicable programs for athletic departments nationwide to emulate. This research also seeks to provide information to develop student-athlete satisfaction, social experiences and integration into the campus community.

Data Analysis

Prior to analyzing the data, I thoroughly examined and reviewed the materials related to the study abroad program at the institution. Qualitative researchers determine how long to remain
in the field, whether the data are saturated to establish good themes or categories, and how the analysis of the data evolves into a persuasive narrative (Creswell & Miller, 2000). By analyzing the themes and categories of the research, I was able to create a lens or viewpoint within the study. Qualitative inquirers bring to their studies a lens which establishes validity in the study (p. 125). I established this “lens” and viewpoint by reviewing the interview notes, the materials associated with the program provided to me by both the international and athletic offices, and by utilizing the actual survey responses. All interview notes and survey responses were transcribed prior to the analysis, and this served the purpose of getting intimately familiar with the materials from a researcher's standpoint. The researcher transcribes the material because they have to conceptualize the project and data in order to establish what he or she has learned overall (Seidman, 2006).

The procedure used for analyzing and evaluating the materials once all data was collected was the “general inductive analysis” strategy. Inductive analysis refers to the approaches that focuses primarily on detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations by the researcher (Thomas, 2006). This strategy is consistent with other patterns of qualitative data analysis, and shares characteristics of pattern coding, however, the approach does not involve causes or explanations of relationships among people like pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Through multiple interpretations of the raw data, categories were developed into a model and key themes were coded into an overall framework. I then shaped the findings using assumptions and personal experiences and by essentially deciding what is the most important components of the data (Seidman, 2006). Finally, I compared those themes to other existing literature that focuses on study abroad and student-athlete programs.
Summary

This chapter focuses on the proposed qualitative research design, which is the most suitable for the topic of study abroad and student-athletes. The purpose of this study is to perform a case study on an existing program and the adaptable elements of that program. This chapter details the literature on case studies and qualitative research, guiding research questions, role of the researcher, interview protocol, and research setting and context.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

For a qualitative case study of a single institution, I collected data from student-athletes who had recently studied abroad during their junior year and also from the administrators and staff members that facilitate their sojourn. The student-athletes provided insight into their college’s history and framework with study abroad while also discussing their many experiences and challenges. The staff and administrators added to the dialogue by sharing the internal details of study abroad programming at this institution along with how it affects the student-athletes and athletic department’s functionality. The details shared allow for a more purposeful view at how and why student-athletes study abroad while also providing fresh avenues of research to the vast literature available on international study and student engagement. This study attempted to address the five main variables from the theoretical framework, the general causal model of assessing change (GMAC). The GMAC variables addressed were the structural and organizational characteristics of the institution, the study abroad student’s background and precollege traits, the student-athletes interaction with agents of socialization, the institutional environment and the quality of the student’s effort towards studying abroad. The information gathered served as the basis of a case study to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the elements critical to creating and maintaining a successful study abroad program for student-athletes?

2. What are the adaptable elements of providing opportunities for student-athletes to study abroad?

Answers to the interview questions were a part of a twofold process. Each student-athlete completed an informational intake form and participated in a formal interview. The administrators only participated in the interviews. The data collected was analyzed by using
inductive analysis with a thematic approach. As the interviewer, my goal was to gather information about the study abroad program at their institution, discuss their personal experiences and extract those key trends and elements that made their education abroad successful. This chapter consists of three sections; the first describes the research protocol, the second discusses the five GMAC variables and the relevance to this study and address the research questions, and the third section summarizes the overall findings.

Research Protocol

This case study examined a high academically achieving, small liberal arts college in the mid-west region of the United States. The college’s mission is to expose as many students to study away as possibly interested. According to the institution’s website, they are committed to being a high academic achieving college with a special emphasis on interculturalism (2016).

During the 2015-2016 academic year, 68 junior class student-athletes studied abroad from the case studied institution. All 68 student-athletes were sent an invitation by the Associate Athletic Director/SWA seeking their participation in this research study. Out of the 68 solicited student-athletes, 9 were available for interview. Also, 5 administrators from the college were interviewed as well.

Research Questions and Findings

Based on an inductive analysis of the transcribed interviews along with the five GMAC main variables, several themes and sub themes became prevalent from the participants of the interviews. Those themes have been categorized as follows: structural and organizational characteristics of the institution and institutional environment, the study abroad student’s
background and precollege traits, the student-athletes interaction with agents of socialization and the quality of the student’s effort towards studying abroad. Each major theme produced a variety of unexpected sub themes throughout the overall interview process.

Structural and Organizational Characteristics of the Institution

This high academically achieving, small liberal arts college in the mid-west region of the United States is quite unique in their approach to study abroad. They refer to their study abroad department as the Center for Study Away.

Campus Culture

The first few questions of the interviews with the student-athletes addressed their ultimate decision to study abroad and how they were made aware of the opportunities at their institution. The reason this question was so important was because within the literature concerning study abroad, it is often concluded that many students are not informed of their opportunities to study abroad. It was widely stated within the interviews that this college and campus has a strong culture of study abroad embedded in its fabric. Almost every student-athlete interviewed stated that they were made aware of the opportunities for study abroad prior to coming to the college and subsequently within the first two years of undergraduate studies. The studied institution has made study abroad part of their educational mission. They understand that the future careers of their students depend on global education. The American public is acutely aware of the importance of global mindedness for future generations (Norris & Gillespie, 2009). In 2002, the American Council on Education polled Americans on their attitudes towards international affairs and 90% of them felt that information would be important
to their careers and the generations behind them (Saiya, Porcelli & Green, 2002). This institution makes certain that their students have the opportunities to travel and learn about other cultures abroad while growing knowledgeable in their studies and research.

Dan, a senior Soccer player, knew prior to attending college that he wanted to enroll somewhere that would support his admiration for travel.

Study abroad is the reason I went to this college. I knew that I wanted to study abroad and I learned about different programs through my major which is Sociology. I knew that I wanted to go to an Arabic speaking country and I have actually gone to study abroad a couple of times now. I’ve been to West Bank and now Jordan.

Beth, a senior from the Cross Country and Track team, also agreed with the campus culture and its richness in international study.

The opportunity to study abroad was actually one of the reasons that I came to school here in the first place, it was something that appealed to me and the courses that I am studying. I am an international studies major, which requires that you go abroad for one semester just to get that exposure and living environment in a different country.

Scott, a senior Baseball and Track participant, spoke about the school’s mission and how the Study Away Center continually informed students of their study abroad opportunities.

Study abroad is a part of the campus life here at the college. It was always something I knew I wanted to do coming into college. Sophomore year, they sent out a class wide email informing every one of the programs. Also, a big resource for me was talking to my teammates and other athletes.

The common theme from the student-athlete and administration interviews was that the college did a great job informing all students of study abroad programs and opportunities. The Study Away Center worked alongside the different colleges to inform the students of the programs most suitable for their majors and special interests. For some of the majors at the college, a semester studying abroad is required of the students as a capstone course to complete their degree requirements. Heather, who runs Cross Country and Track spoke about how her time in Costa Rica was used to complete some of her major requirements in Biology.
I’m a Biology major and in my department it is really encouraged to study abroad, so I got a lot of push from my academic advisor. I was able to get credit for my major for study abroad and I also did an independent study while there. I am able to use that towards my senior capstone course which is also a part of my major.

While most participants felt like they were well informed and facilitated by the Study Away Center throughout the pre-study abroad departure, one student-athlete felt that he was misinformed about the program for study in Singapore. Kevin, an athlete that once participated in Soccer and Track, was eventually able to join the program that studies in Copenhagen but that was not his first choice or his preference.

I had originally wanted to go to Singapore because I am an Urban Planning major. I was told that I was able to attend the Singapore program but at the last minute was told that I didn’t get into the Singapore program. I just felt like there was some misinformation about the program and how it worked so they pushed me towards Copenhagen with only about a 2 week turnaround.

It was unclear how or why there was a misunderstanding with Kevin’s study abroad program, but the general consensus from the student-athletes otherwise was positive concerning the Study Away Center and their processes.

Capstone Course and Major Requirement

Many of the student-athletes interviewed talked about a semester of study abroad as their major and program degree requirement. That program philosophy falls in line with the college’s mission statement that there is a strong emphasis on internationalism. Beth was one of the student-athletes that has a major requirement of study abroad.

At the Study Away Center, you talk to a lot of people that go abroad and it is a pretty good environment for finding out about study abroad. Also, I am an international studies major, which requires that I go abroad for one semester just to get that exposure and living environment in a different country.

Mike, a senior Biology major, also has a program requirement that includes a semester
abroad. Once he attended an information session, it quickly became clear to him where he wanted to attend and why.

I was set on going somewhere that was similar to the United States but I settled on Scotland because they allow the anatomy of human cadavers. I was sold when I was told that I could study and dissect a dead human body.

Financial Coverage for Cost of Attendance

The literature on study abroad exposed financial affordability as the leading deterents for students to participate in study abroad programs. Studying abroad has often been considered an experience reserved for wealthy or tangential to a college education (Williams, 2005). According to this college’s website, the cost of attendance for the 2016-2017 academic school year is approximately $62,000. While most of the student-athletes identified as middle and upper class, paying cost of attendance and affording study abroad becomes costly for students and their families. However, the college includes study abroad costs within the cost of attendance that the students already pay. Craig, the athletic academic and recruiting advisor, explained to me the reason why study abroad is so affordable for students at this college during his interview.

The students only travel to study abroad during the regular semesters. If a student selects a study abroad program through our Study Away Center, it costs the same as what they would pay for a semester on the campus. Our mission is to not have students burdened by extra costs. That might be the reason study abroad is prohibited by some families so we like to keep the costs the same. Counselors also prefer the students go away for the full semester and get the traditional study abroad experience.

Craig also recognized that if student-athletes were required to study abroad in the summer or winter semesters, it would be a financial burden. Scott, a student-athlete, explained to me how he financed his study abroad solely through financial aid.

The way the school does study abroad, is you pay regular tuition and then they in turn pay the program fees. For my program the fee included housing and food. I paid tuition
and did not have to pay an extra housing fee for that semester so it actually turned out to be cheaper the semester I studied abroad.

While the costs for the overall program are covered through the student’s cost of attendance, some of the student-athletes interviewed needed additional assistance for miscellaneous expenses, most of the athletes traveled. John, a senior Soccer player, traveled during his study abroad trip to Madrid, Spain and explored other areas within Europe.

During Spring Break, my brother came and we travelled to Italy and Brussels. I went to a lot of professional soccer matches and joined a soccer league by paying for registration online.

Mike did very similar things to John while in Scotland.

I went to many of the Premier League Soccer (major professional soccer league within Europe) matches while there and traveled to Morocco and some other countries while abroad.

Most of the student-athletes stated financial aid, personal funding, and parents funding assisted with their overall financial needs for study abroad.

Student Background and Precollege Traits

Research suggests that there are certain background and precollege traits that students who study abroad possess. Based on Laura Perna’s (2006) integrated model of college choice, it was hypothesized that the intent to study abroad is substantially influenced by pre-college and socio-economic status and the social and cultural capital accumulated before entering and during college (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2008). There were some important questions asked of the student-athletes on the intake form to determine some themes of characteristics for those individuals who had studied abroad.
High Academically Achieving

Of the 9 respondents of the intake form, none of the students graduated high school below a B (3.0) grade point average. There were 43% of the student-athletes that graduated within the 3.5-3.99 and 44% of student-athletes that graduated high school with a 4.0 according to the intake form. Many of the respondents spoke about their required rigorous study habits at this college and how their pursuits to study abroad were directly aligned with their research and future academic goals. Heather, a senior on the Cross Country and Track teams, researched the Tropical Dry Forest Regeneration and Aging Process.

I do not feel as though the study abroad trip was life changing, I feel that it was impactful mostly because it was research based and because there was quite a bit of language immersion.

Many of the student-athletes spoke about their intense language courses while abroad and how well it contributed to their needs to function in the host country. Meghan, a senior Cross Country and Track athlete spoke of her Hungarian course while away in Budapest, Hungary.

It was hard. My programs required a course where you could learn Hungarian for 8 hours a day for 3 weeks and that helped a ton. I also had to take a Hungarian class during the semester so that I could keep up. I think the whole idea about language immersion forces you to learn really quickly.

Scott, a senior Baseball and Track athlete, made a point during his interview to express the rigor of his college. While his studies abroad still required his academic focus and commitment, it was a break from a fulltime academic schedule.

Just meeting the kids in my program abroad and bonding with them over 2-3 months was special. One of the biggest reasons I chose the program was because it got me out of the classroom and because I didn’t have to come home and study for 3 hours every night.

Socioeconomic Status and College Educated Parent/Guardians

A very large percentage of the student-athletes described themselves as middle to upper
class socioeconomic status. At 67%, most of the student-athletes answered that they were middle class and 33% responded that they were upper class. In addition to this, 100% of the student-athlete's parents or guardian have at least one college degree. Based on literature concerning study abroad, there are precollege characteristics of students that make them a more likely to study abroad. Socioeconomic status and the educational level of parents/guardian are strong indicators of a student's propensity to be interested in travel and study abroad.

Based on the article “Understanding the Choice Process of the Intent to Study Abroad”, there is an assumption that knowledge gained through a parent’s postsecondary educational attainment would extend to, and help shape, a student’s position on cultural capital and social capital. Cultural capital is described as the values, attitudes and beliefs that emphasize the importance of education in general and maximizing a post-secondary experience in particular. Social capital is the awareness of, and access to, resources, networks, timelines and processes that enable successful participation in the college selection and degree attainment experience (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2008).

The student-athletes and administrators discussed with me how their parents travelled abroad and how they provided educational encouragement influencing travel or global exploration. Based on the intake forms, 78% of the respondents had traveled abroad prior to college and their study abroad experience. Beth had participated in some service learning abroad and spoke about her community engagement abroad.

I have gone to Mexico and Colombia. In high school, I spent a month in Mexico on a service learning program and then 2 years ago over winter break, I spent a month in Colombia. My mom came to visit me in Spain, she had lived in Belgium with cousins for a year when she was a young girl.

Dan’s parents taught him travel at an early age and created in him a will to see more of the world.

My parents are Chilean and American and they took us to travel often. I have been to West Bank and now Jordan to study. My parents were very supportive of my travel although they were nervous when I was in West Bank. They were otherwise very supportive and encouraged my traveling especially given that they both work and they
know that this is the time of your life to travel if you want to have the opportunity before you have more responsibilities.

John’s parents also experiences a little bit of apprehension but agreed it was the best experience for him.

I attended the IES program in Madrid. My family was encouraging but of course, they were nervous. My dad had been to Germany before though.

Interactions with Agents of Socialization

Student-Athlete Support from Athletic Department

Based on the interviews, the student-athletes received the same support as the non-athletes for study abroad information and registration. The student-athletes, however, sought and received a great amount of support and encouragement from their coaches and athletic staff. Coach Katie, the school’s Softball coach, spoke about her level of support during the recruiting process and while the athletes are freshmen and sophomores.

When I am recruiting potential student-athletes (PSA) the study abroad question often comes up during conversation, and although I do not educate them about the program I do often share with them the places more recent graduates have studied. The fact that 60% of student-athletes at this college study abroad; I let them know there is an option for it and that I, as a coach, and my program definitely support the opportunity.

Encouragement was a very big component of the student-athletes comfortability with studying abroad although most of the athletes had already made the decision to go away. The Track and Field coach, Coach Sheri, also spoke to me about how she provides advice to her athletes. Coach Sheri has a very large Cross Country and Track team and each year, almost all of her junior class studies abroad either in the fall or spring semesters.

We (the entire coaching staff) encourage them to study abroad. I feel strongly about that because of the mission of the institution and because we have a commitment to creating global citizens. I feel like if I didn’t encourage my athletes to study abroad I would be going against our college's mission.
The student-athletes overwhelmingly felt as though their decisions were not only encouraged but also supported by their coaches and support staffs. However, one athlete felt like one member of his coaching staff grew frustrated with his decision to study abroad because he chose to attend a program that was only offered during the fall which in Soccer, is the main competitive season.

Dan, a senior Soccer player, explained that while his coaches support study abroad, they usually do not have players that forego a competitive season to study abroad.

My coaches knew that I wanted to study abroad and do research so they supported me but they were frustrated with the fact that I was going during the competitive season. They mainly didn’t want other teammates to start traveling for study abroad during the fall, the competitive season.

While the coaches do strongly encourage, there is a slight bit of hope that the better athletes will not study abroad during the competitive season. Coach Sheri stated that study abroad does affect her team’s competitive level against other teams.

It doesn’t affect their participation in the sense of not letting them on the team. I only coach Track and Field. I would prefer they study abroad in the fall, but the majority of them come to me in the spring because they are two sport athletes. It really does affect my program because 22 out of 100 of my team were studying abroad last year in the spring. It was a huge hit to the women’s team; 18 of the 22 were women. The students choosing this college is beyond Track and Field and Cross Country or whatever sport it is. One reason is that they want to study abroad and they know I am open to it and I would never go back on it because I love to hear their stories.

Administrator Encouragement through Regret

Some of the administrators that were interviewed spoke to me about their thoughts on student-athletes studying abroad. Craig, had a lot to add from an advising perspective and as a former Lacrosse coach at a previous institution.

I did not study abroad and before college I had never been abroad. I think my parents went to Europe for their honeymoon but we weren’t travelers. I went to a similar college in Ohio, which was a small school and a lot of kids studied abroad. But in our Lacrosse
program during my four years we had fewer kids study abroad each year. To the point where by my junior and senior years, very few studied abroad because we became more and more competitive and made it to postseason play. Coming out of college as a student-athlete I made assumptions based on our team’s performance that truly competitive athletes didn’t study abroad. Again, this was just my personal thoughts as a student-athlete but then as a coach, I would say that is not true. I think as a coach sometimes you get a little selfish but having stepped away from coaching, you kind of see the experiences and the benefits of study away and it is a unique opportunity that some people don’t get even after graduation.

Sheri, the Cross Country and Track and Field coach, felt that study abroad is just too important of an experience for her athletes to pass up especially since she has regrets.

I wish I would have studied abroad but I didn’t and didn’t even know about it. So, I live vicariously through them and I love it.

Traditional (Competitive) or Non-Traditional (Non-Competitive) Season

Each sport has a traditional and non-traditional season. While most teams compete year round, the Traditional (Competitive) season is the most important season in that it where the teams compete for district, conference, regional and national championships. While this college is a Division III athletic program, which focuses more on academic life than sports, these coaches and student-athletes are training and playing the sport to win titles and be the best competitors. Therefore, it is still a difficult decision on the student-athletes when they should choose to study abroad; during their traditional or non-traditional season. Craig, the athletic academic advisor, knows all too well how difficult this decision is for the athletes.

Probably the biggest hurdle is for the winter sport athletes because their season stretches across both semesters. We have had athletes that have chosen to study abroad for a semester and winter athletes had to lose a portion of their competitive season. I would imagine it was certainly something they had to contemplate and was a big decision. I think that is the biggest problem, those that are in winter sports, particularly Men’s and Women’s Basketball players and Swimmers. They know that so many people on campus are able to do it, and essentially they are able to do it, but they know that it affects their athletic experience because they are going to lose competition and games if they choose to do it.
Socialization through Sport While Abroad

Many of the student-athletes used their sport or their fitness as a tool to socialize while abroad. They spoke of sport being a language that was understood by all, and that they felt comfortable in any environment that involved sports and fitness. While some opted not to work out or only do minimal training while abroad, some stayed true to their sport and athleticism while away. Kevin was a two sport athlete that decided to stay in shape at a local gymnasium.

There was not really a formal training regimen. I had a local gym that created a program for me. I would lift 5 days a week and condition 3 days a week. It was more for me and it was not mandated by anyone with track. It ended up being a really good thing for me in Denmark; I joined a really good gym and got help from other people there.

Though Dan’s coach emailed them workouts for maintaining fitness, he was able to create a relationship with men from the British Embassy and play soccer with them.

While I was abroad I did everything I could to stay in shape. I joined a gym and would go running in the streets. I did it for my health but studying abroad causes a little problem for staying in shape. You are dealing with a culture that doesn’t exercise or a community that is not predominantly an athletic community. I played pickup soccer with the British Embassy people, their embassy was located within 5 minutes of my university and we would play like once a week.

Professor and Advisor Support for Student-Athletes

This college infuses academic programs and majors into their study abroad programs, thus creating interactions between administration and student-athletes perpetuating agents of socialization. While the coaches assisted with gaining an understanding of student-athlete’s study abroad opportunities, there are other administrators and agents of socialization on the campus that directly and indirectly affect the successes of the study abroad experience as it relates to education. Dr. Jimenez, professor and chair of the Sociology department, discussed
with me his involvement with students and student-athletes that study abroad and the various reasons that the programs have been so well received.

The college provides financial aid for the programs which results in insignificant costs for the student. It is something that we value at this institution both in words and in budget. I don’t currently have a huge role within the study abroad program. I am just a faculty member in the Sociology department who happens to have advisees who happen to study abroad. However, in the past I was the chair of the Resource and Planning Committee which had studied the cost of study abroad. Perhaps more importantly and more recently, I was on a task force that was pulled together to examine learning goals for study abroad and how we prioritize which programs students should or could go on.

I was given Dr. Jimenez’s name during one of the student-athlete’s interviews as a person to contact as a result of the task force that examined learning goals for study abroad. While the professor did not seem to think his role was important within study abroad, he continued to give me examples of his indirect interaction. Dr. Jimenez teaches a quantitative research methods course and each semester his class chooses a topic of study. One semester his class, which included a student-athlete that had studied abroad, chose to conduct research on study abroad goals.

The project came about as a request from the international department that wanted to know how study away affected the students once they returned to campus. So the students in the class designed and administered a survey on students who had returned to campus and analyzed the data for a final report. This is something that the international department had been wondering about but did not have the resources to do.

Academic advisors also have an important role in the student’s time away, as it pertains to the program that they are studying and the credits towards their major. Dr. Jimenez spoke about their communication with the students who are away in their host countries.

When they are on study away, I am in communication with them at least once or twice over e-mail and at least once for an advising session. Some of the high achieving athletes have discovered a sport while on study away. I had a soccer player who was in Wales on study away and picked up Net Ball as a hobby and ended up doing research because it was interesting to her. I think many athletes have similar experiences of the other students but to the extent that they might, at times, get a little more out of it from being accustomed to working as a team or getting along with new people. Trying a new
physical activity may seem unusual to some of the others (non-athletes) but there is a little social nature that athletes possess. Not saying that this is deficient for other students; as much as another opportunity for athletes to reach out and try something to make a connection you could say something similar about musicians, etc.

Mr. Anderson, the Director of the Center for Study Away, also shed light on the relationship student-athletes have with the advisors within the center and, particularly, the plight of student-athletes who choose to study abroad.

We have a really strong campus culture and 60% of the students study away. Most come to the school expecting to study away and the athletes are no different. We do not educate them any different than we do other students, but honestly, most everyone speaks with peers and professors around campus. Our job is to find the program most suitable for them and provide them with an information session that helps them determine their goals, reasons for wanting to study away and which courses they would like to study. It can sometimes be difficult for the student-athletes, especially those in a two semester sport. There is a lot of pressure on student-athletes. I have great communication with the coaches, we share a good relationship that is very positive. In fact, football send me recruits all the time.

Mr. Anderson went on tell me about conversations he had with a Women’s Basketball player who ultimately decided to study away during the competitive season against the wishes of her team.

I did have a very strong basketball player who studied away, and people said, “What’s the basketball team going to do without you?” She said, “This is about my education and it’s more important than playing basketball.” She said it was the best decision she could have made and she had a great opportunity to work with a local organization. She had an opportunity to work with a sport business and they invited her back the next summer to work in a full-fledged internship. For her it was a way for her to see a connection between athletics and her future.

As a director and advisor, Mr. Anderson draws from his personal passion and experiences with study abroad. What started out as a study abroad experience during college developed into a 19 year career in providing programs and opportunities for other students.

I wouldn’t be doing what I am doing today if I hadn’t studied abroad. For me it was an incredibly transformative experience. I felt like I got a really deep understanding for another culture, another way of living and really developing a new perspective on my place in the world. I thought to myself, “How can I facilitate these opportunities for
others?” That was my introduction into the world of higher education and international education.

Mr. Anderson believes that there is a lot more that can be done for student-athletes and other specialty groups that struggle with time constraints at his institution.

Sometimes what we end up doing, particularly with the winter sports, is looking for other opportunities for them. Maybe a semester isn’t going to work, so we look at a summer opportunity or something that isn’t as long or as intensive. Here at this institution we do have to think about those students who don’t want to miss half their season. It’s a question we’re still exploring here, we don’t have the perfect answer for that. Since we don’t do summer study as a rule, so the one’s that choose to study away in the summer, they do so at their own expense. We are actually in the process of being able to award some scholarship funds for study abroad in the summer for students who otherwise would not be able to study away. Mainly student-athletes and STEM students.

He also believes there is a still a barrier that needs to be overcome between coaches and their mistrust with the study away offices around the country. He feels that because he and his staff are able to get the information for them to know that student-athletes can do it well with institutional support, it has made for a more comfortable process.

**Quality of Student Experience and Effort**

The student-athletes experienced a myriad of events while abroad. Most of them had revelations of emotional, spiritual and cultural growth through societal adjustments and personal development opportunities. The student-athletes’ experiences exposed them to the many challenges that others encounter across the world, however they remained very positive about their overall experience and about the country they had visited. Much of this can be attributed to the characteristics of being an athlete and having a strong intercultural communication and competency level. Intercultural communication and competency is the ability to be resourceful and deal with stress. It is also the ability to problem solve and set a new goal of social reward in order to sustain one’s behavior (Williams, 1999). Athletes spend years being a part of teams and
being connected to individuals and situations that they normally would not be exposed to. They are often exposed to diversity and interculturalism from their formative years through sport socialization.

Many of the interviewees were given the opportunity to study abroad as part a program which involved them living with a host family. Host families provide many comforts for the students and their families while studying abroad. The student-athletes spoke about the relationships they built with host families and the language skills they were able to acquire by being forced to communicate with people who did not speak or only spoke very little English.

Linguistic Gain and Cultural Socialization

There were some study abroad programs that required a language skills course or component through the academic program. In addition to this, the host families provided an intense level of language acquisition for the student-athletes, as many of them spoke little to no English. The student-athletes that were in this position were forced to leave their comfort zone and quickly learn the native language in order to operate in the host country and the host family's home. Meghan, who studied abroad in Budapest, felt that her host mother was very supportive of her learning Hungarian.

I lived with an older woman and another student of the program. It was a new experience for me because she spoke no English and it took me a little bit to understand her. We had to do a lot of miming to have conversations at first. I took Hungarian eight hours a day for three weeks.

Beth, who studied in Spain, had to really adjust to speaking Spanish full time and was even able to learn from a running club of teenagers.

I stayed with a mother and her daughter both of whom only spoke Spanish. I had an American roommate but we made a pact that we would only speak Spanish in the home. Language skills is where I improved the most in study abroad. We (students and
host family) shared two meals a day, breakfast and lunch: that is where we talked and that is how I learned the most language improvement. I also had the opportunity to run with a high school team in Spain. I worked out with them a couple times a week at a local stadium and it was a great way to get connected when it is all in Spanish. I knew enough to say “hey, nice job, or what pace are we going out at,” but I couldn’t participate in the normal chatter. It was also tough because high school kids talk faster than anything and they use a lot of slang. So that is where I picked up some of the more cultural words but it was really a wonderful opportunity.

For Dave, a junior Cross Country and Track runner, some of his most memorable moments abroad involve cultural trips and language acquisition in South Africa.

There were trips that we took with my program to look at different environmental issues and examined desserts. The theme of my program was the Globalization and the Environment in Society, so we examined globalization’s input on culture and the natural environment. I picked up on some Afrikaans slang and Xhosa slang, which is their Bantu language, but I didn't take any language or immersion classes.

Dan’s trip to Jordan seemed to go smoother than most being that he had already travelled to and lived in West Bank for research.

I lived with an eclectic host family in terms of age, but I had previously been to the area so Arabic for me was pretty easy to communicate with them. I lived in their house for the duration of my program, they fed me in the morning and at night but I was at school for the most of the day. They were very kind and had about 50 student before me. The host kids would help me with Arabic and I would help them with English. It was tiring to try and think and work in Arabic 12 hours a day. We gelled pretty well, they were a family that was very welcoming but not too restricting. The most memorable moments came from trips that I took with my program. They were pretty good about taking us (students in program) to historical sites and nature parks, which were pretty good. I just really tried to embrace the differences and meeting people.

Gender Roles

One theme that emerged from the study abroad trips is the awareness of cultural gender roles of the host countries. While the student-athlete were not shocked as she knew the country she was visiting differed from the western ideals, there was still some instances of surprise. Meghan noticed generational differences in reference to gender roles.
The biggest cultural difference I noticed was gender roles. Not so much on the younger generation but with the older people. You would see women in the home and they have to serve the men, which I kind of expected going in from my research. Yet my host mother’s daughter was pretty progressive, I didn’t see any of that from her.

Mental and Physical (Athletic) Break

The researched institution stays true to the traditional fundamentals of college life by not offering or requiring summer courses. However, it was mentioned throughout the interviews that student academic life is rigorous and requires a strong level of commitment to studying for several hours per day. For the student-athletes, they also have the added pressures of daily training and competitions. Student-athletes that went abroad commented on how they used their study abroad semester to take a mental and physical break at times. Mike, who studied in Scotland, stayed in minimal shape but did not want to train seriously.

My school (abroad) had a very basic gym. I joined a Wednesday night soccer team but only did enough to stay in a little bit of shape but had no real way for strength training. I just really wanted to focus on my studies and I travelled a lot.

Scott also wanted a physical break being a double sport athlete with Track and Baseball.

I cannot say that I did anything relating to my sports or training. I went on a few jogs, but that was about it. I had not taken an athletic break for the previous 4 or 5 years. This was the first time in years that I did not think about sports.

Meghan also felt that her study abroad trip was an opportunity to take a break from athletics.

I decided when I went abroad that I wanted to relax and just run whenever I wanted and not have to worry about getting a certain amount of miles in. I just wanted to run when I wanted to run. It helped not having so much structure around my exercise. I have been running since my freshman year in high school, but before that I played other sports as well.

Beth felt as though the time away from her teammates brought them closer together upon their return.

It was special that we got to go away from each other for a little bit because the first 2
and a half years, we had done everything together and then we all go off to, not only different places, but different countries. Being away from them all for that long was tough and then we came back together with incredible experiences. Just sharing that with each other made it that much more special. It made us appreciate the group that we had together.

Returning from Study Abroad a Better Athlete

While there is very little research on coach’s perspectives concerning their student-athletes that choose to study abroad, some coach’s fear that the time away will cause the athlete to lose their fitness or athletic abilities. Coach Sheri had, admittedly felt that way in the past but through experiences changed her thoughts.

Here at our school, it has happened where people come back and their senior year is amazing. I have seen when they come back and lose their competitive edge but that may not have anything to do with their study abroad experience. I always hope they come back as better athletes and better people.

While Coach Sheri coaches track, where students can run generally to keep a level of fitness, Coach Katie is a softball coach and that can create some real challenges.

I had a pitcher who studied abroad she was on a small sail boat for many week so they definitely come back in an athletic pace that puts them behind where they would have been otherwise, but it doesn’t affect any decision that I make about playing time. If they come back and they have been put behind another teammate, they just have to work harder to earn that spot back. Whoever is the best at the time that we need them is the one who gets the position, so hopefully study abroad doesn’t put them behind so that they lose a starting position.

Cultural Nuances, Phobias, and Isms

Most of the student-athletes that went to Middle-Eastern countries or countries that are not culturally similar to the United States researched appropriateness and prepared themselves for the necessary changes. All of the student-athletes still had surprising stories of cultural practices within their host countries that made them appreciate their homeland. The student-
athletes’ experiences exposed them to the many challenges that others encounter across the world every day, however, they remained very positive about their overall experience and about the country they had visited. Much of this can be attributed to the characteristics of being an athlete and having a strong intercultural communication and competency level. Intercultural communication and competency is the ability to be resourceful and deal with stress. It is also the ability to problem solve and set a new goal of social reward in order to sustain one’s behavior (Williams, 1999). Athletes, due to the nature of sport and socialization, have the natural ability to adjust to their surroundings and embrace change.

Cultural Nuances

Cultural nuances are to be expected when living in another country for the first time and many of the student-athletes experienced first-hand just how those difficulties can put a slight damper on the total experience. Heather lived with a host family and spoke briefly about how surprised she was at the experience.

I did not feel very comfortable in my living experience which I thought would be different. It is very hard and awkward to explain, but I thought my host mother would have been more loving. She was just not as warm and fuzzy as I expected, so I was always on guard. I stayed on guard and was happiest when away. I still feel that others should study abroad and I appreciated it.

Mike’s host family was great, but he did not enjoy his roommate as much as he expected. His roommate was also there as a study abroad student.

I, unfortunately, shared a room with a person (non-American) whose habits were not at all acceptable.

While Meghan had a wonderful experience, her concern was that her classmates were not allowing themselves to do the same.
I didn’t appreciate some of the students that I had in classes with me. They were intelligent but only focused on the math part of studying abroad and that was it. So because of that I was really appreciative of my host family.

Dan’s experiences with harassment of women made him uncomfortable, but he was able to be of assistance to his female peers.

I had negative experiences in the sense that I would go places with my female friends and see certain instances of harassment or “cat calling”. That really bothered me unfortunately that is not something unique to Jordan. Then I have been with friends in the US and they’ve been “cat called” or around during misogynistic things that happened. So I think that what my female friends had to go through on a daily basis there was negative.

Dave spoke about similar situations and even more dangerous occurrences that happened on his campus while abroad.

I didn’t run at night because there was a lot of crime that happened and I think that there is definitely a gender component to that also. A lot of my female classmates, both American and South African did not walk outside even in small groups at night which is definitely different to how most of my female friends act back home. There were definitely instances of sexual assault around the campus at night which kept a lot of women, in particular, from going out.

Homophobia

It was widely known to Dave that part of his education abroad would be dedicated to issues dealing with the region's LGBTQ standards and challenges with homophobia within South Africa.

I had concerns of crime, harassment and sexual assault particularly because my research was done in a gay district so annoying stuff happened that was terrible. I was there conducting interviews on globalization in that neighborhood and interviewing residents. Sometimes people were aggressive and stuff, but it was fine. Part of what I argue in my research is that the space is no longer a gay space; globalization has made it more a tokenized place. It has really marketed itself to be like the gay capital of Africa but with all of this influx of foreign capital, because of gentrification, original residents and businesses have been pushed out. It has become much more transnational, white and straight. I would say it is less welcoming for queer people of color than the United States is, to me it seemed even more stratified within the LGBTQ community between the
White people and people of color in South Africa. It is definitely a product of the Apartheid Regime and the institutional barriers that people of color face on top of that with LGBTQ creating real barriers to economic mobilization for sure.

Terrorism and Racism

Some parts and people around the world are not as accepting of people of color. Like here in America, terrorism and the threat of terrorism has recently been attributed to a religious group of people with a particular look. John, a young man that is mixed with African American and White, had to experience some unfortunate experiences abroad dealing with racism and terrorism.

I went to Italy with my brother. The same day we left was the bombings in Brussels at the airport. That didn’t affect us so much but the bombing was by, I guess, a Muslim affiliated group. So while we were in Italy, which has a reputation for being a bit xenophobic, my brother and I are brown which caused us some problems. We got stopped by the police a lot of times and had to show our passports. I remember when we were going through security at the airport they pulled us in separate rooms and ran our passports and made us go through extra security. We were followed in stores and stuff. It’s not that big of a deal but it was uncomfortable and a little scary but also frustrating and disappointing.

Terrorism was also a concern to Scott who studied and interviewed some military groups in Northern Ireland.

We got to do a lot of one on one interviews with military groups and got to hear a lot of stories about murder and betrayal. This was the only place in the UK where the police officers carry automatic weapons. The standard police cars are SWAT vehicles. Things have kind of been resolved but there is still a lot of internal strife. I still follow the news feeds where you hear people being killed and they still have bomb threats. It made me realize I take things for granted. We are able to do pretty much anything. We don’t have to worry about what side of town we are in or what religion we practice.

Summary

This chapter represents the results of the inductive interviews that were transcribed and
summarized the major themes presented. All major themes aligned directly with the theoretical framework, the GMAC, and other current literature concerning students that study abroad. While the results show that student-athletes have similar experiences abroad, there were additional findings that presented experiences unique to that of a student-athlete. The mission of the studied institution states, “We believe that the benefit of the educational experience is the development of individuals who make informed judgments and interpretations of the broader world around them and choose actions or beliefs for which they are willing to be held accountable.” The interviews of the student-athletes and administration reflect this statement wholeheartedly.

Based on the interviews, the answers were hypothesized to the original research questions. The elements that are critical to creating and maintaining a successful study abroad program for student-athletes are short to mid-length programs, created or joined by an athletic administrative staff member and be conducted during the noncompetitive seasons (winter and summer break included). The adaptable elements of providing opportunities for student-athletes to study abroad are making sure that the student-athletes and athletic personal are aware of the programs and opportunities available on campus, allowing for athletic scholarships to cover the equal amounts of the student-athletes sojourn, creating a sense of support and encouragement from coaches and athletic administration and providing fitness and workout regimens that can be performed in any environment. The research questions are addressed thoroughly in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

It is becoming more popular for specialty undergraduate groups and majors to design study abroad trips that fit the needs of the students who lack the regular opportunities to study abroad. Making study abroad the norm and not the exception can position this and future generations of Americans for global success (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2008). There has been an increase in study abroad numbers overall, but there has also been a new shift in the redesign of the traditional idea of education abroad. Within the literature, STEM programs have done well to find opportunities for their various medical students to participate in study abroad due to their time constraints and rigorous class structure during the regular academic terms. There has not been a substantial increase in ideas and programs, within the literature, geared towards increasing the opportunities for student-athletes who also experience a high level of time constraints and year-round responsibility to the universities and athletic departments. The purpose of this research was to study current student-athletes that studied abroad and, through a series of questions, extract elements of essential and repeatable information for athletic departments and institutions nationwide. Due to a 60% participation rate for student-athletes at the institution that was studied, a case study was performed by interviewing student-athletes and administrators. Based on the feedback and information provided by the participants, there is potential for programs to be created that would be specific to the future development of student-athlete opportunities for study abroad.

The student-athlete participants interviewed were in their senior year of undergraduate studies and had studied aboard the previous academic year, their junior year. The findings of the study are located in Chapter 4. This research was conducted as a case study featuring only one
institution. Therefore, it should be noted that there are specific inferences of information that is specific to this institution only. However, the results in conjunction with literature, implications and recommendations are presented in this chapter along with a final conclusion for this case study.

Implications of Findings

Research on study abroad states that, for the vast majority, it is an experience that is life changing and provides a better sense of intercultural competence for students. The study abroad choice process encompasses all types of capital described as influential and is comprised of a range of decisions based on many elements (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2008). As revealed within the interviews, student-athletes based their decisions to study abroad on competitive season, program of study, and institutional and administrative support. The institution has done a convincingly strong job at overcoming these key elements for decision making by providing a long-standing culture for student-athletes to follow. Based on the interviews, the decision making process was a minimal factor for the student-athletes. Essentially, the key elements addressed within the study through the interviews were critical to the success of the institution’s progress of sending student-athletes to study abroad.

Additional findings within this research have a significant benefit to the institution itself and to member institutions within the NCAA, particularly Divisions I and II. The overall body of literature referencing study abroad and student-athlete engagement will benefit from this case study and the findings. The current information available is very limiting to specialty groups, such as student-athletes, that choose or seek the abilities to study abroad. In addition to the minimal study abroad research, literature based on student-athlete engagement in foreign travel,
cultural immersion and global competency is almost nonexistent. The NCAA briefly acknowledges the student-athlete plight with study abroad by stating within Division I, 27% of student-athletes have either studied abroad or plan to do so while between 30% and 40% of Division II and III student-athletes have or plan to do so (NCAA, 2016). This statement does not provide member institutions with tangible figures or real data surrounding the complexities of student-athlete’s choice or address their need for athletic department support. This statement also creates a fictitious impression of student-athletes’ actual ability to follow through on their expectations to study abroad within the 4 or 5 years of competition. With the qualitative case study and findings produced here, there is a real attempt to gather information and present repeatable measures for NCAA member institutions and athletic departments nationwide.

Elements Critical to Successful Study Abroad Programs

The four elements identified as critical to creating and maintaining a successful study abroad program for student-athletes are strong campus support, strong coaches support, creating opportunities for physical fitness and athletic maintenance while abroad and securing financial aid for cost of attendance needs.

Strong Campus Support

There was a strong reference within the interviews to campus and administrative culture being a contributing factor to the education and expectation the student-athletes had at the institution. There was an easy transitional processes to follow for those athletes that were interested or had already decided to study abroad. The director and staff of the Study Away Center were very knowledgeable of the decisions student-athletes had to make when pursuing a
program and had great working relationships with coaches and administrators within the athletic department. The strong campus culture is rooted in campus awareness and engagement. It was clear in speaking with the student-athletes and coaches that they were aware of the programs available to them and/or the appropriate people to contact on campus when in need of additional information.

Strong Coaches Support

Secondly, as a result of the interviews, there was a strong sense that the coaches supported and encouraged the athletes to study abroad. The coaches themselves mentioned their regrets as they were collegiate student-athletes that did not study abroad. Their work at an institution that sends such a high number of athletes to study abroad has made them realize that they missed an opportunity to have the total student-athlete experience. Many of the coaches at this institution feel so strongly about the benefits of study abroad that they use it as a recruiting tool and explain to potential student-athletes how their team members choose to do so each year and how they are able to still be successful athletes. While the coaches mentioned the unsettling chance that athletes choose to study abroad during the competitive season, they still showed great support for their decisions. Coaches that show support for student-athletes to study abroad make the decision easier and more comfortable for the athlete. While some of the athletes knew they wanted to study abroad prior to attending the institution, hearing their coach’s support provided a separate set of appreciation. The director of the study away center responded that even though this school does not currently have the option for students to study away during winter or summer break, they are now discussing those options because this is overwhelmingly affecting the student-athlete and STEM populations, which is unacceptable. Shorter termed
opportunities to study abroad would need to be explored for most student-athletes throughout the NCAA divisions. There are a myriad of opportunities for short-term study abroad trips which may be a solution for both coaches and student-athletes that do not want to compromise the two playing seasons.

Physical Fitness and Athletic Maintenance

A third implication was addressing the fitness and athletic levels of student-athletes who chose to study abroad. While the Track and Field coach made sure that her outbound athletes knew how they could maintain fitness in any environment, the Softball coach encouraged fitness, but knew it could be difficult based on the technical aspects of the sport. Training while abroad can be most difficult for sports that require certain equipment or facilities i.e. basketball, swimming and diving, volleyball, etc. Most athletes in general had the innate drive and ambition to work out. As student-athletes, they were accustomed to running and lifting frequently, and this did not change because they were abroad. It was interesting to note that for the first time in some of the student-athletes lives, they wanted to take a physical break. Some of the student-athletes could not remember a period in their lives where they were not competing in one or more sports. For coaches that want to support their student-athlete’s decision to study abroad yet require some type of fitness level, a work out or lifting regimen should be given to the student to follow while away, but there should not be the expectation that they will do very rigorous training.

Financial Aid for Cost of Attendance Needs

Finally, the investigated institution had a strong financial aid package that covered
student-athletes cost of attendance while abroad. The process is so seamless, that students only have to fund their own personal wants or explorations while away. However, that is a structure that is unique to the college’s “semester abroad” policy. There are many student-athletes that are on full or partial athletic aid. It would be beneficial to student-athletes that receive athletic aid if they were able to keep their same athletic scholarship to cover their expenses abroad.

Adaptable Elements for Opportunities to Study Abroad

The adaptable elements of providing opportunities for student-athletes to study abroad will require different approaches for Division I and Division II athletic departments. Many of these athletic departments have greater resources, larger staffs; greater expenses more student-athletes, a more inclusive academic calendar, and greater competitive demands than the studied institution and other comparable Division III institutions.

At the 2016 NCAA Division I Convention, the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) discussed and proposed legislations for the member institutions to support. One of the seven concepts proposed was to permit educational exceptions to the five-year eligibility rule to provide the student-athletes time for more study abroad and internships (Hobbs, 2016). The Mid-American Conference SAAC recommended and proposed that student-athletes should have one mandatory off period from athletics during their college careers to study abroad. While the proposal has not yet been voted into legislation, the groundbreaking discussion has been introduced and the support is present across all three divisions. NCAA membership institutions have a staff member designated for creating programs and opportunities for student-athletes to engage in academic led activities on campus through the NCAA Life Skills initiative.

NCAA Life Skills initiative is a well-known collaboration between the national office, the 1,200 member institutions, the affiliate organizations and conference offices. It is
committed to the total development of student-athletes while preparing them with “life skills” that are useful throughout the college experience and after graduation (NCAA).

Through each member institution’s SAAC, the student-athletes have made it clear, although it is not feasible for all, study abroad is an important component of having more discretion with their vacation periods and academic pursuits.

Strong Campus Support

Campus support within Division I and Division II institutions involves effort between both the study abroad offices and the athletics’ department staff. Communication between the study abroad offices and athletics’ staff will assist the student-athletes in awareness of programs and course credit attainment while abroad. For athletic departments and study abroad departments across the country to increase participation from student-athletes, both departments need to work together to make sure that there are suitable programs available for the student-athletes schedules and interests. Key individuals within the athletic department should be regularly educated and informed of programs, and provide that information to the sports teams and their coaching staffs. It is important that the study abroad office identifies programs that work best for the athletes, different seasons of play and time constraints. It is also essential for the designated athletic personnel to be cognizant of and inform student-athletes and coaches of the information sessions, advising meeting and appropriate deadlines within the study abroad department.

Every four years, Division I schools that can afford the expenses, send their teams on a foreign tour. While the foreign tour is designed for teams to expose their university and teams to foreign and national teams, the main goals are to recruit international potential student-athletes, compete against national teams and to allow the student-athletes the opportunity to travel abroad.
There are some campuses that are allowing a professor to design a course for those teams that participate in foreign tours to acquire credit hours while studying away. It is an attempt to add an academic enrichment component to the foreign tour and it is a study abroad opportunity for the student-athletes. In support of the student-athletes that have more difficulty studying abroad, allowing the foreign tour to also act as an educational opportunity would benefit both the institution and the athletes.

Strong Coaches Support

Athletic coaches at the Division I and II levels can be compared to business owners. They are responsible for entire staffs, major budgets, scheduling requirements and, most importantly, their student-athletes. For many coaches, winning competitions is as equally important as providing each student-athlete with a well-rounded college experience. Time constraints and intense scheduling are two of many complaints that SAAC have cited as keeping them from their study abroad interests. While their legislative proposals are still in the discussion phases, coaches need to understand that study abroad is being proposed as a positive academic experience. Coaches should encourage their student-athletes to explore sojourns that align with winter, spring, summer and fall breaks if available through the institution. While some of the Division III student-athletes that were interviewed chose to forego competitive seasons and non-competitive seasons to study abroad, this is generally not an available option for Division I or II student-athletes. Also, many student-athletes use the winter, spring, summer and fall breaks to take one or more courses. Student-athlete often need to acquire credits for progress towards their degree or take the more strenuous courses during the break periods. Coaching staffs should become knowledgeable in study abroad programs that work best for their sports
“down time” so that when athletes request the opportunity, the coach is prepared to support and encourage their efforts.

Physical Fitness and Athletic Maintenance

Student-athletes are part of an elite athletic group where physicality and fitness are a top priority. Another important SAAC proposal at the 2016 National Convention was to have a mandatory off period from athletics and for a national sport specific board to review playing seasons, practice seasons and all countable athletically related activities (Hobbs, 2016). Remaining fit and in top athletic form is a priority to the coaching staffs and student-athletes. One of the main concerns from the coaches that were interviewed for this study and other coaches nationwide is the student-athletes commitment to staying at a decent fitness level while abroad. A proper solution to the fitness concerns would be to provide athletes with an all-encompassing workout regimen to adhere to while abroad. The workout should be designed for in-home or outside options to follow. There is no guarantee that the student-athletes will follow the regimen, however, most athletes know and understand how important their bodies and fitness is to their athletic status.

Financial Aid for Cost of Attendance Needs

Division III athletes are not awarded athletic scholarships, thus making their decision to study abroad based solely on their academic, institutional, personal and family financial support. For Division I and II student-athletes, many of them are dependent on their athletic financial aid through scholarships. Those scholarships require both academic and athletic eligibility and progress. The regulations within those scholarship agreements support either a percentage or the
entire cost of attendance to a university. However, study abroad programs are not considered an academic requirement or right of pursuit bound to an athletic scholarship. It is at the member institution’s discretion as to how much aid will be awarded towards study abroad if any aid is awarded at all. With SAAC’s new proposals and legislative suggestions, athletic departments are being forced to reanalyze their level of financial support for student-athletes to study abroad. In addition to that, contingency plans should be explored to provide opportunities for those student-athletes based on their regular scholarship packages.

In 2015, the autonomy conferences (SEC, ACC, PAC12, Big 12, Big Ten) ruled that a full scholarship would cover additional “cost of attendance” expenses such as academic related supplies, transportation and other similar items (Hosick, 2015). For those institutions that could afford to pay the additional expenses, the student-athletes have been awarded additional monies divided over a 10-month academic school year. This rule was introduced on the heels of the O’Bannon vs. NCAA Supreme Court case which cited the member institutions as profiting from the student-athletes likeness, names and images (O’Bannon v. NCAA, 2015). Through this judicial process, it was strongly encouraged that student-athletes be financially supported in more ways than just tuition, fees, room and board. Study abroad aligns well with the new initiatives in that the student-athletes desire to pursue global enrichment through education should be supported similarly to their on-campus education. While many institutions may not have the resources to support every area of a study abroad experience, provisions should be made to provide those students with a similar package as their normal scholarship.

Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the interviews with the student-athletes and administration at the studied
institution, there were recommendations for further study of the topic concerning student-athletes and study abroad that I strongly feel will create broader significance to higher education as a whole.

Research Student-Athletes of Color

Within the literature of study abroad, it is apparent that the percentages of students of color that choose to study abroad are significantly lower than that of white students. I recommend that research be conducted on student-athletes of color who want to study abroad and those that have studied abroad. There is existing literature that implies there are additional challenges for people of color to travel abroad. Being that student-athletes of color are heavily concentrated in revenue sports such as football, basketball and track and field, a study on their choice and challenges to study abroad should be explored.

Athletics Department Study Abroad Program

Finally, an athletic department that seeks to attract a group of student-athletes each year and expose them to study abroad opportunities should create this program in house separate, but with the assistance of the study abroad department. The director of the study away department at the studied institution spoke about his 19-year career working with athletic departments and was forthcoming about the history of strained relationships between coaches and study abroad advisors. The root of the disagreement was usually based on distrust or an idea that an advisor would not understand the importance of the student-athlete’s need to compete or train. As of late, there have been a small few athletic departments across the NCAA that have developed their own programs to provide a more trusted and controlled study abroad opportunity.
I recommend that the athletic department’s administration conduct a study of their student-athletes who study abroad. The study should include a pre and post interview of their sojourn and focus on topics such as effects on personal growth and development, athletic growth and development, and global and social awareness. Follow-up interviews could be explored to track the student-athletes growth throughout their lives and careers. This study would contribute to literature that explore the long lasting effects of the total student-athlete experience which could also contribute to the NCAA GOALS research.

As I mentioned in my implications, financial support is a large deterrent for many student-athletes, however an athletic department completely sponsors or fundraises for a team’s foreign tour. Many players that otherwise would not have the opportunity to study abroad are given the experience. The recommendation would include a qualitative study that interviews student-athletes prior to departure, during and shortly upon arrival back at institution post trip.

Conclusion

Over the course of several decades, postsecondary study abroad has evolved from a selective niche educational endeavor to a national educational priority (Salisbury, 2011). Institutions nationwide are recognizing the need to educate from a more global and international perspective. Student-athletes that are provided the same opportunity to study abroad get the intercultural experiences and benefits as do their non-athletic peers.

In conclusion, the studied college does a fine job in including student-athletes into their successful study abroad culture. By continuing to create and maintain opportunities for athletes to compete and explore study abroad, they are fulfilling their overall mission to internationalize their students. The goal of this case study is to provide information and
repeatable elements for other student-athletes and athletic departments to follow. This research has provided information that will substantiate the existing literature surrounding study abroad and add to the literature concerning the overall student-athlete experience.
APPENDIX A

EMAIL SOLICITATION: STUDENT-ATHLETES
October 2016

Dear [Name] College Student-Athlete,

You are invited to volunteer for a research case study on the effects of participation in study abroad as a student-athlete. This research is being conducted as a part of a dissertation towards an Ed.D through the University of North Texas. I am conducting this research to determine if there are repeatable measures for other athletic departments and student-athletes nationwide to increase participation in study abroad programs. I will be specifically concentrating on topics such as student-athlete engagement, financial support/scholarship, time constraints and duration of trip and student-athlete/coaches expectations. This case study may assist in providing further research for student-athletes and study abroad and how those effects may be interesting to other collegiate athletic departments nationwide.

Your participation in this study is very important. If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to partake in a recorded interview that will take between 45 minutes to 1 hour of your time. You will be asked a series of questions about your overall study abroad experience and how being a student-athlete effected that experience. Individual answers will be kept confidential and your participation is voluntary. This study has been approved by the Institution Review Board at both UNT and [Macalester].

I have included an informed consent form for you to review for additional information about this study. Your SWA, Ms. [Name] will be assisting with gathering and delivering your consent documents to me as well as assisting with the organization of our interview.

I appreciate your help and willingness to participate in this case study. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me or Mr. Marc Cutright, my doctoral committee chair.

Sincerely,

Chaunte Baldwin-O’Neil
Doctoral Candidate in Higher Education Administration
University of North Texas
APPENDIX B

EMAIL SOLICITATION: ADMINISTRATORS
October 2016

Dear [Redacted] College Study Abroad Administrator,

You are invited to volunteer for a research case study on the effects of participation in study abroad as an administrator that assists student-athletes. This research is being conducted as a part of a dissertation towards an Ed.D through the University of North Texas. I am conducting this research to determine if there are repeatable measures for other athletic departments and student-athletes nationwide to increase participation in study abroad programs. I will be specifically concentrating on topics such as student-athlete engagement, financial support/scholarship, time constraints and duration of trip and student-athlete/coaches expectations. This case study may assist in providing further research for student-athletes and study abroad and how those effects may be interesting to other collegiate athletic departments nationwide.

Your participation in this study is very important. If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to partake in a recorded interview that will take between 45 minutes to 1 hour of your time. You will be asked a series of questions about your overall experience assisting and student-athletes that study abroad. Individual answers will be kept confidential and your participation is voluntary. This study has been approved by the Institution Review Board at both UNT and [Redacted].

I have included an informed consent form for you to review for additional information about this study. Your SWA, [Redacted] will be assisting with gathering and delivering your consent documents to me as well as assisting with the organization of our interview.

I appreciate your help and willingness to participate in this case study. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me or Mr. Marc Cutright, my doctoral committee chair.

Sincerely,

Chaunte Baldwin-O’Neil  
Doctoral Candidate in Higher Education Administration  
University of North Texas
APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT INTAKE FORM
1. What is your first name AND what is your email or phone number for preferred contact?

2. What sport(s) do you play?

If did not return to sport please write, "Did not return".

3. What is your gender?

Female Male Other Prefer Not to Answer

4. Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)

American Indian or Alaskan Native Asian / Pacific Islander Black or African American Hispanic White / Caucasian Multiple ethnicity / other (please specify)

5. What was your high school GPA (approximately)?

2.0 - 2.49 2.5 - 2.99 3.0 - 3.49 3.5 - 3.99 4.0

6. Did your parent or guardian graduate with a college bachelor's degree?

Yes No

7. Which would you describe as closest to your socioeconomic status prior to college?

Lower class Middleclass Upper class

8. Prior to college, had you traveled abroad?

Yes No

APPENDIX D
UNT IRB APPROVAL
October 11, 2016

Dr. Marc Cutright
Student Investigator: Chaunte Baldwin
College of Education
University of North Texas

Re: Human Subjects Application No. 16-396

Dear Dr. Cutright:

As permitted by federal law and regulations governing the use of human subjects in research projects (45 CFR 46), the UNT Institutional Review Board has reviewed your proposed project titled “Study Abroad Student-Athlete Choice.” The risks inherent in this research are minimal, and the potential benefits to the subject outweigh those risks. The submitted protocol is hereby approved for the use of human subjects in this study. Federal Policy 45 CFR 46.109(e) stipulates that IRB approval is for one year only, October 11, 2016 to October 10, 2017.

Enclosed are the consent documents with stamped IRB approval. Please copy and use this form only for your study subjects.

It is your responsibility according to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations to submit annual and terminal progress reports to the IRB for this project. The IRB must also review this project prior to any modifications. If continuing review is not granted before October 10, 2017, IRB approval of this research expires on that date.

Please contact The Office of Research Integrity and Compliance at 940-565-4643, if you wish to make changes or need additional information.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Chad Trulson, Ph.D.
Professor
Chair, Institutional Review Board

CT: jm

1155 Union Circle #310979 940.369.4643  www.research.unt.edu
Denton, Texas 76203-5017 940.369.7486 fax
APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
University of North Texas Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Notice

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: Study Abroad and Student-Athlete Choice

Student Investigator: Chaunte Baldwin, M. Ed., University of North Texas

Supervising Investigator: Dr. Marc Cutright, University of North Texas-College of Education

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to participate in a research study which involves gathering information concerning student-athletes’ experiences in study abroad programs.

Study Procedures: Student-Athletes and administrators will be asked to answer a series of questions that will take about 1 hour to completely discuss. Participants will be video or audio interviewed but will only be audio recorded during the interview. The purpose of the interviews is to use them as a basis for determining the effects study abroad has on student-athletes. The interviews are semi-structured.

Foreseeable Risks: There are no foreseeable risks in this research study.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others: We expect the project to benefit you by providing information to the existing body of literature and providing duplicable study abroad programs for other athletic departments and student-athletes to follow.

Compensation for Participants: None

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: The confidentiality of your individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study. Audio records will be uploaded from the recording device into files and stored on my password protected computer. All recordings will be deleted upon the required 3 year minimum. Research records will be stored in my home office as well as in the Higher Education Department at UNT. I will have the students identified by a number (ex. student-athlete #1).

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. Marc Cutright at marcicutright@unt.edu.

Review for the Protection of Participants: This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-4643 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

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APPROVED BY THE UNT IRB
FROM 10/21/11 TO 10/10/12

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Research Participants’ Rights:

Your participation in the survey confirms that you have read all of the above and that you agree to all of the following:

- The researcher has explained the study to you and you have had an opportunity to contact him/her with any questions about the study. You have been informed of the possible benefits and the potential risks of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.
- You may request a copy of this form for your records.

Printed Name: ________________________

Signature: ________________________ Date: _________
REFERENCES


Corbin, J.K. (2012). *Perceived effects of a mid-length study abroad program.* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation) University of North Texas, Denton, TX.


NCAA Academic Membership Affairs Staff. (2016). *NCAA Division I compliance manual*. Indianapolis, IN.


