

Assessing Outcomes of a Realistic Major Preview in an Introductory Sport Management Course

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Abstract

This paper assessed the outcomes of a field experience assignment (FEA) in an introductory sport management course designed as a realistic major preview. Student learning outcomes assessed were commitment to the major, intent to pursue the major, expectation of a career in sports, and perceived preparation for a career in sports. A quasi-experimental non-equivalent control group research design was employed ($n = 125$). Data was analyzed using 2 X 2 repeated measures MANOVA. The *Group X Time* interaction was not significant, $\Lambda = .945$, $F(4, 97) = 1.42$, $p > .05$, indicating that the FEA did not make a difference in student perceptions compared to those students who did not complete the FEA in the control group. However, the main effects for *Time* were significant. Students scored lower on the posttest than the pretest on all four outcomes. Implications for sport management faculty and administrators are explored.

Keywords: *sport management; teaching; field experience; realistic major preview; assessment; learning outcomes*

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The proliferation of sport management programs has led industry stakeholders to question how so many programs can adequately educate and place 8,000 graduates each year into a competitive marketplace where “the supply of qualified talent typically exceeds the number of jobs available” (Bravo, Won, & Shonk, 2012, p. 63; Jones, Brooks, & Mak, 2008; Mahony, Moorman, DeSchiver, & Hambrick, 2012; Mathner & Martin, 2012). As accountability expectations from accrediting bodies, legislatures, and institutions continue to increase, program directors will need to implement academic leadership strategies such as enrollment management, quality control, program differentiation, assessment of student learning outcomes, and tracking employment outcomes. The end goal of these strategies is to develop students into workforce ready professionals. One such strategy to meet demands of external agents and the desire to place competent professionals in the sport industry could be the use of the introductory course as a realistic major preview.

The term *realistic major preview* is adapted from the industrial organizational psychology field that has coined the term realistic job preview, whereby organizations provide prospective employees with accurate information about a given job so that candidates who are not a fit for the job self-select out of the position (Phillips, 1998). Fox and Krausz (1982) recommended extending the concept of realistic job previews to other career transitions, including the transition from high school to college. Thus, a realistic major preview presents accurate and realistic information about a major (e.g. employment conditions, opportunities for advancement, professional behaviors) early in a student’s academic progression so that students who are not a fit self-select out of the major. Specifically in sport management, the introductory course is positioned to offer a realistic major preview to students that may be selecting the major based largely on their interest in sports and perception that the sport industry is prestigious (Todd & Andrew, 2008).

Introductory courses serve as a gateway to an academic major by exposing students to foundational academic principles and potential professions (Appledorn, Huffman, & Lawrence, 2013). For example, Li and Cotton (1996) found the primary purpose of an introductory sport management course was to “familiarize the student with the field of sport management, including types of jobs and career opportunities available” (p. 95). Class content and assignments can serve as a realistic major preview that offers students a glimpse into what working in the sport and leisure industry will resemble after graduation. Having students complete a realistic major preview is important in sport management because students are often attracted to the major based on their interest in sports or the perceived glamorous nature of working in the sport industry, as opposed to the reality of many entry-level positions characterized by long hours, low starting pay, and intense competition for jobs (Mathner & Martin, 2012, Todd & Andrew, 2008). As a result, the introductory course is well positioned to make a significant impression on lower-level sport management students. The purpose of this study is to assess the effect of an introductory sport management course on the students’ perceptions of the major.

One means of familiarizing students with the types of jobs in the sport and leisure industry is field experience engagement. Field experience is a global term used to describe a variety of vehicles through which students can acquire practical experience, including volunteering, practicums, apprenticeships, cooperative education, service learning, graduate assistantships, and internships (Foster & Dollar, 2010). Acquisition of field experiences is important because it is a key mechanism by which students can make their resume attractive to hiring managers. In fact, prior research has indicated that field experiences are valued by hiring managers over any type of specific coursework (Hutchinson, Sagas, & Quatman,

2010; Petersen & Pierce, 2009). While sport management scholars have not produced an empirical link between experience and securing entry-level employment, it is commonly held that “the more experience students can accumulate before graduation, and the greater the variety of experiences possessed, the more likely they are to gain employment in such a competitive field” (Dees & Hall, 2012, p. 71).

The Foster Five-Step Experiential Learning Model outlines a method for “prompting, encouraging, and requiring sport management students to gain experience in the sport industry before applying for the first full-time position” (Foster & Dollar, 2010, p. 13). The steps in the Foster model are volunteer exploration, apprenticeship, classroom, elective, and required culminating internship (Foster & Dollar, 2010). Field experience acquired in an introductory sport management course fits within the *volunteer exploration* stage of Foster’s model. According to Foster and Dollar, volunteer exploration commences as soon as students arrive on campus. As students are being exposed to the industry, the primary learning objectives at this phase are to learn basic sport management skills and observe sport managers on the job (Foster & Dollar, 2010). However, research concerning outcomes in Foster’s experiential learning model has primarily focused on classroom projects and internships, while little research has been conducted on the first stage of volunteer exploration. In addition to examining the outcomes for all students completing an introductory course, a secondary purpose of this paper is to determine if outcomes differ between students who completed a field experience assignment (FEA) designed to achieve the first stage of Foster’s model and students who did not complete this assignment.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper and corresponding hypotheses outlined below is to examine the effect of an introductory sport management class, and an FEA specifically, on students’ commitment to the major, intent to pursue the major, perceived career expectation, and perceived preparation for a career working in sports.

Literature Review

Commitment and Intent to Pursue Major

Several studies have examined the effect of completing an internship on affective occupational commitment and intent to enter the sport management profession (Cunningham & Sagas, 2004; Cunningham, Sagas, Dixon, Kent, & Turner, 2005). Adapting Lee, Carswell, and Allen’s (2000) definition of occupational commitment, *commitment to the major* is defined in this study as the psychological link between a student and his or her academic major that is based on an affective reaction to that major. *Intent to pursue the major* is defined as one’s plan to enter the sport management major. Cunningham and Sagas (2004) found that sport management students who had completed an internship in sports had significantly weaker level of intentions to enter the field of sport management, while affective occupational commitment did not change. Cunningham et al. (2005) found that anticipated career satisfaction, affective occupational commitment, and intention to enter the sport management profession significantly decreased for students who had completed an internship compared to students yet to complete the internship. Students completing an internship were able to “confirm that sport management is their correct career choice or learn that a career in the sport industry is not one they would enjoy, and thus, their career choices should be directed elsewhere” (Cunningham et al., 2005, p. 53).

Instead of measuring the outcomes at the end of a student's academic career, as is the case in an internship evaluation, this study altered the survey items used by Cunningham et al. (2005) for both commitment to the major and intention to pursue the major. These items were altered to measure outcomes at the beginning of a student's career when they were deciding on their major in an introductory sport management course that required a FEA. Four hypotheses were formed:

H1a: As a result of completing an introductory sport management course, students will demonstrate decreased commitment to the major from pretest to posttest.

H1b: As a result of completing the FEA, students in a treatment group will demonstrate decreased commitment to the major from pretest to posttest compared to students in the control group.

H2a: As a result of completing an introductory sport management course, students will demonstrate decreased intention to pursue the major from pretest to posttest.

H2b: As a result of completing the FEA, students in a treatment group will demonstrate decreased intention to pursue the major from pretest to posttest compared to students in the control group.

The results of two studies may help to explain why student commitment and interest to pursue the field appears to decline after completing a field experience. Todd and Andrew (2008) surveyed 231 students attending a sport management conference and found that students' perception of person-environment fit in the sport industry was based upon their assessment that the sport industry was prestigious, as well as the students' personal interest in sports. Similarly, Mathner and Martin (2012) found that students ranked their interest and love of sports as the top factor leading to their major choice. Moreover, students ranked working in a high profile career as significantly more important than practitioners. These two studies demonstrated that sport management students chose their major based on their love or interest in sports and their belief that sports jobs are prestigious, which means it is certainly possible that "prestige assessments of students could generate unrealistic expectations which could lower intentions to enter the field" (Todd & Andrew, 2008, p. 334). As a result, some students might form inaccurate beliefs about employment in the field if their attraction to the major is based upon their interest or love of sports and conviction that sport management is a prestigious industry.

Expectations

In human resources management, realistic job previews (RJP) attempt to combat misconceptions about jobs by providing candidates with an "accurate, objective understanding of the job" (Lussier & Kimball, 2009, p. 194). RJP's can take the form of structured observations, meetings with current workers, pre-application screenings, videos, booklets or brochures, web-based multimedia, and internship or volunteer programs (O'Neil, Larson, Hewitt, & Sauer, 2001). The objective of administering RJP's is to hire candidates with a high level of congruence between the job and their needs by providing accurate expectations about the organization (Breaugh, 1992). Research has indicated that RJP's are associated with higher job satisfaction and performance, while also being associated with lower levels of attrition during recruitment, lower turnover once hired, and lower initial expectations about the job (Phillips, 1998).

In the only study to date using the term realistic major preview, Lent et al. (2007) adapted RJP to the selection of an academic major by surveying 354 Italian high school students who were transitioning into college. Students listened to a two hour lecture in a topic of the students' choosing (i.e., agriculture, education, and engineering). Lent et al. (2007) found that students exposed to realistic major previews demonstrated increased levels of knowledge about the major, but they experienced decreased levels of interest in and expectations for the major. Lent et al. concluded that decreased expectations resulting from "exposure to unflattering aspects of a job may ultimately yield positive outcomes because those who fit the job less well may decline entry, and those who do enter may be better prepared to cope with its negative features" (p. 188). While Lent et al. chose lecture as the vehicle by which to administer the realistic major preview, requiring students to complete a FEA in an introductory course can also serve as a realistic major preview.

Utilizing a set of questions initially employed by Bristow, Gulati, Amyx, and Slack (2006) for use in sales courses, Pierce and Petersen (2010) identified a factor with reliable psychometric properties called "expectations of a career in sport sales." After adjusting the questions to focus on any type of job in the sport industry, *expectation of a career in sports* is defined in this study as the expectations that students hold for what a job in the sport industry will be like once they enter the profession. Pierce and Petersen (2010) found that expectations for a career in sport sales decreased as a result of the project. However, Pierce, Petersen, and Meadows (2011) found no change in expectations compared to a control group that did not participate in the client-based sales program. In light of the RJP literature, the findings from Lent et al. (2007) and conclusions from Pierce and Petersen (2010), two hypotheses were formulated:

H3a: As a result of completing an introductory sport management course, students will demonstrate decreased expectations to the major from pretest to posttest.

H3b: As a result of completing the FEA, students in a treatment group will demonstrate decreased expectations for working in sports from pretest to posttest compared to the control group.

Preparation

Pierce and Petersen (2010) also utilized factor analysis to identify a factor called perceived preparation for sport sales. After adjusting the questions to focus on any type of job in the sport industry, *perceived preparation for a career in sports* is defined in this study as the extent to which students feel they are prepared to be successful as employees in the sport industry. Pierce et al. (2011) found no changes from pretest to posttest with respect to perceived preparation for a career working in sport sales compared to the control group. However, the context of a sales course is different than an introductory course. In a sales course, students are gaining mastery over one specific skill with repeated practice calling over 200 customers, whereas in an introductory course students are learning about the sport industry at a cursory level and engaging in only 10 hours of field experience. Furthermore, students in the sales course were involved in a curriculum where they knew about the challenging cold call sales experience from other students. In contrast, students in an introductory course do not have the luxury of knowing others in the major yet, or forming opinions about assignments before entering the course. In essence, introductory students learning basic concepts while being exposed to material for the first time are more

likely to be influenced from the beginning of a class to the end.

As students progress through an introductory course, especially while completing a FEA, it is reasonable to assume they will recognize some of the difficulties of working in the sport industry, as well as their own shortcomings. When exposed to the nontraditional work hours, low entry level salaries, and competitive job market, it is likely some students would consider themselves less interested and unprepared for work in this field. For a FEA, this realization is most likely to occur through the nontraditional hours as sport often occurs on nights and weekends. Thus, as students begin to contemplate a career and life goals, a FEA may serve to alter their perceptions of being prepared for work in the sport industry. This change in perceived preparedness is especially likely for the many students who enter an introductory sport management course because of their general interest in sport, or because of the prestige they associate with the sport industry (Mathner & Martin, 2012; Todd & Andrew, 2008). Moreover, educational literature has confirmed that students exposed to unfavorable characteristics of a career or major ultimately change their focus to a more suitable field. This change occurs most often as a result of both personal preference factors (e.g., salary expectations, day-to-day details of a career, and opportunities for advancement) and referent factors (e.g., feelings from family, friends, or professionals about the nature of a career) (Tan & Laswad, 2009). Sport management students are likely to experience both personal and referent information in a FEA that likely contradicts some of the widely held and commonly misunderstood beliefs about working in the sport industry. Therefore, two hypotheses were formulated:

H4a: As a result of completing an introductory sport management course, students will demonstrate decreased perceived preparation for the major from pretest to posttest.

H4b: As a result of completing the FEA, students in a treatment group will demonstrate decreased perceived preparation for a career in sports from pretest to posttest compared to the control group.

Methodology

Pedagogy

A face-to-face "Introduction to Sport Management" course taught at a Midwestern University was used for this study. The course was restricted to freshman, sophomore, and junior students to ensure that all students in the course were considering the pursuit of a sport management degree as opposed to taking the course for general elective hours. Both the fall section and the spring section were taught with the same textbook, notes, lectures, and assignments. For example, the same PowerPoint slides were used during lecture. However, due to administrative decisions beyond the control of the researchers, different instructors were utilized for the fall and spring sections. As a result, the principle investigator met with the two instructors of the course throughout each semester to maintain quality control and ensure that the content was delivered in a similar fashion. Both instructors were briefed on the protocol and goal of the research project and were given instructions to use the same materials.

The only difference between the designs for each course was the inclusion of a FEA, which served as the treatment for the students enrolled in the fall semester. The FEA assignment was created by the five sports management faculty members at the institution

from which the data was collected. The FEA consisted of four components: (1) completion of 10 field experience hours in one or more areas of the sport industry verified by a letter from a professional supervising the experience (Foster & Dollar, 2010); (2) a written assignment asking students to reflect on one individual they met during their field experience (Kolb, 1984); (3) a written assignment asking students to reflect on their field (Kolb, 1984); and (4) two classroom mentoring sessions where high achieving upper-level students led discussions through prompted reflective questions posed by the instructor.

Fox and Krausz (1982) recommended the use of supervised field assignments early in the curriculum to “test whether work in that field is likely to gratify the individual’s needs and expectations” (p. 152). The number of field experience hours was set at 10 because it was slightly higher than the eight hours of required field experience for admission into the major, and the faculty members determined that exceeding 10 hours become onerous for students and the instructor. The reflection assignments were included to supplement the experiential learning experience as described by Kolb (1984). The mentoring sessions were designed by the faculty as part of a larger grant project that examined the efficacy of mentoring in sport management. It was included as part of the FEA to add depth to the assignment in a way that allowed students in the introductory class to learn from and make connections with upper-class students.

Procedures

A quasi-experimental non-equivalent control group research design was employed. Surveys were collected twice from students completing the course with the FEA (treatment group), and from students in the second course who did not complete the FEA (control group). For both groups, the pretest (Time 1) was given during the first week of the course, and the posttest (Time 2) was given during finals week.

Participants

Participants for this study were 125 undergraduate students who completed a face-to-face “Introduction to Sport Management” course. Of the 93 students who completed the treatment course, 69 completed the assignment, pretest, and posttest (74.2%). Of the 62 students who completed the course in the control group, 56 completed both the pretest and posttest (90.3%). The total response rate was 80.6%. There was a slightly lower response rate for the experimental group due to a higher absence rate on the date of the post-test compared to the control group. However, the lower response rate from the treatment group was not of concern methodologically because the sample violated the assumption of covariance, and both groups had to be adjusted to have equal sample size (Stevens, 2002). The entire sample was comprised of 80% males and 20% females; 85.6% white and 14.4% non-white; 46.8% freshman, 43.5% sophomores, and 9.7% juniors. Sport management was the declared major of 60.8% of the students at the start of the class, 16.0% were undecided, and 23.2% were from a different major. However, while some students may be declared as a major other than sport management, it is important to realize that 52% of the students in this specific sport management program come to the program after having changed majors (Office of Institutional Research, 2011).

Measures

All participants completed a questionnaire that asked them to provide their race, gender, and major in addition to items related to the four factors under examination in

this study: commitment to the major, intent to pursue the major, expectation of a career in sports, and perceived preparation for working in sports. All items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Commitment to the major. The wording on four items from Cunningham et al. (2005) was adapted from occupational commitment in order to measure commitment to the major. Items included “I dislike being in the sport administration major,” “I regret having entered the sport administration major,” “I am enthusiastic about the sport administration major,” and “I am proud to be a part of the sport administration major.” Reliability estimates were high during Time 1 ($\alpha = .933$ for treatment, $\alpha = .742$ for control) and Time 2 ($\alpha = .950$ for treatment, $\alpha = .838$ for control).

Intent to pursue the major. The wording on three items from Cunningham et al. (2005) was adapted from intent to enter the profession in order to measure intent to pursue the major. Items included “Following this class, I plan to enter the sport management major,” “I plan on making sport administration my academic major,” and “It is unlikely that I will major in sport administration after taking this class.” Reliability estimates were high during Time 1 ($\alpha = .970$ for treatment, $\alpha = .961$ for control) and Time 2 ($\alpha = .982$ for treatment, $\alpha = .959$ for control).

Expectation of a career in sports. The wording on six items measuring expectation of a career in sport sales was adapted from Pierce and Petersen (2010) and Pierce et al. (2011) in order to measure expectation of working more generally in sports. Items included “For me, a career in sports would be rewarding,” “A career in sports would offer me career opportunities,” “A career in sports would offer me career growth opportunities,” “For me, a career in sports would be satisfying,” “For me, a career in sports would be fun and exciting,” and “I would enjoy the challenges of a career in sports.” Reliability estimates were high during Time 1 ($\alpha = .867$ for treatment, $\alpha = .927$ for control) and Time 2 ($\alpha = .945$ for treatment, $\alpha = .960$ for control).

Perceived preparation for working in sports. The wording on three items measuring perceived preparation for a career in sport sales was adapted from Pierce and Petersen (2010) and Pierce et al. (2011) in order to measure perceived preparation for a career in sports. Items included “I am prepared for success working in sports,” “I believe I can achieve success working in sports,” and “I am prepared for an entry-level job in sports.” Reliability estimates were high during Time 1 ($\alpha = .778$ for treatment, $\alpha = .750$ for control) and Time 2 ($\alpha = .837$ for treatment, $\alpha = .833$ for control).

Data Analysis

Using SPSS version 20.0 software, a score for each of the four factors was determined by calculating the mean score of the questions within that particular factor. The four factors were analyzed with two-way repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to evaluate changes across treatment conditions over time. In order to assess whether the FEA had any effect on the treatment group (hypotheses b), the interaction effect of *Group* (treatment vs. control) X *Time* (pretest vs. posttest) was examined. In order to assess the impact of the course in general (hypotheses a), the main effect of *Time* was examined with the use of univariate two-way ANOVA. Follow-up pairwise comparisons controlled for Type 1 error using the Holm-Bonferroni method ($.05/4 = .125$) (Stevens, 2002).

Results

The means and standard deviations on each of the four factors for the treatment and control group at Time 1 and Time 2 are listed in Table 1. In general, Table 1 indicates that the mean scores for the control and treatment group decrease over the course of the semester for each of the factors. Bivariate correlations for the four factors at Time 1 and Time 2 are presented in Table 2. An independent group t-test was used to confirm that the treatment group ($M = 13.27, SD = 5.00$) completed significantly more field experience hours than the control group ($M = 4.75, SD = 10.00$) over the course of the semester, $t(100) = 5.44, p < .05$. Students in the control group could have acquired field experience hours under their own initiative in spite of the fact that the class did not require hours to be completed.

Table 1

Pairwise Comparisons Examining Main Effect of Time and Group

Sport Management Perception	Pretest		Posttest		Pre/Post Differences	
	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control
Commitment to major	6.18 (1.10)	6.01 (1.15)	5.61 (1.55)	4.93 (1.66)	.57*	1.08*
Intention to pursue major	5.90 (1.61)	5.27 (1.96)	5.38 (1.92) ^a	4.08 (2.36) ^a	.52	1.19*
Expectation of a career in sports	6.61 (0.43)	6.66 (0.48)	6.03 (1.03)	6.09 (0.96)	.58*	.57*
Perceived preparation	6.01 (0.92)	6.04 (1.03)	5.33 (1.26)	5.29 (1.45)	.68*	.75*

n = 51 for each group

* significant change for the group over time ($p < .01$)

^a a significant difference between treatment and control groups at time of post-test ($p < .01$). Only one difference found in the eight follow-up comparisons.

Table 2

Bivariate Correlations at Both Stages of Measurement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Commitment to major ^a								
2.Intention to pursue major ^a	.831**							
3.Expectation of a career in sports ^a	.395**	.357**						
4.Perceived preparation for working in sport ^a	.373**	.316**	.499**					
5.Commitment to major ^b	.601**	.581**	.167	.186*				
6.Intention to pursue major ^b	.531**	.608**	.259**	.171	.861**			
7.Expectation of a career in sports ^b	.409**	.342**	.482**	.459**	.598**	.543**		
8.Perceived preparation for working in sport ^b	.377**	.314**	.352**	.628**	.494**	.462**	.696**	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$. ^aTime 1 of data collection; ^bTime 2 of data collection

A 2 (*Group*) x 2 (*Time*) repeated measures MANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of the FEA on students' perception of the sport management major. Because the model violated the assumption of equal covariance, the control and treatment group were adjusted to have an equal sample size ($n = 51$), which served to create a conditionally robust model (Stevens, 2002). Five cases with missing data were not utilized from the control group, yielding the 51 cases in each group that were analyzed (Stevens, 2002).

Main effects for *Group* and *Time* and the *Group X Time* interaction effect were tested using the multivariate criterion of Wilks' lambda (Λ). The *Group* main effect was significant,

$\Lambda = .878$, $F(4, 97) = 3.35$, $p < .05$, $f = .40$. The *Time* main effect was also significant, $\Lambda = .609$, $F(4, 97) = 15.59$, $p < .001$, $f = 1.0$. However, the *Group X Time* interaction was not significant, $\Lambda = .945$, $F(4, 97) = 1.42$, $p = .234$, $f = .25$, indicating that there was no change in the treatment group compared to the control group from Time 1 to Time 2. The insignificant interaction term resulted in the rejection of hypothesis 1b, 2b, 3b, and 4b.

Despite an insignificant overall *Group X Time* interaction for the MANOVA, univariate ANOVA revealed a significant *Group X Time* interaction for *commitment to the major*, $F(1, 97) = 4.13$, $p = .045$. Pairwise comparisons revealed that while the treatment ($M = 6.18$) and control group ($M = 6.01$) were not different at Time 1, the treatment group ($M = 5.61$) had decreased significantly less than the control group ($M = 4.93$). However, this result must be interpreted cautiously in light of the overall non-significant interaction in the MANOVA.

Because the overall interaction term was insignificant, further statistical exploration focused on the two main effects of *Time* and *Group* with the use of univariate two-way ANOVA. As shown in Table 3, significant differences for *Time* were found on all four factors, which resulted in accepting hypothesis 1a, 2a, 3a, and 4a. As shown in Table 1, follow-up pairwise comparisons indicated that the Time 2 scores were significantly lower than Time 1 scores for both the treatment and control group on all four factors with only one exception. The treatment group did not differ on time for the *intention* factor ($p = .058$), indicating students in the treatment group did not significantly decrease their intent to pursue the major from Time 1 to Time 2. As shown in Table 4, significant differences for *Group* were found only on the *intention* factor. As shown in Table 1, follow-up pairwise comparisons on *intention* indicated that the treatment group was significantly higher than the control group at Time 2.

Table 3

Univariate Two-Way ANOVA Examining Main Effect of Time

Sport Management Perception	Mean Square	df	F	Sig
Commitment to major	34.8	1	42.60	.001
Intention to pursue major	37.10	1	20.38	.001
Expectation of a career in sports	16.87	1	36.64	.001
Perceived preparation	25.89	1	42.62	.001

Discussion

The four hypotheses focused on the FEA (hypotheses b) were rejected on the basis of the nonsignificant interaction term in the two-way repeated measures MANOVA. In sum, the students completing the FEA demonstrated similar pretest to posttest decreases on all four factors compared to the control group. Stated differently, the treatment and control groups both decreased at approximately the same rate on all four factors. Despite the insignificant interaction term, the significant main effect of *Time* on all four factors (hypotheses a) regarding the overall group yields important theoretical and practical findings as it relates to the value of an introductory course. In examining all students enrolled in the course across both semesters, students completing this specific introductory course in sport management significantly decreased their commitment to the major, intention to pursue the major, expectation of a career in sports, and perceived preparation for a sports career as a result of completing this introductory course. In sum, it was hypothesized in this study

Table 4

Univariate Two-Way ANOVA Examining Main Effect of Group

Sport Management Perception	Mean Square	df	F	Sig
Commitment to major	9.31	1	3.08	.083
Intention to pursue major	47.40	1	7.88	.006
Expectation of a career in sports	.176	1	.240	.625
Perceived preparation	.002	1	.001	.975

that students completing the FEA would decrease their perceptions about the major at a sharper rate than the control group, but in reality students completing the FEA showed similar decreases over the course of the semester as students in the control group. Thus, the FEA did not impact what the introductory course was already accomplishing with respect to significantly decreasing student perceptions on all four factors.

While it would be cautionary to generalize these findings outside the institution from which the data was collected, there is convincing evidence that the way in which this specific introductory course was structured, regardless of whether or not students completed the FEA, served as a realistic major preview. This finding is critical to the pedagogy of sport management programs as they continue to develop introductory course content. Whether or not an FEA is included in such courses may be less important than having an entire course that delivers content in a way that serves as a realistic major preview. Future research could examine other approaches to delivering realistic major previews in introductory sport management courses.

Pragmatically, decreased commitment and intention to pursue the major may have positive or negative implications for sport management program administrators. On the positive side, for large programs with burgeoning numbers, it may serve as an enrollment management and quality control mechanism. Providing a realistic major preview, particularly one where students are exposed to the long hours and often inglorious nature of introductory jobs in sport, may serve to eliminate students who did not previously understand the field. On the negative side, for small programs looking to grow, it may dissuade students from entering the major thus keeping enrollments low. Another point worthy of consideration is that while students decreased their intent to pursue the major, commitment to the major, expectation for a sports career, and perceived preparation, the overall mean scores for each factor were relatively high. Even though scores decreased over the course of the semester, students' attitudes toward sport management were still reasonably positive, which could mean that students are still interested in pursuing the major but with a more realistic outlook.

While the MANOVA did not produce a significant interaction effect to indicate change over time for the treatment group compared to the control group, there were two results with statistical support that indicated the FEA may actually play a role in delivering a more committed group of students into upper-level coursework. First, the follow-up pairwise comparisons for *Group* and *Time* on *intention to pursue the major* revealed that the treatment group scored significantly higher than the control group at Time 2, and the treatment group did not significantly decrease on *intention* over the course of the semester. Second, there was a significant interaction for *commitment to the major* where the treatment group

demonstrated less of a decrease than the control group. Taking these two results together, there is some evidence that a FEA might slow the rate at which students' commitment and intention to pursue the major declines in an introductory course compared to students who do not complete such an assignment. However, it is important to note that the non-significant interaction effect for the overall model and for the intention factor limits the strength of this argument. Additional research needs to be conducted in order to more confidently draw this empirical conclusion. Regarding the four factors investigated in this study, results were somewhat similar to previous findings on sport management students. After completing an internship in sport management, Cunningham et al. (2005) found that students decreased in occupational commitment. Likewise, Cunningham and Sagas (2004) and Cunningham et al. (2005) found that students decreased in intention to pursue a career in sports after completing an internship.

With respect to *expectation of a career in sports*, the results of this study align with studies that have found RJP's lower an applicant's initial expectation about a job (Phillips, 1998) and students' expectations about a major or career choice (Lent et al., 2007; Pierce & Petersen, 2010). Due to the typical disconnect between what students expect from a profession and what the profession can realistically deliver, students have the ability to make a more informed opinion about what they expect out of a career after getting a glimpse into the reality of what a particular job will look and feel like (Crow, Hartman, & McLendon, 2009). Students should be informed of the competitive job market, low pay of entry-level positions, and the long and nontraditional hours required in many sport-related jobs during their time enrolled in an introductory course. As accountability expectations and measurable outcomes continue to increase in higher education, sport management program administrators can improve their job placement rate by eliminating students who have unrealistic expectations of employment in the sport industry based on their love of sport and belief that sport is prestigious (Todd & Andrew, 2008).

As it relates to the *perception of preparation* for a position in the sport industry, students felt less prepared after completing the class. One explanation may be that students realized how much they do not know about the industry. Introductory courses are wide ranging and global in nature and quite different from courses where students are learning mastery over a specific topic or skill. For example, when Pierce and Petersen (2010) and Pierce et al. (2011) found no difference in perceived preparation, they focused on a specific skill, making sales calls, which is quite different than the broad context presented in an introductory course. This type of broad content is also not likely to match the relatively narrow experience acquired by students in the FEA.

Limitations

This study has some limitations. First, only one institution was used during data collection, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, all field experiences were treated as equal when comparing the treatment group to the control group, but in reality all field experiences are unique and have a variety of impacts on students. Third, due to scheduling conflicts and administrative decisions beyond the control of the researchers, the two sections of the class were taught by two different sport administration faculty members. While the course content and assignments were purposefully kept the same between the two semesters, it is possible that the difference in faculty members teaching the course impacted the findings.

Future Research

Future research should include data collection at a variety of institutions in order to enhance the generalizability of the findings. In addition, researchers should include new variables such as number of field experience hours required, type of field experience, and performance in the class (grade). It would be particularly interesting to see if the decrease in student perceptions would reach a significant level in the two-way repeated measures MANOVA if the number of field experience was increased. Examining these additional variables would allow researchers to compare differences between groups and identify moderating variables, as well as predict intention to enter the major or commitment to the major. Other types of assignments should also be assessed to determine their effectiveness in delivering a realistic major preview (e.g. readings, written assignments, mentoring).

Conclusion

This paper contributes to the sport and leisure education literature by examining student learning outcomes in an introductory sport management course. Results of this study indicate that students who completed the field experience assignment did not change their perception about the sport management major compared to the control group that did not complete the assignment. However, examination of the main effect of *Time* revealed that students decreased their commitment to the major, intent to pursue the major, expectation of a career in sports, and perceived preparation for a career in the sport industry after completing an introductory course. The introductory course served as a realistic major preview, but the FEA did not impact what the course was already accomplishing with respect to significantly decreasing student perceptions on all four factors. Offering realistic major and job previews early and often in a sport management curriculum, before a culminating senior-year internship, will establish realistic expectations for a sport management career with enough time for students to identify whether the sport and leisure industry is appropriate for them and/or the most appropriate work environment for their career.

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