"Sport as a Resource Caravan": Examining the Efficacy of Sport as a Resource Provider for Adults Experiencing the Retirement Transition

David Walsh, University of Houston
B. Christine Green, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Carole Holahan, University of Texas at Austin
Jessica Cance, The University of Texas at Austin

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Relevance and Literature Review
Older adults, ages 65 and older (Levinson, 1980), are the fastest growing population in the world and will be the largest population by 2030 (CDC, 2011). Moreover, older adults are living with more chronic illnesses than ever before and spend more than half of their entire life's medical expenses over the age of 65 (Rikli, 2005). This is an emerging quality of life issue that has prompted many health interventions, like physical activity programming (e.g., Elavsky et al., 2005). As Chalip (2006) argued, sport participation can be a preferred outlet for physical activity due to its capacity to harbor many health benefits, including social, physical and psychological outcomes. In addition, research has supported sport programs outperforming physical activity programs in its ability to maintain intrinsic motivation, important to program adherence and benefit acquirement (Kilpatrick, Hebert, & Bartholomew, 2005). Thus, researching sport's ability to affect quality of life in older adults may have major impacts.

However, the older population continues to be a group that is under-researched in the field of sport management. Only two articles (cf., Howard, 1992; Barber & Havits, 2001) from the Journal of Sport Management have provided general data and analysis on the implications of decreasing trends in sport participation in adulthood, which includes the older population. Devoting a research agenda to understand sport’s impact on a distressed population group may illuminate ways sport managers could deliver influential programming. Hence, the potential in alleviating mounting quality of life pressures using sport participation could be a lucrative opportunity for sport managers.

Sport development is an emerging discipline in sport management that, in part, examines how sport may be leveraged to foster beneficial outcomes at multiple levels if designed properly (Shilbury, Sotiriadou, & Green, 2008). From an individual development perspective, almost all of the sport development research is geared toward youth and adolescent groups. Again, the older age group is neglected. From a sport development viewpoint, it is fair to say we know very little about how sport may impact the older population, their continued human development, and their quality of life. From a sport management perspective, understanding these relationships may help sport managers design and offer useful programs for the older adult population.

Drawing upon human development and aging literature, the process of development as a life-long phenomenon is clearly supported (Baltes, 1987; Cavanaugh, 1999; Elder, 1994). In fact, developmental trajectories can be altered at any point in a person's life (Elder, 1994). These trajectories have been described as the products of net gains and losses over the life course and are influenced by transitional events and the ability in people to adapt to them (Baltes, 1987; Elder, 1994; Schlossberg, 1981). Schlossberg's (1981, 1984) transition model has been widely used to help explain many sport management and transitional issues, like athletic retirement, overcoming injury, and movement through an elite sport system (cf., Bruner, Munroe-Chandler, & Spink, 2008; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Wylieman, Alfermann, & Lavallee, 2004). Implications resulting from this research suggest strategies to help elite athletes. However, research has yet to demonstrate sport's impact on the transitions themselves and to non-elite groups, like the older population.

Hence, the purpose of this study was to examine the efficacy of sport on developmental components in an age group where our knowledge is still in its infancy. Since the retirement transition typically marks the beginning of late adulthood, this study focused on how sport participation affected people's adaptation to retirement. Retirement has been shown to yield equivocal outcomes, dependent upon people’s pool of resources (van Solinge & Henkens, 2008). Resources are theorized as instrumental mediators in the transition to adaptation process (Schlossberg 1981,
Wang, Henkens, & van Solinge, 2011). Therefore, this study examined sport’s ability to affect resources that predict retirement adaptation and thus, quality of life.

Method, Data Analysis, & Results
Using the theoretical frameworks espoused by Schlossberg and Wang et al., it was hypothesized that people’s sport participation would positively affect resources that have been supported as highly predictive of retirement well-being (e.g., Leung & Earl, 2012). Structural equation modeling was used to explain sport’s relationship with these necessary resources and retirement well-being outcomes (viz., adjustment and satisfaction). Two retirement communities of adults aged 55 and over were surveyed. Due to missing values, 255 was the final retained sample using listwise deletion. The average age was 71 with near equal responses from males (51%) and females (49%). Assumption of normality was met with all constructs’ skewness and kurtosis figures less than |3| (Kline, 2011). Reliability of the scales were all deemed acceptable according to Nunnally’s (1978) >.7 threshold. Latent construct validity was attained that demonstrated both convergent and discriminant validity (Kline, 2011), using average extracted variance (AVE) from the measured variables (all >50%) and construct reliability (all >.70, Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

The results indicated acceptable model fit at the measurement level using confirmatory factor analysis after first conducting exploratory factor analyses on all constructs. In addition, the structural model rendered acceptable goodness-of-fit indices (Hair et al., 2010; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2011), with the exception of the chi-square test: $\chi^2(6)=19.230$, CFI=.981, TLI=.952, RMSEA=.09(CI, .047-.137), SRMR=.031. Since the chi-square test failed, Kline (2011) suggests further diagnosing the chi-square problem by referencing any correlation residuals over |.10|, suggesting model misspecification. However, in this case, the correlation residuals for all the constructs were well below |.10|, the highest being .036. Thus, the model was deemed to be correctly specified and retained for further analysis due to 4 out of the 5 model indices falling in the acceptable fit range (Hair et al., 2010; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2011). The effects of sport participation yielded statistically significant results with medium to high effect sizes on resources ($\beta=.282$, p<.001), retirement satisfaction ($\beta=.285$, p<.001), and retirement adjustment ($\beta=.157$, p<.01). (Please note: planning for the assessment of test-retest reliability using a separate sample is underway. Results may or may not be available by the conference. This will provide further evidence for model reliability.)

Discussion/Implications
The results support the notion that sport can significantly and positively affect people’s resources needed for satisfaction and adjustment in the retirement transition. This supports Schlossberg’s and Wang et al.’s theoretical models with empirical evidence, the first to do so using sport as this antecedent and as a resource itself. This is an important outcome that supports the utility of sport participation in promoting positive developmental processes in older adults. Additionally, evidence is advanced for the potentially important contribution of sport to the retirement and gerontology literature in explaining the relationships between resources, development, and the stimulation of resources in later life. Practically, sport managers can benefit by understanding that designing sport appropriately for a target market in specific need of certain resources can produce quality of life enhancements. Design components should integrate social networking/gatherings, modifications for physical limitations, and/or coaching/mentoring to build self-efficacy and other psychological resources.