

Exploring the Role of Internships in Personal and Professional Development

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Abstract

Internships serve as an instrumental tool in many sport management students' trajectory to becoming impactful employees and leaders in the sport industry. The purpose of this sequential mixed-methods study was to cultivate a better understanding of the development that occurs for students as they progress through an internship program, whether it be personal or professional. Internship outcomes related to personal and professional development alike occurred (e.g., personal maturing and growth, networking, and strategic reflection & change of mindset) and had an array of impacts on the outcomes of the study. Notably, contributing to the Experiential Learning Theory, the data outlined that no programmatic structures are in place to strategically build and/or assess students' personal development; rather, personal development seemed to occur organically for certain participants in this study. Similarly, participants highlighted that soft skills were discussed as important by participants, but not necessarily explicitly addressed in their internship experience. The distinctive context and nature of COVID-19, embedded throughout these findings, provides a unique lens into the necessity of the abstract conceptualization and active experimentation phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle. The findings herein have important practical and theoretical implications for both sport management educators and internship supervisors in sport.

Keywords: Internships, Experiential Learning, Personal Development, Professional Development

Acknowledgments

I could, without a doubt, write another 120-page document about the deep amount of appreciation I have for every individual and group below, but I'll do my best to keep this short and pointed. In line with the theme of this study, each and every one of these people has played a significant role in my personal and professional development throughout this process.

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Signing off,
Jeremy

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Internships are a key component of both sport organizations and sport management curriculum (Brandon-Lai, Armstrong, & Bunds, 2016). From students' perspective, internship opportunities play a significant role in granting them an opportunity to enter the industry and secure entry-level career positions (Schwartz, 2010). From employers' perspective, 80% of employers say co-op and internship students are a source of new talent and potential future employees (Leger Marketing, 2014). According to the 2012 *Annual Job Outlook* survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2011), 73.7% of employers said they preferred to hire students with relevant work experience. Accordingly, more than half (i.e., 56%) of today's undergraduates benefit from experiential learning offered as part of their University's curricula through experiences such as co-op placements, internships and service learning (Canadian University Survey Consortium, 2018). In this study, Kolb's (1984) definition of experiential learning is used, which is the "knowledge created through the transformation of experience" (p. 41). Such statistics as these provide a broad picture of the importance of internship positions and experiential learning within Canada.

Given the prominence of internships within the undergraduate student experience, it is important to note the regulations and standards for unpaid internships. In Ontario, unpaid employment is illegal; however, according to the Employment Standards Act (ESA, 2013), there are six exceptions that make unpaid *internship* employment legal, including: 1) the training given is similar to that which is given in a vocational school; 2) the trainee receives some benefit from the training, such as new knowledge or skills; 3) the employer derives little, if any, benefit from the activity of the trainee while being trained; 4) the trainee does not take someone else's job; 5)

the employer is not promising a job at the end of the training; and 6) the trainee has been told that he or she will not be paid for his or her time.

These six conditions highlight the importance of students' development within internship settings, as the policy emphasizes the internship serving as a tool for students to acquire new knowledge and skills. Given the prominence of this factor what factor, educators and employers should be morally and legally concerned with the development students achieve within their internship experience. These important stakeholders should be morally invested in these outcomes given the distinction between a positive and negative experience for students and should be legally invested given the outlined conditions for unpaid internships.

As the concept and value of an 'experience society' grows, whereby individuals value experiences over anything else, experiential learning is becoming increasingly prevalent in education. As a result, educational institutions feel increased competitive pressure to demonstrate that experiences offered outweigh alternative competitors' options (Beard & Wilson, 2013). Dewey's seminal work defining experiential education theory emphasizes the need to explore experiences. Kolb (1984) provides a deep understanding of the tenants of experiential learning theory, explaining that the role that experience plays, as a lens through which an individual may analyse the interactions of people and their environments. Kolb's (1984) theoretical understanding will be used as the foundation for this study. While the mission and goal of most educational institutions differ, one unifying objective tends to exist within experiential education theory; that is, that students come out of an experiential education experience as "better" individuals. In short, experiential learning helps develop students, and this studying experiential learning in the context of students' development is essential.

For example, when examining Harvard University's mission statement of: "beginning in the classroom with exposure to new ideas, new ways of understanding, and new ways of knowing, students embark on a journey of intellectual transformation" (Harvard, 2019, "Mission, Vision, & History", para. 3), the idea of intellectual *transformation* ties directly to the concept of personal development and professional development which are the main points of emphasis of this study. While there exists a rich foundation of literature tying internships to professional development and career advancement (Allen et al., 2013; Cunningham et al., 2005; Hurst et al., 2014; Petersen & Pierce, 2009), the exploration of the concept of students' *personal* development as a benefit of partaking in the internship curriculum is sparse.

In the sport management industry in 2022, simply possessing a sport management degree does not guarantee a job, since employers expect more from graduates than technical know-how and cognitive skills (Tomlinson, 2008). Employers believe that an internship or practicum context and experience allows them to see if a placement student fits into the culture of the organization and how the student reacts to certain working environments. Internships provide students with a way to supplement coursework and adjust to the world of work (Hall et al., 1995). Meanwhile, Odio et al. (2014) concluded that students have attested to "learning and honing transferrable skills such as communicating with patrons or customers" (p. 54). Not only does the internship provide benefits for students who partake in the experience, but it can have organizational benefits as well, which is further outlined herein (Hergert, 2009; Kosnik et al., 2013; Saltikoff, 2017).

The aim of this study is to cultivate a better understanding of the development that occurs for students as they progress throughout an internship program, whether it be personal or professional. A better comprehension of practical individual development of sport management

students is made by providing students with a platform for sharing their experiences. From a practical standpoint, once an understanding of development has been established, it is possible to determine a set of practices for educational institutions for facilitating, structuring, and conducting internship programs to ensure that students' personal and professional development may occur. This study seeks to develop implications for the two involved stakeholder groups, educational institutions and students, to help ensure the process of development in this setting for future generations involved. However, the emphasis of the pragmatic implications is for the educational institutions.

Defining Development

In an academic setting, there is a common understanding that an effective learning environment requires that staff and students alike understand their responsibilities (Yorke, 1997). There is a mounting mindfulness among educational professionals and the public alike that students deserve to achieve novel, advanced, levels of learning (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). It is apparent that educational institutions, students, and employers correspondingly understand the value of development and learning through academic experiences. However, there exists a lack of a unified definition of the concept of development evidenced by the varying definitions that have been theorized. Stefani (2003) defines development, specific to an education context and an institution perspective, as a sub-discipline of higher education research and practice “specifically about supporting and enhancing the design and development of high-quality student learning experiences” (p. 13). Additionally, the research states that “to ensure the best possible student learning experience, institutions must ensure that staff and educational development does impact positively on the student experience” (p. 11). These two excerpts highlight the importance of involving all stakeholders in order to develop an impactful experience for students.

It is important to note that while the concepts of personal development and professional development are distinguished within this study, there does exist literature on the conceptual overlap between the two terms. McWilliam (2002) argues that “professional development uses a particular sort of knowledge to do a particular sort of work on individuals” (p. 10). This statement alludes to the fact that for an individual to progress professionally, they must develop as individuals as well. Similarly, Brody and Hadar (2011) focus on the “tight connection between the professional and personal factors” (p. 1232) of development. As such, understanding that students may perceive personal and professional development in similar ways throughout their internships is an important association to consider. The implications of this connection are a key component to the findings of this study.

Defining professional development. The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI, 2008) accurately highlights the importance of establishing a working definition of professional development when they state that a working classification is necessary to evaluate the effects of professional practices on producing positive outcomes. In turn, they provide a detailed, thorough definition as follows: “facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional and designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as the application of this knowledge in practice” (NPDCI, p. 3). This definition accurately depicts two important facets of development; first, the fact that professional development experiences are to be designed specifically to acquire professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions. This highlights the need to *obtain* new skills, prior to understanding how to apply and employ them. Second, the definition relates to the *application* of this newly acquired knowledge in practice. By understanding that professional development is not merely *gaining* new professional tools and adding them to one’s repertoire, but also understanding how

to put such tools into action, the definition is one that is workable and applicable for the scope of the study at hand.

Defining personal development. Multiple definitions arise related to personal development when viewed within an educational context, wherein Kuh (1999) offered the most novel definition of personal development that it is a crystallization as a result of the cumulative effects of diverse set of changes in knowledge. Maharaja (2018) defined personal development as “increasing [one’s] own level of self-confidence, global-mindedness, patience, assertiveness, maturity, self-awareness, flexibility and adaptability” (p. 18). In Kirkwood’s (2019) discussion of the case for personal development for happiness, he defined the term as “an abstract *thing* that we must *do* in order to *be* or *feel* better about our current situation, impact, or lifestyle” (p. 117). Viewing these definitions, the concept of *bettering* oneself through a process is common, whether the process be through crystallization, through understanding and enlightenment, or through experiencing a feeling.

Defining Internships

While scholars have not reached consensus among all the definitions proposed in the rich literature of internships, this section provides a definition of the term for the basis and scope of this research. Specifically, Stirling, Kerr, MacPherspon, Banwell, Bandedaly and Battaglia (2017) state that “among all the definitions proposed in the extant literature that internships are meant to be educational and provide structures, meaningful, and career-relevant experiences for students” (p. 28). Moreover, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) (2019) defines an internship as:

a one-time work or service experiences related to the student’s major or career goal. The internship plan generally involves students working in professional settings under the

supervision and monitoring of practicing professionals. Internships can be paid or unpaid, and the student may or may not receive academic credit for performing the internship (p. 2)

Within this definition, there lacks a focus on the respective roles of the employer, the educational institution and the student, as well as each group's responsibilities and objectives. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, Taylor's (1998) definition of internships is chosen to reflect these groups, which notes that internships are "structured and career-relevant work experiences obtained by students prior to graduation from an academic program, having been widely extolled by academicians, practitioners, and students themselves" (p. 393). Postsecondary institutions have responded to the need for student engagement and development in higher education by including internships as one of many experiential learning opportunities. To optimize experiential education opportunities, Stirling et al. (2017) have outlined the need for educational experiences to include "explicit learning activities consistent with each experiential learning mode, including practice, reflection, connecting coursework and practical experience, and implementing creative ideas in practice" (p. 27).

Internships from the Perspective of the Employer

In today's sport management industry, simply having a degree does not guarantee a job. Brown and Hesketh (2014) discuss employers' shifting focus from candidates' credentials to their ability to display behavioural competence. From the employer's perspective, an internship or practicum allows the organization to see whether the student fits within the culture of the organization and how they react firsthand to certain stimulus in a working environment. Such behaviours "help the employer make a much more educated decision on whether the student could possibly become an employee of the organization" (Sotiriadou, 2011, p. 543). Similarly,

Maertz, Stoeberl, and Marks (2013) consider internships to be an “extended tryout,” from which employers are given the ability to improve job selection through a low-risk opportunity. From such perspectives, employers understand the value of internships for both the personal and professional development of an individual.

Increasingly, university students are being told that internships are necessary to become top candidates in the job market, which incentivize them to take internship positions that are either unpaid or at minimum wage (Hawzen, McLeod, Holden, & Newman, 2018). Through an internship, an individual can demonstrate to an employer that they are developing skills beyond the classroom, which is essential in today’s business world. Lowden et al. (2011) explained that:

employers expect graduates to have technical and discipline competences from their degrees but require graduates also to demonstrate a range of broader skills and attributes that include team-working, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and managerial abilities. (p. vi)

To be employed today, employers seek graduates with experience, communication skills, and qualifications (Emery, Crabtree, & Kerr, 2012). Similarly, Finch et al. (2013) found that employers identified problem-solving capabilities (e.g., critical thinking, process skills), as important ones when reviewing a candidate’s employability. Gedye and Beaumont (2018) found in a study of student understandings and definitions of employability, that their definitions of employability become more sophisticated as they progress through their studies. As such, they outline the importance of understanding student perspectives on employability. Not clear here

While the common definition of employability revolves around students’ capabilities of getting and keeping fulfilling work (Cole & Tibby, 2013; Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Yorke & Knight, 2003), it is important to define *perceived* employability for the scope of this research.

Perceived employability is one's subjective evaluation of employability, defined as "the individual's perception of his or her possibilities of obtaining and maintaining employment" (Vanhercke et al., 2013, p. 593). However, there still exists a lack of collaboration between the educational institution and the employer and their defined role structure; indeed, a greater understanding of each group's expectations would enable students' development. By enhancing the collaboration between university and sport industry partners, it may be possible to further enhance graduate employability by fostering social skills (Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018). Similarly, heightened collaboration between these groups may enable all parties to further enhance students' potential for their personal and professional development.

Internships from the Perspective of the Educational Institution

As sport management programs continue to grow and develop across educational institutions, faculty have continuously made efforts to improve the application of experiential learning. Cutting and Hall's (2008) study of the structure of internships showed that maintaining development within an internship program requires adequate resource commitment, the coordinators genuine interest in the students' learning experience, customized work that fits students' needs, and a good evaluation system. A major challenge for institutions, therefore, is finding a balance between hiring staff to obtain, publicize, and/or monitor academic internships for course credits, and other duties that pay off in tangible ways, such as scholarly publications (Maertz et al., 2013). This represents a significant limitation of institution objectives, as these restrictions make it difficult for them to focus on anything beyond professional development, where they can tangibly quantify a student's progress. Sattler (2018) discussed the need to ensure that faculty are given adequate time and resources to properly implement experiential learning for students. Not only does the internship provide benefits for the student partaking in the

experience, but it can have benefits for the institution as well (Hergert, 2009; Kosnik et al., 2013, Saltikoff, 2017). The following sections outline three ways in which universities benefit from internships:

Internships as a promotional tool. Universities have begun pitching their institutions to high school students and their parents in a similar way that consumer products are sold – through strategic targeting and individualized positioning. In the case of educational institutions, said pitch often incorporates the guarantee of landing an internship (Banet-Weiser 2013; Lay-Hwa 2011; Hearn 2010; Black 2008; Bunzel 2007; Lowrie 2007; Einstein, 2015). While this is the case, the promotional effort from educational institutions is one that is multi-pronged, as oftentimes the student is not the sole decision maker. It is essential, from a marketing perspective, that all stakeholders understand that well-developed internship program can provide a more comprehensive curriculum for students to gain a more comprehensive educational experience (Yiu & Law, 2012). In the context of the study, the term comprehensive refers to one that incorporates professional development, stating that the “internship plays a vital role in assisting universities with student placement at the time of graduation” (Yiu & Law, 2012, p. 384). Specifically, Einstein (2015), who served as a college internship program administrator, discusses that internships are most often promoted as a career or resume-building tool. However, she presents a critique of the misleading nature of these types of promotions, which are further outlined in Chapter II Literature Review (limitation of internships).

A curriculum consisting of an experiential learning component may allow schools to market themselves to potential students and their parents by assuring that all motivated and qualified students can have an internship in their chosen field (Maertz et al., 2013). Internship programs provide a value-added means of attracting top level students who desire real-world

experience as part of their education (Gault, Redington & Schlager, 2000). Essentially, through the incorporation of a practicum-based course into an institution's curriculum, universities provide themselves with a tool for attracting incoming students who are looking to get the most out of their education. While research specifically studying the relationship between the presence of an internship program and recruitment numbers have yet to be conducted, it is clear that universities are leveraging the existence of said programs as a recruitment tool.

Internships as a credibility gaining tool. The institution will gain industry credibility when an employer is pleased with a student's performance (Cook, Parker & Pettijohn, 2004). Similarly, an internship provides educational institutions with another opportunity for formal assessment often needed for accreditation (Maertz et al., 2013), thus providing them the possibility for enhanced academic credibility. Since the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) recommends that business schools link their programs to the real world, with internships as one way of accomplishing this goal, universities and colleges worldwide have trended in that direction, with other departments following suit. However, studies directly measuring the degree of credibility between a university or college with an internship program versus one without have yet to be conducted.

Internships as a link strengthening tool. Internships can help strengthen links with the industry: enhancing research opportunities; raising an institution's profile; and establishing long-term working relationships (Craig & Wikle, 2016). If relationships with the industry are managed effectively, they can aid in perpetuating a continued source of internships that the school can rely upon, enabling the school to make projections, if not promises, thus tying back to the internship's role as a promotional tool for the institution (Maertz et al., 2013). Gault et al. (2000) describe internships as a method for accelerating corporate fundraising efforts, as well as

increasing the number of personal connections with the university. Similarly, internships offer tremendous potential for improving and enhancing the relationship between the university and the business community. Weible's (2009) study of university benefits from internships reported that 87.6% of participants felt a greater connection to the community as a result of internship programs. According to Frost (2019), 85% of jobs are filled through networking, despite one in four people not networking at all. As a result, whether realizing it or not, students will have engaged in professional development, as the relationships developed during their internship will assist them in the further stages of acquiring full-time employment.

Research Purpose and Questions

As discussed, internships represent a significant experience for students. Thus, it is critical to understand the development that individuals undergo throughout the experience. The purpose of this study is to cultivate a better understanding of the development that occurs for students as they progress through an internship program, whether it be personal or professional. Aligned with this purpose, two research questions help to guide the research and include:

1. How do students perceive that they incur personal development throughout a sport management internship?
2. How do students perceive that they incur professional development throughout a sport management internship?

Related to the pragmatic focus with these research questions, the study holds two main objectives:

1. To provide educational institutions with actionable items to help maximize the possibility of students' personal and professional development in sport management internships; and

2. To highlight sport management student interns' expectations and goals through their experience to provide educational institutions the opportunity to enhance these internship experiences for future students.

The following chapters clarify and assess the existing research on the topic of internships (Chapter II), describe the methods employed to tackle the research questions (Chapter III), present the findings of the research (Chapter IV), discuss the insights generated from these findings (Chapter V) and ultimately, close by considering the theoretical and practical implications of this study. Overall, this thesis is intended to be a thorough, astute, and credible account of the role that internships play in students' personal and professional development for students.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to outline existing literature with regards to internships and the impact internships have on students. To fulfill this purpose, the literature in this section is divided into the following sections, including: 1) theoretical frameworks; 2) professional development; 3) personal development; 4) internships from the perspective of the student (the employee); and 5) limitations of internships.

Theoretical Frameworks

To examine the research questions proposed and achieve the study's objectives, it is essential to understand the theories that guide this study. I utilized a pragmatic paradigm to research, which emphasizes that the "truth of an idea is dependent upon its workability; ideas or principles are true in so far as they work... [and] reality is a process or an experience (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 60). To gain insight into this reality, a researcher who uses a pragmatic viewpoint adopts research methods most likely to offer the greatest practical insight towards the research questions (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Creswell (2013) explained that pragmatic research focuses on the questions 'how' and 'what', placing "the research problem as central and [applying] all approaches to understanding the problem" (p. 11). While pragmatism is evident in several learning theories, the theories which frame the scope of this research are self-determination theory and experiential learning theory.

Self-determination theory. The self-determination theory implies that "humans continually seek challenges and new experiences to develop and master" (Link, 2019, p. 1). This theory has extensive ties with education and, particularly more so in recent years (Hsu et al., 2019; Irvine, 2019; Liu et al., 2017; Rayburn, 2018; Turner, 2019), therefore making it suitable

for the scope of this research, given these researchers applied the underlying theory in unique ways, thus displaying the theory's versatility and flexibility. For example, Hsu et al. (2019) applied the theory within a non-conventional setting of online learning, finding that students' satisfaction when engaged in online learning was associated with higher perceived knowledge transfer and achievement in said context. Meanwhile, Turner (2019) framed the theory from an administrative lens seeking to explain the impact of providing students with their own personal computer and relevant software. It was found that teachers could use this style of learning, known as one-to-one learning, to support students' independence and competence, thus enhancing student motivation. These two examples have been highlighted as they involve both students and administrators' samples, which connected with two of the three key stakeholder groups outlined within this study.

Self-determination theory in research. In the realm of sport management research, scholars have used this theory to predict attitudes and behaviours (Mallia et al., 2019), examine relationships (Camire et al., 2019), and study youth sport (Fenton et al., 2016). For example, Mallia et al. (2019) used self-determination theory to inform interventions aimed to promote youth athletes' social behaviours and to minimize rule transgressions. The authors found significant relationships between psychological need satisfaction and self-determined motivation, outlining the applicability of the theory in a sport context. Also, Camire et al. (2019) leveraged self-determination theory to examine associations between coach-athlete relationships, satisfaction needs and the teaching of life skills, finding that coaches that can best express behaviours that satisfy athletes' basic psychological needs will be more likely to go on to teach life skills. While these findings are specific to the coach-athlete relationship, the concept of

behaviours between leaders and subordinates being associated with greater development connects to the current research.

Most notably however, for the scope of this research, was the application of the self-determination theory in internship research (Rushing et al., 2017; Hsu, 2013) by examining relationships between self-determination and development & motivation, respectively. For example, Rushing et al. (2017) presented a model which permits supervisors to be “proactive in addressing intern areas of need and growth” (p. 247). This study provides a basis for applying this theory to the research questions proposed herein.

Most notably however, for the scope of this research, was the application of the self-determination theory in internship research (Rushing et al., 2017; Hsu, 2013) by examining relationships between self-determination and development & motivation, respectively. For example, Rushing et al. (2017) presented a model which permits supervisors to be “proactive in addressing intern areas of need and growth” (p. 247). This study provides a basis for applying this theory to the research questions proposed herein.

Experiential learning theory. Dewey’s (1938) work represents the first instance of a researcher arguing against the traditional methods of classroom teaching, outlining that “there is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education” (Dewey, 1938, p. 7). Similarly, according to Dewey (1938), education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience... the process and goal of education are one and the same thing (p. 79). Based on Dewey’s work, experiential learning theory emerged.

Kolb’s (1981) experiential learning theory, which is rooted in the work of Dewey (1938), is comprehensive in nature and emphasizes the various behavioural dimensions of the individual going through a learning experience. The main principle of Kolb’s (1981) experiential learning

theory is that “learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from a combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). The conceptualization of experiences was broken down further through a 4-step cycle: concrete experience (doing/having an experience); reflective observation (reviewing/reflecting on the experience); abstract conceptualization (concluding/learning from the experience); and active experimentation (planning/trying out what you have learned) (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

Kolb’s (2005) cycle opens with a **concrete experience**. This can either be in the form of a completely new experience, or an experience that has already occurred in a re-defined way. In this stage of the cycle, an individual participates in a pursuit or undertaking. In Kolb’s (2005) point of view, it is not adequate for an individual to recite or observe the pursuit in action; rather, in order to acquire new knowledge, individuals need to dynamically *participate* in the undertaking.

Once the individual has participated in the concrete experience, they need to take a step back to reflect on the pursuit, through **reflective observation**. At this stage of the cycle, interaction is critical, given that it allows the participant to recognize any inconsistencies between their perception and the pursuit itself. This period in the learning cycle grants the individual the opportunity to probe and deliberate with other individuals or participants.

Following this step, the individual engages in the **abstract conceptualization** phase, where they’re tasked with developing a sound understanding of the actions that have taken place. The individual bids to derive inferences of the experience through the reflective observation already achieved, conferring with colleagues and leveraging pre-existing concepts that they are familiar with. The step from reflective observation to abstract conceptualization occurs when the

individual begins to define new views and develop conclusions on the undertaking(s). The key in this stage is the ability to take their developed conclusions, and compare and contrast these inferences to their current understanding of similar events or situations. As is the case throughout the learning cycle, views do not necessarily need to be novel and new to the participant but proves that they can evaluate new information adjust or update their conclusions.

Finally, the individual moves into the **active experimentation** phase, also known as the testing phase. In this stage, learners become active players in undertakings once again, with the knowledge acquired through the previous stages. They are tasked with the objective of dynamic application of their revised conclusions to the situation they are facing. By engaging as a participant, the learners can make calculations, explore assignments, and make tactics for the attained knowledge in the future.

Each degree of this cycle provides the foundation for the ensuing stage, where students can enter the cycle at any stage but need the competencies defined by all stages for a learning experience to be most effective. Educational experiences that fail to address each stage in this learning cycle lack the quality appropriate for optimal learning.

As defined by NACE (2019), internships are a one-time work or service experience related to the student's major or career goal. Therefore, the student is receiving a concrete experience that involved active experimentation. However, relatively little is known about the abstract conceptualization and reflective observation that occur within an internship and may result in personal and professional development.

Experiential learning theory in research. Given the theory's close ties to education, experiential learning theory has been used extensively within the education field. Stirling et al. (2017) studied the existence of the four learning modes of experiential learning within

postsecondary internships, outlining that “internship programs overemphasize the practical aspect of the experience at the expense of linking theory and practice” (p. 27). Despite the fact that the four experiential learning modes are not explicitly evaluated within the current study, it is notable to observe the perception of these four modes. As a result, these concepts are used as thematic analysis drivers for analysis purposes.

Saldanha et al. (2019) used the experiential learning theory to evaluate the learning styles of plastic surgery residents. Findings indicate that there is a need to “strive for balance between book learning and hands-on experience for residents at all levels of training” (p. 1). Therefore, there is clear precedence for using this theory as a lens to evaluate student internships, as well as the internship’s impact on the individual.

Literature Related to Professional Development

One of the primary motives for engaging in an internship is the eventual impact that the experience can have on an intern’s career intentions. However, the sport management curriculum is one that is unique, as graduates are not confined to a single field, but rather seek employment in an array of disciplines, including recreation, interscholastic sport, intercollegiate athletics, professional sport, and in other functional areas (Petersen & Pierce, 2009). Additionally, with the number of people attending college continuously increasing over the years, many professional positions require previous work experience. As such, this section of the review of the literature seeks to examine the relationship between professional development and education, as well as professional development in internships.

Professional development in education. Sykes (1996) outlined the insufficiency of prevalent professional development as “the most serious unsolved problem for policy and practice in American education today” (p. 465). Eun (2008) described professional development

as “one of the most effective ways to improve the teaching and learning process” (p. 134). These statements outline the understanding of the significance of the term, as well as its potential outcomes. A number of novel studies have resulted in a heightened understanding of professional development benefits on an institute’s culture and a student’s individual achievements (Borko, 2004; Harris & Sass, 2011). Research has outlined that a quality professor has shown to be a noticeable factor in increasing student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Harris & Sass, 2011). Due to the impact that teachers have on the experiences of students in education, professional development has grown to be a focus of educational institutions and a tangible way for them to increase and enhance student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Harris & Sass, 2011).

Lowden (2006) stated that “well-designed, thoughtfully planned, and adequately supported professional development is a necessary ingredient in all educational improvement efforts” (p. 61). In order to measure this factor, Lutrick (2014) examined administrator perceptions of best practices for instituting professional development on campus. Her findings indicated four themes that supervisors believed to comprise effective practice, including: 1) interactive learning experiences; 2) needs-based content; 3) practical application of content; and 4) follow-up and on-going practices. These findings indicate the ways in which curriculum can be organized and implemented by institutions and teachers in order to ensure that students are impacted. This is in line with Guskey’s (2000) suggestion that for development to have an impact on students, it first must have an impact on the teachers who are likewise engaged in the professional development experience. Essentially, in order for students to obtain the desired outcome of the programs established by educational institutions for professional development, all parties must be invested and engrained in the process.

Professional development in internships. While existing literature does not explicitly mention the term professional development within internships, an abundance of implied theory exists. Elsaid and Scermerhord (1991) were first to outline that classroom visits from industry professionals are not enough to complement academic learning. Rather, they advocated for the incorporation of internships to deliver professional development prospects for students. The concept of internships serving as a trial-run, where students are exposed to various career options without needing to commit to a specific industry, is a highly researched one (Gault, Leach, & Duey, 2010; Sattler, 2011). This is in line with the definition of professional development, as this development supports the acquisition of new knowledge, specific to gaining a deeper understanding of an industry or sector. However, an argument can be made that this clarification can also be categorized as personal development, which is further discussed within the next section.

An unquestionable link between professional development and internships lies in the application of course-based knowledge to hands-on experience. Kuh (1995) outlined an internship's role in "relating theory to practice and using skills learned in the classroom, laboratory, library and so on in other areas of life" (p. 150). Similarly, Sattler (2011) acknowledged that students who have undergone internships are "more likely to have a better grasp on the linking of theory and practice across curriculum" (p. 60). This relationship explains the ways which students can apply theories, concepts, and models taught in course-based learning in the working world. Additionally, internships help students build a strong resume (Coco, 2000; Divine et al., 2007). In fact, in a discussion of the relationship between internships and professional development, Ramus (1997) stated that internships can be the most impressive listing on a student's resume and can be the deciding factor in securing employment.

Finally, internships assist students in addition to educational institutions and employers in developing a lasting, high quality and impactful professional network (Gerken, Rienties, Giesbers, & Konings, 2012). By establishing one's professional network, the possibility of leveraging said network in the future is created. As mentioned previously, with the corporate domain shifting to accommodate the changing times, 85% of jobs are filled through networking, despite one in four people not networking at all (Frost, 2019). Evidently, while researchers and practitioners may not always refer directly to the term professional development, it is a desired and expected outcome of internship programs and curriculum.

Literature Related to Personal Development

While university administrators, employees and faculty will widely agree that students should be taught both hard skills, such as technology and data analysis skills, as well as foundational life skills, such as mindset and communication skills, the latter is not explicitly taught as part of the general undergraduate experience. In this section of the review of the literature, the concept of personal development is defined, followed by a review of personal development within both educational contexts and internships contexts.

Personal development in education. As previously outlined, while the mission and goal of educational institutions across contexts differ, one unifying objective tends to exist; that is, for students to have come out of their experience as a *better* individual.

The aforementioned “foundational life skills” that employers seek while recruiting are ones that emphasize that the aims of higher education should include personal development. These skills are a driving force towards not only preparing students for life beyond the education world, but also provide them with foundational life skills. Through an evaluation of undergraduate curriculum, Whitehall et al. (2016) discussed the need for students to learn the

skills necessary to apply their course work, and the need to implement a more “systemic approach to students’ personal development” (p. 258). Similarly, Kirkwood (2019) discusses and reflects on the relationship between happiness and personal development, outlining the importance of personal growth, where “personal growth is something we all strive for, so strive for it all, we should, and that involves taking stock of our current situations and trajectories, and mapping those in connection with each other” (p. 120). Essentially, by self-reflecting on one’s experiences, an individual will be able to properly absorb information, and develop a deeper understanding of oneself, which will result in personal development and personal growth.

Maharaja (2018) reviewed the impact of studying abroad on college students’ personal development, notably finding that most students described how both they themselves and their views changed through the lived experience in a different culture. This is one of the many examples of one of the possibilities of personal development to which higher education can expose students. Another example of the way that education exposes individuals come in the form of intercollegiate athletics. For example, Gill (2015) researched the relationship between athletics and personal development, finding that the “intercollegiate athletic experience contributes to development of life skills and there is a peer effect on personal development as a result of the experience” (p. 94). Despite Gill’s (2015) novel finding, little explanation was offered of the mechanisms that contribute to this personal development.

Sheehan, McDonald and Spence (2009) tied students’ personal development and emotional competency together as a learning outcome from classwork. Sheehan et al. (2009) followed Goleman’s (1998) definition of emotional competence, defined as “a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work” (p. 24). This definition has direct ties to the concept of personal development as the term *outstanding*

performance is one that is the result of the betterment of oneself, per the definition of personal development used in the current study. Their results indicated that curriculum design incorporating the classroom-as-organization (CAO) approach should be complementary with reflective activities. The CAO approach is defined as designing and implementing a tertiary learning environment to align experiences with such new and emerging work requirements (Herbert & Leigh, 2018). Essentially, Sheehan et al. (2009) demonstrated the value of CAO and how it can be applied to advance students' personal development. These examples represent a glimpse into the possibilities for students' personal development within the educational context.

Personal development in internships. While internships are commonly acknowledged as a career development tool, as previously discussed, they also can play a significant role in personal development. Sauder and Mudrick (2018) studied perceived learning in sport management, in terms of both career development and personal development, finding that a positive, statistically significant relationship existed between internship satisfaction and perceived learning in both regards. This finding indicates that students seek *both* professional *and* personal development opportunities through internship programs. Similarly, Kuh (1999) stated that internships “encouraged students to develop skills needed to be competent in the workplace” (p. 147). Even though other researchers (Burke & Carton, 2013; Cole & Tibby, 2013; Cook et al., 2004; Craig & Wikle, 2016) did not explicitly discuss personal development, they did imply significant opportunities exist for students' personal growth through the internship experience.

For example, Burke and Carton (2013) discussed genuine learning outcome as existing because of student internships, including: authenticity, reflection, monitoring and continuous improvement, and assessment and evaluation. This points to the internship supervisor's role in

the learning process by “providing feedback on those results, and permitting the students to *digest*, or reflect on the experience” (p. 104). Burke and Carton (2013) discussed an internship’s role in expanding student knowledge such as technical, managerial, opportunity identification and creativity knowledge. Similarly, Cook et al. (2004) performed a longitudinal study of the internship students’ perception, finding that one of the significant benefits for students from engaging within the internship was their enhanced ability to work with others, as well the usefulness of the internship in helping students mature as individuals. These examples alone illuminate how significant the experience can be for students’ betterment.

Spence, Hess, McDonald and Sheehan (2009) study the impact of experiential learning curricula on students through the lens of vertical development. In this study, the authors used Cook-Greuter’s (2004) definition of vertical development, which is “how we change our interpretations of experience and how we transform our views of reality” (p. 276). While the concept of vertical development is theoretically distinct from personal development, vertical development has clear synergies with personal development through the overlapping use of the concept of *transformation*.

Spence et al. (2009) offered a framework for sport management educators to specifically focus on vertical development of students’ leadership abilities, through structuring and managing experiential learning curricula, and provided primary evidence that incorporating such methods is beneficial for student development. In the current study, rather than focus on vertical development specific to leadership, the focus is on students’ lateral development (revisit definition briefly again?) from the professional and personal realms of their lives. Given the length of an internship program, emphasizing students’ lateral development is significantly more feasible and likely than vertical development (Cook-Greuter, 2004).

Internships from the Perspective of the Student (Worker)

An area most researched has been on the benefit of internships from the student's perspective; indeed, this area is the main focus in this study. Taylor (1988) summarized the positive implications of internships best by stating that interns, relative to non-interns, including: (1) organizational recruiters better viewed interns as better qualified; (2) were more likely to stimulate employer hiring actions, (3) they were offered higher starting salaries, (4) they expressed greater satisfaction with the extrinsic rewards of their position, and (5) they experienced a higher degree of vocational crystallization (i.e., they developed a clear understanding of their desired career path). However, Taylor (1988) omitted the benefit of *learning*, which is a major underlying factor for unpaid internships, per the ESA (2013): "some benefit is received by the trainee from the training, such as new knowledge or skills." This implies that the student (or trainee) should develop new knowledge or skills from the experience. The two concepts of professional development and personal development present in this study incorporate a sense of learning. The former brings learning into context in the first phase of the definition, which emphasizes teaching and *learning* experiences, whereas personal development incorporates the *betterment* of oneself through learning. As a result, this section of the review is divided into three categories: (1) recruitment benefits; (2) career satisfaction and vocational crystallization; and (3) learning benefits.

Recruitment benefits. Students having completed an internship have been found to have an advantage when seeking full-time positions, whether positions are within the same organization or within an external organization. This finding is aligned with Stratta's (2004) findings, which indicate that "during the internship experience, students expect access to opportunities that facilitate future employment in the sport industry" (p. 27). Similarly, Odio and

Kerwin (2016) identified that students may view internships in sport as a career-building tool rather than a learning experience, reasoning that to engage in such an experience represents a tactic to move them forward in the corporate world. Hayes Sauder and Mudrick (2018) found that students were most satisfied when their perceived impact of internships on career development was highest. However, a gap in their study existed, as the scholars failed to account for personal development. Similarly, Coco (2000) found that students who have completed their internships are 28% more likely to receive job offers before graduation. Rather than being satisfied with their internships due to learning opportunities, students are more interested in proving their abilities to obtain employment rather than in gaining new knowledge (Odio & Kerwin, 2016). As a result, recruitment is in line with students' ability to develop professional relationships.

Stratta (2004) found that when the internship was not a direct path to full-time employment, students wanted to establish a professional network during the internship. Similarly, DeLuca and Braunstein-Minkove (2016) discussed how students felt as though "the internship helped them see more of the industry and facilitate network connections, which were valuable to their future" (p. 6). By connecting with industry professionals, students open themselves up to future job opportunities and networking opportunities alike. Maertz et al. (2013) discussed the role of former interns in an organization, and the fact that when they are hired full time into the organization that they once interned for, they "do not need the same degree of socialization, training, and adjustment period that most new college hires require" (p. 131). Finally, those who have completed an internship have been found to have a higher starting salary (Taylor, 1988; Coco, 2000). Gault et al. (2000) found that graduates who engaged in internships received job offers ten weeks sooner than those who did not, on average, and

typically received faster promotion rates. Given students' primary purpose of the internship being job placement and career advancement (Kelley, 2004), the concept of starting salary is relevant.

Career satisfaction and vocation crystallization. With the sport management industry being one that is often perceived as prestigious and esteemed, students often begin internships with high aspirations and goals. Cunningham, Sagas, Dixon, Kent and Turner (2005) outlined that interns, relative to those students yet to complete internships, have lower anticipated career satisfaction, lower occupational commitment, and fewer intentions to enter the sport management profession. While these results may be perceived as *negative* rather than positive, these are being categorized as the latter for crystallization purpose. Entering an internship, students have in their mind what they wish to do following the completion of their degree. However, upon completion of the internship, they are enlightened to thoughts that their time and efforts should be rather focused elsewhere. While this type of illumination may largely impact an individual's career intentions and aspirations, it is one that falls under the classification of personal development. This type of development, as previously defined herein, focuses on one's *betterment* – which is achieved through this crystallization.

Similarly, Odio et al. (2014) outlined the role that internships play in revealing students' desires for their career after their internships, as well as adjusting their expectations and priorities for their future work environment. This is in line with Odio and Kerwin's (2016) research, in which they discussed how an internship can influence a student's decision to continue pursuing a career in the industry, should the experience be a negative one. Hall, Stiles, Kuzma and Elliott (1995) identified that while both students and employers equally agree that prospective employees view an internship as a positive credential for the job search, their agreement ends

there. Students believe an internship should result in a permanent job offer, while employers do not agree. While their research is outdated, their findings remain important to explore the varying expectations between employers and students leading into and following the internship.

Learning benefits. Internships provide students with a way to supplement coursework and adjust the student to the world of work (Hall et al., 1995). They are a way to “learn and hone transferrable skills such as communicating with patrons or customers” (Odio et al., 2014, p. 54). However, findings by Odio and Kerwin (2016) found that learning opportunities did not have a significant relationship with internship satisfaction. This was contradicted by Cunningham et al. (2018) when they found that there was, in fact, a positive, statistically significant relationship between internship satisfaction and perceived learning. As discussed by previous research, the lack of relationship in the former study can likely be tied to the fact that students are seeking to advance their careers through their roles as interns, rather than specifically to learn. In order to maximize the possibility of learning benefits, it is essential for practitioners to understand that personal development is characteristically psychological (Lee, 1999). As a result, individualized and specified learning opportunities may be hard to come by in generic, normalized internships. Brown et al. (2018) suggest, in line with Kolb’s (1981) previously discussed experiential education model, to focus on phases three and four – integration and assessment. Within these phases, the study suggests that it is fundamental for all participants to collaborate meticulously with one another, as well as reflect on their respective experiences from a variety of perspectives. Whether learning opportunities and internship satisfaction hold a significant relationship, it is commonly agreed upon by researchers that internships are a learning tool and provide students with a unique skillset outside of the classroom.

Limitations of Internships

Thus far, while most of the literature reviewed has covered the noteworthy benefits of internships and experiential learning, it is important to identify some associated limitations, potential costs and pitfalls of internships and experiential learning. As previously discussed, an effective internship program must be one in which stakeholder groups are well invested, both in terms of finances and time (Cutting & Hall, 2008; Schepper & Sotriadou, 2018; Stirling et al., 2017; Taylor, 1998). As a result, involving devoted staff to manage students could be very costly to “smaller schools and programs, or for schools located in rural areas” (Kosnik, Tingle, & Blanton, 2013, p. 617). Similarly, Divine et al. (2007) discuss the need for a significant amount of administrative expertise, as well as a large network of employers. However, internship program supervisors are often underappreciated and not sufficiently remunerated for their efforts (English & Lewison, 1979). Kosnik et al. (2013) provided a well-developed and supported list of internship limitations: (a) an extensive time commitment, (b) logistics and location, (c) placement, (d) costs, (e) variability in the quality of the experience, (f) limited integration with business curriculum, (g) unstructured learning experience, (h) incomplete learning cycle, and (i) less conducive to teamwork.

An extensive time commitment not only ties to the need for a significant amount of administrative expertise, as well as a large network of employers, but also a pledge from the student themselves. Should the commitment be lacking from either party, there is the potential for diminished or non-existent development opportunities. The size of a college and location are factors that play a significant role in decisions to engage in internships. Similarly, Johnson (2018) discusses that students may be forced to turn down more advanced or elite internship opportunities as a result of the fact that they are either unpaid or do not provide housing

relocation or assistance. According to many policies, students are still required to pay tuition and fees associated with course enrollment when on internship placement. Many deans have found it challenging to stimulate faculty to work together across disciplines to agree on teaching strategies that meet the needs of the students and faculty (Starbird & Powers, 2013).

This study emphasizes the commitment needed from educational institutions to enhance personal and professional development possibilities. Schoemaker (2008) discussed the need to encourage teamwork by incentivizing leadership and creativity. However, the unfortunate reality is that student employees are often the last to be invited in on decision-making and important meetings. These limitations represent a barrier to the ability to achieve development in the process. In fact, Walker, Agyemang, Washington, Hindman and MacCharles (2020) suggested that given that sport management students perceive the completion of an internship as “crucial to their future career aspirations” (p.30), these experiences note the impact of supremacy and institutionalization on sport management and in becoming the unopposed norm.

Additionally, employers have continued to express trepidation about students’ level of “work readiness”, criticizing their skills, experiences and attitudes (Lowden et al., 2011). Similarly, Krohn (1986) argued that (1) students are not always serious about their internships, (2) businesses often view interns as a cheap source for menial tasks, (3) university administrators often see internships as a source of revenues without corresponding costs, and (4) faculty internship supervisors sacrifice time that could be spend on continuing growth, service, and scholarly production. Referring to issue (2), many scholars have explored the idea that internships provide employers with the potential to exploit students or recent graduates (O’Connor & Bodicoat, 2017; Gallagher, 2013; Perlin, 2012; Allen et al., 2013; Siebert & Wilson, 2013; Sutton Trust, 2014).

Employers often associate hiring interns with the ability to reduce costs and increase savings. Interns are described as well-suited to help with value-added emergent or back-burner projects that would not otherwise be completed, at far less the labour cost, as well as a reduction in recruitment and selection expenses (Maertz et al., 2013). In fact, many students self-select to not to pursue an internship, believing such roles to be exploitative, unpaid and worthless (O'Connor & Bodicoat, 2017). Cases have been reported where rather than gaining relevant experience specific to an organization, interns are sent on personal errands for managers (Burke & Carton, 2013), thus inhibiting both their potential professional and personal development.

However, steps may be taken to avoid these potential detrimental factors. For example, Gault et al. (2000) acknowledged that “proper integration and organization of program content and evaluation methods foster positive perceptions of the institution” (p. 52). Similarly, Scott, Ray and Warberg (1990) discussed that the negative effects can easily be prevented or counteracted with carefully designed programs that have clear academic objectives. Therefore, it can be said that despite the existence of potential limitations and downfalls to the integration of an internship curriculum, these can be minimized and avoided through proper structure and arrangement. Additionally, there is a need to explore personal and professional development in a *real* context, where these limitations are present for students.

Hayes Sauder and Mudrick (2018) effectively studied perceived learning in internships, finding a significant relationship between internship satisfaction and perceived learning in personal and career development. However, as outlined in the future directions and limitations section of their study, a gap in the literature remains in focusing on developing a deeper understanding of this development. In line with this gap, this study aims to evaluate the development that occurs throughout an internship program, whether it be personal or

professional, by leveraging both self-determination theory and experiential learning theory. It may be possible to determine a best set of practices for administering, structuring, and conducting internship programs. This study provides a foundation for those involved in such activities; that is: the student partaking in the internships, the employer administering the internship, and the educational institution overseeing the internship curriculum and program.

Anjum (2020) recently evaluated the topic being studied herein, however it is held within the developing country of Pakistan. Like this study, Anjum's (2020) purpose was to evaluate "the impact of internship programs on the professional as well as on personal development and skills of business students in Pakistan" (p. 2). Following a comparable study design, the researcher outlined the importance of internship programs within Pakistani curriculum. While this researcher's study is very similar to the one proposed herein, it represents a learning opportunity, leaves much to be desired, and is significantly unique to underdeveloped countries. Anjum (2020) outlined that "there is limited amount of research work on how internship programs assist in professional and personal growth and skills of business students especially in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan" (p. 2-3).

This is different within North America, as significant amounts of research exist on the topic of internships and experiential learning from which to draw. Anjum's (2020) study is said to follow a mixed-method approach, however the quantitative phase is the sole method used as an analysis and discussion tool. To develop more well-defined and pragmatic findings, both quantitative and qualitative data should be emphasized. Relative to the design in the current research, the qualitative data was emphasized while the quantitative data is used solely to outline probing questions. Additionally, given the distinct differences in samples between the proposed study and Anjum's (2020) study, the pragmatic implications are unique to the context.

Anjum (2020) stated his results “will help encourage the business students of Pakistan to focus more on gaining real world [experience]” (p. 7). Similarly, from a policy perspective, Anjum (2020) outlined that the study will “assist business schools to develop proper strategies and curriculum for the promotion of internship programs” (p.7) and “help companies offer effective internship programs” (p.7). Rather than offering pragmatic implications, Anjum (2020) offered surface level implications, and did not engage in an analysis of reflective observation and abstract conceptualization, and did not provide any practical inferences. By utilizing the qualitative portion of the study proposed herein and by adopting experiential learning theory, the pragmatic implications of the current study extends Anjum’s (2020) study in contributing to new theoretical knowledge and is actionable and tangible. Rather than providing broad recommendations, the emphasis on the qualitative portion of the study linked to experiential learning theory will enable pragmatic implications to be well-defined and structured.

Having presented the literature on the topic of internships and the link to personal and professional development, the methodology of the study is next covered. Specifically, the current study was designed using the insights and limitations from Anjum’s (2020) research. Within the next chapter, the researcher’s positionality concerning the subject matter is reviewed, as well as the sample, data collection and analysis methods. Finally, a review of how trustworthiness is addressed, as well as an evaluation of the ethical considerations is reviewed herein. To cultivate a better understanding of the development that occurs throughout an internship program, a mixed-methods explanatory pragmatic study was used and will be next discussed.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research design and methodological practices enacted to fulfill the current study's research purpose and generate insights to be applicable to students' personal and professional development within internships. The chapter outlines reflexivity, the use of an explanatory sequential case study design that follows a mixed methods approach, and the underlying data collection and analysis methods used in order to fulfill the study's purpose from a pragmatic paradigm.

Reflexivity

Berger (2015) defined the process of reflexivity as the “turning of the researcher lens back onto oneself to recognize and take responsibility for one's own situatedness within the research and the effect that it may have on the setting and people being studied, questions being asked, data being collected, and its interpretations” (p. 220). It is a process of “expanding one's consciousness to make what has been tacit explicit” (Dodgson, 2019, p. 221). These definitions indicate the importance of a researcher's personal stance toward the issues addressed by this research. Specifically, if not for my personal experiences and positionality or situatedness with respect to these personal experiences, I would likely not be as invested nor interested in the study at hand.

Positionality. The idea to study internships initially came to me when I was finishing my undergraduate Bachelor of Commerce degree. Having completed this BComm, my personal experiences were within a business education context. As a student in this degree program, I experienced three internship placements, outside of the realm of sport management. Additionally, as a student enrolled within a business school, I was heavily involved in

extracurricular activities, particularly as a member of the John Molson Sport Marketing Committee (JMSM). The JMSM is Committee student-run designed to bridge the gap between the sport business industry and students. Most notably, the JMSM Committee hosts the largest student-run sport business conference in Canada, with more than 400 students and 30 industry executives attending the conference over three days. After serving as President of the JMSM Committee in the final year of my degree, I came to the realization that individuals attending this conference and similar events have in common two themes, that they are searching for an entrance into the sport business industry and didn't know how to go about it. With this understanding of attendees, I knew I wanted to develop a better understanding of how to do so for future attendees.

At first, this study was intended to solely examine the role that internships play in enabling individuals to initially enter the sport management industry. However, after a review of literature and after many discussions with my supervisor, Dr. Shannon Kerwin, the need to study the concept of development through internships arose. Engaging in previous internships in the business world, specifically in organizational contexts that focused on marketing, finance, and accounting, I felt I incurred significant development, both personally and professionally. The potential and initial bias of having indeed felt as though I developed turned into a desire to understand how internships, in sport management specifically, tangibly impact students' development.

Explanatory Research Methodology

Given the aim of the study is to provide increased understanding of the perceptions of students regarding the development that occurs within an internship, an explanatory sequential approach was chosen. Creswell (2003) describes research with an explanatory sequential design

most appropriate when using “qualitative results to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of a primarily quantitative study” (p. 215). The design allows for the qualitative methods to be leveraged by the researcher to explain the quantitative findings. In this case, the phenomenon being explained is students’ perceptions of the potential relationship between internships and personal and professional development.

Pragmatism

In addition to articulating my personal standpoint, it is essential to discuss the philosophical paradigm that guides the current research study. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) highlight the significance of researchers subscribing to and applying a specific philosophical paradigm to illuminate decisions made in designing the study. This research study is guided by a pragmatic paradigm, described as the most “sensible and practical method available in order to answer a given research question with a range of benefits for the research” (Clarke & Visser, 2019, p. 457). Similarly, pragmatism has been labelled to improve some of the strains and boundaries inherent within the pure methodologies (Maggs-Rapport, 2000; Morse & Chung, 2003).

Under a pragmatic research realm, it is possible to combine several different approaches and methodologies (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003). In line with this statement, the current study adopts both quantitative and qualitative methods, in the form of surveys and interviews. Given that pragmatism has a strong focus on “practicality and adaptation, using what works and producing cautious answers” (Clarke & Visser, 2019, p. 458), this philosophical paradigm is best suited for the study herein and is best aligned with my positionality relative to the study. Creswell (2003) explained that research that follows a pragmatic paradigm focuses on ‘how’ and

‘what’ questions, placing the “research problem as central and [applying] all approaches to understanding the problem” (p. 11).

As such, this research study links the theories of self-determination and experiential learning to study undergraduate students’ internship curricula and work experiences. By using a pragmatic paradigm, this research harnesses knowledge useful for sport management educators and faculty. To develop this knowledge, research methods that allow to not only observe but understand the perceptions of internships were used.

Research Methods

Study Site. The case study site of the current research was Brock University, and the purposeful sample of participants were undergraduate students who have completed internships as part of their curriculum in the Bachelor of Sport Management (B.S.M.) program. Moreover, as a Graduate Student at the University, I possessed a personal connection to the study site, which provided an easier opportunity to negotiate access to those who had completed their internship. The program consists of field placements and internships in the third and fourth years of the curriculum, offering significant career-building experiences. The program is intended to prepare students for “career opportunities that include marketing, public relations, promotions, communications, human resources and financial, facility and event management in a variety of public, commercial and non-profit organizations” (Brock University, n.d). It is currently the largest program of its kind in Canada, with more than 1000 undergraduate students currently enrolled to date, of which over 400 are enrolled in their 3rd or 4th years (Brock University, “headcount enrolment report, academic year 2019”, n.d).

Further, this program is one that is representative of a typical context for studying an undergraduate sport management program. In fact, in a survey asking course leaders which

undergraduate sports management course, excluding their own, they believed was best in the world, Brock University's B.S.M. program was the fourth most common response (Evans, 2015). Brock University also identifies experiential education as a pillar in its strategic mandate and the department for which the program is housed includes an experiential education coordinator (E.E.C.) staff position who administers and manages internship placements. Therefore, Brock University's sport management program serves as a valid context for studying the phenomenon of development that occurs throughout an experience.

Context. Brock University's B.S.M. program offers two distinct internship courses, called: SPMA 4F01 (Sport Management Internship Project) and SPMA 4F02 (Sport Management Internship). The internship courses are open exclusively for sport management students who have completed a minimum of 13 credits and have achieved a minimum standing of 70% in their major SPMA average and are at the beginning (summer semester), middle (fall semester) or end (winter or following summer semester) of their 4th year of study. Students must initially apply to the Department of Sport Management for approval to complete an internship for academic credit prior to moving forward and formally applying to an organization to secure an internship. Once the student's application has been, they are eligible to access a dedicated website listing all internship positions available for that upcoming semester and are allowed to apply for those that interest them. Upon completing one of the two internship courses, which is typically one semester (4-month period), but can be over two semesters (8-month period), students receive 2 full credits.

The goal of SPMA 4F02 is to "provide SPMA internship students the opportunity to: 1) learn current practice-based methods from knowledgeable sport management practitioners within a field segment/organization of their choice; 2) apply classroom theoretical content in a practical

sport management based setting; 3) develop, measure, and evaluate their skill set and knowledge base, relative to the industry needs through a variety of means; and 4) NETWORK and gain a greater appreciation for the role and function of sport management professionals” (Brock University Internship Package, n.d., p. 6). Students enrolled in this internship course are evaluated as to whether they meet learning objectives based on mid-term and final supervisory appraisals, learning assignments, and monthly progress of total hours submitted at month-end of each of the 4-month or 8-month period. Students are required to work a minimum of 450 hours for successful completion of the course.

Meanwhile, SPMA 4F01 learning objectives are to “provide SPMA students the opportunity to: 1) apply the knowledge gained over the past 3-4 years enrolled in SPMA, to the organization in which you are working during your internship; 2) experience what it is like as an employee of the organization for which you are working, to confront a management-related organizational issue you will investigate, examine, and explain through a theoretical basis of core sport management concepts you have learned in your SPMA courses, in a major paper that should be useful to your internship employer; 3) express your ability to comprehensively plan the theoretically-based academic paper by creating a three-page proposal; and 4) provide a personal reflection of your experience with the organization you spent your work term, a personal reflection expressed in a five-page report of the impact the experience had on you personally and your success in networking” (Brock University Internship Package, n.d., p.17). Students enrolled in this internship course are evaluated from a basis of four different assignments, including: a proposal paper (20%), a reflection paper (15%), a final major paper (60%), and a business card exchange (5%).

While both internship courses highlight different learning objectives and evaluation activities and ensuing criteria, it is evident through the course syllabi that one of the aims of the internship programs is student personal and professional development. For example, a common theme seen within the evaluation methods is the need for students to reflect on both their expectations and experiences (e.g., “please provide a summary outlining how you feel that your current internship experience will contribute to your professional development” (Brock University Internship Package, n.d., p. 9)). This facet of the internship links directly to Kolb’s (1984) reflective observation cycle, where the student reviews and reflects upon the experience. Similarly, students are required to submit a reflection paper upon completion of their internship, where they are asked to answer questions such as “what did you learn about yourself” from the experience (Brock University Internship Package, n.d., p. 24). This reflective activity ties to the abstract conceptualization cycle of Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory, where individuals conclude what they’ve learned from an experience. The explicit discussion of professional development highlights the program’s understanding of professional development as a desired outcome of the internship experience.

Gaining entry. As mentioned, the Experiential Education Coordinator (E.E.C.) is the staff member responsible for coordinating the Brock University’s B.S.M. program. Green and Thorogood (2018) define this role as a gatekeeping one to the internship, as they are the individuals that “control the researcher’s access to the fieldwork site or to other participants” (p. 91). For the context of this research, the E.E.C serves a gatekeeping role to the study. By establishing a working relationship with the E.E.C., I had direct access to students who chose to enroll in an internship curriculum and enhance the opportunity for an adequate sample size. To

approach students, I attended the virtual orientation meeting and provided potential participants with a description of the study, explaining the goals and requesting their consent to participate.

As a result of COVID-19 and the impact on the sport management industry, it was decided that the Fall 2020 internship cohort was insufficient to carry out empirical research. As a result, an additional sample from the Winter 2021 cohort was approached, recruited and included in the research sample. Here, it was of added importance to note whether internship experiences may have been impacted by COVID-19. As a result, a question in the interview guide probed the design of their internship, per Appendix A.

In addition to using the orientation session as a tool to gain access, posts in Sakai (the student portal) were published by the E.E.C. on 4 separate occasions per semester, with the script highlighted in Appendix E for the pre-internship survey. For the post-internship survey, posts in the student portal were published by the E.E.C. on 4 separate occasions with the script highlighted in Appendix F, as well as a personalized e-mail for those who did not respond to the portal prompts, with the script highlighted in Appendix G.

Participant Selection and Sampling Procedures

The sample of participants are sport management students at Brock University who opt to enrol in the internship courses and complete an internship placement. Approximately 110 students partake in this internship every year among three school terms or semesters: the Fall term (September to December), the Winter term (January to April), and the Spring/Summer term (May to August). In recruiting participants, the objective was to have as many of these registered students who participated as an internship student in the Fall 2020 semester to complete the study's pre- and post-internship surveys, as well as participate in an individual interview following completion of their internship positions. As such, the entire population of students in

the Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 internship cohorts were invited to participate in both quantitative and qualitative sections of the study and the final number of those who responded to the invitation were included in the study and comprised the sample.

This sample is important, as the sport management program at Brock University is the context within which the phenomenon is occurring. As a result, including students who have undergone internships within another University's sport management program to gain more participants does not serve the purpose of this research. In line with the pragmatic approach, this sample not only represented the context within which internships are experienced but also helped provide meaningful findings in the realm of experiential education within Brock University and beyond. The aim of sampling as many interns of the internship cohort as possible was to attract a diverse number of individuals, with respect to both sex (i.e., male and female students), as well as other diversity factors (i.e., age, race, culture). The purpose, as previously outlined, was to determine students' perceived development that occurred because of participating within an internship experience.

For the current study, the aim was to develop a sample that adequately represents the Brock sport management student body, as aligned with Green and Thorogood's (2018) noting of the importance of studying a sample size that is representative of the population. To incentivize participation, participants were offered an opportunity to win one of two \$100 gift cards to a consumer location, pre-approved by Brock's Research Ethics Board. With assistance of the incentivized participation, a sample that was representative of the population was achieved. The gift cards were sent out to two randomly chosen participants via email.

Data Collection Procedures

To serve the mixed-methods design, the two main methods of data collection that were used in this study were the administration and completion of quantitative surveys and the conducting of qualitative interviews. This study followed a sequential data collection strategy to properly evaluate the development that occurred between the pre-internship and post-internship period. The study design follows a dominant-status, sequential approach from an initial round of quantitative data collection, followed by a round of qualitative data collection, where the emphasis is being placed on the latter methodology (i.e., qualitative interviews in the current study). As the goal of this mixed methods study is to “understand phenomena, not to quantify them” (Green & Thorogood, 2018, p. 348), the intention was to explain students’ perception of their internship, in this case. A mixed methods data collection approach was used, which combined both quantitative and qualitative research in a single study (Creswell, 2003).

Yin (1994; 2014) discussed how mixed methods studies includes both qualitative and quantitative data collection, which helps researchers answer wider research questions. Similarly, Yin (2014) discussed two appropriate reasons for undertaking a single case study, where first is the common case nature of the study; and where second, is the longitudinal nature. Given this research involved collecting pre- and post-internship data, comparisons can be made across these two time periods, allowing the researcher to locate any statistical differences between these two periods. The decision to use mixed methods, besides suiting the purpose of the study itself, answered Rudd and Johnson’s (2010) call for more mixed methods research in sport management, given its use could help provide a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied as well as help advance the field of sport management (Rudd & Johnson, 2010).

Quantitative survey. Participants were first sent a Likert scale survey virtually by email, measuring their internship perceptions. The completed surveys were collected one to two weeks

prior to participants starting their internship placement. This timeframe served the purpose of looking at the potential importance of participants' expectations entering the internship. Additionally, a post-internship survey was sent virtually at the completion of the participants' placement, where the survey items were designed to help determine how the experience impacted participants' development and their perceptions of internships. Participants completed the same survey pre-internship and post-internship to accurately determine development; however, the wording was slightly adjusted to ensure a pre-post distinction. Please see Appendix B and C for samples of the survey items. To adhere to the mixed methods design, the surveys were administrated and completed before participant interviews were held, during which each participant was asked specific and unique questions that probed them to respond about their survey responses.

Reliability measures of the questionnaire were taken using Cronbach's coefficient alpha and were checked against Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) criteria of reliability a Cronbach's alpha being above 0.70. In this case, the results represent an alpha range from 0.71 to 0.82, indicating all survey questions fell within the acceptable range, making the questionnaire considered reliable for use in the current study.

The professional development and personal development survey items were established based on Anjum's (2020) study on personal and professional development in Pakistan. Sample personal development survey items included 'I expect to mature personally' within the personal growth category and 'I expect my social relationships to improve' in the personal capabilities category. Sample professional development survey items include 'I expect my internship to help clarify my career goals' in the professional growth category and 'I expect to improve my

teamwork skills' in the professional capabilities category. Survey items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale.

Qualitative interview guide. A key component of the data collection was through semi-structured interviews. Roulston (2010) found that open-ended questions “provide broad parameters within which interviewees can formulate answers in their own words concerning topics specified by the interviewer” (p. 5). By using this approach, follow-up or probing questions were generated to provide further detail to help explain the role of internships on professional and personal development (Roulston, 2010). As per the discussion of the theories used in this study, surveys were developed based on the knowledge of self-determination theory and experiential learning theory. This was then followed up with probing questions based on responses through interview questions, which leads to providing tangible recommendations for practitioners.

The interviews followed a semi-structured guide format to allow “interviewee’s responses [to] determine the kinds of information produced about topics, and the relative importance of them” (Green & Thorogood, p. 115). The explanatory aspect of these interview reflects the idea that qualitative data collected second, via interviews, were used to provide interpretation or explanation for the quantitative data that was initially collected (Creswell, 2003). The questions in the guide were based on the responses to the survey, as well as applied theory.

Both the survey and the semi-structured interview guide were developed based on self-determination theory and experiential learning theory. The survey questions and interview guide are outlined in Appendices A and B, which present the way that the theories were developed into questions. The surveys being used allowed me to effectively identify and measure the perceived

personal and professional development that has occurred. Once the perceived level of development was established through the pre- and post-internship surveys, probing questions were developed to allow participants the opportunity to explain their survey results within the interview.

Data Analysis Strategy

This research was designed as a single-case study, as the study is bound around a single educational institution. The quantitative data were analyzed first to derive descriptive statistics, due to the sequential nature of this pragmatic research. Descriptive statistical findings (i.e., standard deviations and means) primarily served to develop a foundation for determining each participant's perceived development that occurred throughout their internship, as well as to emphasize aspects that could be explored further during qualitative interviews through the development of specific, probing questions.

The qualitative data were then analyzed using thematic analysis, defined as identifying and analyzing patterns or themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themed headings based on literature, research questions and anticipated common responses were developed. Green and Thorogood (2018) state that thematic analysis is a useful and accessible means of analysis, particularly for new or early-stage researchers. Lastly, thematic analysis is noted as being useful for situations where low levels of interpretation are needed. For example, a themed heading that was used related to personal development was 'maturing personally,' while a themed heading that was used related to professional development was 'connections/networking,'

The process of triangulation occurred through the connection of the pre- and post-internship surveys and the interview questions. To begin, the pre- and post-internship survey results were inputted into an Excel Sheet, where the scores were available for cross-reference

with interview data for data analysis. Once all surveys were completed, several data points were collected, including: (1) mean, median, mode and standard deviation by question; (2) mean, median, mode and standard deviation by individual; and (3) mean and standard deviation by category, personal and professional development, and by period, pre- and post-internship. Notably high or low results were pulled from these data points to develop probing questions for interviews. For example, within the pre-internship (expectations) survey, participants had high expectations for the practical work experience they would gain from the internship ($M = 6.45$, $SD = .71$) and within the post-internship survey, participants indicated an aligned outcome with their responses ($M = 6.27$, $SD = .82$). As such, a probing question related to this aligned result was asked of all participants.

The thematic data analysis process for the qualitative data consisted of basic coding of the interviews. This involved using the codes to find the parents or themes in the data, then grouping, reviewing and refining those codes (Brain & Clarke, 2006; Yin, 2014). The majority of the coding process was done in Microsoft Excel, with the final themes and groupings done and stored in Microsoft Word. This proved to be useful for evaluating experiences and themes, and the frequency of these themes within participants' internships. This approach allowed for proper ordering and filtering of information, thus while it was not an expectation, a pattern of themes was developed (Yin, 2014).

Integrated interpretation. After both quantitative and qualitative data sets were separately analyzed, integration was performed to enable comparison. The purpose of this stage was to allow the quantitative data to be explained through the qualitative data that arose through the discussion of participants' internship experiences. The goal was to highlight and outline if, and how, the internship experiences that occurred impacted participants' perceived personal and

professional development. As highlighted by Neuman and Robson (2012), the data from both the quantitative and qualitative methods of collection supported in the interpretation of the other, and the study followed a dominant-status approach. This proved to be the case as the quantitative data served as process for the interview that followed.

The integration of this data, tying back to the study's research questions, helped explain the perceived personal and professional development that occurred throughout participants' internship experiences. While this sequential mixed-methods approach was designed with the purpose of the qualitative data explaining the quantitative data, there were instances where the qualitative and quantitative data slightly contradicted each other. In these occurrences, the substantive and functional qualitative data were used to understand participants' experiences further.

Trustworthiness and credibility. Throughout this research, strategies were implemented to ensure that the case description was an authentic and trustworthy representation of the institution. While positivist traditions value research based on validity and reliability, qualitative research seeks to certify that research is of eminence and can be trusted (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Patton (1999) describes triangulation as a technique used to enhance the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. Patton's (1999) methods triangulation was used, where "quantitative and qualitative methods are used in a complementary fashion to answer different questions that do not easily come together to provide a single, well-integrated picture of the situation" (Patton, 1999, p. 1193). As outlined, the qualitative data collected within this study were used to complement the quantitative data. While triangulation was used to enhance the quality and validity of the data itself, it is essential to ensure researcher credibility.

Patton (1999) outlined that “because the researcher is the instrument in qualitative inquiry, a qualitative report must include information about the researcher” (p. 1198). In response to this call to action, the reflexivity and positionality sections have been carefully crafted to account for any pre-existing biases or predispositions that may exist. To be open and honest about how this research was planned and conducted, clear explanations of the various data collection and analyses tools that were used have been made. By actively partaking in reflexivity, I have demonstrated that I approached this research honestly and have provided potential readers with every opportunity to understand the research theories that piloted how I conducted this study.

Ethical Considerations in the Research

The first step toward developing an ethical study was to develop and submit an application and then receive clearance from the Research Ethics Board. However, once this is granted, there were still several ethical considerations to exact. For example, to protect all participants, pseudonyms were used in place of participants’ real names to enhance confidentiality. Additionally, it was important to ensure that internship host organizations are not named.

As per the possible risks identified in the University Research Ethics Board (REB) application form (Appendix D), there were two potential risk factors. A first factor involved social risk where participants risk the possible loss of status, privacy, and/or reputation as a result in having engaged in the study. For example, if a participant has a negative internship experience, and discusses this experience within the study, there exists a possibility for negative repercussions against the participant. Given Kornspan and Duve’s (2013) finding that the sport industry is one where employers place heavy emphasis on networking and references,

participants could fear losing potential connections by making unfavorable comments about the organization in some manner without confidentiality. As such, three tangible steps were taken: (1) participants' names and placement locations were replaced by pseudonyms to avoid a connection between the participant and their quotations; (2) participants were able to skip questions or decline to respond to any question in the interview guide with which they were not comfortable; and (3) participants were able to review their quotations in the thesis and the report to member check the accuracy and their comfort with statements in the final draft of the project.

Similarly, the fact the internship program is tied to the educational institution presented potential for participants to feel obliged to participate. This particular risk was mitigated by having me – as a student within the program – serve as the face of the project. Rather than participants feeling like they would be letting down a superior (i.e., a Professor or someone with significant power within the institution) through their non-participation, they could feel less repercussions for non-participating because I was the one leading the project.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Within this chapter, the findings from the pre- and post-internship data collected are reported. The findings chapter provides the researchers with an “opportunity to tell the story that they found” (p. 510) throughout their study. In doing so, I present the notable findings related to both personal and professional development from three sources: (1) the pre-internship surveys; (2) the post-internship surveys; and (3) the post-internship interviews. First, I present the quantitative survey data. Next, I break down the discoveries from the interviews, rooted in the work of Kolb’s (1981) experiential learning theory and Link’s (2019) self-determination theory. Together, these quantitative and qualitative data points detail the development that participants experienced and assist me in answering my research question and fulfilling the study’s objectives.

The importance and prominence of the mixed methods design used in this study is present throughout the discourse of these findings, fulfilling my ability to both understand the phenomena being examined and quantifying said phenomena. To adhere to the mixed methods design, the surveys were completed before participant interviews were held, so that participants could be further probed with specific questions derived from survey responses during their actual interview.

While 26 ($n = 26$) participants completed the pre-internship survey, 11 ($n = 11$) completed the post-internship survey. Therefore, 11 surveys were available for the pre-post survey analysis were analyzed first. Moreover, of the 11 participants who completed pre-post surveys, 9 ($n = 9$) of the 11 participants provided consent to engage in a follow-up interview. Among those who participated in an interview, 5 ($n = 5$) were students engaged in internships in

the Fall 2020 (September – December) semester, while 4 ($n = 4$) were students engaged in internships in the Winter 2021 (January – April) semester. Of these 9 participants who engaged in internships, 3 were females and 6 were males. The sample breakdown is in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Sample Breakdown: completed both surveys (= no interview completed); omitted participant numbers = no post-survey data collected.*

P#	Pseudonym	Sex	Perceived Race	Year of Study	Cohort	Industry Sector of Internship
A3	Justin	Male	White	4 th	Fall	Commercial
A5	Sara	Female	Middle Eastern	5 th	Fall	Non-profit
A6	Josh	Male	White	4 th	Fall	Non-profit
A7	Hannah	Female	White	4 th	Fall	Public
A8	Chris	Male	South Asian	4 th	Fall	Commercial
A10*	Dan	Male	White	5 th	Fall	Commercial
B13	Michel	Male	Middle Eastern	4 th	Winter	Commercial
B15*	James	Male	Latino	4 th	Winter	Commercial
B18	Peter	Male	White	4 th	Winter	Commercial
B24	Alexa	Female	White	4 th	Winter	Commercial
B25	Nathaniel	Male	White	4 th	Winter	Non-profit

Quantitative Data: Surveys

The following section outlines the results from the pre-post surveys that were collected from 11 participants. From survey scores, pre-post descriptive statistics were generated in the form of mean, median, mode, variance and standard deviation and were analyzed to identify differences in pre-post scores. These descriptive statistics helped identify where the internship exceeded or fell short of expectations.

As shown in Table 2, the pre-post mean scores and standard deviations for each factor and item emphasize where change occurred. Holistically, the quantitative data were valuable in being used to determine participants' key expectations and outcomes. The survey data were vital to help identify and isolate significant talking points to be included in the interview data collection of the study. For example, as seen in the interview guide (Appendix A), results that

indicated changes from the pre-post survey, on an individual level, were inputted directly into the interview, where participants were asked to elaborate upon or explain differences in ratings.

Table 2: Factor Descriptive Statistics from Pre-to Post-Internship

Factor	T2	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation	T2	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
Personal Development		4.91	5.08	5.42	1.46		4.67	4.92	4.92	1.52
<i>Personal Growth</i>										
Mature personally		5.27	5.00	5.00	0.79		5.64	6.00	6.00	1.03
Change my interests in the industry		3.64	4.00	4.00	1.75		5.00	5.00	5.00	1.10
Change my personal goals		4.00	4.00	5.00	1.61		4.73	5.00	5.00	1.19
Develop better habits regarding my tasks		5.73	6.00	7.00	1.42		4.82	6.00	6.00	1.94
Build upon my classroom knowledge		6.09	6.00	7.00	1.04		4.64	5.00	3.00	1.43
<i>Personal Capabilities</i>										
Improve my money management skills		3.09	3.00	3.00	1.58		3.18	3.00	2.00	1.83
Improve my conscientiousness and ethics		4.36	4.00	4.00	1.69		3.82	4.00	4.00	1.47
Improve my learning skills		5.36	6.00	6.00	1.36		4.73	5.00	6.00	1.68
Improve my view of people around me		4.91	5.00	5.00	1.64		4.36	4.00	6.00	1.96
Improve my social relationships		4.64	5.00	5.00	1.69		4.64	5.00	5.00	1.36
Improve my initiative taking skills		5.55	6.00	7.00	1.81		5.64	6.00	6.00	1.43
Improve my time management skills		6.27	7.00	7.00	1.19		4.91	5.00	5.00	1.76
Professional Development		5.65	5.90	6.30	1.40		5.31	5.60	5.90	1.36
<i>Professional Growth</i>										
Clarify my career goals		6.18	6.00	7.00	0.98		5.00	5.00	5.00	1.41
Advance my career		5.18	5.00	5.00	1.78		4.91	5.00	5.00	1.58
Gain practical work experience		6.45	7.00	7.00	0.69		6.27	6.00	7.00	0.79
Identify the skills needed to get a job in my field of interest		6.00	6.00	7.00	1.00		5.64	6.00	6.00	1.21
Forced me to face some problems seeking and accepting work assignments		4.64	5.00	5.00	2.01		4.82	5.00	4.00	1.72
<i>Professional Capabilities</i>										
Improve my communication and interpersonal skills		5.27	6.00	6.00	1.85		5.55	6.00	7.00	1.44
Improve my decision making and problem-solving skills		5.82	6.00	7.00	1.25		5.36	6.00	7.00	1.57
Improve my teamwork skills		5.27	6.00	6.00	1.90		4.82	6.00	6.00	1.94
Improve my critical thinking skills		5.55	6.00	7.00	1.57		5.27	5.00	6.00	1.01
Improve my technical skills relating to the industry I am working in		6.09	6.00	6.00	0.94		5.45	6.00	6.00	0.93

Table 2 highlights the pre-post mean, media and mode scores and standard deviations for each item under each factor. The T1 items represented factors that highlight participants' expectations, while the T2 items represented factors that highlight participants' experiences, as they were measured following the completion of the internship. These results outline the differences between expectations and intentions prior to engaging in the internship and the actual experience undertaken in the internship by the participant. For consistency purposes, it is important to note that all mean and median scores are relatively similar; albeit one outlier seemingly influencing the mean downward for "improve my teamwork skills" in T2 (mean 4.82 and median 6.00).

The largest decrease from pre-internship to post-internship was the factor relating to building upon classroom knowledge, where the mean response decreased from 6.09 to 4.64 (a net change of -1.45). The largest increase from pre-internship to post-internship was the factor relating to changing the participant's interests in the industry, where the mean response increased from 3.64 to 5.00 (a net change of +1.36).

Under the professional growth factor, all items decreased from the pre-internship survey to the post-internship survey other than the final item, which was related to being forced to face problems. This is an indicator that the internship experience was less than participants' expectations in terms of helping advance their respective careers through clarification of skills and goals. Moreover, heading into the internship, the professional development category was the highest rated in the pre-internship survey ($M = 5.65$, $SD = 1.40$), thus representing the area they expected to see the most significant impact on their development.

Another prominent trend was found is the fact that there are more items in the personal development category that increase pre to post than professional development items (11 items vs.

2 items). This reveals that participants' perception of personal development throughout their internship was greater than they expected, while further solidifying that the development that occurred related to the professional factor was not greater than expected. However, while the change that occurred from pre- to post-internship was seen more for personal development items, the mean scores for professional development items remained empirically higher than personal development items.

Overall, participants rated the professional development items related to the internship relatively higher in both the pre-internship survey ($M = 5.65$, $SD = 1.40$) and the post-internship survey ($M = 5.31$, $SD = 1.36$) than with the personal development items in the pre-internship survey ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.46$) and the post-internship survey ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.52$). The density of the internship practicum, being one that is a rich and immersive experience, undergirded by a transition from the classroom to the workplace, made the mixed methods design fundamental to developing an understanding of what experiences were significant to the participants, notably towards their perceptions of their respective personal and professional development. The following section outlines the qualitative findings.

Qualitative Data: Interviews

Of the 9 interview participants, 3 were females and 6 were males. During these interviews, key themes found were broken down into four categories: (1) personal development; (2) professional development; (3) overlap of personal and professional development; and (4) internship context, which are discussed next.

Personal development. In relation to the notable increases in ratings related to items regarding personal development, 8 of 9 participants discussed the personal development that they experienced throughout their respective internships. These experiences that contributed to their

personal development are grouped in the following section in two categories: (1) personal maturing and growth; and (2) the opportunity for reflection and change of mindset.

Personal maturation and growth. Of the 9 participants, 6 mentioned the role that the internship played in helping them mature and grow personally. Four of these participants explicitly revealed that through the internship experience, they experienced an enlightenment process, which had a direct impact on their personal goals. Hannah stated that the internship provided them with a “new perspective that definitely changed [their] view on the sports industry, where [they’re] going and what [they] want to do.” This new perspective was reflective in their post-internship survey as well, given Hannah rated factors relating to maturing personally and changing their interests in the industry with a score of 7 (the highest possible despite them not expecting these factors to be as impactful per the pre-internship survey, having rated these factors with a score of 5. This participant suggested that experiencing this new perspective illuminated to them all the work that goes into each aspect of sport. Alexa discussed the fact that the internship helped determine what they want to achieve personally, stating: “I wanted to do something that helps people more and makes more of an impact. I definitely developed personally in the way that I know now that I want to help people more than anything.” Alexa effectively reflected on their internship role within a commercial sport organization, where they assisted with sales and team apparel. Through this deliberation, what became clear to Alexa was that this was *not* the type of organization they wanted to be involved within. This finding triangulated with Alexa’s rating increase from a score of 5 (somewhat expect this to happen) on the pre-internship survey to a score of 6 (agree) on their post-internship survey for the factor relating to maturing personally.

3 participants discussed the importance of the internship in their personal growth and maturity. Alexa was very vocal about the impact that the internship had on their personal maturity, stating that the experience “gave [them] the confidence to realize that [they] can do it, and that it helped [them] personally grow and mature.” The nature of the work, given that this was the participants’ first work in a professional, corporate setting drove them to experience some nervousness at the start of the internship, but as time went on, the work enabled their development. Given this organization acquired a company during the participants’ internship timeframe, Alexa was provided with noteworthy tangible work experience, which allowed them to gain visibility and experience in various functional areas of the workplace.

Josh spoke about the impact that the internship had in allowing them to think for themselves, as the opportunity to work on many personal projects throughout the internship, stating that “it gave me the opportunity to pursue [my] own goals and helped me realize that I can personally contribute to the team.” Josh made this statement when discussing the weekly and monthly reports they contributed towards and being exposed to structured dashboards. In conjunction, the participant outlined that being involved in an environment where all employees, including interns, were pushed to develop new ways of thinking, and structuring the company’s story and accomplishments through metrics and dashboards greatly enhanced the experience. Josh’s rankings on their pre- and post-internship surveys triangulated with their point, evident through the increase in their rating related to maturing personally, going from a score of 5 (somewhat expect this to happen) to a score of 6 (agree).

Similarly, Justin explicitly mentioned the feeling that “I’ve matured personally, and it’s been a great step forward for me,” when they reflected on the progression that occurred because of the internship. At the beginning of the internship, they felt like they were “holding back,”

whereas towards the end of the internship, there was a sense of trust and understanding with their manager.

These discussions of personal maturation and growth exemplified the importance of fostering an environment that promotes not only the organization's development, but the internship student's personal development as well. Over the time, as the participants felt more comfortable and welcome in their role and environment, they could build trust which enabled them to make more of an impact, which thus impacted their development.

The opportunity for reflection and change of mindset. 4 participants discussed the role the internship played as an opportunity for them to engage in personal reflection and realization. For example, Justin stated that "looking back at it now, you don't realize the experience you're getting necessarily [...] but I'm better off after the internship as it's made me look into the next five years. Going into this, I didn't have much of a plan after school." Josh's thoughts are a direct example of the internship serving as a guide to personal direction and aiding this participant in defining their interests and aspirations outside of the classroom.

Sara discussed the role of reflection, bringing the required coursework into play, mentioning the end-of-term discussion paper, stating that "the reflection paper at the end was something that was nice to have because it gave me the chance to write everything down and look back at it. That helped me realize everything that I gained knowledge in." In this case, the mandated written reflection assignment forced this participant to engage in a reflective process, which helped them see the development they experienced throughout the semester. Sara's pre- to post-internship survey results regarding whether the internship changed their interests in the industry, vastly increasing from a score of 1 (don't expect this to happen) to a score of 7 (strongly agree). This indicates that in entering the internship, Sara was not expecting that it

would be a tool to help clarify personal industry interests, but this occurred through explicit deliberation.

Similarly, Josh stated that the internship “not only allowed [them] to learn a lot of different professional areas and skills, but also to realize the areas that [they] didn’t personally have yet that [they] need to further develop.” Throughout the interview, this participant continuously emphasized the role that the internship played in developing their personal abilities and reflection. This emphasis was found in the survey responses as well, where Josh’s rating to the internship helping them develop better habits regarding their tasks increased from a 5 (somewhat expect this to happen) to a score of 6 (agree) from pre- to post-internship.

For several participants, the internship served as a tool to adjust their mindset as they transitioned from the classroom to the workplace. Josh explicitly mentioned that their “mindset is different now about working and everything it was previously.” Josh’s response, in the context of his transition from school to a career, validated that the internship experience being placed towards the end of the degree program represents a most efficient bridging tool.

Participants’ professional experiences also provided them with personal skills that they believed they would be able to leverage once they return to the office. For example, Sara stated that “I’m able to use that work ethic moving forward. When I do eventually go back to the office, that’s something that will stay with me.” This participant’s high expectations for improving their time management skills in the pre-internship survey, rated as a 7 (fully expect this to happen), were fulfilled, as they rated this item as a 7 (strongly agree) in the post-internship survey as well. These participants viewed the internship as a tool to think beyond the classroom and change the way they look at themselves and at future experiences. The internship curriculum enabled this shift in mindset by incorporating personal reflection reports into the mandated evaluation

criteria. Participants noted that the opportunity to think beyond the classroom was largely inductive and not embedded in the internship process itself.

Professional development. Participants communicated the professional development that they experienced throughout the internship through their interviews, with all nine participants discussing this concept. The key themes found on the topic of professional development are organized into three categories, including: (1) bridging classroom knowledge with hands-on experience; (2) industry clarification and enlightenment; and (3) networking and connections.

Bridging classroom knowledge with hands-on experience. The value that the internship had in building upon participants' classroom knowledge and allowing them to gain skills through tangible experience was evident throughout interviews, with all nine participants mentioning this facet of professional development. For 6 of the 9 participants, this internship served as their first work experience within the sport industry, which also represented their first glimpse into the professional workplace. Meanwhile, Sara stated that the internship "helped me gain practical work experience. Now I'm in the process of applying for jobs, and so many of the job postings want the applicants have some experience with specific software that I was exposed to because of my internship." Sara discussed that throughout their degree, they were reminded of the importance of both theoretical and practical work experience to bring to the workplace. They highlighted that "throughout university, all you do is gain as much theoretical experience," whereas the internship allowed them to both apply the theoretical understanding and build tangible knowledge. Sara's statement was quantitatively supported by the fact that she outlined an increase from 6 (expect this to happen) to 7 (strongly agree) in her pre- to post-internship survey results related to the item of the internship helping gain practical work experience.

The internship allowed participants to apply classroom knowledge and develop tangible skills. Justin mentioned that “getting real hands-on experience definitely helped me with my task management and scheduling skills.” This response aligned with the survey results, where their pre- and post-internship survey outlined a rating of 7 related to the practical work experience factor. Similarly, Michel was “able to demonstrate some strong organizational skills and especially time management skills, just trying to meet the deadlines in this virtual environment.” Building upon those tangible skills near the end of their studies was imperative to this participant, as it allowed them to “bridge the gap of what’s expected of [me]. Once [I] enter the industry, I now have the firsthand experience of what the industry is like and how fast-paced it is.” Like Justin, Michel also highly rated the professional capabilities category in the post-internship survey, with an average score of 6.20, providing quantitative evidence that this outcome was achieved.

While the importance of these soft skills, including problem-solving capabilities, such as critical thinking and process skills, is continuously discussed throughout the undergrad experience by both potential employers and professors, the ability to develop these skills is often forgotten throughout the curriculum. Overall, Josh provided an excellent summary of the role that the internship played as an opportunity to apply his knowledge, citing that “it was basically an experience that brought together all my learnings and helped me understand how everything applied to actual work in the industry.” The learnings discussed by the participant involved both academic and curriculum learnings from the previous courses taken, in addition to the lessons taken from the internship experience.

Throughout university, the majority of what is taught highlights theory and the application of theory related to course concepts. Three participants outlined that they felt that the

internship was so significant to them considering this, as it provided participants with a chance to broaden their scope beyond the theory-based classroom approach. Justin highlighted that they felt “you can’t learn workplace etiquette in a classroom – to actually get real work experience, you’ve got to actually go out and do it.” Similarly, Sara highlighted that “throughout university, all you do is mostly gain theoretical experience and as much as that's great, I feel like I learned a lot more in the four months of my internship, through my practical experience than I did in my degree for like for my actual industry.” Finally, Chris discussed that “it’s a different environment than when you’re working with your peers and colleagues in an undergraduate program.” The value of an internship program is apparent through this commentary, as there are facets of the workplace context that are distinctively different from facets of the in-class context.

Networking and connections. This third main theme on the topic of professional development was discussed by four of nine interview participants. The difference in the nature of the classroom versus the workplace as a setting for developing relationships was emphasized throughout. Justin stated that “if I sat in a classroom even last semester, I wouldn’t get the experience of working and making connections with people while making relationships that could go somewhere in the future and lead to something further.” Similarly, Peter revealed that “being able to sit in meetings and just listen to what they’re talking about was a great experience.” The exposure to this new environment not only allowed them to network with peers, but also learn from those who are more senior and experienced was vocalized.

Chris mentioned that they think “the opportunity to not only network but work with people who have been in the industry for 20-30-40 odd years [...] was just another opportunity to understand what the daily life is going to be like.” Similarly, Peter was able to “see the strengths that some of these people have and some of the things that maybe I’m not so great at. Working in

that aspect has helped me break down some of those barriers.” From the findings, it can be inferred that the power of networking and developing connections and relationships throughout an internship experience goes beyond merely connecting with colleagues on LinkedIn, but continuously learning from them during the time of their internship experience.

Overlap of personal and professional development. While the discussions of personal and professional development were the focus of the interviews, a probing question during the interview was asked regarding the participants’ view of the potential interconnection of personal and professional development. 7 of the 9 interview participants felt that the two aspects had synergies and discussed the overlap. Holistically, Sara provided an overarching view of the relationship between the two, outlining that “this internship helped me grow professionally, which directly correlated to me feeling more confident about myself. Now, it’s like, I’m not going into applying for jobs without ever having worked in an industry like this before or never having done tasks like this before.” Contrarily, Hannah revealed that “growing personally made me show up professionally. I think just being on top of my own stuff outside of work and not being distracted by it was definitely something that helped me be there for the team and grow professionally over the course of my internship.” These examples from the majority of participants demonstrate that the relationship between personal and professional development is an intertwined, cohesive developmental process that should not be overlooked.

The overlap between both concepts was also reflected within participants’ discussions of the internship serving as an opportunity to bridge personal and professional interests. For example, Josh revealed that “one thing that was definitely interesting for me was taking my personal experiences with creating relationships and then applying that to a professional sense.” In addition to being heavily connected, Hannah stated that they think professional goals “should

be tied to what [an individual] wants to do personally. I think it provides a good starting point to understand those basic foundations to get to where you want to go.” Another example of a participant bridging their personal and professional interests was Michel, who started a blog before starting their internship. They stated that “because of that, [my manager] knew that I had strong research and writing skills, so he was able to assign me more things where I was able to apply my previous knowledge into some more meaningful projects.” This material and concrete view of integration between personal and professional development by the participants provides a unique practical, non-theoretical outlook on the two concepts.

Industry clarification and enlightenment. The role that the internship played in helping participants gain a better understanding of the industry was apparent and emerged during the interviews, with 7 of the 9 participants alluding to the insightfulness of the internship. Specifically, through participants’ experiences of personal maturation and growth, as discussed within the personal development section of the findings, they reflected on their perception of the depth of the industry. Several participants declared that the internship gave them a chance to not only understand the industry better but narrow down where they see themselves fitting in an everchanging landscape. Sara stated that “doing the internship changed my interest in the industry because now I know for sure what digital marketing in sport really is. It helped me think of backup career options because I really enjoyed the editorial side of things during my internship.” This elaborates on Sara’s response on the post-internship survey, where she indicated that the internship helped identify the skills needed to get a job in their field of interest. Similarly, Hannah discussed that “my perspective of sport changed. I didn’t truly realize the numbers behind some of these campaigns, the effort that goes into it and where you have to be to reach those levels.” This commentary related back to the nature of work tasks with which the

participant was engaged throughout their internship and gaining a better understanding of the day-to-day job.

Chris engaged in the internship specifically for this reason, outlining that “what I was looking for in this internship was the clarification of the professional goals – to try and understand what an everyday would look like.” This was evidenced through their pre-internship survey, where the participant rated the factor of expecting their internship to help clarify their career goals as a 7 (fully expect this to happen). Meanwhile, Michel considered the internship to be a way to “help identify some of [my] actual career areas.” The internship provided them with the opportunity to “learn more about the industry and what [I] can do to leave [my] footprint in the industry, specifically in Canada.”

With the nature of the internships at this stage of the participants’ careers being their first glimpse into the sport industry, the discussions largely about the role that the experience played in learning how to be a professional. Peter admitted that “I figured when I have actual experience in this industry under my belt, it would help change my opinion on certain aspects of the industry and how I felt about other things” from a personal perspective. Given the nature of the internship in the lifespan of the participants’ degrees, the above examples outline how the internship served as a vital transition tool for greater awareness and understanding of the industry.

The context. Participants naturally discussed several notable topics that do not inherently fall into the three previously discussed categories but rather, emerged from the data during analysis. Two core topics emerged independently during analysis and related to the context within which participants experienced their internships and include: (1) the impact of COVID-19; and (2) the role of meaningful work and feedback

Impact of COVID-19. 4 of the 9 interview participants discussed the influence of the pandemic on their internship experience, with 8 of them experiencing their internships entirely virtually. Sara revealed they felt a “hole of trying to leave an impact without getting to meet in person.” Josh echoed this point, outlining that they “definitely missed out on the opportunity to have that physical contact/connection” with their peers. However, there were some silver linings to being forced to work remotely in these times. For example, Nathaniel described it as a “growing experience,” while Sara disclosed that they were “grateful for the pandemic in terms of having to work remotely, because it pushed me out of my comfort zone a lot more.” Despite the unique nature of an internship during a pandemic forcing participants to be isolated, the impact on the overall development that occurred was limited to the ability to form connections and build meaningful relationships. However, the participants who were able to push themselves out of their comfort zone overcame these challenges.

The role of meaningful work and feedback. The importance of relevant feedback and valuable work was discussed by seven of the nine participants, as they continuously defined how essential it was to be provided with continuous learning opportunities rather than be treated as a mere number. Sara was part of an intern group within an organization and was tasked with idea generation as a contest. She stated that they were “constantly encouraged to provide ideas for social posts, and nothing was too outside the box [...] and even if we didn’t end up moving forward with [the idea], we were always provided with the rationale as to why we weren’t going with it.” Conversely, when prompted about the nature of their tasks, Hannah was not provided with many meaningful projects and vocalized that they thought the internship “would have been a little bit better if it had more” impactful tasks. Peter went as far to say that meaningful tasks can serve as a motivator when implemented correctly, stating that “they could have easily

ignored me and just had me do menial tasks that don't really matter, but the fact that they encouraged me to keep working hard and gave me important tasks gave me some motivation to do those tasks." Peter's statements validate that the participants of the internship are not merely engaging for course credit but are seeking meaningful work that will help them develop.

To enable that development, participants communicated both the value of feedback and their preferred feedback methods. Alexa mentioned that receiving positive, helpful feedback "helped the experience and made me more confident in my work, for sure." Often, feedback is better delivered in an informal, less structured manner. Sara believes that this kind of feedback is "way more beneficial, because [...] you're shooting an idea out there and then you get that feedback instantly." Similarly, Michel, who developed a strong relationship with their manager believed that "these informal tasks [...] strengthened the communication and trust between us." With respect to mandated appraisals as part of the internship course, Chris shared an opinion that they felt "the performance appraisals are a waste of time, [...] the more genuine the feedback would be the intern to the supervisor in a one-on-one meeting." They suggested that "encouraging students to have informal or genuine feedback and seek that out is much more effective than having some quantitative based performance appraisal." In order to make the most out of both a manager's and intern's time and resources, structuring feedback effectively is essential.

Conclusion

In summary, the quantitative and qualitative data presented illuminate participants' personal and professional development they experienced throughout their internships, thereby addressing the current study's research questions. Participants discussed professional development as more relevant to them than personal development items, which is evident

through both the quantitative data and qualitative data. From a quantitative perspective, participants rated professional development items of the internship in both the pre-internship survey ($M = 5.61$, $SD = 1.41$) and the post-internship survey ($M = 5.26$, $SD = 1.41$) higher than the personal development items in the pre-internship survey ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 1.52$) and the post-internship survey ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.56$).

From the qualitative data, it was found that all 9 interview participants discussed professional development in one way or another, while only 8 of the 9 participants discussed personal development concepts. Next, participants espoused a strong overlap when speaking of both personal and professional development concepts, with 7 of the 9 participants feeling that interactions existed between both concepts. Participants consistently outlined the way that they perceived both types of development as interacting with one another.

Comprehensively, these findings serve as a platform for this study's next chapter, in which I discuss how scholars and practitioners can leverage the detailed findings in this context to advance their knowledge on how educational institutions can optimize their internship programs. Furthermore, in the next chapter, the findings outlined are used to drive insights into how these institutions can strategically utilize the concepts of personal and professional development to improve their respective curricula and to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for students.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I amalgamate the concepts and findings discussed in the preceding chapters to produce a dialogue that generates the message of this research study (Savin-Bader & Major, 2013). Internships are structured to provide students with the opportunity to build upon classroom knowledge and to develop, both personally and professionally. The Employment Standards Act (2013) outlines that the legal intent of an *unpaid internship* is to provide the participant with some benefit, such as new knowledge or skill that is commensurate with in-class learning. More importantly, however, is the link to personal development, in addition to, professional development and career progression, which participants believed they derived the most benefit. Based on the findings, the emphasis and message communicated to the participants about the internship program clearly revolves around career development. There exists a lack of commitment from the industry to paid internships (Johnson, 2018; Starbird & Powers, 2013; Walker et al., 2020) and a lack of understanding from students as to what type of development the internship experience is designed to serve.

The link to professional development and career advancement is validated by experiential learning programs since employers expect more from graduates today than simply technical knowledge and a positive attitude (Tomlinson, 2008). Rather, graduates are expected to “demonstrate a range of broader skills and attributes that include team-working, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and managerial abilities (Lowden et al., 2011, p. vi).” The value of internships in helping students achieve this professional development has been frequently researched (Hergert, 2009; Kosnik et al., 2013; Odio et al., 2014; Saltikoff, 2017) and communicated. However, it is important to recognize that both personal and professional

development are meaningful aspects of the internship curriculum. Hayes (2018) studied perceived learning in internships, finding a significant relationship between internship satisfaction, and perceived learning in personal and career development.

As such, the purpose of this study was to cultivate a better understanding of the development that occurs for students as they progress through an internship program, whether it be personal or professional. The research questions that were aligned with this purpose were:

1. how do students perceive that they incur personal development throughout a sport management internship?
2. how do students perceive that they incur professional development throughout a sport management internship?

Related to the pragmatic focus with these research questions, the study held two main objectives, which were:

1. to provide educational institutions with actionable items to help maximize the possibility of personal and professional development in sport management internships; and
2. to shine a light on sport management student interns' expectations and goals through their experiences to provide educational institutions the opportunity to enhance these internship experiences.

Connections to Relevant Literature

Linking the findings with the literature discussed allows me to fully develop an understanding gained from this case study. Given that I used self-determination theory and experiential learning theory to frame the study's two research questions, literature review, interview guide and data analysis, I was enabled to make connections between these frameworks and relevant literature to explain the findings and find various implications. This discussion

begins by connecting the outcomes of personal and professional development found in this case site with the literature to investigate how these findings can generally inform our perception of the role of internships in educational institutions. From there, the case institution and its management of the internship program is related to relevant literature to understand its role in further optimizing student internships' impact on student development. Through this discourse, I generate the fundamental insights of this research and leverage such insights to form pragmatic implications for future internship practice and research.

Presence of personal development. In response to research question 1 (RQ1), I first explore how the concepts of personal development in this context connect with the sport management literature that discusses the role of internships in this realm. Participants' alignment with the espoused personal development that they experienced throughout their respective internships directly relates to sport management scholars' emphasis of the importance of perceived learning throughout their placements (Beard & Wilson, 2013; Brown, 2013; Petrie, 2011; Spence & McDonald, 2015). Interestingly, participants perceived personal development throughout their internship was greater (at T2) than they initially expected (at T1). Specifically, participants aligned most with the fact that personal development occurred in the form of personal maturity, where they largely described maturity as the increase in their level of self-confidence, patience, assertiveness, self-awareness, flexibility and adaptability.

This finding emerged in the post-internship survey data, where the mean score for maturing personally was the highest rated personal development factor. While the variation of personal development definitions invokes ambiguity as the description of each participants' personal development was diverse, Lee (1999) suggests that personal development is characteristically psychological. As a result, it is important to recognize that participants

experience personal development in their own unique way (Spence et al., 2009). Thus, relevant literature adds depth to the research findings and enables me to develop my observations of personal development in the case organization toward useful insights.

Self-determination theory states that individuals are continuously pursuing “new challenges and new experiences to develop and master” (Link, 2019, p. 1). Participants vocalized the role that the internship played in identifying the skills they excelled at versus those that they needed to build before moving forward with their respective careers. Previous research around self-determination theory in internships outline the relationship between self-determination, motivation and development (Hsu, 2013; Rushing et al., 2017). Given participants engaging in the internship were nearing the end of their studies and preparing to enter the workforce, this study solidified the belief that a connection exists between learning and positive development. Whereas, participants discussed their lateral development, defined as the process by which participants acquire new knowledge and skills while learning from pre-existing levels of cognitive and emotional complexity (Cook-Greuter, 2004) as largely inductive, with no active connection to personal development. This finding is extended to promote the importance to educators using experiential learning as a pedagogy to include and highlight explicit links between skill and personal development in experiential learning activities (Kolb, 1984).

This study has strong ties to Dewey’s (1938) foundational work developing the experiential theory. The main principle of experiential learning theory is that “learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from a combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). Participants herein explicitly discussed two key facets of the learning cycle, including: (1) reflective observation; and (2) abstract conceptualization. First, through discussions with

participants, a prevalent theme of reflective observation was found, whereby participants reported their conclusions and/or learnings from the experiences they undertook (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Historically, internship programs have tended to overstress the practical piece of the curriculum and have failed to bridge the gap between the classroom and the professional workplace.

This failing was evident through participants' pre-internship survey responses, whereby the mean score for the participants' desire to build upon classroom knowledge was 6.09. By engaging in both mandated reflections, as outlined in the course requirements as well as voluntary reflection, participants effectively linked practice and theory throughout their experience. The interviews and surveys in which participants partook, in addition to deliberate forms of reflection and evaluation of their respective experiences, served as tools for reflective observation. While participants most discussed the reflective observation phase of Kolb's (1984) learning cycle, there were several instances where they used their reflective observations to drive new ideas or modify an existing abstract concept. However, the data indicate a disconnect between the program and explicit personal development. This solidifies Spence's (2008) research outlining that "the Faculty Advisors' (FAs) efforts to implement curricula that focuses on fostering students' personal development during internships are secondary ones, however, in contrast to their efforts to implement curricula that focuses on fostering students' skill acquisition and career development" (p. 296). Specifically, no programmatic structures are in place to strategically build and/or assess students' personal development; rather, personal development seems to occur organically for certain participants in this study.

When engaging in abstract conceptualization, students form theories and conclusions about the experience (Kolb, 1984). The second key facet of the learning cycle of abstract

conceptualization was expressed by several participants, whereby they used the reflective observations and mandated course exercises performed to drive their next steps. For example, participants discussed the role that the internship played to help them identify the next steps needed on their behalf prior to join the workforce, such as developing more tangible skills related to task-specific software. Given the nature/placement of the internship in the lifespan of the participants' degree, the internship served as a vital transition tool to the industry for participants, and an experiential learning cite in which they could be exposed to experiencing several phases of the learning cycle.

Presence of professional development. To address research question 2 (RQ2), I discuss how participants experienced professional development in the current case study. All nine participants discussed professional development, citing the experience as one that largely impacted their career. Participants commonly highlighted both facets of professional development discussed within the literature review (i.e., acquiring professional knowledge, skills and dispositions; and obtaining new skills prior to understanding how to employ them). Moreover, the value of an internship program was apparent through participants' comments, as they note there are facets of the workplace context that are distinctively different from facets of the in-class context, whereby students recognize that employers' focus is shifting from credentials to their ability to display behavioural competence (Brown & Hesketh, 2014), an example of lateral development.

The findings emphasize Eun's (2008) statement that professional development is "one of the most effective ways to improve the teaching and learning process" (p. 134). This is evident through the pre-internship survey, where the professional growth factor category was the highest rated, with an average mean score of 5.69. The most prevalent link to existing literature was the

correlation between the findings and Kuh's (1995) discussion of an internship's role in "relating theory to practice and using skills learned in the classroom, laboratory, library and so on in other areas of life" (p. 150). By incorporating well-structured and timed internships to deliver professional development prospects, the educational institution being researched was able to maximize the participants' acquisition of new knowledge. As the internships were placed towards the end of participants' studies, it served as the proper transition tool needed to facilitate the adjustment into the professional workforce. This was evident by the fact that factor of the internship changing the participants' industry, as highlighted in the findings section, saw the largest increase from pre-internship to post-internship (from 3.64 to 5.00).

Continuous growth and development within a certified context are the main facets of the experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984). Throughout this study, participants were provided with opportunities to experience continuous growth and development within the specific context of their respective internships. Generally, internships serve as a transitional tool, whereby students were given opportunities to shape their identity through the experience. The data shows that participants enrolled in the internship were seeking new challenges and experiences to master, which is highly embedded in the tenets of self-determination theory (Link, 2019). However, it is important to note that participants discussed soft skills, including problem-solving capabilities (i.e., critical thinking and process skills) as being important for them, but not necessarily explicitly addressed in their internship experience. Notably, previous research emphasizes that these soft skills have been highlighted as essential to increase the perceived employability of students as they enter the workforce (Emery et al., 2012; Finch et al., 2013).

Overlap between personal and professional development. One of the notable results highlighted in the findings is the intersection between participants' personal development and

professional development. While many previous researchers have investigated both concepts independently, Brody and Hadar (2011) and McWilliam (2002) discussed the connection between personal and professional growth. In this study, it was found that participants largely resonated with this connection, outlining that the professional development they experienced contributed to their personal development and/or vice versa. For example, by growing professionally, Sara was able to feel more confident about themselves as they move into the workplace.

Additionally, the internship was found to serve as a bridge connecting their professional and personal interests. For example, the experience allowed them to use some of the skills developed as personal interests and passion projects into the workplace. Josh outlined that one of the most enriching parts of the internship experiences was “taking [their] personal experiences with creating and developing relationships with people and then applying that to a professional sense.” Similarly, Michel highlighted that prior to the internship, he had started a blog and “because of that, [they] knew that [they] had strong research and writing skills, so [their boss] was able to assign [them] some things where [they] was able to apply previous knowledge into more meaningful projects during [their] internship.”

The concept of a connection between personal and professional development provides a distinctive real-world stance on the two theories that underline this study. Existing literature (Brody & Hadar, 2011; McWilliam, 2002) has viewed the connection between these two concepts of development as abstract and philosophical. The pragmatic nature of the study provides tangible support that participants perceive personal and professional development as largely intertwined. It is important to emphasize that there is a gap in the experiential learning environment context of this study in that these experiences are meant to stimulate higher levels

of development but are, in fact, not structured to tap into a high level personal development beyond their individualized career focus (Cuffaro, 1995). As a result, an emphasis on the structure of the internship to focus on a more holistic experiential education view of development, where the professional and person is needed.

The impact of COVID-19. Given this study was conducted during a global pandemic, it is imperative to discuss its inherent impact on participants' respective internship experiences. All but one participant experienced their internship either partially or entirely virtually, a unique situation. While no research exists on the topic, the results highlighted above relate to this existing condition where participants did not work physically within an internship setting. Participants expressed a concern from their initial belief that they would incur a lack of opportunities for concrete experiences and reflective observation in working online for their internship.

Despite the isolation that existed for many of the participants however, one significant impact on the possibility for further personal and professional development was the lack of possibility to develop enhanced and deep relationships (in person) among colleagues and partners. Conversely, participants were forced to face new challenges and overcome the difficulties of working in such an environment, including but not limited to, time management, enhanced communication and adoption of new technology, software and platforms. As a result, the possible negative impact of the pandemic on participants' personal and professional development may have been mitigated by the unique obstacles they encountered and were forced to conquer in the process, leading to increased development opportunities as they faced and experienced new challenges. Specifically, participants who were able to push themselves out of their comfort zone and overcome these challenges may have benefited through a self-

determination theory lens in that “humans continually seek challenges and new experiences to develop and master” (Link, 2019, p. 1).

Recommendations for Practice

From the insights gained through the discussion, I can generate recommendations for educational institutions so that they may improve the internship program structure and practices through an awareness and strategic emphasis on personal and professional development. The study successfully fulfilled the objectives outlined within the introduction of this paper, and are as follows:

Maximizing the possibility of development. Based on participants’ perceptions of the internship program, I recommend that prior to engaging in the internship, students create a defined outline of objectives related to their personal and professional development. The first step to achieving this lies in a co-creative process between the student, the educational institution representative—the experiential education coordinator in this scenario—and the intern site manager in agreeing upon learning and developmental outcomes.

Once completed, if all stakeholders involved – the educational institution, the student (the employee) and the intern site manager (the employer) – align on these goals, the promotion of such development will occur and the likelihood of development outcomes may increase. This recommendation builds from Lowden’s (2006) research outlining that “well-designed, thoughtfully planned, and adequately supported professional development is a necessary ingredient in all educational improvement efforts” (p. 61).

To foster further development, it is recommended that every organization provide every intern with an organizational mentor; someone who can support them with their transition to a corporate role. Such a mentorship program should help develop key talents through: (1) career

development; (2) practical education and hands-on learning; (3) fostering a sense of belonging, thereby boosting engagement; and (4) promoting self-reflection throughout the internship and as projects or tasks are completed. In turn, such a mentorship program may provide organizations an opportunity for structured dialogue with interns and a deeper understanding of the perspective of the next generation of employees, ostensibly their future talent pool. Ultimately, such a framework enables systematic development, benefiting the employer through increased insights, the interns through enhanced growth opportunities and educational institutions through trusted learning partnerships.

Finally, aligned with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, I recommend that internship curriculum continue to emphasize reflective observation and abstract conceptualization. This can be achieved by implementing reflective projects over forced formal feedback, which be shared with the employer. This builds off of Jowdy et al.'s (2004) recommendation, proposing "increased collaboration with the organization/site supervisor in the development of reflective and observational activities, taking place prior to, during and at the conclusion of the internship" (p. 227).

A notion to be added to these reflective projects, to enable the conceptualization phase of the learning cycle, is to provide a concrete action plan based on the learnings outlined in the reflection piece. The findings herein outline that the role of feedback is diminished when it is mandated and solely quantitative (Poulos & Mahony, 2008). Should these reflection pieces be shared among all three stakeholders prior to, during and at the conclusion of the internship, the possibility for development—likely and accordingly for all three stakeholders—will be maximized.

Strategic reflection. For all stakeholders to transform the internship experience and maximize the possibility for development, each group needs to understand participants' unique 'why' or purpose for engaging in the internship so they may create beneficial value for each group. Burke and Carton (2013) discussed genuine and existing learning outcomes from student internships, including: authenticity, reflection, monitoring and continuous improvement, and assessment and evaluation. I recommend that alongside students, educators and internship supervisors strategically reflect on their respective roles in the internship experience at three points in time throughout the internship: prior to the placement start, halfway through the placement, and at or following the placement ending. During these three reflective timeframes, reflection questions should be framed around the skills, knowledge or behaviours that participants need to develop, are in the process of developing, or have developed through the internship, in addition to those they wish to continue working towards. It is imperative that these activities are related to both students' individual goals and expectations.

In line with Kerwin and Spence's (2017) recommendation, "when developing self-reflection activities for internship curricula or other experientially based projects [...] it is important for educators to recognize that students will relate to and experience these activities and their components differently" (p.83). It is imperative that these activities are related to both their individual goals and expectations. While this research represented an initial strategic reflection for the case site at hand, further reflection by employers, employees, internship supervisors and faculty supervisors involved may bring awareness to further initiatives that can enable the experience.

Expectations and goals. To strategically optimize the internship experience, having a clear understanding of the participants' expectations and goals is imperative. Schoemaker (2008)

discussed the need to encourage teamwork by incentivizing leadership and creativity. However, the unfortunate reality is that student interns are often those last to be invited to engage in team based decision-making and/or to attend important meetings. This is meaningful, given participants' desire to engage in meaningful experiences via work placements (Calk & Patrick, 2017). The Brock University case site, as outlined in the methodology chapter herein, represents a unique and notable example of structure, where an educational education coordinator (E.E.C) is present. Jowdy et al. (2004) outline that this individual should "take on more of an active role in helping students recognize and make sense of the self-development and knowledge that can result from an internship" (p.229). To strategically foster personal growth, the E.E.C should be actively involved.

Such existing limitations of meaningful work that exist in internships represent a possible barrier for internship students to experience development in the process. Given the focus on meaningful experiences, it is important that educational institutions continue to set aside time to facilitate processes to understand and develop these expectations and goals further. These processes should include but not be limited to: discussing main interests (exploring areas of interest where participants have little experience or knowledge); considering different industry sectors of employers (preparing and considering other opportunities within the field); reviewing specialty areas and skills (mastering technical skills or knowledge of applications); and investigating mentors and contacts (expanding networks and building relationships).

To move one step further, educational institutions and students could establish a working relationship with the internship organization to enable a better understanding of roles. This builds off and supports Jowdy et al.'s (2004) recommendation to increase collaboration with the

organization/site supervisor in the development of reflective and observational activities taking place prior to, during and at the conclusion of the internship.

A continued attention to development. As a final and overarching recommendation, all stakeholders involved in an internship program, both as part of this case site and all others, are advised to continually manage students' personal and professional development to ensure that any improvements from a strategic reflection perspective be implemented and sustained. To achieve this recommendation, an emphasis on the relationship between personal and professional development should be placed. In order to uphold this practice, the aforementioned stakeholders should assist participants in developing a "personal brand". Personal branding is the process of creating an identity for yourself as an individual and has become a vital part of a successful job search, driving long-term effects on participants' career path. With all the clutter, it can be challenging for an individual to set themselves apart. The development of a personal brand enables pragmatic abstract conceptualization and reflective observation by looking back at experiences to assess performance, growth and goals. In turn, this will help participants identify any area of weakness or opportunities for development where training in those areas will be fruitful.

As Dewey (1938) stated, "there is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education" (p. 7). If educational institutions and employers are to continuously promote growth and learning, they should be well advised to uphold this practice.

Conclusion

Through this discussion of findings, I identified key insights that emerged through this case study and their implications for practice in the case institution and beyond. In the current

study, participants were strong advocates for the personal and professional development that they incurred throughout their respective internships, and the synergies between both constructs. According to self-determination theory (Link, 2019), it is increasingly important for individuals to seek challenges and new experiences as both a stimulus and as a mechanism for development. Indeed, participants stressed such challenge seeking throughout their interviews, such that this was a focal point of the study. Connecting these findings to relevant literature revealed the opportunities available to the three stakeholder groups involved in sport management students' internship experiences to learn from students' expectations and goals to maximize their potential and opportunities for development. Thus, the discussion represents a transformation of research findings toward insights and recommendations that may benefit educational institutions and future internship participants alike.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This study emerged from my personal internship experiences and my personal observations and reflections of students' abilities to break into the industry. As a student, I had the opportunity to organize the largest student-run sport business conference in Canada, which many students view as a tool to network and make connections to enable their job search when the time comes. This research project was designed to, and succeeded in, understanding more about the personal and professional development that occurred for student participants within the context of a notable sport management program's fourth year internship component. As a first-time sport management researcher, I embraced my role and challenged myself with contemplative questions, such as 'why does the outcome of internships differ among participants' and 'what makes for a legitimate internship program and experience?' The seeming lack of clear responses to these questions by sport management scholars suggested to me a significant gap existed in our understanding of sport management internships.

Sport management scholars and management scholars alike provided me with inspiration to investigate this gap of understanding, as educational institutions continue to find innovative ways to create new opportunities to enhance student experiences. In today's sport management industry, simply having a degree does not guarantee a job. Brown and Hesketh (2014) discussed employers' shifting focus from candidates' credentials to their ability to display behavioural competence. Researchers (Allen et al., 2013; Anjum, 2020, Brady et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2018; Cunningham et al., 2005; Odio et al., 2014; Spence et al., 2009; Stratta, 2004) fuelled this dialogue by focusing on the role of internships in a student's life and career. Thus, the purpose of this study was to cultivate a better understanding of the development that occurs for students as

they progress through an internship program, whether that development be personal or professional.

To fulfill this purpose, I implemented a mixed-methods strategy to triangulate participants' perceptions of their experiences. By incorporating pre- and post-internship surveys similar to Anjum's (2020) study on development and conducting follow-up post-internship interviews, I effectively deconstructed participants' view of their personal and professional development that occurred. Given the explanatory and pragmatic nature of the study, to go along with the emphasis on the qualitative aspect of the methods, the research did not garner definite conclusions about the experiences observed throughout the internships; instead, the research outcomes served as "recommendations for practice," which are meant to inspire future internship stakeholders toward better practice.

In this case, the personal and professional development that occurred was a by-product of a well-structured internship program and experience. Kolb's (1981) experiential learning theory and self-determination theory were applicable and useful for understanding how participants were able to enhance their learning process, and development as a result. Through the incorporation of the two elements of experiential learning theory (i.e., reflective observation, abstract conceptualization), participants were found to use the internship as a tool to shape their futures, both personally and professionally. The qualitative discussions with participants highlighted the importance of a synergetic relationship between the educational institution, the employer, and the student alike, reaffirming Odio et al. (2014) and Jowdy et al. (2004) research. These findings add further substantiation to the intricacy of the internship experience and the impact these experiences have on students, as well as understanding where gaps exist between the literature and the practicum. Next, the limitations of this study and implications for future research are discussed.

Limitations

There are two limitations of this study that may have influenced its outcomes, relating to the interview sample and to the context. First, the interview sample was limited due to student participation. While 26 students originally responded to the first survey, 11 students participated in the survey portion of the study, and only 9 students completed both the pre- and post-internship survey as well as the post-internship interview. As a result, conclusions related to student perception of personal and professional development was largely derived from perceptions of these nine students. Thus, students' limited participation created a potential non-response bias for this research, as a greater sample size likely would have provided deeper insights toward recommendations.

During participant recruitment, there was no definitive explanation provided for students' lack of participation. Traditionally, roughly 110 students partake in this internship every year among three school terms: the Fall term (September to December), the Winter term (January to April), and the Spring/Summer term (May to August). Initially, the objective was to have as many of these registered students participating as an internship student in the Fall 2020 semester to complete the study's pre- and post-internship surveys, as well as participate in an individual interview following completion of their internship positions. Due to the existence of COVID-19 and impact on workspace mandates for sport organizations, the number of the Fall 2020 cohort was lower than historically experienced by students in this program (only 20 students vs. a standard 40), and a second cohort was forced to be added with the Winter 2021 semester.

The second limitation pertains to the possibility that limiting this study to one program restricts the generalizability of the study. The goal to generalize findings was not a core objective of this study, however; rather, the goal was to provide practical implications that may be

transferred to other contexts. In fact, in a survey asking course leaders which undergraduate sport management course, excluding their own, they believed was best in the world, this particular sport management program was found to be the fourth most common response (Evans, 2015). This University also identifies experiential education as a pillar in its strategic mandate, and the department for which the program is housed includes an experiential education coordinator staff position who administers and manages internship placements. Brock University's reputation and substantial internship program was beneficial as it provided participants with more internship options, evident from the wide range of organizations within which interns worked and the positions held.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings and discussion of this case study revealed potential directions for future research, as further exploration into students' personal and professional development incurred through the internship experience may benefit future scholars and practitioners. Additional consideration of these factors may allow scholars to further appreciate the outcome of development in sport management internships, to investigate the overlap between both concepts and to increase the likelihood that educational institutions and employers further invest in their respective internship programs.

First, I recommend that future researchers engage in a process of developing a sound theory for relating and integrating personal and professional development constructs, given McWilliam's (2002) argument that "professional development uses a particular sort of knowledge to do a particular sort of work on individuals" (p. 10). McWilliam's (2002) statement alludes to the fact that for an individual to progress professionally and hierarchically within organizations, they must develop as individuals as well. Similarly, Brody and Hadar (2011)

focused on the “tight connection between the professional and personal factors” (p. 1232) of development; and as such, understanding that students may perceive personal and professional development in similar ways throughout their internships is an important association to consider and perhaps to plan to enhance/deepen both.

For example, future research could assist in developing a framework for bridging the gap between personal and professional development, with a notable consideration and distinction between vertical and lateral development. An understanding that the concepts of personal and professional are heavily intertwined and personal development must be explicitly incorporated into the methods and evaluations of the internship. For example, researchers could find a way to quantitatively model the relationship and potential correlation between the two concepts. Following an established statistically relationship between personal and professional development, it is important to explore the depth of the relationship that occurs between the two concepts as individuals engage in experiential education opportunities. The findings here suggest that professional and personal development were not developed as interconnected concepts within the internship curriculum for these students and have not been traditionally or historically interconnected within the internship courses for these students. Continued case study methodology would provide valuable insight into exemplar contexts where this crossover/connection is embraced and explicitly addressed within internship curriculum.

Within this study, I sampled students who served as a lens through which a deeper understanding of the personal and professional development that occurs throughout an internship experience could be reached. Given the current research only sampled students, understanding the other two stakeholders’ (i.e., internship employers/supervisors, educational institutions) perspectives may therefore expand an understanding of how to best optimize an internship

program. In doing so, I recommend that future research explores and triangulates perceptions of all stakeholder groups to construct a comprehensive understanding of the internship programs being evaluated.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Guide

Preamble:

I want to begin by thanking you for taking the time to meet with me today.

My name is Jeremy Rutman and I would like to talk to you about your recent internship experience. Specifically, we are assessing the perceived personal and professional development that occurred for you as you engaged in your internship. As for this interview, it should take approximately an hour. I will be digitally audio-taping the session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. Although I will be taking some notes during the session, I can't possibly write fast enough to get it all down. Since we're on tape, please do your best to speak up so that we don't miss any of your comments. I want to ensure you are aware that a risk of participation is your identity being recognized based on what is discussed. Due to this all responses will be kept confidential. This means that your interview responses will only be shared with my research supervisor and we will ensure that any information we include in our report does not identify you as the respondent, nor your internship organization. While any anecdotes, quotes, or references you make will be made anonymous, there is still a small possibility you are identified. Having noted this, please remember, you don't have to talk about anything you don't want to and you may end the interview at any time. Lastly, should you discuss any illegal distressing events or occurrences, I am obligated to report this to my faculty supervisor and the proper authorities. Anything else you report that is distressing, I can inform the internship coordinator and my faculty supervisor, should you consent to it.

Are there any questions about what I have just explained?

Are you willing to participate in this interview?

Interviewee

Interviewer

Date

Do you consent to any distressing events or occurrences you report or discuss in this interview, being brought to the attention of the internship coordinator and my faculty supervisor?

Please circle one: **YES NO**

IF YOU FEEL ANY DISCOMFORT DURING OR AFTER THE INTERVIEW, PLEASE CONNECT WITH STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES ON CAMPUS AT 905-688-5550 X3243

Please consider these questions with respect to the internship role that you will complete/have completed.

Background Questions:

1. With which organization did you complete your internship with?

- a. Were you working within a specific department?
- b. Did you have a job description? If yes, what was it? If no, was that an issue for you?
2. What position did you fill within the organization (i.e., what were your responsibilities in general?)
3. Was this internship your first choice? If not, was this organization appealing to you during your internship placement application process or was it a “last resort”? If a last resort, please explain why.
4. Have you worked within this organization before?
 - a. If so, how long were you there with them and what did your position consist of?

Internship/Experience/Expectations

1. In your pre-internship surveys, you indicated that _____. Can you talk about this in more detail?
 - a. Probe for notably high or low scores; correlation between professional and personal development.
2. How did you experience your internship – online, fully in person, hybrid?
3. Based on your survey responses, you indicated that your intention to enter the industry was _____. Can you explain this?
 - a. If there is a change from pre to post: What is the reasoning for this?
4. *Pick three most high or low rated factors from post survey*: In your survey, you rated x y and z very high/low on the scale....
 - a. Talk about the items you’ve rated high or low. Provide the participant with the numbers, can you explain why you’ve labelled each as such?
 - b. Probe: Target items that are statistically different from pre to post.
 - c. Probe: Did something or someone influence this difference in scores from pre to post?
5. Were you provided with opportunities to think outside the box and enhance your world view, challenge assumptions or grow as an individual?
6. How do you think your professional experiences allowed you to develop personally and vice versa?
7. Is there anything else related to what we’ve discussed that you would like to briefly mention?

Conclusion

I would like to thank you again for your participation in this study and taking time out of your schedule. As a reminder, your identity will remain confidential and any names will be replaced by pseudonyms. Only I will have access to the list revealing who each pseudonym belongs to, and this will be encrypted and stored on a password-protected computer.

Do you have any questions?

Do you consent to any distressing events or occurrences you report or discuss in this interview, being brought to the attention of the internship coordinator and my faculty supervisor?

Appendix B

Pre-Internship Survey

Project Title: The Impact of Internships on Personal and Professional Development

Principal Investigator (PI): Jeremy Rutman, MA Candidate
Department of Sport Management
Brock University
514-898-2559; jr19rx@brocku.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Shannon Kerwin
Department of Sport Management
905-688-5550 Ext. 6177; SKerwin@brocku.ca

INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a study that involves research cultivating a better understanding of the development that occurs throughout an internship program, whether it be personal or professional. Personal development is the concept of *bettering* one's self, whether it be through crystallization, through understanding and enlightenment, or through a feeling. Professional development is the facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional and designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as the application of this knowledge in practice

WHAT'S INVOLVED

Should you choose to participate, you will first be asked to fill out an online (Survey Monkey) internship survey that will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. This survey will be completed (1) before your internship starts, and (2) upon completion of your internship. The survey before the internship involves slightly different wording than the survey completed after your internship but are based on the same questions. Following the completion of your post-internship survey, you will be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview based on your internship experience. The interview would take approximately an hour of your time. There are no specific criteria to be interviewed, rather, all participants will be invited to complete one should they be interested. Interview participation is completely voluntary, and you may decline to complete the interview at any time should you not be comfortable. The interview itself would take place virtually, if you are available to do so. The interviews will be audio recorded for transcription purposes. Total participation from pre survey to post survey to potential interview will occur in a five-month timeframe as interviews would be completed ideally two weeks after you complete the internship.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

Possible benefits of participation include potential improvements to the sport management internship curriculum as a whole as the study seeks to identify perceived experiences, thereby potentially leading to changes to the internship course for future students. There also may be risks associated with participation such as yourself discussing any issues that arose during the internship, and in turn the possibility that the organization you interned with finding out. To prevent this from happening, neither your name, nor the organization's, would be used in order to maintain confidentiality. Further, nothing you indicate on your survey or state in an interview

would be linked back to yourself, nor would the internship coordinator have access to this knowledge, therefore your participation will not affect your course grade. Regarding discussing potentially distressful occurrences (should they occur) during the internship, you may experience discomfort. In the case of this occurring, I will not force you to discuss such occurrences any further if they make you uncomfortable. Additionally, I will provide you with contact information for Student Health Services on campus. Lastly, you are not required to discuss anything you do not want to.

CONFIDENTIALITY

As mentioned, no names will be revealed in this study, rather pseudonyms will be designed for individuals or organizations described. Further, the list of names and pseudonyms will be stored on an encrypted file, on a password-locked computer that only the student investigator have access to, to ensure confidentiality. Your student number will be requested on the surveys in order to match pre and post surveys for comparison and interview selection purposes by the student investigator. Once matched, these student numbers will be deleted and replaced by a random number to keep them matched. The faculty supervisor and internship coordinator will not have access to this list identifying the surveys.

Data collected during this study (online survey responses, digital audio files, and transcribed interview documents) will be stored on a password protected computer in an encrypted file. Virtual consent forms that will be obtained prior to an interview will be stored in on a password protected computer. Data will be kept for two years after which time all data collected will be destroyed. Additionally, data collected on SurveyMonkey is subject to American Homeland Security laws such as the Patriot Act.

Access to this data (minus personal identifiers) will be restricted to myself, Jeremy Rutman, and my supervisor, Dr. Shannon Kerwin.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary, therefore, it is not an internship or sport management requirement. Your decision to participate, drop out during participation, or not participate at all, has no influence on any relationship with either investigators, Brock University, or any internship connections. Only the student investigator will know whether or not an individual participates. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of gift card compensation. To withdraw, please email Jeremy Rutman (jr19rx@brocku.ca) indicating your desire to drop out. Any data retrieved, particularly survey data, may be used for comparison purposes, but it will remain confidential. Interview data will be deleted immediately upon decision to drop out of the study.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. Feedback about this study will be available upon completion, approximately Fall 2021. You will be given an opportunity to see your interview transcription, and if you do not feel your responses are not conveyed accurately, you can let the investigator (Jeremy Rutman) know and changes will be made to correct it. You will be given one week to review the results to determine if any

errors were made. Should you fail to contact the investigator at this point it will be assumed there were no issues with the data. To receive feedback, contact Jeremy Rutman using the information above. It is important to note that the internship coordinator, Katie Desveaux, will receive a copy of the final report however, names and organizations will be removed from the report of the findings (all data will be reported as aggregate and anonymous).

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Jeremy Rutman and Dr. Shannon Kerwin using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (REB file # 20-044). If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at 905-688-5550 ext. 4876, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

If you consent to participate in the pre-post survey, click here : I agree to participate
If you consent to be contacted and involved in a follow up interview, click here I agree to participate in a follow-up interview

With consent to the follow-up interview, please include a preferred contact email address: _____

Pre-Survey

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. What is your name? _____
2. What is your Student ID? _____
3. What gender do you identify with? _____
4. Please indicate your age: _____
5. What is your current year of study? _____
6. Current GPA: _____
7. Industry sector of internship (Public, commercial, non-profit): _____
8. Intended industry sector for future employment (Public, commercial, non-profit):

9. Length of internship: _____

Section 2: Personal Development – Developed from Anjum (2020)

Please respond to each of the following questions by indicating your expectation levels with each statement by circling a number from 1 (Very Low Expectations – I don't expect this to happen) to 7 (Very High Expectations – I fully expect this to happen).

Category	I expect:							
Personal Growth	To mature personally	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	My interests in the industry to change	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	My personal goals to change	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	To develop better habits regarding my tasks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Personal Capabilities	To build upon my classroom knowledge	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	My money management skills to improve	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	My conscientiousness and ethics to improve	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	My learning skills to improve	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	The view of people around me to improve	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	My social relationships to improve	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	My initiative taking skills to improve	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	My time management skills to improve	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section 3: Professional Development – Developed from Anjum (2020)

Please respond to each of the following questions by indicating your expectation levels with each statement by circling a number from 1 (Very Low Expectations – I don't expect this to happen) to 7 (Very High Expectations – I fully expect this to happen).

Category	I expect:							
Professional Growth	My internship to help clarify my career goals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	To advance my career	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	To apply classroom knowledge during my internship	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	To gain practical work experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	To identify the skills needed to get a job in my field of interest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	To face some problems seeking and accepting work assignments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Professional Capabilities	To improve my communication and interpersonal skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	To improve my decision making and problem-solving skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	To improve my teamwork skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	To improve my critical thinking skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	To improve my technical skills relating to the industry I am working in	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C

Post-Internship Survey

Section 1: Already completed in Pre-Internship Survey – Name and Student ID needed only.

Section 2: Personal Development – Developed from Anjum (2020)

Please respond to each of the following questions by indicating your perceived levels with each statement by circling a number from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

Category	My internship:							
Personal Growth	Helped me mature personally	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Has changed my interests in the industry	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Has changed my personal goals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Helped me develop better habits regarding my tasks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Helped build upon my classroom knowledge	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Personal Capabilities	Helped improve my money management skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Helped improve my conscientiousness and ethics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Helped improve my learning skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Helped improved my view of people around me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Helped improve my social relationships	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Helped improve my initiative taking skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Helped improve my time management skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section 3: Professional Development – Developed from Anjum (2020)

Please respond to each of the following questions by indicating your expectation levels with each statement by circling a number from 1 (Very Low Expectations – I don't expect this to happen) to 7 (Very High Expectations – I fully expect this to happen).

Category	My internship:							
Professional Growth	Helped clarify my career goals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Helped advance my career	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Allowed me to apply classroom knowledge during my internship	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Helped me gain practical work experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Helped me identify the skills needed to get a job in my field of interest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Forced me to face some problems seeking and accepting work assignments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Professional Capabilities	Helped improve my communication and interpersonal skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Helped improve my decision making and problem-solving skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Helped improve my teamwork skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Helped improve my critical thinking skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Helped improve my technical skills relating to the industry I am working in	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix D
Research Ethics Board (REB) Application Form

1) Indicate if the participants might experience any of the following risks:

- a) Physical risks (including any bodily contact, physical stress, or administration of any substance)? Yes No
- b) Psychological risks (including feeling demeaned, embarrassed worried or upset, emotional stress)? Yes No
- c) Social risks (including possible loss of status, privacy, and / or reputation)? Yes No
- d) Are any possible risks to participants greater than those that the participants might encounter in their everyday life? Yes No
- e) Is there any deception involved? Yes No
- f) Is there potential for participants to feel obligated to participate or coerced into contributing to this research (because of regular contact between participants and the researcher, relationships that involve power-dynamics, etc.)? Yes No

Appendix E
Pre-Internship Survey Script for Portal Post

Dear Interns:

From time to time we are always trying to improve the academic experience of our courses, such as SPMA 4F01, 4F02.

We have partnered with Brock graduate student Jeremy Rutman and his adviser Dr. Shannon Kerwin who would like you to fill in a pre and post internship questionnaire. A copy of the pre-survey link (which leads to the letter of consent and information on the study) is attached.

We would like you to fill in this questionnaire over the next 48 hours if at all possible. Failing that, please fill it in and submit it this weekend. Please note, the study is voluntary and not tied to course marks.

Participants will be entered for a chance to win 1 of 2 \$100 Amazon.ca gift cards.

We thank you for your consideration and time in this important research paper. You are certainly welcome to a copy of the final report.

Yours truly,
Pat Reid & Katie Desveaux

Appendix F
Post-Internship Survey Script for Portal Post

Dear Students, as you may recall, at the beginning of the semester we partnered with Jeremy Rutman, a Sport Management Masters student to evaluate the perceived development that occurs throughout your internships. With your internships either completed or nearing an end, we need your help for the next stage of the research.

The post-internship survey link, for those of you that participated in the pre-internship survey, can be completed here. Once you have completed your post-internship survey, please schedule a time for an interview here. As a reminder, this study is voluntary and not tied to course marks. All participants will be entered for a chance to win 1 of 2 Amazon.ca gift cards.

We thank you for your consideration and time in this important research paper. You are certainly welcome to a copy of the final report.

Yours truly,

Pat Reid & Katie Desveaux

Appendix G
Post-Internship Survey Email Reminder

Hello _____,

As a brief reminder, my name is Jeremy Rutman and I am a Master's Student in the Department of Sport Management. At the beginning of the semester, you participated in a survey on the topic of personal and professional development in your internship.

To follow up on this, I am messaging to request your participation in the post-internship survey, which can be completed [here](#).

Once you have completed this survey, the final stage of the study will be a post-internship interview, which will take approximately 30 minutes. You can book a time at your convenience [here](#).

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thank you in advance & I hope to hear back from you!

Jeremy