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LEARNING BY DOING: STUDENT GROUP FITNESS INSTRUCTORS GAIN
LEADERSHIP, COMMUNICATION, AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING SKILLS IN
CAMPUS RECREATION

BY

MORGYN FELTY

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Science

Major in Sport and Recreation Administration

South Dakota State University

2022

THESIS ACCEPTANCE PAGE

Morgyn Felty

This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the master's degree and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree.

Acceptance of this does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

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This thesis is dedicated to my grandfather, who has been my number one supporter since I started my journey as a student. Thank you for believing in me from the beginning, I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you.

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ABSTRACT

LEARNING BY DOING: STUDENT GROUP FITNESS INSTRUCTORS GAIN
LEADERSHIP, COMMUNICATION, AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING SKILLS
IN CAMPUS RECREATION

MORGYN FELTY

Student employee positions in campus recreation allow students to gain transferrable skills. Previous studies show that students employed in specialized program areas have different experiences that are beneficial for their development. Addressing the gap in research, the purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between leadership, communication, and relationship building skills among student group fitness instructors. Additionally, to investigate if transferrable skill development varies based on an instructor's work experience and demographics. A total of 112 student group fitness instructors from 17 different NIRSA institutions completed an electronic questionnaire in the fall of 2021. Recreation directors were invited to send the questionnaire to their student group fitness instructors via email. Addressing three skill outcomes, leadership development, effective communication, and meaningful interpersonal relationships, a 5-point-Likert scale was used to describe the participants frequency and accuracy of skill objectives within each outcome. Additionally, participants were asked to complete a series of questions pertaining to their employment experience and demographic information.

Descriptive statistics reported high frequency and accuracy of skill outcomes, indicating participants felt they frequently used these skills and perceived skill use was accurate. Pearson's r correlation was used to assess the linear relationship between skill

outcomes and revealed a positive, moderate to strong correlation amongst the variables. Upon further analysis, ANOVA reported that younger students, both biologically and academically, reported higher overall mean of meaningful interpersonal relationships than older students. A T-test revealed that participants who identified as male perceive lower skill frequency and accuracy than female-identifying participants. Future research could address relationship building among student employees, focusing on age and academic year. Additionally, a qualitative study interviewing male-identifying group fitness instructors may be beneficial to investigate why this demographic group is receiving a different experience than others.

INTRODUCTION

Within higher education, student affairs programs work to provide students with support and developmental opportunities that set them up for success post-graduation (Becker, 2009; Bower et al., 2005; Hoyt, 2021; McFadden & Carr, 2015; Toperzer et al., 2011). Under the umbrella of student affairs, campus recreation programs maintain those same opportunities with the guidance of the National Intramural and Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA). Under NIRSA's leadership, campus recreation professionals work towards student success through professional development, creating opportunities to improve skill capacity, specifically within a student's leadership capabilities (Carr & Hardin, 2010; Daprano et al., 2005; Lower-Hoppe et al., 2019; Padgett et al., n.d.). Many students are involved with campus recreation activities (Hall, 2006). Through participation in activities, student learning can be experienced outside of the classroom (Flosdorf et al., 2016). Such involvement also provides opportunities for students to connect classroom work to practical settings, enhancing student's growth and development and working to merge the gap between skills gained in and outside of the classroom (Bolton & Rosselli, 2017).

Assisting student employees to gain transferrable skills is one of the core values for campus recreation professionals. In colleges and universities, campus recreation departments are the largest employer for students on campus. Through consistent hours and scheduling, student employees can experience growth and success within their positions that can be beneficial in their current academic coursework and professionally in their careers (Dundes & Marx, 2006; Toperzer et al., 2011). All program areas—aquatics, fitness, intramural sports, sport clubs, memberships, reservations, open

recreation, facilities, marketing, and outdoor programs— routinely employ undergraduate students to assist with program administration and facilitation (Daprano et al., 2005). Professional staff may not be present during all hours of operation, resulting in student employees being relied on to manage and facilitate programs (Bower et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 2012; Kellison & James, 2011; Toperzer et al., 2011), while also giving students the opportunity to practice and gain transferrable skills (McFadden & Carr, 2015) by using “learn as you go” approach (Bolton & Rosselli, 2017). Professional staff work to build relationships with their student employees, helping them grow professionally and stay connected within the department. Additionally, campus recreation programs often offer internship experiences that allow for further professional development (Ross & Beggs, 2007). Through this unique experience, students can further their development professionally, focusing on sought out transferrable skills (Anderson et al., 2018; Hall, 2013).

Campus recreation provides various learning opportunities and positive influences on students' professional career through their employment experience. Hall (2013) found that no matter the position students work in, student employees generally experience professional growth and positive support within campus recreation. Some program areas have special prerequisites and skill sets that are required upon employment. Areas that require extra certifications and special skillsets can be considered specialized positions and they fall under the areas of aquatics, fitness, outdoor programs, intramural sports, and sport clubs. Within these specialized positions, students are provided with different opportunities for growth and their experiences tend to focus on leadership, communication, and relationship building (Walker et al., 2018).

Previous studies in campus recreation have recognized the unique opportunities for growth within specialized positions, such as intramurals and sport clubs, outdoor programs, and aquatics (Boettcher & Gansemer-Topf, 2015; Buzzelli, 2017; Yarger & Ogoreuc, 2009; Schuh, 1999). While all positions in campus recreation are important and needed for operation, these specialized program areas require additional training, specialized skills, or certifications to fulfill the requirements of the position. For example, a lifeguard must hold a current or up-to-date certification through a certifying entity, such as the American Red Cross, to start working the position. Intramural supervisors and officials need to attend trainings to gain knowledge regarding rules and regulations for a variety of sports. Outdoor program students must have knowledge and risk management techniques to safely lead programs, such as group trips to national parks or teaching a participant how to indoor climb. Group fitness, a specialized program area, has not been studied in current literature. Group fitness instructors must undergo training, have in-depth knowledge of exercise, and have the ability to teach to be successful in the role. Some universities may even require an instructor to hold a certification in fitness before they start teaching.

The purpose of the study was to (1) understand the relationship between leadership development, effective communication, and meaningful interpersonal relationships of student group fitness instructors within a campus recreation setting and (2) investigate if student instructors' transferrable skill development varies with their work experience and demographics. Based on the purpose of this study, three research questions guided this study:

1. Are student group fitness instructors' leadership development, effective communication, and meaningful interpersonal relationships correlated?

- 1.1. Are student group fitness instructors' leadership development and effective communication, positively correlated with each other?
- 1.2. Are student group fitness instructors' effective communication and meaningful interpersonal relationships skills positively correlated with each other?
- 1.3. Are student group fitness instructors' meaningful interpersonal relationships and leadership development skills positively correlated with each other?
2. Does skill development vary based on student instructors' work experience in campus recreation?
3. Does skill development vary based on student instructors' demographics?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Student Employment and Skill Acquisition

Student affairs departments offer multiple opportunities for employment, especially within campus recreation. These student employment positions in campus recreation impact a student's professional growth, allowing them to practice and gain transferrable skills and core competencies (Bolton & Rosselli, 2017). Additionally, on-campus student employment has been shown to improve student success in the classroom related to their grades. More specifically Pike et al. (2008) indicated that students working twenty hours a week or less improved academic success and engagement in students within a university setting. While fostering growth, student employees gain and practice core competencies, defined as skills, knowledge, and abilities that assist in success in a professional role (Ross & Beggs, 2007). These core competencies, or transferrable skills, are important for students to practice before entering their professional careers. To gain these experiences, students become involved

and seek employment on-campus within student affairs programs, such as campus recreation.

Campus recreation has been identified as a place for student employees to learn and grow through applied skill acquisition and practice (Bentrim et al., 2013; Bolton & Rosselli, 2017; Hall, 2013; Toperzer et al., 2011). Toperzer et al. (2011) further concentrated on best practices for student employee professional development, solidifying five general themes for optimal growth: leadership, performance assessment, training and orientation, personal relationships, and professional development. The first, leadership development, encourages the student to build and establish their identity. Professionals should push for training and development opportunities to assist the student with becoming comfortable and confident in their role. Performance assessment, the second theme, can push a student towards independence and increase their problem-solving abilities through self-direction. Third, training and orientation, assists the student in developing their purpose and pushes them to develop achievable goals for the future. The fourth theme, personal relationships, increases interaction with members, peers, and participants, enhancing their sense of acceptance of all individuals. Lastly, professional development, progresses a student's competency (Toperzer et al., 2011).

Students on campus learn through involvement. Regarding their employment position on campus, Bolton and Rosselli (2017) found, through purposeful sampling and focus group interviews, that student employees learned through action and involvement in their position. Students were able to reflect upon the skills they enhanced through their position, focusing on communication, technical, and teamwork skills. Anderson et al. (2018) and Bolton and Rosselli (2017) focused on transferable skills to emphasize the

importance of how student employees gain skills and competence in campus recreation. Bolton and Rosselli (2017) also found that students were able to reflect upon their experiences and skills gained while working in campus recreation. Recruiting a larger group of participants than previous studies, Anderson et al. (2018) designed an instrument around the top ten most desirable skills identified by employers, written by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (Anderson et al., 2018). With the larger sample size, Anderson et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of specialization, concluding that it may be helpful to study individual program areas or institutions.

Hall (2013) solidified the connection between campus recreation and academic coursework, focusing on how often students apply skills learned while working in campus recreation to their coursework. Research was directed to three general themes: working with people, leadership skills, and communication skills. The study resulted in proving its purpose and supporting campus recreation as a place for learning and development in student employees. Concentrating on more specific skills and abilities, Tingle et al. (2013) examined leadership development programs and its effectiveness towards student employees in campus recreation. The findings indicated that student employees who were provided leadership programs saw improvement in leadership skills and abilities, pushing campus recreation professionals to implement student learning practices to assist with leadership growth.

Within higher education, there are several developmental outcomes that professionals need to work towards to help better their students' skills and abilities. These outcomes could be valuable for campus recreation student employees' learning and development. Existing literature outlines desired outcomes and objectives for optimal student development. Strayhorn et al. (2006) Frameworks for Assessing

Learning and Development Outcomes (FALDO) provides 16 student development and learning outcomes that was inspired by efforts from the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in higher education. Through identifying these outcomes, CAS strongly encourages departments within higher education to focus on developing students following the given outcomes. Outcomes include, and are not limited to, leadership development, effective communication, and meaningful interpersonal relationships. Leadership development focuses on the student's ability to serve in a leadership role, comprehend group dynamics, and visualize group outcomes. Effective communication leads students to master public speaking, written communication, and connecting with others. Furthermore, meaningful interpersonal relationships teach students to listen and treat others with respect and dignity. In addition, this outcome assists students in connecting with faculty, staff, and peers on campus; pushing them to connect with potential mentors (Strayhorn et al., 2006).

Campus Recreation Programs

Student employees can work within several areas in campus recreation. Facilities, membership, reservations, group fitness, personal training, wellness, intramural sports, outdoor adventure, special events, and aquatics are the most common program areas that depend on student employees to operate (Bolton & Rosselli, 2017; Kellison & James, 2011; McFadden & Carr, 2015). Intramurals, aquatics, outdoor programs, and fitness are the program areas that often require specialized training and certification; therefore, it is essential to provide continuous training and development opportunities to assist students in building upon skills required for the position. Student employees within these program areas are more likely to receive well-rounded leadership experiences (Daprano et al., 2005) that are beneficial to their futures post-

graduation. However, most existing studies focus on intramural, outdoor, and aquatic program areas. This study may provide further understanding in growth and transferrable skills gained in student employees working within specialized program areas in campus recreation.

Many students work as an intramural official on campus. As an official, students can experience professional growth and development that can be helpful post-graduation (Titlebaum et al., 2009). Professional staff within campus recreation hold high expectations for their intramural officials (Gaskins et al., 2002) and work to provide excellent training and development programs for their intramural officials to participate in (Faircloth & Cooper, 2007). During or after their time served as an intramural official within campus recreation, officials expand their experiences and officiate in external organizations, outside of campus recreation (Faircloth & Cooper, 2007; Schuh, 1999). Experienced intramural officials have opportunities to help train and mentor new officials, providing opportunity for growth for both the mentor and mentee (Gaskin et al., 2002). Through these experiences, student officials can obtain supervisory roles as they gain more knowledge going into their junior and senior year (Schuh, 1999).

Preparation is essential to become an effective intramural official, even for students who are familiar with and participated in sports in high school (Johnson, 1976; Schuh, 1999). Along with preparation, intramural officials practice multi-tasking, decision-making, and problem-solving within a game. Officials must watch the game while ensuring that rules and regulations are being followed by players. Games are fast-paced, and calls made by officials must be made quickly and accurately. Some decisions made by officials receive negative reactions from players, therefore, an official must be able to solve the conflict quickly. Schuh (1999) also found that students reported growth

in areas of communication and leadership through their experiences as an intramural official, indicating they used their experiences in an academic setting. Overall, the growth student employees receive while employed as an intramural official had an influence on their future post-graduation; one student within the study reported they decided to change their career path to work as a professional within campus recreation (Schuh, 1999).

In an aquatic setting, lifeguards are responsible for swimming surveillance, prevent drowning, respond to emergencies, provide a safe environment for swimmers in the facility (Griffith et al., 2011) and remain current on their certification (Yarger & Ogoreuc, 2009). Lifeguards are depended on to handle situations that require difficult skills, all learned through their training (D'arnall, 1976). Risk management is a common topic of discussion for campus recreation professionals dealing with aquatic programs. Aquatic programs within campus recreation settings provide opportunities for professional development in the form of an inservice training. These trainings can include review of lifesaving skills and rescues; presentation of specialized topics; and guest speakers (Vardell, 1993). Lifeguards must have a strong sense of team cohesion, especially in response to an emergency (Griffith et al., 2011). Originally, professionals thought that hiring lifeguards would provide a secure solution to operating a safe aquatic facility. However, providing training and leadership roles improves the role of a lifeguard (Avramidis, 2009; Griffith et al., 2011).

Lifeguards often have responsibility in supervision and mentorship regardless their experience and age (Griffiths, 2000). As a lifeguard, student employees hold more responsibility regarding risk management than other positions within campus recreation. Communication is crucial and needed to run a safe and successful program (Bolton &

Rosselli, 2017; Griffith et al., 2011). Acquired certifications, risk-management, and technical skills are developed within the position. Often, lifeguards tend to learn skills from their peers working in aquatics. As a lifeguard gains experience, they can become a head lifeguard, challenging their leadership and teamworking abilities. Regardless of leadership titles, lifeguards are expected to be a team player in any given situation. This position requires individuals to be knowledgeable of their training, especially in an emergency. A mistake could cost someone their life or cause serious injury, lifeguards must work closely with each other (Avramidis, 2009).

Outdoor Recreation Programs (ORP) places an emphasis on student leadership development and Boettcher and Gansemer-Topf (2015) conducted a qualitative study that examined leadership identity. Based on the Komives et al. (2005) model of leadership identity development, the study focused on the key points of the model—meaningful involvement and reflective learning—encompassing six developmental stages. Taking place on an ORP training trip, students participating stated improvements and the importance of effective communication and teamwork as an ORP leader. Students were able to provide specific examples of how activities during training helped them develop as leaders, supporting that ORP training trips enhance student professional development (Boettcher & Gansemer-Topf, 2015).

Within a group fitness setting, Buzzelli (2017) brought attention to a gap in research within campus recreation. Buzzelli (2017) investigated the role group fitness instructors play within a campus recreation setting, as well as a student instructor's leadership experiences, motivations, benefits, and perceived limitations. Regarding leadership experiences, most job descriptions in group fitness instruction emphasize the word "leadership". Instructors are relied on to lead a class of participants through

choreographed exercise. Group fitness instructors can gain and develop professional transferrable skills that they can take with them into their future careers. Buzzelli (2017) pointed out the limited literature that is available regarding group fitness instructor growth and conducted focus group interviews with group fitness instructors at a small university. It was found that group fitness instructors have positive experiences with mentors and have experienced growth in public speaking and overcoming introversion, leadership, relationship building, and personal identity.

While gathering the results of this study, Buzzelli (2017) found that many student instructors admitted to being naturally extroverted. However, those who self-identified as introverted claimed to have fears associated with public speaking. By conducting an exploratory case study, Buzzelli (2017) found that being a group fitness instructor helps students to build confidence, boost their public speaking abilities, and improve leadership abilities to work within a group; all these skills can be applied outside of a group fitness setting. Moreover, a group fitness instructor also gains experience in conflict resolution and confrontation with class participants, by handling an upset participant or class disruption. The case study found that group fitness instructors improved in motivation, relationship building, public speaking, and leadership skills and abilities (Buzzelli, 2017).

Healthy Relationships and Mentorship in Campus Recreation

Student employment programs on campus offer students several opportunities to socialize and build relationships with their peers, faculty, and staff on campus (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) as well as to learn transferable skills from their work group into a specialized community (Griffith et al., 2011). Supervisors within a campus

recreation setting expose their student employees to specific work tasks (Miller & Grayson, 2006) which allows students to gain experiences outside of the classroom. Griffith et al. (2011) found that student employee groups within campus recreation all have a sense of group cohesion, pointing out that outdoor programs and aquatics groups must have a higher sense of cohesion due to the risk and nature of the positions. Interactions between student employees can provide positive learning experiences and shape their sense of self-awareness. This helps them build their relationships with supervisors, transforming it to a mentorship-relationship.

Hettler (1984) identified six dimensions of wellness into the life of a college student. Defining wellness as a complete state of physical, intellectual, spiritual, social/emotional, occupational, and environmental well-being; further developing a student's overall learning experiences while in college. These dimensions can be seen throughout a student employee's employment experience. For example, an intramural official will experience the physical elements of officiating a game, the intellectual element of knowing the sport rules and regulations, the social element of engaging with peers and players, the occupational element of being employed, and environmental aspects of surroundings while officiating. Focusing on social/emotional wellbeing, this dimension emphasizes the importance of healthy relationships and social interactions, allowing student employees to find their sense of belonging and connect to meaningful relationships (Tulchinsky, 2018).

Campus recreation professionals are becoming more aware of the impact they have on student development. Toperzer et al. (2011) deemed that if professionals apply student development initiatives, their students can experience growth within five themes. Leadership development can assist a student to become comfortable in their role within

the department and assist the student with establishing their identity. Following the first theme, performance assessment is identified as the second theme which supports performance evaluations. The third theme, training and orientation, can help a student define their purpose and become more aware of their goals within the position. Personal relationships are identified as the fourth theme and assists students with developing strong and meaningful interpersonal relationships. Working in campus recreation, student employees are consistently involved with participants and learn to become more aware and appreciate everyone's differences. The fifth theme, professional development, strengthens a student's professional skills and abilities that can assist them in their professional careers post-graduation (Tooperzer et al., 2011).

Mentorship is an encouraged practice between campus recreation professionals and student employees (Healy et al., 2012) and many students stated they had a mentor throughout their employment experience (Buzzelli, 2017). Wittman (2005) describes mentorship as "grooming the next generation of leaders" and articulated three different types of mentorship relationships: traditional, personal, and networking. Traditional mentoring focuses on the mentor teaching and the student, or protégé, learning. The second, mentorship with personal connections, allows the mentor to be a trusted friend and advisor to the mentee. Lastly, network and peer relationships allow the mentee to have a community of mentorship-like relationships (Wittman, 2005). The mentor-student relationship can assist with students developing their purpose, motivation, and engage them in the processes and opportunities that come with the mentorship experience (Buzzelli, 2017; Healy et al., 2012).

Mentorship relationships within a higher education setting promote professional growth and are often encouraged within a higher education setting (Jacobi, 1991). In

campus recreation, participating in mentorship opportunities can help develop both the mentor and mentee; more specifically, the mentee can develop professional skills that can be taken with them into their career after graduation (Wittman, 2005). From a campus recreation professional's perspective, they hope to mentor students, because teaching and assisting students in professional growth is what the career is about (Bower et al., 2005).

METHODS

Sampling and Data Collection

Data was collected from campus recreation departments within NIRSA institutions across the United States. The researcher primarily focused on Region III (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin) and Region V (Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Wyoming, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota) universities, but expanded the pool to gain more diverse participants. Participants must be a student and have worked at least one semester as a group fitness instructor within the campus recreation department. Campus recreation directors at each university were emailed a message to forward onto their student group fitness instructors. The researcher collected 104 director names and email addresses from the university's campus recreation websites. If the department did not have a director position, a coordinator or assistant director was included. Additional universities were contacted via email and invited to participate in the study.

The researcher sent a survey invitation to all directors for assistance in survey distribution to their student group fitness instructors. Those who wished to participate, copied an email template within the original message and forwarded it to their student group fitness instructors. Within this template, instructors were informed about the study

and asked to follow a link to complete an online survey through QuestionPro.

Participants who did complete the survey could fill out an additional questionnaire to be placed in a drawing to win one of four \$50.00 Amazon gift cards. The survey opened in November 2021 for four weeks with one first initial invitation and two weekly email reminders to the directors. The survey was open an additional two weeks to gain more participants. The university Institutional Review Board approved the study prior to the data collection (see Appendix A).

Instrumentation

The questionnaire (see Appendix B) was developed based on previous studies of campus recreation student employee (Anderson et al., 2018; Strayhorn et al., 2006) and was vetted and approved by three campus recreation supervisors (e.g., directors, coordinators). There are five sections in the questionnaire, including instructors' teaching and campus recreation experience, leadership development, effective communication, meaningful relationship building, and demographics. The first and last section of the questionnaire is adopted from Anderson et al. (2018) and adapted to ensure the proper questions for students' employees within campus recreation. The rest of the three sections are based on FALDO and the outcomes leadership development, effective communication, and relationship building (Strayhorn et al., 2006).

The first section of the questionnaire is used to gather student employees' experience in teaching fitness classes in campus recreation. The author adapted Anderson et al (2018)'s study and modified to best suited for the current study, including longevity of employment and student status. The survey asked participants to further indicate their instructor experience, such as the number of academic terms they have been teaching and class format. Participants also were asked to list three adjectives or

nouns that best describe their experiences as an instructor for an open-ended response. Demographic information asked the student to identify their year in school, age, geographic location, university type (public or private), gender, and race.

Leadership Development

Leadership development in students was defined as the ability to articulate leadership style, serve in a leadership role within their college experiences, ability to work cohesively within a group, and visualize purpose and desired outcomes (Strayhorn et al., 2006). The researcher adapted and modified seven leadership related statements from FALDO to fit the needs of current study in campus recreation for student fitness instructors. On a 5-point Likert scale, four questions focused on the frequency of applying leadership skills as an instructor (1= never, 5= always), while three questions were used to understand how students perceived accuracy on leadership skills developed (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). These questions within the survey focused on an instructor's ability to connect with class participants, serve as a role model to other instructors and class participants, train and teach new instructors, and awareness to how their actions can affect the outcome of a class experience.

Effective Communication

Strayhorn et al. (2006) describes effective communication as a vital skill for learning and developing college students. Indication that students have learned and developed this skill include writing and speaking coherently. The researcher adapted and modified seven communication related statements from FALDO to fit the needs of current study in campus recreation for student fitness instructors. On a 5-point Likert scale, four questions focused on the frequency of applying communication skills as an

instructor (1= never, 5= always), while three questions were used to understand how students perceived accuracy on communication skills developed (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). These questions focused on the instructors public speaking abilities, non-verbal communication, and ability to articulate instructions and new ideas.

Meaningful Interpersonal Relationships

Achieving meaningful interpersonal relationships means a student can demonstrate connecting with and listening to other's point of view to treating others with respect (Strayhorn et al., 2006). The researcher adapted and modified seven leadership related statements from FALDO to fit the needs of current study in campus recreation for student fitness instructors. On a 5-point Likert scale, four questions focused on the frequency of applying relationship building skills as an instructor (1= never, 5= always), while three questions were used to understand how students perceived accuracy on relationship building skills developed (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). These questions focused on an instructor's ability to make connections with their supervisor and network with professionals. Additionally, this section focused on gaining information on the students' feelings towards their supervisor being viewed as a mentor.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to understand research participants' demographics and working experience in campus recreation as well as student employees gaining transferable skills as group fitness instructors. Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were included in the descriptive analysis. Within leadership, communication, and relationship building, the frequency of using these skills, perceived accuracy of using these skills, and the overall average sum scores were calculated.

Moreover, Pearson's r correlation was utilized to examine the relationship between frequency and accuracy of using communication, leadership, and relationship building. The relationships between all three outcomes, effective communication, leadership development, and meaningful interpersonal relationships, were calculated using Pearson's r correlation.

Several comparison analyses were used to investigate if student a group fitness instructors' demographics (e.g., gender, age, year) and experiences working in campus recreation (e.g., number of academic terms, number of classes taught per week, certification, etc.) varies with their perceived skill gained in leadership, communication, and relationship building with their supervisor. For example, a t-test was applied to examine if student employees' gender differs in their learning in transferable skills. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to investigate if student employees' typical class teaching differs in their leadership, communication, and relationship building. The statistical significance level was at the 0.05 level (p-value).

RESULTS

A total of 152 group fitness instructors participated in the survey, with 112 of those participants self-identified as current students. Those who identified as current students, were included in the study. Demographic information was collected to provide further understanding of the research participants. Table 1 shows the demographics of the student group fitness instructors who participated in the study. Most participants in this study identified as female (93.8%) and selected White/Caucasian as their self-reported race (88.6%). A majority reported their age between 18-20 (46.4%) and 21-23 (39.3%). Academically, participants reported themselves as a junior (25%) senior

(34.8%), many of them attending a public university (95.5%). Instructors reported attending universities across 17 states, representing five regions within NIRSA: Regions II, III, IV, V, and VI. Ohio (12.5%), South Carolina (12.5%), Indiana (10.7%), and South Dakota (9.8%) were among the top four states in which participants reported where they attended school.

Table 1
Research Participants' Demographics

Instructor Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	105	93.8%
Male	6	5.4%
Age		
18-20	52	46.4%
21-23	44	39.3%
24-26	8	7.1%
27+	7	6.3%
Academic Year		
Freshman	4	3.6%
Sophomore	23	20.5%
Junior	28	25%
Senior	39	34.8%
Graduate Student	18	16.1%
Race		
Caucasian/White	97	88.6%
Black or African American	5	4.5%
Native American or Alaskan Native	2	1.8%
Asian	6	5.4%
Hispanic or Latino	6	5.4%
Prefer not to answer	1	.9%

University Location		
Arizona	2	1.8%
Colorado	9	8%
Indiana	12	10.7%
Illinois	6	5.4%
Iowa	8	7.1%
Michigan	8	7.1%
Minnesota	9	8%
Nebraska	2	1.8%
North Carolina	1	.9%
North Dakota	7	6.3%
Ohio	14	12.5%
Oregon	1	.9%
South Carolina	14	12.5%
South Dakota	11	9.8%
Texas	1	.9%
Wisconsin	2	1.8%
Wyoming	5	4.5%
University Type		
Public	107	95.5%
Private	5	4.5%

Note: *include minor missing data in demographics due to without force answer

Instructor experience indicated the type of classes the student instructor teaches, as well as their level of experience leading group fitness classes (Table 2). About half of the instructors did not hold any supporting certification for group fitness (46.4%) and the other half did report holding a current certification (46.4%). The remaining participants were unsure of their certification status (7.1%). Additionally, the results indicated that student group fitness instructors had been teaching from one to five semesters (66.1%) and on average, teaching two classes per week (42.9%). Of those class occurrences, instructors taught strength/cardio (75.9%) or mind/body (16.1%) formats, with high intensity interval training (35.7%), cycling (30.4%), bootcamp (20.5%), circuit training (20.5%), and yoga (17%) being among the most reported modalities taught by participating instructors. A total of 5.45% of participants indicated they

teach within multiple class categories.

Table 2
Research Participants' Group Fitness Experience

Instructor Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Certifications		
Yes	52	46.4%
No	52	46.4%
I don't know	8	7.1%
Academic Terms as an Instructor		
1	44	39.3%
2	11	9.8%
3	15	13.4%
4	13	11.6%
5	15	13.4%
6	6	5.4%
7	1	.9%
8	3	2.7%
9	2	1.8%
10+	2	1.8%
Number of Classes Taught per Week		
1	32	28.6%
2	48	42.9%
3	22	19.6%
4	10	8.9%
Class Category		
Aquatics	3	2.7%
Mind/Body	18	16.1%
Strength/Cardio	85	75.9%
Multiple Class Instruction	6	5.45%
Class Modality		
Yoga	19	17%
Stretching	10	8.9%
Pilates	6	5.4%
Barre	10	8.9%
HIIT	40	35.7%
Kickboxing/Self Defense	9	8%
Bootcamp	23	20.5%
Cycling	34	30.4%
Zumba ®	8	7.1%
Dance	12	10.7%
Step	2	1.8%
Water Aerobics	3	2.7%
Paddleboard	1	.9%
CrossFit	8	7.1%
Circuit Training	23	20.5%

Specialty Classes: Aging populations	1	.9%
Other	5.4	5.4%

Leadership Development, Effective Communication, and Meaningful Interpersonal Relationships

The results of the deceptive statistics (Table 3) indicated the most frequent leadership development opportunity was to serve as a role model to class participants and other instructors ($M= 4.49$, $SD = .66$). Train and teach new instructors were reported at the lowest score among the statement related to the frequency of developing leadership skills. As of student fitness instructor's perceived level of accuracy in developing leadership skills, the mean scores ranged from 4.41 to 4.79 with “communicate effectively with class participants, providing clear and safe instruction during class” being the highest score.

Table 3
Transferrable Skill Outcome: Leadership Development

Leadership Development	Mean	SD
Frequency		
Serve as a role model to class participants and other instructors	4.49	.66
Recognize when changes need to occur to create a better class experience	4.42	.60
Collaborate with my co-workers and supervisors	3.80	.97
Train and teach new instructors	2.78	1.29
Accuracy		
Communicate with co-workers and supervisors in a timely manner	4.41	.74
Communicate effectively with class participants, providing clear and safe instruction during class	4.79	.41
Become aware of how my actions, emotions, and decisions can affect participants and their class experience	4.67	.54

The results of the deceptive statistics detailed in Table 4 indicated that effective communication objectives were frequently performed, with mean scores ranging from 4.60 to 4.77. Providing verbal and nonverbal cues to participants, guiding them through a group fitness class was the most frequent effective communication opportunity to be

performed by group fitness instructors ($M= 4.77, SD= .54$). Student group fitness instructors mean range of perceived accuracy of developing effective communication skills was 4.52 to 4.78. Provide clear and concise instruction to class participants reported the highest mean score.

Table 4

Transferrable Skill Outcome: Effective Communication

Effective Communication	Mean	SD
Frequency		
Practice and gain skills in public speaking	4.74	.50
Influence others through class instruction	4.76	.47
Articulate new ideas and apply them to class instruction	4.60	.58
Provide verbal and non-verbal cues to participants, guiding them through a group fitness class	4.77	.54
Accuracy		
Communicate in non-traditional forms to participants, co-workers, and supervisors (email, body language, performance)	4.52	.60
Speak in logical and orderly terms while providing instructions, demonstrations, and cues to class participants	4.67	.49
Provide clear and concise instruction to class participants	4.78	.42

The results of the deceptive statistics indicated the most frequent interpersonal relationship skill was to build relationships with class participants ($M= 4.34, SD= .75$). Practice my networking skills was reported at the lowest score among the objectives related to the frequency of developing meaningful interpersonal relationships. As for student fitness instructor's perceived level of accuracy in developing meaningful interpersonal relationships skills, the mean scores ranged from 3.82 to 4.34 as provides me with opportunities to learn and grow being the highest score.

Table 5

Transferrable Skill Outcome: Meaningful Interpersonal Relationships

Meaningful Interpersonal Relationships	Mean	SD
Frequency		
Make connections with and learn from my supervisor within campus recreation	4.09	.96
Make connections with and learn from my peers within campus recreation	4.05	.93

Build relationships with class participants	4.34	.75
Practice my networking skills	3.90	1.05
Accuracy		
Is my mentor	3.82	1.02
Provides me with opportunities to learn and grow	4.34	.74
Has taught me valuable skills that I can use in my professional career	4.22	.84

Table 6 shows the overall descriptive results of student employees transferrable skills gained within development outcomes, including the mean and standard deviation for each frequency, accuracy, and overall skill development for each skill outcome. Leadership development ($M= 4.20$, $SD= .50$), effective communication ($M= 4.70$, $SD= .38$), and meaningful interpersonal relationships ($M= 4.11$, $SD= .70$) showed to be significant. All scales for the three transferrable skills, we in an acceptable to good reliability, ranging from .625 to .886. The Cronbach Alpha for the frequency and accuracy of leadership development, effective communication, and meaningful interpersonal relationships was .754, .876, and .886 respectively.

Table 6
Leadership Development, Effective Communication, and Interpersonal Relationships Outcomes

Overall Skill Development	M	SD	α
Leadership Development			
Leadership Frequency	3.87	.65	.67
Leadership Accuracy	4.63	.44	.63
Total Leadership Development	4.20	.50	.75
Effective Communication			
Communication Frequency	4.72	.34	.77
Communication Accuracy	4.65	.42	.79
Total Effective Communication	4.70	.38	.88
Interpersonal Relationships			
Relationship Frequency	4.10	.76	.84
Relationship Accuracy	4.13	.79	.84
Total Interpersonal Relationships	4.11	.70	.89

Pearson's r correlation coefficient was used to measure the relationship between three transferrable skills for group fitness instructors: leadership development, effective

communication, and meaningful interpersonal relationships (Table 7). The correlation between leadership development and effective communication variables to be $r = .54$, effective communication and meaningful interpersonal relationship variables to be $r = .47$, and leadership development and meaningful interpersonal relationships to be $r = .64$. The results indicate a moderate to strong correlation among these transferrable skills. The results of Pearson's r correlations answered the first research question regarding student instructors' leadership development, effective communication, and meaningful interpersonal relationships, showing a positive correlation.

Table 7
Pearson's r Correlation

Transferrable Skill	Leadership	Communication	Relationships
Leadership Development	1	.54**	.64**
Effective Communication		1	.47**
Meaningful Interpersonal Relationships			1

Note: ** $p < .001$

Certifications among accredited fitness organizations can be an avenue for development as an instructor, allowing them to become more knowledgeable of the program and/or class modality. To further understand the benefits that certified instructors receive in comparison to the skills they develop through experience as an instructor, t-test was used. The t-test revealed that there was no statistical difference between the student instructor's certification status (certified or non-certified) and their skill development; leadership development [$t(102) = .382, p = .703$], effective communication [$t(102) = 1.67, p = .098$], and meaningful interpersonal relationships [$t(102) = -.738, p = .462$].

Table 8
Instructor Certification Status Compared to Skill Development

Transferrable Skill	Certified	Not Certified	p-value
Leadership Development	$M= 4.21$ $SD= .53$	$M= 4.18$ $SD= .49$.70
Effective Communication	$M= 4.76$ $SD= .34$	$M= 4.63$ $SD= .41$.10
Meaningful Interpersonal Relationships	$M= 4.05$ $SD= .75$	$M= 4.16$ $SD= .65$.46

One-way ANOVA was conducted to examine if student group fitness instructors' transferrable skills vary based on their academic year. The results of ANOVA revealed no statistical difference among student instructors' academic year, freshman/sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students, and their frequency and accuracy of leadership development ($p= .20$) and effective communication ($p= .36$). However, student group fitness instructors' meaningful interpersonal relationship skills showed a statistical difference among student instructors' academic year [$F(3, 108)= 3.87, p= .011$]. Tukey's HSD post hoc indicated a statistical difference ($p= .008$) between freshman/sophomores ($M= 4.42, SD= .60$) and graduate students ($M= 3.75, SD= .76$).

Table 9
Instructor Academic Year: Meaningful Interpersonal Relationships

Academic year	M	SD	p-value
Fresh/Soph	4.41 ^{a***}	.60	.01
Junior	4.16 ^{a,b***}	.67	
Senior	4.02 ^{a,b***}	.67	
Graduate	3.75 ^{b***}	.76	

Note: ***Mean with different subscripts are significant at $p < .05$ based on Tukey HSD. The superscripts indicated on the means showcases where the differences between the specific means occur. For example, the mean 4.41 of freshman/sophomore is different than 3.75 (the mean of graduate) but not different than 4.16 (the mean of junior).

Statistically, there was no significant differences in the frequency and accuracy of leadership development ($p= .128$) and effective communication ($p= .076$) skill

objectives among biological age of student group fitness instructors for ages 18 to 20, 21 to 23, and 24+. A oneway ANOVA revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the frequency and accuracy of meaningful interpersonal relationship skill objectives between at least two groups [$F(2, 108) = 3.666, p = .029$]. Turkey's HSD Test that multiple comparisons found the mean value was significantly different between 18 to 20 years ($M = 4.23, SD = .66$) and 24+ years ($M = 3.68, SD = .87$).

Table 10

Instructor Age Identity: Meaningful Interpersonal Relationships

Age (years)	M	SD	p-value
18-20	4.23	.66	
21-23	4.11	.64	.03
24+	3.68	.87	

When comparing instructor gender identity and skill development (Table 11), t-test was used and indicated a significance between gender and leadership development ($p = .016$) and effective communication ($p = .012$). The results revealed a significant difference for males' leadership development ($M = 3.71, SD = .53$) and effective communication ($M = 4.31, SD = .47$) when compared to females' leadership development ($M = 4.22, SD = .49$) and effective communication ($M = 4.71, SD = .37$). There was no significance identified between gender identity when compared to meaningful interpersonal relationships ($p = .078$).

Table 11

Instructor gender identity and skill development

Transferrable Skill	Male	Female	p-value
Leadership Development	$M = 3.71$ $SD = .53$	$M = 4.22$ $SD = .49$.02
Effective Communication	$M = 4.31$ $SD = .47$	$M = 4.71$ $SD = .37$.01
Meaningful Interpersonal Relationships	$M = 3.62$ $SD = .74$	$M = 4.14$ $SD = .69$.08

A t-test revealed that there were no significant differences in skill development when comparing race, white and all others, to leadership development ($p = .92$), effective communication ($p = 1$), and meaningful interpersonal relationships ($p = 1$). Additionally, using the same analysis, there was no difference in class modality when compared to leadership development ($p = .91$), effective communication ($p = .57$), and meaningful interpersonal relationships ($p = .30$).

The results of both t-test and ANOVA supported and answered research questions two and three. Indicating a difference in skill development (meaningful interpersonal relationships) based on academic year and biological age. Additionally, skill development (effective communication and leadership development) varied based on student instructor's gender identity.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Campus recreation has been identified as an environment where students can learn and grow (Bentrim et al., 2013; Bolton & Rosselli, 2017; Hall, 2013; Topper et al., 2011). Student employees learn skills through action (Bolton & Rosselli, 2017) and often apply what they learned in their position to their academic coursework (Hall, 2013). Specialized programs within campus recreation, like group fitness, call for specific skill sets and certifications. This study addresses the gap in research within group fitness, a specialized program area (Anderson et al., 2018; Buzzelli, 2017). The current study aimed to understand the relationship with skill development among student group fitness instructors, focusing on leadership development, effective communication, and meaningful interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, to understand how instructors' experience and demographics affects their transferrable skill development. Impacting campus recreation professionals and student affairs, this study provides examples of

what student group fitness instructors are gaining while working in campus recreation and indicates where improvements can be made.

Participants within this study were undergraduate or graduate students, primarily female and coming from public universities, who are employed as group fitness instructors within their campus recreation department. Most student instructors identified themselves as white, attending universities across 17 different states, teaching class formats across aquatic, mind/body, strength/cardio modalities. Student group fitness instructors identified strongly with development objectives, leadership development ($M=4.20$), effective communication ($M=4.70$), and meaningful interpersonal relationships ($M=4.11$). Through their experiences as an instructor, participants identified that skill objectives within the three categories accurately represented their transferrable skill development, and that they frequently used these skills as an instructor.

Overall Student Group Fitness Instructor Learning Experience

The student employee experience is important for campus recreation professionals and student affairs. While working, professionals should focus on multiple developmental outcomes to encourage growth within their student employee groups, allowing them to gain the most out of their experience (Strayhorn et al., 2006). While these skills are being learned in the working environment, student employees will apply them in the classroom (Hall, 2013). Within the current study, leadership development, effective communication, and meaningful interpersonal relationships showed a strong correlation amongst each other, with leadership development and meaningful interpersonal relationships resulting in a very strong correlation ($r=.64$). Indicating that these outcomes are valuable when implemented together.

Developmental Outcomes in Leadership Development

Establishing identity, comprehend group dynamics, and the ability to visualize group outcomes are important transferrable skill objectives within leadership development. Instructors found that their experience as a group fitness instructor within campus recreation allowed them to gain confidence, pushing them to be a leader both inside and outside of the group fitness setting (Buzzelli, 2017; Strayhorn et al., 2006; Toperzer et al., 2011). Leadership development is important for student professional development, and participants within the current study identified strongly with the objective statements within leadership development. Student instructors indicated high frequency use of objectives ($M= 3.87$), as well as agreed that the assumed objectives listed were accurate regarding their experience ($M= 4.63$). However, results from leadership objectives “collaborate with my co-workers and supervisors” and “train and teach new instructors” implied that student instructors at some universities could put more effort into facilitating student group fitness instructor collaboration, as well as challenging experienced instructors to teach and train new instructors. Collaboration and training new student co-workers are important outcomes within leadership development and professionals can implement requirements and tasks to help student instructors practice these skills. Monthly trainings and peer-mentorship programs could be a solution and provide a beneficial experience to student group fitness instructors.

The current study also revealed a difference between male and female identifying student group fitness instructors within leadership development. Female participants overall reported a statically higher score among leadership development objectives ($M= 4.22$) than male participants ($M= 3.71$). This study indicates that future research should focus the experience that male identifying student group fitness instructors receive, and

what can be done to improve their skill development. Additionally, further analysis saw no difference in leadership development outcome based on an instructor's certification status, biological age, academic year, and race. These results adhere to known efforts by campus recreation professionals, indicating that departments push for growth for all student employees.

Developmental Outcomes in Effective Communication

Campus recreation is a place for student employees to learn and develop and effective communication is a skill that student employees learn and apply in the classroom (Hall, 2013). Public speaking, connecting with others, and written communication are objectives student employees master when practicing effective communication (Strayhorn et al., 2006). Effective communication is important for student success and the current study reveals that a student group fitness instructor can get these experiences through their employment. Communication objectives regarding frequency of use ($M= 4.72$) and accuracy ($M= 4.65$) showed that student group fitness instructors always used these skills and they had agreed with the assumptions made for their employment experiences. Student group fitness instructors gain experience and confidence with their public speaking abilities during their time as an instructor (Buzzelli, 2017) and the current study supports this conclusion and findings.

Based on gender identification, effective communication skill development differed between male and female instructors. Female student group fitness instructors ($M= 4.71$) revealed that they gain more practice and developmental opportunities within this outcome than male student group fitness instructors ($M= 4.31$). With these differences being similar to leadership development outcomes, this points out a need for further research to be done on the current findings. Campus recreation professionals

want to provide a rewarding and effective experience for all student employees. Future studies could focus on how and why male identifying instructors have a different experience will help professionals in the field alter their employee experience within group fitness. While these efforts can be improved, the current study saw no difference in effective communication development regarding certification status, biological age, academic year, and race.

Developmental Outcomes in Meaningful Interpersonal Relationships

Healthy relationships and social interactions push students to make connections and find their sense of belonging (Tulchinsky, 2018) and within higher education, students are encouraged to connect with faculty and staff on campus (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Listening, treating others with respect and dignity, and connecting with others are important skills students learn when building meaningful relationships (Strayhorn et al., 2006). The current study revealed that group fitness is an environment that pushes student instructors to build meaningful relationships and connections with their peers, supervisors, and co-workers. Frequency ($M= 4.10$) and accuracy ($M= 4.13$) objectives within revealed that participants found assumptions accurate regarding their developmental experiences as a group fitness instructor. Participants identified that their supervisor was their mentor ($M= 3.82$) and provides them with opportunities to learn and grow ($M= 4.34$). The current findings support that mentorship relationships provide students with connections leading them to valuable relationships, develop skills that they can take with them post-graduation, and help develop motivation and purpose (Buzzelli, 2017; Healy et al., 2012; Wittman, 2005).

Meaningful interpersonal relationships, an outcome listed in Strayhorn et al. (2006) FALDO, is defined as teaching students to listen and treat others with respect and dignity. Additionally, the framework used for this study focuses on the second part to the definition, connecting students with faculty, staff, and peers on campus, solidifying the benefits of a mentorship relationship. Within the study, student group fitness instructors indicated that they are connecting with their peers, class participants, and supervisors within their position. The results have further identified their supervisor has taught them valuable skills useful for their professional career. The current study revealed similar findings in previous literature that meaningful relationships, like mentorship, assist students in developing their purpose and engage them in professional development opportunities. Connections like this will help set them up for success in their future (Buzzelli, 2017; Healy et al., 2012; Wittman, 2005).

Mentoring student employees to pursue professional growth is what campus recreation professionals strive for when supervising employee groups (Bower et al., 2005). In the current study, further analysis revealed that students ages 18-21 ($M= 4.23$) and freshman/sophomores ($M= 4.41$), were able to connect with their supervisors, peers, and co-workers and develop relationship building skills. Participants ages 24+ ($M= 3.68$) and graduate students ($M= 3.75$) indicated lower outcome experiences within their employment as a group fitness instructor. Based on these results, it could be assumed that younger students, typically new in their position, may get more time and attention because of their training requirements. Where older students, may have been working in their position for longer and may not need as much connection with their supervisor. However, mentorship and relationships help support student growth, and it is important

that campus recreation professionals connect with their older student group fitness instructors. Dropping into classes and implementing check-in meetings with all instructors could help keep the supervisor and students more connected, building meaningful relationships.

While students within different age groups and academic years experienced a different environment within relationship building, it is important to note that all other analysis reported no significance. All participants, no matter their certification status, gender identification, class modality, and race revealed equal experiences when building meaningful interpersonal relationships. A positive result, because campus recreation professionals strive for student professional development, regardless of student demographics and experiences.

Limitations

The present study provides a unique contribution, focusing on student group fitness instructors' professional development. However, it is important to note some limitations when interpreting the results. First, the current number of student group fitness instructors employed on college campuses across the United States is unknown. Therefore, this study may not be an accurate representation of all student group fitness instructors and their experiences working in campus recreation. The current study used an online survey to recruit participants and may have captured a snapshot of the overall group fitness instructor experience. Future studies could focus on specific populations of students, like race, age, gender, and geographic location. Additionally, data collection could be presented at state, regional, and national conferences throughout an academic year to gain a larger applicant pool.

Suggestions and Conclusions

This study portrayed results that can be helpful within the field of campus recreation and can be compelling to professionals. A general theme of the findings within this study focused on meaningful interpersonal relationships, which provided captivating results focusing on biological year and academic year; two highly correlated demographics. The significant difference among skill experience and development within this outcome is compelling and should push research professionals within student affairs to develop strategies to involve older student group fitness instructors with their supervisors. Further analysis into meaningful interpersonal relationship outcome revealed thought-provoking results, with younger students receiving more experience and opportunity to build relationships than older student group fitness instructors. With the current study supporting previous findings on skill development among student employees, other studies show a significant benefit to relationship building and mentorship. Further implying the need for future researchers to focus on relationship building and mentorship opportunities among student group fitness instructors based on age. Campus recreation professionals who oversee student employees can also apply these results within their program areas. Ensuring they are connecting with not just younger instructors, but also older student instructors.

A secondary conclusion found in this study revealed differences in leadership development and effective communication skill outcomes among gender identity, male and female student instructors. Typically, group fitness programs see more female identifying instructors and the current study supports that assumption. With only five participants identifying as male in this study, it is clear that group fitness caters towards females. In this instance, male instructors identified less experiences within leadership

development and effective communication outcomes, signifying that campus recreation professionals need to focus on creating a learning environment for all student employees. Future research is needed in this area, specifically diving into group fitness and how gender biases may play a role within this program.

The current study on student group fitness instructors revealed that group fitness programming within a campus recreation setting allows student instructors to gain valuable transferrable skills within the areas of leadership development, effective communication, and meaningful interpersonal relationships. Additionally, this study sought to prove equal experiences for student employees, not matter their demographics and experiences. Certification status, class modality, and race showed no significant difference in skill development and experiences, supporting the current study's purpose. However, as discussed, biological age, academic year, and gender identity indicated a difference in transferrable skill development, recommending that future research should focus on why these demographic groups have a different experience in comparison to others. Additionally, studies could focus on other transferrable skills such as collaboration, independence, and self-esteem. All three outcomes are important skills where students can experience growth (Strayhorn et al., 2006).

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APPENDIX A

IRB Application Approval

October 4th, 2021

Hello Morgyn Felty,

Your application **Student Employees in Campus Recreation: How Group Fitness Instructors gain leadership and communication skills through specialized work experience and relationship building with their supervisor.** is exempt from further review by the Institutional Review Board of South Dakota State University. Exemption is claimed under exemption criterion 2 outlined in 45 CFR 46, section 104(d).

Note: If the project is changed, it should be re-submitted to the IRB for a determination of whether it still satisfies exemption criteria.

Your approval number is: IRB-2110001-EXM.

I wish you the best in your study.

Sincerely,

Dianne Nagy
Research Integrity and Compliance Officer

APPENDIX B

Participant Survey

Are you currently a student?

1. Yes
2. No

Approximately, how many academic terms have you been a Group Fitness Instructor?
Fall, Spring, and Summer are considered academic terms.

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5
6. 6
7. 7
8. 8
8. 9
9. 10+

Approximately, how many Group Fitness classes do you teach per week?

7. 1
8. 2
9. 3
10. 4
11. 5
12. 6
9. 7
10. 8+

What type of class instruction do you typically teach?

1. Aquatics
2. Mind/Body
3. Strength/Cardio
4. Multiple class instruction

What class formats do you typically teach? Select all that apply:

1. Yoga
2. Stretching
3. Pilates
4. PiYo ®
5. Barre
6. High Intensity Interval Training/Tabata
7. Kickboxing/Self-Defense

8. Bootcamp/Strength and Conditioning
9. Cycling/Spin
10. Zumba ®
11. Dance
12. Step
13. Water Aerobics
14. Paddle Board
15. CrossFit
16. Circuit Training
17. Special Populations: Active Older Adults
18. Other

Are you currently a certified Group Fitness Instructor through a nationally accredited organization? Examples include Athletics and Fitness Association of America (AFAA), National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM), American Council on Exercise (ACE).

1. Yes
2. No
3. I do not know

Please identify three adjectives or nouns that best describe your learning experiences as a group fitness instructor in campus recreation:

As a Group Fitness Instructor within campus recreation, please identify how often you use the following leadership skills:

My role as a Group Fitness Instructor allows me to...

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Serve as a role model to class participants and other instructors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recognize when changes need to occur to create a better class experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collaborate with my co-workers and supervisors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Train and teach new instructors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

As a Group Fitness Instructor within campus recreation, please identify how much you agree with the following statements:

My role as a Group Fitness Instructor has taught me to...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Communicate with co-workers and supervisors in a timely manner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicate effectively with class participants, providing clear and safe instruction during class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Become aware of how my actions, emotions, and decisions can affect participants and their class experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

As a Group Fitness Instructor within campus recreation, please identify how often you use the following communication skills:

My role as a Group Fitness Instructor allows me to...

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Practice and gain skills in public speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Influence others through class instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Articulate new ideas and apply them to class instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide verbal and non-verbal cues to participants, guiding them through a group fitness class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

As a Group Fitness Instructor within campus recreation, please identify how much you agree with the following statements:

My role as a Group Fitness Instructor has taught me to...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Communicate in non-traditional forms to participants, co-workers, and supervisors (email, body language, performance)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speak in logical and orderly terms while providing instructions, demonstrations, and cues to class participants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide clear and concise instruction to class participants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

As a Group Fitness Instructor within campus recreation, please identify how your relationships with your supervisor and peers within campus recreation have helped you experience growth professionally:

My role as a Group Fitness Instructor allows me to...

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Make connections with and learn from my supervisor within campus recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make connections with and learn from my peers within campus recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Build relationships with class participants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice my networking skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

As a Group Fitness Instructor within campus recreation, please identify how much you agree with the following statements:

My supervisor in campus recreation...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Is my mentor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Provides me with opportunities to learn and grow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has taught me valuable skills that I can use in my professional career	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Currently, what year are you in school?

1. Freshman
2. Sophomore
3. Junior
4. Senior
5. Graduate Student

Currently, how old are you?

1. 18-20 years old
2. 21-23 years old
3. 24-26 years old
4. 27+ years old

What state is the university you attend located in?

1. Colorado
2. Illinois
3. Indiana
4. Iowa
5. Michigan
6. Minnesota
7. Nebraska
8. North Dakota
9. Ohio
10. South Dakota
11. Wisconsin
12. Wyoming
13. Other

What is the name of the university you currently attend?

Do you attend a public or private university?

1. Public
2. Private

What gender identity do you identify as?

1. Female
2. Male
3. Agender
4. Genderqueer
5. Genderfluid
6. Non-Conforming Transgender
7. Gender Identity Not Listed Above
8. Prefer not to answer

Please Identify your race, select all that apply:

1. White
2. Black or African American
3. Native American or Alaska Native
4. Asian
5. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
6. Hispanic or Latino
7. Prefer not to answer