


THE FUTURE HAS ARRIVED: FACTORS INFLUENCING SPORT AND EVENT
MANAGEMENT UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' CAREER OUTCOMES

by

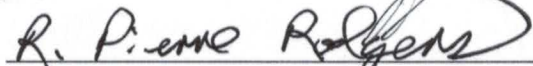
Selina Kirwan
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Submitted to the
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in Partial Fulfillment of
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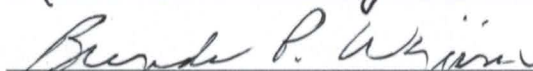
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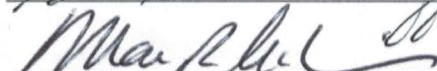

_____ Chair






_____ Academic Program Coordinator


_____ Academic Program Coordinator


_____ Dean, College of Education
and Human Development

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The Future has Arrived: Factors Influencing Sport and Event Management
Undergraduate Students' Career Outcomes

A project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Science in Sport and Recreation Studies at George Mason University

By

Selina Kirwan
Bachelor of Science
George Mason University, 2013

Director: Seungwon "Shawn" Lee, Associate Professor

School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism
College of Education and Human Development

Summer Semester 2017
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

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DEDICATION

With my deepest gratitude and warmest affection, I dedicate this project to Alex, Mummy and Daddy, Nicholas and Sydney, and Vince and Judy for being a constant source of love, knowledge, support, and inspiration.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Shawn Lee, for his continuous support throughout this process. Without his guidance, support, and dedication to my studies, this project would not have been possible.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IRB	Institutional Review Board
TOUR	Tourism and Events Management
SCHEV	State Council of Higher Education for Virginia
SPMT	Sport Management
SRST	Sport and Recreation Studies

ABSTRACT

THE FUTURE HAS ARRIVED: FACTORS INFLUENCING SPORT AND EVENT MANAGEMENT UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' CAREER OUTCOMES

Selina Kirwan, M.S.

George Mason University, 2017

Project Director: Dr. Seungwon "Shawn" Lee

This project explores motivational factors influencing career outcomes of Sport and Event Management undergraduate students at George Mason University. Three motivational factors were investigated throughout this study including undergraduate degrees and associated curricula, faculty mentorship, and fieldwork experiences. These factors were researched in order to discover how both individually and collectively they affect a students' decision-making regarding career outcomes. A mixed methods convergent parallel research design was implemented for this study. In order to examine the effect these factors have on students' career outcomes, both alumni and current students of George Mason's undergraduate Sport and Event Management degree concentrations were interviewed and surveyed. In addition to predetermining the motivational factors, five themes were also fixed for this study. These themes include an undergraduate degree and its associated curricula, faculty mentorship, fieldwork

experiences, all three factors combined, and other factors indicated by the participants.

This study confirms that the three factors indeed play a role separately, but collectively as well. The most influential factor determined in this study was fieldwork experiences.

However, the three motivational factors altogether shape career outcomes by allowing students to identify not only their strengths and weaknesses, but their passions as well.

This in turn helps students make those important post-graduate decisions and determine a career path.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle”

– Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple, Inc. (Love, 2014).

The statement above greatly applies to young undergraduate college students today. It is senior year, a scary world of graduation, job applications; careers are at the finish line and students are preparing to embark on life in the real world. The future students have always dreamed about has finally arrived, and final decisions about that future must be made. Upperclassmen must focus on their future and their goals, and take decisive action for what kind of professional they would like to become.

Each professional realm has many requirements a graduate must possess in order to enter the field (Mayo & Thomas-Haysbert, 2005). This involves relevant field experience such as sales, customer service, industry knowledge and understanding of related jargon, and internship experience (Mayo & Thomas-Haysbert, 2005). In preparation for a career in these fields, faculty and staff needs to understand the motivating and driving factors that influence an undergraduate’s decision to pursue a career in their academic area of interest.

Prior research on this topic has indicated that academic settings tend to directly correlate to the environmental settings in a workplace they so desire (Cunningham, Sagas, Dixon, Kent, & Turner, 2005). If a student enjoys his or her area of study, they are more likely to continue pursuing a career in that field (Nauta, 2007). A student's field of study is commonly known as their major in academia today. Research has shown that "a more proximal index of the efficacy of career decisions or interventions among college students is satisfaction with one's field of study (henceforth referred to as "major satisfaction") (Nauta, 2007, p. 447). Therefore, if an undergraduate student enjoys their degree and the topics covered, they will transition their careers to align with that degree (Nauta, 2007). This is important to understand, especially in an undergraduate setting, because it will help students make those important career-specific decisions.

While academic majors and curricula help encourage students' career decisions, faculty mentorship also has a role in students' career outcomes. Faculty members take on mentorships in many ways, including "acting as a facilitator, guide, or co-learner while the student takes on the roles of explorer, cognitive apprentice, teacher, and producer of knowledge" (Vandermaas-Peeler, Miller, & Peeples, 2015, p. 377). In addition, faculty members "play an instrumental role in encouraging and creating opportunities for their students outside of the classroom" (Kitterlin-Lynch, Williams, & Zheng, 2015, p. 133).

While acting as a mentor, faculty members can also help link students with industry professionals and encourage students to advance their professionalism (Vandermaas-Peeler et al., 2015). Faculty mentorship also brings many benefits to students, including "gaining knowledge about the discipline, improving their resume,

learning how to do research, and preparing for graduate study” (Vandermaas-Peeler et al., 2015, p. 378). Additionally, mentored students as compared to non-mentored students tend to feel more prepared to advance in their careers (Long, Fish, Kuhn, & Sowders, 2010). Students that are mentored appear to be “better at problem solving, decision making, goal setting, making an effective transition to college, and overall happier with their educational experience” (Long et al., 2010, p.13). Therefore, students are better prepared to succeed in their internship experiences.

While academic majors and faculty mentorship play key roles in a career choice, the role an internship has on a career outcome will have a much stronger impact (Cunningham et al., 2005). The internship, as defined, is “an individualized opportunity that typically occurs at the end of a student’s academic experience and is designed to provide a hands-on, challenging workplace experience with a sponsoring agency” (Koo, Diacin, Khojasteh, & Dixon, 2016, p. 30). Although many degrees in relation to the Sport and Events industries involve internship experiences, students seek internships outside of degree requirements (Stansbie & Nash, 2016).

There are many motivations to explain why students seek internships (Koo et al., 2016). Such motivations include, “a need for practical skill development, the potential for enhanced academic performance, and the employment prospects it affords” (Stansbie & Nash, 2016, p.72). Without internship experiences, students could enjoy what they are learning in theory within the classroom, but upon graduation and entering their intended profession, may realize they do not like the expertise of what they have learned. As

experiential learning is growing in popularity amongst curricula, it is important to understand how internships are influencing student's decisions (Koo et al., 2016).

Internships provide a student with both positive and negative experiences, and therefore, "any positive or negative experience during an internship can possibly have an impact on the interns' subsequent career-related affect and behaviors" (Cunningham et al., 2005, p. 45). Stansbie and Nash (2016) claim that internships provide a sneak-peak into the industry and therefore "testing their fondness of the industry can reap longer term benefits in reduced migration and turnover rates" (p.73). Therefore, internships provide insight into whether or not a student would thrive and prosper in the associated field and impact his or her career outcome.

For example, if a student enjoyed learning about event planning and the organizational skills required to execute an event, but did not like the long hours, attention to detail, or the personal sacrifices that need to be made in order to implement a successful event, then that students' attitude would shift, and career goals could potentially be altered. Therefore, we must ask, what effect do undergraduate majors and associated curriculum, faculty mentorship, and internships have on a Sport or Event Management students' career outcome.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A focus of this study was to advance the current knowledge that exists in the literature and recognize why and how an undergraduate degree plays such a pivotal role in career outcomes. However, understanding the role of an undergraduate degree is not the sole focus of this study. Many factors are involved with career decision-making

(Ayres, 2006). Such factors may include, but not limited to, curriculum associated with the degree, internship experience, and interest in the student's chosen academic area of focus over a period of time, as well as an understanding of knowledge and skills required for the student's industry of choice (Ayres, 2015).

Hence, it is important to assess how these three factors (i.e. undergraduate major and associated curricula, faculty mentorship, and internships) conjointly influence career outcomes. Research has explored these factors separately, but there is a significant gap in the literature in relation to how altogether, these three factors affect a students' career outcome. Braunstein-Minkove and Deluca (2015) claim:

In an effort to bridge the gap between academics and external resources, opportunities could include courses with experiential components (e.g., field experience course with on-site hours requirements, semester-long assignments that align students with industry professionals/organizations, etc.); participation in informational interviews, student conferences, and networking events; and electives taught by industry professionals, just to name a few. (p. 26)

By comprehending and evaluating the importance of bridging the gap between academics and field experiences, colleges and universities will be able to better prepare the curriculum offered to their students. In addition, the implications for ongoing research on this matter will provide an opportunity for a more holistic understanding of factors that influence career outcomes for upperclassmen, undergraduate students.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to understand how undergraduate degrees and associated curricula, faculty mentorship, and internships in the Sport and Event Management fields effect a students' career outcome and decision making. It is important for colleges and universities to address these questions and comprehend how their current academic curricula, faculty involvement, and internship requirements align with student goals and career outcomes.

In order to examine and appreciate the affect these factors have on students' career outcomes, both alumni and student perspectives were analyzed. Therefore, participants of this study included George Mason University alumni as well as current students with Bachelor of Science degrees in Health, Fitness and Recreation Resources with a concentration in Sports Management as well as alumni and current students with Bachelor of Science degrees in Hospitality, Tourism, and Events Management with a concentration in Events Management. As these two concentrations prepare students to enter the Sport and Event industries, they were evaluated on how influential they have been on a student's career outcome.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is to improve the professional practices of colleges and universities that offer undergraduate programs in Sport as well as Event Management. Braunstein-Minkove and DeLuca (2015), claim that:

Universities and faculty face a heavy burden to find ways to make sure students are getting the most out of their degrees, and upon graduation,

are not only prepared, but also armed with a skill set that augments their employability, setting them up for future success (p.13)

By examining and observing the recent alumni and student perspective of the programs offered by the School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism at George Mason University, this study will help progress the way curricula is designed not only at George Mason, but in the Sport and Event Management fields as well. As this study continued, and with proper research, contributions and ideas have been recommended in Chapter 4 to help enhance and advance current academic programs.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Career readiness is defined as “the attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace” by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (Career Readiness Defined, 2016). Academic majors and curricula, along with faculty mentorship and field experiences, help shape a student’s decision when it comes time to make a choice related to their career path (Nauta, 2007). It is important not only to realize how each individual criterion shapes a student’s career choice, but to recognize how all three correlate as well. Past research and literature will indicate whether or not there is a divide or connection amongst all three criteria for career outcomes.

Factors and Motivational Aspects that Influence a Career Outcome

In addition to interpreting how academics and curricula, faculty mentorship and field experiences can play a role in career decision-making, it is important to realize what other factors, if any, are involved in the career decision process for students. Ayers (2006) encourages faculty to:

Think of a career as a dynamic process in which individuals gather information on their own likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, and on the world of work; develop realistic career goals; develop and implement strategies to achieve these goals; and obtain feedback to promote career decision making (p.17).

This encourages faculty to reflect on their own experiences, and learn how their feelings affected their career outcomes. If students are encouraged at an early stage by faculty to decipher their internal strengths and weaknesses, they may approach major selection and internship experiences differently.

Students often utilize internships as a means to “gain exposure to developments in the ‘real world,’ cultivate contacts within the industry, and improve teaching methods and curriculum by remaining cognizant of industry developments” (Cunningham et al., 2005, pp. 43-44). By experiencing these internships, students are also seeking networking opportunities from industry leaders, exposure to the realities of the industry and a means to consider whether or not they will like this field (Koo et al., 2016). These factors can be very motivational as to whether or not a student pursues a career associated with their academic major. Students seek a job they will enjoy, feel secure within, and presents opportunities for career advancement (Richardson, 2008). Without the potential promise of these aspects following through, students may not pursue the careers they had initially hoped for and may opt for more realistic and promising professions.

An Undergraduate Degree and its Associated Curricula

The literature that currently exists for the research problem described above is the general belief that students are completely content with their academic programs and therefore plan to pursue a career in the same field. Nauta (2007) asserts, “Students who are highly satisfied with their majors likely experience little anxiety about making future career choices because they have already narrowed possible choices to those that correspond to their major” (pp. 457-458). While this assumes that academic interests and career choices are parallel, Nauta also explains, “some students are dissatisfied about making career decisions if they feel ‘locked in’ to their current field of study and believe that they must choose among unsatisfactory alternatives” (p. 458). This implies that there is not always major satisfaction, and thus a student feels bound to the career that matches their academic area.

There are many factors that influence education and curriculum amongst institutions in the United States (Ring et al., 2008). Ring, Dickinger, and Wöber (2008) state that “education and curriculum design are embedded in a complex construct of influences of stakeholders, with students, employers (or the industry), and government funding bodies being the most important ones” (p. 2). This implies that multiple stakeholders have a say in how curricula and degrees are shaped in a college or university setting.

One of the primary stakeholders involved in changing degrees and curricula in the Commonwealth of Virginia is the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). SCHEV is the Commonwealth of Virginia’s committee involved in

determining policies for higher education (SCHEV Program Approvals, 2014). George Mason University must receive SCHEV approval in order to be granted authorization for a variety of program initiatives (SCHEV Program Approvals, 2014). In addition to multiple stakeholders invested in the development of academic majors and curricula, educators must also think about the industry they are designing curricula for (Ring et al., 2008). It is important for colleges and universities to research the different processes instilled by their institution or their state authority when evaluating and altering curricula. By doing so, colleges and universities will be able to assess current satisfactions or lack thereof in programs offered within both the Sport and Event Management curricula.

In order to combat the lack of satisfaction a student may face with his or her given major, research indicates that curricula should be consistently evaluated (Braunstein-Minkove & DeLuca, 2015). Braunstein-Minkove and DeLuca (2015) mention the importance of “continually evaluating and ensuring that students are being educated in a way that is going to prepare them for entry into the career they are seeking to obtain” (p. 21). In addition, the Sport and Event industries are ever-changing as new technology and industry advancements arise (Min, Swanger, & Gursoy, 2016).

Another set of stakeholders involved in changing curricula within a degree are industry professionals. Industry professionals are able to offer insight into the newest and latest trends that their industries are facing (Min et al., 2016). Min, Swanger, and Gursoy (2016) believe, “it is critical to evaluate the curriculum regularly by actively monitoring and incorporating industry professionals’ opinions regarding course subjects to be included in the curriculum (p.12). In order to “understand emerging industry trends,

hospitality programs should evaluate their curricula regularly and, if necessary, provide new course subjects that can enable students to graduate with the up-to-date knowledge required to maintain innovation in the industry” (Min et al., 2016, p. 13). An Advisory Board made up of employers is one way faculty can keep updated with latest personnel expectations. Advisory Boards “cultivate relationships between faculty and other board members which helps faculty gain insights into industry issues to be covered in the classroom and makes practitioners aware of faculty concerns and curriculum initiatives” (Conroy, Lafever, & Withiam, 1996, p. 86).

By doing so, faculty will be able to determine which courses are deemed absolutely necessary, and which lack the institutional framework that will provide the essential skills and knowledge to succeed in the industries of Sport and Event Management. Braunstein-Minkove and DeLuca (2015) also urge faculty:

To act as the critical conduit between students and the industry, providing preparatory opportunities both within and outside of the classroom with the goal of adding value to the student degrees as well as increasing their employability (p.13).

By acting as a direct funnel to career readiness, faculties have the ability to provide large scopes of preparedness for students both in and outside of the classroom. In order to do so, faculty must evaluate and review curriculum and how it is better preparing students to enter the real world. Additionally, it could be helpful for faculty to facilitate focus groups of both current students and alumni to the programs in question in order to better the curriculum for future participants (Braunstein-Minkove & Deluca, 2015).

In addition to faculty influence, accreditation has a role in curricula development within a degree and concentration. Accreditation is “a status granted to an institution, program, or other entity that meets stated criteria of quality” (The National Recreation and Parks Association, n.d.). Additionally, this process provides a level of quality control, as it “provides a signal to students and the public that an institution or program meets at least threshold standards for its faculty and curriculum” (Eaton, 2012).

There are four criteria that are intended to be addressed through coursework once accredited (Dr. Brenda Wiggins, personal communication, June 14, 2017). The criteria include, “(a) Nature and scope of the industry: Techniques and processes used by professionals; Foundation of the profession within history, science, and philosophy; (b) Demonstrate design, implementation, and evaluation services; (c) Demonstrate operations (facility management) and strategic management/administration; (d) Internship” (Dr. Brenda Wiggins, personal communication, June 14, 2017). Accreditation of a degree program sets a precedent for an institution to adhere to.

Faculty Mentorship

Faculty mentorship is most recently defined as “a deep understanding and appreciation for the circumstances and unique abilities of a protégé that goes beyond an interest in any single personal dimension (Long et al., 2010, p. 12). In addition, Long and colleagues (2010) suggest, “mentors should be approachable, knowledgeable, willing and able to communicate care, good listeners, self-disclosing, personable, empathic, and altruistic” (p.15). Communication is a key component of faculty-student mentorships

(Long et al., 2015). Effective communication between a faculty member and a student is key to evolving a professional and personal connection.

In addition, faculty mentorship encourages students to grow both personally and professionally (Baker & Griffin, 2010). Professional identity is a recurring theme found when students are asked about the benefits of their mentorship experiences (Vandermaas-Peeler et al., 2015). By encouraging students to grow both personally and professionally, faculty must “adopt a ‘scholar-teacher’ approach and involve undergraduates in the process of discovery while simultaneously using the discovery as a platform for student learning” (Vandermaas-Peeler et al., 2015, p. 377). Additionally, DeAngelo, Mason, and Winters (2015) indicate that “faculty-student interaction is the first principle of good practice in undergraduate education and the most important factor in student motivation and involvement” (p. 317). Therefore, faculty-student interactions provide benefits to mentored students as compared to non-mentored students (Long et al., 2010).

Students reap many benefits to mentorship provided by their faculty (DeAngelo et al., 2015). One of the benefits students attain from faculty mentorship is the care and interest devoted to the student provided by a faculty member (Long et al., 2010). Other benefits include:

Mentoring relationships assist students to make sense of their own educational futures and career plans, help them feel welcome as scholars in their disciplines, and provide them with access to important networks of information and people to aid them in their success (DeAngelo et al., 2015, p. 318).

Faculty mentorship is a valuable advantage to career readiness and development. It is strongly advised for institutions to implement a faculty-mentorship program in order to better prepare students for their careers (DeAngelo et al., 2015).

Fieldwork Experiences

In addition to undergraduate degrees and associated curricula as well as faculty mentorship, it is imperative to understand the role that an internship can have on career choices. Internships allow for students to take what they have learned in the classroom and apply that knowledge in real life professional settings. They also act as the “last field experience and final professional preparation for students before they decide whether or not to enter their intended profession (Cunningham et al., 2005, pp.44-45). These quintessential learning experiences:

Encourage students to be more engaged with their education via facilitated experiences that develop their characteristics as a learner. These may include, but aren't limited to, the development of their problem solving and research skills, collaborative work assignments with peers, reflective learning practices, and the application theory to real-world situations (Stansbie, Nash, & Change, 2016, p. 20)

Therefore, internships “increase a student's intrinsic motivation and satisfaction levels” (Stansbie & Nash, 2016, p. 71). Intrinsic motivation is defined as “personal satisfaction derived through self-initiated achievement” (Dictionary.com, 2016). With higher satisfaction, “motivation levels will in turn lead to greater industry commitment, better preparedness for entry-level work roles, and improved staff retention levels, thus helping

lessen the burden faced by employers in addressing skill shortages and migration from the industry” (Stansbie & Nash, 2016, p. 71).

Furthermore, fieldwork experiences bring many benefits to students (Stansbie, Nash, & Jack, 2013). Stansbie, Nash, and Jack (2013) mention that, “benefits are not isolated to individuals but are spread across a number of stakeholders such as students, employers, educators, and numerous indirect stakeholders that live and work in the communities where the internships may occur” (p.158). Through internships, students are able to apply lessons taught in an academic setting and incorporate those tools and skills with their newfound professional colleagues (Koo et al., 2016).

While students are engaging in the industry, they are also provided the opportunity to not only represent their institution, but also represent themselves to key industry professionals. Stansbie and Nash (2016) claim that “internships are a win-win situation for everyone, and the synergistic effect of the relationship among student, host company, and university benefits all participating parties” (p. 72). In addition, field experience opportunities allow students to properly network and showcase their talents to others in the field. Lee, Huh, and Jones (2016) believe that “through networking opportunities, students become familiar with industry practices and expectations for future industry leaders” (p. 98).

In addition, feedback provided to students from an industry standpoint allows students to understand “what knowledge, skills, and attitudes an industry manager needs to possess” (Lee et al., 2016, p. 98). Therefore, students are able to apply what they have learned from their fieldwork experience and effectively use it to personify themselves in

the workplace. While an internship may not necessarily generate a job at its conclusion, it still allows a student to highlight their abilities to his or her employer and garner support for future job searches (Koo et al., 2016).

Summary

It is important to understand what factors influence and motivate career decisions, in order to better prepare students for their career readiness. Without preparing students for the best possible career outcome, the college and university community is unable to recognize the passions and influences that drive their students to career success. In addition, recognizing how an academic degree is selected and evaluated over the course of a student's undergraduate agenda is vital to understanding how well it is preparing students for the "real world." With this knowledge, college and university faculty can address their major stakeholders and express the growing needs of their students.

Curricula design is a large influencer of career outcomes. The curricula offered to students in relation to their majors allow students to gain a theoretical framework of knowledge related to their careers. College and university academics also need to invest in understanding the outline of curriculum offered, and how those classes affect a student's decision to pursue that intended career or withdraw from the academic major altogether.

Another influencer in students' career outcomes is faculty mentorship. Mentorship programs provided by institutions have the potential to better prepare students for entering their intended professional industry. By pairing students with experienced faculty, relationships are built and outlines for professional and

personal growth are encouraged for the students. Additionally, mentored students “have higher academic achievement, stronger persistence, and higher degree completion rates than non-mentored students” (DeAngelo et al., 2015, p. 320). Therefore, faculty mentorship proves to have positive outcomes for faculty and students alike.

Field experience, as part of a curriculum requirement, also helps influence career decisions. Whether the internship participation is positive or negative, the student will always have an experience to reflect on when determining whether or not that field is aligned with their career goals. Without understanding the above influencers in career decision-making, colleges and personnel are unable to provide conscious efforts to serve their students.

Despite the knowledge that already exists, a question remains, “Is there a connection amongst all of the above concepts that has not yet been addressed?” The concepts of major satisfaction, internship experiences and curriculum offered hold high importance for career decision-making stand true, but do all factors contribute equally to influencing a students’ career choice, or is one or two more ideas influential for Sport and Event Management undergraduate students? By conducting this study, the researcher will be able to combine the knowledge presented then published to perhaps influence faculty when preparing curriculum in the Sport and Event fields, therefore, allowing faculty in colleges and universities the opportunity to apply the literature and research found to the way they design and implement undergraduate degrees in the Sport and Event professions (Stansbie & Nash, 2016).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In order to best answer the research question presented, a convergent parallel research design was taken. The convergent parallel design allows a “researcher to converge or merge quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem” (Creswell, 2014, p.15). This is useful because it allows an investigator to “collect both forms of data at roughly the same time and then integrates the information in interpretation and the overall results” (Creswell, 2014, p.15). This method also promotes quantitative and qualitative analysis to occur separately (Creswell, 2014). By doing so, the separate findings can be joined in the investigation phase and a researcher can confirm or disconfirm whether the outcomes are similar (Creswell, 2014). This convergent parallel study provides insight as to what factors influence a student’s career decision-making throughout their undergraduate academic experiences.

The qualitative approach will help explore the process behind career outcomes among George Mason University’s Sport, and Event Management concentration alumni. The intent is to identify and measure the factors that influenced students’ career decision-making. Such factors may include undergraduate degree selection, curriculum within the undergraduate degree, faculty mentorship, and internships. While the qualitative data was being collected, a quantitative approach was taken to measure comparative importance of

the discussed factors on George Mason's Sport and Event Management concentration current students' career decision-making.

Population of the Study

The population of this study included George Mason University alumni and students with a concentration in either Sport or Event Management. These concentrations were selected because of the personal connections to the researcher's academic and career background. Other concentrations offered in the Division of Sport, Recreation, and Tourism (SRT) are Hospitality Management, Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Therapeutic Recreation and Tourism Management. (Undergraduate Degrees, n.d.). The Parks and Outdoor Recreation and Therapeutic Recreation concentrations were not included in this study due to their current national accreditation regulation by the Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (Recreation Management, n.d.). As the Sport and Event Management concentrations are not currently influenced by an accrediting body, the course topics and curricula is designed by George Mason University faculty and therefore do not have the same effect on a career outcome that the Parks and Outdoor Recreation and Therapeutic Recreation concentrations may have.

In addition to the concentrations listed above, the criteria for participation for the current students also required that they are upperclassmen enrolled in the Sport Management prefixed SPMT 490 or Tourism prefixed TOUR 490 internship courses. This was because upperclassmen are required to participate in a 12-credit capstone experience, which includes 400 hours of introductory professional fieldwork in a sport or

Event setting over a span of 10-12 weeks after a prerequisite practicum earlier in the curriculum of 120 contact hours. The size of the population included 125 Tourism and Events Management and 160 Sport Management alumni, and in the Division of Sport, Recreation, and Tourism indicated there were 41 current students completing their TOUR 490 or SPMT 490 requirements. Of the 41 current students, 22 were enrolled in the TOUR 490 course, while 19 students were enrolled in the SPMT 490 sequence.

Out of the 125 Tourism and Events Management recent alumni, 13 total replied to the email inquiry by Dr. Seungwon “Shawn” Lee, Associate Professor and Academic Program co-Coordinator of the Tourism and Events Management program. This translates to a 10.4% response rate among the Event Management alumni. A total of eight of the 160 alumni from the Sport Management concentration replied to the email inquiry from Professor Craig Esherick, Associate Professor and Academic Program Coordinator of the Sports Management program. Therefore, a 5% response rate among the Sport Management alumni was recorded.

The quantitative survey via SurveyMonkey acquired 20 total respondents. Of the 20 respondents, 12 students were completing a Sport Management concentration (60%) and eight students were Events Management concentration students (40%). The twelve current Sport Management students converts to a 63.2% response rate, whereas the eight current Event Management students translate to a 36.4% response rate. Interview questions were submitted to and approved by George Mason University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) in accordance with ethical considerations for conducting research.

Sampling Method

In order to determine the population more in depth, the help of Dr. Lee, as well as Professor Esherick was necessary in order to access a list of both the alumni and concentration populations. While emails to both populations were not directly distributed to the researcher, both Professor Esherick and Dr. Lee distributed invitation emails on the researcher's behalf, due to the university's student and alumni privacy policy.

The recruitment of participants took place in late-April of the Spring 2017 semester. Late April was determined as the best time for current students to participate in this study, as many had completed 200 of their 400-hour internship requirement. This allowed the researcher to inquire as to whether field experiences truly affected current upper-class students' career decision-making.

Alumni were recruited to participate based on their successful completion of a Sport or Event Management concentration and completion of a Bachelor of Science degree. Collectively, 285 total alumni who graduated between Spring 2015 and Summer 2016 were contacted. This range of graduation year was selected based on their most recent departure from the programs. The six alumni selected for the phone interviews were determined based on their graduation year as indicated in their consent to participate email. If a graduation year was not provided in the consent email, the researcher categorized them as backup candidates and would invite them to participate if necessary.

Of the 13 Event Management alumni that responded, seven did not provide their graduation year. Four candidates indicated a May 2016 graduation year, while two reported 2015. The researcher then selected three of the four candidates that graduated in

2016 to interview. A total of eight Sport management alumni communicated interest in participating, however only four indicated a graduation year. The three Sport Management students that were contacted to participate were selected. Additionally, the researcher selected three interviewees from each degree concentration in order to keep a balance between the two concentrations.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected via combined methods, both qualitatively and quantitatively, for this study. The qualitative approach, which targeted six engaging Sport and Event Management concentration alumni were conducted through phone interviews. Six alumni were suggested as an acceptable data size based upon consultation with the project chair. Invitation emails were sent in late-April, 2017 and follow up emails were sent through Dr. Lee and Professor Esherick in early-May, 2017. Phone interviews took place in mid-May, 2017.

When initiating the data collection from alumni and current students, the researcher was unable to obtain access to the listservs and directly communicate to the participants. This was a limitation because of the reluctance from George Mason University Sport Management faculty regarding the purpose of the study as well as restrictions to completing this study within the researcher's initial timeframe. This limitation also led to the researcher requesting for reminders and follow up emails to be sent to alumni and current students, rather than reaching out herself. Due to these constraints, the initial plan for an exploratory sequential mixed methods study was reconfigured to a convergent parallel study upon consulting with the project chair.

The interview questions presented to the research participants were open-ended and dichotomous (yes or no) questions. A sample of the questions asked include, “How has the curriculum, both required and elective, within your major prepared you for your career aspirations?” Additional questions asked can be found in Appendix G. The open-ended questions required thought provoking answers and all interviews were audio recorded using a laptop with the consent of the participants, for ease in post interview analysis. The telephone interviews took place in the researcher’s work office. Phone interviews on average took about 12 minutes, with the shortest being seven minutes and 38 seconds and the longest being 19 minutes and nine seconds.

While the phone interview data were being collected, analyzed, and interpreted, current students were participating in a nine-question quantitative survey. A quantitative survey link was distributed to current students enrolled in the SPMT 490 or TOUR 490 12-credit internship course. The nine questions asked in the online questionnaire were similar to the questions asked to the alumni in the phone interviews. In order to determine the program (SPMT or TOUR) associated with the participant, the first question asked which concentration the students were enrolled in. The following eight questions were created based on a five point Likert scale with options including 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. A sample question within the questionnaire can be found below, while all remaining questions asked are available in Appendix H.

“My field experiences (internships), at both the Practicum level and the 12-credit level, have helped me determine that I would like to stay in my intended field.

- a. Strongly Disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly Agree”

The results of the quantitative questionnaire for students were being collected, analyzed, and interpreted concurrently with the qualitative phone interviews of the alumni. The themes found from the qualitative survey questions helped determine which motivational factors have an impact on career outcomes as well as whether they aligned with the quantitative findings.

The recruitment tool utilized in this procedure was an email. The data collected included a series of questions that relate to the reasoning behind the initial choice of a student’s undergraduate degree, how the curriculum in the undergraduate degree is helping in career decision-making, and the affect a field experience played in career aspirations. The findings from these interviews can be found in Chapter 4.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the qualitative study was first transcribed from audio to text. Upon transcription, the qualitative data analysis program Nvivo® was employed to help code and identify themes. The six alumni transcriptions were uploaded into Nvivo® and then coded into six categories, also known as nodes. These nodes were predetermined by the researcher and were categorized deductively into academic major and curricula, concentration selection and timeline, faculty mentorship, fieldwork

experiences, all three factors together combined, and any other factors deemed by the participants in order to remain aligned to the questions asked. From the phone interviews, there were 94 total references within the six categories. Within the nodes, word searches and queries were run to determine the most influential factors on career outcomes.

Quantitative data was exported from SurveyMonkey and input into the quantitative data analysis program IBM SPSS. As mentioned above, a five point Likert scale was employed for eight of the nine total questions. Each question focused on their agreement of influence of major and curricula, faculty mentorship, and fieldwork experience on career decision. Additionally, the survey examined whether the students felt the program prepared them for a career in the industry and if they intended to stay in their field of study. The five point Likert scale answers were converted into a numerical value for statistical analysis purposes. Strongly disagree held a value of 1.0, while strongly agree was a value of 5.0.

The initial test run within IBM SPSS was a Frequency Descriptive Statistics test for all nine-survey questions to declare the mean, median, and mode among all variables. This was done individually as well as within a group comparing Sport Management and Event Management students. Next, an independent samples test was constructed to determine whether there were significant differences between the two concentrations. The hypotheses that emerged from the frequency statistics test were parallel to the themes indicated in the qualitative analysis: an undergraduate degree and its associated curricula, faculty mentorship, fieldwork experiences, the three motivational factors combined, and other factors.

Collecting the quantitative and qualitative data at the same time and then analyzing separately is important because a researcher can then “compare the results to see if the findings confirm or disconfirm each other” (Creswell, 2014, p. 219). The qualitative and quantitative data were compared to determine the motivational factors of a career outcome. The results of the convergent parallel findings can be found in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to capture how undergraduates pursuing concentrations in Sport Management and Events Management at George Mason University, as well as faculty mentorship and internships, affect a student's career outcome. In order to examine the effect these three factors have on a student's career outcome, both alumni of the Sport and Event Management programs at George Mason as well as current students participating in their required 12-credit internship course were interviewed and surveyed.

This study confirms that the three factors in consideration affect Sport and Event Management students' career outcomes. They do indeed play a role separately, but collectively as well. However, the major influencer was fieldwork experiences. In this chapter, findings from the alumni phone interviews and current student survey data will be shared, analyzed, and summarized. Furthermore, the findings established from the data analysis will advance the logic behind the importance of fieldwork experience on career decision-making and outcomes. Additionally, recommendations for George Mason University's SRT Division faculty will be included.

Data Demographics and Analysis

Alumni of the Sport Management and Event Management program as well as current students in the concentrations participated in this study. Interviews with alumni

were completed in order to recognize the strengths of the Sport and Event Management concentrations. Additionally, the phone interview data will provide a perspective of recent graduates to the programs that have found a job in the sport, recreation, tourism, hospitality, and event industries.

Phone interviews were conducted with Sport and Event Management concentration alumni in May 2017. Six total alumni participated in phone interviews – three from the Event Management concentration and three from the Sport Management concentration. The three Event Management phone interviewees were all female. Two Sport Management interviewees were male and one was female. To see a list of questions asked in the phone interviews, please refer to Appendix G. All interviews were transcribed and coded, following completion. The coding of phone interview data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis program Nvivo® in order to identify themes.

Current students participating in the required 12-credit internship courses were directed to the SurveyMonkey contributor link via Dr. Seungwon “Shawn” Lee and Professor Craig Esherick. A total of 20 responses were collected from late-April to mid-May 2017. Of those 20 respondents, 12 were Sport Management students and eight were Event Management students, creating a 60% to 40% split between the concentrations. The male to female ratio for this portion of the study is unknown. All analysis of the student survey data was conducted through the quantitative data analysis system IBM SPSS.

Participant Profiles

As previously mentioned above, six total alumni participated in qualitative phone interviews. All alumni interviewed were May 2015 and May 2016 graduates, aged 22-24. These alumni will be referred to as participants A-F throughout this report. Of the six participants, four were female and two were male. The diversity amongst the participants provides a variety of perspectives as well as what they believe to be the motivational factors for their career outcomes.

Participant A: Participant A is a May 2015 alumnus of the Sport Management program. He came into the program as a freshman. This participant was also a double major in the Parks and Outdoor Recreation concentration and is now a Park Ranger. He contributes his professional success to both concentrations in SRT, which endorsed perspectives of both recreation management and business management.

Participant B: Participant B is a May 2016 alumna of the Sport Management program. She came into the program as a sophomore. She realized upon completion of this concentration that she did not want to pursue Sport Management in a professional setting and is now currently participating in 10-month program through AmeriCorps where she is focusing on parks and outdoor recreation.

Participant C: Participant C is a May 2015 alumnus of the Sport Management program. He came into the program as a freshman. After internship participation and personal health issues, Participant C is unable to meet the requirements of lifting heavy equipment found in many entry-level positions. He is still planning to pursue a career in the sporting industry.

Participant D: Participant D is a May 2016 alumna of the Tourism and Events Management program. Participant D came to George Mason University as a junior with an Associate's degree. Her concentration was in Events Management and she is currently working as an Event Specialist in a higher education setting and attributes her passion of working in a school setting to her 12-credit internship in her senior year.

Participant E: Participant E is a May 2016 alumna of the Tourism and Events Management program. She declared Event Management as her concentration in her sophomore year. She is currently working as an Event Coordinator at a convention center in a major city. Participant E thoroughly enjoys the fact that no event is the same, and there is always something new to learn.

Participant F: Participant F is a May 2016 alumna of the Tourism and Events Management program. Originally a Communications major, Participant F declared her concentration in Event Management her freshman year. She is currently working for an Association Management firm.

Qualitative Findings

The findings from this study include five pre-determined themes: an undergraduate degree and its associated curricula, faculty mentorship, fieldwork experiences, the three motivational factors combined, and other factors as stated by the alumni of the Sport and Event Management concentrations. The Sport and Event Management students and their associated curricula helped prepare them to enter their field. Alumni contribute their major and curricula to learning more in depth about their intended fields and determining through the required practicum and 12-credit internships

the avenues within the industries that they did and did not like. In addition to the curricula, alumni enjoyed that many of their professors were professionals within the businesses of Sport and Events. This in turn encouraged students and faculty alike to engage in mentorship opportunities. Fieldwork experiences were considered one of the major influences in career outcomes, as they helped alumni realize career aspirations. Lastly, other factors including interpersonal relationships, ambition, and industry growth were listed as other motivational factors to career outcomes and decision-making.

Theme 1: An Undergraduate Degree and its Associated Curricula

Based on phone interview data, the Sport and Event Management concentrations and their associated curricula played a role in the career outcomes of all six alumni. One of the most positive conclusions from this study was the realization that the practicum and 12-credit internship requirements gave students an advantage they felt many other majors overlook. Additionally, the incorporation of a few Recreation Management courses into the curriculum was appreciated by most. Overall, the majors of both the Sport and Event Management concentrations were well favored. Participant A believes the Sport Management concentration “*did a great job of giving me experience working in the field and lead to great connections with the professors that work in the field.*” In addition, Participant B mentioned that her program “*made her realize what she did and did not like*” in relation to the industry.

Course topics were discussed throughout the phone interviews. While most alumni enjoyed the Recreation Management cross-over, a few saw the value in them but did not necessarily find them interesting. Participant B found some of the classes offered

within the Sport Management program “*a bit redundant*” and was therefore frustrated with some of the course offerings. Unfortunately, Participant B did not go into further detail as to which courses in particular she found frustrating. Participant C was in agreement with Participant B and mentioned, “*They were a bit less enjoyable than the Sport Management courses.*” On the Event Management side, Participant D found that the courses offered “*gave us a range of topics to choose from*” and found it helpful to find a niche within the Event Management realm.

Besides course topics, class participation and requirements were deliberated. Participant D found that group projects were “*highly reflected in her current and past jobs*” as she finds herself working in groups for many different events and scenarios. Additionally, the career preparation and professionalism courses were highly valued. Participant D additionally mentioned that the cover letter and resume building aspects of these courses helped her shape how she presented herself as a professional. While curricula were generally affirmative in their impacts, Participant F found distaste in planning mock events through group projects. She felt, “*the classes should provide more than just planning events on paper.*” Participant F found it most helpful when professors would share real life experiences with the class. She particularly found TOUR 221: Event Implementation and Evaluation “*the most helpful when planning and for anticipating things that could go wrong at events and preparing for them.*”

In addition to course topics and specific classes, all six alumni agreed that the internship requirements were extremely influential in their career outcomes. Participant E mentioned, “*Having to do the full-time internship my last semester was very eye-opening*

to me. I learned a lot from that, and I am really thankful that I chose to go to Mason.”

Participant D was in agreement with Participant E by stating, *“A lot of majors do not have internship requirements...but with us, we had to do it, so it gave me a push to really look and get that experience.”* Lastly, the alumni felt that the faculty played a role in helping discover different opportunities for internships. Participant B enjoyed that *“the program encouraged you to do that and helped you and had recommendations. I thought it was super helpful.”*

In addition to being appreciated for helping find different internship opportunities, the professors received very high praise for their roles in their associated industries. Participant E declared, *“I think the professors that they have are absolutely amazing, especially because they work in the industry...they’ve been in the field, and they know a lot of people, and have a lot of connections and all of our work was very relevant to what we are doing now.”* She also felt that the professors that chose situational work and group projects over textbook teaching *“really prepared”* her for *“what the real world was going to throw”* at her. Professors and their involvement in mentorship of students seemed to have a big impact on these alumni’s career outcomes.

Theme 2: Faculty Mentorship

Generally, alumni to the Sport and Event Management programs thought the School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism’s Sport, Recreation and Tourism (-SRT) Division had great faculty. They appreciated their connections to the industry and their knowledge of the businesses. Their openness to form relationships was respected, and therefore alumni mentioned they did not feel afraid to reach out to ask questions or ask

for help. Participant C mentioned that if seen outside of the classroom, the professors would offer sound advice and in turn felt it was very rewarding.

In addition to offering both professional and life advice, one of the biggest take aways the alumni mentioned was the willingness of faculty to prepare students for interviews and potential jobs. Participant A particularly mentioned that he received *“advice to prep for interviews and how to help set himself apart from other students.”* Participant D had similar expressions when mentioning she received letters of recommendation and guidance on creating the best possible resume and cover letters from a particular faculty member. Participant D also mentioned that this professor *“practiced a mock interview with her and prepared her for what it was going to be like.”*

Alumni also found that professors were willing to help find internships as well as jobs for post-graduation. Participants also mentioned how professors’ connections to industry professionals helped advance their careers. Participant A valued one professor’s willingness to *“help me get opportunities, to put my foot in the door through volunteer opportunities, and attending different events to get my name out there and network.”* The professor’s ability to network and show students’ opportunities are endless helped encourage them to find the best practicum and internship opportunities available. Participant D said, *“Emailing us with different openings really helped show me the different opportunities for practicums and internships.”*

While most of the alumni found faculty to be influential in their career outcomes, Participant F disagreed. She mentioned that the professors were *“not that influential.”* Participant F claims, *“I didn’t really have any close relationships with any of my*

professors, and I did not talk to any for advice or jobs or anything like that.” Participant F believes that the internship and curricula had the most impact compared to faculty mentorship. Therefore, it is curious as to why others felt so strongly that the faculty mentorship available to them was significant.

Theme 3: Fieldwork Experiences

It has been noted that, as a whole, the fieldwork experiences factor has held the most impact on career outcomes. Considering Sport and Event Management students are required to accumulate 520 hours of a professional fieldwork experience between the practicum and 12-credit internship, many realize their passions and desires through these experiences (SPMT and TOUR, n.d.). Four out of the six alumni participants claimed that both the practicum and 12-credit internship experiences lead them to different paths within Sport or Event Management. Two Sport Management alumni have left the sport classification and ventured over to Recreation Management. Meanwhile, Participant E indicated that her practicum and internship “*were definitely very helpful in helping me decide which direction I wanted to go, because this industry is so big.*”

Despite finding the direction in the industry they did or did not want to go, there were other benefits mentioned throughout the phone interviews. One benefit mentioned by Participant F is that these fieldwork experiences reaffirmed her choices in pursuing Event Management over Hospitality Management or Tourism Management. While Participant F found confirmation in her career goals, Participant B found the work experience itself beneficial. Participant B confirmed, “*Actually stepping outside of the classroom and doing things hands on, as well as putting what you learned in the*

classroom into actual work was very useful.” Personal and professional growth was also declared as a benefit. Participant C acknowledged, *“It was tough but I learned a lot about myself and it changed my perspective on how I view my personal success.”* Another benefit of the fieldwork experiences listed was how it helped the alumni prepare for future jobs. Participant B claims, *“Looking for an internship was also the first step in trying to figure out the job searching process...it was good to get that under my belt early and I really enjoyed that the program encouraged me to do so.”*

When looking back on their fieldwork experiences, all alumni were in agreement that the internship requirements were the most influential in their career outcomes. Through her internship experience in a school setting, Participant D used her fieldwork experience to *“drive her after her internship to look for school openings in the Event Management realm.”* Participant C revealed the fact that *“internships force you to have some hands on experience. They give you an idea of just how an entry level position in the sport industry will go and some of the challenges and rewards that you will face with it.”* Whereas Participant E claims that, her fieldwork experiences *“mainly prepared me and showed me what I was ready to do then and what I wasn’t. It also showed me that I have a lot to learn and a lot more experience to gain. That was pretty helpful.”* The benefits fieldwork experiences have on a student’s career outcome is extremely influential.

Theme 4: All Three Factors Combined

When questioned on the combined impacts of academic major and curricula, faculty mentorship, and fieldwork experiences together, all alumni mentioned that

collectively they did indeed make a difference on their career outcomes. Participant D stated, *“All three were very influential, and they kept me interested and passionate about the industry.”* Meanwhile, Participant A mentioned that combined with his Parks and Outdoor Recreation double major, the Sports Management curricula, faculty, and fieldwork experiences helped highlight the pros and cons of both concentrations, which led him to a career as a Park Ranger.

Together, these factors encouraged the alumni to pursue their interests and really helped narrow down their passions. Participant C indicated that he *“always wanted to be in the sport industry and still desires to be”* after participating in the Sport Management concentration. Participant E highlighted that her experience throughout her time at George Mason University made her realize that the event industry is ever evolving. She said, *“I love that [the] event industry is constantly changing and improving, and there’s always something new to learn. I really got that feeling from my classes, professors, and internships and that’s why I definitely wanted to stay in this field.”*

After pursuing their degrees, five of the six alumni are currently working within their fields in some way. Participant F revealed that by going through this program, *“I felt confident by the end that it was something that I would be good at and made me realize that this is what I’m supposed to do as my career.”* She also commented that the positive feedback she received from faculty and internship supervisors helped prepare her for her current role. When asked about her experiences, Participant D also highlighted that all three factors *“helped me reach out of my comfort zone and go for experiences that I wouldn’t necessarily go for on my own. These experiences introduced me to multiple*

aspects of event management that I would have never thought through.” These conversations then in turn lead to the potential of any other factors that may have been influential throughout their journey.

Theme 5: Other Factors

The six participating alumni listed many other factors that helped influence their career outcomes. Participant A implied that his Parks and Outdoor Recreation double concentration was one of the major influencers. He claimed, *“The faculty and staff of Parks and Outdoor Recreation were very open to working with me and had a lot of connections to help me get a job outside of college.”*

Participant B credited her classmates as motivators, which also deterred her from a career in the sport industry after *“hearing their stories of long hours, lower salaries, and careers in sales to start out”* with entry-level positions in professional sports. Participant B also recognized the impact *“interpersonal relationships”* have on a career outcome. She was very aware of the importance making connections and networking had on job opportunities post-graduation. Additionally, she mentioned ambition as a motivational factor, focusing on the importance of *“putting your foot in the water and trying new things.”*

While Participant C has hit personal challenges affecting his career in the sports industry, he remains resilient to pursue a career in the field. Participant C credits his *“own personal interest and health issues”* as a motivational factor in achieving his goals. He believes *“what I learned in school and from what I’ve learned on my own, I believe that I can have a prominent position in the sport industry.”*

Participant D acknowledges the “*growth of the industry in general*” as a motivational factor in her career outcomes. She believes there are many career prospects and opportunities and therefore feels that job security lies in the Event Management field. Additionally, she mentioned that her personality has been a major influence. She states, “*I love people and the fast-paced movement of this industry. I like to be working on different projects at one time. I also think that my own strengths were another factor.*” Participant D’s personal successes contribute to her wanting to continue pursuing a job in the Event Management field upon graduation.

Participant F took a more holistic approach to her motivational influencers and credited her family and friends in helping her decision to pursue a career in Event Management upon graduation. She declared that her family and friends “*helped me to decide that this industry is the right career path for me.*” They also helped guide her by making comments such as “*in the end it is going to be worth it because you love what you are doing.*”

While many of the participants above listed personal and relationship factors, Participant F took a more realistic view when considering to pursue a career in event management. She commented, “*Commute was something that was really important*” to her and therefore she only considered jobs in the field that were within her radius limit. Additionally, she mentioned that the weekend work and long hours deterred her from considering any positions or “*venues where people hold events primarily on weekends.*”

Quantitative Results

The findings from the quantitative survey imitate the pre-determined themes from the qualitative phone interviews. The questions asked were parallel to the questions the researcher inquired through the alumni telephone interviews. The differences between the Sport and Event Management concentrations on how they viewed the impact of an undergraduate degree and its associated curricula, faculty mentorship, and fieldwork experiences, as well as the three motivational factors combined, and other factors can be found below.

An Undergraduate Degree and its Associated Curricula

When asked about how the curriculum, both required and elective, within the Sport or Event Management programs prepared students for their career aspirations, the students slightly agreed 3.9, ($SD = .640$). The range of responses landed between “Neutral” and “Strongly Agree” (3.00-5.00). Another question asked for a statement on how well the Sport or Event Management programs had prepared students for their careers within the industries. The average response was 4.35, ($SD = .670$), with a range of responses from “Neutral” to “Strongly Agree.” When prompted to indicate the impact that the academic major and associated curricula played on determining a student’s decision whether to stay in their field, the mean response was 4.20, ($SD = .615$).

Faculty Mentorship

Faculty mentorship impact was specific to Sport and Event Management faculty and staff, not the academic advisors. Overall, the respondents believed that faculty mentorship prepared students for their career aspirations with an average response of 4.15

($SD = .988$). When looking back on faculty mentorship and whether or not they helped influence a students' decision to stay within their field, the mean response was 3.95, ($SD = .887$).

Fieldwork Experiences

Fieldwork experiences were also investigated to determine the level of influence they have on whether a student would like to remain in their intended field upon graduation. Collectively, the respondents affirmed this impact with a mean score of 4.15, ($SD = 1.13$).

All Three Factors Combined

Students were additionally asked to determine the likelihood of staying within their intended field when combining all three factors of academic major and curricula, faculty mentorship, and fieldwork experiences. This question had the highest mean ($M = 4.55$, $SD = .510$).

When comparing the above statistics between the Sport and Event Management students, the responses were wildly similar. However, the Sport Management students indicated that the academic majors and curricula, faculty mentorship, and fieldwork experiences had more of an impact on their decision to continue a career in their field as compared to the Event Management students (Table 1).

Table 1.

Group Statistics of motivational factors: Sport Management students versus Event Management undergraduate students.

Motivational Factor	Concentration	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Curriculum	Event Management	8	3.75	.46291	.16366
	Sport Management	12	4.00	.73855	.21320
Faculty Mentorship	Event Management	8	3.50	1.06904	.37796
	Sport Management	12	4.58	.66856	.19300
Preparation of Career	Event Management	8	4.25	.70711	.25000
	Sport Management	12	4.41	.66856	.19300
Academic Preparation of Career	Event Management	8	3.87	.35355	.12500
	Sport Management	12	4.41	.66856	.19300
Faculty Preparation of Career	Event Management	8	3.25	.70711	.25000
	Sport Management	12	4.41	.66856	.19300
Internship Preparation of Career	Event Management	8	3.87	1.12599	.39810
	Sport Management	12	4.33	1.15470	.33333
Other Factors	Event Management	8	3.87	.99103	.35038
	Sport Management	12	4.16	.71774	.20719
Continue in Field	Event Management	8	4.37	.51755	.18298
	Sport Management	12	4.66	.49237	.14213

Other Factors

Current students were also asked if any other factors determined their choice to remain in their intended field. This was the only question in the SurveyMonkey that indicated an open-ended response to communicate other factors within a text box. The students agreed that there were other factors influencing their decisions ($M = 4.05$, $SD = .825$). Other factors include, “*my experience in the field*” and “*expanding my network through my professor’s colleagues through guest speaker engagements.*” Additionally, students credited their desire to stay in their fields by stating, “*my love and personal passion for sports,*” and “*job openings and salaries.*”

Independent Samples t-Test

An independent samples t-test was employed to determine whether the Sport and Event Management concentration students were significantly different in their career decision-making (Table 2).

Table 2.

Significant differences between Sport and Event Management undergraduate students.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Curriculum	Equal variances assumed	.400	.535	-.849	18	.407	-.25000	.29463	-.86899	.36899
	Equal variance not assumed			-.930	17.975	.365	-.25000	.26878	-.81473	.31473
Faculty Mentorship	Equal variances assumed	2.855	.108	-2.802	18	.012	-1.08333	.38665	-1.89566	-.27101
	Equal variance not assumed			-2.553	10.665	.027	-1.08333	.42439	-2.02100	-.14567
Preparation of Career	Equal variances assumed	.021	.887	-.534	18	.600	-.16667	.31211	-.82239	.48906
	Equal variance not assumed			-.528	14.453	.606	-.16667	.31583	-.84169	.50835
Academic Preparation of Career	Equal variances assumed	8.664	.009	-2.092	18	.051	-.54167	.25891	-1.08561	.00228
	Equal variance not assumed			-2.356	17.363	.030	-.54167	.22994	-1.02603	-.05731
Faculty Preparation of Career	Equal variances assumed	.021	.887	-3.738	18	.002	-1.16667	.31211	-1.82239	-.51094
	Equal variance not assumed			-3.694	14.543	.002	-1.16667	.31583	-1.84169	-.49165
Internship Preparation of Career	Equal variances assumed	.003	.954	-.878	18	.391	-.45833	.52199	-1.55499	.63833
	Equal variance not assumed			-.883	15.430	.391	-.45833	.51922	-1.56235	.64569
Other Factors	Equal variances assumed	.162	.692	-.766	18	.454	-.29167	.38100	-1.09211	.50878
	Equal variance not assumed			-.717	11.831	.488	-.29167	.40706	-1.17998	.59665
Continue in Field	Equal variances assumed	.123	.729	-1.272	18	.220	-.29167	.22927	-.77335	.19002
	Equal variance not assumed			-1.29	14.611	.228	-.29167	.23170	-.78667	.20334

Undergraduate Degree and its Associated Curricula

Based on the t-test, Sport and Event Management students felt that the curriculum, both required and elective, did indeed prepare them for their career aspirations. There is no significant difference between the two concentrations since $t(18) = -.84, p > 0.05$, with a 95% confidence level. Additionally, when asked if their programs had successfully prepared them for a career in the industry, there was no statistically significant difference between the two programs. Lastly, academic major/concentration and curricula were investigated more in depth to understand whether they played a role in their decision to remain in the Sport or Event fields. There was no significant difference between the two concentrations.

Faculty Mentorship and Preparation of Career

Faculty mentorship was divided into two questions, how helpful faculty were in preparing students for their career aspirations, and whether the faculty mentorship helped students determine if they would like to stay within their intended fields upon graduation. When reviewing data regarding faculty preparing students for their careers, there was statistically a significant difference, $t(18) = 3.738, p = 0.002$, with a 95% level of confidence, in "Faculty Preparation of Career." Concerning whether faculty mentorship helped students determine if they would like to stay in the Sport or Event management fields, the data was significantly different, $t(18) = 2.802, p = 0.012$, with a 95% level of confidence.

Fieldwork Experiences

Upon review of the influence internship requirements, both the practicum and 12-credit levels, had on a student's career decision-making, no significant differences between the two concentrations were found.

All Three Factors Combined

When determining any differences between the Sport and Event Management programs in career decision-making, all three motivational factors were taken into consideration. The students were asked whether after nearly completing their undergraduate degree, building relationships with faculty members, and experiencing internships, were they likely to stay in their intended fields? The data shows there is no significant difference between the two majors, and that combined, this was the highest motivational factor of all by both alumni and current upperclassmen students.

Comprehensive Analysis of Qualitative and Quantitative Data

When relating the data, the five themes mentioned throughout this study were utilized to understand how individually and collectively these influences swayed decisions amongst alumni and current students.

Theme 1: An Undergraduate Degree and its Associated Curricula

Upon review of the data described above, there was a consensus between the alumni and the current students that their undergraduate degree and associated curricula do indeed play a role in their career outcomes. Alumni and students both declared that the curricula, both required and elective, prepared them for a career in their intended industries. Through these programs, they were able to learn more in depth about the fields

of Sport and Event Management and acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the industry.

The classes offered within the curriculum helped advance the students' careers. Many alumni mentioned that they enjoyed the incorporation of the Recreation Management classes into both the Sport and Event Management programs. Furthermore, the professional development seminar class were valued and appreciated. This course helped prepare students to enter their professions and alumni explained that this course helped instill career readiness and professionalism. A few courses in particular that were mentioned among alumni as beneficial including, TOUR 221: Event Implementation and Evaluation, TOUR 470: Career Preparation, SPMT 412: Sport Marketing and Sales, SPMT 455: Governance and Policy in Sport Organizations and SPMT 475: Sport Management Professional Development Seminar. Therefore, it can be assumed that the courses that offered real life experiences, hands on experience, and career preparation tactics were the most valued amongst both programs.

Lastly, both the alumni and current students agreed that the practicum and 12-credit internship requirements had the greatest influence out of all of the courses. This requirement was the most eye opening, the most hands on experiences, and gave a competitive advantage in the industries in comparison to other degrees. Collectively, it can be assumed that the Sport Management and Event Management programs and their associated curricula, both required and elective, do indeed act as a motivational factor influencing Sport and Event Management students' career outcomes.

Theme 2: Faculty Mentorship

Faculty mentorship was another motivational factor on a students' career outcome. Alumni determined that faculty welcomed opportunities to get to know the students and helped them find internships in addition to encouraging networking opportunities. They also thoroughly enjoyed that many faculty were industry professionals and were not only well connected to their industries, but also knowledgeable on current trends and industry developments. Students reported that faculty mentorship not only prepared them for a career in the Sport or Event industries, but also helped them determine that they would indeed like to stay within these fields upon graduation. Therefore, it is understood that the Sport and Event Management faculty do indeed foster growth among the students and do intend to help their students advance in their future careers.

Theme 3: Fieldwork Experiences

As mentioned throughout this study, it has been noted that fieldwork experiences have been considered to be the most influential factor in career decision-making and outcomes. The current students conveyed that the practicum and 12-credit internship experiences encouraged them to stay within their intended field upon graduation. Whereas the alumni of the Sport and Event Management programs determined that these experiences fostered their personal and professional growth, helped them realize their career aspirations, and narrow down specific industries within the Sport and Event Management realms they wanted to pursue after graduation. Because internships provide students with hands on experience, professional development, and insight into particular

lifestyles associated with these fields, they allow students to delve into their passions and therefore, encourage shifts in attitudes and motivate career outcomes.

Theme 4: All Three Factors Combined

When observing the impacts of academic majors and associated curricula, faculty mentorship, and fieldwork experiences, alumni and current students strongly agreed that these three elements significantly encouraged them to pursue careers in the Sport and Event Management trades. Based on the findings, these three influencers collectively affected students' decisions by helping them narrow down their passions within the industries and pursue their interests. Additionally, they agreed that as reflected in class, through faculty mentorships, and the internship requirements, the idea that the Sport and Event Management industries are continuously evolving were proven true. Hence, it is confirmed that although individually they play a major role in career outcomes, together they foster the personal and professional growth necessary to appropriately make decisions surrounding their careers.

Conclusion and Implications

After thorough review of the findings resulting from the qualitative and quantitative data, it has been established that concentrations within the SRT Division is actively influencing students' career outcomes. Through various curricula, faculty mentorship and growth opportunities, as well as fieldwork experiences, SRT is shaping students' personal and professional development; and is therefore succeeding in fostering progression from the classroom to eventual careers within the Sport and Event Management industries. Although the overall feedback from this mixed methods study

was positive, there are always ways to improve current practices.

Recommendations

When surveying current students that were enrolled in the SPMT or TOUR 490 12-credit internship courses, a few students provided feedback through an open-ended question allowing for comments through a text box. Students indicated a desire for supplementary educational skills for career advancements to be acquired from the Sport Management program. This student felt that learning how to write business plans, physically marketing a product or service to a company, making a website, or drafting contracts in a professional league setting were not articulated through the curriculum.

One recommendation based on this feedback would be to actively survey students after the courses to truly assess what they would like to learn from the program. Perhaps an entry survey once a student declares the concentration in Sport Management would be ideal to gauge what students are looking for from the program, the skills they wish to acquire, and how they would like to learn those skills and competencies. Therefore, faculty can clearly assess the course offerings and determine whether any changes to the curriculum need to be made. However, it should be noted that students do not always understand why course topics are relevant to their program while studying and cannot always appreciate why they have to take certain classes.

It was widely stated throughout the Event Management qualitative data that the alumni thoroughly enjoyed having industry professionals as their professors and mentors. Their knowledge of the event industry and how it is constantly evolving was well respected by the Event Management students. Therefore, it is recommended that the SRT

Division faculty continue to invest resources into industry professionals that truly care about nurturing students and encouraging them to become outstanding event specialists.

Additionally, the findings from the Event Management alumni declared that guest speakers were influential in their academic careers because they provided different perspectives to the events industry and helped encourage networking opportunities. Having a multitude of perspectives kept students passionate about the industry and therefore continuing to encourage faculty to teach courses in a way that supplements real life examples and situational analysis is suggested.

My personal recommendation among the SRT Division faculty and academic advisors would be to investigate the idea and perhaps gauging the level of interest between the Sport and Event Managements students by encouraging Event Management students to participate in Sport Management courses, and vice versa. In particular, I found it interesting that Sport Management majors were required to take the SPMT 405: Sport Venues and Events course as part of their Professional Sequence, but Event Management students are not offered this course in their Professional Sequence, nor Concentration Elective courses. An outline of the Sport and Event Management curriculum can be found in Appendices I and J, respectively. If more readily accessible, this may help introduce Sport and Event Management students' new avenues across disciplines for careers they had never considered prior to enrolling, therefore, allowing the SRT Division faculty at George Mason University to fully understand the factors influencing Sport and Event Management students' career outcomes.

Limitations

When initiating the data collection from alumni and current students, the researcher was unable to obtain access to the listservs and directly communicate to the participants due to George Mason University's privacy policy. This was a limitation of the study including restrictions to completing this study within the researchers initial timeframe. This limitation also led to the researcher requesting for reminder and follow up emails to be sent to alumni and current students, rather than reaching out herself. Due to these constraints, consultation with the project chair occurred and the mixed methods study was reconfigured from an exploratory sequential design to a convergent parallel design.

A second limitation of this study was differing sample sizes between the alumni and current students. While it was expected to have a smaller qualitative population, the difference between six alumni and 20 current students is quite a variance. Additionally, the hope was to receive equal amount of participation from both the Sport and Event Management students. The participation ratio was 12 (60%) Sport Management students and eight (40%) Event Management students. While this ratio is not a large split between the current student population, the data does skew to the Sport Management students.

Another limitation to note, as mentioned by a committee member, was the criteria selected by the Division of Sport, Recreation, and Tourism that must be adhered to when hiring industry professionals as adjunct faculty. Industry professionals must not only have the professional background, but also the academic experience within the field to be hired (Dr. Brenda Wiggins, personal communication, June 13, 2017). Additionally, if the

individual does not have the necessary academic track in leisure, sport, or tourism, the candidate must initiate and pay for in-service trainings or academic involvement to prove to George Mason University that they have some sort of academic criteria behind them to be hired (Dr. Brenda Wiggins, personal communication, June 13, 2017).

Delimitations

This study was initially prompted based on my own personal experiences within the Event Management concentration with the Tourism and Events Management degree as an undergraduate student at George Mason University from 2009-2013. Unsure of the career path I wanted to pursue, I took a variety of Hospitality, Tourism, and Event Management courses, with a primary focus on Event Management. For the required 12-credit TOUR 490 internship course, I was introduced to the idea that sports are indeed events, when interning for the Washington Wizards. This internship introduced me to a side of events that I had never realized was an option to me as an Events Management major.

Based on my background, the subjects of Sport and Event Management concentrations were the populations chosen as targets of the study due to my personal connection to both concentrations as an alumna of the Tourism and Events Management Bachelor of Science degree and my current position as a Sport and Recreation Studies masters candidate. Based on this factor, I was hopeful to form connections with other alumni and current students in order to gain the knowledge to improve the standards and provide feedback to George Mason University's SRT Division faculty.

Implications and Future Research

Involving academic advisors into the suggestions listed above could potentially alter the findings from this study. If academic advisors are encouraged by faculty to further expand on the opportunities Sport and Event Management students have across disciplines within Sport, Recreation, and Tourism, their career outcomes could be very different. This could also lead to future research on the impact taking courses across disciplines have on career outcomes. This implication could be applied to incoming students with Sport and Event management degree concentrations.

Another future study George Mason University SRT faculty could initiate is, within 10 years of graduation, determine how alumni view their career outcomes based on the same criteria discussed throughout this study. Have their thoughts changed? Do they now reflect on certain course offerings and appreciate the content now as a professional versus as a student? The considerations of alumni as recent graduates versus experienced graduates may differ after further developing skills acquired within a professional setting.

Lastly, it is important to determine whether or not accreditation impacts career outcomes. Once the Sport and Event Management degree concentrations become accredited, how will the results of this study differ? Future research of this topic will help the SRT Division faculty at George Mason University further determine which motivational factor holds the highest impact on career outcomes.

Summary

In order to meet the growing needs of students, evaluating the curricula within the Sport and Event Management programs is necessary. Course topics and frameworks allow students to gain the knowledge and skills required to be competent in an entry-level position upon graduation. Consistently evaluating current classes and implementing new course topics as an industry evolves will help a program remain relevant to industry professionals.

Faculty engagement and mentorship opportunities allow students to feel connected to their professors and institutions as a whole. Encouraging students to form relationships with faculty and staff within a program allow personal and professional growth. Additionally, this can help influence faculty development within programs or organizations as well.

Another influence of career outcomes is fieldwork experience. Allowing students to gain real life, hands on experience in an intended industry helps prosper progression in a work environment. Regardless of positive or negative experiences, internships allow students a familiarity within an industry. Having these understandings of the different sectors within an industry will help them determine their level of interest in that particular field.

Although separately these factors play a pivotal role in a students' career outcome, the conjunction of all three had not been investigated. This study identified whether all three factors contribute to students' career outcomes, in addition to providing recommendations for SRT Division faculty.

Results of the study indicate five themes that were predetermined for this study: an undergraduate degree and its associated curricula, faculty mentorship, fieldwork experiences, all three factors combined, and other factors. Undergraduate degrees play a pivotal role in career outcomes, as the course topics and structure of the academic major allow students to hone in on passions and learn more in depth about the Sport and Event Management fields. Faculty facilitate personal and professional growth by providing students with adequate resources, networking opportunities, and insights into the Sport and Event industries that help foster growth and encourage career outcomes.

Fieldwork experiences showed to have the most influence on a career outcome. By allowing students to apply theoretical classroom knowledge into real life work experiences, students were able to decipher whether their experience equaled passion and a desire to continue within the industry upon graduation. When articulating the impact of all three of the above factors as a whole, together they collectively bring a new dynamic to shaping a career outcome. The conjunction of these factors allow a student to identify their strengths and weaknesses, hone in on their passions, and determine the career outcome that is best for them.

Finally, yet important, other factors were considered on the impact of career outcomes. Students and alumni alike established that not only are the above three factors influential, but personal and professional persuaders are as well. The ability to garner relationships among classmates, faculty and staff, as well as industry professionals allow for a great deal of networking opportunities. Additionally, individual interests and passions helped navigate professional desires and outcomes. Moreover, the constant

change and growth within the Sport and Event industries have encouraged students to strive for advancement within these fields. Without this study, the impact of academic majors and curricula, faculty mentorship, and fieldwork experiences together on a student's career outcome would still remain in question. Further investigation of this phenomenon will help supplement and advance Sport and Event Management undergraduate programs.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Sport Management Listserv Request Email to Professor Craig Esherick

Professor Esherick,

I hope this email finds you well. I am a graduate candidate in the Master's of Sport Management program and expect to graduate this upcoming May 2017. I am currently enrolled in the SRST 798 Master's Project course, and am hoping I can use you as a resource to complete my project. My project is titled "The Future Has Arrived: Factors Influencing Sport and Event Management Undergraduate Students' Career Outcomes" – IRBNet #1036585-1. Throughout this project, I intend to interview and survey both recent alumni and current students of the Sports Management program to determine motivational factors that influence their career outcomes. The first round of interviews would be with alumni of the program, and the second would be surveying current undergraduate students. Findings from the interview and survey will be analyzed and future recommendations will be formed and presented to George Mason University's School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism faculty.

I am reaching out to you to ask permission to acquire two listservs of the Sports Management program. The first listserv would be to recent graduates of the Sports Management program, having graduated in either the December 2016 or May 2016 semesters. The second listserv would be to current undergraduate students in the Sports Management program that are currently enrolled in the SPMT 490 required 12-credit internship course. Would you be willing to provide me with this information so I may conduct both my qualitative and quantitative research for this project?

I appreciate any insight you may have. Please let me know if you need additional information, I would be happy to provide you with any documentation you may need.

Best,

Selina Kirwan

APPENDIX B

Event Management Listserv Request Email to Dr. Seungwon “Shawn” Lee

Dr. Lee,

I hope this email finds you well. I am a graduate candidate in the Master’s of Sport Management program and expect to graduate this upcoming May 2017. I am currently enrolled in the SRST 798 Master’s Project course, and am hoping I can use you as a resource to complete my project. My project is titled “The Future Has Arrived: Factors Influencing Sport and Event Management Undergraduate Students’ Career Outcomes” – IRBNet #1036585-1. Throughout this project, I intend to interview and survey both recent alumni and current students of the Tourism and Event Management program to determine motivational factors that influence their career outcomes. The first round of interviews would be with alumni of the program, and the second would be surveying current undergraduate students. Findings from the interview and survey will be analyzed and future recommendations will be formed and presented to George Mason University’s School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism faculty.

I am reaching out to you to ask permission to acquire two listservs of the Tourism and Event Management program. The first listserv would be to recent graduates of the Tourism and Event Management program, having graduated in either the December 2016 or May 2016 semesters. The second listserv would be to current undergraduate students in the Tourism and Events Management program that are currently enrolled in the TOUR 490 required 12-credit internship course. Would you be willing to provide me with this information so I may conduct both my qualitative and quantitative research for this project?

I appreciate any insight you may have. Please let me know if you need additional information, I would be happy to provide you with any documentation you may need.

Best,

Selina Kirwan

APPENDIX C

Alumni Phone Interview Request Email Template

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Selina and I am a graduate candidate in George Mason University's Master's of Sport Management program and expect to graduate this upcoming May 2017. I am currently enrolled in the SRST 798 Master's Project course, and am hoping I can use you as a resource to complete my project. My project is titled "The Future Has Arrived: Factors Influencing Sport and Event Management Undergraduate Students' Career Outcomes" -- IRBNet #1036585-1. Throughout this project, I intend to interview and survey both recent alumni and current students of the Sports Management program to determine motivational factors that influence their career outcomes.

I would like to interview recent alumni to the program in order to determine not only the motivational factors that influence career outcomes, but to also identify whether or not you have remained in the Sport Management or Tourism and Events Management fields. Findings from the interview and survey will be analyzed and future recommendations will be formed and presented to George Mason University's School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism faculty.

I am reaching out to you to ask permission to interview you for my project. I will be conducting phone interviews with recent alumni in mid-March and would love to have you as a participant. Each phone interview will last 20-30 minutes and I will be recording the interview in order to listen back and accurately transcribe and evaluate the data collected. Would you be willing to participate in the phone interview process in order for me to collect research for this project? Please let me know if this would be something you are interested in, and if you are, with consent to record our phone conversation.

I look forward to hearing from you. Please let me know if you need additional information, I would be happy to provide you with any documentation you may need.

Best,
Selina Kirwan

APPENDIX D

Alumni Informed Consent Form

THE FUTURE HAS ARRIVED: FACTORS INFLUENCING SPORT AND EVENT MANAGEMENT UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' CAREER OUTCOMES

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to determine motivational factors that influence both Sport and Event Management students' career outcomes. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in a 20-30 minute phone interview and answer seven (7) questions. Each phone interview will be audio recorded for transcription and interpretation upon conclusion.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be confidential. Phone interview data collected will be held on Selina Kirwan's work computer on a private drive. This drive is not accessible to the public and will not be distributed to the public in order to maintain the confidentiality of the data. All audio recordings will be used for transcription and review purposes of the study only, and will be deleted indefinitely upon Selina Kirwan's degree completion. Personal information, including your name and other identifies will not be placed on interview data or results in the findings.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no

penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Selina Kirwan in the School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism at George Mason University. He/she may be reached at 703-629-6306 for questions or to report a research-related problem. The chair of Selina Kirwan's committee is Dr. Seungwon "Shawn" Lee and he may be reached at 703-993-9915 or slz@gmu.edu. You may contact the George Mason University Institutional Review Board office at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT

I have read this form, all of my questions have been answered by the research staff, and I agree to participate in this study.

APPENDIX E

Survey Request Email Template

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Selina and I am a graduate candidate in George Mason University's Master's of Sport Management program and expect to graduate this upcoming May 2017. I am currently enrolled in the SRST 798 Master's Project course, and am hoping I can use you as a resource to complete my project. My project is titled "The Future Has Arrived: Factors Influencing Sport and Event Management Undergraduate Students' Career Outcomes" – IRBNet #1036585-1. Throughout this project, I intend to interview and survey both recent alumni and current students of the Sports Management program to determine motivational factors that influence their career outcomes.

I would like to survey undergraduate students in the Sport and Event Management programs that are currently enrolled in the SPMT or TOUR 490 required 12-credit internship course. This will help me determine not only the motivational factors that influence career outcomes, but to also identify whether or not you students in these programs plan to remain in the Sport Management or Tourism and Events Management fields upon graduation. Findings from the survey will be analyzed and future recommendations will be formed and presented to George Mason University's School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism faculty.

I am reaching in the hopes you will participate in my 5-10 minute survey through SurveyMonkey. Would you be willing to participate in the survey in order for me to collect research for this project? Please let me know if this would be something you are interested in, and if you are, with consent to use your survey results in my findings.

I look forward to hearing from you. Please let me know if you need additional information, I would be happy to provide you with any documentation you may need.

Best,

Selina Kirwan

APPENDIX F

Participant Informed Consent Form

THE FUTURE HAS ARRIVED: FACTORS INFLUENCING SPORT AND EVENT MANAGEMENT UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' CAREER OUTCOMES

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to determine motivational factors that influence both Sport and Event Management students' career outcomes. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in a 5-10 minute SurveyMonkey online survey.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

BENEFITS

There are not benefits to you as a participant.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be confidential. Survey data collected will be held on Selina Kirwan's personal SurveyMonkey account and work computer and will not be accessible to the public in order to maintain the confidentiality of the data. While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission. Personal information, including your name and other identifiers will not be placed on surveys or results in the findings.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Selina Kirwan in the School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism at George Mason University. He/she may be reached at 703-629-6306 for questions or to report a research-related problem. The chair of Selina Kirwan's committee is Dr. Seungwon "Shawn" Lee and he may be reached at 703-993-9915 or slz@gmu.edu. You may contact the George Mason University Institutional Review Board office at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT

I have read this form, all of my questions have been answered by the research staff, and I agree to participate in this study.

APPENDIX G

Qualitative Interview Questions for Alumni

1. How did you decide to select Events Management/Sports Management as your intended concentration?
2. When did you make the decision to declare your concentration?
3. How has the curriculum, both required and elective, within your major prepared you for your career aspirations?
4. How influential has faculty mentorship been in preparing you for your internships? Faculty mentorship being interactions with your professors and faculty within the School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism, not your academic advisor.
5. How influential were your practicum and 12 credit internship courses in your career choice?
6. Did your major and curricula, faculty mentorship, and field experiences sway your decision to continue in the sport/event industry after graduation?
7. What other factors, if any, have influenced your career decision-making?

APPENDIX H

Quantitative SurveyMonkey Questions for Current Students

2. What is your concentration within the School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism?
 - a. Sport Management
 - b. Event Management
3. The curriculum, both required and elective, has prepared me for my career aspirations.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
4. Faculty mentorship throughout my undergraduate schooling has helped prepare me for my career aspirations. Faculty mentorship meaning professors and Sport and Event Management faculty, not academic advisors.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
5. The Sport Management/Event Management program has prepared me for a career in the sporting industry.

- a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
6. My concentration and associated curricula have helped me determine that I would like to stay in my intended field.
- a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
7. Faculty mentorship has helped me determine that I would like to stay in my intended field.
- a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
8. My field experiences (internships), at both the Practicum level and the 12-credit level, have helped me determine that I would like to stay in my intended field.
- a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
9. There are other factors that have helped me determine that I would like to stay in my intended field.
- a. Strongly Disagree

- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly Agree
- f. If there are other factors, please specify: (text box available to write in comments)

10. After nearly completing my undergraduate degree, building relationships with faculty members, and experiencing internships, I would like to stay in my intended field.

- a. Strongly Disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly Agree

APPENDIX I

**George Mason University
School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism
College of Education and Human Development**

Events Management – BS Concentration

The Events Management degree concentration is a staged combination of general education, professional preparation courses and opportunities for advanced studies that accommodate the students' individual interests.

To earn a **Bachelor of Science in Tourism and Events Management with a concentration in Events Management**, students must complete all [Mason Core requirements](#) (37 credits) and the TEM Core Courses listed below (71 credits).

Mason Core (37 credits)

- Written communication (6)
- Oral communication (3)
- Information technology (3)
- Quantitative reasoning (3) (Must take STAT 250)
- Literature (3)
- Arts (3)
- Western civilization (3)
- Social and behavioral science (3) (TOUR 311 recommended)*
- Global understanding (3) (TOUR 210 recommended)*
- Natural science (7)
- Synthesis/Capstone (met by completion of TOUR 490 a program requirement)

Professional Sequence (71 credits)

- [PRLS 310: Program Planning and Evaluation](#) (3 credit hours)
- [PRLS 410: Administration of SRT Organizations I](#) (3 credit hours)
- [SRST 450: Research Methods](#) (3 credit hours) (Satisfies the university Writing Intensive requirement)
- [PRLS 460: Sport and Recreation Law](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 110: Professionalism and Civility](#) (1 credit hour)
- [TOUR 200: Introduction to Tourism Management](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 220: Introduction to Event Management](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 230: Introduction to Hospitality Management](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 241: Hospitality, Tourism, and Events Management Practicum](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 340: Sustainable Tourism](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 412: Hospitality, Tourism, and Events Management Marketing](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 414: Hospitality, Tourism, and Events Management Finance](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 470: Career Preparation](#) (1 credit hour)
- [TOUR 490: Hospitality, Tourism, and Events Management Internship](#) (12 credit hours)

Choose eight courses (24 credits) from the following:

- [TOUR 190: Wedding Planning](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 214: Hospitality Tourism and Events Management Accounting](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 221: Event Implementation and Evaluation](#) (3 credit hours)

- [TOUR 313: Event Technology](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 314: Hospitality, Tourism, and Events Revenue Management](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 320: Hospitality Management Information Systems](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 330: Resort Management](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 331: Cruise Ship Management](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 352: Heritage and Cultural Tourism](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 362: Cultural and Environmental Interpretation](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 416: Hospitality Sales](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 420: Tourism Planning/Policy](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 440: Meetings and Conventions](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 450: Hospitality Human Resources Management](#) (3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 480: Special Topics](#) (1 - 3 credit hours)
- [TOUR 499: Independent Study](#) (1 - 3 credit hours)

Note:

*TOUR 210 and TOUR 311 may not be used to satisfy both degree and Mason Core requirements.

TOUR 499 must be approved by department.

Electives (12 credits)

Choose an additional 12 credits from the university catalog.

Total: 120 credits

APPENDIX J

**George Mason University
School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism
College of Education and Human Development**

Sport Management – BS Concentration

The BS in Health, Fitness, and Recreation Resources with a concentration in Sport Management enhances the professional development of liberal arts-educated students, thereby preparing them to assume entry-level managerial positions in the \$300 billion sport industry, including private enterprises, government or public employment sectors, nonprofit or voluntary agencies, and commercial sport ventures.

Preparation in sport marketing, finance, ethics, law, operations, planning, and program leadership fosters the skills that enhance students' acquisition and advancement in sport management careers. An integral part of the program is the opportunity to complete two field experiences in sport organizations.

In addition to George Mason University [Mason Core requirements](#), the Sport Management concentration includes 66 credit hours of required courses based upon the NASSM content standards for Sport Management. The additional 17 credit hours of elective course credits allow students to incorporate one of any number of minor programs that may enhance their professional preparation.

Course Work

Mason Core Requirements (37 credits)

- Written communication (6)
- Oral communication (3)
- Information technology (3)
- Quantitative reasoning (3) Must take STAT 250
- Literature (3)
- Arts (3)
- Western civilization (3)
- Social and behavioral science (3)

- Global understanding (3)
- Natural science (7)
- Synthesis/Capstone, met by SPMT 490, a program requirement

Professional Sequence (57 credits)

- [SPMT 201: Introduction to Sport Management](#) (3 credit hours)
- [SPMT 241: Practicum](#) (3 credit hours)
- [SPMT 302: Philosophical and Ethical Dimensions of Sport](#) (3 credit hours)
- [SPMT 304: Sport, Culture, and Society](#) (3 credit hours)
- [SPMT 405: Sport Venues and Events](#) (3 credit hours)
- [SPMT 412: Sport Marketing and Sales](#) (3 credit hours)
- [SPMT 420: Economics and Finance in the Sport Industry](#) (3 credit hours)
- [SPMT 430: Sport Communication](#) (3 credit hours)
- [SPMT 440: Global Perspectives in Sport](#) (3 credit hours)
- [SPMT 455: Governance and Policy in Sport Organizations](#) (3 credit hours)
- [PRLS 460: Sport and Recreation Law](#) (3 credit hours) OR [SPMT 462: Sport Business Law](#) (3 credit hours)
- [SPMT 470: Strategic Management and Leadership in Sport Organizations](#) (3 credit hours)
- [SPMT 475: Sport Management Professional Development Seminar](#) (3 credit hours)
- [SPMT 490: Internship](#) (12 credit hours) (Must register for 12 credits)
- [SRST 200: History of Sport and Leisure in America](#) (3 credit hours)
- [SRST 450: Research Methods](#) (3 credit hours)

Guided Electives (9 credits)

Choose 9 credits from the following:

- SPMT or SRST-prefix courses
- [SPMT 480: Special Topics in Sport Management](#) (3 credit hours)

Electives (17 credits)

Choose an additional 17 credits from the university catalog.

Total: 120 credits

Consult the current [George Mason University catalog](#) for descriptions of courses and degree requirements. Students will be cleared for graduation using the degree requirements for the catalog year they matriculated into the SPMT concentration.

APPENDIX K

Timeline for Project Completion

January 2017:

- Enroll in SRST 798 – Master’s Project
- Prepare a study outline for spring 2017 semester
- Submit a final project draft to Dr. Lee
- Apply for Summer 2017 graduation through PatriotWeb

February 2017:

- Provide committee (Dr. Lee, Dr. McDowell, and Dr. Wiggins) with a final draft of project proposal
- Schedule project defense in February 2017
- Defend project proposal with committee (Week of February 20 – 24)
- Submit IRB Application
- Keep in close contact with committee chair (Dr. Lee) to continue editing process

March 2017:

- Edit project with committee feedback
- Request listserv of students in the SPMT and TOUR 490 classes from Dr. Lee and Professor Esherick
- Pending IRB approval, schedule qualitative phone interviews with alumni

April 2017:

- Send Dr. Lee and Professor Esherick a SurveyMonkey link to a quantitative survey for current students so they may distribute
- Collect current student data through SurveyMonkey

May 2017:

- Conduct phone interviews with six SPMT and TOUR alumni
- Collect current student data through SurveyMonkey
- Submit project to Sally Evans (Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator) for format review
- Work with committee to select final project defense date
- Transcribe and analyze qualitative data

- Write Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

June 2017:

- Submit final draft of project to committee members by Friday, June 2, 2017
- Defend final project with committee on June 13, 2017
- Edit Chapter 4 and overall project with committee revisions
- Submit final project to committee members for SRST 798 final grade and to receive approval from committee members on Project Signature Sheet
- Submit final project to library by Friday, July 28, 2017 (summer 2017 final submission deadline is 5:00 p.m. on Friday, August 4, 2017)

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BIOGRAPHY

Selina Kirwan was born in Chelmsford, England and raised in Bermuda until her family's arrival to the United States in 1997. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Tourism and Events Management from George Mason University in May 2013. Her experience participating in her 12-credit internship requirement with the Washington Wizards sparked her interest in Sport Management and the pursuit of her Master of Science in Sport and Recreation Studies. She hopes to pursue a career in large-scale event planning for a sport team or league in the future.