SHORT STUDY-ABROAD PROGRAMS FOR EMERGENCY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT CURRICULA: STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to provide a best-practice approach for educators of emergency management (E.M.) programs within higher education to implement a short study abroad program in existing master's-level curricula. The study utilized a faculty-led short-term study abroad approach that complements institutional E.M. curricula while providing students with intercultural experiences and learning within select regions of Spain. Carefully crafted critical reflective assignments and well-planned field experiences drawn from a robust curriculum can build students' learning capacity through applied learning. This paper provides insight for administrators, curriculum developers, and instructors in preparing master's students to develop a better understanding of international E.M. that reflects the cultural needs of the different vulnerable populations impacted by global disasters.

Keywords: experiential learning, short study abroad, emergency management curricula, social vulnerability

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INTRODUCTION

Disasters and catastrophes have no boundaries in dispensing carnage and pose significant risks and consequences to nation-states. The world has witnessed these events in the form of natural disasters, acts of terrorism, technological events, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Today's global environment requires emergency managers to interact with communities from various cultures, religions, and beliefs whose residents may view problems and solutions differently than those practiced within the United States. Higher education continues to grapple with the issue of providing future public sector leaders with efficient, ethical, and empathetic service to culturally, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse communities (Alvarez & Timney, 2008; Brintnall, 2008; Knox & Haupt, 2015; Knox & Haupt, 2020; Revell, 2008; Ryan, 2010; Wyatt-Nichol & Antiwi-Boasiako, 2008). This situation prompts the need for educational institutions to enable students to become globalized by studying internationally through field experiences (Leask,

2001, 2009; Lee, 2017; Smith & Segbers, 2018, Tangney, 2017). Researchers acknowledge that there are educational challenges in linking a student's theoretical knowledge with practical experience in preparing students for rapid assimilation into the field of emergency management (E.M.) (Kapucu & Knox, 2013; McCreight, 2009; Waugh & Sadiq, 2011).

This study examines the pedagogical model of a short study abroad program emphasizing critical reflection outcomes. The research study occurred in the Spanish cities of Barcelona and Málaga. In both cities, students actively participated in significant learning events designed by their hosts, representing various higher-education institutions, first-responder agencies, military, private sector, and global non-profit organizations. These major learning events consisted of presentations, demonstrations, and drills culminating in a full-scale earthquake response exercise in which the students participated.

The study begins with an analysis of experiential learning practices within a faculty-led short-term study abroad (FLSTSA) E.M. master's curriculum. Following the analysis is a description of the methodology used and the results, including intercultural awareness, E.M. practices, and the impacts of collaboration through partnerships. Although previous research points to the benefits and effectiveness of study abroad programs in nursing, psychology, environmental studies, and business (Contreras, et al., 2018a; Edmonds, 2010; Peppas, 2005; Pipitone, 2018; Pipitone & Raghavan 2017; Smith & Segbers, 2018; Tarrant & Lyons, 2012; Tarrant, et al., 2014), no known research has examined the impact of participation in a study abroad program for students studying E.M. curricula. To address this gap in the literature, the current study narrows the focus to an FLSTSA program incorporated within an E.M. master's degree program.

This exploratory case study aims to examine the extent to which experiential learning, utilizing a short study abroad model along with reflective practices, is essential to the preparedness of E.M. professionals upon graduating from an E.M. master's program.

Despite research efforts that examine the educational needs of the Emergency Management (E.M.) field, little has been published that identifies the goals, objectives, and benefits that can be gleaned from short study abroad programs. Further, international study abroad in graduate programs to expose professionals in training to global issues has remained under-studied (Shultz et al., 2007; Slantcheva-Durst & Danowski, 2018). This study attempts to contribute to existing knowledge while stimulating interest for others to publish in this area. The significance of short study abroad programs is relatively new and remains a neglected area for implementation in E.M. curricula.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studying abroad, a form of experiential learning is considered a high-impact educational practice within U.S. higher education since it is an immersive environment in which students can extend their knowledge outside the classroom (Brownwell & Swaner, 2010; Kuh, 2008; Pipitone, 2018). These opportunities include cognitive, affective, and interpersonal gains (Dwyer, 2004; McKeown, 2009) while enhancing international awareness and multicultural competency (Anderson et al., 2006; Lewin, 2009). Five goals identified from a survey of more than 400

instructors who taught short-term study abroad courses revealed that course content, career development, travel skills, and challenging ethnocentrism were the goals most strongly endorsed by participants (Niehaus & Wenger, 2019). Many higher-education institutions have embraced short-term programs, which can significantly bolster student enrollment while diversifying the range of students who study abroad because of cost and less time commitment (Donnelly-Smith, 2009; Long et al., 2010; Mills et al., 2010). However, the literature reveals a minimal body of knowledge for study abroad components within E.M. curricula (Siebeneck & Richardson, 2019). Scholars McEntire and Mathis (2007) also pointed out that the United States does not understand disasters and E.M. institutions worldwide.

The student body makeup of many E.M. master's programs today consists of nontraditional students who are practitioners as first responders and traditional students who may be new to these fields (Carey, 2016). Therefore, academics must address the challenges that nontraditional adult learners can present to E.M. programs in their delivery approaches to learning (Goldberg, 2012; Maxfield, 2009; Russell & Fisher, 2014). Short study abroad programs allow students from nontraditional backgrounds to participate in an international experience while studying a particular discipline back in the United States (Spencer & Tuma, 2007). Many adult learners have already attained the necessary skills, techniques, and culture of an active profession (Lieb, 1991). These students utilize background information to increase their point of reference by applying Generative Learning Theory (Donahue et al., 2010). Generative Learning Theory, founded by Wittrock in 1974, suggests that new ideas must be integrated with preexisting mental schema. Like this theory, Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) posits that new knowledge is attained through meaningful experience and becomes a driving factor for study abroad courses (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012). ELT, developed by David A. Kolb in 1984, draws on the works of scholars from several disciplines—notably John Dewey (1910, 1938), Paulo Freire (1974), Kurt William James (1890), Carl Jung (1931), Lewin (1951), Jean Piaget (1970, 1971), and Carl Rogers (1961, 1969)—to develop a holistic model of the experiential learning process and a multilinear model of adult development. Forms of experiential learning, such as study abroad models, provide institutions with the luxury of simultaneously dispensing varying degrees of applied knowledge to E.M. students.

Scholars and practitioners alike argued that experiential learning pedagogies enable E.M. students to obtain practical, hands-on learning opportunities that should be incorporated into E.M. curricula in higher education (Alexander, 2013; Kapucu & Knox, 2013; Kushma, 2003; McCreight, 2014; Stevens, 2013; Thomas & Mileti, 2003). For these reasons, it has been implied that E.M. programs have an obligation to provide experiential learning opportunities to their students (Carey, 2018; Jensen, 2014; Jensen & Kirkpatrick, 2019; Knox & Harris, 2016; Muffet-Willet et al., 2015). The use of experiential learning in studies of multiple academic fields has been linked to students' more remarkable ability of students to address real-world issues while developing experience in the assessment of problems and practical decision-making (Cullen, 2013; Ertmer & Koehler, 2014; Feist et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2011; Razali & Zainal, 2013; see also Danko, 2020).

CRITICAL REFLECTION PROCESS

Experiential learning enables learners to process experiences that lead to reflection and integrate new concepts into existing knowledge (Goldberg, 2012; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Kolb (1984) provided a template in which a learner experiences, reflects, thinks, and acts. Scholars pointed to the value reflection brings to students in organizing past experiences and drawing upon them when needed (Schon, 1983; Russell & Fisher, 2014).

Ash and Clayton (2009a) pointed out that critical reflection can be achieved through structure and guidance in helping students derive meaningful learning when they are outside the traditional classroom setting. To aid in generating and deepening learning within an applied learning environment, the DEAL Model for Critical Reflection activities can be utilized within a study abroad program (Ash & Clayton, 2004; Ash & Clayton, 2009b). The model consists of three sequential steps: describing experiences to make meaning, examining experiences linked to desired learning outcomes, and articulating the learning to capture what can be acted on and improve the quality of learning. Each step of this model has specific prompts for students to follow, which guide them in developing their understanding rather than reproducing learned material through instruction (Clayton & Ash, 2004; Howard, 1998).

The use of debriefing sessions taking place immediately after a site visit of an entity or event effectively re-emphasizes ideas presented during these visits and in helping students synthesize information as part of their reflection process (Peppas, 2005). These debriefing sessions provide students with a forum to share what they have learned from the day's events while the faculty briefly revisits the progress of planned program objectives (Moates, et al., 2008).

APPLYING THE CRITICAL REFLECTION PROCESS TO THE CASE STUDY

Through daily interactions with their instructors and exploring the inner workings of various host agencies, students could connect similarities and then contrast and compare the differences of services found within the United States. These comparisons allowed students to comprehend the unique hazards faced by the country studied. This process opens the floor up for questions directed toward the host, which leads to critical reflections gained from each event students experienced during their stay abroad.

The researchers decided to conduct debriefing sessions (Moates, et al., 2008; Peppas, 2005) in the form of an after-action review (AAR) after each significant learning event held in both Spanish cities., The AAR is a process used by participants to reflect on a project, program, or event to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement and was initially developed by the United States Army (Department of the Army, 1993). AARs also enabled faculty to provide guidance and direction in clarifying reflective assignments' production (Carey, 2018).

The reflection process began with capturing individual student thoughts through reflective journaling conducted daily throughout their stay at the two venues. Each student compiled these daily reflections and notes taken from observations and AARs, culminating in a final reflection paper. In this way, the critical reflection process captures experiential strategies, goals, and objectives of the FLSTSA.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers adopted an exploratory case study approach. Students could utilize materials and resources through site visits, guest lectures, and practical exercises to enhance disciplinary learning (Hovde, 2002; Kapucu, 2011) while developing intercultural competence (Niehaus et al., 2019). The current study assessed an FLSTSA program by reviewing written journal responses, reflection papers, and observations. To protect the participants, the researchers received permission to conduct the study from the researchers' respective Institutional Review Boards and ensured the participants' anonymity by removing any personal identifiers. The research questions designed were informed by prior studies (Carey, 2018; Sobkowiak, 2019). The following research questions were constructed to elicit responses from the participants to gain an understanding of what attributes learned from this case study could be transferred into practice for use within E.M. in the United States:

- What are some significant benefits students have acquired from a short-term field-based practicum abroad?
- To what extent did students reflect on cross-cultural experiences within the two cities they visited in Spain?
- How can students apply their experiences learned in Spain to their E.M. environment back in the United States in theory and practice?

The researchers utilized purposeful sampling in choosing 13 participants from a population of 15 eligible students; two declined to participate in the study to obtain data from an information-rich population (Patton, 1990). An information-rich population provides researchers with valuable data from a limited number of people who illuminate the study's questions. The criteria for selecting the participants of this study required them to be enrolled as full-time graduate students in good standing within an E.M. program. The research study took place in the Spanish cities of Barcelona and Málaga for 10 days in 2018. A private urban college in the northeast hosted the short study abroad program and provided the researchers with a base of support for their research. In obtaining several perspectives to establish a converging line of inquiry data, various methods were employed in the collection process (Rubin & Rubin, 2011; Yin, 2014). In addition, the researchers used independent researchers to perform an analysis for comparison and present the data as in-depth descriptions (Yin, 2009). To minimize research bias, the data was collected and triangulated through written journal responses, reflection papers, and observations.

The researchers developed a priori codes from professional definitions found in the literature review, theoretical orientations, and personal experiences, which were a preliminary guide for this study (Bulmer, 1979; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Maxwell, 2005; Strauss, 1987). As noted by Stemler (2001) a priori codes are categories (data sets) established before the analysis based upon theories or similar topics. Three rounds of coding followed. The first round of coding entailed the creation of a data book using quotations from reflection assignments and observations separated by Excel rows into chunks (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A chunk represents a single idea, expression, or concept in interpreting the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the second coding round, each chunk was coded using a brief, exact, and accurate phrase that the researcher deemed best to describe the original statement (Saldaña,

2009). A third round of coding was conducted to differentiate among passages and consolidate these codes to generate fine-grained themes (Dey, 1993; Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

MAJOR LEARNING EVENTS

To enable participants to capture and reflect on significant learning events at E.M.'s tactical, operational, and strategic levels, students actively participated in several events offered by various host agencies within the Spanish cities of Barcelona and Málaga. Student experiences ranged from first responder technologies (underground fire hydrant systems, autonomous vehicles, robots, etc.) to advanced life support (ALS) care provided by physicians, nurses, and emergency medical technicians (EMT) (the level of care is based on the severity of a patient), and a tiered military response and support system provided by the Military Emergencies Unit (Unidad Militar de Emergencias or UME).[1] Table 1 displays the host and major EM event in which students participated in the city of Barcelona. Table 2 displays the same for students attending the XII Conference on Security, Emergencies and Disasters hosted at the University of Málaga, Spain. Various drills by first responders, government entities, and not-for-profit organizations culminated in a full-scale exercise of an earthquake response on the grounds of the University Málaga.

Table 1.   Major Events in the City of Barcelona

Event and Date	Host
Presentations on wildfire mitigation and fire protection services, 5/28/2018	The Pau Costa Foundation, Barcelona[2]
Police operations and command structure, 5/28/2018	Ministry of the Interior at Police Headquarters, Barcelona
Presentations on emergency medicine and nursing programs, 5/28/2018	Institute of Emergency Medicine (IEM), Barcelona
Presentations and demonstrations of EMS operations, Terrorism preparedness and response, and tour of the 112 Call System (the equivalent of the U.S. "911" system), 5/29/2018	Emergency Medical Services (EMS, Catalonia
Fire suppression operations and command structure, 5/30/2018	Fire Department, Barcelona

Table 2.   Major Events at the XII Conference on Security, Emergencies and
Disasters Hosted by the University of Málaga

Event and Date	Host
Poster presentation: Students from both institutions collaborated and exchanged individual poster presentations, 5/31/2018	University of Málaga
Drill: Tactical operations and active shooter response, 5/31/2018	Málaga Police Department
Presentations on capabilities, policies, and practices, 5/31/2018	Military Emergencies Unit (UME)
Drills: Aeromedical evacuation, water rescue, 5/31/2018	Spanish Airforce
Faculty Presentations to Conference, 5/31/2018	Researchers (guests) and the University of Málaga Faculty
Full-scale exercise of earthquake: Students took part in a missing persons and reunification drill speaking the English language only to test fluency by local police on, 6/1/2018	Málaga Police Department
Agencies taking part in Full-scale exercise of the earthquake, 6/1/2018	Regional Hospitals Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Málaga Fire Department Military Emergencies Unit (UME) Spanish Airforce

RESULTS

The results revealed four themes from the data analysis (see Table 3). Of the 13 participants, four were male, and nine were female. The range of ages (in years) was 22 to 48. The educational level of the participants was second-year master's students. The case description contains detailed narratives for each emergent theme derived from the data analysis. Participant comments are marked Participant 1 through Participant 13.

Table 3.   Case Description Themes and Theme Description

Theme	Theme Description
Building intercultural competence	This theme focuses on the need to become culturally aware in responding to the global community
Emergency Management Practices	This theme focuses on the need to understand E.M. cultural perspectives outside of the United States. This theme also focuses on the need to become culturally aware in responding to the global community
Professional Networking	This theme focuses on networking and building relationships with E.M. professionals to reconnect in the future
Impacts of Collaboration and Partnerships	This theme focuses on how collaboration leads to meeting goals and objectives in a multicultural setting by establishing relationships

Observations. For this study, each researcher took on the role of participant-as-observer in collecting data through observations of selected locations within the two cities in Spain. One key observation made by all three researchers was the active participation of students during their visit to Catalonia's EMS Operations and Call Center. Students attended a full day of classes, demonstrations, and hands-on activities, including a tour of the agency's facilities. The researchers noted that questions posed to host facilitators by students were used to compare and contrast the EMS practices of the United States and Spain. The entire cohort of students was amazed by the tiered-response approach of dispatching the appropriate personnel based on the severity of a patient in need. Data collected from the observations revealed that peer-to-peer learning took place during this experience. The students could identify and acknowledge that EMS practices could be improved within the United States by following Catalonia's model. Additional data collected from the researchers' observations were consistent with data captured from student reflection journals and papers.

Building Intercultural Competence

This concept of building intercultural competence allowed learners to identify similarities and differences between their own culture and the cultures practiced in Spain. Participant 12 stated,

> The City of Málaga was my favorite part of the trip; the incredible views and friendly people who assisted if needed are just a few items worth mentioning. Our instructors set up the venues and introduced us to our counterpart students during the poster presentation, but the rest was up to us to exchange information and gain knowledge … from attending a Flamenco show to spending time with the residents and students from the University of Málaga helped us to immerse ourselves into the culture.

Students were also able to discern differences practiced within the culture of Spain. Five of the 13 graduate student participants could sense the political division among the people of Spain similar to their own experiences as Americans. Participant 9 stated,

> I watched a pro-Spain rally/ protest outside the court building in the Gothic District where Catalonians for Unification shouted support for the recent action that Madrid had taken against Catalonia.

During their stay in Barcelona, eight students identified various social inequities they witnessed with the need to address issues like homelessness intervention along with the positive aspects of having access to medical care. Participant 7 stated,

> Emergency Management is all about social justice. I sat there and thought "wow" being an emergency manager deals with a lot of social justice issues in the communities they serve …. Understanding social justice issues is vital to emergency management where everyone can benefit from it on a global scale.

Emergency Management Practices. Of the 13 graduate student participants, 10 believed that E.M. is practiced differently in Spain compared to the United States, with some similarities as to its approach. For instance, students took part in a missing persons and reunification drill with the Málaga police, where students made connections to the interagency mechanisms of collaboration (IMC) concept practiced within the United States (Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2012). IMCs provide agencies with protocols that facilitate collaboration in propagating a "unity of effort" (Ramsay et al., 2020). This finding was captured within eight of the 13 reflection papers prepared by students.

Many participants believed that medical response practiced in Catalonia, Spain, provided patients with a higher level of care than in the United States. Participant 1 shared in her reflection paper stating:

> I was personally inspired to find that nurses play a vital role in first response and immediately noted that contrasted with the role nurses play in the U.S. I recognized that the primary difference was due sadly to significant cultural, social, and legal concepts adhered to in the U.S. involving financial and medical responsibility, malpractice insurance coverage.

Participant 11 was most concerned about the call intake and response processes in which people receive medical care. He stated,

> [Catalonia's process was] ... impressive and more elaborate level of emergency response … strictly from a patient perspective, is that the person requesting help is basically diagnosed on the emergency phone call, is what I find perplexing.

Participant 6 added to this discussion, stating:

> If this system were implemented within the United States this process would minimize the volume of patients hospitals receive on a daily basis.

Professional Networking. This theme of networking and building relationships with E.M. professionals while abroad identified how the process led participants in establishing a career path. Participant 9 connected with various first responder agencies and E.M. organizations during a mixer event at the University of Málaga. He stated,

> We talked a great deal about our experiences in the field and the possibility of communicating ideas and experiences in the future.

Participant 7 was able to network with two members of a Virtual Operations Support Team (VOST), a private organization found in many countries that help authorities manage information during disasters. VOST teams are activated to monitor social media, support situational awareness for emergency managers, and disseminate official communications (Reuter, 2012). Participant 7 stated,

> The two members informed me that VOST New York is headed by an alumnus of the [student's] academic institution who graduated a few years ago. They keep connections in New York.

Participant 7 exchanged emails with the VOST members to continue networking. In her final reflection paper, this participant also shared that this professional networking experience came full circle for her back home in the United States.

Impacts of Collaboration and Partnerships

Collaborations. The importance of collaboration and networking cannot be understated. In Spain, an established relationship with the University of Málaga's Chair of Security, Emergency and Catastrophes, and the Department of Behavioral Sciences Methodology and Psychobiology enabled the scheduling of their students alongside with their U.S. student counterparts in attending an annual Conference on Security, Emergencies and Disasters held on campus.[3] Students from both academic institutions attended a poster presentation session where they exchanged their ongoing research and client-based service-learning projects. All 13-student reflection papers revealed that their counterparts were eager and receptive to exchanging information about their college and E.M. experiences in Spain. The papers also revealed that the participants felt the same and reciprocated sharing their knowledge learned in the United States.

Participant 9 shared,

> The first day [at the University of Málaga] we presented our course capstone, a Constructive Action (C.A.) [similar to a client-based service-learning project] … to the attendees. [The students] also discussed the differences of how the U.S., Spain, and the U.N. view disaster and emergency management with the need for more collaborative practices.

Partnerships

The entire collaborative pinnacle between the two academic institutions was possible through networking contacts made by one of the researchers in 2016, who is very active in the field of EMS (Contreras, et al., 2018b). The result was the establishment of a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) that has benefitted faculty, staff, and students thereafter (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2019). The ongoing collaboration allowed for the planning and implementation of future visits to New York City (NYC) in which faculty, staff, and students from Spain visited and experienced the different perspectives of E.M. in a 10-day academic visit. The experience starting in 2017 was so beneficial that the NYC visit became an annual pilgrimage for graduate students from Spain. Likewise, the students from NYC attended the annual conference in Málaga, witnessed the graduate students' capstone project, and engaged in networking events with students and professionals in the field of E.M.

DISCUSSION

In the United States, we celebrate the differences, experiences, and commonalities of the multicultural communities we serve as emergency managers. Students learn how different cultures interpret a crisis while tailoring specific plans to address the needs of impacted communities while respecting their cultural beliefs. This situation also allows students to focus on applying their critical thinking skills in reviewing resiliency strategies that may need to be implemented in addressing vulnerable populations impacted by global disasters. Since critical thinking and cultural competency are underlying components of the Next Generation of Core Competencies for Emergency Management Professionals and their behavioral anchors for measurement practiced within the United States (Feldmann-Jensen et al., 2017; Knox & Haupt, 2020), course managers are recommended to incorporate this same strategy into FLSTSAs. In this way, competencies continue to be reinforced and practiced in a global environment while abroad.

In building intercultural competence, the participants revealed that they gained knowledge by attending events offered during their stay, including political demonstrations, festivals, shows, and visits to select museums. This finding was consistent with Czerwinoka et al. (2015) in obtaining new knowledge about another culture. Intercultural competence prepares students for diverse cultural settings and working in a culturally diverse workforce in various international workplaces (Sobkowiak, 2019).

Since a gap in the literature remains within study abroad education for E.M. programs, other disciplines have informed E.M. educators regarding the use of this type of progressive pedagogy in experiential learning. Research studies on the benefits of study abroad programs indicate that these types of experiences improve students' cultural sensitivity, increase adaptability, and improve employability (Doyle, 2009; DuVivier & Patitu, 2017; Layton, 2019; Peppas, 2005; Slantcheva-Durst & Danowski, 2018; Niehaus & Wegener, 2018; Witkowsky & Mendez, 2018). Notably, the FLSTSA approach can positively affect a student's ability to take on leadership roles (Geyer et al., 2017), an extremely relevant core competency that must be demonstrated by today's emergency managers in practice (Blanchard, 2005; Feldmann-Jensen et al., 2017).

The researchers recommend that institutions of E.M. programs incorporate short study abroad components into their existing higher-education practices. Moreover, academics, policymakers, and practitioners should examine foreign E.M. agencies' higher-education policies and practices, just as Green and Tong (2019) argue that the same should be done for police higher education within the United States (Comiskey et al., 2021). Imparting students with this knowledge enables them to deepen their understanding of how E.M. is practiced abroad. Many Generation Z students indicate that applied learning makes the process enjoyable while providing real-world knowledge and skills that prepare them to enter today's workforce (Seemiller & Grace, 2018).

Strategic collaborations, partnerships, and networking are critical aspects of study abroad programs. Faculty, staff, and students can work with colleagues and exchange ideas, best practices, and other essential information in E.M. In a domestic setting, Knox and Harris (2016) have shown that well-designed experiential learning, along with collaborative partnerships, can facilitate student gains in E.M. skills, including decision-making processes. Networking only adds to the power of knowledge-sharing and best practices, especially when stress levels are at their highest.

While findings for this study show promise in this learning model, scholars point to its limitations from a student's perspective as it relates to their employment obligations and financial constraints (Ryan, 2010), including the inability to absorb and process information about new locations and their cultures (Cushner & Karim, 2003). Furthermore, critics warn that several studies point to the need for longer-term study abroad programs for students to obtain greater intercultural learning experiences in promoting global competence (Dwyer, 2004; Paige & Vande Berg, 2012). Finally, Niehaus et al. (2019) argue that FLSTA programs are designed based on an institution's curriculum, which provides discipline-based experiences versus the need for intercultural learning often caused by disciplinary socialization (Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002).

Student success depends on instructors providing clear guidance in articulating their experiences by producing structured reflective assignments. This becomes paramount in measuring pre-established learning objectives as part of the FLSTA program. Otherwise, the study abroad experience becomes a brief tour, a trip, or a sightseeing expedition in a foreign country (Montrose, 2002), which Woolf (2007) refers to as educational tourism.

CONCLUSION

Working collaborative relationships with academic institutions and emergency service organizations abroad acts as a catalyst for unique learning experiences to occur for students. An integral part of the success of any short study abroad program lies in the commitment of all parties involved (faculty, colleges, and agencies) to collaborate and coordinate resources in a timely fashion to meet student learning objectives. Increasing cultural competency knowledge, skills, and abilities in E.M. higher education require a commitment by program directors, faculty, and staff (Haupt & Knox, 2019). Carefully crafted critical reflective assignments allow students to connect their field experiences while broadening their appreciation of cultural diversity. Studying abroad aids in the development of intercultural competence (Walsh, 2010), which can

also increase a student's value in competing for employment globally (Freedman, 2010; Peppas, 2005; Smith & Mitry, 2008; Sobkowiak, 2019). This experiential learning pedagogy allows students to deepen their understanding of how E.M. is practiced outside of the United States. Associated program learning goals and objectives for an E.M. study abroad program could include diversity learning, governmental processes, collaboration, professional development, and critical thinking. Wholly meeting these goals requires subjects to be taught at the academic institution before departure and revisited at the end of the study abroad experience.

The study identified the benefits of transferring reflective thoughts to journal entries into a final reflection paper assignment. As noted by Goldberg (2012), journaling formalizes the reflection process in student learning through the richness of their writing. The capstone of the short study abroad rests with the student's reflections documented within their final reflection papers. The value of this assignment solidifies the learned experiences students have captured during their trip and thus completes the reflective process.

This study builds upon extant E.M. literature and advances the discipline in providing students with relevant field and academic experiences within a new cultural setting. Various studies have shown (Antonakopoulou, 2013; McKeown, 2009; Peppas, 2005; Tarrant & Lyons, 2012; Tarrant, et al., 2014) that faculty establishing a deliberate learning environment along with the inclusion of intentional pedagogical interventions can ensure an effective short-term program (Donnelly-Smith, 2009; Long et al., 2010). This creates a culturally immersive and focused learning environment through intentional program structure and pedagogy (Pipitone, 2018). Furthermore, the study has drawn attention to the benefits to both students and academic institutions in which FLSTA program can offer the discipline of E.M.

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[1] A branch of the Spanish Armed Forces responsible for providing disaster relief throughout Spain and abroad if required.

[2] A global non-profit foundation created in memory of a firefighter who died in a forest fire with an aim to promote fire ecology, wildfire management, and prevention, headquartered in Barcelona, Spain.

[3] A two-day conference consisting of lectures, panel discussions, workshops, exhibitions, and demonstrations by emergency response organizations. Top-ranking national and international speakers address current civil and military issues including psychological and healthcare-based intervention, logistics, rescue procedures, civil protection, and integral security in emergency and disaster situations. The event concludes with a full-scale exercise involving many organizations including civil and military resources.