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5/3/16

Clubs Interviews

Goals and Context

The overall goal of my research is to understand the relationship between clubs and UW students who are looking to join those clubs. In this interview portion of my research, my goal is to understand the club's motivations and attitudes towards interacting with the student body. My previous field work in this study showed that conversations between advertising club members and general students are extremely important. Purely overserving these interactions allowed me to project my own interpretations onto situations I saw. These interviews will either support this this observed trend, or I will learn what club leaders are truly thinking about.

Clubs have improved my experience here at UW, and I think that everybody should enjoy that experience. Since I can only speak to my own perspective on clubs, this research should illuminate the role that clubs play for the UW student body as a whole. This research can be used to help clubs advertise and increase the attendance at their meetings. I would also hope to help the process of students finding clubs they are comfortable in and will enhance their college experience.

Plan

Since this section of the study allows for a very small number of interviews, I chose to interview club officers. Officers can give really good insight to a club's motivation to bring in more members, as well as how they go about advertising their club. Since officers are, for the most part, at all of the meetings a club holds, they can speak to trends and patterns in the people that do come to club meetings. This is a good tactic for a study that takes place within 10 weeks because I can ask about observations made by people who have been observing for much longer than I possibly could. The plan is to interview leaders from multiple different types of clubs to get results about clubs as a whole, rather than clubs of a specific type.

In the interview itself, I will take a semi-structured approach. I want to ask about specific aspects of clubs, but I don't want to limit interviewees to the stories they have to tell. I'm not a club officer myself, so I'm not equipped to know what aspects of a club are most important to ask questions about. I don't want to ask a question and then limit the possibilities for the way the participant to answer. I don't want to take a fully structured approach because I don't know what kinds of answers I am expecting to hear for most of my questions. A semi-structured approach allows me to stay fluid with which kinds of follow-up questions I ask and allows the participant to speak more on questions that are more important to them. One of my structured questions is, "Are people coming to club meetings to meet people with the same interest or are they looking for access to the resources you provide?" This works for a semi-structured interview because it's not so strict that the participant can't say, "Well actually, they want…"

As long as scheduling works out with the participants, the interviews would take place in the Odegaard booths. It's a place where it's private enough that we'll be able to have a conversation, but it's not so awkwardly and uncomfortably quiet. I plan to use shorthand while typing on my computer to record what we talk about. I also took a backup audio recording, in case I had some gaps in my typed notes. The transcripts are provided in full and not in shorthand in Appendix 2. [**Note: The transcripts have been removed for this web version of the report for the privacy of the participants. Contact emilyu26@uw.edu if you have questions**] All three participants are male UW students. Participant 1 (P1) is an officer for the Husky Gamer

Nation. Participant 2 (P2) is a regular member of many current on-campus clubs, but he is in the process of putting together a unified club which encompasses many existing clubs. His interview was the only one that didn't take place in Odegaard. It took place in a Starbucks instead. Participant 3 (P3) is an officer for the UW Hong Kong Association.

To analyze my interviews, I used a bit of thematic analysis. I looked mainly for similar problems that the different participants would address.   A lot of the similarities brought up by the participants were very surprising because the clubs they come from are so different. These similarities are explained, organized by theme, in the results section.

Interviews are much more intimate experiences with people than pure observation field studies. I made sure to thoroughly speak about consent with the participants. I let the participants know that they are free to answer as many or as few questions as they were willing and they could leave at any time. I also made sure to let them know that the only other person that would be reading the transcript of their interview would be HCDE 131 TA Jennifer Davidson. Lastly, I asked for permission to include this report in my online portfolio, with the promise that they would be anonymous.

Results
Drop off in attendance
Event coordinators report the drop in attendance as the school year goes on.

P1 described the phenomenon where a lot of people show up to meetings in the fall, but current attendance has been a lot smaller. I was surprised that P3, an officer from a completely different type of club, described the same exact problem. One proposed hypothesis proposed by P2 is that people are coming to meetings to meet people with similar interests. He says, "Once they find some friends, they hang out together outside of the club and stop attending the meetings." P1 and P2 said that their target audience are incoming freshmen and transfer students. There is usually an extremely large influx of meeting attendees because of their success in advertising at early fall events like the RSO fair and the gaming section of the HUB crawl. P1 and P3 said that they too joined their clubs because of conversations they had with people at the RSO fair.

Another common theme through the interviews was in regards to when people first start attending club meetings. A lot of people are showing up to meetings by themselves because they are looking for friends. With the gaming clubs especially, there is a bit of an awkward transition of getting these new people involved. If these people who arrive at meetings alone eventually get involved in the meeting, a lot of people will show up to one meeting and then never show up again.

Cross-club cooperation
Clubs are more successful when they team up with other clubs.

When I asked about success in club advertising, the participants responded with the sentiment that success is difficult to determine. A definition that we decided on was attendance at events was a perfectly adequate measurement of success. P3 spoke about putting on events jointly with other culture clubs. This was a way to pool all the clubs' resources, which can include funding, advertising, and student population. As a result, they can put on larger and 'better' events. He described better events as, "having more stuff, more goodies, more food."

P1 and P2 also spoke on bringing gaming clubs together. P2 described the current system of game clubs as, "fragmented" because popular games have their own specific clubs on top of clubs like HGN, who try to encompass all games on all types of platforms. The purpose of bringing the clubs together in this case is to be more inclusive when the individual clubs are advertising.

Club communication and cooperation also can make things more efficient and simplified. P3 described an awkward situation where two separate UW gaming clubs made Facebook events for the recent Heroes of the Dorm tournament. Blizzard, the company that makes Heroes of the Storm, wanted to give free gifts to attending clubs, but wasn't sure which UW club to give it to. In the future, all of the UW gaming club will present themselves to the public on a unified front to make things easier.

A space to call their own
Club event organizers are dissatisfied by the spaces in which they hold events.

I asked one hypothetical question in each of my interviews: "If your club had unlimited funding, where would you like it to be spent?" I was expecting this question to elucidate the participant's favorite part of the club, which they would enhance, but they unanimously answered that they would improve their event space. P3 responded that they would want to hold events in larger venues if they had more funding.

P1 and P2 presented very passionate responses about the desire for a central and specially designated space for gaming to take place. P2 specifically cited how Area 1, the Great Room, and the HUB are not adequately doing the job. An additional parameter for this space that P1 discussed is that students would have access to it even when club officers are not around. People shouldn't be limited to gaming to only when the officers plan specific events or meetups.

People over things
The most important thing to people when joining clubs is community.

A question I asked in all of my interviews was whether they believed that new members were joining clubs to join a community or to take advantage of the resources the clubs can provide. The general idea from these club leaders is that people want to make friends and build community. I was surprised when P1 said he knows that most of the people who attend meetings already own their own consoles. He says that they're looking to play the games they love with other people. P2 also emphasized that community is an integral building block to getting into eSports. It's only after a community for a game exists that players can start to be competitive in their game.

Discussion
All answers given by these officers really goes to show that they are passionate about their hobby and are enthusiastic about bettering the lives of their club members, which is really great. This is a shift from many high school clubs, where officers are looking for things to put in their college applications and don't care about what happens with the club. This plays into the idea that people are excited to be here at UW. University is not a required experience, so all of the people that are here really want to be here. These interviews would not have given good answers to analyze if a participant wasn't very interested in the club they are a part of.

The answers received from these interview participants give much more solid evidence. During my observations, I was limited by the fact that I projected my bias onto interactions between clubs and students. These interviews taught me that I was wrong in my guess that people are joining clubs because they want access to resources that clubs can provide. The opinions and needs of these officers should hold a lot of weight because they know the patterns of their club. They are the ones talking to club members every week for years, in the case of P1. Even though I am asking people to talk about the possible motivations are other people, these club officers are the best equipped to report on the big picture of what is happening in their club.

This portion of the study is limited by the fact that I only interviewed 3 people. If more people were interviewed, trends and patterns would become clearer. A larger sample of participant interviews would also guarantee that the responses I received are representative of clubs in their entirety and are not merely outliers. I would have ideally interviewed officers from a large variety of clubs. Further interviews would ideally be held with sports clubs, student leadership, and academic clubs to supplement the interviews I held with officers of culture and special interest clubs. I also only interviewed men, which is unfortunate. I don't know if women and men give different answers about these types of questions, but they still remain and excluded population for these interviews.

Implications for Design

A large problem with the student-club relationship is the fact that the relationship dies off as the year goes on. One of the solutions, proposed by P3, for keeping up meeting attendance through the year is to make sure that events remain to be really interesting to club members. At the same time, it is impossible to avoid losing some students that only show up once because the club is not something that the student is interested in. The clubs also described the large increase in attendance after the RSO fair, which only happens at the beginning of the year. Maybe there can be a fair every quarter for clubs that would like to continue advertising through the year. Further research can be put into finding out what brings club members back to club meetings.

There are a lot of current motivations to cooperate with other clubs. There's a limit on how many flyers or buttons each club can make on a given day or week. When clubs work together, they can print out double the amount of flyers than they would have been able to on their own. The Student Associations Office (SAO) can do more to motivate working together. They grant funding to clubs individually, but maybe they could give bonus funding to clubs that are putting on events together. P3 said that event attendance is larger when multiple clubs are working together, and the SAO should support that.

A really fun future design project would be to design club event spaces. I can strongly recommend that a central gaming lounge would have a lot of outlets and TVs. This would be a fairly low priority as an outcome of this research study. There's no way to see from these studies how effective improved event spaces would be in convincing people to join clubs. I thought that I would be recommending that clubs put more funding into the resources they can offer to their student, but these interviews showed me that this is not as important as the people that come to the meetings.

Appendix 1: Plan

1. **What are the key implications from your field work that you will use to drive your interview study?**

The previous field work showed the importance in conversation when people are looking to join a club. More personal interviews can elucidate whether or not this is true, by asking what club leaders prioritize when advertising and asking what students look for in clubs.

2. **What is the high-level question you are trying to answer with this study?**
   What role do clubs play in student's daily lives?

3. **Who are your ideal participants? What are the inclusion and exclusion criteria for people to participate in your study?**

4. I want to talk to the leaders of the clubs because are most likely able to comment on the experiences of their members. I want to try to speak to leaders from different types of clubs. (ex. Special interest and academic)

5. **How do you plan to recruit your participants? Where will you conduct your interviews?**
   I have an opportunity this weekend to approach people, whom I've never spoken with before, that are club leaders and women in male-dominated clubs. I may also try to message different kinds of clubs, maybe academic-focused clubs. I plan to reserve study rooms or booths in Odegaard.

6. **What type of interview will you run: unstructured, semi-structured or structured?**
   The interview will be in between unstructured and semi-structured, leaning more towards semi-structured.

7. **Why are you choosing that particular type of interview? Why does it suit your research purpose?**
   I have questions that I want answered, but I have no qualms about spending more time on some questions than others. I want to hear peoples stories, but I don't

8. **What is the overall logic of your questions?**
   My overall logic is to establish what kind of connection is made between clubs and people looking to join clubs.

9. **How will you collect data (e.g., notes only, audio and notes)?**
   I plan to take notes on my computer while listening. I can type fairly quickly, and even if I have errors, it won't be an extreme barrier to decoding my notes. I don't think I have very good audio recording devices. I am going to experiment with my phone.

10. **What biases will you need to consider as you conduct your interview? (Do you already have expectations about the answers to your questions?)**
    I suspect answers from some of my questions, but I'm also very much looking forward to being surprised. That might also be biased, where I'm expecting answers to be strange and unexpected. I really need to listen and not be disappointed if the answers are completely ordinary.

Part 2: Interview Protocol

Develop your interview protocol of which one portion is your set of interview questions. Draft your interview questions (and possible follow-ups) and the rationale for each question. Your rationale should include how the interview question helps answer your high-level question (from item 2 above) and how the question avoids problems such as prestige bias. Your interview should consist of 5-7 questions.

Questions for club members:
Q: How many clubs are you a part of?
Rationale: This would be a question for a person that isn't the head of a club.

Q: Would you like to talk about one in particular or would you be able to talk about your club experiences as a whole?

Q: How did you hear about the club you're in?
Rationale: It's a good question commenting on how effective club advertising is.
Follow up questions can be about how they felt about their experience being persuaded to join the club.
Follow up questions for club leaders would be about how important they think advertising is.

Questions for club leaders:
Q: Is advertising a priority for you and your club?
Rationale: Can they help me in strengthening relationship between club leaders and members?
Follow-up: What methods do you use to advertise?

Questions for all:
Q: Are you a UW student?
Rationale: I've learned recently that non-UW students sometimes attend UW club events.

Q: How much time do you spend with the club?
Rationale: A large time commitment can speak to how important the club is.
Follow-up: How do you prioritize attending club functions/ club organization?

Q: How long have you participated in your hobby?
Rationale: I'm curious if people are finding new hobbies in college or if they are looking to meet people who have had the same interest for their whole lives..

Q: If your club had unlimited funding, where would you like it to be spent?
Rationale: It might show their favorite part of the club.
Follow-up: Is that your favorite part of the club?