

DISSERTATION

PREDICTORS OF STRATEGIC INFLUENCE AMONG COLLEGE SPORTS PUBLIC  
RELATIONS DIRECTORS IN COLLEGE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENTS:  
THE IMPACT OF MANAGERIAL ORIENTATION AND  
LEADERSHIP PERSONALITY TRAIT, SKILL, AND STYLE

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## ABSTRACT

### PREDICTORS OF STRATEGIC INFLUENCE AMONG COLLEGE SPORTS PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTORS IN COLLEGE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENTS: THE IMPACT OF MANAGERIAL ORIENTATION AND LEADERSHIP PERSONALITY TRAIT, SKILL, AND STYLE

The College Sports Information Directors (CoSIDA) noted the need for PR directors to be held in higher esteem and to have more strategic influence in their athletic departments. This dissertation sought to provide some information to help CoSIDA accomplish its goal. Participants were drawn from the entire membership of the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA). An online survey to which 273 college sports public relations directors responded investigated current demographic characteristics as well their perceptions of strategic influence within college athletic departments in the U.S. The survey was drawn from the works of Berger and Reber in 2006, Blake and Mouton in 1985, Broom and Smith in 1979, Northouse in 2007, Richmond and McCroskey in 1990, and Stoldt in 1998.

The survey results suggested the modern college sports public relations director is male, 30-49 years old, has a bachelor's degree in journalism or communications, and most likely makes \$35-\$45,000. Participants identified most closely with the media relations role, had a responsive (versus assertive) personality, were more developed in technical (versus conceptual or human/relational) leadership skills, and possessed a task-

oriented (versus relationship-oriented) leadership style. Respondents reported exercising moderate amounts of influence and that they rank second only to compliance officers in terms of their influence on athletic directors. Respondents varied in their opinions but generally thought their influence had increased and were largely satisfied with the influence they exert.

The strongest predictors of strategic influence were serving in the manager (versus technician) role, being male, directly reporting to the athletic director, and having frequent contact with the AD. Assuming a publicity producer role (versus manager role) was negatively correlated with strategic influence. College sports public relations directors who are more assertive (versus responsive), who have developed conceptual leadership skills (versus technical or human/relational), and who have a relationship-oriented (versus task-oriented) leadership style believe they have more of a chance of gaining a seat at the decision-making table. The study concluded college sports PR directors who develop skills as strategic communicators and managers are more likely to gain influence in the future. Implications and suggestions for further research are discussed.

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It was at those times I was able to draw on the words of Colossians 3:23: Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men (NIV).

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is first dedicated to my wife, Heidi. You are my rock. Through all the trials and triumphs in life, I always know you have my back. Your grace and strength move me and motivate me, and I am eternally grateful.

Also, I would like to dedicate this project to my children, G<sup>3</sup>—Gaby, Gavin, and Grant. Your hugs at just the right times, your willingness to sacrifice time with daddy, and your patience with me when I was at wits end did not go unnoticed. You are the reason I wake up in the morning and why I try to work as hard as I can. I would not have completed this journey without you.

While the Ph.D. may be in my name, we have ALL earned this degree.

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## **CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION**

Traditionally the position is known as sports information director (SID). However, whether they go by SID, media relations director, or communications director, the people assigned to lead the public relations (PR) arm of a college athletic department serve a vital role. Having spent 15 years in the profession, I know first hand the importance of maintaining open lines of communication with all audiences. Alumni, boosters, fans, parents, media representatives, student-athletes and coaches, and administrators all require information. Because college sports public relations directors are connected to these groups more than anyone else, it is imperative that the PR representative be involved in decision making and leading the athletic department.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case. When I began my career in college athletics, it was standard for the sports public relations director to have a direct line to the athletic director (AD). Public relations professionals were consulted on a regular basis and were afforded much influence in the athletic department. However, in meetings with leadership groups at the 2010 College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA) convention in San Francisco, many members told me they had seen their influence diminish in the last 20 years. Meanwhile, marketing professionals, fund-raisers, senior woman administrators, and business managers have surpassed the PR director and claimed the once occupied seat at the decision-making table.

What is more, Dozier and Broom (1995) developed a model linking participation in management decision making to salary and job satisfaction. They also theorized

linkages between strategic influence and gender, tenure with employer, professional experience, education, and PR staff size. Granted, their research centered on members of the Public Relations Society of America and the International Association of Business Communicators, organizations with very few members from the ranks of college sports public relations. Still, if Dozier and Broom's assumptions were correct and apply to college athletics, the need for strategic influence in college sports public relations becomes even more important.

CoSIDA's leadership has recognized this and has initiated a strategic initiative to regain an influential seat at the decision making table and, as a result, to help practitioners gain more professional stature, including salary and job satisfaction (College Sports Information Directors of America, 2008). They have begun to meet with members of the National Association of College Directors of Athletics (NACDA) in an effort to regain some of their lost ground.

Similarly, Berger and Reber (2006) noted a lack of influence as a concern throughout the public relations profession. They found that, rather than serving as managers and advisors, public relations practitioners in corporations, health care, not-for-profit organizations, and education have been relegated to publicists and "journalists in residence." Through a longitudinal study that included surveys and in-depth interviews, they developed a theory as to why public relations directors have lost influence. They learned that two perceptions seemed to prevail as to why public relations professionals may suffer from a "power shortage." They suggested the causes are "organizational leaders who just don't get it and professionals who just don't have it" (p. 2).

If college sports public relations professionals hope to have a seat at the decision making table, and if they desire to have their voices heard, it is time to take the works of Dozier and Broom (1995) and Berger and Reber (2006) a step further by determining which variables, or combinations of variables, may predict how much influence practitioners enjoy. Is it a particular personality trait or skill set? Or perhaps it is a particular professional focus or a specific organizational structure that makes the difference. If college sports public relations directors are to gain influence in their athletic departments, we need to find some answers. That is the intent of this study.

### **Background**

College sports public relations directors are the professionals in college athletics charged with publicizing and promoting the department, its student-athletes and coaches. They “serve as a positive communication link with a variety of the institution’s publics, including the staff, media, fans, community members, alumni, student-athletes, parents and prospective students” (College Sports Information Directors of America, 1993). Traditionally referred to as sports information directors (SIDs), they serve as public relations specialists, event managers, media liaisons, publications and Web professionals, and administrators.

In 1998, G. Clayton Stoldt published his doctoral dissertation, *Current and Ideal Professional Roles of NCAA Division I-A Sports Information Directors: Analysis and Implications*. He wanted to learn what roles college sports public relations directors served in their respective athletic departments. He also wanted to know what roles they *wished* to serve. Stoldt discovered that sports information directors at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) I-A institutions (N = 187) viewed themselves as

technicians, serving primarily to write news releases and develop publications for publicity purposes. However, Stoldt also discovered the typical SID in the late 1990s was interested in performing more of a management function and wanted to be more involved in strategic planning and decision-making within the athletic department.

To date, this seems to be an unrealized goal. Twelve years after Stoldt published his dissertation, he interviewed John Humenik, executive director of CoSIDA. In the interview, Humenik articulated the desire for college sports public relations directors to evolve from technicians to managers:

We have to understand that we not only have to change the way we see ourselves—changing from information directors to communication directors to strategic communications directors—but also have to teach senior leadership; that is how they have to see us and our role within their organizations (Stoldt, 2008, p. 461).

### **Research Problem**

If college sports public relations directors are to realize their potential as professionals, and if college athletic departments are to take full advantage of their PR practitioners' abilities, college sports public relations directors must find a seat at what Berger and Reber (2006) call the "decision-making table."

This study attempted to build on the previous research into the roles played by college sports public relations directors by considering the perceptions of practitioners themselves. Stoldt (1998), in fact, called for such research after completing his dissertation on the current and ideal roles of SIDs. Stoldt wrote, "This questionnaire was certainly not exhaustive in its questions, and other factors which influence practitioner roles may well exist" (p. 73).

This dissertation took the next step by considering a variety of variables that may lead to more strategic influence. Thus, the purpose of this study was three-fold. First, it developed a portrait of the modern college sports public relations director. Like past research (Hardin & McClung, 2002; McCleneghan, 1995; Ottaway, 1962), it considered education level, age, years of experience, gender and salary. But this study went a step further by examining the typical professional orientation, leadership personality, leadership skills, and leadership style. It also considered organizational size and structure (reporting hierarchy, staff size, number of teams, etc.).

Second, it examined whether college sports public relations directors believe their level of strategic influence is on the rise and if they are satisfied with their level of influence. This was an important question to consider. While Humenik and the CoSIDA leadership are pushing for more strategic influence for PR practitioners, some research (Holtz, 2006; Westphall, 1998) has centered on burnout in the college sports public relations profession. From my own experience, practitioners regularly work 60-80 hours per week, two or three nights a week, and every weekend during the academic year. Helitzer (2000) noted a comprehensive list of primary and secondary activities that ultimately turn the profession into a “seven-day-a-week job” (p. 62). And Neupauer (2001) noted, “Even when he or she is at home taking a breather, it is not uncommon for fellow professionals or even sportswriters to phone the SID’s home with questions or requests” (p. 553). It may be that many practitioners are content in their current roles and are not interested in taking on additional duties related to strategic planning and development.

If practitioners *do* desire more influence, as seems to be the case, then finding how to gain such a voice is critical. Thus, the third intent of this study was to determine, using Berger and Reber's (2006) research findings as a guide, which variables, or combinations of variables, seem to have the most impact on the level of strategic influence college sports public relations directors enjoy.

### **Variables**

In this study, a survey of sports public relations directors (see Appendix C) who are members of CoSIDA primarily considered 15 variables (one criterion, 14 predictor):

#### **Criterion Variable**

Perceived Strategic Influence – Interval, a Likert-type, eight-point scale (1 = Never, 8 = Always), questions 1-21

#### **Predictor Variables**

1. Managerial Orientation – Interval, Likert-type, eight-point scale (1 = Never, 8 = Always), questions 27-42
2. Assertiveness Leadership Personality Traits – Interval, Likert-type, eight-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree it Applies, 8 = Strongly Agree it Applies), questions 46, 47, 49, 50, 53, 55, 58, 62, 63, 64
3. Responsiveness Leadership Personality Traits – Interval, Likert-type, eight-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree it Applies, 8 = Strongly Agree it Applies), questions 45, 48, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61
4. Technical Leadership Skills – Interval, Likert-type, eight-point scale (1 = Never True, 8 = Always True), questions 63, 73, 74, 76



5. Human Leadership Skills – Interval, Likert-type, eight-point scale (1 = Never True, 8 = Always True), questions 65, 68, 72, 75
6. Conceptual Leadership Skills – Interval, Likert-type, eight-point scale (1 = Never True, 8 = Always True), questions 66, 69, 70, 71
7. Task-Oriented Leadership Style – Interval, Likert-type, eight-point scale (1 = Never True, 8 = Always True), questions 77, 79, 82, 83
8. Relationship-Oriented Leadership Style – Interval, Likert-type, eight-point scale (1 = Never True, 8 = Always True), questions 78, 80, 81, 84
9. Competition level – Ordinal, question 87
10. Staff size – Interval, question 88
11. Years in current position – Interval, question 91
12. Years in sports PR – Interval, question 92
13. Education Level – Ordinal, question 93
14. Sex – Nominal, question 98

### **Research Questions**

Based on a study of the literature, conversations with professionals in the field, and my own experience, three research questions were addressed. These descriptive and associational questions, written in the form supported by Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner, and Barrett (2004), are:

RQ 1: What is the portrait of the contemporary college sports public relations director?

RQ 2: How do college sports public relations directors perceive that their strategic influence has changed in recent years?

RQ 3: How well does the combination of managerial orientation, leadership personality traits, leadership skills, leadership styles, and demographic variables predict the college sports public relations director's perceived strategic influence?

## Definition of Terms

The following operational definitions were utilized:

**Strategic Influence.** In the present study, based on the work of Broom and Smith (1979), Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig (1995), Pearce and Robinson (2005), and Berger and Reber (2006), *strategic influence* is defined as the degree to which the sports public relations director has a voice in terms of the development and execution of plans and strategies that enable the college athletic department to accomplish its goals and objectives.

**Managerial Orientation.** For the present study, *managerial orientation*, based on the research of Broom and Smith (1979), Grunig (1992), Stoldt and Narasimhan (2005), and Stoldt, Dittmore, and Branvold (2006), is defined as the extent to which college sports public relations directors focus on outcomes expected of an educational administrator (versus merely the production or coordination of communications/information activities expected of staff).

**Leadership Personality Traits.** Because Berger and Reber (2006) noted a passive nature as a potential constraint on influence, *leadership personality trait* is defined as the degree to which the college sports public relations director demonstrates a more dominant nature. Richmond and McCroskey (1990) focused on two distinct personality traits: assertiveness and responsiveness. They argued that these two personality traits “make a substantial contribution to the prediction of communication and other social behavioral patterns” (p. 449).

**Leadership Skills.** In deference to Katz (1955), Christ (1999), and Northouse (2007), the present study defines *leadership skill* as the degree to which the sports public

relations director is able to perform tasks based on three recognized sets of leadership skills—technical skills, human skills, and conceptual skills.

**Leadership Style.** In this dissertation, *leadership style* is defined as the degree to which the sports public relations director acts in ways that place a priority on tasks versus relationships (Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1985).

**Demographic Predictor Variables.** Six demographic predictor variables also were considered: competition level, staff size, years in current position, years in college sports PR, education level, and sex.

Competition level is defined based upon membership in NCAA Division I (Football Bowl Series, Football Championship Series, or I-AAA), Division II, or Division III, or NAIA) and staff size refers to the total number of employees (Cunningham & Rivera, 2001; Hardin & McClung, 2002; McCleneghan, 1996; Slack, 1997).

Years in the current position, years in the profession, and education level all refer to experience, or the extent to which the sports public relations director has encountered various situations and can apply that knowledge in his or her performance (Berger & Reber, 2006; Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995; Hardin & McClung, 2002; McCleneghan, 1996).

In developing a portrait of the college sports public relations director, McCleneghan (1996) and Hardin and McClung (2002) also considered sex, as they sought how many women and men served in the profession.

### **Delimitations**

As this study was concerned with the levels of strategic influence college sports public relations directors have in their athletic offices, only responses from directors were analyzed. Assistant directors, graduate assistants, interns and student assistants were excluded from this study. In addition, this study focused on directors at four-year colleges and universities, so directors at junior and community colleges were not surveyed. Finally, only directors who work in college athletic departments were surveyed, so public relations directors at conference offices or in the NCAA or NAIA national offices were not included in the study population.

### **Limitations**

The primary limitation is that this study focused on college sports public relations directors' *perceived* levels of influence. It also asked directors to provide their own perceptions of themselves as professionals. These perceptions may be very different from how others in the athletic department see them. One option to overcome this limitation Atkins and Wood (2002) pointed to was to conduct 360-degree evaluations of practitioners, including their athletic directors, a peer, and a subordinate in the study. Atkins and Wood analyzed the 360-degree approach to determine validity and to examine the relationship between self and others scores. Atkins and Wood found the approach valid in their study of assessment centers. They learned that those who rated themselves highly were actually poor performers. They also found that "supervisor ratings successfully discriminated between over-estimators but were not as successful at discriminating under-estimators, suggesting that more modest feedback recipients might be underrated by their supervisors" (p. 897). However, as this is a body of research that

has been neglected as it pertains to college sports public relations directors and their levels of strategic influence, several diverse variables needed to be considered. Thus, it was important first to learn how professionals view themselves. Subsequent research may then be conducted to determine if the college sports public relations directors' perceptions of themselves match the perceptions others in the athletic department have of the PR directors.

A second limitation was the use of online questionnaires. Although this type of data collection is relatively easy and saves time and money, because the respondents were anonymous, it eliminated the possibility of interaction with the respondents and did not allow me to ask questions to clarify, nor did it provide an opportunity for in-depth answers. However, because the desire was to provide all directors from each division an opportunity to respond, because the goal was to determine if correlations exist between the dependent variables and the independent variables, and because generalizability was critical in this study, a questionnaire was deemed the appropriate method for gathering data.

### **Significance of the Study**

Sport is part of everyday American life. In 2008, Nielsen reported that more than 108 million people watched Football Bowl Series (FBS) bowl games (Elliot, 2008). That same year, 102 businesses spent \$643 million in advertising during the NCAA Basketball Tournament, also known as March Madness (Daddi, 2009). Businesses paint their storefronts and prominently display school colors and mascots as a show of support for their local teams (Kent & Campbell, 2007). According to MaryJo Sylvester and Tom Witosky of *USA Today*, from 1995-2001 spending on Division I intercollegiate athletics

increased on average about 25%. In part, escalating costs of college sports were “fueled by universities’ desires to reap the benefits of a winning season, which can boost attendance and TV ratings, maintain alumni support and lift student and even regional morale” (2004). From the perspective of those in higher education, “the public perception of a university’s athletic programs is often considered a principal aspect in building the brand image of the respective institution” (Lee, Millock, Kraft, & Tatum, 2008, p. 178).

Unfortunately, the world of college athletics also has dealt with its share of drama and tragedy (conference realignment, the Duke and Virginia lacrosse scandals; the Oklahoma State plane crash; allegations of impropriety and the subsequent firing of Iowa State head men’s basketball coach Larry Eustachy, and charges of abuse resulting in the terminations of Texas Tech head football coach Mike Leach and Kansas football coach Mark Mangino, to name a few). How should the various messages be presented to the many publics? Thinking of the contingency theory of accommodation (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997), what stance should the athletic department take in a given situation? These are questions professionals trained in public relations are expected to answer. That cannot be done with the college sports PR director on the sidelines.

Still, even though sport is a billion dollar industry (King, 1993), little attention has been paid to how college sports public relations directors affect decision-making and planning in athletic offices. McDonald (2005) proclaimed society has created a higher demand for more involved sports public relations professionals, including those in the college ranks. “As professional, collegiate, and amateur sports functions assume an increasingly important role in society and culture, sports organizations and athletes face increasing scrutiny from media and society” (p. 806). Whether strategic planning, crisis

communication, or fundraising and development campaigns, McDonald held that college sports public relations directors, by the nature of their position and training, have plenty to offer. “This job requires a person who understands the world of professional and collegiate sports and who is trained in news and sports writing, public relations, media relations, crisis communication, and ethics” (p. 807).

Carter and Rovell (2003) agreed. They argued that the business of sports is every bit as involved as the business of industry:

Sports organizations, whether professional, collegiate, or amateur, deal with the same challenges faced by organization and corporation public relations practices: media relations, getting key messages to the appropriate target publics, ethics, building alliances with stakeholder groups, image, and crisis management, to name only a few (p. xix).

Lesnik and Schacter (1997) added that, sports public relations is “one of the youngest and fastest growing segments of the PR industry” (p. 405), and it is critical to achieving the communications objectives of the organization and to supporting and enhancing sports marketing activities.

Still, college sports public relations professionals do not seem to be functioning in this more influential manner. Little is discovered in a review of literature regarding the influence they have in college athletic department decisions. Rather, what exists points to college sports public relations directors more as technicians (journalists in residence, as it were) than managers (Hardin & McClung, 2002; McCleneghan, 1995; Moore, 1994; Ottaway, 1962; Stoldt, 1998).

This is a reality that is becoming more unacceptable to the leadership of CoSIDA. Humenik noted in his interview with Stoldt:

If the senior staff is more “old school” in their approach to PR and communications, then I feel it is up to the communications staff to be proactive and clearly demonstrate what has to take place in the current state of communications for the athletics department to be successful (Stoldt, 2008, p. 461).

This idea of the public relations practitioner as merely a publicist runs counter to what many researchers and scholars proclaim: public relations is, first and foremost, a management function. Rex Harlow, a pioneer in public relations education, presented one of the earliest definitions:

Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and its public; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound ethical communication techniques as its principal tools (cited in Wilcox, Cameron, Ault, & Agee, 2007, p. 5).

CoSIDA, with more than 2,700 members, is taking action to change this lack of recognition. In its Master Strategic Initiatives Plan, CoSIDA lists its Seven Core Strategic Vision Guiding Focus Principles. Three of these principles were advancing the profession, advancing the professional, and image building and enhancing within the collegiate athletics community (College Sports Information Directors of America, 2008). The present study attempted to address one of these issues: How college sports public relations directors may gain a more influential voice in athletic department decisions. To do this, variables must be found that help practitioners gain this position. This dissertation was intended to help answer that question.



## **Researcher's Perspective**

For almost 15 years, the last 12 as director, I served in the college sports public relations profession. When I chose to leave the profession, it was in part because I believed my training in public relations was not being utilized to its fullest. I served as an adjunct instructor in communication for two semesters before my career came to an end, and at that time I determined I wanted to become a college professor and to train future college sports public relations professionals.

Then, in the fall of 2008, I took a course in strategic conflict management where I was introduced to the concept of earning influence in public relations. Glen Cameron, my professor for the course, explained that when an attorney meets with the boss about a lawsuit, she comes in with precedent, legal facts, and risks and rewards for going to court or settling. When an engineer discusses the building of a new warehouse, he has zoning regulations, stress tests, and blue prints. However, he said, when public relations professionals discuss how they plan to handle a crisis situation, they too often lack supporting material. This, he suggested, results in a lack of influence.

Cameron explained that Berger and Reber (2006) conducted an extensive study on the matter as public relations practitioners sought more of a voice in their organizations. Rather than serving simply as “in-house journalists,” public relations practitioners wanted an active role in the decision-making process and desired the opportunity to serve as advisors and consultants on matters pertaining to their organizations’ operations and advancement. This peaked my interest. If I could take this concept of earning influence and apply it to college sports public relations, I thought, I could serve the profession I had known and loved; I could help Humenik and the

CoSIDA leadership accomplish their goals. Thus, the combination of my experience in the profession and my interest in the idea of earning influence inspired this study.

## **CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This dissertation is intended to be a practical study to advise college sports public relations directors so they may earn strategic influence in their athletic departments. It is intended to inform of the variables that most often lead to strategic influence. But any scholarly study should have a theoretical basis and should be grounded in the literature. This project is no different.

### **College Sports Public Relations**

Again, as this concept of earning influence in public relations is a new line of research, there is a dearth of analysis as it relates to college sports public relations. Rather, research regarding college sports public relations may be categorized primarily into four divisions. Several researchers (Dalla Costa, 1997; James, 1976; Neupauer, 1998; Owusu, 2003) examined women in college sports public relations and the efforts of public relations offices to promote women's athletics. In the early 1990s into the turn of the century, others (McCoy, 2010; Michaels, 1993; Perreault, 2004; Stepp, 2000; Taylor, 1998; Vagnetti, 2000) began to examine the use of technology, including the Internet, in college sports public relations offices.

A good deal of research in college sports public relations also has centered on media relations. Delger, 1985; Harwick, 1981; Moore, 1994; Nichols, Moynahan, Hall, and Taylor, 2002; Orand, 1996; Tarman, 1988; and Winslow, 1993 all examined how professionals may be more effective in working with media outlets. As it relates to the current study, several authors considered the roles played by college sports public

relations directors and the respect they are afforded. Much of the research was published in master's theses and doctoral dissertations (Connors, 2000; Helitzer, 1996; Leisinger, 1991; Ottaway, 1962; Stoldt, 1998; Swalls, 2004), while a handful were found in trade periodicals and scholarly journals (Hardin & McClung, 2002; McCleneghan, 1995; Neupauer, 1997; Neupauer, 2001; Ruyhley & Fall, 2009; Stoldt, Miller, & Comfort, 2001; Stoldt & Narasimhan, 2005).

Stoldt (1998) focused on the current and desired roles played by college sports public relations directors at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) I-A institutions, but his study has not been re-examined since it was written 13 years ago and it did not examine *how* practitioners may gain a more influential role. This study will attempt to take the next step.

### **Strategic Influence**

If the goal is to determine how college sports public relations directors may gain more influence in their athletic departments, it is essential to define influence. Webster's New World Dictionary defines influence as "power to affect others" or "power to produce effects because of wealth, high position, etc." (Agnes, 2003, p. 332). Berger and Reber (2006) further noted that "every individual and group has some power and can exercise influence" (p. 4) and found that power may come from formal authority, access to decision makers, information, problem-solving expertise, experience, and/or relationships.

Berger and Reber (2006) took much of their definition of power from French and Raven (1960), who developed one of the earliest studies that determined different types of power. According to French and Raven, studying empirical work, particularly as it

related to small groups, “demonstrated the necessity of distinguishing different types of power in order to account for the different effects found in studies of social influence” (p. 607). They defined five types of power: coercive, reward, legitimate, referent, and expert.

Coercive power is the ability to force someone to do something against his or her will. It may be viewed as negative, but can also be used to keep the peace. Conversely, reward power is based on the positive valence seen as a result of positive action. In short, it is a bonus for completing a task well. The third type of power French and Raven (1960) defined is legitimate power, or power that is provided those in authority simply by their position within the organization. Police officers, managers and university presidents enjoy legitimate power because they are in high-ranking positions and by virtue of their position have the authority to reward or punish. Referent power deals with attraction between O (the person or group in authority) and P. If P respects O, believes O’s values are much the same as P’s, and is appreciative of P, then P will have the power to influence O’s actions. Of course, this influence works in reverse as well. As French and Raven stated it, “The stronger the identification of P with O, the greater the referent power of O/P” (p. 618). Finally, expert power is derived from having knowledge or skills that another requires. According to French and Raven, “The strength of expert power of O/P varies with the extent of the knowledge or perception which P attributes to O within a given area” (p. 620).

Berger and Reber (2006) determined “most practitioners equate influence with having a seat and a voice at the decision-making table” (p. 20). Or, quoting one of the respondents to their study, “Being influential means that your arguments are listened to,

your voice is sought out, and you are paid attention to. In other words, what you say has some weight and counts. You've got a voice they hear" (p. 18). In addressing this issue, Berger and Reber conducted an in-depth study to develop the concept of earning influence. They surveyed 801 PR professionals, teachers, and graduate students. They developed a list of 13 professional issues and asked those surveyed to select the two they deemed most important, or to write in their own choices. In all, 219 individuals (27.3%) responded, prioritizing the issues as: 1) Gain a seat at the decision-making table, 2) measure the value of public relations, 3) communicate with diverse publics, 4) reduce information clutter, and 5) enhance professional image. Comments from professionals such as "PR professionals are not considered part of the decision-making process" and "too many (practitioners) are still editorialists" demonstrated the frustration of some in the profession. In other words, practitioners did not believe they had the power to influence decisions in their respective organizations.

In order to overcome much of this frustration, Berger and Reber (2006) determined public relations practitioners must gain access to the dominant coalition, the powerful collection of professionals within the organization who make the majority of the decisions. Berger and Reber, though stressed that "being a member of the dominant coalition or inner circle is no guarantee of influence. Being present and being listened to are not the same" (p. 7). They added that "Membership in organizational power circles nevertheless provides some important advantages" (p. 7) because being in the inner circle of management offers a level of authority that provides position and participation power.

Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig (1995) in their Excellence Study reached a similar conclusion. CEOs and top communicators were asked to indicate "the extent to which the

dominant coalition ...supported the public relations or communication function in the organization” (p. 78). Their findings: Based on the instrument they developed, the least-excellent organizations had less than half the support score from CEOs when compared to the most-excellent organizations. Further, Dozier et al. learned that, of the organizations with excellence scores in the top 10%, 76% of their top communicators were members of the dominant coalition. The authors said, “After studying the data, we can say that top communicator membership in the dominant coalition is not necessary for communication excellence, but it sure helps” (p. 78).

L.A. Grunig (1992) proposed that the dominant coalition must be educated as to the value of public relations. Practitioners, she said, must present themselves more as managers than as technicians. She also said PR departments should be at the top of the organizational hierarchy, rather than the middle. She stressed such efforts are essential if public relations practitioners want to fully benefit the organization, as “Professionals who want to influence strategic decisions have more effect when they are part of a group than when they act as organizational entrepreneurs” (p. 491).

For this study, the focus is on strategic influence rather than technical influence. It may be assumed that public relations directors have the authority to develop publicity materials as they see fit; studies conducted by Stoldt, Miller, and Comfort (2001) and Ruihley and Fall (2009) suggested that athletic directors give their public relations professionals high marks for the technical aspects of their jobs. Based on Berger and Reber’s (2006) findings, though, it is a lack of strategic influence – the opportunity to be involved in the planning and direction of the organization – that frustrates practitioners.

As stated previously, Berger and Reber (2006) also determined through their research that constraints to influence were “organizational leaders who don’t get it and professionals who just don’t have it” (p. 2). They suggested on one hand the problem is managers don’t understand the role and value of public relations. On the other hand, they said, public relations practitioners seem to be too focused on publicity and the technical aspects of the job, they are too passive, they lack leadership and strategic management skills, and they lack experience in management. Further, some respondents voiced concerns about the organizational/reporting structure, arguing “If you’re not at the top in terms of reporting relationships, you may not get heard” (p. 35).

While their research was extensive, Berger and Reber (2006) focused on professionals in the corporate world, in not-for-profit organizations, in health care, and in education. No research was found that specifically examined college sports public relations as it relates to influence. However, if, as Grunig (1992) suggested, influence and power are tied to the roles played by practitioners, it would seem a practitioner’s professional orientation (managerial or technical) is the next variable to consider.

### **Managerial Orientation**

The College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA) explained that sports information directors are public relations specialists, event managers, media liaisons, publications/Web professionals, and administrators (College Sports Information Directors of America, 1993). Shortly after Stoldt’s interview with Humenik, CoSIDA launched a strategic initiative aimed at changing the focus and image of its members. The strategic plan went so far as to include a revised logo (see Figure 1) emphasizing the organization’s commitment to advancing the profession.





*Figure 1.* The former (left) and new logos for the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA). (Re-printed with permission of CoSIDA).

Humenik noted that “information director” implies a professional who collects statistics, writes news releases, and designs publications (Stoldt, 2008). “Strategic communicator,” on the other hand, implies a professional who uses a systematic approach to gather information and communicate a message with long-range departmental goals and objectives in mind, thus providing said professional with more credibility.

After learning that many NCAA Division I sports information directors sought more management responsibility, one of Stoldt’s (1998) recommendations for future study following his dissertation was to examine how well prepared college sports PR practitioners are to function in such managerial roles.

Broom and Smith (1979) set the standard when addressing such roles. In simplest terms, expert prescriber is an acknowledged expert in communications and PR practices; the communication facilitator is a liaison between management and publics; the problem-solving process facilitator is a consultant to management, helping management think through issues to systematically find a solution; and the technical services provider produces materials needed for publicity purposes.

Studies conducted by Dozier (1992), Dozier and Broom (1995), and Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig (1995) further examined the roles of public relations practitioners. Dozier and Broom determined that “knowledge to enact the manager role was the single most powerful correlate of excellence in public relations and communication management” (p. 4). Further, they determined that practitioners who enact the manager role participate more frequently in management decision-making, have higher salaries, and tend to be more satisfied with their jobs.

Some of the earliest work in determining public relations’ place in decision making and its opportunity for influence in organizations came from the *Excellence Study*, conducted by J.E. Grunig and colleagues (1992). They surveyed public relations practitioners in relation to their expertise in communication technician, senior advisor, and media relations roles. Whereas professional orientation looks at where directors focus their attention, expertise refers to the relative skills public relations directors bring to the various aspects of the job. Dozier et al. found that “playing advanced organizational roles as communication managers and senior advisers helps top communicators run excellent communication departments” (p. 112).

From the research conducted in college sports public relations, it would appear that, overall, professionals have not made the move from technician to management. Ottaway (1962) produced one of the earliest research studies focusing on college sports public relations professionals. He found the typical practitioners’ primary functions included writing releases and editing brochures and game programs. Almost 40 years later, Stoldt (1998) came up with a similar conclusion: Practitioners view themselves as technicians. Were these professionals content with their positions, seemingly in more

technical roles? Apparently not. Stoldt utilized the practitioner's primary roles as defined by Broom and Smith (1979) to determine if significant differences existed between current and ideal primary roles with most practitioners. He learned that practitioners, including those who served in more managerial roles, wanted to engage in management activities more frequently.

Similarly, Helitzer (2000) and Nichols, Moynahan, Hall, and Taylor (2002) listed the college sports public relations practitioner's primary responsibilities as developing publications, creating publicity, maintaining statistics, and supervising game management. Based on their findings, it would seem college sports public relations directors are still seeking that seat at the decision-making table.

In his interview with Stoldt (2008), Humenik suggested the title "sports information director" itself could be part of the problem:

In today's collegiate world, and for that matter throughout all areas of PR in our country, the title "information director" seems to primarily refer to a person who is involved mostly in keeping stats, preparing basic news releases, working on publications, setting up interviews, and managing the press box. The title "communications director," however, seems to clearly project a person who has broader, more global studies and who is viewed more in a strategic and visionary capacity ... There simply is more "value" in how others view a person who is an architect and has strategic capacity and interests (Stoldt, 2008, p. 460).

In an informal content analysis of job postings on the CoSIDA Webpage from March to October 2010, sports information director was listed nine times. It also appeared the most influential positions came with the title "assistant athletic director." Similarly, technical tasks such as recording and reporting statistics, maintaining the department Website, designing publications, and producing written materials were listed as chief responsibilities at least 18 times. Managerial assignments like ensuring compliance and regulations, serving on campus marketing committee, collaborating with

athletic marketing and promotions, and developing comprehensive communication plan were mentioned no more than three times. Thus, it would seem more work still needs to be done if college sports public relations directors are going to make the transition from technician to manager, and as a result see an increase in strategic influence.

### **Leadership**

Berger and Reber (2006) also found public relations practitioners seem to lack leadership and strategic management skill. Based on their findings, if college sports public relations directors are to assume more influential roles in college athletic departments, it is important to determine how practitioners may become more effective as leaders. Three approaches to leadership that are considered leader-centered (Northouse 2007) are trait, skills, and style.

#### **Trait Approach**

Christ (1999) noted that the trait approach to leadership focuses on qualities of effective leaders that are “variously manifest, and the techniques for the cultivation of these qualities” (p. 200). Northouse (2007) added that traits are “innate and largely fixed” (p. 39). Based on this school of thought, a leadership trait may be defined as personal qualities that distinguish one individual from another and that allow a person to lead effectively. Soucie (1994) pointed out that it is difficult to point to a specific trait that allows a leader to have influence, but through an examination of the leadership works of several scholars, Northouse said major leadership traits may be combined into five categories: intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability. These categories consider a leader’s knowledge and expertise, belief in his or her abilities, persistence, honesty, and interpersonal skills. Gilley, McMillan, and Gilley

(2009) noted that these traits – along with supervisory ability, need for achievement, decisiveness, and initiative – have been identified as significant when related to leadership and organizational change.

Taking the trait philosophy a step further is the psychodynamic approach to leadership. Whereas the trait approach assumes certain traits are characteristics that are assumed to be important to attaining leadership or performing leadership tasks, the psychodynamic approach suggests that various personality types are better suited to particular leadership positions or situations. Carl Jung (1923, 1993) assumed human behavior is predictable because people have preferences in how they work and play. He believed personality could be assessed based on four dimensions:

**Extraversion and Introversion:** Relates to how people prefer to obtain information, inspiration, and energy; where people derive their energy. Introverts look inward at their own ideas and do not need external motivation; extraverts enjoy talking and interacting, drawing their energy from those around them.

**Sensing and Intuition:** Considers how people gather information. Sensors gather facts and data by using their senses. They are precise and sequential. Intuitive people are more theoretical and conceptual; they acquire data randomly.

**Thinking and Feeling:** Focuses on how people make decisions. Thinkers are rational and desire facts, while feelers are more subjective, use personal feelings, and seek harmony.

**Judging and Perceiving:** Considers whether people are planners or if they are spontaneous. Judgers seek structure, plans, and resolution of conflicts. Perceivers, on the other hand, are more spontaneous and flexible.

Jung (1993) said how leaders combine these four dimensions may explain how they interact with subordinates. As such, he believed it is important for leaders to identify and understand their own dominant personality traits, as this may explain why they take particular actions.

Freeman (2004) studied photojournalists and personality in an effort to predict whether extroverts or introverts were more successful. Neupauer (1999) recognized the importance of personality traits as leaders examine themselves and their effectiveness. He conducted the only examination of personality traits as it pertains to college sports public relations, using four trait scale measurements to study the communicative personalities of eastern sports public relations directors. One instrument he utilized was the Assertiveness-Responsiveness Measure (ARM) (Richmond & McCroskey, 1990), which examines how aggressive or passive individuals are in making their point. Communicators are classified into four groups: noncompetent (low responsiveness, low assertiveness), aggressive (low responsiveness, high assertiveness), submissive (high responsiveness, low assertiveness) and competent (high responsiveness, high assertiveness). It has been found that aggressive and competent communicators are more constructive because, while they are more argumentative, they focus on the task at hand, and not on personal attacks (Martin & Anderson, 1996).

If, as Berger and Reber (2006) suggested, public relations practitioners lack influence because they are too passive, and if a more assertive communication approach allows practitioners to be heard more clearly, it is necessary to consider leadership personality traits, focused on Richmond and McCroskey's (1990) ARM, as a predictor of strategic influence.

### **Skills Approach**

Based on Berger and Reber's (2006) findings, if college sports public relations directors are to assume more influential roles in college athletic departments, it is also important to determine how practitioners may become more effective as leaders. Whereas

traits are often considered a part of who the leader is, skills are thought to be more attainable through education and training. Gilley et al. (2009) stressed that leaders' skills strengthen the "linkage between leader behaviors and effectiveness in implementing change" (p. 41) and that lack of change management skills has been shown to impede success. In French and Raven's (1960) definition of power, it is the fifth type of power—expert power—that coincides with the skills approach to leadership, as it assumes the more expertise a leader has in a given area, the more power he or she possesses. Consequently, the more power the leader has, the more influence.

When discussing skills in relation to journalism, broadcasting and film, and public relations and advertising, Christ (1999) made the distinction between "craft skills" and "intellectual skills." Craft skill is the ability to perform tasks related to the job, such as writing a lead for a newspaper reporter or making an oral presentation for a public speaker. Intellectual skills, meanwhile, relate to activities like designing and conducting research, analyzing data, and engaging in knowledgeable debate. Soucie (1994) and Northouse (2007) supported the three skills approach to leadership presented by Katz (1955). Katz's three skills approach to leadership included: technical leadership skills (focusing on the tasks), human leadership skills (with an emphasis on interactions with others), and conceptual leadership skills (centered on things such as goal setting and analysis of research). He pointed out that managers on a supervisory level typically have highly developed technical and human skills, but are less adept at conceptual skills. Middle managers tend to be balanced, while top management usually focused less on technical skills, as human and conceptual skills are more critical.

Professionals in athletics administration (Doherty, 2004; Kutz, 2008; McDermott, 2008; Platt Meyer, 2002; Skemp-Arlt & Toupenca, 2007; Tock, 2009) have agreed with these assessments, noting that effective leaders possess expertise in the field, honesty, and quality communication skills. In addition, they care for the needs and training of others and are visionary, with an ability to develop strategy and plan campaigns. As CoSIDA noted, college sports public relations practitioners must be highly skilled in the technical aspects of their job. They also must be effective communicators. However, if they really want to move up and become more involved in strategic management, the ability to develop plans and strategy must be present.

### **Style Approach**

The styles approach to leadership posits that the leader's behavior influences the effectiveness of subordinates (Slack, 1997). Because a focus only on traits seemed to be too limited, researchers at Ohio State University and the University of Michigan analyzed how individuals acted when they were leading groups. They determined that leaders were either relationship-oriented or task-oriented (Northouse, 2007; Slack, 1997). These orientations may be defined as transformational or transactional leadership.

Transformational leadership "is a process that changes and transforms people" (p. 175) and "creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower" (p. 176). It focuses on emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. In contrast, other leadership theories, which Burns (1978) termed "transactional," are more concerned with the bottom line and use rewards and punishments in leadership.



As it relates to athletics, Branch (1990) conducted one of the earliest empirical studies related to effective leader behavior. After surveying athletic administrators, he found effective athletic departments have leaders who are more autocratic and task oriented than relationship oriented. Branch said, “consideration was not a significant contributor to the effectiveness of the organization” (pp. 170-171).

Soucie (1994), on the other hand, following an in-depth review of leadership literature, found that developing and nurturing “interpersonal relationships with subordinates, peers, superiors, and outsiders” and “maintaining a balanced concern for the needs of the organization and those of people within the organization” (p. 9) is a much more effective means of leading in sports organizations. Further, he learned that effective sports organization leaders believe in people, delegate, and share power. After interviewing leaders who were successful in turning losing professional sports organizations into winners, Frontiera (2009) added that leaders who effectively bring about a culture change recognized focusing on the bottom line rather than people is a sure way to fail. He also found that effective leaders “expressed a genuine interest in the growth of those who worked for them” (p. 25).

To see where individual leaders placed their focus, Blake and Mouton (1964) developed The Managerial Grid. Following their initial study, Blake and Mouton (1985) released three editions of their text detailing The Managerial Grid and its components. They stressed that, though leadership is a complex process, it has several main elements that are vital to effective leadership: initiative, inquiry, advocacy, conflict resolution, decision-making, and critique. Where others used the terms “transformational” and “transactional” to describe leadership, Blake and Mouton assumed all leaders had a

central focus, simply stated either on people or on production. They focused on these assumptions, noting that, “There are several different sets of assumptions, and the assumptions a leader acts on may or may not be based on what appears to be sound” (p. 5). They went on to note, “The Grid is useful for helping leaders identify the assumptions they make as they work to get results with and through people” (p. 7). In short, college sports public relations directors who desire a more influential role would be advised to examine their dominant leadership style.

### **Organizational Size and Structure**

At Dickinson State University, a member of the NAIA, the sports information director splits his time between public relations duties and serving as the assistant track and field and cross country coach for the Blue Hawks’ nationally-ranked teams. He reports directly to the athletic director. Dickinson State sponsors 15 sports and is a school of 2,767 students.

At NCAA Division II member Truman State University, the assistant athletic director for communication and operations serves as public relations director and reports to the university’s AD. He is assisted by a half-time assistant who doubles as co-men’s golf coach. Truman supports 21 teams and enrolls 5,600 students.

Meanwhile, Colorado State University’s media relations director oversees two full-time assistants, and a graduate assistant, not to mention a handful of interns and student assistants. At this NCAA Division I institution, the media relations director reports to the associate athletic director for external affairs. Seventeen teams compete at Colorado State, a school of 26,500 students.

This is just a sample of the make-up of college athletic departments and schools. Some research leads us to believe organizational structure may be a determinant of level of influence because it provides the linkages between senior managers, mid-level managers, and staff (Slack, 1997). However, whereas most research has dealt with the structural components of sport organizations, only Cunningham and Rivera (2001) addressed organizational structure as it relates to intercollegiate athletics. Cunningham and Rivera examined the relationship between structure and effectiveness in NCAA Division I athletic departments. They first turned to the writings of Weber (1947) and his three dimensions of organizational structure—specialization, formalization, and centralization. Weber's teaching continued to be emphasized by researchers in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Cunningham & Rivera, 2001; Mintzberg, 1979; Pugh, Hickson, Hinings, & Turner, 1968; Rogers, 2003; Schminke, Ambrose, & Corpanzano, 2000; Slack, 1997). Specialization refers to how job roles are differentiated based on tasks. Formalization considers how rigidly rules, procedures, and communications are recorded and enforced and influences how people behave. Centralization refers to the level at which critical decisions are made and affects participation in decision-making.

Rogers (2003) also focused on the concepts of formalization and centralization in his work regarding the diffusion of innovations. He found that organizations that are prone to innovate (and thus have leaders who are willing to share influence) tend to be less formalized and centralized. Mintzberg (1979) presented five primary structures of organizations: simple structure, machine bureaucracy, professional bureaucracy, divisionalized form, and adhocracy. Three of these—simple, machine bureaucracy, and divisionalized form—seem to fit the typical athletic department profile.

The simple structure is characterized by little to no technical structure, few support staff members, no real middle line, a loose division of labor, a low level of formalization, and little formal planning and training. The CEO makes the decisions and coordinates activities through direct supervision. The simple structure is typically seen in small organizations (Mintzberg, 1979).

In a machine bureaucracy, there is high standardization of activity and formalized communication procedures. Functional grouping of tasks is present, as are routine operating procedures. Further, a clear delineation between line and staff relationships exists, authority is present in a centralized hierarchy, and technical and advisory support is key in decision-making (Mintzberg, 1979). Finally, Mintzberg stated that in a divisionalized form middle line management is key, as managers oversee specific divisions that are autonomous. Organizations that operate in a divisionalized form tend to be formalized and centralized.

Another important factor to consider regarding organizations is size (Cunningham & Rivera, 2001; Rogers, 2003; Slack, 1997). In organizations, size may be measured by total assets, market share, sales volume, number of clients, number of employees, number of members, and net profit. On the one hand, with increased size comes increased income, the ability to recruit and retain top managers, coaches, and personnel, and public attention (Slack, 1997). At the same time, some studies suggest size also affects structure and process within organizations. Larger organizations seem to be more formalized because of greater complexity and more need for control. Simultaneously, they appear to be less centralized so senior managers do not become overwhelmed. Still, despite the increased formalization found in larger organizations, Rogers argued that the increased

size had a positive correlation with organizational innovativeness because more opportunities for input and ideas is present.

Of course, when discussing college athletics, one factor that is expected to affect the size of the organization is competition level. Anytime a study is conducted regarding college athletics, it is helpful to consider the different dynamics between levels of competition. Hardin and McClung (2002) conducted the most recent study that painted a profile of a college sports information director and the operation in which she or he worked. They assessed staff size and considered competition level as a means to assess the size of the organization. As Branch (1990) pointed out, studies that center only on NCAA Division I institutions may be incomplete, as participants at smaller institutions may have very different insights. The National Collegiate Athletic Association is divided into Division I (split for football-playing schools into Football Bowl Subdivision, Football Championship Subdivision, and D-IAAA), D-II, and D-III. Additionally, the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics competes at the Division I and II levels.

To date, much of the scholarly research regarding sports information professionals has centered on Division I (Hardin & McClung, 2002; Ottaway, 1962; Stoldt, 1998;), though two significant articles – McCleneghan (1995) and Stoldt, Miller, & Comfort (2001) – did encompass and differentiate between all three divisions. Each division has its own mission and agenda, its own priorities, and its own challenges. Because of the varying structures of public relations offices and the diversity of responsibilities, it is reasonable to conclude that competition level could play a key role in determining the influence enjoyed by the college sports public relations director.

## **Experience**

In their study of public relations professionals, Berger and Reber (2006) noted one perceived constraint to influence is a lack of expertise in management and leadership on the part of public relations directors. Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig (1995) examined the levels of expertise practitioners demonstrated as technicians and managers. They found expertise to be derived from education and experience. Similarly, Grunig (1992) said, “To increase their access to the dominant coalition, public relations practitioners should increase their own expertise via education, experience, and professionalism” (p. 485).

Ottaway (1962) produced one of the earliest studies of college sports public relations. In her thesis, experience and training were the focus. She found that the typical practitioner at an NCAA Division I institution had served in some sports information capacity for 7.2 years and that almost “one-half of the 127 individuals attending college majored in journalism” (p. 38). Also, she learned that more than half of the respondents (52.3%) were employed in mass media professions, either for newspapers or for radio or television stations, immediately prior to entering sports information work (p. 47).

Forty years later Hardin and McClung (2002) conducted a study aimed at painting a profile of the typical D-I sports information director. They followed Ottaway’s (1962) research and learned that the average SID had almost 17 years experience in the profession, a dozen years at his or her current institution. Also, Hardin and McClung learned that, of the 86 respondents, 38% studied journalism or public relations.

While these studies tell us a bit about the experience and education of sports public relations directors, they do not tell us about the influence public relations has in the athletic department or the value placed on this field. Obviously, then, no correlation

is drawn between experience and influence. Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig (1995), however, determined that practitioners who have expertise through education and experience have the knowledge to “manage the organization’s response to issues” and to “develop goals and objectives” (p. 27). These are critical pieces in the enactment of the managerial role.

It would appear education data are available. In 2009, Street & Smith’s SportsBusiness Journal reported that 331 schools sponsored bachelor’s or master’s programs in sports business and administration. Koehler, Parks, and Kroll (1998) supported the notion that students who pursued master’s degrees may be given additional responsibilities in management, as programs are expected to offer education and training in management. Additionally, such programs train students in leadership and organizational structure, research in sport, legal and ethical aspects of sport, and financial management. Taylor, Doherty, and McGraw (2008) added that training and development tends to lead to higher job satisfaction and morale, increased motivation, improved efficiency, and a greater ability to learn new technologies and methods.

### **Sex**

McCleneghan (1995) conducted the benchmark study to develop a portrait of the college sports public relations profession. He believed it was important to learn what a college sports information director looked like, based on demographics that included sex. He learned that most SIDs were male. Hardin and McClung (2002) followed this study and also discovered women lacking in the profession. One difference between McCleneghan’s and Hardin and McClung’s studies, however, was that McCleneghan

assessed practitioners at all levels, whereas Hardin and McClung focused only on NCAA Division I.

As noted previously, much of the research in college sports public relations has centered on women in the profession (Dalla Costa, 1997; James, 1976; Neupauer, 1998; Owusu, 2003). While women are in the minority in college sports public relations, it appears they are in the majority in PR overall (Hampson, 2001). Further, Stoldt, Miller, and Comfort (2003) found that, while 44% of male respondents believed they functioned as managers, only 11% of female respondents had a similar belief.

Why is this variable important to consider? First, because the first intent of this dissertation is to paint a portrait of the modern college sports public relations director. But second, and perhaps more importantly, Dozier and Broom (1995) found a linkage between gender and managerial orientation, which they concluded ultimately leads to more influence and a higher salary and level of job satisfaction. If we are to truly find predictors of strategic influence, then, it is imperative to consider sex.

### **Conclusion**

While these concepts—managerial orientation; leadership traits, skills, and style; organizational size; experience; and sex have been applied in business and public relations, only rarely have they been considered in college athletics. Even then these concepts have not been applied simultaneously.

As a result of this literature review, these key issues emerged. Little is known about the level of strategic influence college sports public relations directors enjoy. The literature indicates that influence may be found through power, which may be coercive or reward, legitimate, referent, or expert. Further, it seems membership in the dominant



coalition is important, but not a guarantee of influence. It also appears that role orientation could be a key determinant of the level of strategic influence afforded the college sports public relations director, as could the practitioner's leadership personality traits, skills, and style. Organizational size, experience, and sex also seem to be critical predictors. What is not clear is which of these variables is the *strongest* predictor of the level of strategic influence enjoyed by public relations directors in college athletics. Nor is it clear if any combination of these variables is a stronger predictor than another. This lack of understanding warrants an examination of the college sports public relations directors' perceptions of themselves and their professional practices as they seek to make more of an impact in decision making and strategic planning in their respective university athletic departments. By examining managerial orientation, leadership, organizational size and structure, experience, and sex in relation to college sports public relations, we may gain a clearer vision of the practitioner of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. More importantly, we may discover a correlation between these variables (or combinations of these variables) and the strategic influence practitioners seek.

## **CHAPTER 3 - METHOD**

This chapter is a detailed account of the research methodology used to perform this study. The chapter includes a rationale for the research design, identification of participants and site, a discussion of instrumentation and instrument design (complete with a detailed discussion of validity and reliability), an explanation of the data collection procedure, and an explanation of data analysis.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The purpose of this research was to determine if college sports public relations directors perceive they have strategic influence, if they want it, and what variables may predict if strategic influence exists. In short, I took a positivist approach to determine what the reality is in the college sports public relations profession.

A quantitative approach, such as those of Blake and Mouton (1964), McCleneghan (1995), and Stoldt (1998) allowed me to inexpensively and rapidly analyze a large population. McCleneghan used a survey instrument to develop a snapshot of the typical college sports public relations director in the mid-1990s. Stoldt used a quantitative methodology to examine the roles played by college sports public relations practitioners. Blake and Mouton developed a quantitative method for determining a professional's predominant leadership style. These are variables I too considered. The first goal was to develop a portrait of the modern college sports public relations director, considering demographic characteristics as well as more detailed information into the professionals' perspectives as managers and leaders in college athletics. Also, I

attempted to make predictions regarding predictor variables that may affect the level of strategic influence college sports public relations directors enjoy. Thus, I used statistical analysis germane to the quantitative paradigm.

Additionally, my research questions were descriptive and associational in nature, thus supporting the choice of a quantitative approach. In this study, I sought to determine the most common role orientation of college sports PR directors and their most common leadership personality traits, skills, and style. In order to analyze the descriptive data, I used measures of central tendency—mean, median and mode. Further, based on the findings of the independent variables, I attempted to predict how much strategic influence practitioners may enjoy. To analyze this data required the use of inferential statistics, a decidedly quantitative approach.

Additionally, the research design is appropriate because respondents were able to self-administer the survey in a familiar setting, thus increasing ecological validity, Finally, a survey instrument may be used to investigate attitudes, perspectives, and beliefs (McMillan, 2008). This is what I attempted to do in my dissertation with these guiding research questions:

RQ 1: What is the portrait of the contemporary college sports public relations director?

RQ 2: How do college sports public relations directors perceive that their strategic influence has changed in recent years?

RQ 3: How well does the combination of managerial orientation, leadership personality traits, leadership skills, leadership styles, and demographic variables predict the college sports public relations director's perceived strategic influence?

### **Participants and Site**

Participants in this study were college sports public relations directors at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I (FBS, FCS, and I-AAA), II, and III

and National Intercollegiate Athletic Association (NAIA) schools in the United States who are members of the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA). No minors were included in this study, and no practitioners were excluded based on race, ethnicity, gender, or any other demographic marker.

All members of CoSIDA received the May 2011 survey, but only directors of public relations operations at member schools were considered in this study. This is because directors of operations are the professionals who make the decisions for their operations and would then be expected to be the voice of their office when addressing upper administration. In short, if the director lacks strategic influence, it may be reasonably assumed assistants, graduate assistants, interns, and student assistants do not have strategic influence with upper administration, either.

Of the roughly 2,700 surveys distributed, 356 were returned, a response rate of 13.2%. Of those who responded to the survey, 72 were assistant directors in their college athletic departments, while eight were either directors or assistants in conference offices. Because the focus of this study was on sports public relations directors at colleges and universities, the assistant directors and conference office personnel were removed from the pool. Three respondents were eliminated because of incomplete data in several parts of the survey. This left a total of 273 directors for analysis. With 1,355 directors in the population, this resulted in a response rate of 20.1%

By division, response rate broke down thus: 120 responses from 332 members (36.1%) in NCAA Division I (50 FBS, 48 FCS, 22 I-AAA), 61 responses from 289 members in Division II (21.1%), 84 responses from 444 members in Division III

(18.9%), and two responses from 290 members in NAIA (.01%). Six respondents did not identify their competition level.

As I began developing the idea for this study and visiting with members of the CoSIDA leadership, John Humenik, executive director for CoSIDA, said he and the leadership would endorse my project. Because the focus of this study aligns well with CoSIDA's strategic initiative, it was important to give every NCAA and NAIA college sports public relations director an opportunity to respond. Humenik agreed the current research was instrumental in helping the association gain a better understanding of how it may positively influence decisions and personnel in college athletic programs. Therefore, he agreed to serve as a gatekeeper for my research between the CoSIDA members and me and to e-mail my data collection pieces, making this the most far-reaching study ever conducted in college sports public relations.

### **Measures**

I utilized adapted versions of existing instruments and personally developed instruments to create a survey. I chose to develop a Web-based survey using Qualtrics Survey Software to collect data for several reasons. First, the use of a Web-based survey ensures anonymity. Morgan, Gliner, and Leech (2009) noted that, "If the data are anonymous, the participant may be more willing to share" (p. 192). Thus, this willingness to share information was expected to lead to a greater response rate and greater external validity. Further, Dillman, Smith, and Christian (2009) said one of the best ways to decrease the costs of participation is to make it convenient to respond. From my experience, college sports public relations directors are familiar with e-mail correspondence and with completing forms for conference and national awards, surveys

and the like via the Web. Because of their familiarity with this approach, the belief was they would be more apt to respond to a survey delivered in this fashion. Finally, Qualtrics is supported through the Colorado State University School of Education. Thus I had technical support available, if needed.

The survey was broken into nine sections. The first two sections considered strategic influence, with section one (questions 1-21) focused on perceived influence and section two (questions 22-26) covering influence change. Section three (questions 27-44) addressed the college sports public relations director's managerial orientation, while the next three sections addressed leadership. Section four (questions 45-64) considered leadership personality, section five (questions 65-76) addressed leadership skills, and section six (questions 77-84) examined leadership style. Organizational questions (questions 85-90) made up section seven, section eight (questions 91-95) focused on experience, and finally section nine (questions 96-100) addressed personal demographics. A detailed account of each section with a discussion of reliability and validity follows.

## **Operationalizations**

### **Strategic Influence**

First, the study examined how much strategic influence college sports public relations directors *perceive* they have and how they have seen their influence change.

Broom and Smith (1979) identified the four-role typology – expert prescriber, problem-solving facilitator, communication facilitator, or communication technician – which Broom (1982) later used to evaluate differences in males and females in public relations. Stoldt (1998) utilized this instrument to assess the roles played by NCAA

Division I sports information directors, and gave me permission to use his adaptation of Broom's roles survey.

The criterion variable for this study was perceived strategic influence.

Respondents were asked to respond to each question as to the current reality in their athletic departments, using the 1 to 8 scale. This is their *perceived* strategic influence.

This portion of the survey included questions 1 through 21 (see Appendix C). For this section I used the seven items that relate to Broom and Smith's (1979) expert prescriber role (questions 1, 4, 6, 9, 14, 16, 19). Participants were asked to respond to questions such as "I plan and recommend courses of action for solving public relations problems" using a scale of Never = 1 to Always = 8.

In this role, influence is critical. Practitioners who assume the expert prescriber role are viewed as authorities on public relations problems and solutions. They are viewed as experts in public relations research and strategy and are members of the management team. They develop the programs and take major responsibility for implementation (Broom & Dozier, 1986; Broom & Smith, 1979; Stoldt, 1998). As a result of their expertise, expert prescribers often are provided greater influence, as managers may become passive and dependent upon the "expert's advice." When Broom and Dozier (1986) applied the scale (with a Cronbach's alpha of .97), they found an alpha of .90 for the expert prescriber.

However, these seven items were related to the manager role when Broom and Smith's (1979) developed the role typology. As a result, it would be assumed that there would naturally be a high correlation between these strategic influence items and the manager role items to be utilized in this study. Therefore, so the items would not appear

to be artificially correlated, I included 14 additional items. Eight questions (questions 2, 5, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 20) specifically focused on public relations directors as advisors to the athletic director. Based on the literature (e.g. Branch, 1990; Hardin & McClung, 2002; Neupauer, 2001; Ruyhley & Fall, 2009; Stoldt, 2008) and comments from practitioners in the field (three members of the CoSIDA board of directors and two former colleagues who currently work in college sports public relations), these questions assessed how frequently PR directors are called upon to advise their athletic directors. Participants were asked to respond to questions such as “My athletic director visits with me daily about issues that may affect our athletic department,” again using the scale of Never = 1 to Always = 8.

Finally, six questions (questions 3, 7, 11, 13, 18, 21) were utilized to consider how college sports public relations directors perceive their athletic director values their role in relation to other positions in the athletic department. Again, these questions were developed based upon the literature (e.g. Branch, 1990; Hardin & McClung, 2002; Neupauer, 2001; Ruyhley & Fall, 2009; Stoldt, 2008) and comments from practitioners (including the three members of the CoSIDA board of directors and two former colleagues). Participants were asked to respond to questions such as “In a typical situation, my AD seeks our compliance officer’s advice before my advice” and “In a typical situation, my AD seeks my advice before seeking the advice of any other administrator in our athletic department,” using the scale of Never = 1 to Always = 8.

Section two (questions 22 through 24) used a three-item semantic differential (end points were diminished/expanded, better/worse, inferior/superior). It also included two



open-ended questions (questions 25 and 26) in which practitioners were asked to describe how their influence has changed and if they are pleased with their level of influence.

### **Managerial Orientation**

Section three of my survey (questions 27 through 46) addressed managerial orientation. Questions 27 through 42 adapted the roles survey items that related to managers (eight items) and technicians (eight items). Broom (1982) found a high correlation among the communication facilitator and problem-solving process facilitator roles, and thus suggested that public relations practitioners view themselves in only two roles: manager or technician. Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig (1995) noted a third role, that of media relations. Therefore it seemed looking at these three roles would give a good indication as to whether the professional orientation of college sports public relations directors is more centered on publicity and technical aspects, media relations activities, or on managerial functions.

In this section, participants were asked to respond to questions such as “I keep athletic management informed of public reactions to organizational policies, procedures and/or actions” (a managerial role question) and “I produce brochures, pamphlets, and other publications” (a technician role question) using a scale of Never = 1 to Always = 8. Using the model laid down by Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig (1995), the technician role was broken into “publicity producer” (questions 28, 31, 38, and 41) and “media relations professional” (questions 30, 34, 36, and 42), while the “manager role included questions 27, 29, 32, 33, 35, 37, 39, and 40. I sought correlations between these three roles and perceived level of influence. Additionally, I measured how much of a managerial role orientation practitioners possess. A composite score was calculated by averaging the

scores on the eight items related to the managerial role. A second composite score was calculated by averaging the scores on the eight items related to the technician role (combining the publicity producer and media relations professional questions). The technician score was then be subtracted from the managerial score to determine the managerial-technician gap; the larger the number, the greater the managerial orientation.

When Broom and Dozier (1986) advanced the public relations role research, they found alphas of .91 for the manager role and .78 for the technician role. Alpha for the manager role (.94) and technician role (.74) continued to hold true in 1991, as Dozier and Broom (1995) conducted further research on the evolution of the public relations manager role. Finally, when Stoldt (1998) applied the instrument to his research on the roles played by NCAA Division I sports information directors, he found alphas of .94 for the management role and .75 for the technician role.

## **Leadership**

**Personality.** Sections 4, 5, and 6 of my survey addressed leadership (questions 45 through 84). In section 4, I examined the leadership personality traits, considering both Assertiveness Leadership Personality Traits and Responsiveness Leadership Personality Traits of the college sports public relations directors. The Assertiveness-Responsiveness Measure (ARM) (Richmond & McCroskey, 1990) assesses how aggressively or passively professionals communicate, and McCroskey granted me permission to use this measure.

Participants were presented 20 brief statements that related to their personality, such as “helpful,” “responsive to others,” and “competitive” (questions 45 through 64). They were asked to indicate how each statement applies to them using the scale of Strongly Disagree it Applies = 1 to Strongly Agree it Applies = 8. Internal consistency

reliability estimates were .88 for assertiveness and .93 for responsiveness (Richmond & McCroskey, 1990). In addition, Richmond and McCroskey reported “scores on the two factors were not meaningfully correlated ( $r = -.027$ ) and that “previously cited work points to the predictive validity of the measure” (p. 450).

**Skills.** Next, the questions turned to leadership skills (section 5, questions 65 through 76). For this section, the Leadership Skills Inventory (LSI) presented in Northouse (2007) was utilized. Based on the research of Katz (1955), leadership skills on the LSI are grouped into technical leadership skills, human leadership skills and conceptual leadership skills. Participants responded to such statements as, “My main concern is to have a supportive communication climate” and “I enjoy working with abstract ideas” using the scale of Never True = 1 to Always True = 8. I also compared their levels of skill in each of the three areas (four questions for technical skill, four questions for human skill, and four questions for conceptual skills). In this step, the responses to the four questions for each skill were summed and averaged to determine in which skill area participants perceive they are most active. Northouse noted that surveys have been used to help people assess their leadership styles, but was quick to point out that they often “are not used in research because they have not been tested for reliability and validity” (p. 63). Therefore, I tested the LSI for content validity before implementing my survey and assessed reliability once responses were collected.

**Style.** In section 6, leadership style was the focus. For this section, Blake and Mouton’s (1964) Managerial Grid served as a model. According to the authors, “The Managerial Grid identifies five theories of managerial behavior, based on two key variables found in organizations. One variable reflects concern for production or output,

the other variable, concern for people” (p. 135). In this section, eight questions (77 through 84) were asked regarding leadership activities. Respondents were asked to respond to a Likert-type scale from Never True = 1 to Always True = 8. Questions included “When correcting mistakes, I do not worry about jeopardizing relationships” and “Nothing is more important than building a great team.” The responses to the questions related to task focus and the questions related to relationship focus were summed and averaged, accordingly, to determine where college sports public relations directors place their leadership style focus.

Similar to the scales on leadership skills, prior to the current study this measure had not been tested for reliability or validity. However, I wanted to utilize the Managerial Grid because it is designed to differentiate between task-oriented and relationship-oriented leaders. Therefore, I tested it on 60 upper-level undergraduate and graduate students in communication classes at my university. In this initial assessment,  $\alpha = .74$ , which is considered acceptable (Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner, & Barrett, 2007). Further, for the four relationship-oriented items on the instrument,  $\alpha = .72$ . For the four task-oriented items,  $\alpha$  was  $.57$ , which is just under the  $.60$  threshold considered to be marginally acceptable.

It should be noted that the actual Managerial Grid includes 18 questions (nine each for relationship and task oriented). However, in my initial assessment, alphas were substantially lower when considering all 18 items, and the four items selected for inclusion for each variable yielded the highest alphas, and the highest overall  $\alpha$  for the measure. Still, these students did not reflect my population, so I used factor analysis and Chronbach’s Alpha in my final research to measure the reliability of the instrument.

### **Demographic Predictor Variables**

Six demographic predictor variables also were considered: competition level, staff size, years in the current position, years in sports PR, education level, and sex. For competition level (section 7, question 87), respondents were asked to indicate the division (NCAA-I FBS, FCS or I-AAA; NCAA-II; NCAA-III; or NAIA) in which they work. For staff size (question 88), respondents were asked to indicate how many full-time, salaried employees are on their staff, how many graduate assistants and/or interns are employed, and how many student assistants are employed (all excluding clerical and game-day only staff). These three groups were measured individually to provide descriptive data, but were summed to provide an overall staff size count to be utilized in data analysis related to perceived strategic influence.

To answer questions about experience (section 7, questions 91 through 93), respondents were asked to answer two open-ended questions (questions 91 and 92) about how many years they have worked in their current position and how many years they have worked in college sports public relations. They also were asked to indicate their highest level of education achieved (question 93): some college, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, or doctorate. Finally, respondents were asked to indicate their sex (section 8, question 98) by indicating whether they are male or female.

### **Non-predictor Demographic Variables**

Several non-predictor demographic variables also were included in the study. The second part of section 3 (question 43) served to corroborate. Practitioners were asked to indicate what percent of their time is spent in three broad tasks—one related to management functions, one related to the technician role, and one related to media

relations – with a fourth item related to duties outside of public relations in which they may engage (compliance, coaching, teaching, etc.). In this way, I hoped to confirm the findings of section five. For example, a practitioner with a high managerial orientation score would be expected to spend more than 50% of his or her time in managerial tasks. The tasks selected for this section came from my personal experience in the field, as well as a brochure developed by CoSIDA to promote the profession (College Sports Information Directors of America, 1993).

In question 44 participants were asked to indicate the title that most closely matches their title (sports information director, assistant/associate athletic director, communications director, sports public relations director, media relations director, news bureau manager, assistant/associate director of sports information/media relations/communications, or other). This question is in relation to the literature that indicates title may be tied to managerial orientation.

Demographic variables that addressed organizational structure were in section 7. Because it was believed that the structure of the organization could have an impact on the influence, these questions considered the person to whom the survey participant reports and the number of contacts with the athletic director in a typical week (questions 85 and 86). Also, additional questions related to the size of the organization considered the number of teams the athletic department fields, and the total number of students enrolled at the institution (questions 89 and 90).

In addition to the predictor demographic variables related to experience, two additional questions were asked about the respondents' educational backgrounds. Questions 94 and 95 in section 8 considered undergraduate major, and, if applicable,

master's degree focus. The final section (section 9, questions 96 through 97 and 99 through 100) asked personal demographic questions, including participation in intercollegiate athletics, age and salary. Not only are these key questions that were intended to help me develop a portrait of the modern practitioner, but again, Broom and Dozier (1986) proposed that age and salary demographics may have an impact on the role played by public relations directors, a role that could have a direct impact on the level of influence college sports public relations directors enjoy.

### **Validity**

Questions may only be deemed appropriate for use in a specific setting with a particular audience for a specific purpose if they have proven to be valid and reliable (Morgan, Gliner, & Harmon, 2006). In research, we are concerned with four types of validity: face, content, criterion-related, and construct. For this research, face and content validity were considered. I also evaluated external and ecological validity.

#### **Face and Content Validity**

Face validity, though it lacks in statistical verification, is used to determine if the instrument appears to measure what it is intended to measure. Content validity takes this idea a step further. It looks at whether the content is well defined. One way of maximizing item appropriateness in scale development, and thus establishing content validity, is to have a panel of experts review the questions to make sure the items included fit the content to be measured. According to Morgan, Gliner, and Harmon (2006), the use of a panel of experts can help the researcher pull items not representative of the concept(s) to be measured, thus raising the level of both face and content validity.

To ensure the items on the survey utilized for this study were valid, several steps were followed. First, after developing the initial survey, the instrument was presented to two senior colleagues who offered recommendations regarding formatting and wording. Next, after making adjustments, the survey instrument was presented as a Microsoft Word document via e-mail to students in a senior-level publicity class. Students were instructed to assume they were college sports public relations directors, to read the questions for clarity, and to complete the survey, noting the time taken for completion. Because the students did not match the target population, and the intent was to measure the time necessary and the delivery mode, no further statistical analysis was completed. Additionally, the survey was presented to 15 fellow doctoral students who also examined the instrument for clarity and formatting. From these efforts, instructions were clarified, and a number of questions were reworded to eliminate potential question bias.

In a fourth step, five meetings with leadership groups from each of the four divisions and with the governing board were conducted at the 2010 College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA) convention in San Francisco. This assisted me in further refining the survey. For example, the need to address organizational structure was born from these discussions.

In a final effort to establish face and content validity, questions on sections of the instrument that I developed were shared with five experts in college sports public relations (who were not included in the final study) for a final examination of clarity and appropriateness. These individuals have many years experience in the profession and were aware of the intent of my study. They were told that, while their names and places of occupation would not be disclosed, their general information would be published.



I developed questions related to advisory influence and comparative influence that relate to strategic influence and were combined with the roles research put forth by Broom and Smith (1979). In addition, I developed the Job Function Measure (JFM) as a manipulation check for the variable “managerial orientation.” Finally, I adapted the Leadership Skills Inventory (LSI) from Northouse (2007) and the Managerial Grid (Blake & Mouton, 1985), neither of which has been tested for reliability or validity.

The comparative influence questions were initially developed by examining the literature (e.g. Branch, 1990; Hardin & McClung, 2002; Neupauer, 2001; Ruihley & Fall, 2009; Stoldt, 2008) and from comments from practitioners (including three members of the CoSIDA board of directors and two former colleagues). Likewise, the advisory influence questions were born from this review of the literature and these conversations. The JFM items were pulled from a brochure CoSIDA (1993) produced to promote the profession. However, because the brochure was published in the early 1990s, it was determined that it would go through the same process as the comparative and advisory influence questions, the LSI, and Managerial Grid to develop content validity.

To do this, five experts were asked to determine the relevance of each item to the concept being measured, based on their own judgment and experience. Two members of the College Sports Information Directors of America board of directors, a professor of sports management (and former SID), an associate athletic director of external affairs (and former SID), and a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics public relations staff served as this panel of experts. They were instructed to select a numbered response corresponding to one of the Likert-type responses: *not related*, (0); *somewhat related*, (1 or 2); *moderately related*, (3 or 4); or *very related* (5). They also

were asked to suggest other relevant components that may be missing. Items that were mentioned more than three times were to be included in the final measures, but none appeared. Interrater reliability was assured by keeping items at least three experts rated as *somewhat related* (2), *moderately related* (3 or 4), or *very related* (5). Items that did not meet this standard were to be eliminated, but again, this did not occur.

### **External and Ecological Validity**

Two other validity issues also considered here are external validity and ecological validity. External validity relates to the generalizability of the study, while ecological validity is concerned with the manner and environment in which the study is conducted. For my study both have been addressed.

Morgan, Gliner, and Leech (2009) noted that external validity should be evaluated based on both population and ecological external validity. Because all NCAA and NAIA directors who are members of the College Sports Information Directors of America had the opportunity to respond, findings should be generalizable to the entire population, thus positively influencing external validity. Again, because external validity is concerned with the generalizability of the study, the actual sample (those responding to the survey) needed to be large enough and representative enough of all NCAA and NAIA divisions to ensure population external validity. Previous research utilizing surveys to gather data from college sports public relations professionals has demonstrated this body's willingness to participate. In eight studies conducted from the mid 1960s to present, researchers have seen an average response rate of 60.2%, with a low of 35% and a high of 96%. To help ensure I experienced a similar response, Humenik volunteered to send an e-mail to all members alerting them when my study would begin and urging them to

respond in a timely fashion, as the results are expected to benefit CoSIDA members. Further, I followed the procedure outlined by Dillman et al. (2009) to encourage a sound response.

Ecological external validity was sound. Morgan, Gliner, and Leech (2009) pointed out that questionnaires may be “somewhat artificial because they are not direct measures of the participants’ actual behavior in a typical environment” (p. 127). However, the directors surveyed were able to respond in their offices during office hours, thus providing the opportunity to respond in a natural setting.

### **Reliability**

Research results are said to be reliable if they consistently present the same scores (Morgan, Gliner, & Harmon, 2006). This study focused on Cronbach’s alpha, an internal consistency reliability method (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2011). This is a single measurement instrument that is administered once to approximate reliability. The alphas for the subscales reported in the study ranged from .56 to .90.

However, because the instruments for leadership skills and leadership style had not been tested before, and because I was looking at a third role beyond manager and technician (that of media relations), I also performed confirmatory factor analyses using varimax rotation on each of these variables. A loading threshold of .40 was established, as advised in Morgan, Gliner, and Leech (2009). Items that did not load at this level were eliminated. Nine items loaded on more than one factor (three for managerial orientation, four for leadership skills, two for leadership style). However, for the items that loaded at .40 or higher on more than one factor, the factor in which the item was expected to load was chosen. For example, item No. 68, “Being able to understand others points of view

is important to me” loaded at .43 for conceptual leadership skills and at .59 for human leadership skills. Because the item was expected to predict human leadership skills, it was used to analyze this skill set. This decision was made for two reasons. First, this is exploratory research, and part of the goal has become to analyze the instruments used to assess these variables. More importantly, though, based upon my experience in the field, as well as the responses from professionals during validity testing, it was determined that these items should be used to analyze the factor predicted. After factor analysis was completed, items on each of the variables that did not reach the .40 threshold were eliminated from reliability analysis. Finally, alpha with items deleted was run. Items that brought alpha down significantly were also eliminated, thus producing the final items for analysis.

### **Strategic Influence**

Chronbach’s alpha was run on the 21 questions related to strategic influence and the three questions related to influence change. Strategic influence demonstrated reliability at .84. For the seven items related to Broom and Smith’s (1979) expert prescriber role, alpha was .88, which is consistent with the .90 alpha Broom and Dozier (1986) discovered when examining roles in public relations. For the eight questions I developed and validated related to serving as an advisor, alpha was .89.

Reliability for the three quantitative questions related to influence change was .90. Two open-ended questions related to influence change and influence satisfaction were also asked. Wanting to insure reliability in coding the qualitative responses regarding influence change and influence satisfaction, I enlisted the assistance of a colleague. After training on the codes and procedures, using three comments for each question as

examples, we independently coded the data. We had 98% agreement on the first open-ended question, “If you believe your influence has changed in the athletic department in recent years, please explain how and why.” The second question, “Are you pleased with your level of influence in your athletic department?” proved to be a little more ambiguous, but we still enjoyed 95% agreement. Percent agreement, however, is not the best way to assess reliability, as it does not account for chance agreement (Neuendorf, 2002). Therefore, Scott’s *pi* was calculated for these two questions. Both were found reliable, as  $pi=.90$  for influence change and  $.92$  for satisfaction.

### **Managerial Orientation**

For managerial orientation, Chronbach’s alpha was  $.86$ . Eight items were expected to identify the first factor related to manager. These yielded an alpha of  $.88$ . In addition, four items were to relate to the second factor related to publicity producer (alpha= $.67$ ), and four were expected to identify the third factor related to media relations professional (alpha= $.68$ )

After factor analysis was performed, one item that did not factor at the  $.40$  threshold was eliminated from the eight questions related to the manager role. After this item was dropped, alpha was recalculated at  $.87$ . One item was also dropped from the questions related to publicity producer and another item was dropped from the questions related to media relations professional. As a result, alpha increased to  $.73$  and  $.74$ , respectively (see Table 3.1). These results are similar to those reported by Broom and Dozier (1986), Dozier and Broom (1991), and Stoldt (1998).

Table 3.1

*Factor Analysis and Reliability of Managerial Orientation Data*

<b>Loading</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Accepted/Deleted</b>
<b>Factor 1: Manager</b> (alpha = .87)		
.694	Point out the need to follow a systematic PR process	Accepted
.755	Work with personnel to increase skills in solving PR problems	Accepted
.849	Outline alternative approaches to solving PR problems	Accepted
.807	Create opportunities for management to hear the views of various publics	Accepted
.700	Report public opinion survey results	Accepted
.651	Operate as a catalyst in management's decision-making	Accepted
.314	Solicit management participation when making important PR decisions	Deleted
.437*	Keep management informed of reactions to policies, procedures, and actions	Accepted
<b>Factor 2: Publicity Producer</b> (alpha = .73)		
.221	Edit materials written by others in the athletic department	Deleted
.770	Produce brochures, pamphlets, and other publications	Accepted
.697	Do photography and graphics for communication and PR materials	Accepted
.843	Handle the technical aspects of producing sports information materials	Accepted
<b>Factor 3: Media Relations Professional</b> (alpha = .74)		
.417*	Keep others in the department informed of media reports about our department	Deleted
.436	Place sports news releases	Accepted
.519	Use journalistic skills to determine what the media will consider newsworthy	Accepted
.532*	Maintain media contacts for my athletic department	Accepted

\* = Loaded at .40 or higher in two factors.

**Leadership Personality Traits**

Richmond and McCroskey's (1990) Assertiveness-Responsiveness Measure was utilized to examine leadership personality traits. Reliability for assertiveness was .88,

while reliability for responsiveness was .89, which is consistent with Richmond and McCroskey (.88 and .93 for assertiveness and responsiveness, respectively).

### **Leadership Skills**

Leadership skills were divided into technical, human or conceptual skills. Each was expected to load with four items. Four items loaded at .40 or higher for technical skills and conceptual skills. Of the four items expected to identify with human skills, three loaded at .40 or higher.

The only variable on the entire instrument that did not have a satisfactory alpha was technical leadership skills. Alpha = .56, however, it was decided to cautiously include this variable, as this is exploratory analysis. After removing the item that factored below .40 on human skills, alpha = .71. For conceptual skills, alpha = .78 (see Table 3.2).

### **Leadership Style**

Finally, for leadership style, both task-oriented and relationship oriented styles were expected to have four items. However, three items loaded at .40 or higher for task-oriented leadership, while four loaded for a relationship-oriented style. Alpha was .70 for the remaining task-oriented leadership items, .71 for the four items related to relationship-oriented leadership (see Table 3.3). These alphas were higher than found when I tested the instrument on upper-level undergraduate and graduate students in communication.

Table 3.2

*Factor Analysis and Reliability of Leadership Skills Data*

<b>Loading</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Accepted/Deleted</b>
<b>Factor 1: Technical Skills</b> (alpha = .56)		
.448*	I enjoy getting into the details of how things like the department Website work	Accepted
.805	I understand how to do the basic tasks required of me.	Accepted
.639*	I am good at fixing things and making things work.	Accepted
.644	Following directions and filling out forms comes easily for me.	Accepted
<b>Factor 2: Human Skills</b> (alpha = .71)		
.704	My main concern is to have a supportive communication climate.	Accepted
.590*	Being able to understand others points of view is important to me.	Accepted
.352	Understanding the social fabric of the organization is important.	Deleted
.801	I am concerned with how my decisions affect the lives of others.	Accepted
<b>Factor 3: Conceptual Skills</b> (alpha = .78)		
.605*	I enjoy working out strategies for my organization's growth.	Accepted
.719	I enjoy working with abstract ideas.	Accepted
.716	Creating a mission statement is rewarding work.	Accepted
.775	I am intrigued by complex organizational problems.	Accepted

\* = Loaded at .40 or higher in two factors.



Table 3.3

*Factor Analysis and Reliability of Leadership Style Data*

<b>Loading</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Accepted/Deleted</b>
<b>Factor 1: Task-Oriented Leadership</b> (alpha = .70)		
.430*	Nothing is more important than accomplishing a goal or task.	Accepted
.138	When correcting mistakes, I do not worry about jeopardizing relationships.	Deleted
.872	I manage my time so I may complete tasks on schedule.	Accepted
.897	I monitor schedules to ensure a task or project will be completed on time.	Accepted
<b>Factor 2: Relationship-Oriented Leadership</b> (alpha = .71)		
.785	I enjoy coaching people to develop their skills and knowledge.	Accepted
.746	Counseling employees to improve their performance is second nature to me.	Accepted
.717	I encourage my employees to be creative about their job.	Accepted
.522*	Nothing is more important than building a great team.	Accepted

\* = Loaded at .40 or higher in two factors.

### **Data Collection**

After approval was received from the Colorado State University Internal Review Board (IRB) with exempt status, data collection began. A three-stage, three-week process was utilized. Morton (1996) and Dillman et al. (2009) agreed that multiple-step procedures, evenly spaced, are effective in producing acceptable response rates in survey research.

The day IRB approval was granted, John Humenik, the executive director of the College Sports Information Directors of America, was notified. He then sent a letter from the CoSIDA leadership inviting all CoSIDA members to take part in the study, advising them that a link to the survey would be sent within days and encouraging them

to respond in a timely manner (see Appendix A). Dillman et al. (2009) suggested that a personalized note on a Web survey “establishes a connection between the surveyor and the respondent that is necessary to invoke social exchange” (p. 272). Heerwegh (2005) found with a sample of first-year students in Belgium that personalized invitations to take part in a survey yielded an 8-percentage point increase in response rates versus unpersonalized invitations. Thus, this procedure was followed.

The second stage of the process was an e-mail with a cover letter/consent form, sent May 12, 2011. The cover letter described the importance of the project to the profession and guaranteed the anonymity of responses. In addition, it provided a link to the survey on Qualtrics. A copy of the cover letter is in Appendix B, and the survey is in Appendix C. E-mail reminders (see Appendix D) to the survey recipients were sent at one week and two weeks after the initial survey was released, encouraging recipients who had not responded to please do so immediately.

All e-mails were generated by me and then sent to Barb Kowal, CoSIDA director of external affairs. She then notified CoSIDA’s e-mail blast provider, Constant Contact, and the e-mails were sent to the membership. Constant Contact is an online marketing company that helps small businesses and organizations reach their audiences. Internet provider (IP) addresses were not accessible to me, nor did I ever personally receive the e-mail list. This further insured the anonymity of participants. This also helped protect the mailings from being captured as spam, and because the members are accustomed to receiving e-mails from Humenik and the CoSIDA leadership, the process lent credibility to the study and thus promoted participation.

Once data collection ended, it was transferred to SPSS. Qualtrics has a feature that allows data to be loaded directly into SPSS for analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

At the conclusion of survey collection, responses were checked for missing items, multiple responses, and erroneous inputs. Of the 356 responses (again, 80 were either assistant directors in their college athletic departments or directors or assistants in conference offices, and thus were eliminated), only three respondents had to be eliminated because of incomplete responses in multiple sections of the survey. After this process was completed, SPSS 18 for Windows was utilized for statistical analysis.

One additional situation required special attention. For staff size, analysis was done in two fashions. First the mean and standard deviation were computed from the raw data. However, outliers in full-time and student assistants skewed the means dramatically. For example, one respondent stated he/she employed 90 student assistants, while another reported 44 student assistants and a third reported 30. From my experience, this is not realistic, so it was assumed an error was made in these responses. Therefore, outliers were computed and any that had one or two responses were eliminated, thus producing the final frequencies, mean scores, and standard deviations. In keeping with the custom in social science research, results were deemed statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level (on in 20 probability of being the result of chance).

Again, 15 variables (one criterion, eight predictor, and six demographic predictor variables) were considered (see Table 3.4):

Table 3.4  
*Criterion, Predictor, and Demographic Predictor Variables for Studying Strategic Influence Among College Sports Public Relations Directors*

<b><i>Criterion Variables</i></b>			
Perceived Strategic Influence	Interval	Likert-Type, eight-point scale (1 = Never, 8 = Always)	Questions 1-21
<b><i>Predictor Variables</i></b>			
Managerial Orientation	Interval	Likert-Type, eight-point scale (1 = Never, 8 = Always)	Questions 27-42
Assertiveness Leadership Personality Traits	Interval	Likert-Type, eight-point scale (1 = Strong Disagree it Applies, 8 = Strongly Agree it Applies)	Questions 46, 47, 49, 50, 53, 55, 58, 62, 63, 64
Responsiveness Leadership Personality Traits	Interval	Likert-Type, eight-point scale (1 = Strong Disagree it Applies, 8 = Strongly Agree it Applies)	Questions 45, 48, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61
Technical Leadership Skills	Interval	Likert-Type, eight-point scale (1 = Never True, 8 = Always True)	Questions 67, 73, 74, 76
Human Leadership Skills	Interval	Likert-Type, eight-point scale (1 = Never True, 8 = Always True)	Questions 65, 68, 72, 75
Conceptual Leadership Skills	Interval	Likert-Type, eight-point scale (1 = Never True, 8 = Always True)	Questions 66, 69, 70, 71
Task-Oriented Leadership Style	Interval	Likert-Type, eight-point scale (1 = Never True, 8 = Always True)	Questions 77, 79, 82, 83
Relationship-Oriented Leadership Style	Interval	Likert-Type, eight-point scale (1 = Never True, 8 = Always True)	Questions 78, 80, 81, 84
<b><i>Demographic Predictor Variables</i></b>			
Competition Level	Ordinal	NCAA-I (FBS), NCAA-I (FCS), NCAA- IAAA, NCAA-II, NCAA-III, NAIA	Question 87
Staff Size	Interval	Open-Ended	Question 88
Years in current position	Interval	Open-Ended	Question 91
Years in college sports PR	Interval	Open-Ended	Question 92
Education Level	Ordinal	Some college, Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, Doctorate	Question 93
Sex	Nominal	Male or Female	Question 98

Research question 1, “What is the portrait of the contemporary college sports public relations director?” was answered by descriptive data. As the first intent of this study was to develop a portrait of the modern college sports public relations director, measures of central tendency—mean, median, and mode—were utilized.

For determining the director's primary role, leadership personality trait, leadership skill set, and leadership style, I followed the procedure applied by Stoldt (1998), Broom and Dozier (1986), and Broom (1982). For example, when examining the professional roles, scores for each task on the survey that related to the managerial role were grouped together, scores for the tasks related to media relations pro were grouped, and scores for tasks related to publicity producer were grouped. Means scores for each role were calculated with the highest mean score indicating the practitioner's primary role. Taking this procedure and considering leadership skills, for instance, if the mean score for human skills was 5.3 and the mean scores for technical and conceptual skills were 5.1 and 4.2, respectively, human skills were considered primary.

Research question 2, "How do college sports public relations directors perceive that their strategic influence has changed in recent years?" also was answered by descriptive data. Mean scores were utilized to determine how the influence of practitioners has changed, whether it had increased or decreased, improved or diminished, become inferior or superior. In addition, qualitative analysis was utilized to code the open-ended questions related to how influence had changed and if the director was satisfied with her or his level of influence. In addition, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to compare the strategic influence mean scores of practitioners based on influence change (increase, decrease, or no change) and satisfaction with level of influence (satisfied, somewhat satisfied, dissatisfied).

Research question 3, "How well does the combination of managerial orientation, leadership personality traits, leadership skills, leadership styles, and demographic variables predict the college sports public relations director's perceived strategic

influence?” considered the impact of the independent variables – managerial orientation (manager, media relations professional, publicity producer), leadership personality traits (assertiveness and responsiveness), leadership skills (technical, human, and conceptual), leadership style (task-oriented and relationship-oriented), and demographic predictors (measures of organizational size, experience, and sex) on the dependent variable perceived strategic influence. For this question, following Leech, Barrett, and Morgan (2011), multiple regression was to utilized to consider the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables or combinations of independent variables, as I sought correlations in order to make predictions.

In addition, hierarchical regression was utilized to determine if ordered combinations of variables may be more predictive than others. According to Leech, Barrett, and Morgan (2011), one conducts a hierarchical regression to determine if the addition of new groups of variables provides a greater prediction and when the researcher “has a priori ideas about how the predictors go together to predict the dependent variable” (p. 121). I first considered the constraints Berger and Reber (2006) discussed when determining the variables to analyze. These included lack of access to decision makers, and too much passivity, too much focus on publicity and technical tasks, and too little strategic management and leadership experience.

After considering the constraints, I determined which variables to include in the hierarchical analysis. To analyze access to decision makers, I used the variables “direct report” and “number of AD contacts” as control variables. The belief was college sports public relations directors who report directly to the athletic director and/or have more contact with the athletic director in a typical week would have greater influence.

For passivity, assertiveness and responsiveness were utilized as control variables. If directors were considered too passive to have influence, it would stand to reason that a more assertive professional would have more strategic influence. Similarly, to analyze focus on publicity versus management, publicity producer, media relations, and manager means were used as the control variables; a director who identifies more with the manager role would be expected to have more strategic influence. Lastly, technical, human, and conceptual leadership skills were to be used as the control variables to analyze level of strategic management and leadership skills. As Northouse (2007) noted, leaders with high conceptual leadership skill scores are more strategic thinkers and managers. Thus, it would make sense that leaders with high conceptual leadership scores would be considered stronger strategic managers and as a result would have more influence. However, after running correlation and regression, technical leadership skills, was not statistically significant and thus was removed from the hierarchical analysis

I also looked at highest education level, believing that directors who have an advanced degree would have the training and education necessary to gain more influence. Next, I expected to look at competition level, staff size, and sex because in my conversations with the CoSIDA leadership, several directors believed these would be stronger predictors of strategic influence. Finally, I initially planned to examine years of experience at the current institution and overall experience in college sports public relations. These two variables were considered because of the preponderance of comments on the questionnaire indicating experience as a reason for increased strategic influence in their athletic departments.

However, as with technical leadership skills, competition level, staff size, and years of experience (both in the current position and in college sports PR) were not statistically significant and thus were removed from the hierarchical analysis.



## CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section includes personal demographics, job related descriptive data, and organizational demographics. Data for each of these broad areas are provided for the overall population and then are divided between the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I respondents and the non-NCAA Division I respondents (NCAA divisions II and III and National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics [NAIA]). The second section analyzes the questions regarding strategic influence (research question 2) and makes comparisons between the NCAA Division I and non-Division I groups. The third section addresses research question 3 in an attempt to make predictions of level of strategic influence based on the independent variables. A summary of results concludes the chapter.

### **RQ1: The Modern College Sports Public Relations Director**

Research question 1 asked, “What is the portrait of the contemporary college sports public relations director?” As in past research, a portrait was first produced in terms of demographic variables. This research went a step further, however, as it also sought to paint a picture of the modern public relations director based on the independent variables (managerial orientation, leadership personality traits, skills, and style).

Personal demographic information collected in the questionnaire included age and sex, education level, undergraduate major, master’s degree, and a yes-no question regarding participation in intercollegiate athletics (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

*Personal Demographics of College Sports Public Relations Directors*

	Overall		D-I		D-II, D-III, NAIA	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Age</b>	<b>(n= 267)</b>		<b>(n= 118)</b>		<b>(n= 143)</b>	
20-29	45	17	8	7	35	24
30-39	99	36	46	38	49	33
40-49	67	25	34	28	33	22
50-59	48	18	26	22	22	15
60-69	8	3	4	3	4	3
<b>Sex</b>	<b>(n=271)</b>		<b>(n=119)</b>		<b>(n=146)</b>	
Male	224	82	96	80	126	86
Female	47	17	23	19	20	14
<b>Highest Education Level</b>	<b>(n=272)</b>		<b>(n=119)</b>		<b>(n=147)</b>	
Some College	1	0.4	1	0.8	0	0
Associate's Degree	1	0.4	0	0	1	0.7
Bachelor's Degree	158	58	73	61	81	55
Master's Degree	111	41	44	37	65	44
Doctorate	1	0.4	1	0.8	0	0
<b>Undergraduate Major</b>	<b>(n=273)</b>		<b>(n=120)</b>		<b>(n=147)</b>	
Public Relations	17	6	10	8	6	4
Journalism	59	22	32	27	26	18
Communication	55	20	24	20	31	21
Broadcasting	8	3	2	2	6	4
English	13	5	7	6	6	4
Sports Comm/Admin	25	9	12	10	11	8
Other	96	35	33	28	61	42
<b>Master's Major</b>	<b>(n=257)</b>		<b>(n=110)</b>		<b>(n=141)</b>	
Communication	9	3	3	3	6	4
Business	11	4	4	3	7	5
Sports Administration	58	21	25	21	32	22
Educ. Admin/ Leadership	8	3	4	3	4	3
Other	41	15	12	19	27	18
Not Applicable	130	48	62	52	65	44
<b>Participation in Intercollegiate Athletics</b>	<b>(n=273)</b>		<b>(n=120)</b>		<b>(n=147)</b>	
Yes	76	28	26	22	48	33
No	197	72	94	78	99	67

Note: Total percentages on tables do not always add up to 100 due to rounding.

Based on the responses, the typical college sports public relations director is a male, 30 to 49 years old ( $M=40.2$ ,  $SD=10.2$ ). As might be expected, because of greater experience NCAA Division I directors reported being a bit older than their non-Division I counterparts ( $M=43$ ,  $SD=9.5$  for D-I directors vs.  $M=39$ ,  $SD=10.5$  for non-Division I). The typical PR director has a bachelor's degree, either in journalism or communication. Few have a bachelor's degree in broadcasting. One result that was a bit surprising was the large number of directors who reported "other" as their undergraduate degree. Of these, 13 had degrees in history or civics, 10 had degrees in education, seven were in sports management, six were in health and physical education, and five were in some combination of communication majors. The remaining 55 directors had a wide variety of degrees, from accounting to youth counseling, from forestry to theatre.

If the modern college sports public relations director does have a master's degree, it is most likely in athletic administration. Interestingly, only nine (3%) of the respondents earned a master's degree in communication while eight (3%) were in educational administration and leadership. This may signify the realization that more management training than technical training is necessary if directors wish to advance in the profession. It could not be determined whether respondents earned the advanced degree before or after beginning work in the educational setting (a possible explanation of the high percentage of degrees in education).

The typical modern college sports public relations director did not play a sport in college. If the director did compete, it was likely in baseball, basketball, track & field/cross country, or soccer.

Additionally, personal demographics related to the job were collected. These included title, salary, and experience (years in current position and in college sports public relations). Table 4.2 focuses on this data.

Table 4.2

*College Sports Public Relations Directors Job-Related Demographics*

	Overall		D-I		D-II, D-III, NAIA	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Title</b>	<b>(n= 273)</b>		<b>(n= 118)</b>		<b>(n= 147)</b>	
Sports Info. Director	124	45	23	19	98	67
Assistant/Associate AD	80	29	57	48	22	15
Communications Director	20	7	11	9	8	5
Sports PR Director	3	1	2	2	1	0.7
Media Relations Director	22	8	17	14	5	3
Other	24	9	10	8	13	0
<b>Salary</b>	<b>(n=273)</b>		<b>(n=120)</b>		<b>(n=146)</b>	
Less than \$25,000	4	2	2	2	1	0.7
\$25,000-\$35,000	32	12	4	3	27	18
\$35,001-\$45,000	73	27	17	14	56	38
\$45,001-\$55,000	61	22	25	21	35	24
\$55,001-\$65,000	51	19	29	24	19	13
\$65,001-\$75,000	21	8	15	13	6	4
\$75,001-\$85,000	18	7	15	13	3	2
More than \$85,000	13	5	13	11	0	0
<b>Years in Current Position</b>	<b>(n=272)</b>		<b>(n=120)</b>		<b>(n=146)</b>	
1-10	180	66	79	66	95	65
11-20	56	21	22	18	34	23
21-30	27	10	17	14	10	7
31-40	9	3	2	2	7	5
<b>Years in College Sports Public Relations</b>	<b>(n=272)</b>		<b>(n=120)</b>		<b>(n=146)</b>	
1-10	101	37	27	23	68	46
11-20	91	33	43	36	48	33
21-30	61	22	38	32	23	16
31-40	19	7	12	10	7	5

Note: Total percentages on tables do not always add up to 100 due to rounding.

The typical college sports public relations director is identified by the traditional title of “sports information director,” or SID. A much larger percentage of NCAA Division I directors reported bearing the title of assistant or associate athletic director – presumably a more distinguished title, as it suggests a closer relationship with the athletic director and thus more inclusion in the dominant coalition – than non-Division I directors (48% to 15%). Further, D-II, D-III and NAIA directors are deemed sports information director over any other title by an almost two-to-one margin.

The largest number of respondents said they make between \$35,001 and \$45,000, but the average modern college sports public relations director falls in the \$45,001 to \$55,000 per year category. Only four directors reported making less than \$25,000. More than a third of D-I directors make more than \$65,000, while only nine of the non-Division I directors make as much. The modern college sports public relation director has just over 15 years experience in the profession, a little over nine years in the current position. On average, D-I directors have been in their current positions only slightly longer than their non-Division I counterparts, but have been in the profession more than five years longer.

Finally, participants were asked to provide information related to departments in which they work, specifically to whom they directly report, how many direct contacts they have with the athletic director per week, and the number of employees they supervise (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

*Departmental Demographics*

	Overall		D-I		D-II, D-III, NAIA	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Direct Report</b>	<b>(n= 273)</b>		<b>(n= 120)</b>		<b>(n= 147)</b>	
Athletic Director	158	58	54	45	101	69
Assistant/Associate AD	78	29	56	47	21	14
Marketing Director	4	2	0	0	3	2
University PR Director	19	7	3	3	15	10
Other	14	5	7	6	7	5
<b>Contacts with AD/Week</b>	<b>(n=273)</b>		<b>(n=119)</b>		<b>(n=147)</b>	
Never	31	11	14	12	15	10
Once a Week	106	39	48	40	55	37
2 times a week	55	20	25	21	30	20
3 times a week	28	10	10	8	18	12
4 times a week	11	4	7	6	4	3
5 times a week	6	2	4	3	2	1
Once a day	24	9	6	5	17	12
Two or more times a day	12	4	6	5	6	4
<b>Full-Time Assistants</b>	<b>(n=268)</b>		<b>(n=119)</b>		<b>(n=147)</b>	
Zero	125	46	21	18	99	67
1-3	109	40	62	52	47	32
4-6	24	9	24	20	0	0
More than 6	10	4	8	7	1	0.7
<b>GAs/Interns</b>	<b>(n=272)</b>		<b>(n=120)</b>		<b>(n=146)</b>	
Zero	117	43	30	25	83	57
1-3	143	52	81	68	61	42
4-6	11	4	8	7	2	1
More than 6	1	0.4	1	0.8	0	0
<b>Student Assistants</b>	<b>(n=267)</b>		<b>(n=110)</b>		<b>(n=143)</b>	
Zero	62	23	25	21	36	25
1-3	93	34	41	34	49	33
4-6	67	25	27	23	39	27
More than 6	45	17	25	21	19	13
<b>Total Staff</b>	<b>(n=273)</b>		<b>(n=120)</b>		<b>(n=147)</b>	
Zero	26	10	9	8	17	12
1-3	73	27	21	18	52	35
4-6	75	28	27	23	47	32
7-9	42	15	22	18	19	13
10-12	21	8	15	13	6	4
More than 12	36	13	26	22	6	4

Note: Total percentages on tables do not always add up to 100 due to rounding.

The majority of respondents said they report directly to the athletic director (158, 58%) while only four (2%) respondents said they answer to the marketing director. Despite the large majority of college sports public relations directors who reported answering directly to the athletic director, most still only have intermittent contact with the AD, as the largest group (107, 39%) claimed they visit with the AD about athletic department matters just once a week. Thirty-one respondents (11%) reported never having direct contact with the athletic director regarding athletic department matters.

The mode for each type of staff member (full-time, graduate assistants/interns, student assistants) was zero. However, only 26 of the 273 respondents reported having no assistants whatsoever. The majority of respondents (145, 53%) said they have one to three graduate assistants and/or interns on staff, though 116 (42%) said they have no GAs or interns. Similarly, the largest number of respondents said they have one to three student assistants (93, 34%), while 70 (26%) reported having four to six.

More than half of the NCAA Division I directors reported one to three full-time assistants, and two-thirds have one to three graduate assistants. Conversely, two-thirds of the non-Division I directors said they have no full-time assistants and less than half said they have 1-3 GAs.

Two other questions were asked related to the number of sports sponsored and the number of students enrolled at the respondents' schools. Of the 272 college sports public relations directors who responded to the question regarding number of intercollegiate teams, 173 (64%) said they have 16 to 24, while 83 (31%) reported having fewer than 16. Also, 271 respondents answered the question about number of students enrolled with the vast majority (153, 56%) reporting they have from 1,000 to 9,999. The next largest

group reported an enrollment of 10,000 to 19,999, with 48 respondents (18%) reporting in this category.

Another goal of this research was to determine the primary professional role, leadership personality trait, leadership skill set, and leadership style of the modern college sports public relations director. (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4

*Frequencies of Independent Variables*

	Overall		D-I		D-II, D-III, NAIA	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Managerial Orientation</b>	<b>(n= 273)</b>		<b>(n= 120)</b>		<b>(n= 147)</b>	
Manager	9	3	8	7	1	1
Publicity Producer	55	20	26	22	27	18
Media Relations Pro	143	52	61	51	79	54
Other	66	24	25	21	40	27
<b>Leadership Personality</b>	<b>(n=273)</b>		<b>(n=120)</b>		<b>(n=147)</b>	
Assertive	77	28	45	38	29	20
Responsive	186	68	70	58	113	77
Other	10	4	5	4	5	3
<b>Leadership Skills</b>	<b>(n=273)</b>		<b>(n=120)</b>		<b>(n=147)</b>	
Technical Skills	157	58	67	56	85	58
Human Skills	85	31	43	36	41	28
Conceptual Skills	7	3	3	3	4	3
Other	24	9	7	6	17	12
<b>Leadership Style</b>	<b>(n=273)</b>		<b>(n=120)</b>		<b>(n=147)</b>	
Task-Oriented	157	58	63	53	91	62
Relationship-Oriented	99	36	49	41	47	32
Other	17	6	8	7	9	6

Note: 1. Other indicates a director who has identical scores on two or more variables (ex. a mean score of 6.50 on both publicity producer and media relations pro).

Note: 2. Total percentages on tables do not always add up to 100 due to rounding.

Based on these findings, the modern college sports public relations director identifies most closely with the media relations role (versus the publicity material producer or manager). The PR director has a responsive (rather than assertive) personality, is more developed in technical leadership skills than in human/interpersonal



or conceptual skills, and possesses a task-oriented leadership style, as opposed to a relationship-oriented style. Table 4.5 presents the means and standard deviations for each of these variables.

Table 4.5

*Means and Standard Deviations for Managerial Orientation, Leadership Personality Traits, Leadership Skills, and Leadership Style (on a scale of 1 to 8)*

	Overall		D-I		D-II, D-III, NAIA	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>Managerial Orientation</b>	<b>(n= 273)</b>		<b>(n= 120)</b>		<b>(n= 147)</b>	
Manager	4.52	1.43	4.90	1.26	4.20	1.50
Publicity Producer	6.56	1.54	6.28	1.75	6.76	1.33
Media Relations Pro	7.19	1.16	6.97	1.28	7.35	1.05
<b>Leadership Personality</b>	<b>(n=273)</b>		<b>(n=120)</b>		<b>(n=147)</b>	
Assertive	5.66	1.07	5.84	1.03	5.51	1.08
Responsive	6.31	0.95	6.25	0.90	6.40	0.98
<b>Leadership Skills</b>	<b>(n=273)</b>		<b>(n=120)</b>		<b>(n=147)</b>	
Technical Skills	6.36	1.31	6.19	1.42	6.47	1.23
Human Skills	6.03	1.09	5.98	1.02	6.10	1.15
Conceptual Skills	4.96	1.35	4.98	1.31	4.94	1.39
<b>Leadership Style</b>	<b>(n=273)</b>		<b>(n=120)</b>		<b>(n=147)</b>	
Task-Oriented	6.03	1.27	6.05	1.21	6.03	1.29
Relationship-Oriented	5.86	1.08	6.04	1.04	5.73	1.09

While there is consistency between directors in Division I and non-Division I schools, the data suggest D-I directors perform more frequently in managerial activities than do their counterparts at non-Division I institutions, as  $M=4.90$  for D-I directors, compared to  $M=4.20$  for the non-Division I directors. Division I directors also reported being more assertive ( $M=5.84$  to  $5.51$ ), they demonstrated slightly more conceptual skills ( $M=4.98$  to  $4.94$ ), and they are much more relationship oriented ( $M=6.04$  to  $5.73$ ) than non-Division I directors.

Another interesting finding was that, while the frequencies indicated that college sports public relations directors see themselves first as media relations directors (then as publicity producers and finally as managers), their responses to the question regarding percent of time spent in four broad functions (media relations, publicity producer, manager, and other) bore a different response. In this case, the directors viewed themselves as publicity producers first (an average of 48.4% of their time spent in this capacity). Next they viewed themselves as managers (21.8% of their time), then as media relations professionals (19.4% of their time). The final 10.4% of their time, on average, is spent in other duties, such as teaching, coaching or compliance.

Additionally, the modern college sports public relations director reported perceiving a moderate level of influence in the athletic department (see Table 4.6). Based on the 21 questions related to strategic influence, overall most respondents ( $n=176$ , 65% of respondents) reported they have a moderate level of influence (with mean scores in the 4 to 5.99 range). Seventy-two respondents (26%) believed they have little influence (mean scores of 1 to 3.99), while only 25 (9%) perceived they have a high level of influence (mean scores of 6 to 8).

Table 4.6

*Means, Standard Deviations and Frequencies for Groups Based Upon Influence Level*

Influence Level	Overall ( $n=273$ )		D-I ( $n=120$ )		D-II, D-III, NAIA ( $n=147$ )	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Low (1-3)	72	26	30	25	40	27
Medium (4-5)	176	65	75	63	98	67
High (6-8)	25	9	15	13	9	6

This data indicate Division I directors perceive they have higher levels of influence, though the difference is minimal (75% of D-I directors believe they have at least moderate levels of influence, compared to 72% of non-Division I directors).

**RQ2: Strategic Influence and College Sports Public Relations**

Related to strategic influence, one section of the survey considered how the sports public relations director compares to other administrators in the athletic department.

Using a scale of 1= Never to 8 = Always, respondents were asked six questions such as, “In a typical situation, my AD seeks our compliance officer’s advice before my advice.”

The phrase “in a typical situation” meant a situation not specific to any one area as it would stand to reason, for example, that the facilities manager would have more influence regarding questions related to building maintenance and scheduling. Based on the mean scores from these six questions, the respondents said they are second only to the compliance officer in terms of influence. In order, the remaining four positions based on level of influence (most to least) were business operations, development and fund raising, marketing, and facilities (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7

*Ranking, Means, and Standard Deviations of College Sports Public Relations Directors’ Perceptions of Comparative Influence of Athletic Department Administrators (N=261)*

<b>Position</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Compliance Officer	4.60	2.20
College Sports Public Relations Director	3.74	1.99
Business Operations Director	3.57	2.23
Development and Fund Raising Director	3.30	2.23
Marketing Director	3.00	2.18
Facilities Manager	2.92	2.04

Perhaps of more value, however is how respondents perceive their level of influence has changed and their satisfaction with their current level of influence. Three quantitative questions were presented to measure influence change in recent years, as respondents were asked to report whether their influence had diminished or expanded, if it was better or worse, if it was inferior or superior ( $\alpha=.90$ )<sup>1</sup>. For the 273 respondents who completed this section of the survey, the average mean score for the three items was 5.47 (SD=1.59), indicating they believe their influence is on the rise. A qualitative question was also asked regarding this issue, and it bore similar results. One hundred ninety eight respondents answered the open-ended statement, “If you believe your influence has changed in the athletic department in recent years, please explain how and why.” Judging from the results after coding the data and looking for themes, overwhelmingly most perceive their influence has increased in recent years; 148 reported an increase in influence, while only 15 reported a decrease (34 did not distinguish). A manipulation check was conducted using an ANOVA to compare the three influence change groups (increased influence, decreased influence, and no change) and their scores on the three quantitative influence change questions. This check may be seen in Appendix E.

Interestingly, those who proclaimed on the qualitative question that their influence has increased pointed predominantly to their own efforts. Of the 197 responses, 57 (29%) wrote that their experience and the opportunity to demonstrate their skills led to more influence. Common responses included statements such as, “It has gotten better as I have become a more experienced professional” and “As I have proven

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<sup>1</sup> The question asking if influence was “better or worse” was asked in this fashion to make sure respondents were paying attention. It was reverse coded for final analysis.

my ability to influence perceptions about our athletic department among our fans, etc., my opinions have been sought more often.”

Another factor the respondents pointed to that led to more influence was technology, as 15 noted social media, the Internet, and the director’s knowledge of such tools had become invaluable. One respondent said, “With the increased venues for communication (Web, social media for example), the need to include me in decisions and discussions has become more imperative.” Eighteen reported that changes in athletic director or upper administration – often leaving the PR director as the professional with the most seniority – or changes in the structure of the department have led to an increase in influence. Another 16 reported they had earned promotions or were serving in new roles. Persistence also was recognized as a factor; one respondent said, “I’ve earned my stripes. The SID position here used to have a lot of turnover, but I’ve been here 10 years and have earned my AD’s respect.”

On the other hand, the respondents who noted a decrease in influence frequently blamed administration. Often those who reported their influence has decreased stated it is because administration does not value public relations. One director said, “While the role of PR has increased, I still don’t believe that the administration understands its importance.” This perception was followed closely by what some directors called micromanaging athletic directors who make all the decisions themselves. One respondent said, “The AD (actually the last three ADs) believe they know my job better than I do, and so do our chancellors—who are very involved in athletics,” while another reported that “We hired a new athletic director, and he likes to make all the decisions himself. He only asks opinions from those who he feels will agree with him all the time.”

What makes this an interesting point is that a handful of respondents who believe their influence *has* increased also noted it was because administration (often new administration) recognizes the importance of public relations to the organization; one reported, “(The) new athletic director values the role of sports information.”

Similarly, while many pointed to new technology as a factor that improved their influence, others noted the increased need to keep up with publicity and the technical aspects of the job has reduced their ability to provide input. Comments to this effect included, “Been too busy with other projects (Web, media guide, etc.) to be as involved as I once was” and “Being a one-person shop for 17 varsity sports has been overwhelming and I’m not involved with anything outside of sports information.”

This research needed to go a step further than simply analyzing whether college sports public relations directors believe their influence has changed. It also needed to consider how it had changed in relation to its present state. In other words, it needed to look at how much strategic influence directors perceive they have and whether they’ve seen it increase, decrease, or remain the same. Thus, in order to examine the differences between the influence change groups (increased, decreased, no change) on perceived level of strategic influence, another one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed with strategic influence serving as the dependent variable.

A statistically significant difference was found among the three levels of change on perceived level of influence,  $F(2, 194) = 22.48, p < .01$ . Table 4.8a shows that the mean perceived level of influence score was 4.94 (on a scale of one-to-eight) for those who perceived increased influence, 3.89 for those with decreased influence, and 3.90 for those who have seen no change in their level of influence.

Table 4.8a

*Means and Standard Deviations Comparing Three Influence Change Groups on Perceived level of Strategic Influence*

Influence Change	Perceived Level of Strategic Influence Score		
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Increased Influence	148	4.94	0.97
Decreased Influence	15	3.89	0.79
No Change	34	3.90	0.88
Total	197	4.69	1.04

What these results indicated is that those directors who perceive they have more influence believe their influence has risen to that level, while those directors who believe they have less strategic influence perceive what influence they do have is decreasing.

Post hoc Tukey HSD tests indicated that the increased influence group and the decreased influence group differ significantly in their perceived level of strategic influence ( $p < .01$ ,  $d = 1.11$ ). Likewise, there was a significant mean difference on perceived level of influence score between the increased influence and no change groups ( $p < .01$ ,  $d = 1.09$ ). Both effect sizes are much larger than typical, demonstrating a clear difference between the perceived level of influence felt by those directors who believe their influence has increased in recent years and those who believe their influence has decreased. There was not a significant difference between the decreased change and no change groups (see Table 4.8b).

Table 4.8b

*One-Way Analysis of Variance Summary Table Comparing Influence Change Groups on Perceived Level of Influence Score*

Source	<i>df</i>	SS	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Influence Change					
Between groups	2	40.16	20.08	22.48	<.001
Within groups	194	173.31	0.89		
Total	196	213.47			

Perhaps of more importance to the members of the college sports public relations profession is the matter of satisfaction. In all, 227 respondents answered the question, “Are you pleased with your level of influence in your athletic department? Please explain.” One hundred forty seven respondents indicated they were at least somewhat satisfied with their level of influence (92 satisfied, 55 somewhat satisfied), while 80 were dissatisfied. Those satisfied frequently said it is because their opinions are sought and heard. Some sample responses included:

- “Yes, coaches and administrative staff ask opinions on several matters, knowing they will get an unbiased answer.”
- “In a small college department, I feel like I can express my opinions, and that they are considered when making departmental decisions.”
- “I am listened to and can voice my opinion without fear.”

Conversely, those dissatisfied said they do not believe they are heard. Another reason for dissatisfaction was the lack of an assistant or associate athletic director title:

- Still don’t have an AD title; just an SID title.
- We (SIDs) are at EVERY home event and don’t get asked our opinions on game environment, atmosphere, rating officials ... anything!
- The department still considers PR as an add-on, rather than an integral part of what it does.



- It continues to decrease. We hired a GA (graduate assistant) for marketing and our AD seeks his advice daily and does not consult me on issues.

In order to examine the differences between groups based on satisfaction with influence and influence change score, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed with influence change score again serving as the dependent variable. And again, a statistically significant difference was found among the three levels of satisfaction (satisfied, somewhat satisfied, and dissatisfied) on influence change,  $F(2, 224) = 36.26, p < .01$ . Table 4.9a shows that the mean influence change score was 6.49 (on a scale of one-to-eight) for those who report being satisfied with their level of influence, 5.25 for those who are somewhat satisfied, and 4.70 for those who are dissatisfied.

Table 4.9a

*Means and Standard Deviations Comparing Three Influence Satisfaction Groups*

Influence Satisfaction	Influence Change Score		
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Satisfied	92	6.49	1.01
Somewhat Satisfied	55	5.25	1.74
Dissatisfied	80	4.70	1.54
Total	227	5.65	1.67

This demonstrates that the directors who responded to being satisfied with their level of influence believe that they have more than they once did, while those who are somewhat satisfied or dissatisfied perceive their level of influence is either diminishing or is remaining relatively stagnant.

Once more, post hoc Tukey HSD tests were run, and they indicated, as with influence change, significant differences exist between all groups (see Table 4.9b). The

satisfied group differed significantly from the somewhat satisfied group ( $p < .01$ ,  $d = .43$ ). Likewise, there were also significant mean differences on influence change score between the satisfied and dissatisfied groups ( $p < .01$ ,  $d = .60$ ) and between the somewhat satisfied and dissatisfied groups ( $p < .01$ ,  $d = 1.12$ ). This is a much larger than typical effect size for somewhat satisfied and dissatisfied, a large effect size for satisfied and dissatisfied, and a medium effect size for satisfied and somewhat satisfied.

Table 4.9b

*One-Way Analysis of Variance Summary Table Comparing Influence Satisfaction Groups on Perceived Level of Influence Score*

Source	<i>df</i>	SS	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Influence Satisfaction					
Between groups	2	144.08	72.04	36.26	<.001
Within groups	224	445.04	1.99		
Total	226	589.12			

Another comparison was used to analyze the differences between groups based on satisfaction with influence and perceived level of strategic influence, again using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Level of strategic influence was the dependent variable for this analysis. Once more, a statistically significant difference was found among the three levels of satisfaction (satisfied, somewhat satisfied, and dissatisfied) on perceived level of strategic influence,  $F(2, 224) = 20.71$ ,  $p < .01$ . Table 4.10a shows that the mean strategic influence score is 5.17 (on a scale of one-to-eight) for those who report being satisfied with their level of influence, 4.44 for those who are somewhat satisfied, and 4.24 for those who are dissatisfied.

Table 4.10a

*Means and Standard Deviations Comparing Three Influence Satisfaction Groups on Perceived Level of Strategic Influence*

Influence Satisfaction	Perceived Level of Strategic Influence Score		
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Satisfied	92	5.17	1.00
Somewhat Satisfied	55	4.44	0.88
Dissatisfied	80	4.24	1.05
Total	227	4.67	1.07

This should be obvious; those directors who have more influence are more satisfied with their level of influence, while those directors who are dissatisfied with their level of influence perceive they have less. This finding supports CoSIDA's notion that, yes, college sports public relations directors want to have more of a say in their respective athletic departments.

Post hoc Tukey HSD tests were run, and they indicated significant differences between directors who are satisfied and those who are somewhat satisfied ( $p < .01$ ,  $d = .71$ ) and between directors who are satisfied and directors who are dissatisfied ( $p < .01$ ,  $d = .91$ ). This is a larger than typical effect size for satisfied and somewhat satisfied, a much larger than typical effect size for satisfied and dissatisfied. There was no significant difference between directors who claimed to be somewhat satisfied and those who reported being dissatisfied (see Table 4.10b).

Table 4.10b

*One-Way Analysis of Variance Summary Table Comparing Influence Satisfaction Groups on Perceived Level of Influence Score*

Source	<i>df</i>	SS	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Influence Satisfaction					
Between groups	2	40.56	20.28	20.71	<.001
Within groups	224	219.33	1.00		
Total	226	259.89			

These responses indicated that, while most college sports public relations directors perceive that their influence is on the rise and that most are satisfied with their level of influence, there is still much work to be done. Further, it is interesting that the responding directors perceive that their influence has risen, but that it is still, on average, in the low to moderate range. It also is clear that many college sports public relations directors do, in fact, desire more influence in their athletic departments, as influence is related to satisfaction.

### **RQ 3: Making Predictions**

The primary reason for conducting this research was to determine if the independent variables may predict how much strategic influence a college sports public relations director enjoys. The analysis sought to understand the relationship between strategic influence and the independent variables. In order to do this, multiple regression and hierarchical regression were utilized, following the processes outlined in Leech, Barrett, and Morgan (2011).

## Correlation and Regression

The analysis began after assumptions of linearity, normally distributed errors, and uncorrelated errors were met. The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations are printed in Table 4.11.

This combination of variables significantly predicted strategic influence,  $F(16, 246) = 12.33, p < .001$ . Staff size, sex, media relations professional, manager, assertiveness leadership traits, responsiveness leadership traits, human leadership skills, conceptual leadership skills, task-oriented leadership style, and relationship-oriented leadership style all significantly contributed to the prediction. Interestingly, neither job tenure in the current position nor in college sports public relations, appeared to be a significant predictor of influence, which is contrary to what was found through the open-ended questions. The adjusted  $R$  squared value was .41. This indicates that 41% of the variance in strategic influence was explained by the model, a large effect.

Examining the intercorrelations for strategic influence and the predictor variables indicated that for managerial orientation, a high manager mean was a stronger predictor of influence than high mean scores for media relations professional or publicity producer. Where manager mean tells us how frequently the college sports public relations director performs as a manager, it does not tell us how much the director performs as a manager in relation to serving in the more technical roles related to publicity producer and media relations professional. Thus, to consider further how acting in the managerial role may predict strategic influence, a gap score was calculated. For this step, the responses for publicity producer and media relations professional were summed and averaged to compute a technician mean. This mean was then subtracted from the manager mean to

compute a managerial gap score. Correlation and regression was then run and was significant ( $p < .05$ ), thus further supporting the notion that the more one performs in a managerial role, the more likely he or she is to have strategic influence.

In terms of leadership personality traits assertiveness was more of a predictor than responsiveness. In addition, directors who demonstrate higher conceptual leadership skills indicated having more influence than those higher in human or technical leadership skills. Finally, leaders with high relationship-oriented means perceive they have more strategic influence than do leaders with high task-oriented scores.

This data indicated that, by far, the strongest predictor of strategic influence is serving in the manager role, meaning the more of a managerial orientation the director takes the more likely he or she is to have strategic influence. Being male and serving as a publicity producer also significantly contributed to this prediction. Given the negative beta for publicity producer ( $-.39, p < .01$ ), the more a practitioner serves in the publicity producer role, the less likely he or she is to have strategic influence. Table 4.12 presents the beta weights of the independent variables.

Table 4.11

*Means, standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Strategic Influence and Predictor Variables (N = 273)*

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Strategic Influence	4.63	1.05	-.93	.16**	.03	.06	-.06	-.13*	-.05	.22**	.63**	.27**	.19**	.09	.28**	.31**	.19**	.27**
Predictor Variable																		
1. Competition Level	3.33	1.54	--	-.36**	-.04	-.31**	.08	-.09	.21**	.21**	-.25**	-.20**	.07	.17**	.03	-.04	-.02	-.18**
2. Staff Size	5.97	5.17		--	-.02	.15**	.01	.04	-.18**	-.07	.20**	.19**	-.04	-.13*	.08	.14*	.08	.26**
3. Years in Current Position	9.46	8.78			--	.79*	-.10	-.10	-.11	.01	.06	.10	.11*	-.12*	-.01	-.07	.03	.01
4. Years in College Sports PR	15.48	9.31				--	-.07	-.07	-.24**	-.11*	.14*	.12*	.02	-.22**	-.02	-.06	-.03	.03
5. Education Level	3.41	0.53					--	.12*	.12*	.00	-.08	-.04	.01	.11*	-.02	.00	.09	.06
6. Sex	1.16	0.37						--	.05	-.16**	-.02	.14*	.08	.09	.05	.09	.14*	.13*
7. Publicity Producer	6.56	1.52							--	.48	.09	.08	.14*	.95**	.13*	.10	.14*	.02
8. Media Relations Professional	7.19	1.11								--	.23**	.14**	.26**	.51**	.27**	.08	.12*	.10
9. Manager	4.51	1.42									--	.46**	.28**	.20**	.43**	.54**	.26**	.44**
10. Assertiveness Leadership Traits	5.66	1.07										--	.19**	.12*	.32**	.44**	.39**	.46**
11. Responsiveness Leadership Traits	6.33	0.94											--	.18**	.50**	.26**	.21**	.31**
12. Technical Leadership Skills	6.36	1.29												--	.19**	.14**	.17**	.06
13. Human Leadership Skills	6.05	1.09													--	.67**	.33**	.51**
14. Conceptual Leadership Skills	4.96	1.36														--	.25**	.55**
15. Task-Oriented Leadership Style	6.05	1.25															--	.46**
16. Relationship-Oriented Leadership Style	5.87	1.08																--

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 4.12

*Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Strategic Influence (N = 273)*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	<i>Beta</i>
Division	.04	.04	.06
Staff Size	.01	.01	.04
Years in Current Position	.00	.01	.02
Years in College Sports Public Relations	-.01	.01	-.07
Education Level	.02	.10	.01
Sex	-.33	.15	-.11*
Publicity Producer	-.27	.11	-.39*
Media Relations	.09	.06	.09
Manager	.45	.05	.61**
Assertiveness	.00	.06	.00
Responsiveness	.02	.07	.01
Technical Leadership Skills	.22	.14	.27
Human Leadership Skills	-.01	.07	-.01
Conceptual Leadership Skills	-.03	.06	-.04
Task-Oriented Leadership Style	.03	.05	.04
Relationship-Oriented Leadership Style	.01	.07	.01
Constant	2.39	.61	

Note:  $R^2 = .41$ ;  $F(16,246) = 12.33$ ,  $p < .001$

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

### **Hierarchical Regression**

After completing the correlation and regression, hierarchical regression was analyzed. The assumptions of linearity, normally distributed errors, and uncorrelated errors were checked and met. A seven-step process was followed. First, sex and education level were used as control variables. In step two, direct report and number of athletic director contacts were included. These were not initially predictor variables, but because of what Berger and Reber (2006) found regarding access to management and dominant coalition as a constraint on influence, it was believed they could provide interesting data. Human and conceptual leadership skills were included in step three, and in step four task- and relationship-oriented leadership styles were added. In step five,



responsiveness and assertiveness means were added to the model, and in step six publicity producer mean and media relations mean were included. Finally, manager mean (because it had been the strongest predictor based on correlation and regression) was added alone in step seven. The variables for step one and steps three through seven were included in the hierarchical regression because they all significantly correlated with strategic influence mean score in the correlation and regression.

After running the hierarchical regressions on each of the variables, three stood out as being strong predictors of strategic influence: AD contacts in a week, direct report, and manager mean. The strongest predictor, by far, was manager mean, the degree to which college sports public relations directors perform managerial functions (a high mean indicates a director who frequently performs managerial activities, while a low mean demonstrates the director rarely performs this role). Until it was added to the equation, a relationship-oriented leadership style and media relations mean were significant predictors of strategic influence. However, when manager was added to the model, neither became significant (though media relations mean was close at .07). This may be because the relationship-oriented leadership style questions focused on how directors lead and interact with subordinates while the manager questions centered on how directors advise their peers and superiors, thus demonstrating upward strategic influence (versus guidance of those in the director's employ). Similarly, media relations mean, a hybrid with both technical and managerial components, may become less important as more managerial questions are asked.

Prior to adding manager mean, the model was significant,  $F(12,257) = 11.25$ ,  $p < .001$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .31$ . However, when manager mean was added to the equation, it

significantly improved the prediction,  $R^2$  change = .19,  $F(13, 256) = 22.76, p < .001$ .

With manager mean added to the model, the adjusted  $R^2 = .51$ , according to Cohen (1988) a much larger than typical effect size. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis summary, with manager mean standing alone, is presented in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13

*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Summary Predicting Strategic Influence from Multiple Independent Variables When Controlling for Manager Mean (N = 273)*

Variable	B	SEB	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Step 6 (all variables but manager mean)				.31	
Constant	.92	.53			
Step 7				.51	.19
Manager Mean	.44	.04	.59**		
Sex	.11	.13	.40		
Highest Education Level	.03	.10	.01		
Direct Report	.44	.10	.24**		
Number of AD Contacts/Week	.10	.03	.18**		
Human Leadership Skills Mean	-.00	.07	-.00		
Conceptual Leadership Skills Mean	-.08	.06	-.10		
Task-Oriented Style Mean	.02	.04	.03		
Relationship-Oriented Style Mean	.07	.06	.07		
Responsiveness Mean	-.00	.06	-.00		
Assertiveness Mean	-.04	.05	-.04		
Publicity Producer Mean	-.07	.04	-.10		
Media Relations Mean	.10	.05	.10		
Constant	1.78	.45			

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

Given that data indicated manager mean is the strongest predictor of strategic influence, the obvious next question, then, would be “What variables predict serving in a managerial role?” Again, a hierarchical regression was computed, using managerial mean as the dependent variable and the same variables previously utilized as the independent variables (competition level was also added, based on the comments heard during meetings with the CoSIDA leadership, to see if it had any impact on the manager role).

This data demonstrated that being male, possessing a more assertive personality, and serving at a higher competition level are significantly the strongest predictors. Strong technical and conceptual leadership skills also were significant, indicating that, while managers are more strategically oriented, they still must possess the expertise requisite with the position if others are to follow them. All were significant at the .05 level, while both leadership skill variables and competition level were significant at  $p < .01$ . Betas ranged from  $-.23$  (competition level) to  $.73$  (technical leadership skills). What the negative correlation means for competition level is that the lower the division, the less likely the director would serve in a managerial role. Functioning in the media relations professional role over the publicity producer role also was significant (beta =  $.12$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Similarly, a negative correlation existed between publicity producer mean and manager mean (beta =  $-.65$ ,  $p < .01$ ), once again demonstrating that, though technical skills are important, the more a director acts in a technical capacity, the less frequently he or she serves as a communications manager.

Another significant correlation existed between serving in the manager role and the number of direct contacts with the athletic director (beta =  $.15$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that managers tend to have more interaction with senior administration, and thus more strategic influence.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

Some valuable insights and findings were discovered in this research. In this chapter, I discuss the findings as they pertain to each research question. I also address the limitations of this research project, with emphasis on the perceptions of the college sports public relations directors and on the reliability of the leadership skills and style instruments. Next I discuss the implications of the findings for college sports public relations directors, and finally I provide recommendations for future research.

### **Answering the Research Questions**

#### **The Modern College Sports Public Relations Director**

Research question 1 was, “What does the contemporary college sports public relations director look like?” Results were generally similar to the findings of previous studies (Hardin & McClung, 2002; McCleneghan, 1995; Neupauer, 1999; Stoldt, 1998; Swalls, 2004). It bears noting that only McCleneghan’s study is comparable to this dissertation in terms of the audience. Whereas he sampled only directors from all competition levels, the others either focused only on NCAA Division I professionals, or included all practitioners—directors, assistants, and interns. Still, the findings were relatively consistent, indicating not much has changed in the profession in 15 years. Most practitioners are in their mid 30s to 40s and they generally majored in journalism. Most report to the athletic director and have nine to 10 years experience at their current institution. As Neupauer (1999) found, most directors possess more of a responsive personality. In 1995, the year of McCleneghan’s study, the average college sports public

relations director made \$38,500. The largest number of respondents to this study reported making \$35,000 to \$45,000, while the average director makes between \$45,000 and \$55,000. On first blush, this looks promising. However, when adjusting for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in 1995, the results are not as positive. The CPI in 1995 was 225.4. In 2010, the CPI was 320.2. This means that in the past 15 years prices have increased by more than 42%, while the average college sports public relations director's salary has increased by 16.9% to 29.9% (U.S. Department of Labor (2011). Put simply, the data indicated college sports public relations directors are actually making less today than they did 15 years ago.

While leadership skills and leadership style have not been considered previously as they relate to college sports public relations directors, the manager-technician dichotomy was analyzed in Stoldt's (1998) dissertation. And just as he discovered, most directors in this study relate to the technician role (publicity producer and media relations professional) rather than the manager's role

One interesting fact was found when asking the directors if they competed in intercollegiate athletics while in college. From my experience, many view college sports public relations directors as frustrated athletes who turned to statistics and publicity because they were not good enough to make the team. This study showed differently. Only a fourth of the participants (28%) competed in college athletics, although several of those competitors participated in multiple sports.

### **Change in Influence**

Research question 2 asked, "How do college sports public relations directors perceive that their strategic influence has changed in recent years?" What the findings

indicated is that college sports public relations directors now seem to have a voice, contrary to what McCleneghan (1995) found. Stoldt (1998) discovered that the vast majority of directors who responded to his study wanted to serve in more of a managerial role, and those who identified with the managerial role wanted even more of a voice within their organizations. From the findings of this dissertation, it would appear that, while few identify with the manager role, college sports public relations directors perceive they are being consulted more. The respondents reported they are called upon more frequently than other administrators (marketing director, director of business operations, facilities manager), and that their level of influence has increased. Further, 73% of those who responded to the open-ended question regarding influence change said they had seen a significant positive change. However, while 92 respondents reported being content with their level of influence and 55 were at least somewhat satisfied, 80 were dissatisfied. Thus, while influence is on the rise, apparently directors believe there is much work to be done. In other words, progress has been made from the time of Stoldt's research, but college sports public relations directors are not there yet.

### **Predicting Strategic Influence**

Of particular interest is how the findings of this dissertation relate to the findings of Berger and Reber (2006). This was the focus of research question 3: "How well does the combination of managerial orientation, leadership personality traits, leadership skills, leadership styles, and demographic variables predict the college sports public relations director's perceived strategic influence?"

Berger and Reber (2006) found that public relations directors who lacked influence perceived it was because of management that did not understand the value of

public relations and because of PR directors who were too publicity minded, who were too passive, and who lacked strategic management experience and leadership skills.

They also considered a lack of access to administration as a barrier.

Based on the results of this study, those constraints hold true. From the responses to the open-ended questions, management's understanding of public relations and its value was seen as a reason why many college sports public relations directors perceived their influence had increased. Subsequently, a lack of understanding on management's part was seen as a detriment by those who had seen a decrease. Further, those who reported an increase in influence most often pointed to their experience as the dominant factor, noting that as they had introduced programs and demonstrated their leadership skills, they had been consulted more. This confirmed what I thought going into the study. I expected experience to be the most significant predictor of strategic influence. Analyzing the qualitative responses led me to believe I was right, as nearly a third of the respondents said their influence had increased in recent years because of their experience.

However, the quantitative findings did not confirm this theory. Multiple regression was utilized to examine correlations between the dependent variable "strategic influence score" and the independent variables. One surprising finding was that experience was *not* a significant predictor of strategic influence. It may be that it's not the years in the profession, but what college sports public relations directors have *done* in those years. For example, it could be that a director who has successfully weathered a number of crises in a short period of time has more influence than a director who has been in the field for a decade but has not had to demonstrate his or her leadership through a difficult time.

Another surprise was the lack of correlation between competition level and strategic influence. Again, my expectation was that college sports public relations directors at the higher divisions would have more strategic influence. Once I saw the response rates, I believed my suspicion had been confirmed. As the competition level got smaller, from NCAA Division I to Division II to Division III, and finally to NAIA, so did the response rate. This may be an effect of the size of the operation. The Division I schools typically have more staff members, and therefore may have more of an opportunity to respond. This is why I expected staff size to be a significant predictor of strategic influence; more assistance, more time to spend in strategic planning. Ultimately, though, this was not the case in this study.

As the variables related to the constraints identified in Berger and Reber (2006), the survey results did indicate that those college sports public relations directors who identify most closely with the manager role do have more influence. Conversely, from these findings, the publicity producer is negatively correlated with strategic influence, meaning that the more the college sports public relations director serves in this role, the less likely he or she is to have influence. As the descriptive data indicated few college sports public relations directors most frequently identify with the manager role (only nine of the 273 respondents), it appears much work is to be done if college sports public relations directors are to serve in more influential roles.

Data also indicated that college sports public relations directors who are more assertive have more of a chance of gaining a seat at the decision-making table. However, what is equally interesting is the finding that relationship-oriented leaders, rather than task-oriented leaders, enjoy more of a voice in their organizations. This may indicate a



belief among college sports public relations directors that management is largely about relationships. This is consistent with Soucie's (1994) and Frontiera's (2009) findings, and runs counter to what Branch (1990) discovered.

Finally, with regard to strategic management and leadership skills, those directors who perceive they possess more conceptual leadership skills perceive they possess more influence. This holds with what Berger and Reber (2006) discovered. It also supports what Swalls (2004) learned: If college sports public relations directors want to have senior management status – and the strategic influence that goes with it – they must continue to develop their knowledge and skills as strategic communicators and leaders.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Because the focus of this study was on the college sports public relations director's perceived level of influence, it is unclear if the responses measured reality. This sets the stage, however, for an interesting follow-up study utilizing a 360-degree evaluation of college sports public relations directors (Atkins & Wood, 2002).

The use of an online questionnaire also was a limitation, as it limited the interaction with the respondents and did not allow me to conduct in-depth analysis. The two open-ended, qualitative questions did allow for the collection of more detailed responses, but more qualitative analysis would be desirable.

Also, the low response rate from directors in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (2 of 290, .01%) could be viewed as a limitation. One goal was to compare/contrast responses from directors in all divisions. However, this was not possible because so few responded from the NAIA.

Perhaps the greatest limitation was the lack of previously validated instruments that had been found reliable for the analysis of leadership skills and leadership style. While the instruments utilized turned out to be valid and reliable, they were not without flaws. However, because this research had never been conducted on this population, the results provide a valuable benchmark for future analysis.

### **Implications for College Sports Public Relations Directors**

This study provided information for those college sports public relations directors seeking more strategic influence in their athletic departments.

From the two open-ended questions, the results demonstrated that experience is vital to gaining more influence. The results also indicated that directors are seeing a bit of an increase in influence, but that they still only have moderate levels of influence. Further, the data bore out that there is strong link between level of influence and satisfaction, indicating that college sports public relations directors do, in fact, desire more influence.

When comparing managerial orientations, leadership personality traits, leadership skills, and leadership styles, and their impact on strategic influence the data suggest that practitioners who have developed their management skills are perceived to be in higher regard. However, results also indicate that technical skills, what French and Raven (1960) would consider expert power, are still vital. This finding holds with what was discovered from the open-ended questions. The data also suggest that assertive directors, those who have strong conceptual leadership skills, and those who are more relationship oriented in their leadership enjoy more strategic influence. Thus, if directors are interested in gaining more influence, based on these findings, they have an

idea of what is going to be required. This is important to note because the descriptive data indicated college sports public relations directors currently perform more as technicians, are more responsive, are more adept at technical leadership, and are task oriented. Thus, if college sports public relations directors want more strategic influence, and if they want to move from information directors to strategic communicators, it is clear practitioners need to reconsider how they operate and that they need to become more progressive as strategists and managers.

To that end, this research provides a baseline for the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA) as they work out strategies for gaining influence and for improving their image. As CoSIDA is constantly developing continuing education opportunities, it also provides information to let the leadership know where further education and training is needed.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on these findings, three additional studies should be conducted. In-depth interviews with a number of directors, based on the survey results, is a good first step to understanding how college sports public relations directors have enhanced their strategic influence. I believe this will provide further insights into the means by which directors gain influence in their athletic departments. For example, it is clear is that college sports public relations directors believe experience is a key. What is not so clear is what *kind* of experience is necessary. Have the directors who noted experience been through crises that they managed well and thus gained respect? Did they plan campaigns that were successful? Have they introduced new technology that has been effective? In-depth interviews will allow for the collection of such data.

On the subject of technology, it was also interesting that a fair number of the respondents proclaimed the use of new media technologies has led to greater significant influence, especially given that serving in the publicity producer role was negatively correlated with strategic influence and that a higher managerial orientation was the strongest predictor. It may be that traditional means of communicating (news releases, brochures, etc.) are still necessary, but that college sports public relations directors perceive athletic directors recognize the value in the more direct communication and interaction afforded by social media and new media technologies. Further, whereas Coyle (2010) noted some organizations are hesitant to utilize social media because “they’re afraid that fans/consumers will say bad things about them” (p. 18), Qualman (2009) used examples from Comcast and JetBlue to demonstrate how microblogging enabled companies to respond to customer concerns. Perhaps some college sports public relations directors have recognized the benefits of new media and communication technologies and are using these tools to the director’s benefit. Again, more research may help us answer this question.

This research will not be complete, however, without studying the individuals in charge of the athletic department, the college athletic directors. Therefore, as a final piece to this line of research, it is necessary to survey athletic directors and ask them similar questions to the ones asked in my dissertation survey. Then, I believe, we will have a full picture of what it takes to earn strategic influence in the college athletic department. Then this line of research may really help CoSIDA accomplish its goals.

A study considering the education and training of college sports public relations professionals also would be interesting. Given comments from some researchers

(Neupauer, 1997 & 2001; Stoldt, 1998), study into the educational backgrounds of college sports public relations directors may inform the development of an accreditation program that will help directors develop their management and leadership skills while simultaneously staying current on technology. Further, of particular interest would be an investigation of the relative value of advanced degrees in sports administration and education administration and leadership (given the high percentage who reported degrees in these fields) vis-à-vis advanced degrees in communications or public relations.

Finally, because no valid, reliable instruments for leadership skills or style were found, it would be beneficial to conduct an instrument development project. It may be that Northouse's Leadership Skills Inventory (2007) and Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid (1964) could be adapted with wording that fits this particular audience. Regardless, given the dearth of instruments for measuring leadership skills and style in research settings, this is an appropriate line of study.

This study afforded all NCAA and NAIA members of the College Sports Information Directors of America the opportunity to respond and was the most extensive ever conducted in the field of college sports public relations. By examining the perceptions of college sports public relations directors, we may gain a better understanding of where sports PR practitioners view themselves as competent and where they may be deficient, from a strategic influence standpoint. From this information, college sports public relations directors may learn why they either need to promote their knowledge, skills and abilities, or why they need additional education and training. What is more, the findings could be beneficial to public relations practitioners struggling to have a voice in other disciplines as well. Educators in sports management programs and

public relations programs also may benefit from the findings as they develop courses and training programs for future generations of practitioners. Humenik called for as much:

It is not enough ... that the importance of this be taught just to folks interested in careers in sports communication. It must, perhaps even more important, be taught to the folks who are interested in becoming senior-level leaders like athletic directors (Stoldt, 1998, p. 463).

The findings of this research may be expected to assist current college sports public relations directors as they seek to have their voices heard, to share their wisdom and experience, and to positively impact their organizations. It also may assist future college sports public relations directors develop the knowledge and skill sets necessary for more influential roles. In short, with further research, this project may be expected to make a positive impact on the college sports public relations profession now and in years to come.

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**APPENDIX A:**

**Advance E-mail Sent To the Survey Population**

College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA)

{ Date }

Dear Colleagues,

Joe Moore, a former NCAA Division II sports communications director and current doctoral student at Colorado State University is conducting an important research study on strategic influence in college sports public relations. Joe visited with the CoSIDA Board as well as several of the divisional leadership groups at the CoSIDA convention in San Francisco last July and his study was fully endorsed by all of those groups.

Joe's research could provide, we believe, important insights into our profession and its people. It could provide us with important information and future strategic direction as to how we may better gain more influence for our practitioners and help our profession and organization achieve our objective of enhancing the image of the profession and the professional. Your participation is thus paramount to this project and its purpose. The more feedback Joe receives helps him provide our leadership with more relevant and strategic based information and direction.

The CoSIDA board feels that this is perhaps the most significant study every undertaken with regard to our lack of strategic influence within the athletics community and strongly encourages you to participate in a survey as he investigates this situation in college athletics that has impacted our profession and its people in a negative way for several decades. You will be receiving this survey from CoSDIA within the next few days. Participation will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Your participation in this research is voluntary and your responses will be anonymous. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty.

Results will be summarized in general for our profession/organization and will also be reported for divisional groups. At no time will the responses of individuals be reported. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

A link for this online survey will be e-mailed to you by CoSIDA within the next few days. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request and your hopeful, and important, participation.

Sincerely,

Larry Dougherty, 2010-11 CoSIDA President

John Humenik, CoSIDA Executive Director



**APPENDIX B:**  
**Survey Cover Letter**

Colorado State University

{Date}

Dear Colleague,

My name is Joe Moore and I am a doctoral student from Colorado State University in the School of Education. We are conducting a research study on strategic influence and college sports public relations. I am the Co-Principal Investigator and the Principal Investigator is Dr. Don Quick from the School of Education.

We would like you to participate in survey as we investigate this phenomenon in college athletics. Participation will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes and is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty.

Your responses will be anonymous. Results will be summarized and reported only for groups. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

Your response is important to this project. Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have questions, concerns, or comments, please feel free to contact me at (660) 543-4923. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator, at 970-491-1655.

Please keep this email as a reference for any questions during or after the survey.

Click here if you would like to participate in our research and take our survey:

[\[Link Here\]](#)

Sincerely,

**Joe Moore**

Joe Moore  
Doctor of Philosophy Candidate  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, CO  
Assistant Professor  
University of Central Missouri  
Warrensburg, MO

Don Quick, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Adult Education and Training  
Distance Education Technology  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, CO

**APPENDIX C:**

**Strategic Influence and College Sports Public Relations Survey**

## Strategic Influence and College Sports Public Relations Survey

### Perceived Influence - Section 1

Below are 21 statements that relate to you as a practitioner of college sports public relations. Using a scale from Never True = 1 to Always True = 8, how frequently do you engage in each of these?

1. I make the public relations policy decisions.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

2. My AD visits with me daily.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

3. In a typical situation, my AD seeks our compliance officer's advice before my advice.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

4. I diagnose public relations problems.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

5. My AD seeks my advice about how to manage sensitive issues.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

6. I plan and recommend courses of action.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

7. In a typical situation, my AD seeks our marketing director's advice before my advice.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

8. My AD asks me for advice and/or training on how to respond to the media.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

9. I explain problems to other athletic administrators.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

10. My AD contacts me first when fans are angry about a decision our department has made.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

11. In a typical situation, my AD seeks our facilities manager's advice before my advice.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

12. My AD asks my opinion in management meetings.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

13. In a typical situation, my AD seeks our business operations manager's advice before my advice.  
 Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True
14. I take responsibility for the success or failure of PR program.  
 Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True
15. My AD contacts me first in a crisis.  
 Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True
16. I serve as a consultant for public relations issues.  
 Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True
17. My AD asks me to craft letters and speeches in his/her name.  
 Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True
18. In a typical situation, my AD seeks our fund-raising/development officer's advice before my advice.  
 Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True
19. I advocate for a stance in PR situations.  
 Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True
20. My AD considers my opinion on all athletic department matters.  
 Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True
21. In a typical situation, my AD seeks my advice before seeking the advice of another administrator in our athletic department.  
 Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

## **Influence Change- Section 2**

**Following are four questions that relate to your influence as an administrator in college athletics. The question is worded the same in the first three questions, but the responses are different. Please read the responses carefully before answering.**

22. How has your influence in the athletic department changed in recent years?

Diminished -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Expanded

23. How has your influence in the athletic department changed in recent years?

Better -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Worse

24. How has your influence in the athletic department changed in recent years?

Inferior -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Superior

25. If you believe your influence has changed in the athletic department in recent years, please explain how and why.

26. Are you pleased with your level of influence in your athletic department? Please explain.

### Managerial Orientation - Section 3

How frequently do you engage in each of the following activities? Please use a scale from Never = 1 to Always = 8.

27. Point out the need to follow a systematic public relations planning process  
Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always
28. Edit materials written by others in the athletic department  
Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always
29. Work with personnel to increase skills in solving public relations problems  
Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always
30. Keep others in the department informed of media reports about our department  
Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always
31. Do photography and graphics for communication and public relations materials  
Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always
32. Outline alternative approaches to solving public relations problems  
Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always
33. Create opportunities for management to hear the views of various publics  
Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always
34. Place sport news releases  
Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always
35. Report public opinion survey results  
Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always
36. Use journalistic skills to determine what the media will consider newsworthy  
Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always
37. Operate as a catalyst in management's decision-making  
Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always
38. Produce brochures, pamphlets, and other publications  
Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always
39. Solicit management participation when making important PR decisions  
Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always
40. Keep management informed of reactions to policies, procedures, and actions

Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always

41. Handle the technical aspects of producing sports information materials

Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always

42. Maintain media contacts for my athletic department

Never -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always

43. Below are four broad functions you might serve in your job. Please indicate what percent of your time in a typical week you spend on each of the following duties. Please make sure the total adds up to 100 percent.

\_\_\_\_\_ Serving as a manager (training and mentoring subordinates, attending meetings with other athletic department administrators, recommending policies and advising senior administrators)

\_\_\_\_\_ Producing publicity materials (news releases, media guides, programs, etc.) and maintaining the department Website and utilizing social media

\_\_\_\_\_ Performing media relations (coordinating interviews, news conferences, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Other duties apart from public relations (e.g. compliance, coaching, teaching)

100%

44. Please indicate the title that most closely matches your title

Sports Information Director

Assistant/Associate Athletic Director

Communications Director

Sports Public Relations Director

Media Relations Director

News Bureau Manager

Assistant/Associate director of sports information/communications/PR

Intern

Graduate Assistant

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_



#### Leadership Personality – Section 4

Here are 20 terms you might use to describe yourself. For each of the following items, please indicate to what degree each applies to you, using the scale of Strongly Disagree it Applies = 1 to Strongly Agree it Applies = 8. Please work quickly and record your first impression.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree			
45. helpful	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
46. defends own beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
47. independent	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
48. responsive to others	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
49. forceful	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
50. strong personality	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
51. sympathetic	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
52. compassionate	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
53. assertive	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
54. sensitive to the needs of others	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
55. dominant	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
56. sincere	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
57. gentle	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
58. willing to take a stand	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
59. warm	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
60. tender	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
61. friendly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
62. a leader	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
63. aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
64. competitive	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8

## Leadership Skills – Section 5

To what degree are the following statements Never True = 1 to Always True = 8 about you.

65. My main concern is to have a supportive communication climate.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

66. I enjoy working out strategies for my organization's growth.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

67. I enjoy getting into the details of how things like the department Website work.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

68. Being able to understand others points of view important to me.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

69. I enjoy working with abstract ideas.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

70. Creating a mission statement is rewarding work.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

71. I am intrigued by complex organizational problems.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

72. Understanding the social fabric of the organization is important to me.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

73. I understand how to do the basic tasks required of me.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

74. I am good at fixing things and making things work.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

75. I am concerned with how my decisions affect the lives of others.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

76. Following directions and filling out forms comes easily for me.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

### **Leadership Style – Section 6**

**To what degree are the following statements Never True = 1 to Always True = 8 about you.**

77. Nothing is more important than accomplishing a goal or task.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

78. I enjoy coaching people to develop their skills and knowledge.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

79. When correcting mistakes, I do not worry about jeopardizing relationships.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

80. Counseling employees to improve their performance is second nature to me.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

81. I encourage my employees to be creative about their job.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

82. I manage my time efficiently so I may complete tasks on schedule.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

83. I monitor schedules to ensure a task or project will be completed in time.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

84. Nothing is more important than building a great team.

Never True -  1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8 – Always True

**Organizational Questions - Section 7**  
**You and your athletic department**

85. On your athletic department's organizational chart, to whom do you officially report?
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic Director            | <input type="checkbox"/> Assistant Athletic Director          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing Director           | <input type="checkbox"/> University Public Relations Director |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |   |
86. During the regular academic year (August through May), about how many times in a week do you discuss policies or developments face-to-face with your athletic director?
- Never
  - Once a week
  - Twice a week
  - Three times a week
  - Four times a week
  - Five times a week
  - Once a day
  - Two or more times a day
87. Please indicate the division in which you work
- NCAA-I (FBS)
  - NCAA-I (FCS)
  - NCAA-I-AAA
  - NCAA-II
  - NCAA-III
  - NAIA
88. How many employees do you supervise in your athletic department (**excluding** clerical staff and game-day only staff)?
- a. full-time, salaried employees \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. graduate assistants and/or interns \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. student assistants \_\_\_\_\_
89. How many teams (NCAA or NAIA) did your team field in the last academic year?  
\_\_\_\_\_ teams.
90. How many total students (based on head count) are enrolled on your campus? Please round to the nearest 1,000. \_\_\_\_\_ students

**Experience Questions – Section 8**  
**Your experience and education**

91. How many years have you worked in your current position? \_\_\_\_\_
92. How many years have you worked in the college sports public relations profession?  
\_\_\_\_\_
93. What is your highest education level achieved?
- Some college
  - Associate's Degree
  - Bachelor's Degree
  - Master's Degree
  - Doctorate
94. What was your undergraduate major?
- Public Relations
  - Journalism
  - Communication
  - Broadcasting
  - English
  - Sports Communication/Administration
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
95. If applicable, in what discipline is your master's degree?
- Communication
  - Business
  - Sports Administration
  - Educational Administration/Leadership
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Personal Demographics – Section 9**

96. Did you play an intercollegiate sport in college?

- Yes                       No

97. If yes, what sport? \_\_\_\_\_

98. You are (select one)

- Male                       Female

99. Your age in years \_\_\_\_\_

100. Your salary

- less than \$25,000  
 \$25,000-\$35,000  
 \$35,001-\$45,000  
 \$45,001-\$55,000  
 \$55,001-\$65,000  
 \$65,001-\$75,000  
 \$75,001-\$85,000  
 more than \$85,000

**Thank you for your contribution to this study. Your support is greatly appreciated!**

**APPENDIX D:**

**Follow-up E-mail**

Colorado State University

{Date}

Dear Colleague,

A link to a survey exploring strategic influence and college sports public relations directors was e-mailed to you last week. If you have already completed and submitted the survey, thank you for your support.

If not, please do so as soon as possible, as your response is important to the project's success. I have again included the link to the survey for your convenience. The survey should take about 15-20 minutes to complete. Thank you again for your participation in this study. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at (660) 543-4923.

Click here if you would like to participate in our research and take our survey:

[\(link here\)](#)

Sincerely,

**Joe Moore**

Joe Moore  
Doctor of Philosophy Candidate  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, CO Assistant Professor  
University of Central Missouri  
Warrensburg, MO

Don Quick, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Adult Education and Training  
Distance Education Technology  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, CO



**APPENDIX E:**  
**Influence Change Manipulation Check**

As a manipulation check to determine if the responses to the qualitative questions matched the responses to the quantitative questions, and in order to examine the differences between the three influence change groups (increased, decreased, no change based on the qualitative data) on influence change score (based on the three quantitative questions asking if influence had diminished or expanded, was inferior or superior, was better or worse), a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed. Influence change score was the dependent variable. A statistically significant difference was found among the three levels of change,  $F(2, 194) = 100.20, p = .00$ . Table E1 shows that the mean influence change score was 6.31 (on a scale of one-to-eight) for those who perceived increased influence, 2.71 for those with decreased influence, and 4.08 for those who have seen no change in their level of influence.

Table E1

*Means and Standard Deviations Comparing Three Influence Change Groups*

Influence Change	Influence Change Score		
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Increased Influence	148	6.31	1.05
Decreased Influence	15	2.71	1.55
No Change	34	4.08	1.50
Total	197	5.65	1.67

Post hoc Tukey HSD tests indicate that significant differences at the  $p < .05$  level exist between all groups (see Table E2). What this indicates is that the increased influence group and the decreased influence group differ significantly in their influence change scores ( $p < .01, d = .25$ ), though the effect size is small. Likewise, there were significant mean differences on influence change score between the increased influence and no change groups ( $p < .01, d = .39$ ) and between the decreased influence and no change

groups ( $p < .01$ ,  $d = .48$ ). The effect sizes were small to medium, which may be because of the wide disparity in responses along each dimension. Still, though the effect sizes are not large, there is clearly a difference between those who have seen their influence increase and those who have seen it decrease.

Table E2

*One-Way Analysis of Variance Summary Table Comparing Influence Change Groups on Perceived Level of Influence Score*

Source	<i>df</i>	SS	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Influence Change					
Between groups	2	278.38	139.19	100.20	<.001
Within groups	194	269.50	1.39		
Total	196	547.88			