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## Why Undergraduate Students Choose Sport Management as a Major: Factors Influencing College Choice Decisions

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

WHY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS CHOOSE SPORT MANAGEMENT AS A  
MAJOR: FACTORS INFLUENCING COLLEGE CHOICE DECISIONS

By

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A Thesis submitted to the  
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The members of the Committee approve the thesis of Sarah Singleton Crockett on June 22, 2005.

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My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion  
forever. - Psalm 73:26

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore and determine relevant college choice factors among undergraduate Sport Management students, along with collecting specific demographic information from the respondents. Since little was known about college choice factors for undergraduate Sport Management students, this study will be exploratory in nature, and will employ a non-experimental design.

College choice has been a topic of great interest in the last two decades. Numerous studies have been conducted for both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Except for a dissertation published in 2001, the most relevant study exploring college choice for doctoral Sport Management students, there was a lack of research pertaining specifically to undergraduate Sport Management students.

For surveying purposes, a modified version of the questionnaire used in a college choice study of nursing majors was used for data collection. The sample population consisted of randomly selected Sport Management programs listed in a December issue of the Sports Business Journal. Parametric statistics produced analyzable results using descriptive statistics, MANOVA, and linear regression.

Results revealed that there were no significant differences for the demographic variables gender and age. Race, however, produced significant differences for each of the three categories in which college choice items were grouped; choice, influence, and perception. The data also showed that the majority of undergraduate Sport Management students are choosing their university of attendance prior to choosing their major.

## INTRODUCTION

Sport has been a part of every day life for thousands of years. In today's society, the sport industry has become an extremely profitable sector of the economy. In response to sport's lucrative emergence, the academic world has created degree programs to begin training professionals. Degree programs in recreation and leisure and physical education have existed at an academic level for many years. The study of Sport Management, however, has emerged in the last fifty years. College choice has recently been a topic of great interest in the world of academia. Numerous studies have been conducted in an attempt to determine what factors influence a student's choice to attend an institution of higher education (see Table I.1). However, there has been a lack of research pertaining to college choice decisions for specific programs of study. Jisha (2001) completed research pertaining to college choice for doctoral Sport Management students. Despite its contributions, Jisha's research addressed graduate level students. Sport Management is a growing field and it seems that an investigation in the process of choosing the major seems appropriate at the undergraduate level.

### **Significance of the Study**

Sport management's beginnings can be traced back to 1966 at Ohio University where the first sport management program was started (Mason, Higgins, & Owen, 1981). Since its inception at Ohio University, the field of Sport Management has grown by leaps and bounds. There are currently over two hundred Sport Management programs in the United States alone (Pitts & Quarterman, 2003). The field has also created several associations throughout the world such as the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM), the Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand (SMAANZ), and the European Association of Sport Management (EASM). The field has also established several of its own journals such as the *Journal of Sport Management*, the *European Journal of Sport Management*, *Sport Management Review*, *International Journal of Sport Management*, and *Korean Journal of Sport Management* (Pitts, 2001). Sport Management has gained international recognition.

The current study offers some useful information that the current literature cannot provide regarding the field of Sport Management. By providing insight into influential college choice factors, this research sought to uncover suggestions for future marketing strategies, reveal the level of prestige of the major, determine the effectiveness of personal contact in the college choice process, and offer ideas for further research. Other general contributions included offering information to professors who teach in Sport Management degree programs and presenting additional insight into the development of the scientific knowledge base for the field of Sport Management.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore and determine relevant college choice factors among undergraduate Sport Management students. This study addressed the following research questions: (1) Which choice did students initially make, the major of study or the university of attendance? (2) Were there statistically significant differences among undergraduate students when classified by gender, race, and age in three categories of college choice factors?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that was employed in this study was based on Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-phase model. The current research study was based solely on Hossler and Gallagher's third phase of their model that was labeled "choice." The "choice" phase was considered to be the stage in which the student conducts their final analysis and decision. Furthermore, the factors for Hossler and Gallagher's choice phase was broken into three major categories, (1) Reasons for choosing a career in Sport Management, (2) Reasons influencing student to choose a Sport Management program, and (3) Perceptions of important factors influencing the selection of a baccalaureate Sport Management program.

### **Definition of Terms**

There was only one term that required an operational definition within this study. Sport Management as a field was explained as typical business functions focused specifically on sport. A university was required to meet specific criteria in order to be considered a Sport Management program for this research project. For the purposes of this study, universities that offered a Bachelor of Science degree in Sport Management

and universities that offered a business degree with an emphasis in Sport Management were defined as having a Sport Management program.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The time frame in which this research was conducted turned out to be a limitation to the study. The web-based survey was sent out at the beginning of the 2005 spring semester. One school was incapable of participating due to weather conditions that prevented students from returning to school in time to participate. Another school was interested in participating, but the university did not resume spring semester until after the data needed to be collected. Another limitation occurred in that one of the schools had no way of contacting the Sport Management students at that university.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The literature review begins with an examination of the evolution of the field of sport management. Following the evolution assessment, college choice studies were presented in an attempt to outline the status of current college choice research as it pertains to the current study.

### **Evolution of Sport Management**

Sport Management is the union of sport and management and the functional procedures that overlap between the two disciplines. DeSensi, Kelly, Blanton, and Beitel (1990) defined Sport Management as “planning, organizing, leading, and evaluating within the context of an organization with the primary objective of providing sport or fitness related activities, products, and/or services. Overall, the goal was to combine the two disciplines in order to provide successful sport related products and services. As the sport industry has advanced throughout the years, it became necessary to train individuals to work in specific areas such as sport marketing, facility management, sport finance, and event planning. Sport Management began to emerge at the university level from departments such as physical education and business management. The first Sport Management program was believed to have originated at Ohio University in 1966 (Mason et al., 1981). Isaacs (1964) disputed this claim stating that the Florida Southern University offered a sport management program called “Baseball Business Administration” between 1949 and 1959. Regardless, the discipline began to solidify itself as a credible field with the creation of the Journal of Sport Management in 1987 and the conception of organizations such as the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM), which was established in 1986.

In a 1992 article, Chelladurai offered his opinions on the development of the field of Sport Management. Chelladurai recalled his initial interactions with the field while taking an administration in physical education class back in India. He stated that in the forty years since then he has been honored to watch the field of Sport Management be conceived and then flourish within the world of business (Chelladurai, 1992).

Chelladurai also stressed the importance of realizing that the field of Sport Management overlaps several other fields such as physical education and recreation and leisure. In general, Chelladurai commended the field on its accomplishments, and expressed his thought that Sport Management will only continue to grow.

Pitts (2001), a recipient of the Dr. Earle F. Zeigler Lecture Award in 2000, used the opportunity to discuss the progress of Sport Management as a field of study. Pitts (2001) outlined five criteria that constitute a field of study; a body of knowledge and literature, professionals who educate, research and practice, professional organizations dedicated to the advancement of the field, professional preparation, and credibility. In her overall evaluation, Pitts agreed that the field of Sport Management was on its way to becoming a credible field. Overall, Pitts congratulated the field on accomplishing a vast amount in the time since its conception. Pitts agreed with Chelladurai in suggesting that the field would only improve if it continually critically evaluated its goals and objectives.

### **College Choice**

The next phase in this study explored the body of knowledge related to the college choice decisions and the use of web-based surveying. The review of the literature revealed a vast amount of research pertaining to the area of college choice. The articles found in the literature search focused on four general topics. The first topic covers college choice among the general undergraduate population. The second topic covers college choice among the general graduate population. The third topic covers college choice pertaining to a specific major. The fourth topic covers conceptual models used to study college choice.

### **Undergraduate College Choice**

Numerous research articles have addressed the subject of college choice pertaining to general undergraduate student populations (Baksh & Hoyt, 2001; Bradshaw et al., 2001; Brown & Hoyt, 2003; Hossler, 1982; Lay & Maguire, 1980; Novratil & Welki, 1987). These studies revealed two common purposes for conducting their research. First, they explored general factors influencing college choice (Bradshaw, Espinoza, & Hausman, 2001; Brown & Hoyt, 2003; Lay & Maguire, 1980; Novratil & Welki, 1997) and second to explore the importance of financial factors on college choice (Baksh & Hoyt, 2001; Hossler, 1982). Each study drew its sample from high school aged

students, many drawn from accepted applicant pools at various universities. The types of sampling varied throughout the articles. For example, Hossler (1982) used cluster sampling in his analysis while Brown and Hoyt (2003) used stratified random sampling by geographic area. The designs for each of these studies began to reveal the differences in research techniques. Brown and Hoyt (2003) contributed a summary article of twenty-three college choice studies, and did not employ a research design. Bradshaw et al. (2001) utilized a qualitative framework conducting face-to-face interviews. Novratil and Welki (1987) used yet another research design employing the case study approach. The most popular research design throughout all of the articles was the survey approach, utilized by Baksh and Hoyt (2001), Hossler (1982), and Lay and Maguire (1980). Data analysis procedures contained very few similarities. The majority of these studies drew on parametric statistical procedures including the t-test and ANOVA.

Common findings among general undergraduate college choice studies included (a) financial characteristics (Baksh & Hoyt, 2001; Bradshaw et al., 2001; Hossler, 1982; Brown & Hoyt, 2003; Lay & Maguire, 1980; Novratil & Welki, 1987), (b) academic (Brown & Hoyt, 2003, Novratil & Welki, 1987), and (c) parental (Lay & Maguire, 1980; Novratil & Welki, 1987). One overarching finding was the importance of financial factors in the college choice decision-making process. The main monetary concern was financial aid opportunities and availability; especially the availability of scholarships. A second monetary characteristic of concern, was the cost of tuition (Brown & Hoyt, 2003; Novratil & Welki, 1987). A further financial characteristic stemmed from the Hossler (1982) study, which identified a concern for financial gain in post-baccalaureate job settings. In other words, the respondents in this study chose to pursue an undergraduate degree based on the belief that a degree would lead to higher pay rates upon graduation. A second major factor throughout the studies was the importance of an institution having the student's desired program or major. This shows that it was feasible that some students pursue their major of study; while other students investigate and choose the institution they will attend.

### **Graduate College Choice**

Numerous articles addressed college choice among graduate students. The studies on graduate students produced a purpose that mirrored that of the undergraduate

studies which was to explore the various factors that influence college choice (Hagedorn & Doyle, 1993; Kalio, 1995; Malaney, 1987; Olson, 1992; Olson & King, 1985; Pope & Fermin, 2003; Talbot et al., 1996). The studies researching graduate students differed by focusing on gathering recruiting information (Malaney, 1987; Malaney & Isaac, 1988). The samples for these research papers covered a wide variety of populations. Three studies selected undergraduate students in order to complete their data collection (Kalio, 1995; Malaney & Isaac, 1988; Pope & Fermin, 2003). By sampling the undergraduate population, the researchers were able to analyze the perceptions and post-baccalaureate plans of the students. A sample population that received equal attention was current graduate students (Malaney, 1987; Olson, 1992; Olson & King, 1985). The Hagedorn and Doyle (1993) study sampled women less than thirty-five years of age and women over thirty-five years of age. One final study, by Malaney (1987), utilized faculty for the sample. These varying results deviated from the uniform sampling techniques found in the undergraduate college choice literature. The research design for all of the graduate articles was a survey approach. There was a lack of consistency in the data analysis procedures for the graduate college choice articles, though, the majority made use of descriptive statistics. Within these articles, the choices for further statistical analysis were divided with several researchers choosing parametric (Hagedorn & Doyle, 1993; Kalio, 1995; Pope & Fermin, 2003) and several others choosing non-parametric statistics (Malaney, 1987; Malaney & Isaac, 1988; Olson & King, 1985).

Common categories in which influential factors fell for the general graduate student population regarding college choice included: (a) academic (Hagedorn & Doyle, 1993; Kalio, 1995; Malaney, 1987; Olson, 1992; Talbot et al., 1996) and (b) faculty interactions (Malaney, 1987; Olson, 1992; Olson & King, 1985). Major of study, program of study, and type of degree offered were highly influential characteristics when choosing an institution for graduate study. Other academic factors included faculty reputation and academic reputation. A characteristic that prevailed in several of the articles, not found to be of importance to undergraduate students making college choice decisions, pertained to faculty interactions. Olson and King (1985) reported that positive interaction or contact with faculty was the overwhelmingly influential factor considered

when making the final decision. Olson (1992) replicated this finding seven years later in a study of student choice factors exploring ethnicity and age.

Two graduate college choice studies focused on recruiting practices. Malaney (1987) surveyed faculty members that were chairpersons of graduate studies committees in regards to their departmental recruiting practices. Reports concluded that faculty meeting students at professional conferences and faculties making personal contact with schools or students were two of the predominant forms of recruiting. These findings correlated with the above results and reiterated the value of faculty interactions for graduate students. In a separate study, Malaney and Isaac (1988) addressed recruiting by gathering data from undergraduate seniors. The research explored the future plans of outstanding undergraduates. The researchers discovered that males, honor students, and students with “A” grade point averages, were more likely to immediately pursue a graduate degree. Malaney and Isaac also concluded that, in general, people are waiting longer before pursuing graduate level degrees.

After reviewing both undergraduate and graduate college choice literature it was evident that there are both similarities and differences. This can most likely be attributed to the typical life stage that a student was experiencing at the time of matriculation.

### **College Choice for a Specific Major**

Several articles in the genre of college choice literature focused on the choice of an undergraduate major (Cassells, Redman, and Jackson, 1986; Jisha, 2001; Love and Pooch, 2001; Pappu, 2004; Webb, 1993). More specifically, the studies addressed the following academic programs: Nursing (Cassells et al., 1986), Sport Management (Jisha, 2001), Higher Education Administration (Love & Pooch, 2001), Marketing (Pappu, 2004), and Business (Webb, 1993). The researchers utilized currently enrolled students within the specific major as the sample. Each study used questionnaires for the data collection portion of the research.

While the study’s focuses differed in terms of educational level, two focused on the undergraduate level (Cassells et al., 1986; Pappu, 2004) and three on the graduate level (Jisha, 2001; Love & Pooch, 2001; Webb, 1993), there were several common findings throughout. Academic reputation was the most dominant factor in college choice for a specific major. Academic reputation manifested itself in several ways:

accreditation (Love & Poock, 2001; Webb, 1993), programs (Love & Poock, 2001; Webb, 1993), and school (Cassells et al., 1986; Jisha, 2001; Pappu, 2004).

Additionally, Love and Poock (2001) reported that location was a significant factor for African American students and students above the age of forty-one. Pappu (2004) found that his marketing students highly valued the potential career prospects that came with being in a specified business degree. Jisha (2001) found that significant differences existed in the areas of marketing and personal college choice factors. Cassells et al. (1986) discovered that the availability of health care facilities and the desire to work in nursing highly influenced their respondents.

### **College Choice Models**

There were several models for college choice present in the current literature (Chapman, 1981; Dembowski, 1980; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982). All of the articles, except Dembowski (1980), presented working models for college choice by attempting to assign compartmentalized steps to researching and choosing a collegiate institution. Dembowski (1980) proposed a mathematical equation that could predict the probability of a student entering a particular college once they had been admitted. The model consists of three basic components which can be formally written as  $E_i = f(S_i, P_i, C_i) + u$ . These components addressed the student's characteristics, the college's admission process components, average scores from other college choices of the specific student, and an error term (Dembowski, 1980). Although this type of college choice model was helpful, it does not provide any subjective inputs from the students.

One of the first attempts to explain student college choice was presented in a model created by Chapman (1981). Prior to explaining his model, Chapman offered several suggestions as to why a lack of research existed on the topic of college choice. First, it was suggested that the recent trend in admissions had focused primarily on selection rather than recruitment. Second, few theories exist in academia that pertain to college choice (Chapman, 1981). Chapman's model consisted of both internal and external components. The internal components consisted of socioeconomic status, aptitude, level of educational aspiration, and high school performance, which all function as the student's predetermined set of characteristics influencing college choice. Chapman

categorized the external components into three major categories: significant persons, fixed college characteristics, and college efforts to communicate with students. He further described each category, with the significant person category including friends, parents, and high school personnel. The fixed college characteristics category included cost (financial aid), location, availability of program, college efforts to communicate with students including written information, campus visit, and admissions/recruiting.

These internal and external student characteristics functioned together to create the student's general expectation of college life. Chapman also explained that colleges focus on students' internal characteristics, specifically aptitude and high school performance, when selecting people for admissions (Chapman, 1981). On the other hand, students use the external influences to determine which college they would like to attend. In the college choice process, the universities extend admission to students and then the students are allowed to accept or decline admissions.

Litten (1982) offered a three-phase model to conceptualize the college choice decision. The first stage included the desire or decision to pursue a degree in higher education. The second stage involved the investigation of potential colleges and universities of interest to a student. The final stage outlined the student's decision to apply, admittance, and enrollment into the institution of choice. Litten's model differs from Hossler and Gallagher in the first stage. Hossler & Gallagher discussed the learned, or environmental, factors that motivate a student to begin the college choice process. Litten's first step, however, does not address the environmental factors. Litten simply stated that there was a desire or decision to attend an institution of higher education.

Jackson (1982) offers another model, similar to Litten, which presented a three stage decision-making process. Jackson labeled the first stage "preference," and explained this as the feelings a student has toward pursuing a degree in higher education. Jackson's second stage was called "exclusion." In this stage, the student form a list of institutions that they are interested in gaining more information about, including particular programs or school characteristics. Jackson terms the final stage "evaluation." In this stage, the students analyze the positive and negative attributes of each institution and selects one to attend.

Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model was most prevalent throughout the literature (Basksh & Hoyt, 2001; Bradshaw et al., 2001; Love & Poock, 2001; Pope & Fermin, 2003). A number of studies discussed Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-phase model consists of three steps: predisposition, search, and decision choice. The first stage, "predisposition" related to environmental factors influencing a student's choice to attend college. For example, parents' educational level, ability of funds, and

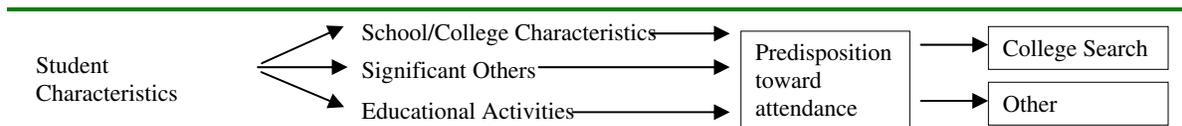


Figure 2.1 – Hossler and Gallagher's first phase of college choice, "Predisposition"

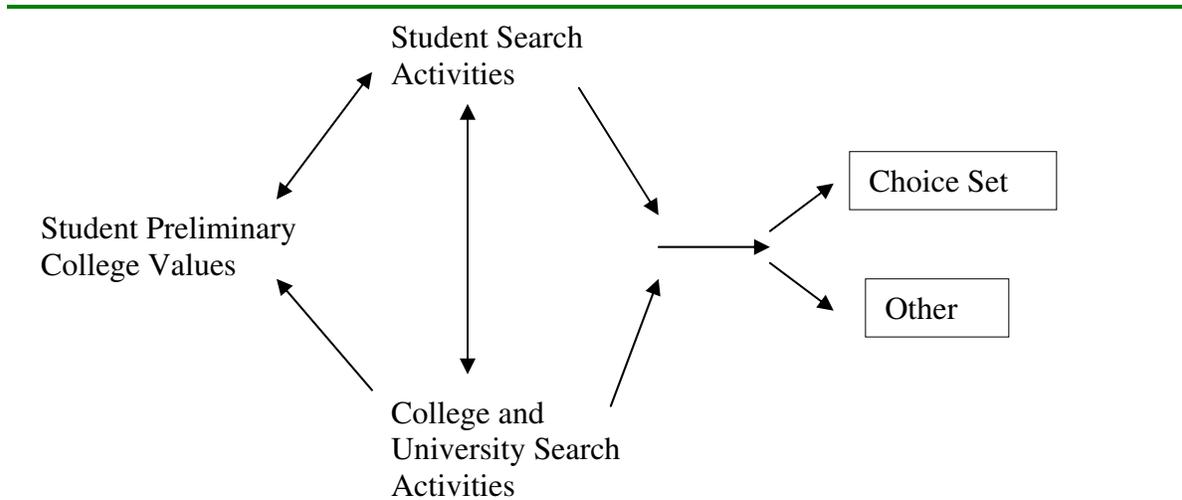


Figure 2.2 – Hossler and Gallagher's second phase of college choice, "Search"

desire to pursue a degree in higher education were all factors contributing to the predisposition of a student. In the second phase, "search," the study found that several factors may be capable of having some type of impact on student college choice. In this phase, the student sought characteristics of an institution such as cost of tuition, degree programs offered, availability of financial aid and scholarships, and location. Hossler and Gallagher termed the third phase "choice" and defined it as the analysis and ultimate

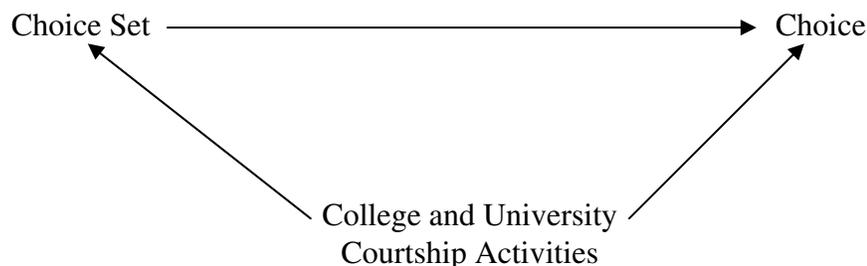


Figure 2.3 – Hossler and Gallagher’s third phase of college choice, “Choice”

decision regarding which institution to attend. With these three phases defined, Hossler and Gallagher provided a multidimensional model for exploring college choice factors.

Hossler and Gallagher have had a tremendous influence on research pertaining to college choice. An example of this impact was evident in the creation of the College Choice Influence Scale (CCIS) presented by Dixon and Martin (1991). The scale included five groups of factors that influence students based on Hossler and Gallagher’s three-phase model. The five groups are as follows: (1) attitudes toward the specific institution, (2) life-planning influences, (3) influence of others, (4) independence-recreational reasons, and (5) family tradition of attendance at the specified institution (Dixon & Martin, 1991). The CCIS consisted of a twenty-five question survey using a five point Likert scale. This scale was proof that Hossler and Gallagher’s three-phase model had greatly encouraged growth in college choice research.

Since Hossler and Gallagher’s model, there have been few additions to the number of college choice models available for research. Therefore, Hossler and Gallagher’s model is still frequently used in research. This model, being general in nature, allows researchers to adapt it to their specific area of interest. Thus, it was conceivable that Hossler and Gallagher’s model will remain at the forefront of college choice research until further frameworks are developed.

### **Population**

The target population for the present research, which was not observed in the literature, undergraduate sport management students. This population was of interest

because of their recent matriculation and current involvement in the field of Sport Management.

### **Summary of College Choice Literature**

Overall, the general uniformity of college choice literature helped guide the current research study. For instance, data collection procedures remained consistent by utilizing exploratory surveying techniques. Furthermore, this study mirrored several in the literature review by analyzing currently enrolled students. A final similarity was the use of parametric statistics to report collected data. Despite several similarities, the college choice literature did not provide information specifically pertaining to college choice among undergraduate Sport Management students. The study that provided the most relevant information was conducted by Jisha (2001) that researched graduate Sport Management students. However helpful, it was necessary to specifically explore undergraduate Sport Management students because of likely differences between undergraduate and graduate students. For this reason, cause for undergraduate Sport Management research was validated. Although this literature review covered a wide scope of research, it was impossible to claim that this was an exhaustive search.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter outlines the approach utilized for data collection and data analysis procedures. The direction of the research was determined by the research design and the instrument selection. These processes were integral to the research process, and deserved sufficient attention prior to examining the current data.

#### **Research Design**

The present study contained a non-experimental design. Characteristics typical of this design type include the descriptive nature, the absence of manipulation or control variables, and the self-reported data (Patten, 2002). In other words, this was the type of research study in which phenomena was merely observed. Since little was known about college choice factors for undergraduate sport management students, this study was exploratory in nature.

#### **Selection of Subjects**

Subjects for this study were undergraduate sport management students currently enrolled in universities across the United States during the 2005 spring semester. A population of available schools was provided by a list published in the November 29 through December 5, 2005 issue of the Sports Business Journal (King, 2005). The probability sampling technique that was utilized was random sampling, with schools being randomly selected from a Sports Business Journal article. See Appendix A for a list of schools contacted to participate in the study.

The survey was electronically distributed to twenty-seven universities in the United States. A total of six schools responded to the request to participate in the research study. Four universities agreed to participate allowing for a total sample size of 931. The other three rejected the invitation to participate for several interesting reasons. One university stated that they do not have a method in which to contact their students. Another university had not yet begun the spring semester. The most interesting denial came from a northern university that had experienced inclement weather that had disrupted their course schedule and prevented them from participating in the study. Of

the 931 potential subjects 156 responses were entered into the database. Of the 156 entries, three had to be removed from the data because two of the entries were repeat entries and one entry contained false information (the respondent entered an age of 786). At final count, the usable responses totaled 150 resulting in a 16.1% response rate.

### **Research Instrument**

The questionnaire used to conduct the research mirrored that of Cassells et al. (1986). Their study investigated student choice of baccalaureate nursing programs. The instrument used in the nursing research combined the five instruments – the Deans' Questionnaire 1983, Deans Questionnaire 1984, Senior Nursing Students Questionnaire 1984, Senior Nursing Students Questionnaire 1985, and Follow-Up Survey Questionnaire for Baccalaureate Nursing Students (Cassells et al., 1986). The text used in the questions in the nursing questionnaire was then reworded to reflect applicable choices for sport management students. For example, a question in the nursing instrument that read “availability of health care facilities for clinical experience” was re-worded to say “availability of athletic department for practical experience.”

The questionnaire included four demographic questions, one forced choice answer, and thirty questions with a Likert scale response. The forced choice question asked which was chosen first, the major of study or the university of attendance. A five point Likert scale (1 = very unimportant, 2 = unimportant, 3 = neutral, 4 = important, 5 = very important) was used for the remaining thirty questions. The thirty questions were categorized into three groups: section 1 (Choice) - reasons for choosing a career in sport management, section 2 (Influence) - reasons influencing students to choose a sport management program, and section 3 (Perception) - perceptions of important factors influencing their selection of their baccalaureate sport management program.

The web-based questionnaire was constructed by Dustin Holland, a freelance programmer, with VBScript using radio buttons, drop down menus, and text boxes. Radio buttons are groups of buttons, where only one button at a time can be selected. This type of web-based function was helpful when the respondents were asked for demographic information such as gender and race due to its capability of only allowing one response. A drop down menu is a list that "drops down" when you click on an item. For this questionnaire, drop down menus were used for the thirty Likert scale questions.

The final type of input tool used was a text box. Text boxes enabled subjects to directly input a line of text into your application. Text boxes have the added feature of being able to add constraints that can be placed on the size of the text box and amount of input the user can enter. For this survey, text boxes were utilized to collect data on race and age. The race category actually used both radio buttons and text boxes. If the respondent's race was not an available choice they were able to input their own response in a text box labeled "other." Each of these scripting components combined to allow for a user-friendly web-based survey. While technology can seem rather complicated at times, this web-based survey required minimal technological knowledge to complete.

### **Advantages for Web-based Applications**

Web-based surveying for academic research had both advantages and disadvantages. Online data collection had several advantages compared to paper and pencil surveying. Web-based surveying was convenient; when users completed the web-based survey the data instantaneously went into a database. This enabled the data to be accessed and manipulated with ease. The cost for the web-based survey was minimal, as opposed to the materials required for traditional paper surveys. Web-based surveying also allowed for greater widespread distribution and participation, and had the potential to be much quicker. Thus, web-based survey results were immediate, more cost effective, and the data analysis process was easier (Pawloski & Topp, 2002).

### **Disadvantages for Web-based Applications**

There were several disadvantages to using a web-based surveying technique. Despite advances in accessibility and education, there were still setbacks regarding equipment availability and expertise among respondents. Another weakness of online data collection was the dependability of entered data. It was suggested (Smith, 1997; Stanton, 1998) that the integrity of collected data should be of concern when respondents are not supervised while completing the survey.

When researchers consider using online technology to collect data it is imperative that they weigh the advantages and disadvantages of online data collection. It is possible that as society becomes more familiar with technology and the World Wide Web, online data collection will reach and possibly exceed the effectiveness of traditional surveying methods (Pawloski & Topp, 2002). Research by Stanton (1998) indicated that response

rates for e-mail and web-based surveys are catching up to conventional techniques. The majority of universities across the country provide students with e-mail accounts and computer labs in which they can access the World Wide Web. Therefore, it seems feasible that conducting a web-based survey of university student would be an effective means for collecting data.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The questionnaire was converted from the traditional paper to web-based using visual basic script (VBScript). VBScript is a scripting language that can be explained as a lower level programming language. VBScript is actually a simpler version of Microsoft's programming language Visual Basic. In order to create the web-based survey, the VBScripts were written and inserted into a Hyper Text Mark-Up Language (HTML) document. The questionnaire was then sent to the server, the cyberspace location from which respondents accessed it, where it was hosted. Once the HTML document was posted on the server, the Internet browser was then able to read the VBScripts in the HTML document. These operations, working together, allowed for a fully functional questionnaire to be posted on the World Wide Web. As stated before, the questionnaire was officially open on January 5, 2005, and officially stopped accepting responses at midnight on January 31, 2005.

Although, the psychometric measures from the nursing study were applicable, it seemed important to further establish some of those measures. In order to establish construct validity, several professors from various academic departments throughout the university and several graduate students reviewed the questionnaire. Their responses were compiled and necessary corrections were implemented into the Sport Management version of the instrument. For the purpose of this study, the level of significance was measured using an alpha of .05.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The data for this study were analyzed using descriptive and parametric statistics. More specifically, the results were reported using frequency distributions, MANOVA, and linear regression analysis. All of the demographic variables were reported with frequency distributions. The college choice factors were studied using a MANOVA for the demographic variables race and gender. Age was examined using linear regression.

The thirty Likert scale questions were divided into three groups for statistical analysis. The questions pertaining to reasons for choosing a career in Sport Management were placed in a group called “Choice,” the questions pertaining to reasons influencing students to choose a Sport Management program were placed in a group called “Influence,” and the questions pertaining to perceptions of important factors influencing the selection of a baccalaureate sport management program were placed in a group called “Perceptions.”

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

The focus of this study was to explore and determine relevant college choice factors among undergraduate Sport Management students. The usefulness of the instrument and the results of the web-based survey were reported in this section of the research. These results helped determine the applicability of this research to the field of Sport Management.

#### Descriptive Statistics

The web-based survey produced several demographic variables for the 150 respondents. Of the 150 respondents 105 were males (70 percent) and 45 were females (30 percent). Table 3.2 displays the results of the racial demographic data. The results showed that Caucasians dominate the sample by representing more than three-fourths of the respondents. Another demographic variable reported was age. The results offered a wide variety of responses, reporting a range of 14; the lowest age being 18 and the highest age being 32. Table 3.3 displays the demographic results of age. The majority of students were 20 or 21 years of age. This was a normal response given that normal matriculation begins around the age of 18 and a student is fully into their major of study during their junior and senior years of college. Thus, the ages correlated with the normal academic process.

Table 3.1

Gender Demographics		
Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	105	70.0
Female	45	30.0

Table 3.2

Racial Demographics		
Race	Frequency	Percent
African-American	12	8.0
American Indian	1	0.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	3	2.0
Caucasian	122	81.3
Hispanic	12	8.0

Table 3.3

Age Demographics			
Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
18	7	4.7	4.7
19	13	8.7	13.4
20	37	24.7	38.1
21	50	33.3	71.4
22	25	16.7	88.1
23	7	4.7	92.8
24	4	2.7	95.5
25	1	0.6	96.1
28	2	1.3	97.4
29	2	1.3	98.7
31	1	0.6	99.3
32	1	0.6	99.9

The final demographic statistic was year in college. The results revealed that the sample included twelve freshman (8 percent), sixteen sophomores (10.7 percent), fifty-seven juniors (38 percent), and sixty-five seniors (43.3 percent).

#### Instrument Assessment

A reliability test, the Cronbach's Alpha, a statistical procedure to measure the squared correlation between observed scores and true scores, was run for each section of the questionnaire. This test ensured that consistent and reliable responses would result even if questions were replaced with other similar questions. Santos (1999) and Nunnally and Berstein (1994) indicated 0.70 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient, and this was the standard utilized for the current study. Below Table 3.1 displays the results of the reliability tests.

Table 3.4

Questionnaire Reliability		
Category	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Choice	10	.721
Influence	11	.778
Perception	9	.803

According to Nunnally (1994), all of these results confirmed that the questionnaire was reliable. In other words, the questionnaire could depend on to collect accurate data in terms of college choice for undergraduate Sport Management students.

### **Research Question 1**

#### **Overall Rankings**

Of the thirty questions addressed in the assessment, the top five scoring college choice factors beginning with the highest scoring were desire to work in the Sport Industry (mean = 4.73), opportunity to work in the Sport Industry (mean = 4.46), desire to have a college degree (mean = 4.05), opportunity for advancement in Sport Management (mean = 3.87), and diverse positions available in Sport Management (mean = 3.79). These top five college choice factors all received scores of either Very Important (5 on the Likert scale) or Important (4 on the Likert scale). Four of the top five college choice factors fell into the category of reasons for choosing a career in Sport Management. Thus, the decision to pursue a degree in Sport Management seemed to be a choice rather than something that was influenced.

The five least important college choice factors, working from the highest score, were family/friend works in the sport industry (mean = 1.91), cost of tuition (mean = 1.89), scholarship/financial aid available to study Sport Management (mean = 1.86), accepted transfer credits (mean = 1.76), and recommendation of high school counselor (mean = 1.58). In terms of least important college choice factors, all were spread out evenly among the three categories with two in Choice, one in Influence, and two in Perceptions. The statistical results for all of the questions are listed in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5

Choice: Mean and Standard Deviation for the Individual Items		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Desire to work in the Sport Industry	4.73	0.665
Opportunity for advancement in SM	3.87	0.978
Diverse positions available in SM	3.79	1.07
Opportunity to work with athletes	3.70	1.257
Reputation of SM as an emerging field	3.65	1.062
SM skills are marketable	3.36	1.057
Opportunity to have a well paying job	3.28	1.193
Work hours	2.56	1.132
Family/Friend works in the Sport Industry	1.91	1.212
Scholarship/Financial aid available to study SM	1.86	1.193

Table 3.6

Influence: Mean and Standard Deviation for the Individual Items		
Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Opportunity to work in the Sport Industry	4.46	0.738
Desire to have a college degree	4.05	1.276
Greater opportunity for career mobility with a BS degree	3.37	1.195
Status of having a baccalaureate degree in SM	3.35	1.311
Desire to pursue advanced/graduate degree	3.17	1.416
Expectation of high salary with degree	2.89	1.182
Convenient location of baccalaureate SM program	2.81	1.369
Parent's expectation that you acquire a college degree	2.77	1.430
Recommendation from someone in the Sport Industry	2.40	1.414
Desire for liberal arts background complementing SM	2.14	1.141

Table 3.7

Perception: Mean and Standard Deviation for the Individual Items		
Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Reputation of SM program	3.33	0.934
Reputation of school	3.22	1.34
Availability of athletic department for practical experiences	3.03	1.385
SM program congruent with personal philosophy	2.73	1.315
Time/credits needed to complete the major	2.39	1.355
Proximity to home	2.37	1.445
Scholarship/Financial aid offered	1.95	1.36
Cost of tuition	1.89	1.148
Accepted transfer credits	1.76	1.208
Recommendation of a high school counselor	1.58	0.943

### Categorical Rankings

It was also important to note the highest and lowest scoring college choice factor for each of the three groupings; Choice, Influence, and Perceptions. The highest-ranking score for Choice was desire to work in the Sport Industry (mean = 4.73). The lowest-ranking score for Choice was scholarship/financial aid available to study Sport Management (mean = 1.86). For the factors pertaining to Influence, opportunity to work in the Sport Industry ranked highest (mean = 4.46) and desire for comprehensive liberal arts background to complement Sport Management knowledge scored lowest (mean = 2.09). Finally, the highest-ranking score for Perceptions was reputation of Sport

Management program (mean = 3.33) while the lowest-ranking score was recommendation of high school counselor (mean = 1.58). Overall, the items surveyed on reasons for choosing a career in Sport Management (Choice) reported the highest group score for college choice reporting a mean of 3.27. The lowest scoring category was found in the group addressing the perceptions of important factors influencing the selection of a baccalaureate Sport Management Program that reported a mean of 2.42. The implications of these findings are examined in the discussion section.

### **Initial Choice: Institution versus Major**

The study sought to reveal which choice a student makes first, the major of study or the institution that they attend. The results showed that the majority of students chose the university of attendance first (64.7 percent), as opposed to those who first chose their major of study (35.3 percent). These findings offered some interesting insight into the status of sport management as a growing field that is addressed later in the discussion section of this research paper.

## **Research Question 2**

### **Gender Demographic**

In order to assess the significance of gender and race in terms of college choice a MANOVA was used for statistical analysis. The Pillai's Trace test reported an F score of 1.201 and a p-value of .306. The remaining statistical results such as Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root for gender can be found in Appendix F. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also run on the data. F-test and significant scores were reported for each of the three categories. Appendix C offers evidence that all of the groups failed to meet the predetermined value of significances ( $p < .05$ ). Post Hoc tests were unable to be performed because there were fewer than three groups in the data. Thus, combining gender and race did not result in significant differences for any of the three college choice categories.

### **Race Demographic**

As stated above, a MANOVA (Appendix F) was conducted using gender and race as independent variables. The results did not reveal any significant differences for Choice, Influence, and Perception; returning a p-value of .306. Post Hoc tests were unable to be calculated for the MANOVA because at least one group, within the race

demographic, contained fewer than two cases. Race was also analyzed using the ANOVA statistic (Appendix F). For statistical purposes, the responses were categorized into two groups; Caucasian and Non-Caucasian. Running the ANOVA revealed that the group Choice reported an F-test score of 5.257 with a significance level of .023. This showed that college choice factors such as desire to work in the sport industry, opportunity to work with athletes, work hours, and opportunity to have a well paying job were ranked significantly different when comparing Non-Caucasians to Caucasians. The Influence category reported an F-test score of 9.677 with a significance level of .002. This showed that influential college choice factors such as desire to have a college degree, expectation of high salary with degree, convenient location of baccalaureate Sport Management program, and desire to have a college degree were reported as having significantly different responses pertaining to their importance in the college choice decision. Finally, the Perception category reported an F-test score of 15.509 with a significance level of .001. This finding revealed that factors such as reputation of Sport Management program, proximity to home, cost of tuition, and scholarship/financial aid offered differ in levels of importance for Non-Caucasians and Caucasians. Each of the groups showed a p-value that was less than .05 which revealed that significant differences exist between races within each of the three categories. Both the Influence and Perception categories showed significant differences at the .01 level.

### **Age Demographic**

Linear regression analysis was used to examine any significant relationships for the demographic variable of age. The purpose in running a linear regression, as opposed to an ANOVA or MANOVA, was to see if students' responses changed as age increased. The R square factor was recorded for each of the three categories. As the R square value approaches 1.0 it can more accurately predict the value of another term. Conversely, as the R square value approaches 0.0 it becomes less of a predictor of the value of another term. The R square values reported were as follows, Choice at .001, Influence at .004, and Perception at .004. Thus, none of the categories were very accurate in predicting college choice factors in each category.

Table 3.8

Linear Regression for Age					
Category	R	R Square	B	t	Sig.
Choice	.024	.001	-.006	-.288	.773
Influence	.060	.004	.021	.735	.464
Perception	.062	.004	-.021	-.753	.453

The linear regression produced beta scores, t-scores, and p-values for age in regards to Choice, Influence, and Perception. The Choice category reported a beta value of  $-.006$ , a t-score of  $-.288$ , and a p-value of  $.773$ . Influence reported a more significant result, but still did not meet the p-value requirement of  $.05$ , reporting a beta score of  $.021$ , a t-score of  $.735$ , and a p-value of  $.464$ . The final category, Perception, also failed in producing any significant results with a beta score of  $-.021$ , a t-score of  $-.753$ , and a p-value of  $.453$ .

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DISCUSSION**

The demographic findings suggested that, desire to work in the sport industry, opportunity to work in the sport industry, desire to have a college degree, opportunity for advancement in Sport Management, and diverse positions available in Sport Management were the top reasons why undergraduate students choose Sport Management as their major. The statistical results also revealed that family and friends working in the sport industry, cost of tuition, the availability of scholarships and financial aid to study Sport Management, acceptance of transfer credits, and recommendations of high school counselors were the least important factors influencing college choice in undergraduate Sport Management. The remaining findings that tested gender, race, and age only provided support for one of the three hypotheses; there were statistically significant differences between students when classified by race. The statistical results for the web-based survey were both minimal and insufficient to discuss their usability as a research tool.

#### **Research Question 1**

Research question number one sought to discover the overall rankings for each individual college choice factor. In order to compare the present findings with the literature each survey question was placed into one of five categories (See Appendix C). The categories were field, finance, academic, personal, and institution. The undergraduate literature revealed financial and parental factors as the most pressing college choice factors (Brown & Hoyt, 2003; Novratil & Welki, 1987), while the current Sport Management study revealed that financial factors were not very influential. Of the four financial factors reported, only one, opportunity to have a well paying job, received a mean score above a 3.0 on a 5-point Likert scale. The remaining financial factors, expectation of high salary with degree, cost of tuition, and availability of scholarship/financial aid, all received a mean score below a 3.0 on a 5-point Likert scale. These findings contradict the current literature. For example, Hossler (1982) found that

80 percent of future university attendees believed that a college degree would ensure higher income. It seems as if Sport Management might be a distinct field in this regard.

The primary factors influencing college choice in Sport Management continued to contradict the college choice literature. The literature pertaining to graduate college choice revealed academic and personal factors as most influential (Hogdorn & Doyle, 1993; Jisha, 2001; Kalio, 1995; Malaney, 1987; Olson, 1992; Olson & King, 1985; Talbot et al., 1996). The highest scoring academic factors in the Sport Management sample were the desire to have a college degree and the greater opportunity for career and educational mobility with a Bachelor of Science degree. Similarities surfaced when previous research articles were compared to the present study. Cassells et al (1986), Jisha (2001), Love and Pooch (2001), Pappu (2004), and Webb (1993) all published two factors that correlated with the current findings; reputation of the program and reputation of the school.

After comparing past literature to the current study it was suggested that Sport Management college choices were distinct. An interesting observation was that the majority of the highest scoring factors for undergraduate Sport Management students pertained specifically to the field of Sport Management itself. This may suggest that the field is gaining recognition and is rapidly growing. However, this also offered reason to wonder why Sport Management is not ranking as high academically, which may reveal that the actual level of emergence and growth of the Sport Management field may be less than imagined. Of the ten highest ranked factors, 60 percent can be classified as field influences while 40 percent are academic influences. Although the field influences do not mirror past findings, the academic influences are supported by Hogdorn and Doyle (1993), Kalio (1995), Malaney (1987), Olson (1992), and Talbot et al (1996). Financial findings revealed only one college choice factor for Sport Management that received a mean score above 3.0; opportunity to have a well paying job. The remaining four financial factors received a mean score below 3.0, suggesting that these factors were either unimportant or very unimportant. This was a direct contradiction to findings by Brown and Hoyt (2003) and Novratil and Welki (1987) who found financial factors to be of highest importance. It was evident in the current research that the financial factors for Sport Management students ranked fairly low overall. It was then suggested that the

lower means were due to scholarship and financial aid being less likely received from the Sport Management programs themselves, and more often from the university or private donors. For the purpose of this study, personal factors were those that involved interaction with others; 16.6 percent (five questions) of the questions were categorized as Personal. Of these five questions, only one received a positive mean score, opportunity to work with athletes, while the remaining factors received negative mean scores. These results conflicted with the findings of Lay and McGuire (1980) and Novratil and Welki (1987). Both of these studies also tested undergraduate populations, thus, further research was necessary to determine potential causes. Finally, the institutional factors also received rather low scores. The only positive mean score being found was the factor that addressed the availability of athletic department for practical experiences; the two other institutional factors received negative mean scores. Cassells et al. (1986) and Pappu (2004) found conflicting results. It was also inappropriate and reckless to suggest potential causations for this finding without conducting further research. It was also important to restate that the response rate was 16.1% which disallows for generalizations to be made. Overall, it can be suggested that Sport Management is a field within itself, and the findings do not highly correlate with previous research studies.

The current research also sought to discover what the sport management students initially made, their university of attendance or their major of study. The statistics revealed that almost two thirds of the respondents chose their university of attendance prior to choosing Sport Management as a major. Table 4.1 shows the mean scores for each college choice factor between two groups that were defined by their initial choice. This type of inquisition was not present in any of the articles reviewed in the literature. This finding presented an interesting scenario. For example, if a student intended on pursuing a career as a doctor, they had already chosen their field of study, and their major dictated which university they attended. On the contrary, if a student did not have any particular career ambitions, the university of attendance was the primary decision. The study indicated that the majority of respondent Sport Management students in this sample were choosing the institution of attendance prior to the major.

Table 4.1

<b>Differences Between Caucasian and Non-Caucasian</b>			
<b>College Choice Factor</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Major</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Opportunity for advancement in SM	3.75	4.01	-0.26
Reputation of SM as an emerging field	3.49	3.90	-0.41
Desire to work in the Sport Industry	4.69	4.75	-0.06
SM skills are marketable	3.36	3.37	-0.01
Work hours	2.59	2.54	0.05
Scholarship/Financial aid available to study SM	1.79	2.05	-0.26
Opportunity to have a well paying job	3.30	3.32	-0.02
Diverse positions available in SM	3.72	3.98	-0.26
Family/Friend works in the Sport Industry	2.02	1.83	0.19
Opportunity to work with athletes	3.80	3.66	0.14
Desire for liberal arts background to complement SM degree	2.17	2.22	-0.05
Expectation of high salary with degree	2.91	3.05	-0.14
Parent's expectation that you acquire a college degree	2.90	2.71	0.19
Desire to have a college degree	4.05	4.22	-0.17
Status of having a BS degree in SM	3.17	3.86	-0.69
Greater opportunity for career and educational mobility	3.32	3.66	-0.34
Desire to pursue advanced/graduate education	2.96	3.77	-0.81
Location of SM program	2.73	3.26	-0.53
Recommendation of someone in the Sport Industry	2.52	2.50	0.02
Opportunity to work in the Sport Industry	4.46	4.81	-0.35
Recommendation of a high school counselor	1.54	2.03	-0.49
Reputation of SM program	3.13	4.07	-0.94
Cost of tuition	1.77	2.52	-0.75
SM program offered was congruent with personal philosophy	2.69	3.22	-0.53
Accepted transfer credits	1.77	2.20	-0.43
Scholarship/Financial aid offered	1.87	2.56	-0.69
Reputation of school	3.12	3.94	-0.82
Time/credits needed to complete the major	2.36	2.94	-0.58
Availability of athletic department for practical experience	3.09	3.43	-0.34
Proximity to home	2.25	3.13	-0.88

This finding had several implications and suggested areas that were in need of further research. First, the field of Sport Management might want to ask itself if it is marketing itself effectively. Malaney's (1987) research suggested that faculty meeting with prospective students, faculty making personal contact with other schools, and mass mailings were effective ways to attract potential students. On the other hand, Sport Managers need to evaluate and assess whether their efforts need to be focused into an area of factors that seem less important to the incoming students. It was also important to

note that student may have in fact received information about Sport Management from their high school counselor, however, this study did not report that type of data. Second, Sport Management as a field seemed to have attracted the majority of the undergraduate students, which conveys that jobs within the field are desirable. It seemed that academic college choice factors were the second most important factors that influenced undergraduate college choice. Being that this study only examined what choices were important it was difficult to speculate why academic factors were less important. An area for potential future research would be for administrators and professors to examine if the programs offer what students want. Olson (1992) reinforces Malaney's findings, that positive personal contact with faculty and university personnel was imperative to marketing a program of study. The scores from the survey questions revealed that personal contacts were not very influential in the student's college choice process. This might suggest that personal contact might be an area where the field of Sport Management needs to make improvements. However, further research needs to be conducted to explore the root of these findings. Another possible reason for academic factors being less influential was that Sport Management may be a field that attracts students who were involved in sports, as either participants or spectators. Overall, Sport Managers might want to replicate this study and explore the causes behind the responses to the college choice factors.

### **Research Question 2**

The second research question investigated college choice in terms of several demographic variables in order to determine if any significant differences existed within the data. Analyses were run on three demographic variables; gender, race, and age.

#### **Gender Demographic**

The gender demographic questioned the relationship between males and females in terms of college choice factors for undergraduate Sport Management students. The current findings found that there were no statistically significant differences when undergraduates were classified by gender. Past literature did not provide any similar research, with the closest analysis of gender being conducted in regards to post-baccalaureate plans of outstanding undergraduates (Malaney & Isaac, 1988). The demographic results of this study suggested that males greatly outnumber the female

population within Sport Management, thus, potentially having contributed to the lack of significant differences. This suggestion was noteworthy because the female population is not being utilized to its greatest potential for the field of Sport Management.

If it were true that Sport Management draws the majority of students from persons previously involved with sports, then the implementation of Title IX would support the idea that males dominate the sport industry. Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 was the landmark legislation that prohibits sex discrimination in schools, in both academics and athletics (LeUnes & Nations, 2002). It was not feasible to assume that universities offering Sport Management were discriminatory towards females. One might argue that the implementation of Title IX would actually ensure that gender equality is reached. This argument can be refuted in that Title IX compliance has not been achieved nationally. Also, compliance was granted for institutions that display participant percentages that are equivalent to the gender percentages of the institution. For example, if the institution is comprised of 42 percent female and 58 percent male, Title IX compliance is met if there is 42 percent participation by females and 58 percent participation by males. This offered the suggestion that the necessity of Title IX may be related to lack of gender equality in the current study.

### **Race Demographic**

The demographic variable of race sought to investigate potential differences between African Americans, Hispanics, Caucasians, Asian/Pacific Islanders, American Indians, and other races for college choice in Sport Management. The majority of the respondents were Caucasian, with less than twenty percent of the participants classifying as minorities. Despite the relative lack of diversity, the statistics revealed significant differences for race in all three of the college choice categories. Table 4.2 details the responses from both the Caucasian and Non-Caucasian groups. Differences are reported to show where significant differences occurred.

Findings revealed some similarities with current literature, such as Olson's (1992) study that showed minority students being initially influenced by factors related to academics. The findings of this study supported Olson by revealing the most significant difference in the perception category that contained six academic factors.

Table 4.2

<b>Differences Between Caucasian and Non-Caucasian</b>			
College Choice Factor	Caucasian	Non-Caucasian	Difference
Opportunity for advancement in SM	3.95	3.42	0.53
Reputation of SM as an emerging field	3.75	3.10	0.65
Desire to work in the Sport Industry	4.69	4.28	0.41
SM skills are marketable	3.46	2.92	0.54
Work hours	2.69	2.07	0.62
Scholarship/Financial aid available to study SM	2.00	1.35	0.65
Opportunity to have a well paying job	3.33	3.17	0.16
Diverse positions available in SM	3.90	3.46	0.44
Family/Friend works in the Sport Industry	1.88	2.25	-0.37
Opportunity to work with athletes	3.71	3.85	-0.14
Desire for liberal arts background to complement SM degree	2.31	1.67	0.64
Expectation of high salary with degree	3.04	2.60	0.44
Parent's expectation that you acquire a college degree	2.97	2.25	0.72
Desire to have a college degree	4.23	3.60	0.63
Status of having a BS degree in SM	3.58	2.75	0.83
Greater opportunity for career and educational mobility	3.54	3.07	0.47
Desire to pursue advanced/graduate education	3.38	2.75	0.63
Location of SM program	3.04	2.35	0.69
Recommendation of someone in the Sport Industry	2.57	2.25	0.32
Opportunity to work in the Sport Industry	4.57	4.53	0.04
Recommendation of a high school counselor	1.81	1.28	0.53
Reputation of SM program	3.65	2.57	1.08
Cost of tuition	2.21	1.28	0.93
SM program offered was congruent with personal philosophy	3.00	2.28	0.72
Accepted transfer credits	2.05	1.32	0.73
Scholarship/Financial aid offered	2.30	1.28	1.02
Reputation of school	3.57	2.53	1.04
Time/credits needed to complete the major	2.69	2.00	0.69
Availability of athletic department for practical experience	3.35	2.53	0.82
Proximity to home	2.69	1.96	0.73

Pope and Fermin (2003) published an article reporting that minorities ranked financial and institutional influences higher than Caucasian students. The statistical analysis

supported the literature findings on financial factors that were presented by Pope and Fermin (2003). However, it contradicted both Pope and Fermin and Olson in not reporting institutional factors as significantly important to minorities. A potential reason for minorities not weighing institutional factors might be highly related to socioeconomic status. With financial constraints, the number of colleges to choose from is limited.

When taking an overview of the sport industry it was evident that Caucasians dominated it, and only in recent years have minorities found their way into positions of higher authority. According to the schools participating in this study, it seemed that Caucasians dominate Sport Management programs. It was also important to note that statistically, minorities struggled with financial and social prejudices (Julian & Kornblum, 2004). It was reported that although Caucasians were by far the largest group among poor families, African Americans and other ethnic minorities were over-represented. Statistically, 22.7 percent of the African American population and 21.4 percent of people of Spanish-speaking descent have incomes below the official poverty level, compared with 9.9 percent of the Caucasian population (Julian & Kornblum, 2004). Further research would have to be conducted in order to determine the actual validity of the previous statement. However, it can be suggested that these differences may be attributed to financial and academic hardships experienced by minorities.

Therefore, it was plausible that the significant differences are a result of economic and cultural difficulties within society. Current research in the area of minorities and financing of higher education presented several possible reasons for a lack of equality. Ruppert (2001) reported that there was in fact a gap in opportunity for minorities. Kane (1999) and McPherson and Shapiro (1998) presented possible reason for this gap through their research that indicated that there has been a decline in federal grants. For example, the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance produce data that showed that the average Pell grant covers less than 60 percent of a public college (St. John, 2002). This finding may be related to the difficulties minorities face in accessing higher education.

### **Age Demographic**

Age was examined to determine if any significant differences existed between college choice factors and the age of respondents. As the results expressed, there were

not any significant differences in any of the three factor groups. The literature reviewed in this study did not provide any college choice research that analyzed age using parametric statistics. Thus, it was unrealistic to attempt to compare literary findings. Crimmins and Riddler (1985) found an increase in matriculation among mature populations, which they defined as 35+ years. When an older person decides to return to college it was plausible that the factors influencing their college choice decision vary slightly from that of a traditionally college aged person. Factors often experienced by older matriculants include marital status, workforce status, and possible children. Regardless of age, college students are faced with similar decisions; however, the factors influencing these decisions may be very different. For this reason, future research should facilitate a deeper examination of college choice factors in regards to age.

### **Summary**

The two research questions were tested to reveal any relevant information pertaining to college choice factors for undergraduate Sport Management students. The descriptive statistics of all the college choice factors that were tested in the first research question revealed the importance of the factors in each category. The first research question also revealed that the majority of currently enrolled students choose their institution prior to choosing Sport Management, which uncovered several interesting implications. Of the three demographic variables tested, only race produced statistically significant results in determining college choice factors. Although the two remaining parametrically examined demographics did not produce noteworthy results, the lack of finding them unveiled areas for future research for the field of Sport Management. Overall, the findings were productive in contributing to the growing body of knowledge in both college choice and Sport Management.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this study, the factors that influenced an undergraduate Sport Management student's college choice were addressed. The sample surveying of currently enrolled undergraduate Sport Management students produced very few significant findings. It was feasible that the lack of significant findings could be attributed to the low response rate and the limitations experienced in regards to the web-based survey. The one significant difference found in this study on college choice pertained to the demographic factor race. These findings can be extremely useful to professors, administrators, and faculty within the field of Sport Management. The current study successfully brought some insight into college choice for undergraduate Sport Management students.

### **College Choice**

In terms of college choice, it was apparent that students are being drawn to the major through previous involvement or by having prior interest in the sport industry in some capacity. It was evident that something was lacking in promoting the major prior to entering college, and the majority of students were choosing their institution first. Interestingly, students reported institutional and personal factors as the least influential in their overall decision. While some of the findings were supported by the literature, it seems as if Sport Management students are distinct in influential college choice factors.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This exploratory study offered much insight into college choice among undergraduate Sport Management students. Since it was the initial study addressing this subject with undergraduate Sport Management students the opportunity to offer suggestions for future research endeavors in the same area were vast.

### **Institutional**

Although the field of Sport Management is growing, strategic marketing is extremely valuable. The marketing of Sport Management programs of study seems adequate; however, improvements and refinements should always be welcome. With the majority of matriculants originating from students that are already involved in sport in some capacity, efforts may need to be made to attract more of the general college bound

population in order to continue growing the field at a steady rate. Two specific groups that are highly necessary to target are non-sport participants and females. First, the probability of non-sport participants being exposed to the field of Sport Management is less likely than that of participants. This is a potential hindrance to the field because it is not necessary for a person to enjoy or participate in sport in order to contribute to the field. Sport Management may be missing out on talented managers, and losing them to other majors merely through lack of marketing. Second, despite the low response rate for the study, it seemed as if males dominated the Sport Management programs. Future studies should explore knowledge of college bound students in order to determine if Sport Management is even a known field of study. It would also be beneficial to study non-sport participants and females regarding awareness of Sport Management as a field of study. These explorations would hopefully reveal the effectiveness of the current marketing strategies used by Sport Management programs.

### **Personal**

One of the most unexpected findings was that students are not highly influenced by recommendations from their high school counselors as far as the Sport Management major is concerned. Due to the fact that this study merely addressed what type of factors were influential in the college choice decision, it was unwise to recommend reasons causing the reported results. Research needs to be conducted to determine if high schools are even aware of Sport Management programs, and then determine ways to educate the counselors about the field.

### **Financial**

One of the main recommendations for enhancing the influence of financial factors would include offering scholarships through the Sport Management programs themselves. Although the implications of this recommendation potentially extend into political issues within the universities, it would be a valuable asset in terms of attracting and recruiting potential matriculants into the Sport Management field. Another recommendation for positively influencing matriculants towards a Sport Management program financially would be to offer work-study programs within the university's athletic and campus recreation departments. Future research needs to investigate financial college choice factors in a more defined manner. For example, specific

financial factors such as scholarships, loans, grants, and future financial gains need to be broken down into categories that are more specific and focused.

### **Academic**

The academic factors found in the Choice, Influence, and Perception categories received very high ratings. Therefore, it might be true that Sport Management has established a solid reputation academically and is effectively influencing students toward choosing Sport Management as a field of study. This, however, can only be determined through further research. Future research should investigate what aspects of a program or an institution are important in order to determine where the institution and program stand.

### **Field**

The current study revealed that characteristics related to the field of Sport Management were primarily what attract the students to study it. Future research should investigate which specific aspects students are interested in, such as sport marketing, sport finance, sport law, and/or facilities management. Exploring these interests can provide pertinent information for Sport Management programs by making them aware of what interests are in demand. Thus, they would be able to offer specific areas of study in Sport Management programs that in the long run could potentially contribute to an increase in the prestige of the field.

### **Summary**

The current research has offered a beginning to the exploration of undergraduate Sport Management college choice. However, further research needs to be conducted in order to determine if these results are in fact generalizable. It is also suggested that the survey be distributed during the middle of an academic semester when classes are in session, as opposed to the beginning. Overall, the current research provides an effective beginning to discovering the influential college choice factors of undergraduate Sport Management students.

APPENDIX A

SCHOOLS CONTACTED TO PARTICIPATE

<b>University Name</b>	<b>Accept</b>	<b>Decline</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Florida State University	X		180
Bowling Green	X		491
Western New England College			
Daniel Webster College			
Southern New Hampshire University	X		220
Ithica College			
Drexel University			
Flagler University			
University of Florida			
Guilford College			
Principia College			
Tri-State University			
Rice University	X		40
Southwestern College			
St. Johns University			
Alvernia College		X	
Barton College			
Kenka College			
State University of NY, College of Cortland			
State University of NY, College of Brockport		X	
New England College			
Springfield College			
University of New England			
Endicott College			
New York University			
Dowling College		X	
<b>Total</b>			<b>931</b>

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Data of Undergraduate Sport Management Students

Modified by Sarah Crockett, October 15, 2004  
(No individuals or institution will be identified in this scientific study)  
(All responses will be kept confidential by the researcher)

1. Sex:            \_\_\_Male        \_\_\_Female
2. Race:           \_\_\_Caucasian   \_\_\_African-American   \_\_\_American Indian  
                     \_\_\_Hispanic   \_\_\_Asian/Pacific Islander   \_\_\_Other (specify)
3. Age:            \_\_\_\_\_
4. Classification: \_\_\_Freshman   \_\_\_Sophomore   \_\_\_Junior   \_\_\_Senior

Please respond to the following questions by placing an "X" in the corresponding blank or circling the number that corresponds to your opinion and attitude concerning the statement. Mark only one block and circle only one number.

Which choice in your pursuit of higher education occurred first?

- \_\_\_\_\_ College/University of Attendance  
\_\_\_\_\_ Major of Study

**(5) very important, (4) important, (3) neutral, (2) unimportant, (1) very unimportant**

How influential where each of these components in your choice of Sport Management as a major?

- 5 4 3 2 1 Opportunity for advancement in Sport Management  
5 4 3 2 1 Reputation of Sport Management as an emerging field  
5 4 3 2 1 Desire to work in the Sport Industry  
5 4 3 2 1 Sport Management skills are marketable  
5 4 3 2 1 Work hours  
5 4 3 2 1 Scholarship/financial aid available to study sport management  
5 4 3 2 1 Opportunity to have a well paying job

- 5 4 3 2 1 Diverse positions available in Sport Management
- 5 4 3 2 1 Family/Friend works in the Sport Industry
- 5 4 3 2 1 Opportunity to work with athletes
- 5 4 3 2 1 Desire for comprehensive liberal arts background to complement Sport Management knowledge
- 5 4 3 2 1 Expectation of high salary with degree
- 5 4 3 2 1 Parent's expectation that you acquire a college degree
- 5 4 3 2 1 Desire to have a college degree
- 5 4 3 2 1 Status of having a baccalaureate degree in Sport Management
- 5 4 3 2 1 Greater opportunity for career and educational mobility with a BS degree
- 5 4 3 2 1 Desire to pursue advanced/graduate education
- 5 4 3 2 1 Convenient location of baccalaureate Sport Management program
- 5 4 3 2 1 Recommendation from someone in the Sport Industry
- 5 4 3 2 1 Opportunity to work in the Sport Industry
- 5 4 3 2 1 Recommendation of a high school counselor
- 5 4 3 2 1 Reputation of Sport Management Program
- 5 4 3 2 1 Cost of tuition
- 5 4 3 2 1 Sport Management program offered was congruent with personal philosophy
- 5 4 3 2 1 Accepted transfer credits
- 5 4 3 2 1 Scholarship/financial aid offered
- 5 4 3 2 1 Reputation of school
- 5 4 3 2 1 Time/credits needed to complete the major
- 5 4 3 2 1 Availability of athletic department for practical experience
- 5 4 3 2 1 Proximity to home

APPENDIX C

CATAGORIZATION OF COLLEGE CHIOCE FACTORS

Table A.1

<b>Item</b>	<b>College Choice Factor</b>	<b>Catagory</b>
1	Opportunity for advancement in SM	Field
2	Reputation of SM as an emerging field	Field
3	Desire to work in the Sport Industry	Field
4	SM skills are marketable	Field
5	Work hours	Field
6	Scholarship/Financial aid available to study SM	Financial
7	Opportunity to have a well paying job	Financial
8	Diverse positions available in SM	Field
9	Family/Friend works in the Sport Industry	Personal
10	Opportunity to work with athletes	Personal
11	Desire for liberal arts background to complement SM degree	Academic
12	Expectation of high salary with degree	Financial
13	Parent's expectation that you acquire a college degree	Personal
14	Desire to have a college degree	Academic
15	Status of having a BS degree in SM	Academic
16	Greater opportunity for career and educational mobility	Academic
17	Desire to pursue advanced/graduate education	Academic
18	Location of SM program	Institutional
19	Recommendation of someone in the Sport Industry	Personal
20	Opportunity to work in the Sport Industry	Field
21	Recommendation of a high school counselor	Personal
22	Reputation of SM program	Academic
23	Cost of tuition	Financial
24	SM program offered was congruent with personal philosophy	Academic
25	Accepted transfer credits	Academic
26	Scholarship/Financial aid offered	Financial
27	Reputation of school	Institutional
28	Time/credits needed to complete the major	Academic
29	Availability of athletic department for practical experience	Institutional
30	Proximity to home	Institutional

Note: The Field category refers to the field of Sport Management

APPENDIX D

CATAGORICAL RANKINGS

Table A.2 - Institutional Ranking	
College Choice Factor	Mean
Reputation of school	3.22
Availability of athletic department for practical experience	3.03
Location of SM program	2.81
Proximity to home	2.37

Table A.3 - Field Rankings	
College Choice Factor	Mean
Desire to work in the Sport Industry	4.73
Opportunity to work in the Sport Industry	4.46
Opportunity for advancement in SM	3.87
Diverse positions available in SM	3.79
Reputation of SM as an emerging field	3.65
SM skills are marketable	3.36
Work hours	2.56

Table A.4 - Financial Rankings	
College Choice Factor	Mean
Opportunity to have a well paying job	3.28
Expectation of high salary with degree	2.89
Scholarship/Financial aid offered	1.95
Cost of tuition	1.89
Scholarship/Financial aid available to study SM	1.86

Table A.5 – Personal Rankings	
College Choice Factor	Mean
Opportunity to work with athletes	3.70
Parent’s expectation that you acquire a college degree	2.77
Recommendation of someone in the Sport Industry	2.40
Family/Friend works in the Sport Industry	1.91
Recommendation of a high school counselor	1.58

Table A.6 – Academic Rankings	
College Choice Factor	Mean
Desire to have a college degree	4.05
Greater opportunity for career and educational mobility	3.37
Status of having a BS degree in SM	3.35
Reputation of SM program	3.33
Desire to pursue advanced/graduate education	3.17
SM program offered was congruent with personal philosophy	2.73
Time/credits needed to complete the major	2.39
Desire for liberal arts background to complement SM degree	2.14
Accepted transfer credits	1.76

APPENDIX E

PARAMETRIC GENDER STATISTICS

Category		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Choice	Btwn Groups	.000	1	.000	.000	.998
	Within Groups	50.767	148	.343		
	Total	50.767	149			
Influence	Btwn Groups	.790	1	.790	1.326	.251
	Within Groups	88.259	148	.596		
	Total	89.049	149			
Perceptions	Btwn Groups	.001	1	.001	.001	.973
	Within Groups	77.850	148	.526		
	Total	77.850	149			

Effect		Value	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.813	3.000	140.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.187	3.000	140.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	4.346	3.000	140.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	4.346	3.000	140.000	.000
Race	Pillai's Trace	.162	12.000	426.000	.021
	Wilks' Lambda	.843	12.000	370.697	.019
	Hotelling's Trace	.179	12.000	416.000	.018
	Roy's Largest Root	.135	4.000	142.000	.001
Gender	Pillai's Trace	.028	3.000	140.000	.263
	Wilks' Lambda	.972	3.000	140.000	.263
	Hotelling's Trace	.029	3.000	140.000	.263
	Roy's Largest Root	.029	3.000	140.000	.263
Race * Gender	Pillai's Trace	.050	6.000	282.000	.306
	Wilks' Lambda	.951	6.000	280.000	.310
	Hotelling's Trace	.051	6.000	278.000	.314
	Roy's Largest Root	.029	3.000	141.000	.253

APPENDIX F

PARAMETRIC RACE STATISTICS

Category		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Choice	Btwn Groups	1.741	1	1.741	5.257	.023
	Within Groups	49.025	148	.331		
	Total	50.767	149			
Influence	Btwn Groups	5.465	1	5.465	9.677	.002
	Within Groups	83.584	148	.565		
	Total	89.049	149			
Perceptions	Btwn Groups	7.384	1	7.384	15.509	.000
	Within Groups	70.466	148	.476		
	Total	77.850	149			

Effect		Value	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.813	3.000	140.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.187	3.000	140.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	4.346	3.000	140.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	4.346	3.000	140.000	.000
Race	Pillai's Trace	.162	12.000	426.000	.021
	Wilks' Lambda	.843	12.000	370.697	.019
	Hotelling's Trace	.179	12.000	416.000	.018
	Roy's Largest Root	.135	4.000	142.000	.001
Gender	Pillai's Trace	.028	3.000	140.000	.263
	Wilks' Lambda	.972	3.000	140.000	.263
	Hotelling's Trace	.029	3.000	140.000	.263
	Roy's Largest Root	.029	3.000	140.000	.263
Race * Gender	Pillai's Trace	.050	6.000	282.000	.306
	Wilks' Lambda	.951	6.000	280.000	.310
	Hotelling's Trace	.051	6.000	278.000	.314
	Roy's Largest Root	.029	3.000	141.000	.253

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sarah Crockett is a native of Belleair, Florida. She graduated from Florida State University in 2002 with a Bachelors of Science in Sport Management and Information Studies.

Prior to entering graduate school for her masters, Sarah took time off and worked for the State Technology Office of Florida. While pursuing her masters, Sarah participated in an internship with the Florida State Meteorology Department doing research on weather and sport.

Sarah has recently accepted an internship position in ministry at Christian Campus Fellowship in Tallahassee, Florida.