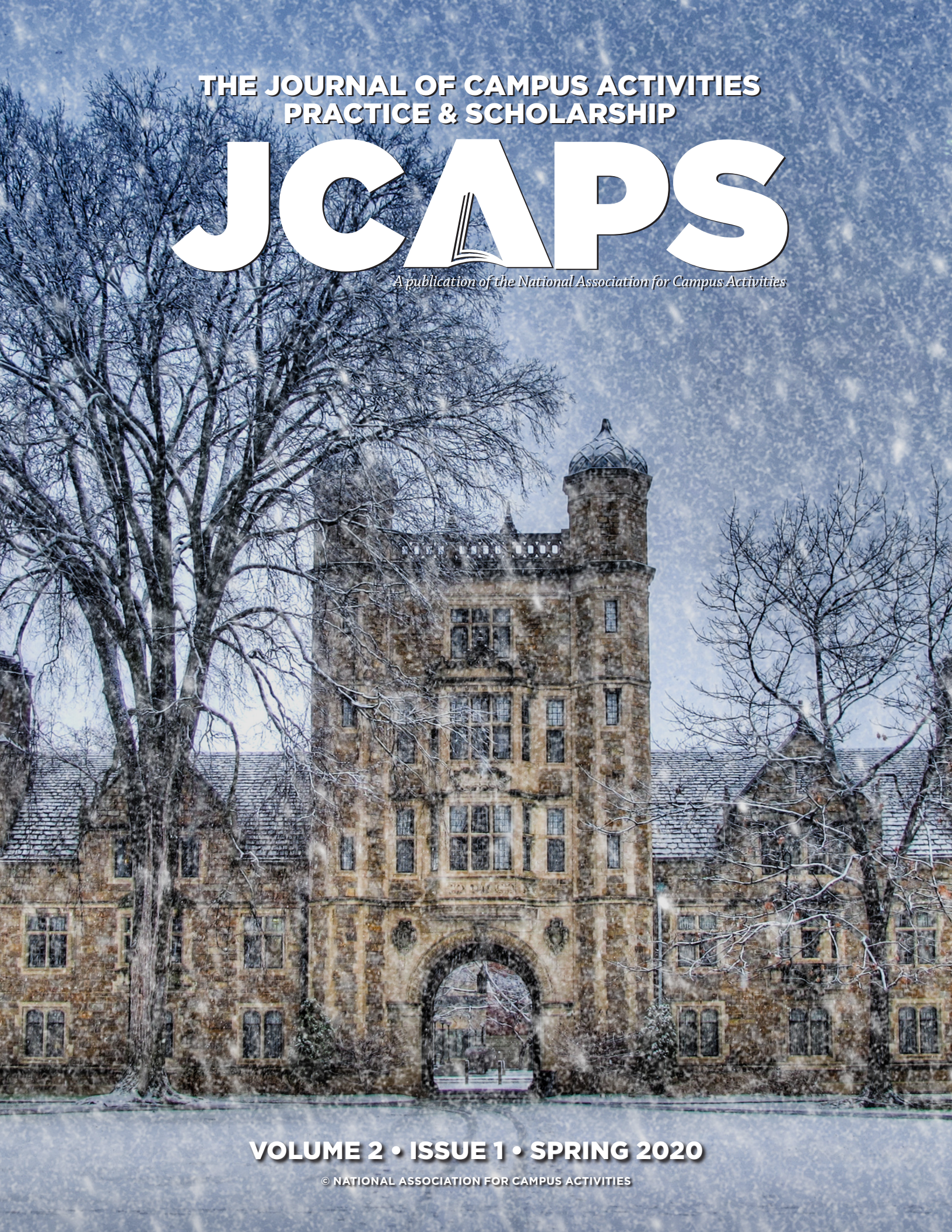


**THE JOURNAL OF CAMPUS ACTIVITIES  
PRACTICE & SCHOLARSHIP**

# JCAPS

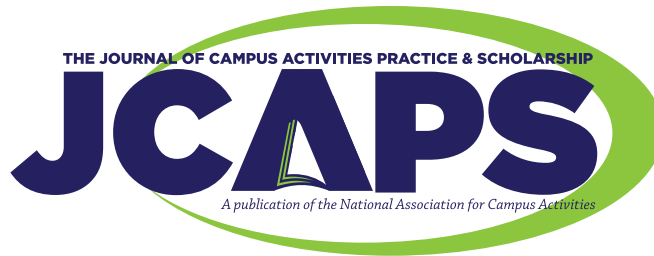
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*The Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship* (JCAPS) is a social science peer-reviewed journal. It focuses on publishing rigorous, relevant, and respected scholarship related to postsecondary education co-curricular campus activities, and translating such scholarship to practice. It especially encourages submissions from practitioners throughout higher education.

Typical submissions to the journal cover topics such as:

Student and leadership development within campus activities

Programming within a diverse and multicultural campus

Advising students and their organizations

Campus programming, governance, and/or funding boards

Assessing the effects of student involvement in campus activities

Navigating political and legal issues in working with students

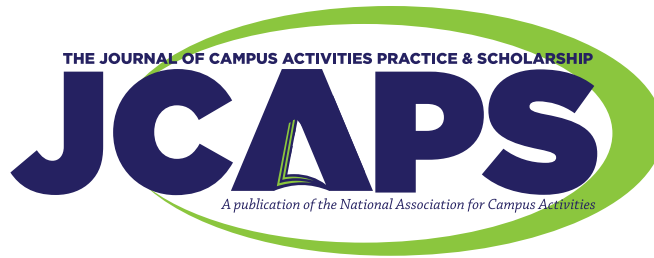
Professional development for staff and faculty who work with students

Authors can find more information about the submission process at [naca.org/JCAPS](https://naca.org/JCAPS).

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## CONSIDERING THE NATURE OF THEORY-BUILDING IN THE FIELD OF CAMPUS ACTIVITIES: ADVICE FROM THE JOURNAL EDITORIAL BOARD

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AT ITS HEART, THE CENTRAL MISSION OF THE JOURNAL OF CAMPUS ACTIVITIES SCHOLARSHIP AND PRACTICE (JCAPS) has been to promote and sustain a culture of scholarship within the field of campus activities. This editorial board has used a variety of strategies for accomplishing this goal. We routinely reach out to senior scholars in the field to invite them to share insights that can benefit student affairs professionals. We work in a hands-on way to help burgeoning scholars in our field to develop a research and scholarship agenda, and to make publication an important part of their scholarly activity. In the Fall 2019 edition of JCAPS, we provided a guide for transitioning a dissertation into a scholarly publication (Rosch, Desawal, McCullar, Peck, & Russell Krebs, 2019). This article, in particular, has been favorably received since it fills an important gap not only in the field of campus activities, but within student affairs overall.

A key strategy in promoting a culture of scholarship in campus activities is engaging practitioners in intentionally applying theoretical elements in their practice more consistently. Given the work demands of this group, it can be hard to make time to even think about theory – let alone produce new scholarship to help guide others. In the first edition of this journal, Love and Goyal (2018) wrote, “...student activities professionals...are busy people who argue that they hardly have the time to slow down to use theory to guide and direct their work” (p. 33). They add, “In our conversations with professionals about how they determine their actions to bring about specific outcomes, formal theory rarely enters the conversation” (p. 34). Beyond the speed at which student activities professionals are expected to operate, and the volume of work they must manage, there are other reasons why they often find it difficult to apply existing theory. A significant reason identified by Love and Goyal (2019) is that many have limited knowledge of theory beyond the introduction provided during their graduate program of student development and organizational theories that are frequently cited within the professional literature.

In their piece, Love and Goyal (2019) advocate that practitioners embrace not only formal theories to guide their actions, but also their own personal theories that they have developed to explain, predict and proscribe their own personal approach to the development of their students. Developing your own personal theories, as Love and Goyal note, is an example of how campus activities professionals unconsciously are using constructivism to make meaning of their environments. Full-time researchers often identify a theoretical perspective (e.g., constructivism) to indicate to the reader how they approach and situate their work. Campus activities professionals make meaning of their environments (e.g., student organization behaviors, student leader training programs, etc.)

by translating and interpreting the individual behaviors to understand social interaction. This meaning-making process is known as constructivism (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). The application of formal theory to practice involves developing a conscious awareness of the beliefs and theories that one holds and using one's understanding of formal theory to validate or question their own construction of the observed environment.

Campus activities professionals observe student learning and development day-to-day within the campus environment. As a result, professionals frequently respond to an observed phenomenon within their environment and adjust the delivery of services to meet student needs. These adjustments often improve the student experience and promote student learning. The action of improving conditions for student learning is how student activities professionals pursue and achieve "praxis." Praxis is defined by Kemmis and Smith (2008) as "action that is oriented and informed by traditions in a field" (p. 4). An easy way to conceptualize praxis is to think of it as the fulcrum in a lever – like the balancing point of a seesaw. Praxis is the balance point between theory and practice. Praxis is desirable for practitioners to attain– balancing the knowledge of the theory unpinning their work with how one approaches the specific work they are doing.

In this edition of JCAPS, Spencer and Smedick provide a comprehensive review of the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education (2019) professional standards and how they serve as a framework for ensuring that student development is at the center of our work, assessed regularly, and used to make program improvement. This framework from CAS sets the conditions in which praxis can be achieved through the understanding and application of formal theory. The newly updated CAS standards provide a blueprint for successfully assessing our programs and services, and can serve as a stepping-stone from creating a culture of student learning and assessment to creating a culture of scholarship. As we mentioned above, we see our work in JCAPS as creating a culture of scholarship in the field of campus activities. To this end, we suggest that helping campus activities professionals achieve praxis – by connecting formal theories with our constructivist approach to improve student learning and engagement unique to the campus activities environment– may be the very essence of our scholarship.

It is no secret that campus activities professionals, and student affairs as a whole, have struggled to create a culture of assessment. A culture of assessment is a "set of pervasive actions and behaviors by staff across an organization (e.g., unit, division) focusing on the use of data in decision making regarding the accountability and improvement of programs and services" (Henning & Roberts, p. 263). As JCAPS works to build a culture of scholarship, we recognize that one of the challenges professionals may be facing is that they are unaware of the data they have, and how they have used constructivism to create conditions in response to issues facing students.

## GROUNDING OUR CULTURE OF SCHOLARSHIP

As we begin to build a focused culture of campus activities scholarship, the editorial board wanted to offer some considerations for how professionals could translate their practice into scholarship. First, we recognize that campus activities scholarship is about studying students in their campus environments. Second, we recognize that campus activities professionals' interactions with students are inherent to the discovery process. Third, the intentional creation of a program or service for students is based on the interaction between the professionals and the students. These three characteristics lead us to suggest that a constructivist grounded theory methodology would be an ideal starting point to build a culture of scholarship.

Grounded theory methodology focuses on aligning the theory development to the phenomenon that is being questioned (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998) through a focus on those individuals that experience the environment (Charmaz, 2000, as cited in Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). Its systematic techniques and procedures of analysis enable the researcher to develop a substantive theory that meets the criteria for doing 'good' science: significance, theory-observation compatibility, generalizability, reproducibility, precision, rigor, and verification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 31). It is also anchored by the researcher's identity, philosophy and perspective (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2014). Jones, Torres & Arminio (2014) write, "[r]ecognizing the relationship between researcher and the researched is an essential criterion for judging qualitative research" (p. 29). Taking into con-

sideration the three characteristics described above, a constructivist grounded theory “arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural and structural contexts” (Charmaz, 2000, pp. 510, 523-524 as cited in Jones, Torres, and Arminio, 2006). What does this mean for the campus activities professional? Those personal/informal theories that have been created within your work environments may not be that informal at all. This connection makes grounded theory ideal for student activities professionals who are seeking ways to translate their informal theory of practice with others. Within this structure, researchers can use the knowledge gained through listening to those with interest and/or understanding of a given phenomenon to construct grounded theories that can be empirically tested and validated in ways that lead to a more robust understanding.

The following represents a framework for which practitioners can employ a grounded theory methodology to translate their own practice (e.g., intentional development of student programs and services) into scholarship. Let us presume that you, reader of this article and campus activities professional yourself, have used data (qualitative and quantitative) to create the innovative programs and services that have received national awards and have been selected by peers for presentation at annual conferences. What we invite you to do at this stage is not just to share the structure of the program and highlight student success stories. In addition, we invite you to write about how you created the program/service, specifically through identifying the data (e.g., student voices, surveys, student newspaper articles, etc.) that you used to articulate to colleagues the observed phenomenon, along with what knowledge (formal and informal) informed the design of the program/service.

Dissemination of these ideas through JCAPS allows others to refine and test these assumptions to build a theoretical understanding of how the entire discipline of campus activities can become based as heavily on theory as on best practices. To pursue a model in which campus activities professionals feel comfortable using a constructivist grounded theory methodology, there are four necessary conditions that we must meet. First, we need to learn to improve our knowledge of formal theory within the fields of campus activities and student affairs. Second, we need to learn to translate assessment into scholarship. Third, we must improve our comfort with and rigorous application of qualitative methodologies. Lastly, we must find ways to share what we learn as a profession so we can test and validate our grounded theories.

## IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE OF FORMAL THEORY

As noted earlier, professionals often do not acknowledge the use of formal theories in their day-to-day practice. Bensimon (2007) identified that the tension that exists between theory and practice is linked to the “invisibility of practitioners in the discourse on student success” (p. 44). She further notes that the invisibility the practitioner sees in current scholarship results in the creation of implicit theory that is based on assumptions gained from observed behaviors. Such implicit theory is similar to what Love and Goyal (2019) refer to as personal theories. How does this become enacted in a campus activities context? It emerges when a supervisor tells their graduate assistant that “we don’t use theory;” and when a conference attendee who says about a program session, “that is a nice program that the presenters have developed, but my campus isn’t very similar, so it wasn’t useful.” The supervisor likely does employ formal theory, but maybe cannot articulate it, just as much as the theory that underlies the success of the program described at the conference also can be applied at non-similar campuses.

Reason and Kimball (2015) note that “understanding formal theories provides a common language and shared understanding of student development goals among professionals” (p. 368). They offered a model of theory-to-practice translation that focuses on sequential design and includes two feedback loops. First, we consider formal theory, which can be described as a shared common language that is introduced within an institutional context. In practice, we may find ourselves using common language to describe how we interact with students. For example, we may see multiple campus activities offices around the country publicize that offer a “holistic” student experience. The common use of this word, “holistic,” broadly references literature that indicates professionals consider how students process knowledge, the influence of their identities and how they relate to others. Applying formal theory within our own unique institutional contexts leads to developing informal theories that many professionals use daily to inform their practice. Essentially, it is how we anticipate the behaviors and needs of our students and then respond day-to-day within our institution through the implementation of programs



and services. Done well, we utilize a double-feedback loop. The first feedback loop is how one's practice informs our application of informal theory; as what works for use changes, we adjust our informal theory. The second loop is how our practice informs our institutional context, evaluating how the programs and services we offer are meeting institutional goals. This second feedback loop becomes critical as we consider the growth of scholarship within campus activities.

Professionals have the opportunity through JCAPS to begin processes that lead to the creation of formal theory related to campus activities practice. We suggest that professionals begin with re-familiarizing themselves with core student development theory, and looking for the theories that have guided the design of the programs and services they offer. Since no one theory explains all student behavior, professionals should recognize that they are likely using aspects of multiple theories. Using a mapping exercise to connect programs, intended learning outcomes, and associated formal theories is an ideal place to get started. This exercise can be useful to help identify the terms and concepts that are common throughout the programs/services offered at your specific institution.

As we approach our work, we should recognize that social justice is a central value embedded in the work of campus activities specifically and student affairs as a whole. Campus activities professionals have often been on the front lines with students to identify systems of oppression that continue to lead to inequitable and unjust conditions within higher education. As we build our culture of scholarship, we should ensure that we are using a critical lens to employ the theories and literature that build a common language across the context of campus activities. Approaching our work in this way can not only benefit the students on our own campuses, but challenge and inform the perspective of other professionals within our field. Critical theory can provide a framework for approaching this work. According to Jones, Torres and Arminio (2014), critical theory constitutes "... a lens by which to promote critique and analysis for the purpose of increased understanding, improved praxis and ultimately liberation" (p. 18). Critical theory examines how constructs like race, class, ability, gender, religion or sexuality inform an individual's perspective and provide a basis for evaluating social constructs.

## TRANSLATING ASSESSMENT INTO SCHOLARSHIP

Assessment and research share many similarities. Both employ various methods to understand issues of practical importance better. The biggest difference between the two rests in their goals. Erwin (1991) defined assessment as "the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students" (p. 15). Upcraft & Schuh (2002) characterized two central differences between assessment and research. First, "assessment guides good practice, whereas research guides theory and tests concepts," and second, "assessment typically has implications for a single institution, whereas research typically has broader implications for higher education" (p. 17). Both of these differences must be acknowledged as we consider elevating assessment as a form of scholarship in student activities. A significant limitation of assessment efforts is that it is often not broadly shared even on one's own campus. Another is that such efforts often become more of an exercise in institutional compliance than a sincere attempt to improve outcomes for students.

Drawing upon the concept of grounded theory, assessment-based inquiry can provide a basis for testing the local findings on a particular campus to see if it may hold true for other campuses as well. Here, the emphasis on "closing the loop" in assessment (i.e., where data analysis leads to practical changes and new questions) takes on increased relevance. The best assessment recognizes, as Banta and Blaich (2011) observed, that "...the most important outcome of assessment is not gathering high-quality data, generating reports, or stimulating conversations among colleagues. That outcome is instead demonstrably improving student learning by assessing it and using the findings to revise programs accordingly" (p. 26). One way to do that is for student activities scholar-practitioners to find significant issues to study on their campuses, rigorously assess them, make improvements, and measure the change produced. We suggest a final step of thoroughly documenting the process in JCAPS while suggesting ways it can be applied at other institutions. This kind of scholarship is desperately needed in contemporary higher education – where our current approach to improvement often involves considerable trial and error. JCAPS would welcome this sort of research that promotes best practices related to common issues in the field.



## IMPROVING COMFORT WITH QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research provides the opportunity to progress to the “heart” of an event and to learn the story or “essence” of an experience. Being able to tell the story behind the numbers that quantitative data provides will help explain why something is happening, working, or not working. Researchers have created many different approaches, or designs, to qualitative research, and there are a few that we feel are particularly relevant in campus activities and other areas of student affairs. As was previously mentioned, there is a growing acceptance of qualitative methodologies as a means of collecting reliable data (Patton, 2002). Additionally, these methods are often more intuitive to student activities and student affairs practitioners who have the opportunity to develop and refine a skill set for listening to students to understand and meet their needs. While there is a wide variety of qualitative methods, we will focus on interviews, focus groups, case study, action research, critical theory and generic qualitative inquiry.

### Interviews

It stands to reason that a simple way to determine what people think is simply to ask them. By using open-ended questions that encourage participants to share their perceptions and beliefs, the researcher can achieve a robust understanding of how individuals experience the issue being studied. An important consideration in conducting interviews is whether the researcher will use pre-determined questions or allow the conversation to progress naturally. There are advantages to each. By preparing questions in advance, the researcher can thoroughly investigate the topic of interest. However, a more emergent style may discover considerations that the researcher might otherwise miss.

For example, imagine we were conducting interviews with individuals who regularly ride the institution’s shuttle bus. We might ask detailed questions about the shuttle bus like, “What do you like most about the shuttle bus” or “tell me about your interactions with the bus driver.” Or, we could ask more broad questions and let the topics that students choose to discuss help us inform the question about what aspects of the shuttle bus they care about most.

### Focus Groups

According to Edmunds (1999), focus groups are used as a “means of testing concepts, new products and messages” (p. 2). Since it is a qualitative methodology, the results are not generalizable to other populations or groups, per se. Typically, a focus group is made up of a group of eight to 10 people for a discussion of a relevant topic in which the group has a vested interest. The number of participants does not necessarily impact the validity of the findings. As a matter of practicality, groups large than ten may be too large to facilitate easily. As we discussed previously, the job of a qualitative researcher is not to predict if other groups will see the phenomenon in the same way as the focus group. So unlike quantitative research, which relies upon a random sample to ensure that bias is minimized, this group is selected specifically because it has an opinion about what will be discussed.

### Case Study

Case studies work well in higher education because of the nature of the “bound system” which defines it. Punch (2014) describes,

The case may be an individual, or a role, or a small group, or an organization, or a community or a nation. It could also be a decision, or a policy, or a process, or an incident, or an event of some sort, and there are other possibilities as well. (p.121)

Case study could also include a set time frame that is observed. These all lend well to events we host or student groups with whom we work. The case study will give a snapshot of that particular place in time.

### Action Research

Action research comes more naturally in our field, as it is, in essence, researching the activities that we are doing. Action research “aims to design inquiry and build knowledge for the use in the service of action to solve a practical problem. Therefore, within action research, the inquiry starts from a specific or applied problem or question” (p.136). The practicality of the research is the strength of it in student activities. Using action research

in association with the implementation of our events will provide us the opportunity to study the outcomes of our events. We can design specific research outcomes based on the outcomes of our events. These outcomes can then be used to measure audience reactions or the learning outcomes for our student leaders.

### **Generic Qualitative Inquiry**

While somewhat more controversial to some researchers, a generic qualitative inquiry provides an opportunity to do hold to the principles of qualitative research without subscribing to a strict methodology (Kahlke, 2014). Using a generic qualitative approach, you can use the aspect of multiple designs or not adhere to the strict parameters of a particular design. For example, grounded theory has a strict set of guidelines and parameters a researcher would normally follow, but with a generic qualitative inquiry, this will allow you to use the methodological approach of qualitative research without holding to the foundation of the research methodology. Generic qualitative inquiry is a great design when you are trying to figure out why something is happening and need to gather more information to inform your research questions or your actions. Not having the bound systems provides the flexibility to collect the data you need while also being able to utilize a variety of “lenses” through which to study the data.

## SHARING WHAT WE LEARN

The field of campus activities possesses several natural gateways for building a stronger culture of research and scholarship. For accreditation, year-end review, measuring program outcomes, assessing student satisfaction, and conducting employee performance evaluation, we collect data. Some of this data collected are notorious for either never being used outside of stating you have collected it or only used once in a report. We have the opportunity to be intentional in the data we are collecting and how we are using it to inform the field more broadly. Creating research questions and being intentional about what we are asking of our participants or our students can make a difference. If you are trying to figure out why students are engaged or not engaged in your activities, another campus is probably experiencing a similar quandary. In campus activities, there are countless opportunities to conduct qualitative research that includes the staff who are putting the programs on and the students (the audience) they are impacting – and then broadly describing the results of such research.

### **Including Program Staff and Student Workers**

Qualitative research provides a great opportunity to investigate what your student leaders or staff members are gaining from participating in the organization. Do you have outcomes for the student leaders, and are you meeting them? Have you wondered why some members join and stay while other members leave? Is your organization attractive to some population of students and not others? Qualitative research could get to the root of the issues you are having by talking with those who participate or those who do not participate.

### **Including Students Participants**

Numerous campus activities professionals would like to know how the programs they coordinate create impact within their target audiences and meet their needs. Attaining such knowledge involves more than simply finding out what speaker they want to hear or what band they want to see. More in-depth efforts involve, for example, finding out if they feel a better sense of belonging to the college or university by attending your events. More systemically investigating the needs of your student audience and the impact of your programs on them – and then sharing your results through outlets like JCAPS, may not help you develop new and better programs, but also advance the field of scholarship in campus activities.

## CONCLUSION

It is important for us not only to be intentional about the data we are collecting, but also to disseminate the data we do collect. Intentionality in programming has become very important in harsh economic times, where justification of our resources has never been so critical. We need to show that our programs make an impact on our students – both those involved and those who are participating in our events. Through conducting research,

we can do this on a field-wide scale. Engaging in a more intentional process of theory-building through your campus activities work, and then sharing your information with the field through a publication such as JCAPS, will strengthen our programs, assist others, and establish a foundation for the importance of student activities to student affairs and higher education.

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SCHOLARSHIP-TO-PRACTICE

## HELPING STUDENT LEADERS ENGAGE AS ALLIES

Brian Bourke, Murray State University

**I**N FIGHTS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, ALLIES AND THEIR EFFORTS RECEIVE A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF ATTENTION. This attention can be justified, as allies serve essential functions in efforts to eliminate inequities present in social systems, through the pursuit of social justice (Russell & Bohan, 2016). “Allies are a crucial group in the work of social justice” (Munin & Speight, 2010, p. 249). Add to this that higher education is increasingly looked to as a critical source of leadership development (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Hastings & Sunderman, 2019), and the need to address allyship among student leaders is especially poignant. Embracing action as allies is one avenue to aid students’ learning to integrate social justice into their approach to leadership, which is a key aspect of developing as socially responsible leaders (Dugan & Komives, 2010; Irwin, 2015).

I use the term student leaders in this article as an all-encompassing term to reflect students who are actively engaged in student organizations and activities, and who are likely to take part in organizational meetings and training sessions. This definition is important to note, as conceptions of leadership have shifted from industrial notions of leadership (Dugan & Komives, 2007) to questioning the importance of position-based leadership (Linder, 2016). Involvement in activities and leadership roles increases students’ development of community values. “Community values define leadership as active community participation as a result of a sense of responsibility to the communities in which people live” (Foreman & Retallick, 2016, p. 86).

In addition to student leader being a bit difficult definition to nail down, social justice is a somewhat ambiguous term “without a consensus definition” (Bredemeier & Shields, 2019, p. 202) that has earned buzzword status across student affairs (Patton, Shahjahan, & Osei-Kofi, 2010). Because of that, I want to offer a clear definition and description of what social justice is and represents. Social justice reflects actions aimed at eliminating systems of oppression, which involves both procedural justice and distributive justice (Reason & Davis, 2005). Procedural justice is where students and student activities professionals are likely to focus their efforts, as it relates to who has access and input in decision-making processes. Bell (2018) described social justice as being both “a process and a goal” (p. 1), which reinforces the idea that social justice is active (process), but that it also represents a state of being (goal). But as a buzzword in student affairs, social justice has lost some of its meaning. I have encountered this at student affairs conferences and within individual institutions. When something is a buzzword, it gets used without intention. For example, a department might use language about a commitment to social justice on its website without having discussed what that commitment looks like.

An advisor plays a critical role in assisting students in their development as socially responsible leaders (Irwin, 2015). Advisors help students learn to navigate policies and institutional practices. This role is especially import-

ant when student leaders' allyship enters into the realm of activism, which is a link that has been brought out in recent scholarship (see Martin, Linder, & Williams, 2019)

Approaching the link between leadership development and allyship development of student leaders fits with prior calls to better understand the development of student leaders between "a person's capacity to lead" (Rosch, Collier, & Thompson, 2015, p. 286). This link is critical, as research has shown that participation in activism-related activities, which are often lumped under a label of social justice efforts, contributes to student growth on measures of citizenship and civic responsibility (Martin, Williams, Green, & Smith, 2019).

## UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL JUSTICE ALLIES

Ally is another term that is used, possibly in ways akin to a buzzword, but I do not see or hear ally being tossed around the way buzzwords often are in student affairs. Regardless, if student activities professionals are going to help students who identify as allies engage in social justice action, it is important to spend some time digging into allies and allyship.

### **Defining Social Justice Allies**

Social justice allies are people from dominant identity groups working to address the effects of oppression on members of underrepresented groups. Sometimes allies are defined as individuals working on behalf of members of oppressed or underrepresented groups (Washington & Evans, 1991). Broido (2000) focused allyship on privilege: "social justice allies are members of dominant social groups (e.g., men, Whites, heterosexuals) who are working to end the system of oppression that gives them greater privilege and power based on their social-group membership" (p. 3).

The work of allyship has to be with the oppressed, not for or on anyone's behalf (Freire, 2008). The ally, because of their possession and performance of one or more dominant identities that are inscribed with power, and function to then reinscribe that power in systems, lives in precarious spaces. The power differentials that exist between oppressed and oppressor results in ongoing dehumanization, because "the oppressor, who is [themselves] dehumanized because [they] dehumanizes others, is unable to lead this struggle" (Freire, 2008, p. 47). The concept of this power differential is very important to keep in mind in the context of student leaders. It can be common for student leaders to take the mantle of leadership to mean advocacy for other students. Advisors have to help student leaders recognize the importance of actually seeking out and hearing the voices of other students.

### **Understanding Ally Developmental Models**

As Edwards (2006) theorized, there are three stages to ally development, where the individual progresses in their motivation for allyship: beginning with self-interest, followed by altruism, then reaching a pinnacle of working toward social justice. Allies for self-interest are often motivated to don the ally label because of a personal experience of someone they know. This type of motivation could be seen in a student leader who expresses their allyship in response to a lesbian friend being on the receiving end of slurs being shouted as they walk across campus. The ally for self-interest will probably not engage in action to address any issues related to their friend's experience, because they see what their friend encountered as being driven by ignorant people, rather than systems that support negative behaviors. Allies for altruism express ally identities driven by a belief that they can and should use their privilege to advocate for others. Their motivation likely comes from experiencing guilt for their unearned privileges (e.g., White guilt), but have yet to comprehend that their unearned privileges are linked to broader systems of oppression. They also fail to recognize that advocating for others does nothing to address systemic oppression. Finally, allies for social justice engage in allyship to confront and dismantle systems of oppression. They see that the roles they play as allies do not take center stage, as their focus is on working alongside members of oppressed groups.

### **Accomplices, not Allies**

One of the critiques of allyship and allies is that allies have the privilege of not having any skin in the game. In other words, allies can risk little in their performance of allyship because they inherently have little to nothing to lose. The lack of risk becomes more apparent when considering the different stages of development where advisors might encounter allies.

## STRATEGIES FOR HELPING ALLIES TAKE ACTION TOWARD BECOMING ACCOMPLICES

Like any identity development model, Edwards' (2006) model offers student activities professionals a framework for thinking through the potential development trajectory of students with whom they work. The strategies provided in this section do not represent an exhaustive list. These strategies are drawn from a combination of sources: scholarly literature, conference sessions, and conversations with student affairs educators, including conversations with graduate students in classes I have taught.

The strategies I share here are not sequential; one does not lead to the next. Likewise, addressing these are not tasks to be marked as completed on a task list. Rather, the strategies are equally important and require advisors to approach supporting leaders in this realm as a critical component of their work.

### **Focus on Actions**

Help students focus on actions rather than ally identities. "By definition, the focus of allyship should be on actions (i.e., defining allyship as a verb) rather than identity (i.e., defining allyship as a noun)," (Toomey, McGeorge, & Carlson, 2016, p. 248). One of the pitfalls of allyship, which is connected to social justice being a buzzword, is that it is easy for someone to call themselves an ally without doing anything. The result is that this means there is a great deal of work to be done in shifting the definition of allyship to a verb rather than a noun focused on identity. As student activities professionals work with student leaders engaged in allyship, they can focus on actions by asking questions about what students are doing, which means spending time digging in with student leaders.

### **Understand Spheres of Influence**

You likely have worked with students who are fired up and ready to take on the world and get in everyone's face. You might have been that student. While there can be a time and place for engaging in that type of work as an accomplice for social justice, staff have responsibilities to help students navigate their institutions. Learning to do that requires understanding the places and spaces where they might be able to have influence. One of the keys to understanding one's spheres of influence is being able to recognize power dynamics both within and between groups (Linder, 2019). This recognition includes both the role of one's own privilege and how privilege is used and leveraged by others.

### **Embrace Discomfort**

Allyship can be uncomfortable (Case, 2012). There can be discomfort in sharing an ally identity with others. There can be discomfort when engaging in social justice action as a member of a dominant identity group. There can be discomfort in starting conversations about social justice and allyship with groups to which a campus activities professional is assigned as an advisor. One of the first moments of discomfort for would-be allies is wrestling with the recognition of one's privilege (Case, 2012). Helping allies in their development means that the advisor has down their own work.

### **Do Your Own Work**

The struggle for some student activities professionals in helping student leaders engage as allies is that the professionals are still finding their places and voices in addressing social justice. All of the other suggestions for helping student leaders engage as allies are rendered meaningless if advisors do not attend to their own development in this area.

The need for doing one's own work is not exclusive to student activities professionals from dominant identity groups. Everyone needs to recognize who they are in relation to others; how experiences with and within systems of oppression intersect. Social justice efforts in higher education have to be intersectional (Pitcher, 2015), wherein efforts should include understanding and actively addressing the complexities of intersecting systems of oppression. This differs from a common misuse of the concept when talking about intersecting identities (Pitcher, 2015). Understanding intersectionality means understanding social forces such as heterosexism, racism, and transphobia, to name a few.



### **Promote Accountability**

Allyship exists largely as a neoliberal construct, where individualism is celebrated (Shahjahan, 2011). One of the challenges of allyship is moving beyond a savior or liberator perspective, leading allyship to be often construed as a lone beneficent actor doing good deeds. What the advisor should do to promote accountability is to help students connect with others and forge connections where they can hold each other accountable. Advisors have a fine line to walk in this regard. If the advisor takes on the mantle of holding students accountable for the allyship, they run the risk of overstepping the boundaries of their official roles; at the same time, doing nothing to address accountability could mean advisors become seen as do-nothing blowhards who only give lip service to social justice.

Beyond helping students develop accountability networks, advisors have a responsibility to provide feedback to student leaders. “An essential component in the learning process [for student leaders] is feedback” (Posner, 2019, p. 28). For example, guiding the front-end of how to navigate institutional policies, procedures, and politics is important. That guidance needs to be matched with ongoing guidance and feedback throughout the students’ experience.

### **Encourage Collective Action**

One of the most important advisor roles is helping students understand and navigate campus policies and practices. Advisors need to help students develop the tools they need to build coalitions that enable collective action. Promoting collective action among allies is critical because so often, individual allies receive attention for supposed extraordinary efforts (Russell & Bohan, 2016), rather than exploring and emphasizing the importance of collectivism. Allies need to engage in collective action because students from marginalized groups who participate in social justice efforts can be left out on islands by themselves (Linder, 2019). Regardless of labels, allies need to seek out opportunities to work alongside others.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Advisors aiming to address allyship and social justice action need to consider how to undertake such an endeavor. For the purposes of this article, I offer food for thought between two avenues: addressing one-on-one with student leaders, and approaching formalized education approaches with groups of leaders. All of the strategies addressed above can be engaged through either of these approaches. Ultimately, helping student leaders engage as social justice allies will require both/and rather than either/or approaches.

**One-on-one.** Consider working one-on-one with student leaders to develop individualized learning and development plans (Shah, Ladhani, Morahan, & Wells, 2019). One-on-one developmental work can be especially important for allies who fall in Edwards’ (2006) aspiring allies stage. Developmental dialogs can open up spaces for allies for self-interest to begin to refine their thinking beyond individual bad actors to beginning to recognize the role of privilege. Individual discussions can also be powerful for Allies for Social Justice as they continue to process the potential unintended consequences of engaging in socially just leadership, such as being seen as self-serving.

**Formalized education.** When considering any approach to educating student leaders, advisors need to consider pedagogical approaches to be used (Shah et al., 2019). This consideration also needs to be weighed against approaches for building and maintaining a respectful and inclusive learning environment. When approaching allyship development through formal education programs, especially in group settings, advisors need to take extra care in adhering to ground rules that promote respect for the agency of everyone in the space.

Both of these considerations for approaching the space where allyship and leadership development meet can be approached from an appreciative framework. Appreciate frameworks in higher education are based on constructivist views that focus on what works in a particular experience and how to build upon that (Bloom & McClellan, 2016; Evans & Lange, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

What all of this boils down to is helping allies reflect the principle of praxis, which is the active practice of making one's words and actions congruent (Freire, 2008). Simply proclaiming oneself to be an ally is insufficient. As increases in social activism in recent years, it is important to recognize that there is not a line between student leaders and student activists. Leaders are taking on activist roles, and activists are leaders on campus (Linder, 2019). Student activities professionals have responsibilities to not only help student leaders navigate the terrain of institutional policies, but also play a role in addressing developmental needs. Advisors have to help allies participate in meaningful and powerful dialogues (Shaw Bonds & Quaye, 2019) as part of the process of connecting their allyship to their roles as student leaders. Helping student leaders engage as allies requires careful planning and active work over time.

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RESOURCES REVIEW

# CAS STANDARDS FOR CAMPUS ACTIVITIES PROGRAMS: A REVIEW OF THE CONTEXTUAL STATEMENT AND STANDARDS

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*The purpose of this review is to highlight the differences in the new contextual statement and standards from past editions, as well as to discuss and provide examples of how CAS Standards can be utilized by Campus Activities Professionals.*

The Council of the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) was founded in 1979 to create standards of professional practice that further the development of environments that foster student learning and development. The National Association for Campus Activities (NACA) was one of the nine founding members of CAS. The tenth edition of the CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education was released in spring 2019. This edition includes an updated Contextual Statement as well as the Standards and Guidelines for Campus Activities Programs.

## CONTEXTUAL STATEMENT

Contextual statements are the “introduction to a set of CAS Standards that offers sufficient background and perspective on the functional area to assist in understanding and applying the standards and guidelines.” (CAS, 2019, p. 523). In addition, they provide context to the history, foundational principles, and current issues that influence the functional area standards. The Campus Activities Programs (CAP) Contextual Statement was most recently updated in 2018.

All professionals, regardless of the field involved in, need to know and understand the history of and theoretical constructs that inform them in their line of work. The contextual statement that precedes the Campus Activities Program standards provides the reader with a very brief description of the “why” campus activities professionals are engaged in the work they do, as well as the justification for how they matter. It also gives a brief overview of how student organizations began, as well as addressing some of the work of Astin (1996) and Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ramin-Gyurmek (1994) as it relates to our understanding of the theory of involvement.

In the updated CAP contextual statement, a section was added to think about how we serve our more diverse student populations and take into consideration how we create and promote culturally relevant and responsive environments. The Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Model of College Success (Museus, 2014) suggests five questions that should be addressed each time we are planning an event for our students. These questions are:

1. Does the space or program encourage collaboration toward a common goal?
2. Is the space or program structured so that participants will spend prolonged engagement with specific

faculty, staff, or peers?

3. Have sufficient efforts been made to ensure that all potential participants have acquired information about the space or program?
4. Have program planners sent more than an email to potential participants?
5. Have potential participants been encouraged or pressured to engage by someone they know? (p. 19).

Finally, the contextual statement discusses the role of the campus activity advisor and the multifaceted roles they play. It also challenges advisors to use the CAP Standards and Guidelines “to create quality programs that are engaging, developmental, and experiential for a diverse student body” (CAS 2019, p. 71).

## AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO USE THE CAP CONTEXTUAL STATEMENT

Activities professionals can use the CAP contextual statement to challenge themselves, their colleagues, and student leaders by reading the contextual statement and discussing whether their current programs and services detract or enhance from the CAP Contextual Statement as well as their own organization’s stated mission. While much of the CAP Standards offer very specific recommendations for activities professionals, the CAP Contextual Statement provides a view from the balcony and can provide insights that can enhance the direction and alignment of the department to overarching professional standards.

### Standards and Guidelines Updates and Suggested Uses

All CAS standards and guidelines have the same 12 common criteria categories, which are commonly referred to as general standards. These categories apply to all functional areas, no matter the area of focus. They were revised in 2018, and have been reclassified and reordered. The twelve areas and suggestions for applying are as follows:

**Part 1. Mission.** Do members of the organization look at your departmental mission statement, determine if it reflects the values of your professional associations, university, division, and other related units. Is the mission statement understandable to both internal and external audiences?

**Part 2. Program and Services.** Do student activities professionals determine whether or not the departmental programs and services are meeting the needs of all members of your community as well as if they enhance or detract from student engagement?

**Part 3. Student Learning, Development, and Success.** Does the staff determine what exactly you are striving for in terms of specific student learning outcomes through your programs and services? Once learning outcomes have been established, does the student activities professionals measure the development and success related to each outcome?

**Part 4. Assessment.** Does every student activities professional should possess the ability to assess the effectiveness of their programs and services? Do methodologies used for assessment practices include quantitative (numbers of community members attending events, money spent per event, etc.), qualitative interviews, reflection exercises, focus groups, and benchmarking identifying exemplary practices in student activities and learning from those practices?

**Part 5. Access, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.** How welcoming, accessible, inclusive, equitable, and free from bias or harm are your programs? Have you met with students from diverse backgrounds to inquire about their perceptions of your office, programs, and services? Does your staff mirror the demographics of your community? Have you analyzed the data of who is attending your programs and using your services? Do you have a plan to examine this consistently?

**Part 6. Leadership, Management, and Supervision.** Do you and all your staff model ethical behavior? Is there regular training to examine this? Do your area’s mission, goals, and ethical practices align with your institutions? How are you regularly analyzing this? Is there adequate training, appropriate feedback and evaluation, and pro-

professional development opportunities for you and your staff? Have you developed a strategic plan/direction for your organization, and is it reviewed on a regular basis?

**Part 7. Staffing and Support.** Is there adequate staffing for your organization? Do the staff have the appropriate credentials for the work? Are there procedures for personnel recruitment, selections, training, supervision, performance, and evaluation? Is there adequate onboarding and continual professional development opportunities for staff?

**Part 8. Collaboration and Communication.** Does your organization seek out and work with partners within student affairs, academic affairs, and where appropriate, community organizations? Does your organization use multiple avenues and ways to communicate internally and externally? Does your organization tailor your communications toward distinct members of your campus community?

**Part 9. Ethics, Law, and Policy.** Do you and members of your organization's staff review university and professional association ethics statements and audit your compliance? Do members of the staff know the law and liabilities pertaining to campus activities programming at the local, state, and federal levels? Do members of the staff stay current on university policies and procedures?

**Part 10. Financial Planning.** Do the staff engage in long term strategic planning that includes forecasting and budgeting? When planning, do the staff consider multiple financial forecasts based on history and even worse case scenarios?

**Part 11. Technology.** Is the technology for the staff adequate for the day to day operations of the staff as well as the programming the department is required to produce for the campus community?

**Part 12. Facilities and Infrastructure.** Does the physical plant of the department (offices, reception area, and conference rooms) meet the needs of the personnel, including private space for student/advisor discussions? Is the physical space of the office open and inviting to all students?

All functional areas have specialty standards and guidelines. All standards use the verbs "must" and "shall," designating whether the statement that follows is an imperative or a suggestion and appear in bold print to be quickly identified. Guidelines are intended to provide suggestions and illustrations that can assist in establishing programs and services that more fully address the needs of students. They appear in regular font and use the verbs "should" and "may."

## CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS VERSIONS

The last time the CAP standards were updated was 2006. Hence, there are significant changes to the Standards, which will be quite helpful to professionals. In addition, the general standards having been significantly revised and updated, making the entire document new and updated. Anyone using these will see major differences compared to the last version of CAP Standards. In Part 1, Mission, the new version helps us to think about how we connect to the bigger picture of our institution and challenges us to think about our CAP mission as it ties to the overall student educational experience.

The most comprehensive revisions were in Part 2, Program and Services. In addition to clearly stating that a set of written goals and objectives must be done and tied to the mission, the list of fundamental functions have more breadth to them, and also expand our thinking of what opportunities and environments are necessary for our students as they participate in co-curricular activities. Part 2 also addresses identifying online platforms to engage students, as well as lengthy considerations for advising student organizations. Other areas with extensive standards recommendations are student governance, stewardship of student activity fees, providing resources to implement student organization events and programs, and training, education, and development for students. These revisions will provide a tremendous gauge for professionals who wish to be cutting edge and establish best practices in their work.



Another area that will be extremely helpful is the updated Part 4, Assessment. As the general standards have been significantly updated, the CAP standards in Part 4 give a comprehensive list of areas where campus activities professionals should have evidence to support their work. This part has a good blueprint for what must be done to successfully to assess our programs and services, including what data sources should be used.

Part 7, Human Resources, has been upgraded to include an extensive list of positions that could be used in a staffing model, primary functions of CAP professionals, qualifications necessary for working in CAP, and recommended support for professional staff development and training. Part 8, Collaboration and Communication, clearly identifies what must happen in collaboration with others to ensure the success of CAP, while Part 9, Ethics, Law, and Policy clearly identifies legal and ethical issues that CAP must be aware of. The remaining areas (Parts 3, 5, 6 10, 11, 12) all have minor revisions and are updated and reflect industry standards for each section.

## USING THE CAMPUS ACTIVITIES PROGRAMS STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

An underlying principle of the CAS standards is that they are designed for self- assessment for programs and services offered by functional areas in higher education. As a self- assessment tool, CAS functional area standards, and guidelines offer a great place to start with a programmatic self-assessment process.

CAS also recommends the following steps when conducting a self-assessment:

- 1. Plan the Process.** Map out the steps for the process, develop a timeline, build buy-in with all stakeholders, and explicitly identify desired outcomes of the self-study.
- 2. Assemble and Educate Team.** Identify 5-10 individuals, comprised of stakeholders, including students. Train the team on self-assessment concepts and principles.
- 3. Identify, Collect, and Review Evidence.** Define what constitutes evidence, then gather, collect, manage, and review evidence. This process is often more difficult than people think it will be.
- 4. Conduct and Interpret Ratings using Evaluative Evidence.** Clarify the team's rating criteria; employ a process for rating [small group, individual, and staff]; negotiate rating differences; and manage group ratings. You will need to have the Self-Assessment Guide (SAG), which can be purchased on the CAS website. The current cost for a SAG is \$65.
- 5. Develop an Action Plan.** Identify discrepancies, corrective action, and recommended steps (e.g., identify strengths, weaknesses, benchmarks, resources, timeframe).
- 6. Prepare a Report.** Identify the audience for the report(s); describe self-study, evidence gathering, the rating process, evaluations, strengths, weaknesses, and action plan; draft executive summary.
- 7. Close the Loop.** Put action plans into practice; navigate politics and secure resources; identify barriers; and build buy-in to the program review results.

As a new director of student activities/union in 1989, one of the authors of this article (Bill) was searching for ways to credibly justify changes that he felt needed to occur in his functional area of responsibility. CAS provided the credibility and documentation in the Campus Activities and Campus Union functional areas to increase the scope of programs offered and a much-needed renovation of a student union. Admittedly, we have a bias based on our successful use of the standards throughout our careers. As the needs of student affairs professionals changed and became more complex, the CAS Standards was often the go-to resource to help navigate the often-changing currents we needed to navigate. Later in his career, as a person promoted to a new position as Assistant Dean for Leadership Programs and Assessment, CAS provided the framework for the Leadership Programs design and implementation at his institution. In 2003, CAS provided a comprehensive list of desired student learning outcomes that Bill was able to use to provide and measure student learning outcomes throughout the student affairs division. As the NACA representative to the CAS Board of Directors, both of us witnessed the very beginning of discussions among the CAS Board members to consider cross-functional standards that break down functional area silos. In the most recent version of the published CAS Standards, those cross-functional

standards are now providing current student affairs professionals the needed resources to provide programs and services that provide a more holistic vision for student affairs professionals moving forward.

The most pertinent of the CAS Standards related to NACA and Campus Activities professionals are the Campus Activities Programming standards. There are at least five additional standards that should also be considered to use as a resource, dependent on the functional areas that fall under your purview. We all know campus activities professionals wear many hats, and therefore it is beneficial that additional functional areas are included in the CAS Standards including; Leadership Programs, Campus Media Programs, Fraternity and Sorority Advising Programs, Campus Unions, and College Honor Society Programs, to name a few. Cross-functional standards can now be ordered through the CAS website, allowing you to put together a set of standards that meet the unique nuances of the area in which you work.

If you are able, you can also use CAS standards to conduct an outside review of your area. After your team has conducted their self-assessment, 1-3 content experts can be brought in to review the self-assessment, meet with your staff, campus and community stakeholders, faculty, staff, and students to get a better account of your office and what can be improved or should be recognized as good practice. It is also good to use outside reviewers to have an objective and unbiased view of what is transpiring in your work.

## CONCLUSION

Conducting a self-assessment is often an eye-opening experience. It is helpful to make a case for additional resources and lets you identify areas that require improvement, while seeing areas that are often up to standards as well as exemplary. CAS standards are also helpful to use when an impending accreditation visit is on the horizon to collect data that will inevitably be helpful for the review. While many advanced degree programs in higher education administration have been known to familiarize their students to CAS and even have had them use them experientially, using the CAS standards in undergraduate classes can also be useful. It is clear that a necessary skill that professionals must possess is the ability to assess their areas of responsibility. One of the authors uses the CAS framework to have their undergraduate students assess an element of their undergraduate co-curricular experience to gain practical competence in assessing and forming recommendations in an organization in which they are involved.

As stated earlier, the authors have found the CAS standards to be helpful throughout their careers in a variety of ways, and we hope we have interested the reader in considering the uses we have outlined in this review. However, it is further recommended that users of the CAS Standards for assessment and program improvements consider using additional sources to take their program to exemplary levels. First, professional associations provide resources for members that can be instrumental in improving functional areas such as NACA's Competencies for Campus Activities Professionals and Competencies for Diversity and Inclusion. Attending professional association conferences and workshops can also prove to be helpful as one discovers exemplary programs offered by professionals at other colleges and universities.

We highly recommend the use of CAS Standards in your work. We believe the newly revised Campus Activities and Programs will be of great benefit to you as you work to provide the best activities and programs for the students on your campus. The use of the CAS Standards will also be a great professional staff opportunity for you as a professional!

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## RESEARCH

# IT'S NOT THE PLAYER; IT'S THE GAME: A PILOT STUDY OF BULLYING EXPERIENCES IN CAMPUS GAMING COMMUNITIES

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*Collegiate esports communities are as prone to bullying as other campus social spaces are. This pilot study surveyed student members of competitive online gaming clubs on a midsized university campus. Participants self-reported bullying experiences both in and out of game and indicated whether they primarily play support roles or core roles within game. Results indicated that the social roles of players were similar in both in-game and out of game settings but playing support in-game did not predict social roles.*

Esports clubs and other gaming communities are becoming increasingly prevalent on higher education campuses (Engle, 2017). Schaeperkoetter et al. (2017) count 22 varsity collegiate esports teams. Some institutions are already officially sanctioning esports teams and offering scholarships to students who compete on behalf of their school (CBS News, 2017). Still others are earning their way through college by playing competitively on their own or playing for a large, online audience via streaming platforms like Twitch.tv (Farokhmanesh, 2017). As competitive esports as an industry spreads exponentially on college campuses, student affairs professionals must be in tune with the needs and challenges of this population. This study opens an inquiry into collegiate competitive gamers' self-awareness of bully and victim behaviors inside and outside of game contexts.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Peer bullying in clubs and organizations on higher education campuses is common (Knudson, 2015). For example, 30% of 1,215 college marching band members have reported bullying experiences (Silveira & Hudson, 2015). While bullying is a persistent, aggressive pattern of behavior toward a victim (Whitney & Smith, 1993), cyberbullying takes place online, thereby giving aggressors greater access to the victim, and sometimes the anonymity to avoid accountability. Olweus (1993) notes that bully and victim are of unequal strength. However, the power differential may not be as obvious in online situations, except where the cyberbully is one of several, or where they are exposing or ridiculing the victim in front of several others or more as in social media, for example (Langos, 2012). Attempts to quantify the rate of cyberbullying on college campuses have yielded a wide range of results largely due to inconsistencies in the definitions of cyberbullying and differing methodologies; regardless, cyberbullying is demonstrably prevalent in higher education institutions (Baldasare, Bauman, Goldman, & Robie, 2012). Langos (2012) notes the challenge of defining cyberbullying for the purposes of research and offers an exploration of cyberbullying that addresses the uniqueness of public, Internet spaces as venues for directed aggression and how such spaces can make it difficult to assess bullying intent. Among 1368 survey respondents in Canada and the United States, victims of bullying in high school were likely to experience this in college, and bullies in that study also reprised the bully role in college (Beran, Rinaldi, Bickham, & Rich, 2012).

Collegiate bullying is not limited only to students. A survey of 346 online instructional faculty in 2013 found that 33.8% had experienced bullying by students (Minor, Smith & Brashen). In this case, the power differential of teacher-to-student was reversed as retention rates and fear of reprisal led faculty to forego reporting cyberbullying. In this way, cyberbullying has the potential to alter traditional images of bully and victim, for an evolving definition. The nonprofit National Crime Prevention Council, known widely for its *McGruff the Crime Dog* marketing, lists online messaging, distribution of humiliating media, identity theft, and using websites to harass and humiliate individuals (2017) in its definition of cyberbullying. As online video games have already been established as viable social spaces for interpersonal relationships (Steinkuehler & Williams, 2006), bullying in campus gaming or esports clubs merits attention among student affairs researchers.

Research on the social component of gaming has historically centered on what are known as Massively Multiplayer Online games (MMO). These are persistent, online environments with a focus on role-playing and community building. Applications of social science theory to MMOs are relatively common and cover a wide area of interest including social capital (Zhong, 2011), gender theory (Williams, Consalvo, Caplan, & Yee, 2009), lifestyles (Whang & Chang, 2004), problematic Internet use (Caplan, Williams, & Yee, 2009) and bullying (Teng, Tseng, Chen, & Wu, 2012) through online behavior. Some studies investigate how gaming affects players' offline behavior. One line of research in this area is centered on addiction to online gaming (e.g., Byrne, Sias & Kim, 2016; Sarda, Bègue, Bry, & Gentile, 2016). With broader social implications in mind, Yee, Bailenson, & Ducheneaut (2009) and Velez, Mahood, Ewoldsen, & Moyer-Gusé (2014) predicted offline behavior given how players' online environments were fabricated. Both studies particularly noted that group functioning in online environments carried over to offline group settings, and perceptions of gamers' online avatars significantly affected others' offline perceptions of those same individuals. One such study employed a competitive social computer game to show that prior assessments of middle schoolers' social roles (bully, victim, bystander) could in fact be predicted by student interactions within the game (Manilla-Caceres, Espelage, & Amir, 2014). Espelage additionally published a bully and victimization scale that would be adopted for the current study (Espelage & Holt, 2001).

The current study expanded on the work of Manilla-Caceres and colleagues (2014) by examining whether a university esports club member's social role in a competitive online gaming environment was predictive of bullying both on and offline. Further literature on cyberbullying in higher education is available (e.g., Watts, Wagner, Velasquez, and Behrens 2017), but the current study added esports to the discourse on cyberbullying. This study was necessitated by a paucity in current research to examine esports environments regarding online and offline social interactions.

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

As this study tested hypotheses across different games and communities, it was important to clearly define in-game roles that are sufficiently general enough to be applicable across different games.

- 1. Support**—support is a role within a competitive game that focuses on actions that enable other players on the team. Primary responsibilities include providing healing capabilities, offering utility to the team, hindering enemy players, or generally sacrificing one's avatar to enable other players on the team to accomplish objectives that win the game. An analogy within traditional sports is a goalkeeper or defender in soccer. These players hinder the opposing team and enable forwards and midfielders to accomplish objectives that lead to victory: scoring goals.
- 2. Core**—core is a role within a competitive game that focuses on actions that directly lead to winning the game. The support roles enable these roles, and their primary responsibilities are acquiring in-game resources, accomplishing objectives, and defeating enemy players. An analogy in traditional sports would be the forwards and midfielders in soccer. It is their primary responsibility to score goals and win the game, and they are supported by the goalkeepers and defenders who pass the ball to them while hindering opposing forwards from scoring.
- 3. Bullying/bully**—is the experience of engaging in verbal and physical abuse, or actions which generally and intentionally harm or hinder other students' quality of life. It is important to recognize that bullying online and offline take different forms. For this study, bullying in an online setting is defined as flaming (hateful, negative

communication), intentionally losing the game to attack players on the team, or actions that generally and intentionally reduce the enjoyment or efficacy of other players.

**4. Victim**—is the role that an individual reports experiencing as a target of bullying behavior (Manilla et al., 2001).

**5. Competitive esports**—games in which the players on opposing teams use avatars to contend as the central design of the game, which is played online. For the current study, this definition includes both casual and league-based gaming. The games represented in this study are *Dota 2* (Valve Corporation, 2013), *League of Legends* (Riot Games, 2009), and *Overwatch* (Blizzard Entertainment, 2016).

## METHODS

This quantitative, cross-sectional survey study extended on the work done by Manilla-Caceres and colleagues (2014), employed modified versions of their bullying and victimization scales, and examined groups on campus that have formed around competitive esports games. Roles within the game (support or core) were expected to correlate with social roles (bully or victim) outside of the game. The following questions were addressed:

1. Are students' frequencies of bullying out-of-game correlated with frequencies of being victimized in-game?
2. Are students who play support roles most frequently in-game more likely to be victimized than those who less frequently play support roles?

### Participants

Participants were convenience sampled from the various gaming communities present at a mid-sized university, who self-selected and gave informed consent prior to their participation. An email was sent to the presidents of university gaming communities who disseminated the email to club members. Social media posts on Facebook with a link to the study were also posted to each club's page. A sample of 42 participants was collected for the first part of the study: 39 of the participants identified as Cisgender Male, and three identified as Cisgender Female. Thirty participants primarily played *Dota 2*, 9 participants primarily played *League of Legends*, and three participants primarily played *Overwatch*. Participants fulfilled the following criteria: they are active members of their gaming community, their game of choice is competitive and takes place online, and their community has offline interactions (i.e., socials, LAN events, etc.). 31 identified as White, one as Black, 14 as Asian, one as Pacific Islander, and five as Hispanic. Subject ages ranged from 18 to 26 years old.

### Data Collection

Participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, which included age, gender identity, year in school, major, race, ethnicity, and gaming community membership. Participants also indicated the percentage of time spent playing a support role using a sliding scale from 0-100 percent with 0 meaning "I only play core" and 100 meaning "I only play support." The first part finally asked participants to take two modified versions (see Appendix A) of the Illinois Bully Scale (Espelage & Holt, 2001), a survey that measures the degree to which respondents are bullies, bully-victims, or bystanders. One version measured offline interactions and removed the survey items which dealt with physical bullying, and the other was modified to reference the same bullying behaviors in online contexts.

### Data Analysis

Incomplete results were discarded from the dataset. Descriptive statistics were generated for bully and victim scores, as well as for the support and core sliding scales. Based on a sample of 42, the authors were not concerned about data normality (Hogg, Tanis & Zimmerman, 2014). A Pearson correlation was used to test the hypotheses and to seek other relationships in the data.

## RESULTS

The Illinois Bully Scale (Espelage & Holt, 2001) and its modified in-game component had a combined Cronbach Alpha of  $\alpha = .906$ . Measurements of being a victim in-game were neither positively correlated with playing



support, nor found to be significant at the .05 level. Being a victim in-game was positively correlated with being a victim out of the game ( $n = 42$ ,  $r = .464$ ,  $p < .005$ ), and being a bully in-game ( $n = 42$ ,  $r = .708$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Measurements of being a bully in-game were found to be negatively correlated with frequency of support play ( $n = 42$ ,  $r = -.412$ ,  $p < .01$ ), with being a bully out-of-game ( $n = 42$ ,  $r = .365$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and with being victimized outside the game ( $n = 42$ ,  $r = .572$ ,  $p < .0001$ ).

## DISCUSSION

In line with Manilla-Caceres and colleagues (2014), this study predicted that the social roles participants fulfilled out-of-game would be reflected in-game. The researchers further asked whether the roles of support and core, unique to games, could also be predicted against the roles of bully and victim. The results showed that both bully and victim roles out-of-game were found to be reciprocated in-game as predicted. Our findings indicate that other social roles may be recreated in online venues of gaming community interactions.

Perhaps the most interesting result is the significantly positive, moderate ( $r = .572$ ) correlation between being a bully in-game and being a victim out-of-game. This correlation suggests that individuals who experience bullying in offline experiences may enact negative emotions online as bullying behavior- or it may mean that engaging in bullying makes one more aware of bullying when directed toward them. As gaming provides a unique platform for individuals to exercise measurable power over others, it may be the case that victims of bullying feel powerless in real life and vent frustration by abusing other players using the built-in mechanisms of the game they play. In tandem with the strong ( $r = .708$ ) correlation between in-game bullying and in-game victimization, this may indicate a cycle whereby players who are bullied out-of-game could go on to bully others in-game, which in turn may increase the amount of bullying they receive in-game. This cycle seems particularly damaging when campus gaming communities are taken into account, as most of the individuals in these communities are playing with each other and instigating these bully/victim cycles. While the sample was large enough ( $n = 42$ ) for a correlative procedure (Hogg, Tanis & Zimmerman, 2014), its generalization to campus esports overall is not prudent. The high Cronbach Alpha of  $\alpha = .906$  indicates that both the original (Espelage & Holt, 2001) bullying instrument and modified gaming bullying instrument were internally consistent for use with this study.

## LIMITATIONS

As this study was conducted at one university, the results of this study may not reflect the culture of gaming communities at other institutions. The racial/ethnic make-up was not representative of the university, featuring more white males and fewer underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. Esports tend to be characterized as a male-dominated culture, despite womxn making up nearly half of gamers (Entertainment Software Association, 2019; Macdonald, 2018). Such characterization may explain the hesitation that non-males could feel in not identifying with gamer communities. Future studies may collect additional data from other universities to identify any potential differences and compare experiences across race and gender identities, which was not possible given this study's data; and between games. The sample size of this study was too small to run factor analysis, and so the extraction of subscales was impossible. Finally, while the Espelage & Holt (2001) bullying instrument is considered a gold standard for measuring bully/victim roles, it is based on self-report responses.

## IMPLICATIONS

With an increase in campus esports (Schaeperkoetter et al., 2017), both casual and competitive, gaming is now a legitimate part of campus culture. This study is a first in examining the unique properties of one campus gaming community through a bully/victim role lens. Although Manilla-Caceres and colleagues (2014) provided a predictive framework for this study, there is no one theory that clearly and distinctly addresses the estuary of interaction in a dual online/offline community among higher education populations. This study is the first step in thorough examinations of campus gamer culture, a mainstay population across institutions of higher education in the immediate future.

The findings of this study suggest that there might be a complex cycle of social development: changes in the social dynamic of the game environment have predictable and measurable effects on the non-game environment and vice versa. Student affairs professionals are potentially missing a substantial portion of campus gamers' developmental spheres: both as a place to meet student needs, and as a laboratory in which to apply leadership and bystander skills. Research is needed to differentiate bullying from cyberbullying, as well as to subclassify the phenomenon within cyberbullying. Olweus (1993) ranks bully and victim as differentiated by strength, but in social media, anonymity or exposure may comprise strength. In esports, the use of game-based mechanics or game-bound status (such as in-game rank) indicates strength.

Institutions should explicitly include bullying interactions within games as part of their definition of cyberbullying. The appropriateness of reporting structures for abuse and harassment in collegiate esports game settings must also be emphasized in training mandated reporters on college campuses. Codes of conduct and charter documents for campus esports organizations can also be explicit about in-game behavior. Campus activities professionals and advisors can train participants and student leaders in bystander advocacy for in-game bullying as they would for out-of-game bullying.

## CONCLUSION

Social role as an influencer in both online and offline environments poses a unique opportunity for student development using games as a platform. Engagement with games is very high among this population (Anderson & Jiang, 2018), and any intervention which uses game communities in a significant way could potentially be effective in eliciting social development. As the games in this study were all team-based, objective games, there is certainly room for leadership and cooperative development interventions. As esports is a burgeoning industry, the research opportunities for its place in student affairs will continue to grow over time.

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## APPENDIX

### Survey Instrument: Illinois Bully Scale and Modified Online Scale

How often did you do the following over the last 30 days?

[Select boxes: (Never, 1 or 2, 3 or 4, 5 or 6, 7 or more)]

1. I upset other students for the fun of it.
2. In a group, I teased other students.
3. I spread rumors about other students.
4. I started (instigated) arguments or conflicts.
5. I helped harass other students.
6. I threatened to hurt or hit another student.
7. I encouraged people to fight.
8. I teased other students.
9. I was mean to someone when I was angry.

How often did these things happen to you over the last 30 days?

[Select boxes: (Never, 1 or 2, 3 or 4, 5 or 6, 7 or more)]

10. Other students picked on me.
11. Other students called me “gay.”
12. Other students called me names.
13. I got hit and pushed by other students.
14. I was threatened by other students.
15. Students spread rumors or told lies about me.
16. I was excluded or kept out of a group of friends on purpose.

Considering interactions while gaming only, how often did you do the following in-game, over the last 30 days?

[Select boxes: (Never, 1 or 2, 3 or 4, 5 or 6, 7 or more)]

1. I upset other players for the fun of it.
2. In a group, I teased other players.
3. I spread rumors about other players.
4. I started (instigated) arguments or conflicts in-game.
5. I helped harass other players.
6. I threatened to hurt or hit another player.
7. I encouraged players to fight.
8. I teased other players.
9. I was mean to another player when I was angry.

Considering interactions while gaming only, how often did the following happen to you in-game, over the last 30 days?

[Select boxes: (Never, 1 or 2, 3 or 4, 5 or 6, 7 or more)]

10. Other players picked on me.
11. Other players called me “gay.”
12. Other players called me names.
13. I was *griefed* (using game mechanics to hinder, player-kill, or otherwise exploit) by other players.
14. I was threatened by other players.
15. Players spread rumors or told lies about me.
16. I was excluded or kept out of a group/team on purpose.



RESEARCH

# OPTIMIZING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES OF COLLEGIATE RECREATIONAL SPORTS PARTICIPATION

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## ABSTRACT

*Higher education theorists have long since proposed student involvement in educational programs is directly proportional to student learning (Astin, 1999), neglecting potential non-linear relationships. The purpose of this study is to determine the presence of non-linear relationships between collegiate recreational sports (CRS) participation and student learning outcomes. Data from the NASPA Assessment and Knowledge Consortium were analyzed through ordinary least squares multiple regression to determine if there is a point of diminishing returns in student learning outcomes of CRS participation. The results demonstrate a significant curvilinear relationship for depth and breadth of CRS participation, supporting a point of diminishing returns. The point of diminishing returns in student learning outcomes occurs at a CRS participation frequency of 8 times per week and number of different CRS activities of 30 activities per week. These findings have implications for CRS programming, marketing, and mentoring.*

**Keywords:** recreational sport; student development; learning outcomes; diminishing return

## INTRODUCTION

THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE PROVIDES A DIVERSE ARRAY OF OPPORTUNITIES for students to get involved in both in-class and co-curricular education programs and activities. When considering the evolution of student involvement on college campuses in the United States (U.S.), we saw an increase in involvement in the 1700s, which has continued through the 21st century (Moore, Lovell, McGann, & Wyrick, 1998). The breadth of student involvement has expanded the context of education to incorporate both inside and outside classroom experiences with a resulting emphasis on the “whole student.” Co-curricular programs enrich student learning through experiences designed to develop students’ knowledge and skills in areas such as decision making and problem solving, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, and civic engagement (Stirling & Kerr, 2015). Engagement in co-curricular programs is widely-recognized as complementary to academic curriculum (Stirling & Kerr, 2015), with research demonstrating significantly greater gains in personal and social development among students engaged in co-curricular experiences compared to non-participants (Turrentine, Esposito, Young, & Ostroth, 2012).

The literature cites *student outcomes* as the result, positive or negative, attributed to involvement in education programs (NIRSA, 2008). Student learning outcomes demonstrate what students should be able to do following involvement in an education program (Cooper, Flood, & Gardner, 2009). With respect to the college experience, students achieve a variety of learning outcomes dependent on the distinct educational activities they are involved in. As a whole, student learning has multiple dimensions (i.e., physiological, social, emotional, and cognitive), and occurs throughout and across the college experience (Fried, 2006). When examining student learning broadly, consideration of diverse learning outcomes is appropriate.

In the 1980s, reform efforts advocated for higher education to prioritize student learning, admonishing the large research institutions perceived as straying from this focus (Komives & Schoper, 2006). The student outcomes movement grew, in response to education reform, with higher education expanding their examination of student outcomes to incorporate out-of-class co-curricular activities (Komives & Schoper, 2006; NIRSA, 2008). The current emphasis on student learning outcomes is largely fueled by the university accreditation process and increasingly tighter budgets, calling for greater accountability among educational programs and administrators (Cooper et al., 2009; Komives & Schoper, 2006; Moore et al., 1998). While there is an increasing focus on research examining learning outcomes outside the classroom (Keeling, 2006), scholarship in this area still lags, what is known about classroom learning (Moore et al., 1998; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). To understand how to develop the “whole student,” an examination of student service programs is essential.

Unfortunately, the increase in co-curricular experiences through education reform efforts can also lead to an over-scheduled student. As Harvard Magazine describes, “Students today sprint through jam-packed daily schedules, tackling big servings of academic work plus giant helpings of extracurricular activity in a frenetic tizzy of commitments” (Lambert, 2010). Higher education literature calls campus administrators to provide structural and advisor support for students’ co-curricular involvements and challenges with time management and work-life balance (McNeil, 2017). A greater understanding of the relationship between co-curricular involvements and student outcomes will inform practitioners’ programming and support to optimize student development. A prominent outlet for co-curricular experiences (educational programs outside the classroom) is collegiate recreational sports (CRS). Students can engage in a diverse array of activities facilitated by the CRS department, including: group fitness, intramural sports, sports clubs, and outdoor recreation (Lower, Turner, & Petersen, 2015).

With an estimated 8.1 million students involved in CRS across the U.S. (NIRSA, n.d.), collegiate recreation represents a prominent co-curricular activity occupying students’ time. The purpose of this study is to determine the point of diminishing returns with respect to student learning outcomes from participating in CRS. Given the scarcity of resources to invest in the student experience and increased expectations of university accountability (Bowman & Trolian, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2006), accurate information about the effects of student services – such as CRS – can enhance campus administrators’ strategic planning, budgeting, and targeted efforts to develop the “whole student.” In light of the fine line between optimal student involvement and the over-scheduled student, the guiding research question for the study is: *Are there non-linear relationships between CRS participation (depth; breadth) and student learning outcomes, such that positive relationships will diminish with greater levels of involvement?*

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education theorists cite student involvement, engagement, and integration as established theories and constructs associated with student learning outcomes (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009). Research demonstrates the time and energy students devote to educational programs and activities is the best predictor of student learning and development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). When considering the conceptualization of student time and energy, the *involvement*, *engagement*, and *integration* constructs are often used interchangeably, with no clear distinction (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009). Distinguishing the constructs, Kuh (2001; 2009) asserts *involvement* focuses on student behavior, while *engagement* incorporates institutional efforts to induce students to participate in education programs. *Integration* is a separate theory, emphasizing shared normative values (Tinto, 1993; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009).

Higher education theorists acknowledge the complexity of student *involvement*, *engagement*, and *integration*, identifying a multitude of factors that enhance or inhibit student behaviors, supports, and values. In addition to university administrators, Zepke and Leach (2010) identify “locations, structures, cultures, technologies, buildings and equipment” as primary actants influencing student *engagement*, which are often unaccounted for in empirical research. Further, scholarship examining student involvement has often imposed a monolithic view of students, “devoid of issues of race/ethnicity, culture, gender, politics, and identity” (p. 130). While this study is not intended to address socio-cultural issues in higher education, the researchers seek to account for students from diverse backgrounds by integrating intrapersonal factors that may influence the student experience within the research design (see Methods).

### **Student Involvement**

When considering the higher education theories conceptualizing student time and energy, a socio-ecological framework would suggest scholarship start at the intrapersonal level (*involvement* – student behaviors) prior to expanding to the interpersonal (*integration* – shared values) and community (*engagement* – institutional involvement) levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Astin (1999) defines student involvement as “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 518). Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement makes five claims: 1) student involvement reflects physical and psychological energy expended within an education program; 2) the degree of student involvement varies across education program and time; 3) student involvement includes quantitative (e.g., physical energy expended) and qualitative components (e.g., psychological energy expended); 4) the quantity and quality of student involvement is directly proportional to the student’s learning outcomes; and 5) education policies impact student involvement.

Student involvement in college enhances development in skill areas deemed pertinent for post-college vocational positions and overall quality of life (Moore et al., 1998; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Moore and colleagues (1998) call into question which areas of student involvement in the collegiate setting matter, based upon Astin’s (1999) assertion that different types of involvement lead to varied outcomes. While student service programs create opportunities for students to integrate the knowledge gained in diverse curricular activities, distinct programs are designed to target specific student outcomes. Research examining the impact of CRS programs demonstrates an association between CRS participation and student outcomes related to health and wellness (e.g., Buzzelli, 2016); academic performance (e.g., Robbins et al., 2009); ethics, integrity, and character (e.g., NIRSA, 2008); social benefits (e.g., Artinger et al., 2006); sense of belonging and community (e.g., Elkins, Forrester, & Noel-Elkins, 2011); and life skill development (e.g., Haines & Fortman, 2008).

### **Point of Diminishing Returns**

While Astin (1999) asserts a direct proportional linear relationship between the quantity of involvement and student outcomes, the literature challenges the notion that more is always better, suggesting that greater involvement may lead to diminished outcomes (i.e., the law of diminishing returns). The law of diminishing returns asserts that as energy (inputs) is invested, the benefits gained (outputs) will increase monotonically up to a certain point, upon which further energy invested will result in steadily decreasing benefits (Shephard & Färe, 1974); this point has been coined *the point of diminishing returns*. Within the context of CRS, the law of diminishing returns suggests student learning outcomes will steadily increase as CRS involvement increases until a certain point in which further involvement will result in nominal gains or potentially diminished outcomes.

Research examining the law of diminishing returns within CRS primarily focuses on the frequency of CRS usage and student outcomes related to academic performance and health and wellness. For example, student use of campus recreation facilities 25 times throughout an academic semester has been found to increase a student’s likelihood of first-year retention by 1% and 5-year graduation by 2% (Huesman, Brown, Lee, Kellogg, & Radcliffe, 2009). Quantity of involvement in group fitness, intramural sports, and sport club programs has been found to predict perceived social, intellectual, and fitness benefits of CRS involvement (Lower, Turner, & Petersen, 2014). CRS participants engaging in more than four hours of exercise per week were found to be significantly more likely to believe the student recreation center improved quality of life compared to non-users (Watson, Ayers, Zizzi, & Naoi, 2006).



While research demonstrates significant relationships between increased CRS involvement and student outcomes, a few studies have also demonstrated non-significant results. Watson et al. (2006) and Brock, Wallace Carr, and Todd (2015) found CRS usage to have a non-significant impact on student grade point average (GPA). Brock et al. (2015) also found no significant changes in health indices when a student increased or decreased CRS usage by two days a week. The conflicting findings indicate that higher levels of CRS involvement may not result in measurable student learning outcome gains, suggesting a possible threshold in which additional involvement produces no additional return.

While the majority of scholarship examining the relationship between college student experiences and outcomes assumes a linear relationship, Bowman and Trolian (2017) proposed “many relationships between student experiences and growth may be curvilinear in nature” (p. 478). They found engaging in co-curricular activities had a significant curvilinear relationship with psychological well-being, cognitive skills, tendencies and development, and leadership. The curvilinear association differs for various forms of student experiences, warranting further investigation in the CRS context. A more robust analysis of the association between CRS participation and student learning outcomes can inform strategic programming and support.

## METHODS

### Background

This study reports the results of a secondary analysis of data from 33,522 students from 38 different colleges and universities across the U.S. who completed the Recreation and Wellness Benchmark instrument as part of the 2013 National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Assessment and Knowledge Consortium. The sample consists of 29,142 college students enrolled at public institutions (86.9%) and 4,380 college students attending private institutions (13.1%). A total of 2,823 (8.4%) respondents were from small institutions (defined as having less than 5,000 students), 12,386 (36.9%) students were at medium institutions (defined as having between 5,000 and 15,000 students) and 18,313 (54.6%) students were at large institutions (defined as having more than 15,000 students).

### Instrument Development and Administration

The Recreation and Wellness Benchmark instrument was selected for the current study, given its specific focus on CRS, in comparison to the popular National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which measures co-curricular activities broadly. The Recreation and Wellness Benchmark instrument was originally used in the NIRSA/NASPA Consortium Campus Recreation Impact study. The instrument was most commonly administered to a random sample of the student population, but campuses also had the option of administering it to a segment of the student population. The survey was administered via Campus Lab’s mass-mailing tool. Colleges and universities registered to participate in the survey through the NASPA Consortium.

### Measurement of Variables

The measure of involvement was limited to the number of different CRS activities participated in (breadth) and their frequency of CRS participation (depth) based on the secondary dataset. Students participated in an average of 4.49 (SD = 2.77) activities (ranging from zero to 13), and their median frequency of participation was two times per week (ranging from never to more than five times per week). Student learning outcomes were measured by asking students, “From your participation in [REC], do you feel you have increased or improved your [insert outcome]: (not at all, somewhat, definitely).” Please refer to Table 1 for a complete list of the CRS activities used to create the CRS breadth and depth of involvement variables.

**Table 1. CRS Participation Area.**

**Campus Recreational Sport Activity**

	Never	1-2 times per semester	1-2 times per month	1-2 times per week	3-4 times per week	5 or more times per week
Cardio-vascular training (e.g., treadmill, elliptical, stationary bike).....	17.0	9.0	12.4	24.8	24.5	12.2
Weight training/lifting free weights.....	30.5	9.7	11.3	20.4	18.3	9.7
Open recreation (e.g., pick-up basketball, volleyball, soccer).....	53.6	13.9	12.1	11.9	5.8	2.7
Instructor-led group fitness or exercise classes.....	57.9	14.5	9.3	12.1	4.9	1.4
Aquatics/pool.....	61.6	17.7	9.8	6.9	2.7	1.4
Intramural sports.....	65.5	13.2	6.0	11.9	2.5	0.9
Racquet sports.....	67.8	14.8	8.6	5.5	2.2	1.1
Outdoor adventure activities and/or trips.....	75.1	12.3	5.7	3.7	1.9	1.2
Wellness programs (e.g., wellness classes, wellness expo).....	77.8	12.2	4.5	3.1	1.4	1.0
Sport clubs.....	80.6	5.3	2.7	5.1	3.8	2.5
Classes (e.g., safety, non-credit, for credit).....	81.2	9.6	2.9	3.7	1.6	1.0
Personal training.....	83.8	4.4	2.9	3.9	3.1	1.9
Fitness assessments or testing.....	85.4	7.8	3.0	1.9	1.0	0.8

**Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize responses to the demographic, involvement, and student learning outcome questions. The depth and breadth categories of students’ CRS involvement were used as the independent variables in the analysis. The Recreation and Wellness Benchmark instrument contained 23 questions that measured students’ perceptions of the benefits associated with participating in CRS programs. A principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted to examine the underlying factor structure of these benefits items.

Ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple regression was used to examine the relationship between CRS involvement and student learning outcomes. OLS regression is arguably the most widely used statistical method for fitting linear relationships between an independent variable and a single continuous dependent variable (McDonald, 2014; Rawlings, Pantula, & Dickey, 1998). OLS regression analysis was conducted to examine the linear relationship between participation in campus recreation activities and student learning. However, previous research suggests that the relationships between college student experiences and outcomes may be curvilinear, specifically quadratic (Bowman & Trolan, 2017; Lower, Forrester, Elkins, & Beggs, 2018). A quadratic relationship exists if there is a single bend in the relationship between the dependent variable and the predictor. A quadratic term is created by squaring the linear term of the predictor variable. The depth and breadth of CRS participation was modeled as both a linear and a curvilinear (quadratic) variable to see if student learning increased, decreased, or remained monotonic in response to increases in depth and breadth of CRS participation.

Linear and squared variables for depth (model 1) and breadth (model 2) of CRS involvement were used as the key predictors, and the summated student learning outcomes factor stemming from the PCA served as the dependent variable for both models. This study also used numerous control variables to account for other factors that may influence student learning outcomes including age, gender, ethnicity, class standing, enrollment status, place of residence, international student status, expected GPA, member of student club or organization, member of varsity team, and employment by the campus recreation department (Bowman & Trolan, 2017).

## RESULTS

### Background Demographics of Respondents

The median age of respondents was 22 years of age, and the sample consisted of approximately two-thirds women and one-third men. Just over 90% of students were enrolled full-time, and only 3.9% of respondents were international students. Respondents were predominately white (71.3%) and consisted of primarily undergraduate students (87.5%). Approximately one-third of students lived on campus, two-thirds lived off-campus, and 60% of students indicated living five miles or less away from the on-campus CRS facility. More than 80% of students expected to have a GPA of 3.0 or higher the semester that they completed the Recreation and Wellness Benchmark instrument. Less than five percent (4.7%) of students were varsity athletes, while 58.4% of students indicated they were a member of at least one student club or organization with 4% of respondents indicating they were currently or previously employed by the campus recreation department.

### Student Learning Outcomes

PCA with varimax rotation was used to examine the factor structure of the 23 benefit items from the Recreation and Wellness Benchmark instrument. An orthogonal (Varimax) rotation was employed based upon previous literature that has found health and wellness outcomes and student learning outcomes uncorrelated (Lower et al., 2018). The use of rotation also enhances the interpretation of the factor loadings, as factors load highly onto some variables and less onto other variables, easing identification of the extracted components (Stevens, 2009). A factor loading cut-off of .50 was used to minimize the likelihood of items cross-loading and also to ensure that weak items were removed. The PCA produced a two-factor solution (eigenvalues = 12.50 and 2.19) that included 22 of the 23 items and accounted for 63.86 percent of the variance in the benefits items. One item, 'academic performance,' loaded on both factors and was subsequently eliminated.

The first factor contained 12 items that clearly reflected various health and wellness outcomes associated with participating in CRS programs (e.g., fitness level, overall health, feeling of well-being). The second factor was comprised of 10 items and addressed student learning outcomes associated with CRS participation (e.g., communication, learning, leadership, and problem-solving skills). Overall, the items loaded strongly (.555 to .842) on their respective factors, and appear to represent two independent benefit areas associated with involvement in CRS programs (refer to Table 2). Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were used to assess the internal reliability of these factors. Both the health and wellness, and student learning, outcomes factors demonstrated strong internal reliability ( $\alpha=.940$ , and  $\alpha=.943$ , respectively). As the authors focused on the student learning outcomes component for this study, more information about optimizing student health and wellness of CRS participation can be found in Lower et al. (2018).

**Table 2. Factor Loadings for Health and Wellness and Student Learning Outcomes.**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Health and Wellness Outcomes</b>		
Fitness level.....	.828	
Overall health .....	.825	
Physical strength.....	.809	
Feeling of well-being .....	.770	
Weight control.....	.754	
Athletic ability.....	.749	
Stress management.....	.673	
Self-confidence.....	.662	
Balance/coordination .....	.628	
Concentration .....	.615	
Ability to get a good night's sleep .....	.558	
Time management skills.....	.555	
<b>Student Learning Outcomes</b>		
Communication skills.....	.842	
Leadership skills.....	.807	
Group cooperation skills.....	.800	
Problem-solving skills.....	.788	
Multicultural awareness.....	.757	
Ability to develop friendships.....	.755	
Sense of belonging/association .....	.754	
Respect for others .....	.708	
Ability to multi-task.....	.690	
Sense of adventure .....	.627	

**Relationship Between CRS Involvement and Student Learning Outcomes**

Results for the relationships between the depth (Model 1) and breadth (Model 2) of CRS involvement and student learning outcomes, adjusted for covariates, are presented in Table 3. While the results indicate a significant linear relationship exists for both depth and breadth of CRS involvement and the student learning outcomes variable, a significant curvilinear relationship was also present as indicated by the results for the corresponding squared terms.



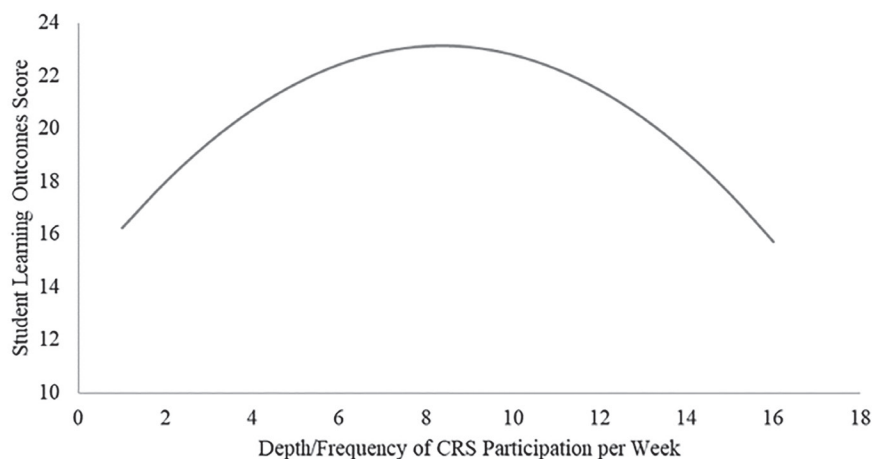
**Table 3. Regression Coefficients for the Relationship Between Participation in Collegiate Recreational Sports and Student Learning Outcomes**

Collegiate Recreational Sports Participation	B	SEB	$\beta$
<b>Model 1</b>			
Depth of collegiate recreational sports participation .....	1.87*	.108	.579
Depth of collegiate recreational sports participation (Squared).....	-.127*	.013	-.327
<b>Model 2</b>			
Breadth of collegiate recreational sports participation .....	1.039*	.078	.453
Breadth of collegiate recreational sports participation (Squared).....	-.018*	.006	-.094

Note. \*  $p < .05$ ; SEB = Standard error of the unstandardized regression coefficient  
 Model 1:  $R^2 = .132$ ;  $N = 10,584$   
 Model 2:  $R^2 = .184$ ;  $N = 7,080$

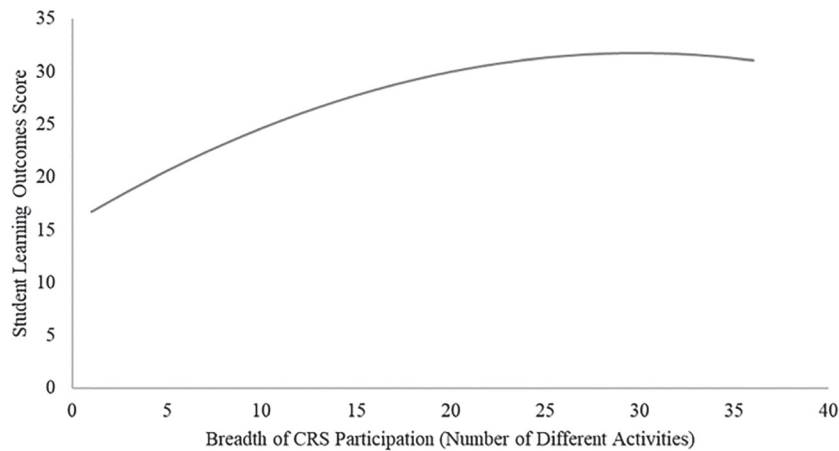
Control variables included age, gender, ethnicity, class standing, enrollment status, place of residence, international student status, expected GPA, member of student club or organization, member of varsity team, and employment by the campus recreation department.

The results presented in Table 3 suggest that the relationship between CRS involvement and student learning outcomes is curvilinear. In each case, a positive linear term indicates a positive association between the independent (CRS involvement) and dependent (student learning outcomes) variables, while a negative curvilinear term indicates that the direction of the curvature is downwards and that the effect of the relationship is attenuated. The results suggest that overall, an increase in the depth (frequency) of CRS involvement increases student learning outcome scores, but at a higher frequency of involvement, student learning outcome scores actually decrease (see Figure 1a). As seen in Figure 1, the point of diminishing returns occurs at a frequency value of approximately eight times per week, after which student learning outcome scores start to decrease with increases in frequency of CRS involvement.



**Figure 1a. Relationship between depth (frequency) of CRS participation and student learning outcomes.**

The overall association between the breadth of CRS involvement (number of different CRS activities) and student learning outcomes is positive, but when students participate in an increasing number of different CRS activities, student learning outcome scores decrease (see Figure 1b). Student learning outcome scores start to decline once students start to participate in a considerably high number of different CRS activities (approximately 30), suggesting that participating in different types of CRS activities seems to have a beneficial effect on student learning outcomes. The point of diminishing returns appears to be well beyond the number of different CRS activities that most students would likely participate in.



**Figure 1b. Relationship between breadth of CRS participation and student learning outcomes.**

## DISCUSSION

This study furthers our understanding of the impact of CRS involvement on student learning. The influence of CRS participation frequency (depth) and the number of CRS activities participated in (breadth) on student learning outcomes were examined. Student learning outcomes of CRS involvement included communication skills, leadership skills, group cooperation skills, problem-solving skills, multicultural awareness, ability to develop friendships, sense of belonging, respect for others, ability to multi-task, and sense of adventure.

### Depth of CRS Involvement

Findings from the study indicate participation in a CRS activity, up to eight times a week, resulted in increased student learning outcomes. However, participation in a single activity more than eight times a week resulted in diminished student learning outcomes, supporting the law of diminishing returns (Shephard & Färe, 1974). This finding largely supports Astin's (1999) assertions of the outcomes of student involvement as a positive relationship was demonstrated between depth of CRS involvement and student learning outcomes. Participation in a single CRS activity eight times per week is indicative of considerable involvement, as this may reflect a student participating daily in a particular CRS activity. As student learning outcomes continue to increase up to CRS involvement of eight times per week, campus administrators should seek to deepen the level of involvement of casual participants.

To increase depth of involvement, practitioners should ensure the CRS environment meets students' innate psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness, which have been found to enhance intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) – a key contributor to CRS involvement. Practitioners could deepen the involvement of casual participants by integrating extrinsic motivators. Research examining the motivations of CRS participants with low involvement has found extrinsic, tangible motivations (e.g., money, clothing and equipment, food, class credit, etc.) to be the greatest source of motivation to participate in CRS (Parietti & Lower, 2016). By promoting an environment that fosters intrinsic motivation and integrates extrinsic motivators, practitioners could effectively deepen the involvement of both casual and highly involved CRS participants.

### Breadth of CRS involvement

The findings from the study also revealed that student breadth of participation affects student learning outcomes. The more unique activities a student participates in, the greater the positive impact on student learning outcomes. This was found to be true for each additional activity, up to thirty different activities, at which point learning outcomes begin to diminish, reinforcing the law of diminishing returns (Shephard & Färe, 1974). This finding also supports the underlying premise of experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), which postulates a constructivist process in which the learner creates knowledge through actively engaging in and reflecting upon an experience. As each CRS activity provides a unique social and physical environment in which to engage, participation in additional activities provide new opportunities for student learning. This study builds upon our previous under-

standing of the outcomes of CRS involvement, as most studies focus on CRS involvement broadly or one specific activity (e.g., Huesman et al., 2009; Lower et al., 2014).

Participating in a greater number of unique activities provides the opportunity for a student to interact with different people, which is of critical importance to campus recreation professionals who have a goal of facilitating increased involvement in campus activities while promoting diversity and inclusion on campus. According to Astin (1993), students socializing with persons from different racial and ethnic groups has a positive influence on cultural awareness and student satisfaction with college. Promoting expansion of the breadth of activities can facilitate more diverse social interaction and further impact student learning. Further, student awareness and subsequent involvement in currently available CRS activities can be enhanced through intentional marketing. Practitioners may also consider expanding the diversity of activities within existing CRS programs, such as offering a variety of group fitness classes.

### **Avoiding the Point of Diminished Returns**

While increasing the CRS involvement of students should remain a priority, practitioners must also be cognizant of the point of diminishing returns. It is not uncommon for a person seriously involved in an activity to view intense participation as a personal sacrifice (Stebbins, 2000). In addition, students heavily involved in a specific leisure activity often participate intensely at the expense of relationships with others (Scott & Shafer, 2001), possibly limiting their social network to these dominant activities which consume their time. Weidman's model of undergraduate socialization (1989) indicates that the normative context of institutions supports positive student learning outcomes. However, Astin (1999) asserts heavy involvement in educational activities can isolate students from peer groups and impede valuable and beneficial social experiences. Social integration is critical for student success and satisfaction with the college experience, as it has been found to benefit increased learning, cognitive growth, and personal development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

When considering the value of promoting physical activity across the lifespan, administrators should be aware of the possibility of student burnout as a result of intense involvement in a single CRS activity. Drawing parallels with early sport specialization literature, sport samplers – in comparison to sport specializers – have been associated with greater social capital and less burnout (Strachan, Côté, & Deakin, 2009). A key contributor to burnout is exhaustion (Gould, Udry, Tuffey, & Loehr, 1997), which may result from intense participation in one CRS activity. As burnout has been found to lead to participants emotionally and physically withdrawing from the sports activity or dropping out completely (Gould et al., 1997), practitioners must mitigate burnout. Self-determination theory can once again be applied in this instance, considering competence and autonomy have been found negatively related to exhaustion, devaluation, and reduced accomplishment – components of athlete burnout (Lonsdale, Hodge, & Rose, 2009). Within the diverse CRS program offerings, practitioners should ensure students have opportunities to experience competence and autonomy, which can be achieved through proper skill progression and allowance of self-determination.

### **Implications for Practice**

Navigating optimal levels of student involvement in CRS is complicated. Therefore, the authors seek to provide implications that can help campus administrators guide students towards the ideal level of involvement. When considering the student experience, within moments of stepping foot on campus, students are inundated with organizational materials from distinct sections of campus (e.g., student clubs, honors and scholars programs, counseling services, etc.) to large scale traditional events (e.g., resource fairs, campus tours, residence hall move-in, etc.). Major promotional efforts for student activities occur during welcome week between student move-in and the first official day of classes. Creating awareness of available student programs and services is necessary to incite student involvement at the beginning of one's college experience, although these promotional efforts may also contribute to the over-involved student resulting in diminishing student learning outcomes.

From a student affairs perspective, it is important to recognize that students are involved in multiple activities across campus. As such, the results of this study are not limited to CRS but rather should be positioned within the broader student affairs unit. Student affairs practitioners should not operate as a silo within their unique depart-

ment, but must consider the broader implications of programmatic decisions. Administrators who see students involved in CRS activities to the exclusion of other important student experiences may encourage that student to either seek diverse experiences and new social groups within CRS or explore other student experiences facilitated by the university. While this form of advising has been called “intrusive” (Robbins et al., 2009), given an institution’s proactive intervention with students identified as at-risk for diminished outcomes, if welcomed, this type of institutional support can promote student success. Moreover, enhancing students’ awareness and direction could prevent students from constricting their social group and minimizing their engagement in other important campus activities (including academic activities) that positively impact student learning outcomes.

To support students’ personal, academic, and career goals, student counseling services are available through most universities. Counseling services have begun to embed counselors within residential spaces across campus to assist with immediate mental health concerns (M. Samad, personal communication, December 11, 2018). If students experience deficits in their social community, academic performance, career goals, or health due to over-involvement in various activities, they should be directed towards available counseling services that are equipped to address these concerns. According to the *Student Personnel Point of View*, student affairs should not only provide student services that support the mission of the institution, but also understand individual students and pay attention to their well-rounded development, including intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual development (Nuss, 2003). Student affairs and campus administrators should be trained on student development as they serve as an informal source of counsel on work-life balance, health and wellness, time management, and other factors influencing a student’s college experience and learning outcomes.

In addition to optimizing the quantity of student involvement in co-curricular activities, it is important to continually enhance the quality of involvement (Astin, 1999). Zepke and Leach (2010) encourage student affairs practitioners to invest in a variety of student support services (e.g., orientation processes, mentorship, childcare), adapt to evolving student expectations, and foster a culture welcoming to students from diverse backgrounds, particularly ‘non-traditional’ students (Zepke & Leach, 2010). To dismantle the discrimination that continues to be a critical social issue on college campuses, changes must occur in student affairs policy, resources, programming, staffing, and training to provide an inclusive campus environment for minority and ‘non-traditional’ students (Harley, Nowak, Gassaway, & Savage, 2002).

### **Limitations & Future Research**

When interpreting the results of this research, it is important to do so in the context of the limitations of the study. The majority of the sample in this study is comprised of White women (62.6%). Despite the small sampling error (+ 0.52 at the 95% confidence level) associated with this data (Forrester, 2015), the percentage of White women in our study is slightly higher than the nationwide percentage of females (56.4%) in degree-granting postsecondary institutions the year in which this data were collected (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). As such, caution is advised when generalizing the results beyond this demographic.

While the factor analysis of the benefits scale produced two reliable factors, the learning outcomes measured in this study are diverse yet not exhaustive. Future studies should be grounded in a conceptual model of learning (e.g., Bloom’s taxonomy). Though self-reported learning outcomes are subjective, research demonstrates support for the adequacy and appropriateness of the use of self-report data in higher education research (Pike, 2011). Future research should consider integrating objective measures of learning outcomes for a more comprehensive understanding of the outcomes of CRS participation. Furthermore, while the power of the statistical tests was strong, the effect sizes were relatively weak. These results suggest that a more intentional benefits perspective should be incorporated into the planning and implementation of CRS programs to achieve these student learning outcomes.

The measure of involvement was limited to the number of different CRS activities participated in (breadth) and their frequency of CRS participation (depth) based on the secondary dataset. Future research may seek to explore optimal combinations of activities (breadth) that contribute to student learning outcomes. Frequency may not be the best measure of the depth of involvement as a student may participate in a CRS activity for 30 minutes or 2 hours; a more accurate measure – such as time spent engaged in an activity – is warranted. Based upon Astin’s (1984; 1999) conceptualization of student involvement as incorporating both quantitative and qual-



itative components, future research should consider adding a measure of qualitative involvement – such as effort expended while engaged in the activity.

While this research identifies a point of diminishing returns for student learning outcomes, more interpretive future research approaches might help contribute further insights or understanding regarding what it is about participating in CRS that facilitate these and other student learning outcomes. To accurately capture the student experience, future research may incorporate a qualitative approach to explore the sociohistorical cultural context impacting students' opportunities for CRS involvement, involvement experience, and future intentions to persist or withdraw from the activity. Further exploration of how the control variables - such as place of residence, location of CRS facilities, or CRS participation fees – influence student involvement in CRS activities and subsequent student learning outcomes will provide helpful context for student affairs practitioners. Researchers may also consider developing and testing a new student involvement framework that accounts for the environmental context and point of diminishing returns to extend theory and practice.

## CONCLUSION

The U.S. Department of Education (2006) charges universities with increasing transparency and accountability through reporting crucial information, such as student learning outcomes, to inform policymakers and demonstrate the contribution of higher education to the public good. Campus administrators responsible for delivering programs, activities, facilities, and services to the student body are faced with justifying their costs and competing for internal resources, necessitating investigation and demonstration of student learning outcomes associated with student involvement. Though research supports the value of student involvement in a variety of campus activities for social integration within the institution (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), more opportunities for involvement has been linked with greater student involvement (Lower et al., 2015), which can lead to the over-scheduled student.

The current study demonstrates positive student learning outcomes associated with CRS involvement, providing evidence of the value of CRS programs in higher education. However, the findings reveal a curvilinear relationship between CRS involvement and student learning outcomes, illustrating a point of diminishing returns. Ultimately, this study reveals the reality of the over-scheduled student. Through strategic efforts, student development can not only be promoted but also protected. Ultimately, information is power; we hope that this study will inform higher education practice for the promotion of student development, health, and wellness.

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RESEARCH

# THE STABILITY IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS OVER TIME

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This article explores the stability of student organizations along two main dimensions: number of students and length of existence. Also, we examine if the national presence of a student organization affects student organizational stability. Using Howard University yearbooks to examine a large population of African American students, we found that stability varies greatly by type of organization. In terms of the number of students, we found that the most stable organizations were the national social groups. In terms of length of existence, we found the Pan-Hellenic organizations to be the most stable.

## INTRODUCTION

Student organizations are present on virtually all colleges and universities and range from national groups with a focus on service to local groups that allow individuals from similar backgrounds to meet and share commonalities. Student involvement in particular organizations may lead to students being more successful, and this has been particularly true for honors organizations, according to Cosgrove (2003). Naturally, the compositions of student organizations are subject to myriad interests and backgrounds. Some organizations persist while the student body changes both numerically and demographically nearly every year.

This research focuses on the stability of campus organizations from 1989 to 2009, with the intent of providing students and administrators with a general idea of the types of groups that tend to flourish over the long term. Unlike prior studies that focus on the outcomes of students involved in student organizations, we provide an exploratory analysis of the stability in student organizations along two main dimensions: number of students and length of existence. We focus on student organizational stability since established organizations are likely to be more effective in improving performance and integration. We created a student organization data set and match this data with academic records data from Howard University, a premier Historically Black College and University (HBCU), to answer two important questions: (1) How does membership in campus organizations vary over time? (2) What are the characteristics of the campus organizations that have the most longevity? The answers to these questions will hopefully encourage further research on student organizational stability, aid administrative decisions regarding funding and opportunities for organizational growth, as well as inform students interested in creating new groups on the types of organizations that historically enjoyed relative stability.

According to the U.S. News and World Report 2019 Statistics, Howard University, a private institution founded in 1867, has a total undergraduate enrollment of 6,354 students. Howard's 258-acre urban campus is home to 13 schools and colleges. The university utilizes a semester-based academic calendar and reported tuition and fees of \$



26,756 for the 2018-2019 academic calendar. Based on the 2019 edition of the “U.S. News Best Colleges: National University Rankings,” Howard University ranked 89th out of 312 schools.<sup>1</sup> As mentioned previously, Howard is a Historically Black University. Based on statistics from the US Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics, HBCUs continue to provide postsecondary education for a significant share of African Americans. According to the US Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, HBCUs were established to provide postsecondary education to blacks who “were generally denied admission to traditionally white institutions” due to public policies that prohibited the education of blacks.

The mission statement of Howard University highlights its original and continuing commitment to both quality and longevity as an institution of comprehensive educational offerings at the undergraduate, professional, and graduate levels. In addition, the mission statement lays the foundation for the significance of cultural, social, and academic activities that are varied, sustainable, and important to an exceptional education of lasting value. Howard University’s mission statement is as follows: “Howard University, a culturally diverse, comprehensive, research-intensive and historically Black private university, provides an educational experience of exceptional quality at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels to students of high academic standing and potential, with particular emphasis upon educational opportunities for Black students. Moreover, the University is dedicated to attracting and sustaining a cadre of faculty who are, through their teaching, research, and service, committed to the development of distinguished, historically aware, and compassionate graduates and the discovery of solutions to human problems in the United States and throughout the world. With an abiding interest in both domestic and international affairs, the University is committed to continuing to produce leaders for America and the global community.”<sup>3</sup>

To answer the questions previously mentioned, we created a comprehensive data set of Howard University student organizations by utilizing Howard University’s Yearbooks from 1989- 2009. We matched yearbook data with student academic records for the same years. The data set also included a host of student demographic characteristics and academic records. With this data, we quantitatively analyzed student organizational stability utilizing the number of students participating in an organization to examine student membership in campus organizations over time and to determine the characteristics of the campus organizations that have the most longevity. Since the focus of this article is not to examine individual student organization dynamics, we classify and analyze student organizations based on categories consistent with the Howard University Yearbooks. Based on our analysis of the university’s yearbooks and student records, we found that the stability of organizations varied greatly by organizational type. In particular, we found the most stable organizations, based on the number of students, to be national social organizations. Also, the most stable organizations, based on years of existence, were the Pan-Hellenic organizations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (1987) and American Council on Education (1949), the typical role of higher education is to preserve, transmit, and enrich society through instruction, research, and other scholarly activities. Extracurricular activities, e.g., participation in student organizations, are compliments to classroom activities and provide students with essential real-world training and skill development (Montelongo, 2002). Further, there is a relatively large literature on the relationship between participation in student organizations and academic performance and social integration, respectively, and relatively small literature on the importance of student organizational longevity. Below, we briefly highlight the literature in the three areas mentioned above.

### **Academic Performance**

There are various types of student organizations on college campuses, and the impacts of student organizations on academic performance are mixed (Astin, 1993; Baker, 2008; Bowman & Culver, 2018; Insler & Karam, 2019). Astin’s seminal book provides a thorough examination of student outcomes and how they are affected by college environments. Relying on a longitudinal survey of about 25,000 college students, Astin found that student to student interactions, through student organizations, group projects for classes, tutoring other students, etc., led

to positive overall academic development. Using the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen and focusing on underrepresented minorities attending selective colleges, Baker (2008) found that the relationship between student organizations and academic achievement differs by organizational type and race and gender of the student. Bowman & Culver (2018) relied on survey data from forty-six four-year institutions and propensity score matching methods. They found that honors programs predicted higher grade point averages, retention, and four-year graduation rates, especially for underrepresented minorities. For students that participate in intercollegiate athletics, sports participation has been found to reduce recruited athletes' grades (Insler & Karam, 2019).

### **Social Integration**

Hartshorne (1943) noted that in campus organizational involvement, "there is ideal generational continuity (in transmitting) a cultural heritage." Harthorne posited that incoming first-year students socialize with upper-level students directly and indirectly. Further, these interactions help to pass down information/norms that are embedded in the college culture. Hartshorne also posited that members of functional organizations are chosen from those students who share a common background, including having graduated from the same high school. Potential members are likely selected based on the likelihood of their acceptance of the group's informal standards rather than any specific qualifications. Hartshorne states that "the informal or latent function of the group may come to be as important as the ostensible or formal function" (p. 322).

Student organizations play an essential role in social integration. Using survey data from African American students attending predominantly White institutions (PWIs), Sutton and Kimbrough (2001) found that African American students marginally participated in traditional predominantly white student organizations because of an "unwelcoming" campus climate. This unwelcoming climate was also noted by Brown (1991), Mallory (1997), Person & Christensen (1996), and Rooney (1985). In a similar vein, Sergent & Sedlacek (1990) found that African American students on predominantly white campuses were less likely to participate in student councils or student unions and homecoming committees. However, in multicultural organizations that were also predominantly White, Sutton & Kimbrough (2001) found that African American students thrived due to a sense of self-satisfaction in helping the community at large, but these studies were in environments where African American students were a minority on these campuses.

Another aspect relevant to student participation in organizations is the concept of "mattering." Rosenberg & McCullough (1981) define "mattering" as the belief that students matter to an organization. They go on to suggest that there are three important areas: attention, importance, and dependence. Rosenberg and McCullough postulated that feeling appreciated by others and seeking approval from others have a profound influence on human behaviors. They state that "mattering represents a compelling social obligation and a powerful source of social integration" and that "we are bonded to society not only by virtue of our dependence on others but on their dependence on us."

Similarly, Person & Christensen (1996) performed a study examining African American culture at a predominantly White liberal arts and engineering college. They found that students joined groups to support each other and came together to celebrate their history and to address racial identity developmental issues. But these results are again restricted to African Americans in PWIs. At other types of institutions, these students might join organizations for different reasons.

Grubb (2006) examined the academic impacts of student participation in Greek organizations and investigated the characteristics of Greek membership. Grubb found that Greek organizations disproportionately attract students from out of state because these organizations provide a "substitute" for distant family, community, and social networks.

Dugan (2008) used latent class analysis and cluster analysis to "explore whether latent phenomena could be identified to assist in the classification of students into subgroups." Dugan surmised that four latent factors underlie "patterns of student involvement in co-curricular group experiences." The latent factors were the breadth of involvement, the difference between identity and expression, and sports-related patterns, the distinction between

art and academic careers, and the contrast between traditional collegiate experiences versus a more diffused or nonspecific pattern.

### **Organizational Longevity**

Kuk, Thomas, & Banning (2008) described a typology in which student organizations are classified. Their research may provide an important element in understanding why some organizations are more apt to survive on a college campus than others. Thomas & Cross (2007) identified critical survival elements. They state that “[f]our distinct place agents’ typologies have been identified: transformational, contributive, contingent, and exploitative.” This place typology is important in helping school administrators to foster a better relationship with campus/student organizations.

In answering the research questions as to the stability of campus organizations, this research explores the factors that influence membership over time and what organizations have longevity within the campus culture. The unique dataset from Howard University enabled insight into the trends in student involvement at an institution where the majority of students are African American. Such data is largely underrepresented in the literature.

## METHODOLOGY

Based on the body of literature that has studied student organizations, student organizations play an important role in student academic performance and social integration, and the effects may vary by race and gender. Further, established organizations are likely to be more effective in improving performance and integration. To examine student organizational stability, we created a comprehensive data set for student organizations at Howard University, a Historically Black University, and match this data with student records. Ideally, data on student organizations would have been obtained from Howard University’s Office of Student Activities, but this information was not available for use for academic research. As the next best alternative, we relied on Howard University’s award-winning yearbook that has been published annually for several decades. The yearbook documents the names and types of campus organizations on Howard University’s campus. We elected to use the Howard University yearbook as it was the most comprehensive resource available for accounting for student organizations across the university. For a nominal fee, these yearbooks were obtained from various locations across the country for the years 1989- 2009. The campus organizations were cataloged by hand from these yearbooks.

Once we had a listing of organizations and student names by year, we then grouped the organizations as follows: academic and professional, Pan-Hellenic, honors, political, religious, social, state, and regional, student councils, and university-wide organizations. These categories corresponded with the university’s official categories as of December 12, 2009. Academic and professional organizations are defined as organizations that either pertain to academics or a profession. Similarly, honors societies also focus on academics, yet they usually have a grade point average (GPA) requirements for becoming and remaining a member of the organization. Pan-Hellenic organizations are composed of nine historically black fraternities and sororities. Our research showed that religious groups were not uniquely associated with particular religious affiliations. At the same time, political organizations that were focused on politics were not necessarily limited to Republican and Democratic parties. Social organizations and state and regional organizations were similar in that they both allow students from different backgrounds to meet and share commonalities. However, state and regional organizations focused on bringing students from the same states and regions of the country together, while social organizations generally did not have this same focus. Lastly, student councils and university-wide organizations consisted of school and dormitory councils and organizations, especially media organizations, which informed the entire campus.

We then determined if the organization was only located on Howard University’s campus or could be found elsewhere. For example, organizations such as the Connecticut Club were unique to Howard University, lacking a national organization or presence outside of the campus. Organizations such as the NAACP exist around the nation, or in other words, exist outside of Howard. We juxtapose these two different groups, Howard University-only versus national campus organizations, comparing their stability relative to each other.

To assist with stability characteristics, we noted that campus organizations appeared to change names or names were inputted differently from year to year in the yearbook. However, with the help of the Office of Student Activities, we were able to determine which organizations were the same despite having different names. For example, we found that in 1993 the New York State Club self-identified as New Yorkers Unlimited.<sup>5</sup> Once these differences in names were identified and verified, we counted the number of people in each organization for each year and discarded the non-identifiable names. Although it was interesting to know the names of the students in the organizations, their names were not necessary to answer our research questions. Once we had a workable dataset, we culled through each yearbook, making sure that the counted names matched the number of names listed.

Our sample consists of 316 unique student organizations. We also matched student academic records to their student organization affiliation. Thus, the data had over 6,000 students for each academic term and year. Table 1 shows how many organizations existed for each year. Because there were no records that illustrated an accurate number of organizations on campus for each year, we sent our list to the Office of Student Activities to ascertain the number that we had verified. We were informed that our list for the 2007, 2008, and 2009 years provided about 50 percent of the active student organizations on campus. We assumed, due to the importance of the yearbook at Howard University, that a significant proportion of active members participated in being in the yearbook, and this proportion was constant across groups. Although we only capture approximately half of the student organizations, our sample size is large enough for robust and rigorous statistical inference. Table 1 provides a summary of the total number of student organizations as determined by the Howard University Yearbook.

**Table 1. Total number of student organizations from Howard University yearbooks.**

Year	No. of Organizations	Year	No. of Organizations
1989	53	2000	120
1990	67	2001	105
1991	83	2002	49
1992	50	2003	100
1993	65	2004	86
1994	83	2005	78
1995	80	2006	100
1996	83	2007	93
1997	63	2008	121
1998	58	2009	102
1999	66		

## RESULTS

### Stability

We had two questions: (1) How does membership in campus organizations vary over time? (2) What are the characteristics of the campus organizations that have the most longevity? To begin to answer our questions, we first found a general count of students participating in organizations for each organizational category. In Table 2, we detail summary statistics for our findings by including two additional classifications: Howard-only organizations, organizations that exclusively exist at Howard University, and national or international organizations. All Pan-Hellenic were national, and all state and regional and student councils and university-wide were Howard-only. Based on a yearly count of student organizations, among Howard-only organizations, student councils, social, and state and regional generally had the highest number of organizations. Among national organizations, social, academic, and professional were the most numerous.

To examine stability in terms of organization size, we computed the mean number of students for every organization type for each academic year and found their respective standard deviations. The measure of means and standard deviations provided a general idea of how the number of students in each group was distributed about its mean over all the years. Table 2 summarizes these results.



**Table 2. Type of organization, means, and standard deviations by number of students.**

<b>Organization Type</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
Academic and Professional (HU).....	14.79.....	5.11
Academic and Professional (National) .....	14.47.....	6.80
Honors (HU) .....	15.18.....	10.03
Honors (National).....	28.58.....	33.12
Pan-Hellenic .....	15.67.....	6.21
Political (HU) .....	11.40.....	6.06
Political (National).....	34.35.....	16.12
Religious (HU) .....	17.57.....	5.91
Religious (National).....	12.00.....	6.35
Social (HU) .....	14.61.....	5.33
Social (National).....	10.26.....	3.54
State and Regional (HU).....	15.94.....	3.99
Student Councils (HU) .....	14.79.....	5.11

*Note: HU denotes Howard University-only organizations, and National denotes national or international organizations.*

National social, Howard-only political, and national religious organizations had the lowest mean number of members per organization. More interestingly, national social groups had a low standard deviation in addition to having a relatively small number of members. This result is surprising for two reasons. The first reason is that there was an overall increase in the number of national social groups, starting from 1 in 1989 to 19 in 2009. Usually, increasing the number of groups makes the average number of students per group more deviant, yet this standard deviation is small. The second reason is that social groups are expected to be more variable in that social preferences change often. In this case, however, changing social preferences do not significantly affect the average number of students per group and its variability, implying that national social groups are the most stable in terms of the number of students.

On the other hand, national political organizations and national honors organizations by far had the highest average number of student members of any other category. As with Howard-only political organizations, national political organizations had a small number of organizations among them. These types of organizations had two or fewer groups for eleven out of the sixteen years in existence. Honors organizations had a more surprising result in terms of the standard deviations for student members. One would expect honors organizations to have less variability due to the GPA requirements needed to become and remain a member. Yet, surprisingly, national honors organizations had a high average number of members and standard deviation relative to the remainder of the groups, suggesting that the number of members in these groups is larger and more volatile relative to the other groups. Because of the high variability in these organizations, national honors organizations tended to be unstable in terms of the number of students.

### **Longevity**

To examine stability in terms of longevity, we explored the maximum number of years that each organization existed and averaged across organizational type. Organizational types that existed longer on average had small standard deviations with respect to their means and appeared to be more stable than groups existing for shorter amounts of time with higher standard deviations. Table 3 summarizes these results.

**Table 3. Type of organization and years in existence.**

Organization Type	Mean	Std. Dev.
Academic and Professional (HU).....	1.63.....	1.16
Academic and Professional (National) .....	2.88.....	2.67
Honors (HU) .....	8.90.....	4.68
Honors (National).....	2.80.....	2.05
Pan-Hellenic .....	3.92.....	4.48
Political (HU) .....	4.00.....	
Political (National).....	5.33.....	5.39
Religious (HU) .....	3.11.....	3.00
Religious (National).....	1.45.....	0.82
Social (HU) .....	2.48.....	2.44
Social (National).....	2.80.....	2.57
State and Regional (HU).....	3.37.....	3.27
Student Councils (HU) .....	4.00.....	4.21

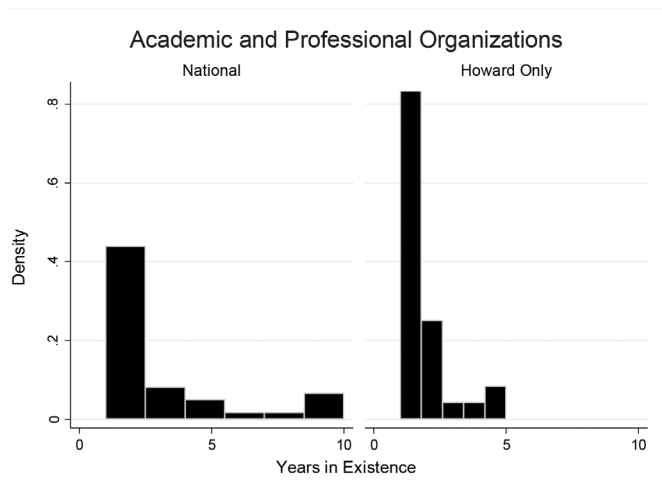
*Note: HU denotes Howard University-only organizations, and National denotes national or international organizations.*

Of the organizational types with the smallest number of years in existence, national religious organizations and Howard-only academic and professional organizations had the fewest number, suggesting that these organizations tended to exist for short periods continually. Since the religious organizations had a smaller relative standard deviation and were practically driven by one organization, the least stable of the two were the Howard-only academic and professional organizations. This result can be explained by the perpetual change in student academic preferences over the years. Also, Howard-only social groups existed for short periods with a high standard deviation. This result was expected, however, since student social preferences usually changed from year to year, and these organizations lacked a national presence.

The organizational type with the most average years in existence was the Pan-Hellenic organizations. These organizations persisted for 8.9 years, on average, much longer than the other organizations. Pan-Hellenic organizations also had a relatively low standard deviation compared to the mean, so Pan-Hellenic organizations were generally stable.

To further analyze longevity, we provide a discrete distribution, which gives the density of organizations by the number of years in continual existence. These distributions show how continual existence varies by organizational type at Howard University. This information provides more details than the means. Figures 1-8 summarize these findings.

**Figure 1. Distribution of years in existence for academic and professional organizations.**



As shown in Figure 1, all of the Howard-only academic and professional organizations have lasted no more than five years continually, with the organizations distributed between one and five years. Nationally, academic and professional organizations also tended to exist continually for less than five years. However, several of these organizations have lasted longer than five years.

**Figure 2. Distribution of years in existence for honors organizations.**

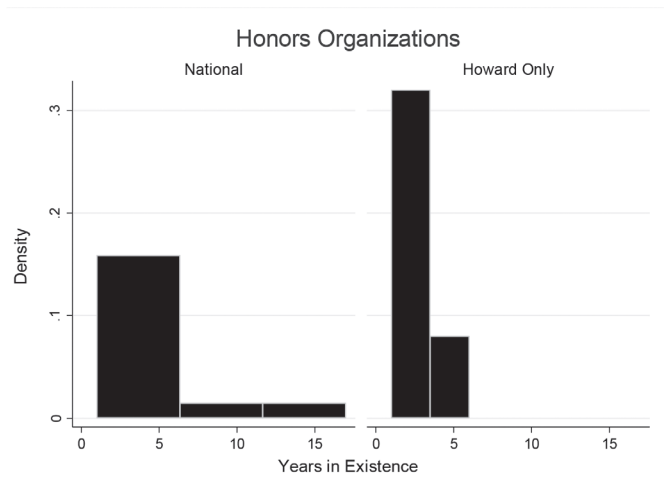


Figure 2 shows years in existence for honors organizations. Howard-only and national honors organizations have stark differences in terms of years in existence. National honors organizations are distributed across the entire range of years, mostly existing for fewer than five years continually. On the other hand, Howard-only honors organizations have all existed for five or fewer years continually on average. The national foundation of national honors organizations may allow them to exist longer than similar Howard-only organizations.

**Figure 3. Distribution of years in existence for Pan-Hellenic organizations.**

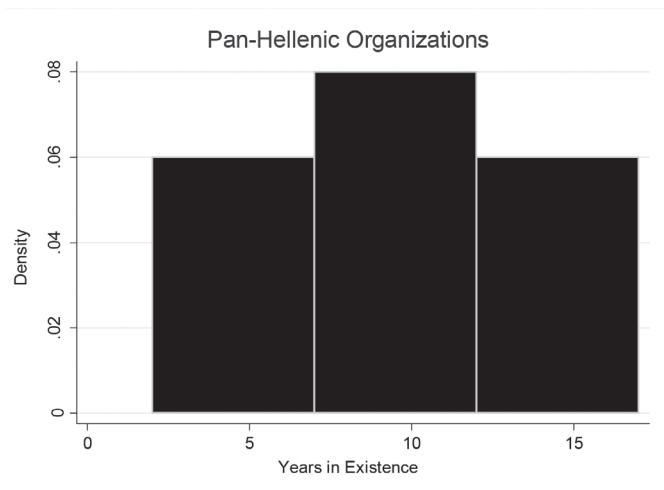
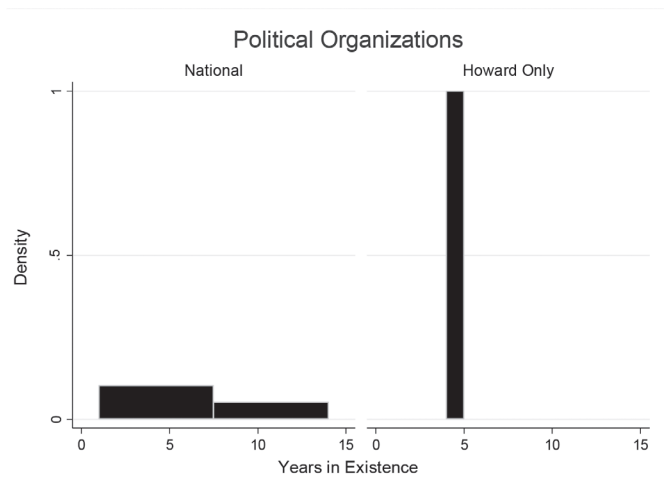


Figure 3 shows that Pan-Hellenic organizations were very evenly distributed around ten years in existence, with the highest density around ten continual years of existence. These types of organizations also had the most continual years in existence overall, further suggesting that these types of organizations are most stable on a year to year basis.

**Figure 4. Distribution of years in existence for political organizations.**



There is a stark difference in the distribution of political organizations, as shown in Figure 4. We observe an even distribution in National political organizations, but Howard-only political organizations are distributed around four years in existence, which demonstrates their instability. However, the lack of organizations under the Howard-only political type drives this finding.

**Figure 5. Distribution of years in existence for religious organizations.**

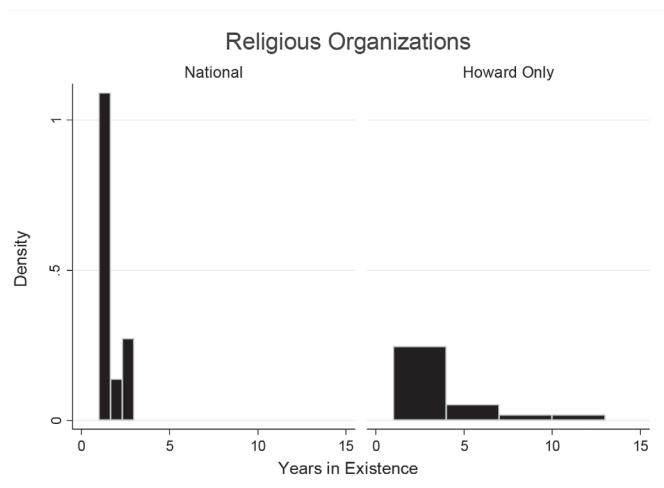


Figure 5 shows that among religious organizations, national organizations had a distribution below five years in existence, and Howard-only organizations had a distribution predominately below five years, which contradicts the trend that national organizations tend to last longer continually. The lack of organizations under the national religious organizational type again explains the low levels of continual years in existence.



**Figure 6. Distribution of years in existence for social organizations.**

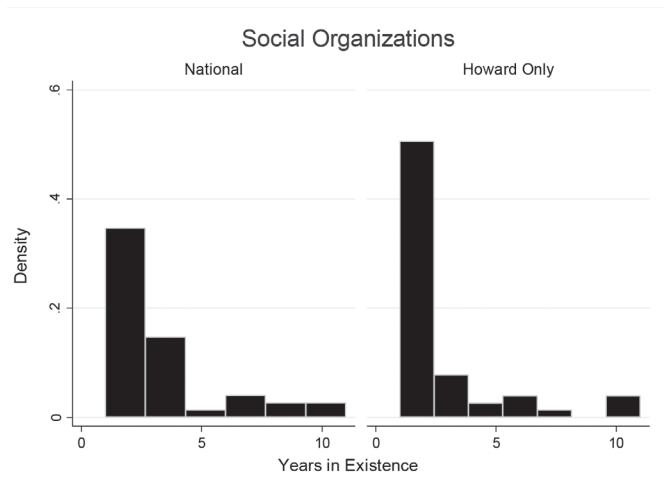


Figure 6 shows that for both national and Howard-only social groups. Many of these organizations lasted less than five years continually, with a few exceptions. National social organizations had a more even distribution when compared to Howard-only social organizations, and Howard-only organizations had a split in their distribution where organizations either lasted longer continually or not long at all.

**Figure 7. Distribution of years in existence for university-wide organizations.**

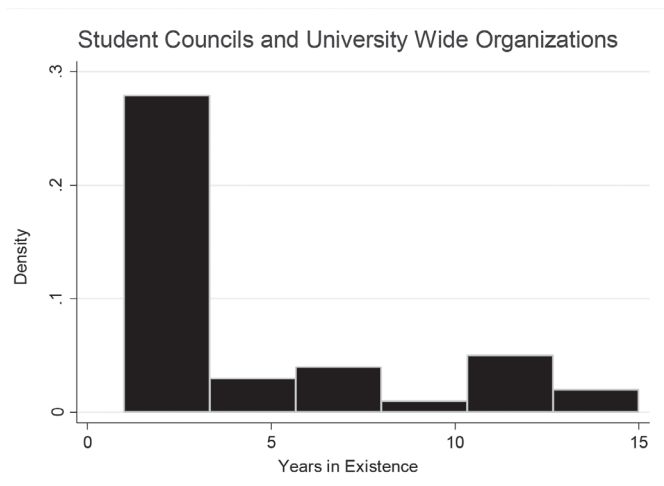


Figure 7 shows that many student councils and university-wide organizations lasted less than five years. This result is surprising because student councils generally are based on campus-wide participation and are essential for the shared governance of the university, suggesting that this type of organization should last longer on average.

**Figure 8. Distribution of years in existence for state and regional organizations.**

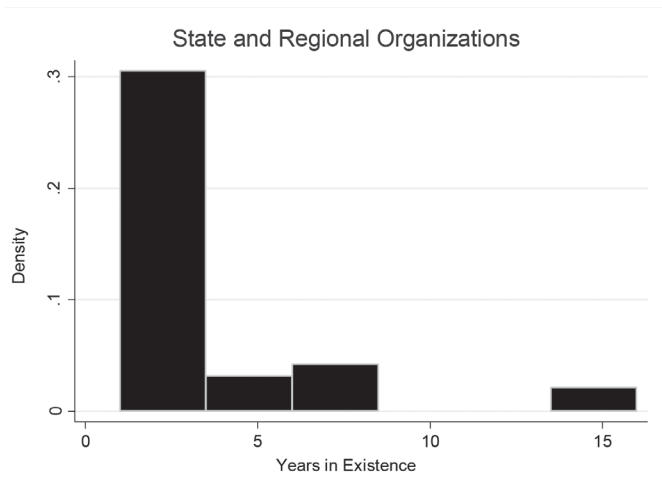


Figure 8 shows that state and regional organizations had a split distribution similar to that of student councils and university-wide organizations, with the difference being that state and regional organizations had a higher proportion of organizations at the bottom of the distribution.

## CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This research develops a comprehensive data set of student organizations for a premier Historically Black University. In contrast to the literature on student organizations that typically focuses on student outcomes, we utilize this data to perform a comprehensive analysis of the stability of student organizations to highlight the types of student organizations that are the most stable. Thus, the results of this study can inform future research and administrators and students, making student organizational decisions. In terms of student numbers, the most stable organizations were the national social groups. These groups had a very low standard deviation relative to their mean compared to the other categories, which was a surprising result. We also found that in terms of longevity, Pan-Hellenic organizations were the most stable. Pan-Hellenic organizations not only had a high number of continual years in existence but were also evenly distributed throughout all organizations.

While this article addresses the stability of student organizations, it does not attempt to explain the evolution of individual student organizations over time. Determining why an organization changes would allow us to conclude the behavior of individuals within each organization. However, this article provides a broader analysis of student organizations to provide information that can be useful for students and administrators in making decisions about organizations on campus. For an administrator whose priority is to increase student academic performance through an honors organization, we found that national honors organizations tend to be more stable based on the number of members as well as years in existence. Comparatively, if an administrator's priority is to increase the number of religious organizations, university-level student religious organizations tend to be more stable when compared to national level student organizations.

This article presented a rich data set, and this data includes information on student gender, age, college major, college grade point average, high school grade point average, course enrollment, etc. The analysis presented can be easily extended to discuss the relationship between student organizations and academic performance. Unlike prior studies that have focused on social integration, participation in student organizations is less likely to be driven by racial integration. Given that the data set discussed is a panel that follows thousands of undergraduates as they matriculate through college, this data is also ideal for time-to-event analysis. Although there are some limitations to the data as economic variables and post-graduation outcomes are unavailable.

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