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Transformational Leadership in Club Sports: An Instrument for Evaluation and Assessment

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Transformational Leadership in Club Sports:
An Instrument for Evaluation and Assessment

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Master of Education in Recreation and Sport Management

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Stephen F. Austin State University
Bachelor of Science in Animal Science, 2016

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Abstract

Campus Recreation and its programs can be used as a way to combat the national trends of decreasing enrollment and retention (Weaver, Forte, & McFadden, 2017; Kampf & Teske, 2013). In fact, 62% of students indicate that Campus Recreation programs are a factor when choosing an institution and 67% indicate that recreation programs were a factor when deciding to stay at a particular institution (Forrester, 2014). As a program within Campus Recreation, Club Sports specifically is perceived to have the greatest health and wellbeing benefits out of all Campus Recreation programming (Lower, Turner, & Petersen, 2013). Due to the voluntary nature of Club Sports, Transformational Leadership (Bass, 1985) may be the most prevalent leadership style (Chan & Mak, 2014). The purpose of this study is to determine if Club Sport Presidents exhibit Transformational Leadership characteristics. The Global Transformational Leadership Survey (Carless et al., 2000) was sent to all Club Sport members. Fall '17 Club Presidents received a separate survey which obtained information about their leadership experience on campus. Results: The average GTL score was 31.13 out of a possible 35 with a standard deviation of 2.94. There was not a significant difference between High and Low Involvement groups $t(25) = -.586$, $p = .563$. Club Sport Members perceived their Fall 2017 Club Presidents to exhibit characteristics of Transformational Leadership. However, it does not appear that the amount of time a President spends in a Club Sports leadership role has an impact on these characteristics.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Institutions of higher education are currently experiencing a decline in enrollment and retention (Kampf & Teske, 2013; Weaver, Forte, & McFadden, 2017). Lately, Campus Recreation and its programming have been cited as one way to combat such issues (Lifschutz, 2012; Weaver et al., 2017). Campus Recreation is a department on most college campuses that “provide services, programs, equipment, facilities, and staff that provide recreation opportunities for the entire campus community” (NIRSA, 2018). It offers numerous activities including intramural and club sports, cardio, weight training, wellness programs, aquatics, and even First Aid and CPR classes (Forrester, 2014). In fact, 62 % of students indicate that Campus Recreation and its programs are important factors when choosing a school, and 67% indicate that Campus Recreation and its programs were critical factors when deciding to remain enrolled at an institution (Forrester, 2014). Historically and statistically, Campus Recreation specializes in engaging college students and should be viewed as an asset to affront national trends (McDowell, Deterding, Elmore, Morford, & Morris, 2016). However, Campus Recreation and its programs have long been ignored by researchers while Campus Recreation professionals continually struggle to prove their worth.

Without the ability to prove their value, Campus Recreation departments find it difficult to get critical funding for new facilities, renovations of current facilities, and new equipment that may also support increased retention and enrollment. By demonstrating through research that Campus Recreation extends the mission of higher education beyond the classroom and teaches students a range of skills, Campus Recreation may be proven valuable in the eyes of higher education administrators. Campus Recreation provides numerous opportunities for student involvement and current literature indicates that as student involvement increases, so too does

the retention rates of such students (Weaver et al., 2017). Skills and attributes associated with student involvement in Campus Recreation include time management, respect for others, sense of belonging, and especially leadership skills (Forrester, 2014; Warner & Dixon, 2013).

Freshmen who utilize Campus Recreation facilities and programs generally earn a higher grade point average (GPA) and also complete more credit hours during the course of a semester than those who do not (Kampf & Teske, 2013). Campus Recreation and its programs provide opportunities for student involvement, which create a sense of belonging that has a positive effect on retention and enrollment on college campuses (Dugan, Turman, & Torrez, 2015; Kampf & Teske, 2013; Weaver et al., 2017). According to Henchy (2011), 81% of students indicated that Campus Recreation and its offerings contributed to their sense of belonging at an institution. While the literature suggests these positive outcomes of Campus Recreation involvement, it is still unknown specifically how such a sense of belonging is fostered.

Club Sports is a program area within Campus Recreation, providing competitive or recreational sports opportunities for non-varsity athletes in a wide range of sports. As a program within Campus Recreation, a Club Sport program offers many opportunities for leadership and student development to an estimated two million athletes nationwide (Lifschutz, 2012). Although Club Sports is perceived to have the greatest health and wellbeing benefits out of all Campus Recreation programming, very little literature exists on the topic (Lower, Turner, & Petersen, 2013). Club Sports is unique in that all members and leaders are students and all are volunteers that share a common interest. Each Club is led by a group of officers, usually a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary, which volunteer for such roles and are elected by their club members. The officers bear most of the burden for the direction and success of the club and are also the focus of student development programming within Club Sports. While other Campus

Recreation programs focus on the development of physical traits and competition, Club Sports emphasizes student development and experiential learning in areas such as leadership, conflict resolution, time management, and communication among others (Weaver et al., 2017).

The biggest reported area of growth for most Club Sports participants is leadership (Dugan et al., 2015; Hardin, 2015). As a volunteer leadership organization, Club Sports are not dissimilar from registered student organizations (RSOs) or other volunteer leadership organizations on campus, but different in that they incorporate sport as the vehicle through which their activities are carried out. Current literature indicates that the most useful leadership style in such organizations, due to the intrinsic nature of the activities, is Transformational Leadership (Chan & Mak, 2014; Posner, 2015). Transformational Leadership focuses on the intrinsic needs of group members, thereby creating cohesion and unity within the group which fosters a culture that aligns with the goals of group leadership (Bass, 1985; Callow, Smith, Hardy M., Arthur, and Hardy J., 2009; Carless, Wearing, & Mann, 2000;; Overstreet, Byrd, Hanna, & Hazen, 2015). As the intrinsic needs of group members are met, their satisfaction with the group increases as does their sense of belonging (Smith & Chenowith, 2015). While Transformational Leadership has been assessed and analyzed in many areas of student life, Club Sports remains unevaluated.

In order to better understand Club Sport leadership and its possible impact on Club members and sense of belonging, this study investigates how Club Sport Presidents are perceived by their members. The purpose of this study is to determine if Club Sport Presidents are perceived to exhibit Transformational Leadership characteristics. The presence of Transformational Leadership characteristics will be assessed by answering the following questions:

RQ1: To what degree is Transformational Leadership exhibited by Club Sport Presidents?

RQ2: Is experience in a Club Sports leadership role related to the exhibition of Transformational Leadership characteristics?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

What are Club Sports?

A Club Sport is defined as a group of students that voluntarily organizes to further their common interest in an activity through participation and competition (Lifschutz, 2012). Club Sports can range from the usual lacrosse, soccer, and volleyball to more niche sports such as quidditch, ballroom dance, and even rodeo. The foundation of Club Sport programs are often clubs without a varsity counterpart such as Bass Fishing, Ultimate Frisbee, and Rugby (Connections, 2017). Clubs like these stand out due to their uniqueness and ability to attract specific populations. Bass Fishing, Ultimate Frisbee, and Rugby also have a larger national presence and may even help recruit students to particular universities. Club Sports and Club Sport programs are usually ran by the Campus Recreation department on most college campuses. Club Sports can also exist as a registered student organization outside of Campus Recreation, however this study will focus strictly on those housed under Campus Recreation. As a Program under Campus Recreation, Club Sports are governed loosely by an administration of one to three staff members that help the clubs balance their budget, fundraise, and plan travel in accordance with university policies (Weaver et al., 2017).

Club Sports are unique from Intramural Sports and other Campus Recreation programs in that they practice regularly, host games, and compete in national competitions (Lifschutz, 2012). Intramural sports are more recreational in nature and intramural teams do not interact year round like Club Sports do. Club Sports are often seen as the competitive median between intramural

sports and varsity sports. Not quite as time intense as varsity sports, Club Sports are a way for students to pursue their passion while still enabling them time to dedicate to studies (Connections, 2017). While much less known and celebrated, Club Sports are actually the origin of varsity sports and may in fact support the educational mission of higher education more so than varsity sports, especially in reference to twenty-first century collegiate athletics (Lifschutz, 2012; Warner & Dixon, 2013).

In order to form a Club Sport, some Campus Recreation departments require the club to exist as a student organization for a period of time before they can apply to be a Club Sport making it somewhat exclusive. Other universities simply require that a group have a certain number of members and a faculty or staff advisor before they are allowed to be part of the Club Sport program under Campus Recreation. Most Club Sports allow any student to be a member but each club may have different restrictions on membership set forth by their national governing bodies. Clubs can recruit new members in almost any way they see fit including tabling on campus, holding open tryouts, posting flyers, or even visiting local high schools and teaching younger athletes about their sport. Joining a club is often as simple as paying dues set by the club and filling out a waiver, as required by the university (Weaver et al., 2017).

There are generally two types of Club Sports, recreational and competitive. Recreational clubs will typically only practice and will rarely travel to compete against other collegiate club teams. Competitive clubs will practice several times a week and travel nationwide to compete against other schools either in a league or as part of a sanctioned tournament held by their national governing body. The recurrence of practice and year round involvement allows for relationships to be established between members, thus filling the need for camaraderie of former high school athletes and increasing their sense of belonging (Connections, 2017). Club Sport

members join their respective clubs for a litany of reasons. Warner and Dixon (2013) identified four that seem to propel Club Sports and also develop a sense of community: common interest, leadership opportunities, voluntary activity, and competition.

Club Sports are funded in part through an allocation from the University, the amount of which greatly depends on the university itself. Clubs may request more or less funding at the end of each academic year based on their success and the expectations and overarching goals of Club Sport administration. These goals usually include a fundraising component, a community service component, and a competitive component. However, university allocations are often meager, forcing clubs to find other ways to raise money (Weaver et al., 2017). Club Sports are also funded through member dues, negotiated and set by the officers of the club. Dues can range from zero to thousands of dollars depending on the sport and funding from the university. Clubs can raise money in enumerable ways aside from their allocations and dues. Some standbys are t-shirt sales, hosting a tournament, getting a sponsor, or even donations from supporters.

Club Sports are governed by Club Sports administration which is a program area of Campus Recreation Departments, and their national governing bodies, however within each club there are several leadership opportunities. Club Sports are unique in that they are student run, and voluntarily organized and led. Clubs often have three to four executive officers that oversee club business: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Each club is unique in what these officers do and how they interact. Some clubs let the President do most of the work while the others pitch in when needed, other officer groups delegate very well and each works equally toward the goals of the club. Officers are responsible for the planning of travel, meeting with national governing bodies of their sport, fundraising, and remaining in good standing with

Campus Recreation. Club Officers are elected by the members of the club and the club may elect new officers every year or even every semester depending on the club’s constitution.

Table 1. Club Sport National Governing Bodies

| National Governing Body | | Sport(s) |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| NIRSA | National Intramural - Recreational Sports Association | Soccer, flag football, basketball, tennis, & Volleyball |
| NCWSA | National Collegiate Water Ski Association | Water Ski & Water Sports |
| NCCGA | National Collegiate Club Golf Association | Golf |
| NCBBA | National Club Basketball Association | Basketball |
| NCBA | National Club Baseball Association | Baseball |
| NCFA | National Club Football Association | Club Tackle Football |
| ACHA | American Collegiate Hockey Association | Ice Hockey |
| NCRHA | National Collegiate Roller Hockey association | Roller Hockey |
| USAU | United States of America Ultimate | Men's and Women's Ultimate Frisbee |
| USAR | USA Rugby | Men's & Women's Rugby |

Club Sport officers assume a significant amount of responsibility when they take their positions within the club. Officers must balance academic and social life as well, and because of this balancing act officers are often at risk for high levels of stress when compared to non-athletes or varsity athletes who have help or have no say in their training, travel, and budget (Connections, 2017). These officers interact on a weekly or even daily basis with Club Sports administration and are the faces of each club. They receive credit when a club does well and take

the blame when the club performs poorly. The voluntary nature of Club Sports requires significant dedication of time and energy, and the need to sway the members into the favor of the officers can make leading such an organization quite daunting.

Outcomes of Club Sport Participation

Club Sports emphasize student leadership and development through the very nature of the organization. Assessments of Club Sports have demonstrated that students who participate in Club Sports are subject to experiential learning, which enhances what is taught in the classroom and thereby furthers the mission of higher education (Dugan et al., 2015; Weaver et al., 2014). The most commonly identified outcomes of Club Sport participation are leadership, communication, conflict resolution, and time management (Lifschutz, 2012; Weaver et al., 2017). Student leadership is often identified as the biggest area of growth within Club Sport leaders (Dugan et al., 2015; Hardin, 2015).

Leadership is central to the mission of higher education, and Campus Recreation and Club Sports demonstrably supports the mission to that end (Dugan et al., 2015; Forrester, 2014). Club Sports instills a sense of pride through collegiate representation (Connections, 2017). Club teams often have showy jerseys representing the name of their school, as well as themselves, and any club sponsors which often contributes to the pride involved in participating in Club Sports. Pride is also associated with increased self-confidence and sense of belongingness to the club and to the university (Hardin, 2015; Warner & Dixon, 2013). Club Sports contributes to the idea that Campus Recreation as a whole has a positive effect on retention within its population, although very little Club Sport specific research exists (Hardin, 2015).

Volunteer Leadership Organizations

Volunteer leadership is a constant force on college campuses. Any student organization that does not extrinsically incentivize its leadership must meet the intrinsic needs of its leaders and followers (Bang, 2015). While Club Sports leadership has not been studied in the context of volunteer leadership, other non-profit and student organizations have been. Smith and Chenowith (2015) issued a self-assessment of leadership traits to business students and found that learning is in fact holistic rather than segmented. Minority students who were involved in formal and social activities outside the classroom earned higher grades, which creates an avenue to push these minority groups into co-curricular involvement. It was also found that students experience a higher level of satisfaction overall if students are involved co-curricularly. Retention rates were also higher in students involved in organizations outside of the classroom.

Bang (2015) found that younger volunteers are likely to be more satisfied with their role in the club when they have a higher level of respect for the club leaders. Sport organizations like Club Sports do not choose their members, which may inhibit younger members because club leaders may be inept or inadequate (Bang, 2015). Members want the leaders or officers of a club to guide the club and each member toward their goals and those that do so well will earn the following, respect, and admiration of club members. Student leaders should then aim for such goals. Rosch (2014) found that student leaders feel a greater responsibility to their peers than themselves, contributing to the idea that there is some intrinsic leadership involved in student organizations.

Gassman, Reed, and Widner (2014) found that students who were involved in an organization were more likely to aspire to leadership positions, and that those positions may contribute to overall development. It follows that the more involved a member is in an

organization, the more competencies are enhanced as well. Club Sports offers many competencies in which students may improve including leadership, communication, conflict resolution, and time management which makes Club Sports a valuable program for student growth.

Membership Characteristics. Jyoti and Bhau (2015) found that the interactions between a leader and their followers can have a positive impact on job performance if clear role relationships are established. These role relationships, regardless of specific context, are very important for the success of the organization. The leader(s) must have pleasant relationships with their club members in order for the members to want to participate and buy-in to the goals and mission of the club. Members of volunteer organizations also seem to be spurned by structure and hierarchy, and prefer autonomy instead (Posner, 2015). Volunteers want to help in the way that they feel they can help the best, and structure and hierarchy inhibits that will. Members also tend to become more loyal to an organization than any given leader, forcing leaders to adhere to the overarching purpose of the organization to get cooperation from its members (Balduck et al., 2010).

Traits of Volunteer Leaders

Leadership itself appears to be focused on the ability to get members involved or to buy-in to the goals of that particular leader for the good of the organization (Rosch, Collier, Thompson, 2015). Posner (2015) found that volunteer leadership hinges on the distinction between leaders and followers and understanding those differences, as well as adapting to meet the needs of followers. Volunteer leaders must be able to clearly articulate the goals of the organization and be able to motivate other volunteers despite few personal consequences (Posner, 2015). In the case of volunteer organizations, the leader needs the followers more than

the followers need the leader. Club members who do not see themselves as followers are also less likely to buy-in to the goals of a leader (Dugan et al., 2015). Those who do not support the leadership in power tend to halt the progress of the organization toward the goals of its leader which can create conflict.

Volunteer leaders do not have extrinsic financial incentives for members so they must consider members intrinsic needs (Posner, 2015). Transformational Leadership describes such needs and as Posner (2015) states, Transformational Leadership is useful in assessing volunteer leadership because they are acting out of intrinsic interest. Research by Chan and Mak (2014) suggests that Transformational Leadership may be the best leadership practice for volunteer organizations because members are likely to be more prideful and committed to an organization with a transformational leader.

Transformational Leadership

A Transformational Leader is one who is a model of integrity and fairness, sets clear goals, has high expectations, encourages others, provides support and recognition, gets people to look beyond self-interest, and inspires people to reach for the improbable (Bass, 1985). Transformational Leadership has had a positive impact in military, education, and public sectors as well as sport and is well regarded among leadership theories for its impact on followers (Smith, Arthur, Hardy, Callow, & Williams, 2013). Transformational Leadership has consistently been found within the context of sport, but has not been observed or assessed in Club Sports specifically (Smith et al., 2013). Transformational Leadership also appears to fit Posner's (2015) model in that it requires the leader to clearly state goals and be sensitive to the needs of the club members.

Bass (1985) went beyond defining Transformational Leadership by describing how one acts as a transformational leader. Bass describes a transformational leader as someone who creates an inspiring vision for the future. This vision allows followers to easily observe the goals of the leader and the organization, which, if agreeable, can create popularity and following within the membership. It is also important that the leader describes the vision in a way that is motivating to the members of the club, and to deliver that message in a way that is clear and effective. Finally, transformational leaders should build trust based relationships with their members. This particular tenet of the theory is very important. Building trust through relationships makes members feel valued to the leader which helps generate support. Without the support of the club, officers cannot be effective.

Who becomes a leader is more deeply entrenched into society than just drive. Rosch et al. (2015), found that there is no difference in motivation to lead between genders but there were significant differences between races, which may factor in to who and who is not a club officer. Other variables such as sexual orientation and identification may also have an effect, but these factors will not be evaluated in this study.

The goal of Club Sport leadership is to inspire volunteer members to buy in to the goals of the leader for the good of the club. Club leaders need that following because members will be more loyal to the organization than a leader, and the leader can be easily replaced. Since it is also difficult for officers to find other like-minded, dedicated individuals to help them run a club, it can become a one person show that can result in fast burnout, causing officers to plan out their year and convince members to buy in to their vision. Transformational Leadership is a powerful way of generating support and can ease the process because it requires the leader to create an inspiring vision for the future of the club, motivate people to buy into and deliver the vision,

manage delivery of the vision, and build strong, trust based relationships with their members (Bass & Riggio, 2006). If a leader manages to do a few of these things well, the club can be very resilient (Valero, Jung, & Andrew, 2015).

Jyoti and Bhau (2015) offer evidence that Transformational Leadership establishes high quality relationships with followers and therefore enhances the quality of the leader-member exchange which has a positive effect on job performance. High levels of Transformational Leadership are associated with greater volunteer satisfaction (Dwyer, Bono, Snyder, Nov, & Berson, 2013). Volunteers are generally more satisfied because of the enhanced meaningfulness of the work and higher quality team relationships forged by Transformational Leadership (Dwyer et al., 2013). Therefore, the more important the work or sport is to a person and the better the relationships within the team are, the more satisfied a volunteer member will be.

Transformational Leadership also enables followers to exceed expectations and can result in greater commitment as well (Smith, Young, Figgins, & Arthur, 2017).

Students study leadership theories and work in groups in the classroom to accomplish a task extrinsically rewarded by a grade, but this is only so effective in the development of leadership skills necessary to succeed in the workforce (Smith & Chenowith, 2015). Club Sports are a very unique venture in that they are student run, and the engagement of the student is voluntary in Club Sports, not coerced the way they are in the classroom. Club Sports also provides a way for students to voluntarily practice theory learned in the classroom. Whether it's effective business practices, leadership theory, communication, or sport management skills, Club Sports provides an opportunity for the growth and development of students.

Leadership and the ability to work in a team have long been valued not only in student organizations, but also in the workplace. Volunteer leadership positions demonstrate that

students have skill sets and values that employers are seeking (Greenbank, 2015). The skills that Club Sport officers learn during their tenure with the organization are useful and beneficial well beyond their college years. Their leadership skills make them valuable assets to businesses regardless of major or industry.

Club Sports have not been differentiated in existing research from Intramural Sports when there are significant differences between the two in terms of student development and investment (Hardin, 2015; Kampf & Teske, 2013). Unlike Rosch (2015) and Smith and Chenowith (2015) this study is a peer assessment instead of a self-assessment, which will produce club member's opinion of club leadership. This study will be useful not only for future investigation into Club Sports leadership but also for assessment of this particular program.

Chapter 3: Methods

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to determine if Club Sport Presidents are perceived to exhibit Transformational Leadership characteristics.

RQ1: To what degree is Transformational Leadership exhibited by Club Sport Presidents?

RQ2: Is experience in a Club Sports leadership role related to the exhibition of Transformational Leadership characteristics?

Survey

The Global Transformational Leadership survey (GTL) is a compilation of the literature on Transformational Leadership into a quick and effective seven item peer assessment. It has been used in business, sport, and other fields while demonstrating acceptable validity and reliability

(Cronbach's Alpha = .93) (Carless et al., 2000; Overstreet et al., 2013). Each of the seven questions includes a Likert scale ranging from one to five, one being least like the President of the Club, five meaning most like the President of the Club. The GTL measures the leadership style of each Club President via seven items and the seven elements of Transformational Leadership: vision, staff development, supportive leadership, empowerment, innovative thinking, leading by example, and charisma.

Vision incorporates the idea that transformational leaders should create an inspiring vision for the club. Staff development and supportive leadership refer to the trust based relationships that transformational leaders should form. Innovative thinking aligns with the idea that the vision must truly change the club for the better, and also includes the management of the delivery of the vision to club members. Leading by example gives club members a model to follow, and by acting in the way that a leader wants all club members to act can generate the outcomes the leader strives for. Finally, charisma relates to the need that a group or team member inherently has to buy into the vision that the leader has set forth. By acting charismatically and being infectiously positive and driven, a club leader may be more able to generate that buy-in. Factor loadings and confirmatory factor analysis of the GTL indicate that each of the seven items strongly correlates to the Transformational Leadership characteristic they are associated with (Overstreet et al., 2013). The GTL has demonstrated high reliability in a wide range of settings as well, thus making it a fast and efficient way to measure the leadership characteristics of Club Sport student leaders (Overstreet et al., 2013).

The GTL will be prefaced by a short survey of demographic information that includes each Club Sport members age, gender, year classification, number of years in Club Sports, whether or not they are an officer and if so which position and for how long, and what club each member

primarily belongs to. The independent variables in question here are simply the number of semesters that a Club President has served in their role.

Sampling

Upon IRB approval, the convenience sample will be collected by retrieving all emails of Club Sport members from one Southeastern Conference institution. A Club Sport member is defined as one who has completed a Campus Recreation liability waiver, and paid the listed dues of his or her club. There are a total of 475 Club Sport members that have completed a waiver and paid dues. Of these, there are 27 Presidents, one of each 27 Club Sports and 448 Club Sport members from all 27 clubs.

This study featured an electronic survey sent out via email. Treischl and Wolbring (2017) suggest that online surveys allow for contact with all people within the sample. College students are not as likely to respond to emailed surveys when compared to in-person assessments. However, online surveys eliminate the opportunity for any social pressures or bias if the survey was to be given out during a club practice.

Club Presidents. A demographic survey (Appendix B) was sent to 27 Fall 2017 Club Presidents. Of the 27 (100% response rate) responses there were nine female Club Presidents and eighteen male Club Presidents. The average age of Club President was 20.96 years. Of the 27 club presidents, 21 held leadership positions in their club prior to becoming president. Of the 27 Club Presidents, 18 were involved in other organizations on campus. 5.4% of Club Presidents held leadership roles in organizations outside of Club Sports. 88.46% of respondents were “White”, with 11.54% self-reporting as “Other”. 96.3% of Club Presidents were not first generation college students while 3.7% were. As it pertains to classification, 3.7% were graduate

students, 44.44% of Club Presidents were Seniors, 44.44% were Juniors, 7.41% were sophomores, and there were no freshmen Club Presidents in the current sample. Each President that completed the survey had been involved in Club Sports for an average of 6.19 semesters – fall and spring semesters only. Each President had served as President for their club an average of 2.63 semesters. The twenty-seven Club Presidents were enrolled in 21 different degree programs, which showcases the diverse group of students that comprises this particular sample.

Club Members. The GTL and accompanied demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) were sent to 448 Club Sport members. Of those 448, 149 fully completed the survey (33.25% response rate). Of that, there were 60 female Club Members that completed the survey and 89 male Club Members that completed the survey. The average age of those that completed the survey was 20.78 years of age, only slightly younger than the average age of Club Presidents. 93.04% of those who completed the survey identified themselves as “White”, 3.16% “Asian”, and 3.80 % “other”. 13.38% of respondents were first generation college students while 86.62% were not. 25.95% of Club Members were freshmen, 27.22% sophomores, 23.42% juniors, 21.52% seniors, and 1.9% were graduate students. 35.57% of Club Members had been involved in Club Sports for two semesters, 25.37% of respondents had been in Club Sports for 4 or more semesters. Each Club member that completed the survey has been involved with Club Sports for an average of 3.42 semesters. 62.03% of respondents were officers of their clubs. Most officers held the office of Treasurer for their particular club, 16% were vice Presidents. 47.8 % of Club Members were involved in other student organizations as well. There were on average 5.52 responses per club. It should be noted that only surveys that were wholly complete were utilized for the purposes of this study.

Data Collection & Analysis

RQ1 is a descriptive experimental design, and therefore we will only be assessing the mean scores for each Club President and for the Club Sport program as a whole. Mean scores for each question will also be evaluated because each question of the GTL assesses a different component of Transformational Leadership (Table 2). While mean scores are usually weak for Likert scales, the seven item GTL creates a greater range that is statistically stronger than most of Likert scale surveys (Carless et al., 2000).

RQ2 requires the comparison of groups. Club Presidents will self-report the a) length of time they have been in the role of President as well as b) the length of time they have held other officer positions within Club Sports (0-11+ semesters each). These two items were added together to create the “Involvement” variable. Club Presidents were then be grouped via mean split into “High Involvement” (≥ 6 Semesters) and “Low Involvement” (≤ 5 Semesters) groups. An Independent Sample T-test was then ran comparing GTL Scores to Involvement.

Chapter 4: Results

RQ1. The average GTL Score for all Presidents was 31.13 (SD=2.89) out of 35 indicating that all Club Presidents exhibit Transformational Leadership characteristics as perceived by club members. This finding is significant qualitatively because it can now be said, given the current sample, that Transformational Leadership is present in Club Sports. Club Presidents scored highest in Member Development (M=4.66, SD =.80) and Supportive Leadership (M = 4.55, SD = .87). Club Presidents averaged the same score for both Leading by example and Charisma (M=4.46) but had a smaller standard deviation for Leading by Example (SD=.92) than Charisma (SD=.97). Club Presidents scored lowest in Empowerment (M=4.44, SD=.98), Vision (M=4.36,

SD=1.01) and Innovative Thinking (M=4.22, SD=1.04). Each question on the GTL correlates to a characteristic of Transformational Leadership as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. GTL Questions and correlated Transformational Leadership Characteristics.

| Question | Aspect of Transformational Leadership | Average Score Per Question |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Communicates a clear and positive vision for the future | Vision | 4.36 |
| 2. Treats members as individuals, supports and encourages their development | Member Development | 4.66 |
| 3. Gives encouragement and recognition to members | Supportive Leadership | 4.55 |
| 4. Fosters trust, involvement and cooperation among team members | Empowerment | 4.44 |
| 5. Encourages thinking about problems in new ways and questions assumptions | Innovative Thinking | 4.22 |
| 6. Is clear about his/her values and practices what he/she preaches | Lead by Example | 4.46 |
| 7. Instills pride and respect in others and inspires me by being highly competent | Charisma | 4.46 |

RQ2. There is not a significant difference in GTL Scores between Club Presidents who have been involved in Club Sports for 6 or more semesters and those who have not ($t(25) = -.586$, $p=.563$). The High Involvement ($n=15$) group actually had a lower average score (30.83) and larger standard deviation (3.42) than the Low Involvement ($n=12$) group ($M=31.50$, $SD=2.30$). Both groups followed a normal distribution.

Although not quantitatively significant, Males ($M = 31.80$) were more prone to display Transformational Leadership characteristics than females ($M=29.78$). Those who were involved outside of Club Sports ($M=31.29$) were also more likely to display Transformational Leadership characteristics than those who were not ($M=30.80$). Those who held Club Sport leadership

positions previously ($M=31.40$) were also more likely to display Transformational Leadership characteristics than those who had not ($M= 30.4$).

Chapter 5: Discussion

RQ1. Transformational Leadership characteristics were perceived to be present in this study which indicates that Club Sports may have more in common with volunteer leadership organizations than professional sports or other extrinsically incentivized groups. This is crucial to the understanding of how to construct and support a Club Sport program. Volunteer organizations exist to meet the intrinsic desires of their members. Volunteer organizations, like Club Sports have a wide range of categories and purposes. Some are more philanthropic (i.e. Habitat for Humanity) while some are competitive in nature such as debate team. Regardless of the purpose, each fills an intrinsic need for that group of students. By meeting intrinsic needs, and satisfying them as the data suggests, a sense of belonging may be fostered (Kampf & Teske, 2013; Weaver et al., 2017). This sense of belonging positively correlates to the possible retention of Club Sport athletes (Kampf & Teske, 2013; Weaver et al., 2017). In this study there were 27 volunteer leadership organizations surveyed and the mean GTL score was 31 with a standard deviation of 2.89. While the standard deviation is high, the sample still follows a normal distribution. The GTL assesses Transformational Leadership via seven items that independently correlate to a characteristic of Transformational Leadership. By analyzing the mean scores for each individual item, the strengths and characteristics of Club Presidents may be observed and assessed.

Member Development is representative of the Club President's ability to identify what each member needs, and their ability to meet such needs (Bass, 1985). That is to say that given the current sample, Club Sport Presidents were able to assess the abilities of their club members

($M=4.66$, $SD=.80$) and direct activities, drills, or conversation in ways that helped the club members. This could also pertain to delegation of tasks as Carless et al. (2000) pointed out. For instance, if a Club Member displays a willingness for greater responsibility, the data suggests that Club Presidents would provide such opportunities. Such opportunities are examples of the experiential learning that Club Sports provides its members.

Club Presidents were also perceived to exhibit another quality of Transformational Leadership more than others and that was Supportive Leadership ($M=4.55$, $SD=.87$). Supportive Leadership is closely related to Member Development in that it involves giving feedback to club members or to the club as a whole. A Club President that is a supportive leader expresses confidence and recognizes successful individual club members as well as the group as a whole (Carless et al., 2000). Expressing confidence and faith in club members can create commitment if the club members feel that the leader is committed to them. Club Presidents may realize that they need the clubs support more than the club needs the President, and by being supportive and expressing pride in club members they can generate such support.

Vision involves the depiction of a plan for the club. It includes the goals and aspirations of the leadership group and a plan for how to achieve those goals. It includes delivery of that vision to the group. It also creates a culture of behavior, along with the other aspects of Transformational Leadership that aligns with the goals of the organization. Vision is often seen as the most crucial aspect of Transformational Leadership, especially in business settings (Carless et al., 2000). Club Sport teams function somewhat as non-profit businesses in that they do fundraise and log community service hours yet the revenue is not distributed to club members and thereby not extrinsically incentivized to complete such activities. It is interesting that Club Presidents scored lower on this characteristic ($M= 4.36$, $SD=1.01$) and may indicate that Clubs

may not require such a vision if the requirements and expectations of Club Sports Administration are not rigorous enough. It may also indicate that not enough motivation exists for the President's to want to create such a plan. Such requirements include community service hours, fundraising amounts, and expectations of competition. More research is necessary to describe the role that Vision plays in Club Sports.

Empowerment involves the transparency of decision making in a club. This study supports the idea that Club Sports Presidents do empower their members ($M=4.44$, $SD=.98$). Club leaders can create empowerment by promoting and encouraging autonomy amongst club members. Empowerment could include talking about administrative issues including forms and presentations that club officers are responsible for with the club as a whole. Delegation of tasks is something that Club Sport programs promote, and is perhaps central to the empowerment of Club Sport Members (Lower et al., 2013).

The best transformational leaders can epitomize the values they preach. Leading by Example is the way in which Transformation Leaders embody the message they are sending to their club. This study suggests that Club Sport Presidents also excel at Leading by Example ($M=4.46$, $SD=.92$). Leaders set the expectation for how club members should act including their attitude and values through their own actions (Carless et al., 2000). Whether on the field or off, it is perceived that Club Sport presidents in this sample embody virtues that are admirable and set the tone for proper behavior and attitude for each club.

Bass (1985) suggests that charisma is the most important part of Transformational Leadership as it inspires and motivates members. Club Sport Presidents in this study were perceived to exhibit Charisma ($M=4.46$, $SD=.97$). A Charismatic leader is one that is perceived as trustworthy, competent, and worthy of respect. It is also suggested that charismatic leadership

is critical to the success of the group, and that a clubs effectiveness and success could be predicted by the charisma of the leader (Bass, 1985). Charisma and Leading by example appear to be closely related not only in definition but also in perception as seen in this study. By making each member feel competent, positive attitudes are promoted and group relations tend to be more positive (Carless et al.,2000).

Leaders use Innovative Thinking to achieve their goals with the support of the club (Carless et al., 2000). Of all Transformational Leadership characteristics, Club Presidents scored lowest on Innovative Thinking (M=4.22). Innovative thinking includes challenging preconceived notions about how and why things are done a certain way. This skill would be extremely useful within Club Sports, as most clubs are encouraged to raise a certain amount of money per year, volunteer a certain amount of hours per year, and compete or travel a certain number of times per year. The data indicates that perhaps Clubs are routine in their ways of doing things, and don't want to change for fear of failure. However, utilizing Innovative Thinking while in a leadership role in Club Sports is something that is inherently useful, and is a critical aspect of Transformational Leadership.

The results of the survey indicate that Club Sport Presidents may also utilize certain characteristics such as Supportive Leadership and Member Development more than the other aspects of Transformational Leadership. Perhaps the team setting creates the need for the cohesion and development that such characteristics develop. However, it is clear that within this sample, all elements of Transformational Leadership as measured by the GTL were present further indicating that Transformational Leadership is heavily utilized in Club Sports.

RQ2. There was not a statistical difference between Club Presidents who had been involved for six or more semesters and those who had been involved in Club Sport leadership for five

semesters or less is not a negative indictment on behalf of Club Sports. Due to the work of Gassman, Reed, and Widner (2014) it was hypothesized that the more time a leader spends in such a capacity, the more competencies would be improved. Competencies in this case would consist of the seven elements of Transformational Leadership that RQ1 considered. However, similarly to Rosch (2014) it was found that that Club Sports is perceived to foster Transformational Leadership characteristics, as do other volunteer leadership organizations, by the very nature of the activities.

That is to say that because the presidents are not extrinsically motivated to take their roles, the motivations and characteristics of those that do assume leadership positions must be similar in nature. Dwyer et al. (2013) noted that Transformational Leadership may function much differently in volunteer contexts such as Club Sports and Registered Student Organizations, than it would in non-volunteering situations. Businesses and other organizations that dangle carrots in front of their members or workers are likely to employ different leadership styles such as transactional leadership, which controls followers through reward or punishment (Dwyer et al., 2013). Payment or employment serves as the reward, while demotion and pay cuts may serve as the punishment. Club Sports and other volunteer leadership organizations do not have the ability to levy such consequences, another difficulty for Club Sport Presidents and officers to navigate (Posner, 2015).

Despite the lack of power, Club Sport Presidents and officers must still find a way to create accountability and unity within their club. Callow et al., (2009) suggested that through Transformational Leadership traits such as fostering acceptance of group goals, promoting teamwork, having high expectations, and consideration of individuals a team or club may find better cohesion. While team cohesion was not specifically measured in this study, it stands to

reason that the Transformational Leadership characteristics examined by the GTL are not dissimilar from the factors in Callow et al. (2009). Therefore, the Club Presidents examined in this study were perceived to strive for that cohesion and buy-in that is so critical in volunteer leadership organizations. The Callow et al. (2009) study focused on performance success, however success defined much differently for Club Sports than it is for strictly competitive or varsity teams. Each Club Sport has various responsibilities throughout the year whether its volunteer hours, competition success, fundraising dollars, or recruitment therefore performance success looks very different for each and every club. The emphasis may be different for one club than another. A particular club may set a goal to have the most fundraising dollars out of any club, while another may choose to shoot for a competitive goal – thus having different definitions of success.

Club Presidents, officers, and leaders of volunteer organizations must be able to meet the intrinsic needs of their followers (Posner, 2015). The GTL scores of Club Presidents in this study were high, regardless of High or Low Involvement classification, which indicates that the intrinsic needs of Club members are being met. While it is understood that involvement in co-curricular activities has a positive effect on retention and sense of belonging is critical to retention, the mode through which Club Sports fosters such belonging has not been studied previously (Smith & Chenowith, 2015; Weaver et al., 2007). According to the Dwyer et al. (2013) study, the high levels of Transformational Leadership should represent a Club Member population that is highly satisfied with their roles in the club and with club leadership. Previous research also indicates that the more satisfied club members are, the more likely it is that they have a strong sense of belonging to their club and the greater the likelihood that those students will be retained (Kampf & Teske, 2013; Weaver et al., 2017).

Finally, Club Presidents were involved with Club Sports for an average of 6.19 semesters while Club Members averaged 3.42 semesters. This study supports the observations of Gassman, Reed, and Widner (2014) in that the longer a member is involved in an organization, the more likely it is that they aspire to leadership positions. Presidents on average, give 3 years of their collegiate career to Club Sports while only serving as President for an average of 2.63 semesters indicating that such a trend does exist in this sample of Club Sport athletes. It also further supports the idea that Transformational Leadership characteristics do not depend on the length of time that one holds a leadership position because there was not a significant difference between High and Low Involvement groups, but rather it is the nature of the position itself. The prevalence of Transformational Leadership characteristics in Club Sports, in addition to this evidence of retention suggests that Campus Recreation, through Club Sports may in fact effect retention and serve as a way to combat the national trends of decreasing retention and enrollment.

Practical Implications

This study is important because it provides us with data on Club Sport athletes, which is estimated to be at least two million students nationwide – four times the number of varsity athletes (Weaver et al., 2017). Not much at all is known about Club Sports. Millions of dollars allocated to these programs every year through University allocation of state funding .It is the responsibility of Campus Recreation departments to then use these allocated funds in ways that benefit all patrons, including Club Sport athletes.

It is also important data for helping Campus Recreation professionals prove their value on campus. As previously stated, leadership and student development are critical aspects of higher education and this study supports the idea that Club Sports does foster Transformational

Leadership skills. It can also be inferred that the sense of belonging that is necessary for the retention of students is fostered by Club Sports via Transformational Leadership. The development of such leadership skills is critical to a student's success beyond college. Employers are constantly looking for leaders that can not only contribute empirically but intangibly as well (Greenbank, 2015).

This study also supports the idea that Club Sports serves as a vehicle by which students may develop leadership skills and behaviors. Campus Recreation departments should advertise this fact – Club Sports are similar to RSOs in that they can develop these positive characteristics of leadership. It also adds to the literature that suggests Campus Recreation is more than just a place to work out and improve yourself physically, but also socially, mentally, and holistically. By educating and fostering leadership skills that are valued in the workplace and promoting the fact that they strive to develop such characteristics, Campus Recreation professionals and departments across the country may better represent their impact on students.

Specifically for Club Sport administrators, this study can serve as a tool to evaluate their own programs. The GTL is a fast and efficient way to measure Transformational Leadership. It should be noted that if the GTL is to be relevant, the Club Sport program itself must be loosely structured in a way that it fosters volunteer leadership. The GTL can then be used for two purposes.

The first way to use the GTL is to use it as it was used in this study; to identify the aspects of Transformational Leadership that Club Presidents exhibit. By focusing on the intrinsic needs of club members, and creating student development sessions for the officers that teach them the best ways in which to meet such needs, a Club Sport program may be improved significantly. This allows for the focus of student development activities to be on the weaker elements of

Transformational Leadership. The goal is that by focusing on the elements that Club Presidents may be weaker in, Club Sport Administrators may support the development of well-rounded Club Officers which results in more success within each club and more success in the program as a whole. It also, and more importantly benefits the students in the long run, developing leadership skills that are not only useful but valuable in the workforce (Greenbank, 2015).

The second use of the GTL could be within one particular club. If a Club Sport Administration notices a decrease in productivity in a club, the GTL would be useful to identify if the issue is with the President or one of the other officers. If one of the GTL item responses is significantly lower, or the President or officer scores low on the entire GTL, it will be easily identifiable. By identifying the weakness or the perception of the President/officer by Club Members, Club Sport administration may be able to help strengthen the president in one of the seven elements through meetings, help sessions, or other methods of student development.

Future Research

Future research should focus on comparing GTL scores of volunteer organizations to those of extrinsically incentivized organizations such as businesses. Extrinsically incentivized organizations such as businesses should serve as a control group to identify whether or not Transformational Leadership is unique to volunteer leadership organizations. Such research would identify significant differences between groups as far as Transformational Leadership characteristics are concerned.

This study may also be replicated in other student volunteer leadership organizations to determine if Transformational Leadership is a trait found within volunteer leadership organizations as the research suggests, or if it is unique to Club Sports. Again, comparing Club

Sport Member perceptions of Transformational Leadership characteristics of their Club Presidents may be compared to a control group such as a student volunteer leadership organization.

More information is also required about the motivations of Club Sport athletes to determine if their motivations truly are intrinsic and if they do have a strong sense of belonging. Perhaps club members only want to win trophies and reap the praise that comes with doing well, both extrinsic rewards. The assumption however, is that most non-professional sports are intrinsically motivated – that there arises a feeling of internal fulfillment when one participates. There should be a clear distinction here between Club Members and Club Officers, as even their motivations may be different.

Limitations & Delimitations

One of the premier difficulties in this study upon startup was the idea that there should ideally be a control group. However this study did not include a control group because it was unclear what a reasonable control group for such a setting would be. If there was a control group – an extrinsically incentivized control for comparison, the results would have perhaps been more significant. Again, it is suggested that Transformational Leadership is very much dependent on context therefore it is reasonable to suspect that there would be differences in member perception of Transformational Leadership characteristics (Dwyer et al.,2013).

Another limitation of this study is the fact that there were various response rates per club. Some Clubs had 8 to 9 members respond, others only had a few. The means were not weighted, therefore all scores were weighted equally to avoid this limitation.

This study, though reasonably robust in sample size, was limited to one Club Sport program at an SEC Institution. The values that the Club Sport program promotes are likely to be

the ones that show themselves in data such as TL characteristics. By gathering data from more than one institution, the data may be more generalizable and more significant differences may be observed.

The mode of surveying was also a limitation. Research on college students and surveys suggests that emailed surveys have a lower response rate than in-person assessment. However, as Treischl and Wolbring (2017) suggest, in-person assessments may introduce bias as the person being evaluated may be present at the time of evaluation. In order to avoid such bias, the surveys were emailed, and a reasonably acceptable response rate was observed (33.2%).

Finally, the GTL is a Likert Scale type instrument, and is thereby subject to some limitations. Such an instrument only gives respondents five choices of numerical data that represent qualitative traits in a leader. This means that each survey is extremely subjective as to the distance between each point. For instance a 5 may be much greater than 4 for one respondent but not near as great for another. Another weakness of the GTL is that it was not reverse coded, which could be the reason for such a high percentage of maximum “5” ratings. Previous studies have concluded that such coding is not a significant threat to validity though (Carless et al., 2000; Overstreet et al., 2013).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study provided pilot data on an otherwise neglected population on most college campuses, Club Sport athletes. Club Sports are volunteer leadership organizations, and like others such as RSOs, this study identified Transformational Leadership as a core component to volunteer leadership. It was perceived that Transformational Leadership is present in the current sample of 27 Club Sport Presidents. However, semesters of Club Sport leadership involvement did not have a significant impact on the presence of Transformational Leadership characteristics.

Such insignificance indicates that Club Sports may be similar to other volunteer leadership organizations in that Transformational Leadership characteristics are inherent to the leadership positions themselves. That is to say that such organizations require Transformational Leaders because of the lack of extrinsic incentive to lead such groups. More research is required to determine if Transformational Leadership is unique to Club Sports or all volunteer leadership organizations as the literature suggests. Retention of Club Sport Presidents was also high, which supports the current literature that Campus Recreation and Club Sports specifically do have positive effects on the retention of college students. Higher education funding is usually reserved for those colleges and departments that produce the most research. Campus Recreation must follow suit and produce research of its own to receive funding in order to keep up with the needs of today's college student. By focusing on specific program areas and their impact on students, Campus Recreation professionals may find it easier to prove their worth on modern college campuses.

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Appendix A

Global Transformational Leadership Survey

1. Age _____

2. Gender _____

3. To which racial or ethnic group(s) do you most identify?

- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black, Non-Hispanic
- Hispanic/Latino
- White, Non-Hispanic
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Two or More Races
- Other

4. Are you a first generation college student?

Yes No

5. Classification:

Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate Student

6. What Club Sport are you primarily a member of?

7. How many SEMESTERS have you participated in Club Sports with this club?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11+

8. Are you an Officer for your Club?

Yes No

8a. If yes, what position do you currently hold?

Secretary Treasurer Vice-President President Other

9. How many SEMESTERS have you been a Club Sport Officer?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11+

10. Are you involved in any other student organization (RSO/Greek Life) on campus?

Yes No

10a. If yes, please state and describe the organizations you are a member of.

11. Do you or have you held any leadership roles in other organizations such as RSOs or Greek Life on campus?

Yes No

11a. If yes, please state and describe the positions and organizations you have/do hold.

Appendix A Continued

Please indicate to what extent you feel your Fall 2017 Club President exhibits the following characteristics:

(1 = not at all like my club's President, 5 = very much like my club's President)

1. Communicates a clear and positive vision of the future

1 2 3 4 5

2. Treats club members as individuals, supports and encourages their development

1 2 3 4 5

3. Gives encouragement and recognition to club members

1 2 3 4 5

4. Fosters trust, involvement and cooperation among club members

1 2 3 4 5

5. Encourages thinking about problems in new ways and questions assumptions

1 2 3 4 5

6. Is clear about his/her values and practices what he/she preaches

1 2 3 4 5

7. Instills pride and respect in others and inspires me by being highly competent

1 2 3 4 5

Appendix B

Club President Survey

For Fall 17 Club Presidents only:

1. Age: _____

2. Gender: _____

3. To which racial or ethnic group(s) do you most identify?

- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black, Non-Hispanic
- Hispanic/Latino
- White, Non-Hispanic
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Two or More Races
- Other

4. First generation college student?

Y/N

5. What is your major?

6. Club for which you serve as President: _____

7. How many SEMESTERS (Fall & Spring only) have you participated in Club Sports?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11+

8. How many SEMESTERS (Fall & Spring only) have you been president of your club?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11+

9. Have you held other leadership positions within your club prior to becoming President?

Yes No

9a. If yes, how many SEMESTERS (Fall & Spring only) have you been a club sport officer (other than President)?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11+

9b. Please state and describe your roles within these positions.

10. Are you involved in any other student organizations such as RSO's or Greek Life on campus?

Yes No

10a. If yes, please state those you are a member.

11. Do you or have you held any leadership roles in other organizations such as RSOs or Greek Life on campus?

Yes No

11a. If yes, please describe the roles and organizations that you do or have held leadership positions in.

Appendix C



To: Shelby Hutchens
BELL 4188

From: Douglas James Adams, Chair
IRB Committee

Date: 02/28/2018

Action: **Exemption Granted**

Action Date: 02/28/2018

Protocol #: 1802098893

Study Title: Transformational Leadership in Club Sports: An Instrument for
Evaluation and
Assessment

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: Sarah Elizabeth Stokowski, Investigator