





**The SMART Journal © 2009**

The SMART Journal  
Jason W. Lee, Editor

1UNF Dr.  
Building 9  
LCIT/Sport Management  
University of North Florida  
Jacksonville, FL 32224-2645

Phone: 904-644-1144  
Fax: 904-644-620-2980  
E-mail: [Jason.Lee@unf.edu.com](mailto:Jason.Lee@unf.edu.com)

### SMART Editorial Board

**Editor:**

**Dr. Jason W. Lee, University of North Florida**

**Review Board Members:**

**Dr. Annie Clement, University of New Mexico**

**Dr. Dan Connaughton, University of Florida**

**Dr. Dan Drane, University of Southern Mississippi**

**Dr. Heidi Grappendorf, North Carolina State University**

**Dr. Angela Grube, Western Carolina University**

**Dr. Chevelle Hall, Grambling State University**

**Dr. Ted Kian, University of Central Florida**

**Dr. Greg Letter, Adelphi University**

**Dr. Kim Miloch, Texas Woman's University**

**Dr. Michael Mahoney, California State University, Fresno**

**Dr. John Miller, Texas Tech University**

**Dr. Lisa M. Miller, Ohio Dominican University**

**Dr. Sue Mullane, University of Miami**

**Dr. Mark Nagel, University of South Carolina**

**Dr. Kadie Otto, Western Carolina University**

**Dr. Reginald Overton, Virginia State University**

**Dr. Jeffrey Petersen, Ball State University**

**Dr. Brenda Pitts, Georgia State University**

**Dr. Fritz Polite, University of Tennessee**

**Dr. James Reese, SUNY-Cortland**

**Dr. Ray Schneider, Bowling Green State University**

**Dr. Michael Smucker, University of Tampa**

**Dr. John Vincent, University of Alabama**

**Dr. Warren Whisenant, University of Miami**

### IN THIS ISSUE...

#### SPECIAL ISSUE ON SPORT AND POPULAR CULTURE AND THE MEDIA:

- THE NBA: NOT YET A GLOBAL SPORT LEAGUE IN NEWSPAPER COVERAGE**  
EDWARD (TED) M. KIAN 4
- MARKETING PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING TO CHILDREN: AN ETHICAL EXAMINATION**  
MATTHEW J. BERNTHAL 19
- IS IT EQUITABLE ONLINE? THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE 2007 NCAA DIVISION I BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT ON FOXSPORTS.COM**  
HEIDI GRAPPENDORF, ANGELA HENDERSON, STACY SANDERS, & JUDY PEEL 30
- BEYOND THE BOX OFFICE: AN ANALYSIS OF VIOLENT AND DEVIANT BEHAVIOR IN POPULAR SPORT FILMS**  
JEFFREY J. FOUNTAIN, LAURA L. FINLEY, PETER S. FINLEY 43

#### GENERAL TOPIC ARTICLES:

- THE OFFICIAL VISIT EXPERIENCE OF NCAA DIVISION I RECRUITED STUDENT-ATHLETES**  
HEATHER J. LAWRENCE, CHRISTINA MERCKX, & EDWARD HEBERT 69
- EXAMINATION OF JOB DESCRIPTIONS IN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATION: APPLICATION OF GENDER TYPING OF MANAGERIAL SUBROLES**  
LAURA BURTON & ERIN HAGAN 84
- THE PRACTICE AND TEACHING OF CRITICAL THINKING IN SPORT MANAGEMENT**  
ROBERT C. SCHNEIDER & WILLIAM F. STIER JR. 96
- INSIDER'S PERSEPECTIVE: MIKE FRANZESE**  
JASON W. LEE 110

### **THE NBA: NOT YET A GLOBAL SPORT LEAGUE IN NEWSPAPER COVERAGE**

**EDWARD (TED) M. KIAN, PHD, UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA**

---

#### **INTRODUCTION**

With several names that were difficult to pronounce and a variety of ethnic backgrounds on display, the 2007 National Basketball Association (NBA) Finals may have looked more like a United Nations assembly gathering to some U.S. television viewers than a game featuring well-known former U.S. collegiate stars. The San Antonio Spurs captured their third NBA title in five seasons by sweeping the Cleveland Cavaliers in a series dominated by players born and raised outside of the United States.

Tony Parker, a native of France, became the first foreign-born player to be honored as NBA Finals most valuable player (MVP) after leading San Antonio in scoring during the series. Tim Duncan, the Spurs' two-time NBA regular-season MVP, was born and raised in the Virgin Islands, which is a U.S. territory but not a state. San Antonio's No. 3 scorer in the 2007 NBA Finals was Manu Ginobili, an Argentinean who was joined by countryman and Spurs' starting forward Fabricio Oberto. Additionally, Francisco Elson (The Netherlands) and Beno Udrih (Slovenia) were among the six international players on the Spurs' 12-man playoff roster. Meanwhile, Cleveland started Zydrunas Ilgauskas (Lithuania) and Sasha Pavlovic (Serbia), while Anderson Varejao (Brazil) played more minutes in the NBA Finals than any other Cavalier reserve.

The international presence on the Spurs and Cavaliers has become commonplace in the NBA, as the 2006-07 season featured a record 83 international players representing 32 different countries on opening-day rosters (National Basketball Association, 2006). Those figures marked a substantial increase from the 32 international players from 18 countries who began the 1996-97 season on NBA teams (National Basketball Association, 2006).

It would seem that NBA commissioner David Stern's long-stated goal of the globalization of his league has helped fuel the influx of more international talent (Eisenburg, 2003). NBA globalization has arguably been more successful in other areas, such as marketing to other nations, international merchandise sales, foreign telecasts of NBA games, and most notably the league's increasing popularity in China. However, it is unclear if these contemporary trends have resulted in substantial local print media coverage of the NBA in countries outside of the U.S. It is also unknown if U.S. and international newspapers provide more coverage to individual basketball players based on their nationality.

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

##### **GLOBALIZATION AND MARKETING OF THE NBA**

Since Stern became commissioner in 1984, the NBA has evolved from a league with an almost exclusive U.S. fan-base to arguably the most popular professional sport league in the world (Eisenburg, 2003; Euchner, 2008). Prior to Stern's arrival, the NBA's only contact with foreign markets came through a 1979 exhibition game hosted by the Chinese national team that featured the Washington Bullets (Lynch, 2004). In 1984, Brazil-native Oscar Schmidt became the first foreign player drafted by an NBA team, although Schmidt never signed with an NBA team (Euchner, 2008). However, by opening day of the next season, 10 international players from eight different countries were on NBA rosters.

The increase in foreign players on team rosters has undoubtedly aided the extensive global marketing campaign launched by the NBA in 1989 (Fay & Snyder, 2007). Since 1991, the NBA has had its teams and/or players partake in preseason or exhibition games in Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Japan, Mexico, and Spain (Andrews, 1999; Euchner, 2008; Lynch, 2004). But the NBA's international reach has been much greater thanks to its efforts through events like basketball workshops, coaching clinics, community service projects, and fanfares. In just the summer of 2007 alone, the NBA held 262 international events in 162 cities spanning five continents (Euchner, 2008). In 1995, the NBA expanded its membership to Canada when the expansion Toronto Raptors and Vancouver Grizzlies began play, although the Grizzlies moved to Memphis, TN, following the 2000-01 season. Stern has expressed aspirations of holding regular-season games in major European cities, with the ultimate goal of adding expansion teams or even another division comprised of teams based out of Europe (Euchner, 2008).

Nowhere do Stern's globalization efforts appear to have been more successful than in China. With a booming economy, China is the fastest-growing market in the world, and basketball has undoubtedly become the country's most popular sport (Chinadaily, 2007; Lee, 2007). Since its population of roughly 1.3 billion accounts for more than 20% of the world's inhabitants, Stern has focused much of the league's international marketing efforts on reaching the Chinese market (Euchner, 2008; Warren, 2008).

The NBA's popularity and notoriety in China increased dramatically after the Houston Rockets selected 7-foot-6 Chinese native Yao Ming with the first pick in the 2002 NBA Draft (Lee, 2007). Yao, the first Chinese player in the history of the NBA, became an immediate sensation, earning selections to the NBA all-star game in each of his first six seasons (Bradsher, 2007; Lee, 2007). Now, approximately 89% of Chinese citizens aged 15-54 are aware of the NBA and an estimated 300 million Chinese are fans of the NBA (Euchner, 2008; Warren, 2008). In comparison, an estimated 130 million Chinese identify themselves as fans of soccer, which is generally regarded as the most popular sport in the world (Euchner, 2008; Fay & Snyder, 2007). "NBA" is the most searched sports term on Baidu.com, the leading Internet search engine in China, while nearly one-third of NBA.com traffic comes through the Chinese version of the Website, where content is published in Mandarin (Bradsher, 2007; Business Wire, 2008; Lynch, 2004).

NBA merchandise profits from China exceed \$10 million annually, as NBA products are sold through more than 50,000 outlets throughout the country (Bradsher, 2007; Business Wire, 2008). Through merchandise sales, sponsorships, and broadcast rights, China is the NBA's second largest national source of total revenues behind only the United States (Balfour, 2007; Lee, 2007). But the NBA's global marketing success and increasing merchandise sales have not been limited to China over recent years. Overseas sales now account for nearly \$500 million (20%) of NBA merchandising revenues (Euchner, 2008; Warren, 2008). NBA apparel is sold in 100,000 stores in 100 countries on every continent on Earth with the exception of Antarctica (Euchner, 2008). From 2006 through 2007, NBA merchandise sales in Europe increased by 40% (Lloyd, 2007). In part thanks to the success of players like Manu Ginobili (Argentina), the NBA has also become more popular in Latin America over recent years, and Stern is trying to improve the league's notoriety and appeal in Africa (Euchner, 2008). A major reason for the NBA's successful expansion into new markets has been the league's ability to generate foreign television exposure.

### **INTERNATIONAL TELEVISION COVERAGE OF THE NBA**

After initially rejecting and then accepting an offer of free programming from Stern, CCTV (China's state-run television station) began broadcasting the NBA finals on tape delay in 1990 (Larmer, 2005). That initial providing of free programming to a foreign government has



certainly paid off for Stern in China. In Yao's first season in 2002, the NBA signed new television contracts with 12 provincial Chinese stations to broadcast 170 of its games, which was more than double the number broadcasted the previous year (Lamer, 2005; Oates & Pollumbaum, 2004). The league now has partnerships with 51 Chinese telecasters (Balfour, 2007; Business Wire, 2008). NBA officials estimate 300 million Chinese fans watch NBA games on TV or the Internet, a number nearly equal to the entire U.S. population (Euchner, 2008; Warren, 2008).

In the 2007-08 season, the NBA proclaimed its broadest global television distribution in league history (NBA.com, 2008). More than 900 games and 45,000 hours of NBA programming were slated to be broadcast in 43 languages on 202 television networks representing 215 countries (Euchner, 2008; NBA.com, 2008). It should be noted that the United Nations only recognizes 193 different nations on Earth, but the NBA classifies some disputed territories and independent provinces as countries. Televised NBA coverage reaches an estimated 3.1 billion viewers annually in 750 million households worldwide (Lamer, 2005; NBA.com, 2008).

In 1999, NBATV was launched, making the NBA the first major professional sport league to own a cable/satellite station (Euchner, 2008; Silver & Sutton, 2000). The 24-hour channel distributes NBA coverage to 30 different countries, including Iceland, Mexico, Russia, Turkey, and Venezuela (NBA.com, 2008). But many of these contracts were arranged by the NBA through its international marketing division, which attempts to increase the league's brand image and awareness, and occasionally does so by offering cheap or free programming to international television markets where basketball is not yet popular (Andrews, 1999; Brady, 2007). Thus, a better way to measure the NBA's international importance is through the coverage the league receives in newspapers across the world, since newspaper sports editors often have limited print space and thus usually publish stories on sports they deem most interesting to their local readers (Hardin, 2005; Kian, 2007).

### **SAMPLING SELECTION**

The Lexis Nexis Academic advanced search engine was used to locate newspaper articles, columns, and editorials on or related to the 2007 NBA Finals published between June 6 (the day before the first game of the NBA finals) and June 15 (the day after the last game of the finals). Search terms used to locate international and domestic newspaper articles were *San Antonio, Cleveland, Spurs, Cavaliers, Cavs, National Basketball Association, NBA*, and both the first and last names of each of the 30 total players on the two teams' 2007 rosters.

In July, 2007, the Lexis Nexis Academic service available to U.S. universities listed 51 publications as major newspapers, although two of these papers no longer publish. These newspapers are all published exclusively in English or publish an English version. A majority of the 50 newspapers (N=30) were based in the U.S. However, the remaining 19 newspapers were from 11 other countries: Brazil, Canada (2), China, Great Britain (5), Ireland, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand (3), Scotland (2), Singapore. Scotland joins Great Britain as part of the United Kingdom, but they are distinguished as separate counties by Lexis Nexis Academic. The search terms were used to locate all newspaper articles and columns on the 2007 NBA Finals published during the time frame in each of the 19 international publications (as shown in Table 1) classified as major newspapers by Lexis Nexis Academic.

The NBA receives substantial U.S. media coverage. However, it is unclear if national or local papers would provide different amounts of coverage to U.S. and international NBA players. The three most heavily circulated daily newspapers in the U.S. and the only three distributed daily throughout the country are (in order of highest Monday-Friday circulation) *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times* (BurrellesLuce, 2007). However, *Wall Street Journal* is a business-specific publication that provides infrequent sports coverage. Therefore, articles on or

related to the NBA finals published in *USA Today* and *The New York Times* from June 6-15, 2007, were located via Lexis Nexis Academic and examined for this study, since those are the two most prominent U.S. national newspapers that provide regular sports content.

Although neither was classified as one of 50 major newspapers by Lexis Nexis Academic, the two most popular newspapers in the host cities of the NBA finals' participants – *The Plain Dealer* out of Cleveland and *San Antonio Express-News* – were also used in this study to examine local coverage in all articles on or related to the NBA finals in each newspaper. In 2007, *The Plain Dealer* ranked 19<sup>th</sup> amongst most circulated daily newspapers in the U.S., while *San Antonio Express-News* ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> (BurrellesLuce, 2007).

It is unclear if the nationality of players will impact the amount of coverage they receive in international publications, major U.S. newspapers, or two smaller U.S. newspapers representing the two participating teams' host cities.

### **METHODOLOGY**

A basic content analysis was used to count the number of total articles related to the NBA finals in each publication, and the number of references per publication on each individual player for both teams. Two graduate students, working independently of each other, searched for all articles on the NBA finals in the 24 newspapers examined. The lead researcher, a former sports writer at several major newspapers, determined which stories focused on the 2007 NBA Finals before any coding procedures were undertaken.

Two graduate students coded all articles independently to add intercoder reliability. The presence of a second coder assures results are not the subjective interpretation of a single researcher, and thus add objectivity and trustworthiness to a content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002). Each reference to a player's full name in each article was coded once, as were times when only a player's first name, last name, or nickname were used. For simplicity and consistency, pronouns of any type were not coded. The full texts of all articles, including headlines, were coded. Box scores, photo captions, and statistical listings that were not included within the text were not counted as articles and thus not coded. A simple listing of a game under events or telecasts was not counted as an article on the NBA finals.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RATIONALE**

Results could not be predicted, since no similar research projects have been attempted. Therefore, research questions were employed rather than hypotheses for this exploratory study. However, examining the number of articles on the NBA finals published in specific international newspapers versus U.S. newspapers provides evidence to the extent of the NBA's global popularity. Moreover, finding out the number of times specific players are mentioned by name in those newspapers will show if nationalistic bias exists in U.S., or other countries' newspaper coverage of the NBA.

RQ1: How many overall articles and columns on the 2007 NBA Finals were published in the selected U.S. local, U.S. national, and international newspapers?

RQ2: How often were U.S.-born and international players referenced in international articles compared to selected U.S. local and U.S. national newspapers?

### **RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

Results from coding include the total number of articles published on the 2007 NBA Finals in each newspaper, as well as the number of references toward each individual player in each newspaper. No tests for statistical significance were included, because the entire population of 2007 NBA Finals articles in these newspapers were examined.



Players' full names, first names, last names, or nicknames were coded 3,849 times by one graduate student and 3,846 times by a second graduate student. An examination of the coding discrepancies by the author determined that 3,850 was the correct number of references. Thus, the intercoder reliability rate was 99.9%, a very high percentage but one that is not surprising considering the simplicity of just counting names from published text.

RQ1: How many overall articles and columns on the 2007 NBA Finals were published in the selected U.S. local, U.S. national, and international newspapers?

As shown in Table 2, a total of 254 articles from the 24 examined newspapers focused on the 2007 NBA Finals. Approximately 220 (86.6%) of articles were published in the four U.S. newspapers, with 59.8% (n=152) of all articles derived from the two teams' local newspapers: (Cleveland) *Plain Dealer* and *San Antonio Express-News*. Just 34 (13.4%) total articles on the NBA finals were published in the 20 international newspapers included in the search, with 27 (79.4%) of the 34 international articles coming from the two Canadian newspapers.

Published articles appeared in only four of the 11 countries that had newspapers included in the search: Canada, Ireland, Malaysia, New Zealand. The combined 15 newspapers representing Brazil, China, Great Britain, Israel, Japan, Scotland, and Singapore all published no articles on or related to the 2007 NBA Finals. Therefore, 97.2% of all articles were published in North American newspapers.

RQ2: How often were U.S.-born and international players referenced in international articles compared to selected U.S. local and U.S. national newspapers?

Where to place Tim Duncan was the only difficult decision in categorizing Cleveland and San Antonio players as domestic (born and raised in the U.S.) or international (raised in a country outside of the U.S.). Duncan was raised in St. Croix of the Virgin Islands, a U.S. territory but not a state. Duncan played and excelled on the college level in the U.S. at Wake Forest University. Of the eight other international players on the Cleveland or San Antonio 2007 rosters, only Spurs' reserve Francisco Elson (University of California) played college basketball in the U.S. Duncan was also a member of the U.S. Olympic men's basketball team in 2000. However, the U.S. Virgin Islands sends its own delegation as a country to the Olympics. In fact, Tim Duncan's sister, Tricia, actually swam for the U.S. Virgin Islands national team in the 1988 Summer Olympics (Kernan, 2000). Tim Duncan was classified as an international player in this study, although he could have easily been slotted as a domestic player. Rosters for both teams and the players' native countries are shown in Table 3.

As shown in Tables 4 and 5, U.S. players were referenced more overall times in U.S. newspapers (N=2028) than international players (N=1359). The 21 U.S. players on the two teams' rosters averaged 96 total references in the four combined U.S. newspapers examined. However, Cleveland superstar LeBron James accounted for 45.9% (n=931) of all references to U.S. players in domestic papers. No other U.S. player accounted for higher than 10.9% of the total references of U.S. players in domestic papers. Subtracting James, U.S. players were referenced by name an average of 54.9 times per individual player by the combined four U.S. newspapers. In contrast, the nine international players were referenced an average of 151 times by the four U.S. newspapers. Thus, international players on average received much more coverage than U.S. players in U.S. newspapers. However, Duncan was referenced more often (N=413) than any other international player in U.S. papers. If Duncan was counted as a domestic player, coverage would have been more similar by the U.S. press. With Duncan's inclusion as a U.S. player, U.S. players would have averaged 111.4 combined references in the four U.S. newspapers compared to 118.3 references on average for international players.

The two local newspapers referenced players from their cities' teams more than the opponents. (The Cleveland) *Plain Dealer* referenced Cavalier players an average of 9.3 times (n=833) in its 90 articles on the NBA finals compared to an average of 6.1 times (n=552) for Spurs' players in articles. The *San Antonio Express-News* showed even more hometown emphasis in its articles, averaging 10.1 references (n=626) of San Antonio players per article on the NBA finals compared to 5.6 attributions (n=345) of each Cavalier per article.

The champion Spurs had twice as many international players on its roster than the Cavaliers, so it was not surprising the *San Antonio Express-News* provided more coverage to international players. Approximately 45% (n=437) of all *Express-News* references were to international players, including 61.5% of all references of just Spurs' players. However, those percentages dropped to 31.3% and 40.3%, respectively, if Duncan was counted as a domestic player instead of international.

In addition to counting the number of times specific domestic and international players were mentioned in each of the various newspapers and newspaper categories (U.S. local, U.S. national, international), it was also worth investigating how many times individual players' names or nicknames appeared in the title/headline of articles, since headlines are the first thing readers see in the text of articles and some readers may not continue after the headline. Tables 4-7 show the number of times a player's name appeared in articles under each newspaper or newspaper categories, with the number of times that player's name appeared in the headline/title of a newspaper article listed in parentheses. James' name appeared in headlines 55 times in the four examined U.S. papers, which was more than three times more often than the next closest individual in that category – 2007 NBA Finals MVP Tony Parker (N=17).

Coverage of domestic and international players in the U.S. national papers was similar to those of the hometown papers. References toward U.S. players accounted for 62% of all names published in *The New York Times*, although the nine international players averaged 17.7 references each in *The New York Times*, while the 21 domestic players were noted an average of 12.3 times each. *USA Today* provided even more coverage of international players than *The New York Times*. International players were 47% of all the names of players published in *USA Today*. International players each averaged 38.3 references in *USA Today*, while U.S. players averaged just 18.7 references in the national paper of their home country.

It is difficult to compare any of the international newspaper results shown in Tables 6 and 7 to the U.S. local and U.S. national newspaper findings in Tables 4 and 5, since only the two Canadian newspapers provided more than token coverage of the NBA finals. James accounted for an even higher percentage (62%) of references of U.S. players in the foreign newspapers than he did in the four U.S. publications (45.9%). Moreover, Table 6 shows that James and San Antonio defensive specialist Bruce Bowen – who defended James for most of the series and thus was often mentioned in conjunction with James within text – were the only U.S. players that had their names appear at least once in each of the five international newspapers that published articles on the 2007 NBA finals. James also dominated the headlines of international articles as his name or nickname appeared 10 times in international headlines, compared to a total of just four attributions in headlines of international papers for the other combined 20 U.S. players on the two teams' rosters.

San Antonio's three international star players – Duncan, Parker, and Ginobili – were noted most often among international players by the foreign press as shown in Table 7. International players accounted for 38.9% (n=184) of all references in international articles compared to 40.1% of the total references in the four U.S. newspapers. In other words, international players

received more overall references and a higher percentage of references in the U.S. papers than they did in the five international papers that provided coverage of the NBA finals.

By himself, James (N=173) was referenced nearly as often by the international press as the nine international players combined (N=184). James also appeared in more headlines (N=10) in international papers than all nine international players combined (N=6) and as often as the other 29 international and U.S. players on the two teams' combined rosters (N=10).

### **SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION**

The NBA markets itself as an international sport league with ardent fans throughout the world (Brady, 2007; Janoff, 2005). Evidently, sports editors at daily newspapers outside of the U.S. must not believe the NBA is of much interest to their local readers. The most surprising result of this study was the dearth of articles on the 2007 NBA Finals published in newspapers based outside of North America and, in particular, outside of the United States and one Canadian city.

From the 20 international newspapers examined, 15 newspapers published no articles or columns on the NBA finals. Most of these newspapers could have easily published the available wire copy from news services (e.g., Associated Press) but chose to give no attention to the NBA finals. Of the 11 countries represented amongst those 20 newspapers, seven published no articles on the NBA finals: Brazil, China, Great Britain, Israel, Japan, Scotland, Singapore. From that list, Brazil, China, and Great Britain have players in the NBA (NBA.com, 2008). Ironically, among the five Brazilians on NBA rosters in 2006-07 was Anderson Varejao, who was a key member of the Cleveland Cavaliers. Stern has made increasing his league's popularity in China one of the NBA's prime missions (Euchner, 2008; NBA.com, 2008), and an international-high five newspapers from Great Britain were included for examination. However, none of the six newspapers from those two countries published a single article on the 2007 NBA Finals.

It should be noted the only Chinese newspaper examined in this study, the *South China Morning Post*, is based out of Hong Kong, a Chinese territory but one that may have more cultural ties to the United Kingdom than China. Thus, the NBA's popularity in China may have not spread to Hong Kong. Still, the fact that the *South China Morning Post* is published in English should have increased the likelihood it publishing NBA articles, since U.S. business persons traveling abroad can read them. In fact, all of these 20 international newspapers are published exclusively in English or at least produce a version in English. However, it could be argued publishing in English should increase the likelihood of these newspapers printing articles on the NBA..

The two Canadian newspapers produced 79.4% of all international articles in the population. Both of those papers – *The Globe and Mail* and *The Toronto Star* – are based out of Toronto, currently the only non-U.S. city to host an NBA franchise. This shows that Stern's goal of placing NBA expansion franchises in other continents may be the best if not the only way to generate local print media coverage within those markets.

The NBA boasts of its cosmopolitan appeal by noting that its telecasts are shown in 215 different countries (Euchner, 2008; NBA.com., 2008). However, Falcous and Maguire (2006) concluded the NBA is constrained in its ability to fully control its brand image internationally. The NBA occasionally offers free or cheap programming to get on television in many foreign markets (Andrews, 1999; Brady, 2007). But what are shown on these television markets are often pre-packaged highlights designed to attract mostly youth audiences (Emerson, 1993; Falcous & Maguire, 2006). Thus, the majority of NBA fans in international markets may be

youths who are less likely to read daily newspapers but are more likely to help increase traffic on Web sites that provide NBA content.

The only minor surprise in the amount of U.S. coverage of the 2007 NBA Finals was that the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* (N=90) published considerably more articles than the *San Antonio Express-News* (N=62), even though the San Antonio Spurs won the NBA title by sweeping the Cleveland Cavaliers in four games. However, the victory marked the Spurs' third NBA title in five years and fourth championship over eight years. Competing for a championship may have been more exciting to the fans of the Cavaliers as the city of Cleveland had not won a major team sports title since the Browns captured the National Football League title in 1964 (Grange, 2007). No U.S. city with at least three teams in the four major professional team sport leagues (Major League Baseball, NBA, National Football League, National Hockey League) has a longer on-going streak without winning a single title in any of the four most popular men's pro sport leagues (Grange, 2007).

Little analysis can be offered on the number of references used by domestic and international newspapers on U.S. and foreign players since there was so little coverage of the NBA finals by the international publications examined. It was interesting that U.S.-born Cleveland superstar LeBron James accounted for an even higher percentage of all references in international articles (62%) than James did for articles in U.S. papers (45.9%). Even with James dominating ink-space in most newspapers, international players in the NBA finals were referenced more often on average than the U.S. players in all newspaper categories examined (U.S. local, U.S. national, international). Still, it is noteworthy that on average international players received a higher overall percentage of references in U.S. newspapers than in international publication, thus nullifying charges of favoritism or even nationalism by the U.S. press. Of course, the prevalence of coverage of international athletes was at least in part due to the success of the Spurs, whose top three scorers – Duncan, Ginobili, and Parker – were international players.

There is very little research on the international media coverage of the NBA and most figures in this area are provided by the NBA. Therefore, future quantitative and qualitative academic studies need to be completed on the amount and types of coverage the NBA and its players receive through various types of local foreign media (i.e., television, newspapers, Internet, sport magazines, etc.). Researchers could also examine the amount of coverage international players receive from media outlets in their host countries compared to NBA players from different nations. Finally, it may be difficult, but it would be ideal to examine media coverage the NBA receives in local foreign markets in languages other than English.

### REFERENCES

- Andrews, D. (December 1999). Whither the NBA, whither America? *Peace Review*, 11(4), 505-511.
- Balfour, F. (October 23, 2007). A slam dunk for the NBA in China. *Sports Business*. Retrieved from [http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/oct2007/gb20071023\\_180498.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/oct2007/gb20071023_180498.htm)
- Bradsher, K. (September 19, 2007). New push into China by NBA. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/19/business/worldbusiness/19hoops.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/19/business/worldbusiness/19hoops.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)

Brady, D. (October 8, 2007). Heidi Ueberroth; The NBA marketing executive is behind a big global expansion. *Business Week*. Retrieved from [http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/content/sep2007/db20070925\\_869276.htm?chan=top+news\\_special+report+--+the+power+100\\_special+report](http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/content/sep2007/db20070925_869276.htm?chan=top+news_special+report+--+the+power+100_special+report)

BurrellesLuce (2007). Top 100 US daily newspapers. Retrieved from [http://www.burrellesluce.com/top100/2007\\_Top\\_100List.pdf](http://www.burrellesluce.com/top100/2007_Top_100List.pdf)

Business Wire. (January 14, 2008). NBA forms new China entity. Retrieved from <http://www.pr-inside.com/nba-forms-new-china-entity-r385976.htm>

Eisenburg, D. (March 31, 2003). The NBA's global game plan. *Time Europe*, 161(13), 115-118.

Euchner, C. (January/February 2008). Hoop dreams. *The American: A Magazine of Ideas*. Retrieved from <http://www.american.com/archive/2008/january-february-magazine-contents/hoop-dreams>

Emerson, R. (November 8, 1993). 'Globalball'. *The Bulletin*, pp. 77-82.

Falcous, M., & Maguire, J. (2006). Imagining 'America': The NBA and local-global mediascapes. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 41(1), 59-78.

Fay, T.G., Snyder, D. (2007). A North American perspective on International Sport. In. B. Parks, J. Quarterman, & L. Thibault (Eds.), *Contemporary sport management* (3rd ed.) (pp. 163-188). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Grange, M. (2007, June 12). King James looks to light up Cleveland for the first time; Ohio hopes homegrown Cavaliers star can reverse fortunes, bring city its first champion since 1964. *The Globe and Mail*, p. S3.

Hardin, M. (2005). Stopped at the gate: Women's sports, 'reader interest,' and decision-making by editors. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82(1), 62-77.

Janoff, B. (December 12, 2005). NBA marketing mantra: Think global, act local. *Brandweek*, 46(45), 11-14.

Kernan, K. (2000). *Tim Duncan: Slam Duncan*. Champaign, IL: Sports Publishing.

Kian, E.M. (2007). Gender in sports writing by the print media: An exploratory examination of writers' experiences and attitudes. *The SMART (Sport Management and Related Topics) Journal*, 4(1), 5-26.

Larmer, B. (September/October 2005). The center of the world. *Foreign Policy*, 150, 66-74.

Lee, M. (October 18, 2007). The NBA in China: Opening a super market. *The Washington Post*, p. E01. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/17/AR2007101702218.html>

Lloyd, B. (November 19, 2007). The new abroad. *DNR*, 37 (47), 25.

Lynch, D. (October 14, 2004). China, NBA become fast-breaking friends. *USA Today*. Retrieved February 3, 2008, from [http://www.olympic-usa.org/11767\\_27512.htm](http://www.olympic-usa.org/11767_27512.htm)

National Basketball Association. (2006, November). Record 83 international players on NBA rosters fosters from 2006-07 season. Retrieved from [http://www.nba.com/players/international\\_players\\_2006-07.html](http://www.nba.com/players/international_players_2006-07.html)

Neuendorf, K.A. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Oates, T., & Polumbaum, J. (June 2004). Agile big man: The flexible marketing of Yao Ming. *The Journal of Pacific History*, 7(2), 187-210.

Rui, Z. (July 5, 2007). Chinadaily. (July 5, 2007). Sky is the limit for NBA in China: Stern. *China Daily*. Retrieved from [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/sports/2007-07/05/content\\_910538.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/sports/2007-07/05/content_910538.htm)

Silver, A., & Sutton, W.A. (June/July 2000). An interview with Adam Silver, president and chief operating officer, NBA Entertainment. *International Journal of Sport Marketing & Sponsorship*, 2(2), 101-110.

Warren, J. (January 28, 2008). NBA makes right moves, goes global. *Chicago Tribune*, p. 2.



**TABLE 1**

**INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPERS EXAMINED**

<b>International Newspapers</b>	<b>Base Country</b>
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	Great Britain
<i>The Daily Yomiuri</i>	Japan
<i>The Dominion Post</i>	New Zealand
<i>Financial Times</i>	Great Britain
<i>Gazeta Mercantil Online</i>	Brazil
<i>The Globe and Mail</i>	Canada
<i>The Guardian</i>	Great Britain
<i>The Herald</i>	Scotland
<i>The Independent</i>	Great Britain
<i>The Irish Times</i>	Ireland
<i>Jerusalem Post</i>	Israel
<i>New Straits Times</i>	Malaysia
<i>The New Zealand Herald</i>	New Zealand
<i>The Observer</i>	Great Britain
<i>The Press</i>	New Zealand
<i>The Scotsman</i>	Scotland
<i>South China Morning Post</i>	China
<i>The Straits Times</i>	Singapore
<i>The Toronto Star</i>	Canada

**TABLE 2**

**SOURCES FOR ALL ARTICLES**

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Total Articles</b>	<b>% of Total Articles</b>
<u>U.S. NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS</u>	68	26.8%
<i>The New York Times</i>	18	7.1%
<i>USA Today</i>	50	19.7%
<u>U.S. LOCAL PUBLICATIONS</u>	152	59.8%
(Cleveland) <i>Plain Dealer</i>	90	35.4%
<i>San Antonio Express-News</i>	62	24.4%
<u>INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS</u>	34	13.4%
<i>The Globe and Mail</i> (Canada)	8	3.1%
<i>The Irish Times</i>	2	0.8%
<i>The New Zealand Herald</i>	1	0.4%
<i>New Straits Times</i> (Malaysia)	4	1.6%
<i>The Toronto Star</i> (Canada)	19	7.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>100%</b>

**TABLE 3**

**NATIONALITIES FOR 2007 NBA FINALS' ROSTERS**

(Note: Starters have an asterisk by their names)

<b>Cleveland Player</b>	<b>Native Country</b>
Shannon Brown	United States
Daniel Gibson	United States
Drew Gooden*	United States
Zydrunas Ilgauskas*	Lithuania
Larry Hughes*	United States
LeBron James*	United States
Damon Jones	United States
Dwayne Jones	United States
Donyell Marshall	United States
Ira Newble	United States
Sasha Pavolvic*	Serbia
Scott Pollard	United States
Eric Snow	United States
Anderson Varejao	Brazil
David Wesley	United States
<b>San Antonio Player</b>	<b>Native Country</b>
Brent Barry	United States
Matt Bonner	United States
Bruce Bowen*	United States
Jackie Butler	United States
Tim Duncan*	Virgin Islands
Francisco Elson	Netherlands
Melvin Ely	United States
Michael Finley*	United States
Manu Ginobili	Argentina
Robert Horry	United States
Fabricio Oberto*	Argentina
Tony Parker*	France
Beno Udrih	Slovenia
Jacque Vaughn	United States
James White	United States

**TABLE 4**

**U.S. NEWSPAPER REFERENCES OF U.S. PLAYERS**

<b>Players</b>	<b><i>Plain Deal</i> 90 Articles</b>	<b>Local Papers 152 Articles</b>	<b><i>USA Today</i> 50 Articles</b>	<b>U.S. Total 220 Articles</b>
Barry	11	35 (1)	19 (1)	58 (2)
Bonner	2	7	-	7
Bowen	76	154 (3)	40	211 (3)
Brown	-	-	-	0
Butler	-	2	-	2
Ely	-	10	-	10
Finley	13	45 (2)	15	62 (2)
Gibson	72 (3)	126 (4)	71 (3)	221 (9)
Gooden	37	41	9	54
Horry	13	96 (3)	34 (3)	168 (7)
Hughes	66 (4)	101 (4)	22 (1)	127 (5)
James	469 (26)	631 (37)	143 (14)	931 (55)
Jones, Da	21 (1)	24 (1)	1	26 (1)
Jones, Dw	-	-	-	0
Marshall	37 (2)	57 (2)	5	68 (2)
Newble	21 (2)	21 (2)	-	21 (2)
Pollard	4	10 (1)	-	10 (1)
Snow	16	25	16 (1)	42 (1)
Vaughn	2	7	9	16
Wesley	2	2	9 (1)	12 (1)
White	-	2	-	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>862 (38)</b>	<b>1376 (60)</b>	<b>393 (24)</b>	<b>2028 (91)</b>

**TABLE 5**

**U.S. NEWSPAPER REFERENCES OF FOREIGN PLAYERS**

<b>Players</b>	<b><i>Plain Dealer</i> 90 Articles</b>	<b>Local Papers 152 Articles</b>	<b><i>USA Today</i> 50 Articles</b>	<b>National Papers 68 articles</b>	<b>U.S. Total 220 Articles</b>
Duncan	107 (1)	240 (2)	125 (4)	173 (5)	413 (7)
Elson	1	28 (1)	2	2	30 (1)
Ginobili	63 (1)	182 (8)	58 (1)	81 (1)	263 (9)
Ilgauskas	23 (1)	53 (2)	18 (1)	30 (1)	83 (3)
Oberto	14	27	8	9	36
Parker	150 (10)	234 (14)	106 (1)	158 (3)	392 (17)
Pavlovic	10	16	21 (2)	40 (2)	56 (2)
Udrih	-	9 (1)	1	1	10 (1)
Varejao	47 (2)	63 (2)	9	13	76 (2)
<b>Total</b>	<b>415 (15)</b>	<b>852 (30)</b>	<b>348 (9)</b>	<b>507 (12)</b>	<b>1359 (42)</b>

**TABLE 6**

**INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER REFERENCES OF U.S. PLAYERS**

<b>Players</b>	<b>Globe and Mail 8 Articles</b>	<b>Irish Times 2 Articles</b>	<b>New Straits 4 Articles</b>	<b>New Zealand Herald 1 Article</b>	<b>Toronto Star 19 Articles</b>	<b>Total Int. Papers 34 articles</b>
Barry	1	-	2	-	-	3
Bonner	-	-	-	-	7	7
Bowen	2	1	4	1	8 (1)	16(1)
Brown	-	-	-	-	-	-
Butler	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ely	-	-	-	-	-	-
Finley	1	-	1	-	1	3
Gibson	21 (1)	1	4	-	20 (1)	46 (2)
Gooden	1	-	-	-	2	3
Horry	1	1	-	-	3	5
Hughes	2	-	4	-	2	8
James	71 (5)	13	21 (1)	4	64 (4)	173 (10)
Jones, Da	1	-	-	-	1	2
Jones, Dw	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marshall	-	-	-	-	-	-
Newble	-	-	-	-	10 (1)	10 (1)
Pollard	-	-	-	-	-	-
Snow	1	-	1	-	-	2
Vaughn	1	-	-	-	-	1
Wesley	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>103 (6)</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>37 (1)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>118 (7)</b>	<b>279 (14)</b>

**TABLE 7**

**INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER REFERENCES OF FOREIGN PLAYERS**

<b>Players</b>	<b>Globe and Mail 8 Articles</b>	<b>Irish Times 2 Articles</b>	<b>New Straits Times 4 Articles</b>	<b>New Zealand Herald 1 Article</b>	<b>Toronto Star 19 Articles</b>	<b>Total Int. Papers 34 articles</b>
Duncan	16	21	16 (1)	-	20 (1)	73 (2)
Elson	-	-	2	-	2 (1)	4 (1)
Ginobili	8	5	2	-	12	27
Ilgauskas	2	-	1	-	9	12
Oberto	3	-	1	-	3	7
Parker	11	5	9	-	28 (3)	53 (3)
Pavlovic	1	-	-	-	1	2
Udrih	-	-	-	-	-	-
Varejao	2	-	-	-	4	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31 (1)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>79 (5)</b>	<b>184 (6)</b>

### **MARKETING PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING TO CHILDREN: AN ETHICAL EXAMINATION**

**MATTHEW J. BERNTHAL, PHD, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

---

#### **INTRODUCTION**

As noted by Laczniaik, Burton, and Murphy (1999), there has been a notable lack of attention given to marketing ethics in the sport literature, and the attention which has been given has focused on an important yet relatively limited set of topics, much of it addressing the issue of ambush marketing (e.g., Meenaghan, 1996; O’Sullivan & Murphy, 1998). The practice and study of marketing ethics is as important for the sport and entertainment industry as it is for any other. Kotler’s (1997) “societal marketing concept” suggests that organizations should build social and ethical considerations into their marketing practices, acting in the best long-term interests of society. The Code of Ethics of the American Marketing Association (AMA) also promotes the importance of marketing ethics, stating that marketers should not do harm knowingly, and should offer products and services that are safe and fit for their intended uses.

Reasons can be posited as to why such a lack of attention to marketing ethics exists within the sports literature. For instance, one might charge that within academic research as a whole, dismissal of research considered to be colored by a normative or overly polemical tone is commonplace (perhaps rightfully so). Further, one might harbor the notion that the consumption of sport in its various forms has relatively little potential for harm. In other words, challenging the marketing of other consumer products within an ethical framework, such as marketing tobacco to teens and credit cards to the young and to the mentally disabled, seems a valuable pursuit given the potential harm these products can do to consumers. However, one might see the viewing of sport, even sport that raises ethical eyebrows, far down the potential for harm scale when compared to the potential harm that comes from teen smoking and teens and the mentally disabled using credit cards. However, the explosion in popularity of one form of sport, or more accurately “sports entertainment”, begs ethical examination, due to its targeting of children and its potential to cause harm.

#### **THE POPULARITY OF PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING AS “SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT”**

Professional wrestling is a very popular form of entertainment. World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), the professional wrestling industry leader in virtually every statistic (e.g., television ratings, live event attendance, licensing revenue) broadcasts over 7,500 hours of television programming to over 130 countries in 23 different languages throughout Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and Latin America. Each week, WWE television is viewed by an average of 16 million people in the U.S. alone, and revenues for the NYSE traded company approach a half-billion dollars annually (\$485.7 million in 2007). Further, attendance for WWE events has grown from 1.1 million fans in 1997 to 2.1 million in 2007, with a current average ticket price of almost \$50 ( “Live and Televised Entertainment,” 2008). WWE’s flagship show, *Monday Night RAW* on USA Network is consistently the number one rated regularly scheduled cable television program, while the company’s other core show, *Friday Night Smackdown* on CW, which was the most watched program on that network among all male demographics and is often the top-rated program of the night in all of television among males aged 18-34 (note: *Smackdown* programming is now aired on My Network TV). Combined, *RAW* and *Smackdown* drew average weekly Nielsen ratings of 6.25 in 2007, while yet another WWE television program, *ECW: Extreme Championship Wrestling*, drew an average Nielsen rating of 1.47 in 2007. In addition, *ECW: Extreme Championship Wrestling*, is the Sci Fi Channel’s most popular show in terms of households and total viewers (Guthrie, 2007). The 7.72 combined Nielsen rating for *RAW*, *Smackdown*, and *ECW* clearly highlight wrestling’s popularity (Guthrie,



2007). Indeed, in recent years, pro wrestling has drawn ratings that would make many sports envious. In addition to strong television ratings, the WWE stages approximately 350 live events per year, including more than 60 international events, and wwe.com averages 17.5 million unique visitors a month (Guthrie, 2007). This popularity and ubiquity has resulted in the WWE becoming a publicly held global enterprise with a \$1.2 billion market cap (Guthrie, 2007).

To achieve this popularity surge, pro wrestling has significantly transformed and repackaged their product. Where it once was promoted as “real sport,” it now unashamedly admits that it is testosterone-laced theater. Where it once tried to hide the predetermined nature of the results, it now proudly promotes itself as entertaining camp. As WWE states on its website, “Our formula is straightforward. We develop compelling storylines anchored by our Superstars” (“Business overview,” 2008). It is now recognized as full-fledged soap opera, with the actors (wrestlers) free to act, not restrained by the pretense that they are engaged in a legitimate sport contest. This has led to viewers tuning in to see what will happen next, to see the creative, unencumbered direction in which the writers will take the stories. As alluded to earlier, the WWE now labels this product not sport, but “sports entertainment”, and the wrestlers are now not only called wrestlers, but “Superstars” (note: the company is has recently has been moving more toward reference their “Superstars” as “Entertainers” rather than “Sports Entertainers”), engaging in activities typical of mainstream entertainment stars (e.g., starring in major motion pictures, television programs, and appearing as guests on popular talk shows). Indeed, the WWE has capitalized on this by starting WWE Films, which has produced such films as 2007’s *The Condemned*, starring Stone Cold Steve Austin, and 2006’s *The Marine*, starring John Cena. Wrestling has emancipated itself from the restraints of sport legitimacy, and this has allowed many people who have avoided it in the past to embrace it for what it is (entertainment) and not what it is not, much like they would embrace any other fictional television show. Wrestling fans now come, unashamedly, from many different occupations, income levels, and educational levels (Ashley, Dollar, Wigley, Gillentine, & Daughtrey, 2000). A manifestation of this can be seen in the variety of advertisers on wrestling programming, which include or have included, among others, cosmetic firms, banks, hotels, pharmaceuticals, and long-distance carriers.

While repackaged as “sports entertainment”, wrestling has also exploded in popularity due to its successful targeting of the male 18-34 year old demographic. Wrestling, in particular the WWE, has attracted this group through ratcheting up the sexual and violent content in its events and programming, content that many young men value in their entertainment. For example, a sampling of WWE programming (*RAW* and *Smackdown*) reveals the following:

- Mark Henry, a WWE wrestler (and former U.S. Olympian) also known as Sexual Chocolate, leans back in his dressing room chair as a woman begins seductively rubbing and kissing her way down his bare chest and stomach. The woman, a “gift” from Henry’s two WWE female valets, then lowers her head beyond the view of the television camera (the picture stops at his waist) as Henry proceeds to arch his head back, close his eyes and moan in ecstasy. The activity being performed onscreen is not ambiguous to the viewer, though it is not directly seen. The woman finishes her task and Henry graciously thanks her as he caresses her body. When he reaches a certain part of “her” anatomy, he shockingly discovers that his lover is not actually a she, but a he. Henry had been duped by his valets who had grown tired of his brand of macho chauvinism. His two valets then formed their own partnership called PMS (Pretty Mean Sisters) and set out to humiliate other male wrestlers.
- Triple H, one of the WWE’s top superstars, dresses as his masked rival Kane, and stages a scene in a funeral home where he, inside of an open casket, engages in necrophilia with Kane’s deceased girlfriend Katie Vick. The act was taken to completion, upon which Triple

H, still hovering over the body in the casket exclaims upon wiping a substance off of Ms. Vick's head, "I guess I really did screw your brains out."

- Upset at what he sees as insubordination by his "bastard son" Hornswoggle (a "leprechaun" wrestling character), WWE Chairman and on-screen personality Vince McMahon brings another wrestler, JBL, into the ring for a confrontation with Hornswoggle. John "Bradshaw" Layfield (better known as "JBL") handcuffs Hornswoggle's protector, Finlay, to the steel cage that surrounds the ring. McMahon proceeds to profusely whip Hornswoggle with his belt. JBL then drops elbows on the prone Hornswoggle, beats him, and then throws him like a rag doll into the side of the steel cage.

Whether it is with content such as this, or the antics provided by characters such as Val Venis (a former WWE superstar who portrayed the role of an ex-porn star impressed by his past career and remaining prowess) Vince McMahon seems to have captured the pulse of the baser instincts of this 18-34 year old male demographic, a demographic strongly coveted by advertisers.

While a majority of pro wrestling's audience is indeed the young male adult, it has been and remains a very popular form of entertainment among children under 18 years old. Rosellini (1999) cited Nielsen figures showing *RAW* drawing more teenage male viewers than Monday Night Football, and showing a full 15% of televised wrestling viewers being under 11 years old. More recently, Nielsen Media Research shows that WWE *Smackdown* was watched by the second most number of children aged 2-11 (492,000) during the week of July 28 through August 3, 2008 ("Nielsen's ratings for July 28 Aug. 3", 2008). Children are a significant portion of the audience for live wrestling events, televised wrestling (both regular and pay-per-view programming), and both industry (e.g. [wwe.com](http://wwe.com)) and fan-operated wrestling Internet sites (e.g., [www.wrestlingnewsworld.com](http://www.wrestlingnewsworld.com), [www.prowrestlingscoops.com](http://www.prowrestlingscoops.com)). The industry recognizes and actively capitalizes on this fact. The WWE, in fact, promotes its appeal to children to potential investors and corporate partners, offering news releases trumpeting its television ratings among children. For example, a 2007 release promotes the New Year's Day *RAW* program as being the number one primetime cable program among households, total viewers, men 18-34, and male teens 12-17. This same release promotes *RAW* as posting season high ratings among males 6-11, persons 6-11, adults 18-49 and adults 25-54 ("WWE ratings see," 2007). Similarly, the WWE corporate website promotes the fact that Friday Night *Smackdown* is the top rated program on Friday nights among total teens, male teens, and males 12-34 ("Business overview," 2008).

The WWE's intentional targeting of children is also evidenced by past weekend morning programming for children that highlighted the events of the more popular (and more violent and risqué) weeknight programs and encouraged children to tune in to these programs. The value of children to the wrestling industry is also evidenced by their licensing revenue stemming from the sale of consumer products, many of which are targeted to children and teens. Licensed products marketed to and purchased by children include action figures and other toys, apparel, video games, DVDs, and more. The WWE is currently marketing children's Easter Egg Baskets on its website. One of the offerings is a D-Generation X Easter Basket, named after the wrestlers who form a group called D-Generation X (their signature salute is a crotch chop while their signature saying is "Let's Get Ready to Suck It"). The WWE maintains licenses with approximately 120 licensees, with products sold through Wal-Mart, Target, Toys-R Us, and other retailers. WWE video games alone have generated over \$1 billion in revenues since 1999 ("Consumer products," 2008), and the company's licensing operations represent 23% of their revenues ("WWE overview," 2008). The WWE also indirectly benefits from advertising sold to firms which target children on WWE programming, including toy, video game, and food product firms. Indeed, IHF, the marketer of Chef-Boy-R-Dee, saw its sales

increase 6% in 1999, an increase attributed primarily to its advertising on WWE television using wrestlers as endorsers of the product (Thompson, 1999).

In becoming increasingly attractive to the young male adult, has pro wrestling put a potentially harmful (both physically and developmentally) product in the path of children? Is the pro wrestling industry, knowingly or unknowingly, engaging in unethical marketing practice? The first question has received attention in the mainstream press, particularly during the several years following an incident involving the death of a six year old girl at the hands of a playmate who killed her by imitating moves he had seen on professional wrestling (e.g., Macintyre, 2001). In addition, organizations such as the Parent's Television Council (PTC) have taken a vocal stance against pro wrestling, even to the point of activism such as encouraging consumer boycotts against firms which advertise on WWE programming. However, to fully examine both questions posed above, it is beneficial to do so based on research on aggression and televised violence and appropriate marketing ethics theory.

### **MARKETING ETHICS, TELEVISED VIOLENCE, AND PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING**

Pro wrestling's targeting of children is best examined under teleological and social contract theory perspectives. The study of ethics is essentially comprised of two sets of theories. The first is teleological ethics (utilitarianism or ethical egoism), which is defined as theories of ethics according to which the rightness of an act is determined by its end. Teleological ethics focuses on the consequences of actions and behaviors in determining their worth (Ferrell & Gresham, 1985). The second set of theories is deontological ethics, which state that certain actions are right or wrong, regardless of their consequences. While ethical evaluations are most often made using a combination of teleological and deontological principles, most prior attention to ethical issues in target marketing has taken a teleological perspective (e.g., Pollay, 1993). Under a teleological framework, an ethical evaluation of pro wrestling's targeting of children must be examined in light of its potential negative consequences on the development of the attitudes and behaviors of children who consume it.

Another important consideration in ethical evaluations of targeting strategies is social contract theory, which states that corporations exist only through the cooperation and commitment of society. In essence, this means that there is a social contract for business that provides corporate legitimacy on the basis of the consent of those affected by the business (Dunfee, Smith, & Ross, 1999). To a degree, a business (in this case the professional wrestling industry) and society hold each other responsible for the condition of their mutual existence. Like teleology, this perspective also calls for the examination of pro wrestling's targeting of children in terms of its effect on the attitudes and behaviors of children who consume it, as this clearly represents a component of the societal condition.

In line with both teleology and social contracts, a significant amount of literature on ethical targeting has focused on the role of product harm and consumer vulnerability (e.g., Rittenburg & Parathasarathy, 1997; Smith & Cooper-Martin, 1997; Wolburg, 2005). Vulnerable consumers are defined as those who are more susceptible to economic, physical, or (as is potentially the case with wrestling and children), psychological harm because of characteristics that limit their ability to maximize their utility and well-being. Essentially, the perception of a targeting strategy as unethical increases as product harm and the target market's vulnerability increases. Under this ethical umbrella, then, it is necessary to examine the extent to which pro wrestling has the potential to cause psychological and/or physical harm, and the extent to which children are particularly vulnerable to this harm.

### **PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING'S POTENTIAL FOR HARM**

Aggression has been defined as "behavior that inflicts harm, either physically or psychologically, including explicit or implicit threats and nonverbal behavior" and "any action

that serves to diminish something in a physical, psychological, social, or emotional manner” (National Television Violence Study, 1997, p. 37). Research examining the effect of viewing televised violence on aggression has generally established a small to moderate relationship between the two. For example, in a meta-analysis of 556 studies (survey and experimental) on media violence and aggression, Paik and Comstock (1994) arrive at a small to medium effect size in field studies, and a large effect size in lab studies. Other studies have concluded that viewing televised violence is causally related to increased aggression and that this relationship persists over time (e.g., Huesmann, Eron, Lefkowitz, & Walder, 1984; Huesmann, 1986; Singer, Singer, & Rapaczynski, 1984). Further, many studies have specifically examined the effect of the viewing of televised violence by children and its effect on their subsequent aggression and found a causal relationship (e.g., Christakis & Zimmerman, 2007; Ellis & Sekyra, 1972; Liebert & Baron, 1971; Murray, 2008). While no study has proven a direct causal relationship specifically between watching wrestling and an increase in aggression, a widely publicized correlational study by DuRant et. al (2008) found that after adjusting for ethnicity, gender, median family income, age, region of the country, other fighting behaviors, and family composition of 16-20 year olds, the frequency of watching wrestling was associated with violent behaviors such as having tried to hurt someone with a weapon and threatening to hurt someone with a weapon.

Three major findings regarding the effect of televised violence on aggression have been consistent in this literature over the past three decades, two of which are relevant to pro wrestling (the third, increased fearfulness about becoming a victim of violence, will not be discussed). The first stems from social learning theory (Bandura, 1973), and it is that viewing televised violence increases aggression toward others through learning and imitation. For example, Bandura has shown that children will show an increase in aggressive behavior as a result of exposure to aggressive models. This effect occurs whether or not the model is a live person, a person dressed as a cartoon character in a film, or a filmed human model (each of which applies to pro wrestling). In the case of wrestling, this would equate to children viewing pro wrestlers as attitudinal and behavioral models, and imitating their language, gestures, and behaviors in their own settings. In a survey of school teachers, Bernthal (2003) found that teachers reported prolific student imitation of the aggressive language and behavior that the students had watched on televised professional wrestling.

The second major finding regarding the effect of televised violence on aggression is that viewing televised violence tends to have a desensitizing effect on viewers (National Television Violence Study, 1997). Material that once was seen as offensive or degrading to victims may be evaluated as less so with continued exposure. Indeed, many wrestling fans who defend criticisms of wrestling program content often do so by claiming that the programming content is not particularly aggressive (physically, sexually, or otherwise). These fans, including children, state that pro wrestling does not contain any more aggression (attitudes, language, and behavior) than does afternoon soap operas or prime-time comedies and dramas. Interestingly, this one of the main defenses WWE owner Vince McMahon has given against criticism of his product.

While a link has been established between television violence and aggression, contextual factors have been identified which strengthen this relationship, and many of these contextual factors are indeed present in professional wrestling. First, children and adults are more likely to attend to and learn from models who are perceived as attractive, and it has been shown that children as young as four can distinguish “good guys” from “bad guys” (Huesmann & Eron, 1986; National Television Violence Study, 1997). Certainly, the pro wrestling portrays its athletes, particularly the “babyfaces” (the industry term for “good guys”) as attractive characters to be emulated.

Second, when violence is perceived as justified, learning of aggression is increased (e.g., Maiuro & Eberle, 1989; Rule & Ferguson, 1996). Indeed, in a content analysis of professional wrestling television programming, Tamborini et. al (2005) found that wrestling portrays violence as justified moreso than do other prime-time television genres. Related to this, a significant portion of each wrestling event is comprised of, in both wrestling action itself and in dialogue between wrestlers, aggressive response to shame. Wrestlers on each and every broadcast react to injustices against them perpetrated by other wrestlers. In the context of babyfaces reacting to injustices by “heels” (the industry term for “bad guys”) with aggressive language and behavior, this aggression might be particularly attractive. Along these lines, research has shown that children who report more involvement with professional wrestling (on a 22-item wrestling involvement scale) tended to respond more aggressively to shame as measured by an 8-item scale (Bernthal & Medway, 2005).

Third, the presence of weapons has been shown to increase the learning of aggression (National Television Violence Study, 1997). The use of weapons in pro wrestling has become increasingly commonplace. Wrestlers are hit with steel chairs, kendo sticks, trash cans, stop signs, and other objects (including even the proverbial kitchen sink), thrown on beds of tacks, and hit with mock baseball bats and sledgehammers. Indeed, the WWE previously had an established “Hardcore Division” where matches consisted solely of the use of these weapons.

Fourth, humor in the context of violence has been shown to increase the learning of aggression. For example, Baron (1978) found that exposure to hostile humor increased subjects’ aggression toward people, while nonhostile humor reduced it. One of the main reasons for this effect is that humor fosters an emotional desensitization to violence, leading the audience to perceive the violence/aggression as significantly less serious, and indeed, relatively less violent than if the humor were not present (Gunter & Furnharm, 1984; Jablonski & Zillmann, 1995). Like weapons, humor has become increasingly prevalent in pro wrestling and is a regular on WWE programming. From the Sexual Chocolate incident described earlier, to a large former wrestler named Rikishi that used to regularly grind his posterior into the faces of horrified opponents, to simple “humorous” insults given by one wrestler to another (e.g. The Rock, Chris Jericho, etc.), the violence portrayed in pro wrestling takes place with humor (however boorish) as a regular companion.

Fifth, rewards for violence increases the learning of aggression (National Television Violence Study, 1997) and is particularly applicable to pro wrestling. Heels and babyfaces alike are rewarded for violence with wins, audience approval, and championship belts. Indeed, the WWE has “non-traditional” matches on a regular basis in which the winner is determined by rules such as whomever makes the opponent bleed first (a “First Blood” match) and whomever makes the opponent quit first (an “I Quit” match).

Given agreement with the premise that a relationship between television violence and the learning of aggression has been established, and subsequently examining pro wrestling in light of a number of contextual programmatic factors shown to strengthen this relationship, viewership of professional wrestling by children could potentially lead to their learning of aggression. Given further agreement with the premise that the learning of aggression is attitudinally and potentially physically harmful, it can be concluded that viewing professional wrestling in its current form as sports entertainment indeed has strong potential to cause children harm.

### **CHILDREN’S VULNERABILITY TO PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING’S POTENTIAL FOR HARM**

While pro wrestling appears to provide an environment in which aggression has the potential to be learned, and thus harm has the potential to be caused, it also meets the second criteria for unethical targeting as well, in that when the industry targets children, it targets a segment that



is vulnerable to learning the attitudes and behavior demonstrated on its programming and at its live events. In short, research has shown that children's developing cognitive abilities and limited world experience leaves them particularly vulnerable to learning from the messages of television (e.g., Dorr, 1986; Eron & Huesmann, 1987; Singer & Singer, 1988). Television can and does teach children cognitive scripts which influence their social behavior. These scripts, formed by direct experience or observation, are learned early and serve as a guideline for future behavior (Huesmann, 1986). Simple exposure to the scripts offered by the wrestling industry is not as potentially dangerous as is the fact that these scripts are perceived as "cool." With youth's perception of this content as in-vogue comes the frenzied applause, cheers, and imitation that it generates (Bernthal, 2003). What scripts does pro wrestling teach? Aggressive response to shame, bending and breaking rules to succeed (few matches in today's wrestling are won "cleanly," but rather by some form of scripted cheating behavior), and viewing women first and foremost as sexual objects, to name a few.

Regarding the objectification of women, most pro wrestling organizations, including the dominant WWE, routinely promote their female wrestlers as sexual objects. The WWE has featured matches with their "Divas" (the WWE term for their female wrestlers) such as the "Bra and Panties Match" (where the winner is the first to strip her opponent down to her bra and panties), "Pudding Matches" (where the bikini-clad combatants wrestle in a pit of chocolate pudding), and "Paddle on a Pole" matches, with the winner the first to climb a pole, obtain a paddle, and spank her incapacitated opponent. Indeed, a WWE program attempted to gather ratings for a Monday night program through in-program promotion of "HLA" (Hot Lesbian Action, which was to take place in the ring that night). This included promotion of such activity during the prime-time hour, hours when children are likely to be and are indeed viewing. Further, lingerie posters, Divas "Undressed" DVDs, and other sexually provocative items have been among the top sellers on WWE.com. It has also become commonplace for the WWE to leverage their Divas by having them appear in full undress in Playboy magazine (e.g., Sable, Torrie Wilson, Candice Michelle, Maria). A cursory examination of wrestling related web sites, including industry operated and privately operated sites, reveals the strong connection between the objectification of women and the professional wrestling industry, with the vast majority of sites offering image sections devoted to bikini and lingerie clad women, and not a small percentage of privately operated sites offering partial or full nudity. Though he is no longer a WWE Superstar, of the WWE's more popular wrestler's in recent years was The Godfather, who played a pimp character. When he wrestled, he paraded to the ring a bevy of women he referred to as his "hos", while he was referred to himself as "Pimp Daddy." One can only hope that such cognitive scripts aren't among those learned by young boys watching professional wrestling, but research noted earlier (e.g., Huesmann, 1986) suggests otherwise.

### **CONCLUSION**

Does professional wrestling, by increasing product attractiveness to and actively targeting the male 18-34 year old demographic, put a potentially harmful product in the path of children? The answer is yes. The wrestling industry asks society to give children credit. It posits that since children recognize wrestling as staged aggression (i.e., "fake"), they will not use it to form cognitive and behavioral scripts. If similar logic were applied to advertising, it could be concluded that since consumers recognize advertising as just that, advertising, it should also have little to no effect on consumer behavior. Yet the television industry claims just the opposite, as does the wrestling industry in regard to advertising on its programming. Somewhat ironically, while the television industry earns large sums of money through the sale of advertising by (accurately) claiming that televised advertisements do indeed influence viewer's behavior, and while it also claims that television is a valuable medium by which positive behaviors can be learned, it oddly claims that televised aggression has little influence on behavior (Singer & Singer, 1988). The wrestling industry has offered the same arguments in defense of its product when critics decry its exposure to children. While the logic behind why



both industries make these claims is obvious from a business perspective, it is nonetheless troubling.

Though it has been argued here that the professional wrestling industry has some culpability for the potential negative effects that can arise from children watching its product, it should be acknowledged that parents or other guardians of children are certainly not without responsibility. Further, it has not been the intent of this article to suggest that every aspect of professional wrestling is potentially harmful to children. Indeed, some positive values such as perseverance, overcoming adversity, playing by the rules, etc. are modeled in wrestling programming, and it would be inconsistent to claim that wrestling is capable of fostering negative outcomes in children while incapable of fostering some positive ones. Future research might even examine potential moderating effects of positive adult supervision on the outcomes of children's' wrestling viewership. However, when one considers prior research establishing that children can learn aggression from televised violence, wrestling programming that includes violence portrayed in contexts that strengthen the learning of aggression, programming that fosters objectification of women and other negative scripts, it can be reasonably posited that the bad outweighs any potential good.

Laczniak and Murphy (1993) and Laczniak, Burton, and Murphy (1999) suggest a series of tests to use in evaluating the ethics of marketing practices, including practices of firms in the sport and entertainment industry. While some tests are deontologically based, two apply to the issue currently under examination. The "consequences test" seeks to determine if there will likely be any major damages to people or organizations resulting from an action (in this case marketing professional wrestling to children). The "justice test" seeks to determine if an action leaves a person or group who is a member of a relatively underprivileged class less well off. If the term underprivileged class is expanded to include a class or market segment that is "vulnerable," which is in the spirit and intent of the justice test, it could be argued that professional wrestling industry, in actively and intentionally targeting children, performs poorly on both tests.

### REFERENCES

- Ashley, F.B., Dollar, J., Wigley, B., Gillentine, J.A., & Daughtrey, C. (2000). Professional wrestling fans: Your next-door neighbors. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 9(3), 140-148.
- Bandura, A. (1973). *Aggression: A social learning analysis*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Baron, R.A. (1978). The influence of hostile and nonhostile humor upon physical aggression. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 4(1), 77-80.
- Bernthal, M.J. (2003). The effects of professional wrestling viewership on children. *The Sport Journal*, 6(3). Retrieved from <http://www.thesportjournal.org/2003Journal/Vol6-No3/wrestling.htm>
- Bernthal, M.J., & Medway, F.J. (2005). An initial exploration into the psychological implications of adolescents' involvement with professional wrestling. *School Psychology International*, 26(2), 224-242.
- Business overview. (2008). World Wrestling Entertainment Corporate. Retrieved from <http://corporate.wwe.com/company/overview.jsp>
- Christakis, D.A., & Zimmerman, F.J. (2007). Violent television viewing during preschool is associated with antisocial behavior during school age. *Pediatrics*, 120, 993-999.

Consumer products. (2008). World Wrestling Entertainment Corporate. Retrieved from <http://corporate.wwe.com/company/consumer.jsp>

Dorr, A. (1986). *Television and children: A special medium for a special audience*. California: Sage.

Dunfee, T.W., Smith, N.C., & Ross, W.T. Jr. (1999). Social contracts and marketing ethics. *Journal of Marketing*, 63(3), 14-32.

DuRant, R.H., Neiberg, R., Champion, H., Rhodes, S.D., & Wolfson, M. (2008). Viewing professional wrestling on television and engaging in violent and other health risk behaviors. *Southern Medical Journal*, 101(2), 129-137.

Ellis, G. T. & Sekyra, F. (1972). The effect of aggressive cartoons on the behavior of first grade children. *Journal of Psychology*, 81(1), 37-43.

Eron, L.D. & Huesmann, L.R. (1987). Television as a source of maltreatment of children. *School Psychology Review*, 16(2), 195-202.

Ferrell, O.C., & Gresham, L. (1985). A contingency framework for understanding ethical decision making in marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 49(3), 87-96.

Gunter, B., & Furnham, A. (1984). Perceptions of television violence: Effects of programme genre and type of violence on viewers' judgements of violent portrayals. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 23(2), 155-164.

Guthrie, M. (2007, June 25). Wrestling marketing muscle. *Broadcasting & Cable*, 12-13.

Huesmann, L.R. (1986). Psychological processes promoting the relation between exposure to media violence and aggressive behavior by the viewer. *Journal of Social Issues*, 42(3), 125-139.

Huesmann, L.R. & Eron, L.D. (Eds). (1986). *Television and the aggressive child: A cross-national comparison*. Hillsdale: Erlbaum.

Huesmann, L.R., Eron, L.D., Lefkowitz, & Walder, L.O. (1984). Stability of aggression over time and generations. *Developmental Psychology*, 20(6), 1120-1134.

Jablonski, C.K., & Zillmann, D. (1995). Humor's role in the trivialization of violence. *Media Psychology: Periodical for Individual and Mass Communication*, 7(2), 122-133.

Kotler, P. (1997). *Marketing management: Analysis, planning, implementation, and control* (9th ed.). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Laczniak, G.R., Burton, R., & Murphy, P.E. (1999). Sports marketing ethics in today's marketplace. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 8(4), 43-53.

Laczniak, G.R., & Murphy, P.E. (1993). *Ethical marketing decisions: The higher road*. Needham Heights. MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Liebert, R.M., & Baron, R.A. (1971). Some immediate effects of televised violence on children's behavior. *Developmental Psychology*, 6, 469-475.

- Live and televised entertainment. (2008). World Wrestling Entertainment Corporate. Retrieved from <http://corporate.wwe.com/company/events.jsp>
- Macintyre, B. (2001, March 10). Life term for wrestling boy, 14, who killed girl. *The Times*, p. 19.
- Maiuro, R.D., & Eberle, J.A. (1989). New developments in research on aggression: An international report. *Violence and Victims*, 4(1), 3-15.
- Meenaghan, T. (1996). Ambush marketing – A threat to corporate sponsorship. *Sloan Management Review*, 103-116.
- Murray, J.P. (2008). Media violence: The effects are both real and strong. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 51(8), 1212-1230.
- National Television Violence Study*. (1997). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Nielsens ratings for July 28 Aug. 3. (2008). *USA Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.usatoday.com/life/television/news/nielsens-charts.htm>
- O'Sullivan, P., & Murphy, P.E. (1998). Ambush marketing: The ethical issues. *Psychology and Marketing*, 15(14), 367-383.
- Paik, H., & Comstock, G. (1994). The effects of television violence on antisocial behavior: A meta-analysis. *Communication Research*, 21(4), 516-546.
- Pollay, R.W. (1993). Targeting the young is an old store: A history of cigarette advertising to the young. In J. B. Schmidt, S. C. Hollander, T. Nevett, & J. N. Sheth (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Sixth Conference on Historical Research in Marketing and Marketing Thought* (pp. 263-282). Atlanta: Emory University Graduate School of Business.
- Rittenburg, T.L., & Parthasarathy, M. (1997). Ethical implications of target market selection. *Journal of Macromarketing*, 17, 49-64.
- Rosellini, L. (1999, May 17). Lords of the ring. *U.S. News and World Report*, 52.
- Rule, B.G., & Ferguson, T.J. (1986). The effects of media violence on attitudes, emotions, and cognitions. *Journal of Social Issues*, 42(3), 29-50.
- Singer, D.G. & Singer, J.L. (1988). *Some hazards of growing up in a television environment: children's aggression and restlessness*. In S. Oskamp (Ed.) *Television as a Social Issue: Applied Social Psychology Annual* (pp.171-188). California: Sage.
- Singer, J.L., Singer, D.C. & Rapaczynski, A. (1984). Family patterns and television viewing as predictors of children's beliefs and aggression. *Journal of Communication*, Spring, 73-89.
- Smith, N.C., & Cooper-Martin, E. (1997). Ethics and target marketing: The role of product harm and consumer vulnerability. *Journal of Marketing*, 61(3), 1-20.
- Tamborini, R., Skalski, P., Lachlan, K., Westerman, D., Davis, J., & Smith, S.L. (2005). The raw nature of televised professional wrestling: Is the violence a cause for concern? *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 49(2), 202-220.

Thompson, S. (1999, November 29). International home foods links its brands to NASCAR, WWF. *Advertising Age*, 70(49), 24.

Wolburg, J.M. (2005). Drawing the line between targeting and patronizing: How “vulnerable” are the vulnerable. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 22(4/5), 287-288.

WWE overview. (2008). World Wrestling Entertainment Corporate. Retrieved from <http://corporate.wwe.com/investors/documents/OverviewNewDecember2007.pdf>

WWE ratings see strong start in new year. (2007). World Wrestling Entertainment Corporate. Retrieved from [http://corporate.wwe.com/news/releases\\_2007.jsp](http://corporate.wwe.com/news/releases_2007.jsp)

### **IS IT EQUITABLE ONLINE? THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE 2007 NCAA DIVISION I BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT ON FOXSPORTS.COM**

**HEIDI GRAPPENDORF, PHD, NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**ANGELA HENDERSON, PHD, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO**  
**STACY SANDERS, MS, NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**JUDY PEEL, PHD, NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY**

---

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Although women's participation in sport has reached unprecedented highs (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008), research shows that media coverage of female athletes still lags behind that of men's (Duncan, Messner, & Williams, 1991; Fink, 1998; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Tuggle & Owen, 1999). Additionally, research has indicated the quality, or ways in which men's and women's sport is covered is inequitable (Messner, Duncan, & Cooky, 2003). Since the passage of Title IX in 1972, male and female athletes in collegiate sports were expected to have equal access to equipment and practice facilities, media representation, coaches of the same quality, and scholarship money proportional to participation (Huffman et al., 2004).

Equitable coverage can be defined in several ways. First, researchers have argued that equity is not reached by solely providing an equal number of articles and photographs, but also, as stated by Fink and Kensicki (2002), by not discrediting females by using them as overt sex symbols in the media while men are portrayed as powerful and talented athletes. Second, equitable sports coverage should also provide equal coverage to all *types* of sports; females participating in sports deemed by society as masculine (i.e., rugby, basketball, soccer) should be covered at the same rates as sports considered to be feminine (i.e., golf, tennis, swimming) (Kane, 1996). Thirdly, since coverage of sports can create excitement and drama surrounding a sporting event (Messner, Duncan, & Wachs, 1996) it is important to examine the quality or type of coverage being provided. When considering what constitutes "equitable sports coverage" – the *type of coverage* in terms of whether or not the information is merely *factual* (i.e., basic statistics regarding the competition) or *personal* in nature (i.e., writing with a "human interest" lens) is also important. The latter provides a unique frame for the story, which helps build fan base and draw support for teams by providing a personal connection for readers and fans. By writing from such a perspective, an advantage is afforded to the athletes in the personalized stories because the personal information provides a cue by which each team or coach or individual player is more easily recalled and therefore more likely to be followed in the media (Messner et al., 2003, Messner et al., 1996). Further, Messner et al. (1996) contended that the media impacts the preferences of fans by not only the amount; but the type of coverage provided. Therefore, sexism occurs when differential treatment of men's and women's sports occurs by the media as women are viewed as "outsiders" or "others" (Eastman & Billings, 2000).

To date, there has been limited analysis of the men's and women's NCAA Division I Basketball Tournament's online coverage, particularly of women in sport on Internet sports websites (Real, 2006). Considering online sports sites are very popular during the NCAA Division I Basketball Tournaments, it is important to conduct studies in this area (Real). Additionally, Cunningham, Sagas, Satore, Amsden, & Schellhas (2004) suggested with the high number of sport consumers utilizing the Internet for information that more research was needed on the topic. Researchers have also noted the continuing need for the analysis of not just the amount or quantity of coverage given to women's sports, but also to the *quality* of coverage (Messner et al., 2003; Messner et al., 1996). The present study focuses on this type of analysis in order to identify any under-representation, paying particular attention to the type of coverage provided.

Therefore, to determine if equity in coverage existed, the purposes of this study were to (1) Determine whether equal coverage was displayed through coverage of foxsports.com online sports during the 2007 men's and women's 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> rounds of the NCAA Division I Basketball Tournaments, and (2) Determine if the articles and photos attributed to males and females are similar in quality with regard to the type of coverage (factual vs. personal) provided both in text and photographs.

### **AMOUNT OF COVERAGE**

Previous research (Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Lee & Choi, 2003; Messner, Duncan, & Jensen, 1993; Tuggle, Huffman, & Rosengard, 2002) has indicated under-representation of women's sports coverage in the media. The majority of the research conducted on sports coverage has been done on print and television media (Duncan & Messner, 2000; Billings & Eastman, 2002; Billings, Halone, & Denham, 2002; Higgs & Weiller, 1994; Tuggle & Owen, 1999). Studies on print and television have revealed inequalities when comparing the coverage of women's athletic events to men's athletic events (Billings & Eastman, 2003; Kane, 1996; Tuggle et al. 2002). However, during major athletic events which receive worldwide coverage, such as the Olympic Games, coverage of both sexes is more equitable. An analysis of the 1992 Barcelona Summer Olympics conducted by Higgs and Weiller (1994) found 56% of all coverage was devoted to men's sports, with the remaining 44% devoted to women's athletics (Eastman & Billings, 2001). During the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics, Tuggle and Owen (1999) found the gap to be decreasing with findings of men's coverage at 53% and women's at 47%.

Eastman and Billings (1999) reported the coverage findings during the 1998 Nagano Olympics showing the gap to have widened to 60% for men's coverage and 40% for women's. Additionally, at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, there was a 2.6% drop in the proportion of television time devoted to the coverage of female athletes and competition from 1996 to 2000 (Tuggle et al. 2002).

Within print media, Cunningham et al. (2004) found an equitable amount of coverage from the *NCAA News's* overall coverage of athletics. According to this study, reporters used consistent language when describing the athletic accomplishments of males and females, and there was also equal space (i.e., stories, photographs) given to each sex throughout the magazine. Their photo and text analysis was conducted based on a previous study by Shifflett and Revelle (1994), which had previously reported an unequal coverage rate of men's and women's sports photographic and text print media coverage. Shifflett and Revelle (1994) reported women's articles attributed to only 26.5% of the print media, and the photo coverage was reported at 34%. A decade later, Cunningham et al. (2004) reported that the articles attributed to women's athletics had increased by 15.9% and photo coverage had also increased by 5.7%.

According to Real (2006), the research on sport coverage on the Internet is still in the beginning stages. Though the research on Internet coverage has been limited, the results indicate that the quantity and quality of coverage is still discriminatory between men and women. Cunningham (2003) examined university sponsored websites, finding more coverage of gender appropriate sports (women's tennis) at the same schools. Sagas, Cunningham, Wigley, and Ashley (2000) looked at university softball and baseball websites and found more coverage of men's baseball than women's softball. Jones (2004) did a content analysis of ABC News Online during the 2000 Olympic Games, where she found an improvement in the extent and range of sports covered (though it was found that female athletes were more likely to be characterized as emotional). In addition, Lee and Choi (2003) examined Olympic photographs online during the 2002 Salt Lake Winter Olympics and the 2002 Pusan Asian Games. After collecting the photos from the online websites, the two coders analyzed the photos based on how many photos were posted, how impressively the athletes were described in the photos, how importantly the photos were presented, and which sport categories were more prominently covered according to gender



(Lee & Choi, 2003). One of the limitations noted by the researchers was the difficulty in capturing every picture. This was due in part to the nature of online websites, which allowed for constant updates and frequent changing of text and pictures. In terms of overall coverage during the Salt Lake Games, their results indicated that men were covered more than females with men and women receiving 61.8% and 24.4% of coverage, respectively. Similarly, men and women were unequally represented in the Pusan Asian Games. Of the coverage time allotted, males received 65.5% compared to females' 27.8% of coverage.

### **GENDER AND THE QUALITY OF MEDIA COVERAGE**

Just as imperative as the *quantity* of coverage is the *quality* of the type of coverage being provided to women's sports. Researchers have long suggested that the quality of the coverage could have a significant effect on how viewers experience the event and how the public perception is affected regarding the value or importance of women's sports (Billings, Halone, & Denham, 2002). Messner, Duncan, and Wachs (2001) noted that the type of coverage given to the Men's Final Four was billed as a "must see" event while the Women's Final Four was constructed as a nonevent or just some other game on television. Messner et al. (1993) contended this type of coverage depicted female athletes as "others" and not as important as male athletes. Messner et al. (2001) noted that as a result of the lack of coverage, the ability to emotionally connect and develop interest in the game is lost. In fact, the authors noted that viewers could even view the women's game as lackluster and dull. They go on to suggest that "...not only has television failed, thus far, to build audiences for women's basketball, it has actively undermined the possibility of the development of such an audience" (p. 331). However, if equitable and respectful coverage is provided, it is possible to build a larger and more diverse audience for women's sports (Messner et al., 2003).

The degree to which the sport media covers women shapes society's view of female athletes (Tuggle et al., 2002). Not only does the type of language used in print, broadcast, and online media have an immediate and future impact on society's view of female athletes, but also, it can alter viewers' and readers' perceptions of women's coverage. The media can have tremendous power by choosing not only what to cover, but in how they cover an event (Martin, 2004). Therefore, the way sports are covered and reported plays a huge role in how female athletes and female sports are viewed by society.

### **FRAMING THEORY**

Goffman's (1974) framing theory proposes that media coverage provides social cues that help viewers interpret events. The framing process involves reporters and editors selecting and highlighting particular aspects of reality while obscuring or omitting other elements (Goffman, 1974). As a result, the mass media have the ability to actively set the frames of reference that readers or viewers use to interpret events (Tuchman, 1978). Rowe (1999) wrote, "If culture is the 'stuff' of everyday life-the frame through which we experience, interpret, mold and represent everything that surrounds us-then sport occupies...an uncommonly prominent position within it" (p. 23). In other words, framing can increase or decrease the importance of an event. In essence, the media frame a story, whether it is a photograph or the text of an article, by selecting certain aspects of the story to promote a desired reality.

Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem, definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation for the item described (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

Photos have been identified as an important reference by which readers judge a news story (Mathews & Ruess, 1985). Therefore, the types of photographs used to portray female athletes should not send the readers a false sense of reality that women are not as athletic as their male

counterparts. Based on framing theory, Billings and Eastman (2003), argued that portrayals of gender, ethnicity, and nationality are altered through a media controlled shaping function in which images are manipulated to appeal to the desired audience. Bissell and Holt (2006) also used this framing theory to analyze the gender bias coverage of the 2004 Olympic Games via the Internet. One of their hypotheses suggested that males would be seen in more active shots in the dominant photographs, whereas women would be seen in more passive shots in the dominant photograph (Bissell & Holt, 2006). Their study found that, of 45 total photographs of men, 64% of shots were active and 36% of shots were passive. From the 19 total photographs of women, only 47% were active and 32% were passive (the remaining 21% was coded as "other"). The use of more passive shots for women suggest sexual difference in the way male and female athletes are portrayed in visuals on the web (Bissell & Holt, 2006). The photograph angles reinforced the differences in the portrayal of male and female athletes. Males were more typically framed in an upward angle shot (59% of the time), and females were photographed either straight-on or using a downward camera angles (63% of the time). The researchers concluded that photographing men in this way emphasized strength, masculinity, and superiority and the angles used to photograph females emphasized femininity and weakness.

Based on this body of literature, we would expect the media coverage to be different for men and women not only quantitatively (amount of coverage), but also in terms of the quality and type of coverage provided. The literature presented here suggests that: (1) male athletes receive more coverage than female athletes, and (2) the quality of coverage differs for males and females. Examining the type of coverage in terms of factual (i.e., baseline statistical information) versus personal information (i.e., human interest or non sport or sport performance related information) can contribute to the limited amount of information on this topic on sports Internet websites. It is important to examine the framing of the coverage to determine if inequitable coverage is being provided.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted to analyze the equality of gender coverage through the online coverage of college sports. From foxsports.com, two hyperlinks navigated the researchers to both the men's and women's college basketball home pages.

Foxsports.com averages over 14 million visitors a month and is ranked third of the 10 most popular U.S. Sport Internet Sites (ComScore Network, 2005). It was ranked only behind ESPN.com and MLB.com. Foxsports.com's coverage of NCAA basketball consisted of two pages; one dedicated for men's coverage and one for women's coverage. The two research questions addressed were: (1) Does foxsports.com produce equitable coverage, in terms of quantity and quality of paragraphs for men's and women's basketball and (2) Does foxsports.com produce equitable coverage, in terms of quantity and quality of photographs for men's and women's basketball?

To answer research questions one and two, the researchers independently coded each paragraph and photograph. Equitable media coverage was defined as providing equal amounts of photos and paragraphs (quantity) while also providing the same quality (personal versus factual information). Personal information included information about a player, team, or coaches that did not specifically relate to their on the court performance (i.e., family information, appearance, attire, relationships, etc.). Factual information included all statistical, game information, game explanations, or anything specifically related to the contest.

The unit of analysis for the written material was examining paragraphs on the website for men's and women's basketball. The other units of analysis were the photographs displayed on the websites. The criteria for a paragraph included one or more complete sentences on the website. Due to the nature of online writing during the NCAA Basketball Tournament,

paragraphs often are short and may only consist of 1-3 sentences. Thus, due to the often brief paragraphs, it was uncommon for “mixed” paragraphs containing both personal and factual information to appear. Since there were such a limited number of paragraphs (4) that included mixed information (both personal and factual information), these were coded according to what the first sentence was (personal or factual). Therefore, two were coded as personal, and two were coded as factual based upon the first sentence. Game stories, previews, summaries, and any news stories or features on the men’s and women’s pages were included in the analysis. Photograph captions were not included. Chat board discussions, blogs, or comments left by readers on the website were also not included. For the coding process of paragraph content, Cunningham et al.’s (2004) procedures were partially followed. Since this study did not examine paragraph or photo location, this part of the methodology from their study was not utilized. The following was examined: (a) factual information related to athletics, (b) factual information not related to athletics, (c) personal information related to athletics, (d) personal information not related to athletics, and (e) other. For photographs, the coding categories included (a) competing athlete, (b) athlete in competitive context but not competing, (c) head shot of the athlete(s) or coach(es), (d) head shot of a person other than an athlete or coach (i.e., administrator or mascot), (e) a group photograph of persons other than players or coaches (e.g., committee members or fans), and (f) other (Cunningham et al., 2004).

SPSS version 14.0 was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics ( $f$ ; %) were calculated through cross tabulations to show the percent differences between the independent variables, gender, and dependent variables, category type, for both the articles and photographs. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to statistically evaluate the frequency of each paragraph type by gender. In addition, a Pearson’s chi-square ( $X^2$ ) test was run for research question 1 to test any significant difference between paragraph types among the sexes. Chi-square is an approximate test of the probability of getting the frequencies that have actually been observed when the sample size has a substantial number of observations (Chernoff & Lehmann, 1954). Research question 2, relating to photographs had a small sample size; therefore, the criteria for conducting a Chi-Square test was not met, so frequency distributions were the only analysis used to show differentiations.

### **PROCEDURES**

Two researchers independently coded all paragraphs and photographs during the given time frame for the study. By having two researchers, intercoder reliability was strengthened, which eliminated the potential of interpretation by just one researcher (Krippendorff, 2004). In order to establish content validity, a pilot test was utilized using foxsports.com to clarify definitions as well as provide consistency for the current study (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). After the pilot study was conducted and the researcher’s codes were compared, any inconsistencies were discussed to ensure both researchers were in agreement on category types for paragraphs and photographs. For the actual study, the reliability (Cohen’s kappa) was high,  $K = .912$ ,  $p < .001$ . Cohen’s kappa was utilized as it also accounts for chance agreement (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, Bracken, 2002). According to Landis and Koch (1977), it is suggested that a  $K$  between 0.60 and 0.79 is substantial, but a  $K$  of 0.80 or better is outstanding. Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (1998) indicate that coefficients of .90 would be acceptable to all, while .80 would be acceptable in most situations, and .70 is more acceptable in exploratory research. Thus, the Cohen’s kappa in this study suggested a strong correlation of consistency.

The schedule of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> rounds of the 2007 NCAA Basketball Championship games was obtained from ncaasports.com. Data was collected during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> rounds of the NCAA Division I Basketball Championship Games. Each website for men and women was viewed and analyzed three times each day at 8 a.m. EST, 1 p.m. EST, and 7 p.m. EST. These times were chosen based upon previous research which found that, unlike printed media, website articles and pictures can be changed throughout the day. The times were chosen to capture all the

articles that were reported on each day. The 8 a.m. time slot would capture all the media reports from the games the night before. The 1 p.m. time captured articles and pictures that recapped and projected what may occur on that given day, and the 7 p.m. slot would capture media on what had occurred during the day.

The researchers independently coded each paragraph and picture at the specified time. This was done according to a previously agreed upon method using a coding sheet produced by the primary researcher based upon the work of Cunningham et al. (2004). Each paragraph and picture was coded as the researchers independently navigated through the website at the specified times. After the collection period was over, the primary researcher entered data into an Excel document.

### RESULTS

Foxsports.com produced 796 total paragraphs during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> rounds the NCAA Division I 2007 Basketball Tournament and 36 photographs (see Tables 1 and 2). Results from the chi-square analysis indicated that there was a significant difference in the amount of coverage between males and females,  $X^2 = 78.7$ ,  $p < .01$ . The men's site contained 53.8 % ( $n = 428$ ) of the total paragraphs and 88.9 % ( $n = 32$ ) of the total photographs while the women's site had the remaining 46.2 % ( $n = 368$ ) of the paragraphs and 11.1 % ( $n = 4$ ) of the total photographs.

When the paragraphs were coded for text content, they were coded as (a) factual information related to athletics, (b) factual information not related to athletics, (c) personal information related to athletics, (d) personal information not related to athletics, and (e) other. Within all paragraphs ( $N = 796$ ), 44.7 % ( $n = 356$ ) of the information included was coded as (a) factual information related to athletics (see Table 1). Individually, within that same category, the men received an overall percentage 29.2 % ( $n = 125$ ), while the women received 62.8 % ( $n = 231$ ) overall of the total paragraphs of that type. Within the category (b) factual information not related to athletics the overall percentage of the total paragraphs ( $N = 796$ ), was 1.1 % ( $n = 9$ ). The men individually received an overall percentage of 1.4 % ( $n = 6$ ) paragraphs coded in that category, and the women received an overall percentage of 0.8 % ( $n = 3$ ). Of the total paragraphs ( $N = 796$ ), 51.0 % ( $n = 406$ ) were coded as (c) personal information related to athletics. In that category, the men's individual percentage overall was 66.8 % ( $n = 286$ ) total paragraphs. The women received an overall percentage of 32.6 % ( $n = 120$ ) total paragraphs that included factual information. In the next category (d) personal information not related to athletics, 2.1 % ( $n = 9$ ) of the paragraphs were attributed to men's overall percentage with 2.7 % ( $n = 10$ ) being attributed to the women's overall percentage. This category received a combined percentage of 2.4 % ( $n = 19$ ) overall. Finally, within the category of (e) other, of the total paragraphs ( $N = 796$ ) there was an overall percentage of 0.8 % ( $n = 6$ ). The men had an individual percentage of 0.5 % ( $n = 2$ ) overall, and the women received 1.1 % ( $n = 4$ ) paragraphs in that category overall.

The coding categories for photographs included (a) competing athlete, (b) athlete in competitive context but not competing, (c) head shot of the athlete(s) or coach(es), (d) head shot of a person other than an athlete or coach (i.e. administrator or mascot), (e) a group photograph of persons other than players or coaches (e.g., committee members or fans), and (f) other. Within all photographs ( $N = 36$ ), the men individually received 25 % ( $n = 8$ ) of their photographs coded in the category of (a) competing athlete while the women received 0 %, leading to an overall combined category percentage of 22.2 % ( $n = 8$ ). Of the total photographs ( $N = 36$ ), in the category of (b) athlete in competitive context but not competing, the combined total percentage for this category was 47.2 % ( $n = 17$ ).

Individually, 50 % ( $n = 16$ ) of the men's photographs were coded in this category, and the women received 25 % ( $n = 1$ ) of their photographs coded in the same category. The percentage

of the overall photographs ( $N = 36$ ) in the category (c) head shot of athlete (s) or coach(es), was 22.2 % ( $n = 8$ ). For this category, the men individually received an overall percentage of 15.6 % ( $n = 5$ ), and the women, for their individual percentage received 75 % ( $n = 3$ ) of photographs with this code. Within the remaining three categories, (d) head shot of person other than athlete or coach, (e) group photograph of persons other than players or coaches, and (f) other; the women received no photographs attributed to any of those categories. However, the men did see an individual percentage of 3.1 % ( $n = 1$ ) in each of those categories, leading to an overall combined percentage of 2.8 % ( $n = 1$ ) for those categories. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) revealed that online articles about men were more likely to focus on personal information related to athletics ( $M=0.67$ ), whereas the online articles about women were more likely to focus on factual information related to athletics only ( $M=0.63$ ),  $F(4, 793)=27.83$ ,  $p<.001$ .

### DISCUSSION

The study found that of the total paragraphs ( $N = 796$ ) produced by foxsports.com during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> rounds of the 2007 NCAA Division I Basketball Tournament, males accounted for 53.8% ( $n = 428$ ) while females accounted for 46.2% ( $n = 368$ ) of the paragraphs. Therefore, the numbers indicated inequitable coverage in the number of paragraphs. The Internet is a popular source of information, and one would hope that the Internet not follow in the footsteps of television and print media by providing inequitable coverage in terms of quantity. Women's sports needs to be in the forefront, and must have equitable coverage if it hopes to have a chance to expand. It is difficult to generate any interest whatsoever in women's sports if it simply is not being covered by the media.

There was also inequitable coverage in terms of quality. This study found that men received the majority of their paragraphs, 44.7 % ( $n = 356$ ), coded as (c) personal information related to athletics, and women received the highest number of codes 62.8% ( $n = 231$ ) in category "a" factual information related to athletics. Though the women's articles did report more of their athletic accomplishments, there was less focus on their personal information as demonstrated by a large percentage of the articles containing factual information. It appears foxsports.com has gone from one end of the continuum to another by only providing personal information or descriptions about females' bodies or personal lives to omitting personal information. Therefore, an opportunity to generate fan interest, or the ability to capture the reader is lost. Potentially, the more personal information you have about athletes the easier it is for the fan to connect. The human interest piece can be a powerful tool that draws fans to women's athletics. This "cut and dry" reporting could potentially minimize the intrigue, excitement and overall entertaining factors of women's basketball. However, it is advisable that the personal stories that are included not include marginalization, objectification, or the sexualizing of female athletes as previous research has found (Eastman & Billings, 2000; Messner et al., 1996). It is time for women the media to figure out equitable coverage that is a positive portrayal of the women's game.

The quantity and quality differences create a double quandary for women with regards to sports coverage. Ultimately, this approach can have detrimental results for females in sports. In other words, by omitting the emotions or descriptions of female athletes while reporting, the reader is left with a void that does not allow them to connect with the female athlete or team in the ways that it does for men's athletics. Thus, the ability to promote or sell the women's game is severely limited. Ultimately, for women's sports to continue to grow, a larger, broader fan base would be beneficial. Furthermore, a new generation of Internet users could be influenced in a more positive fashion regarding female athletes. Women's sports could be covered in a way that would create more interest, and excitement, and in the end garner more fans for women's sports.



Photographs provide visual interest and cues to capture an audience. It is important for women to be represented because photos entice the reader to read the article. Consistent with previous research (Bissell & Holt, 2006; Lee & Choi, 2003; Shifflett & Revelle, 1994), foxsports.com displayed fewer photographs of women compared to men. The lack of photographs reinforces previous suggestions that the media does not assist with the selling or marketing of women's sports by eliminating the visual appeal through photographs of female athletes. Maintaining existing societal views regarding gender ideology, the disproportionate number of photographs between men and women reinforces the notion that women are under represented and not shown photographically in action type sports.

Women's participation in sports has made huge strides through the years, especially since the passage of Title IX. However, the amount of coverage, along with the type of coverage females receive is far from equitable in comparison to men's coverage. Without equitable coverage, female adolescents may not have the opportunity to have a positive female athlete to view as a role model. Also, female athletes are not provided the same opportunity to develop fan interest and support based upon the media coverage.

### **LIMITATIONS**

This study was an initial exploratory study into Internet website coverage on the NCAA basketball tournament. This study was limited to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> rounds of the 2007 NCAA Basketball Tournament on foxsports.com. Further rounds or consecutive years of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> rounds could be included in future research. Additionally, a more comprehensive analysis including more of the most popular websites that cover the NCAA tournament could be completed.

Another potential limitation could have been the coding of paragraphs where there was both factual and personal information included in the paragraph. Since no previous studies examining the online coverage of the men's and women's NCAA Basketball Tournament could be found, this study coded the combined paragraphs by if the first sentence was personal or factual. Though the number was only four, future studies that expand the time frame may want to include this as "other." This appears to be an area where discrepancies exist in previous research in the print media when looking at gender issues. Shifflett and Revelle (1994) counted male, female, combined, or neither, while Malec (1994) argued that these categories should be eliminated as the concern should only be with males and females. Though this study looked at the personal and factual information in the paragraphs, this may be something to take into consideration in the future.

The researchers were surprised at the limited number of photographs provided. Thus, another limitation was the limited number of photographs that were available to be coded. Again, potentially extending the time frame of research in the future could eliminate this problem.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

While athletic accomplishments are being reported, a balance between accomplishments and personal athletic information must be reported to attract and connect readers with players and or teams. Potentially, owners, editors and reporters have the ability to change the coverage provided for women's sports. Whether as commentators or sports writers/editors, more women in the field could potentially decrease the inequitable coverage leading to more interest. More interest generated could in turn lead to more consumer demand, therefore having a significant following could mean higher consumer spending in the area of women's athletics.

Though this study did show that articles dedicated to women during the 2007 NCAA Division I Basketball tournament reported athletic accomplishments of women and did not trivialize or discredit their athletic ability, the interest factor of the articles was lost due to lack of personal



information related to the women or teams. It may seem a great stride has been made with the reporting of women's accomplishments on the court, but there are still more advancements to be made and many more steps to be taken before coverage can be considered equitable.

The quantity *and* quality of the media coverage of women's athletics should continue to be evaluated. Particular emphasis should be given to online resources, as the Internet continues to be a source of information for sports fans and consumers.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH**

Additionally, more research on the Internet's sports media coverage seems warranted. It seems important to know if as the Internet continues to grow as a source of information for sports fans, if women's and men's sports coverage continues to differ. These studies could include various websites, different sports, and different levels (professional or college). Particularly, attention should be paid to those sports seemed sex-appropriate. Additionally, it would be interesting to include international teams, sports, and websites. It would be interesting to know if the same issues (hegemony, lack of coverage, etc.) are occurring on Internet websites as well.

### **REFERENCES**

- Acosta, R.V., & Carpenter, L.J. (2008). *Women in intercollegiate sport: A longitudinal, national study thirty one year update 1977-2008*. Retrieved from <http://webpages.charter.net/womeninsport/2008%20Summary%20Final.pdf>
- Billings, A.C., & Eastman, S.T. (2002). Gender, ethnicity, and nationality: Formation of identity in NBC's 2000 Olympic coverage. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 37, 349-368.
- Billings, A.C., & Eastman, S. (2003). Framing identities: Gender, ethnic, and national parity in network announcing of the 2002 Winter Olympics. *Journal of Communication*, 53(4), 569-586.
- Billings, A.C., Halone, K.K., & Denham, B.E. (2002). "Man, that was a pretty Shot": An analysis of gendered broadcast commentary surrounding the 2000 men's and women's NCAA final four basketball championships. *Mass Communication and Society*, 5, 295-315.
- Bissell, K., & Holt, A. (2006). *Who's got game? Gender bias in coverage of the 2004 Olympic Games on the Web*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, New York City, NY. Retrieved from [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p14267\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p14267_index.html)
- ComScore Network (2005, June 2). *The score: Sports sites score*. Retrieved from <http://www.imediaconnection.com/content/6027.asp>
- Cunningham, G., Sagas, M., Satore, M., Amsden, M., & Schellhas, A. (2004). Gender representation in the NCAA News: Is the glass half empty of half full? *Sex Roles*, 50(5/6), 861-870.
- Cunningham, G.B. (2003). Media coverage of women's sport: A new look at an old problem. *Physical Educator*, 60(2), 43-50.
- Chernoff, H., & Lehmann E. L. (1954). The use of maximum likelihood estimates in  $\chi^2$  tests for goodness-of-fit. *The Annals of Mathematical Statistics*, 50, 579-586.
- Duncan, M., & Messner, M. (2000). *Gender stereotyping in televised sports: 1989, 1993, and 1999*. Los Angeles, CA: Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles.

- Duncan, M., Messner, M., Williams, L. (1991). *Coverage of women's sports in four daily newspapers*. Los Angeles: Amateur Athletic Foundation.
- Eastman, S.T., & Billings, A.C. (1999). Gender parity in the Olympics: Hying women athletes, favoring men athletes. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 23, 140-170.
- Eastman, S.T., & Billings, A.C. (2000). Sportscasting and sports reporting. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 24(2), 192-213.
- Eastman, S.T., & Billings, A.C. (2001). Biased voices in sports: Racial and gender stereotyping in college basketball announcing. *Howard Journal of Communication* 14(4), 183-202.
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51-58.
- Fink, J. (1998). Female athletes and the media: Strides and stalemates. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance*, 69, 37-45.
- Fink, J., & Kensicki, L. (2002). An imperceptible difference: Visual and textual constructions of femininity in Sports Illustrated and Sports Illustrated for Women. *Mass Communication and Society*, 5, 317 - 339.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Higgs, C.T., & Weiller, K.H. (1994). Gender bias and the 1992 Summer Olympic Games: An analysis of television coverage. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 3, 234-249.
- Huffman, S., Tuggle, C.A., & Rosengard, D. (2004). How campus media cover sports: The gender-equity issue, one generation later. *Mass Communication and Society*, 7(4), 475-489.
- Jones, D. (2004). Half the story? Olympic women on ABC news online. *Media International Australia*, 110, 132-146.
- Kane, M.J. (1996). Media coverage of the post title IX female athlete: A feminist analysis of sport, gender, and power. *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy*, 3, 95-127.
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.
- Landis, J.R., & Koch, G.G. (1977). The measurement of observer agreement for categorical data. *Biometrics*, 33, 159-174.
- Lee, J., & Choi, Y. (2003). *Is There Gender Equality in Online Media? The Photo Analysis of the 2002 Salt Lake Winter Olympics and the 2002 Pusan Asian Games Coverage*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Marriott Hotel, San Diego, CA. Retrieved from [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p111735\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p111735_index.html)
- Lombard, M., Snyder-Duch, J., & Bracken, C. (2002). Content analysis in mass communication: Assessment and reporting of intercoder reliability. *Human Communication Research*, 28(4), 587-604.

- Malec, M.A. (1994). Gender (in)equity in the NCAA News? *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 18, 376-378.
- Martin, C. R. (2004). *Framed! Labor and the corporate media*. Ithaca, NY: ILR.
- Mathews, M., & Reuss, C. (1985). *The minimal image of women in Time and Newsweek, 1940-1980*. A paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication annual meeting.
- Messner, M.A., Duncan, M.C., & Cooky, C. (2003). Silence, sports bras, and wrestling porn: Women in televised sports news and highlight shows. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 27, 38-51.
- Messner, M.A., Duncan, M.C., & Wachs, F.L. (1996). The gender of audience building: Televised coverage of women's and men's NCAA basketball. *Sociological Inquiry*, 66, 422-439.
- Messner, D., Duncan, M., & Jensen, K. (1993). Separating the men from the girls: The gendered language of televised sports. *Gender & Society* 7: 121-137.
- Real, M. (2006). Sports online: The newest player in media sport. In A. A. Raney & J. Bryant (Eds.), *Handbook of Sports and Media* (pp. 171-184). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Riffe, D., Lacy, S., & Fico, F.G. (1998). *Analyzing media messages: Using quantitative content analysis in research*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Rowe, D. (1999). *Sport, culture, and the media: The unruly trinity*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Sagas, M., Cunningham, G.B., Wigley, B.J., & Ashley, F.B. (2000). Internet coverage of university softball and baseball websites: The inequity continues. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 17(2), 198-212.
- Shifflett, B., & Revelle, R. (1994). Gender equity in sports and media coverage: A review of the news? *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 18, 144-150.
- Tuchman, G. (1978). The symbolic annihilation of women by the mass media. *Images of Women in the Mass Media*, 3, 8.
- Tuggle, C.A., Huffman, S., & Rosengard, D. (2002). A descriptive analysis of NBC's coverage of the 2000 Summer Olympics. *Mass Communication and Society*, 3(3), 361-375.
- Tuggle, C.A., & Owen, A. (1999). A descriptive analysis of NBC's coverage of the Centennial Olympics. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 23(2), 171-182.

**TABLE 1**

**FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS OF TEXT**

Paragraph Category Types	Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%
Total paragraphs	428*	1.86	368	2.16
Factual information related to athletics	125	29.2	231	62.8
Factual information not related to athletics	6	1.4	3	0.8
Personal information related to athletics	286	66.8	120	32.6
Personal information not related to athletics	9	2.1	10	2.7
Other	2	0.5	4	1.1

\*  $X^2 = 78.7$ ,  $p < .01$ .

**TABLE 2**

**FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS OF PHOTOGRAPHS**

Paragraph Category Types	Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%
Competing Athlete	8	25.0	0	0
Athlete in competitive context but not competing	16	50.0	1	25.0
Head shot of athlete(s) or coach(es)	5	15.6	3	75
Head shot of persons other than athletes or coaches	1	3.1	0	0
Group shot of persons other than athletes or coaches	1	3.1	0	0
Other	1	3.1	0	0

**TABLE 3**

**ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE (ANOVA)**

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-statistic	P value
Type of newspaper article	4	24.41	6.10	27.83	0.001
Residual	793	173.89	0.22		
Total	797	198.30			

### **BEYOND THE BOX OFFICE: AN ANALYSIS OF VIOLENT AND DEVIANT BEHAVIOR IN POPULAR SPORT FILMS**

**JEFFREY J. FOUNTAIN, PHD, NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY**  
**LAURA L. FINLEY, PHD, BARRY UNIVERSITY**  
**PETER S. FINLEY, PHD, NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY**

---

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Research has shown that sport films depict a great deal of deviance and violence (Charlesworth & Glance, 2005; Finley & Finley, 2005; Jhully, 1999; Manganello, 2008). These depictions ranged from underage drinking to illicit drug use to sexual assault (Finley & Finley, 2005; Jhully, 1999). Yet only recently have sport films become a topic of academic attention (Baker, 2003; Jones, 2008; Kusz, 2008; Poulton & Roderick, 2008; Rowe, 1998; and Rowe, 2008). Drawing on the literature regarding media affects and violence in films, it can be argued that sport films depicting deviance and violence are likely to impact viewers in a number of ways, regardless of whether those individuals are sports fans (Finley & Finley, 2005; McDonald, 2007; Pearson, Curtis, Haney, & Zhang, 2003; Schehr, 2000; and, Wenner, 1989). A prime example of the impact sport films can have on some viewers occurred in 1993 when the movie *The Program* was released in theaters. The film featured a scene showing a heavily intoxicated star quarterback proving his “nerves of steel” by lying in the middle of a road at night while traffic went past (Hinds, 1993). This deviant behavior was copied by many teenagers shortly after the release of the film. One Polk, Pennsylvania teenager was killed instantly when a pickup truck ran over him as he lay in the street (Hinds, 1993). The scene has been omitted from current copies of the film but the impact it had on some young and impressionable viewers should not be forgotten.

This study is intended to help fill the gap in academic work addressing sport films that present deviance and violence. The research is a content analysis of five films featuring quasi-realistic depictions of high school and collegiate revenue-producing sports (football and basketball). Films were analyzed for the amount and type of violence and deviance presented on screen, which characters were involved, which characters instigated the acts, and the response, if any, by the athletic system.

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

A growing body of literature has affirmed the impact media has on people’s lives. Media both shapes and reinforces social conditions (Felson, 1996; Holtzman, 2000; Kappeler, Blumberg & Potter, 2000; Pearson et al., 2003). Media has been linked to such negative behaviors as smoking (Charlesworth & Glance, 2005), sexual assault (Jhully, 1999), school violence (Jhully, 1999), and dating violence (Manganello, 2008). At its most extreme, media can teach people that hurting or even killing others is acceptable behavior. Many have commented on the over-representation of interpersonal violence in all forms of media (Barak, 1994; Beckett & Sasson, 2000; Bok, 1998; Kappeler, Blumberg & Potter, 2000; Prince, 2000; Slocum, 2001; Surette, 1998). Colonel Dave Grossman has maintained that the same techniques used to teach soldiers to kill are now provided in media and are teaching children to use violence (Grossman, 1995). Colonel Grossman discussed how interactive video games were created after analyses of kill ratios in World War II revealed many soldiers were not actually shooting at the enemy but instead aimed to the side or at the ground. Video games helped trainees by providing a more lifelike situation.



Film violence has been defined as an “interpersonal, aggressive physical act that impacts another character, committed by a human agent in the course of a conflict” (Browne, Webb, Fisher, & Cook, 2002, p. 352). Analyses of film violence often address not just the quantity of violent acts, but also the seriousness of the violence, the severity of the violence, whether it is intentional or unintentional, and its explicitness (Browne et al., 2002; Rafter, 2000). Studies have also examined who initiates the violence and who is the intended recipient. For instance, Browne et al., (2002) studied the depiction of violence in a variety of film types, focusing on the relationship between initiators and victims in the film and the consequences of the violence. The study utilized the top 100 grossing American films of 1994. Despite there being fewer action films in the analysis than films of other genres, they found more acts of violence depicted in the action genre, with a total of 658 in 14 films. The study revealed that over ninety percent of the violence depicted was intentional. These concerns are not new. On the contrary, concerns about the impact of films on viewers began almost as soon as the first film was released (Springhall, 1998).

The problem, as Surette (1998) explained, is that the public has learned to receive the information and entertainment provided by media without considering the source of the information or entertainment, and the impact it might have on both individuals as well as the broader society. Kappeler, Blumberg, and Potter (2000) noted that the average American citizen receives as much as 96% of their information about crime and criminal justice from the media. Films focusing on crime generally draw on the attitudes about crime, victims, law, and punishment that are prevalent at the time (Rafter, 2000). “Films tell us how to feel about crime and the contexts in which it occurs...while films do not *determine* our emotions, they do provide narratives that we use to frame our emotional responses to actual criminal events” (Rafter, 2000, p. 63). With few other frames of reference concerning these topics, people can become reliant on media to inform them of the way violence should be perceived and provide them with suggestions regarding how they should respond.

### **THEORIES OF MEDIA AFFECTS**

There are a number of theories that have been developed to explain the way media impacts viewers. One theory of media effects has been called the Direct Effect model, or the “magic bullet” model. This theory maintains that people learn how to behave from media, and that they will imitate that behavior.

There is some anecdotal evidence that crime films inspire actual crime. On opening night of *Boyz N the Hood*, two people were killed and more than thirty injured. Although surely there were numerous factors involved in these melees, the film has been said to have acted as an igniter (Rafter, 2000). John Hinckley, Jr. has said he was imitating *Taxi Driver's* Travis Bickle (played by Robert DeNiro) when he attempted to assassinate President Ronald Reagan (Rafter, 2000). In 2001, a 13-year-old poured gasoline on his legs and feet and lit himself on fire, emulating a stunt he had watched on the MTV show *Jackass*. Perhaps the most famous magic-bullet example occurred in 2001, when 14-year-old Lionel Tate, imitating a wrestling move from the shows he loved to watch, killed 6-year-old Tiffany Eunick (Carter & Weaver, 2006).

Social-self theory can also be used to explain media's impact. This theory posits that people's behavior is influenced by the way they think others perceive them. One source of these perceptions is the media. For instance, social-self theory might contend that young people learn how they are expected to act in relationships from media (Jhully, 1999; Manganello, 2008). Teens may believe that others will perceive them as weak if they do not act in controlling or physically aggressive ways with their partners. The documentary *Wrestling with Manhood* demonstrated some of the ways that one form of media—televised versions of World Wrestling Entertainment—might teach young men that women are to be dominated. Consumers of this type of media may then adopt behaviors or attitudes modeled in the media by aggressive

athletes or movie characters. Research has demonstrated this impact with police: As they have come to believe the public expects them to act in ways similar to those they view on *CSI* and other reality TV shows, police officers have admitted they have indeed altered their behaviors (Doyle, 1998; Perlmutter, 2000).

Social learning theory asserts that individuals learn about other people or groups by internalizing information and cues. First proposed by Albert Bandura and Richard Walters in 1963, the theory suggested that viewers, in particular, children, model the behavior seen on television or in films. Movies provide models for how we are supposed to behave (Snyder, 1995). Later versions of the theory have incorporated more cognitive elements, suggesting that violent media may present scripts or schemas that shape the strategies people employ when solving problems. Berkowitz (1965) proposed that when people who are already angry view violent images, the signals in that media could trigger aggressive behavior. For example, if someone was angry at his or her partner and then viewed aggressive behavior perpetrated by an athlete in a sport film or televised sporting event, that person may be more inclined to act out in anger (Jhully, 2002).

Another influential theory of media affects is the cultivation hypothesis, which is commonly associated with the work of communications scholar George Gerbner and his colleagues. Gerbner posited that those who spend the most time viewing violent media see the world as more violent and dangerous. They are more fearful and feel more vulnerable. He has called this mean-world syndrome (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorelli, 1994). Weaver and Carter (2006) argued that even factual or quasi-factual reporting of deviant or violent events might evoke a sense of inevitability; that is, people may come to see these acts as both frequent and normal. There is some support for this notion. Gerbner, et al. (1994) showed that people who watch fifteen hours or more of television per week were more likely to believe what they saw on television than their actual observations of the world. Research with persons identified as heavy media users has found them to express less empathy for persons who have been victimized when they read vignettes about violent crime. The largest study ever of television violence, involving analyses of three years of programming on twenty-three channels, found, among other things, that prolonged exposure to media violence may lead to desensitization or callous attitudes about real life violence and actual victims (Gerdes, 2004). Huston, Watkins, and Kunkel (1989) found that both children and adults who view television violence are less likely than those who do not to seek help for victims of violence.

Considerable research has found that the context of how violence is presented in media impacts the way the material is received. Gerbner (2006) argued that one of the most common forms of violence depicted in media is "happy violence," which he calls "cool, swift painless, and often spectacular, even thrilling, but usually sanitized" (p. 46). This is the kind of violence depicted in World Wrestling Entertainment, where characters use increasingly violent spectacles to demean opponents. Yet rarely is this violence depicted as having any kind of consequence. Instead, athletes get pounded over and over again, yet bounce back for more. Paik and Comstock (1994) found that if a program showed violence as a successful means to achieve a particular end, that is, if the violence appears to be justified or normalized, and if viewers see the violence as pertinent to their lives, actual aggression is more likely. Lichter, Lichter, and Rothman (1994) analyzed the first month of the 1992-1993 prime-time television season and found violence frequently committed by characters who were supposed to be the "good guys." They also found violence was rarely condemned, with only 9% of the total sample presented as if it was wrong. Only 12% of gunplay or other forms of serious violence were condemned as bad, ugly, or illegal. Television violence reinforces power relations; violence reveals who holds the power and those people are generally presented as the winners.

### **SPORT MEDIA, FILMS, AND DEVIANCE**

There are many studies about media and sport, although the bulk of them have focused on news or televised coverage (Bruce, 2004; Duncan, Messner, Williams & Jensen, 1990; Eastman & Billings, 2001; Gruneau, 1989; Messner, Dunbar, & Hunt, 2000; Messner & Sabo, 1994). Additionally, most studies have focused on gender or race-related issues, rather than on deviance and crime (Baker, 2003; Caudwell, 2008; Giroux, 2007; Harden, Lynn, & Walsdorf, 2005; Kibby, 1998; Kusz, 2006; Leonard, 2006; Messner, Dunbar & Hunt, 2000; Messner & Sabo, 1994). Little work has addressed sport films until recently, despite the fact that sport-related films have become an especially popular form of media (Jones, 2008). More than one hundred American sport films have been made since 2000 (Kusz, 2008). One of the primary reasons for what *Time* magazine has called the proliferation of sport films “new jock cinema” is related to American audiences’ enjoyment of:

‘feel good’ morality tales that express ‘universal’ existential themes while simultaneously appearing to confirm the ‘truth’ of dominant American mythologies like individualism, meritocracy, hard work and personal perseverance displayed through the ‘authentic’ stories of heroic athletes, many of which are either ‘based on’ or ‘inspired by’ a true story (Kusz, 2008, p. 210).

Hyland (1990) explained that sport is not seen as serious enough to warrant intellectual analysis, and thus sport films are not viewed as worthy of academic attention, either. Part of the issue lies in defining what precisely is a sport film. Wallenfeldt (1989) noted that the differences between a sport film and a film that includes sports may be slight. Part of the problem is that sport films tend to be very formulaic. Plots generally center on an underdog competing against and usually defeating the allegedly invincible champion (Jones, 2008).

Regardless of these academic debates, many argue that sport films do matter. Briley (2005) commented that sport films are not just escapist entertainment; rather, they highlight important social issues. Pearson et al. (2003) suggested sport is of interest to film-makers because it serves as an arena in which people define their social identities. Coakley (1998) maintained, “When people read about, listen to, and view sports, these themes may inform their own ideas about the world” (p. 385).

Several studies have affirmed that sport media reinforces gender stereotypes and presents aggression as essential to masculinity. Many of these studies, however, have focused on televised sport. For instance, Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt (2000) found several themes in their analysis of sport programming identified as the programs most watched by boys aged 8-17. They found that the most successful males were depicted as the most aggressive, while the timid failed in sport.

This injunction for boys and men to be aggressive, not passive, is reinforced in commercials, where a common formula is to play on the insecurities of young males (e.g., that they are not strong enough, tough enough, smart enough, rich enough, attractive enough, decisive enough, etc.) (Messner et al., 2000, p. 386).

In addition,

Announcers often took a humorous ‘boys will be boys’ attitude in discussing fights or near fights during contests, and they also commonly used a recent fight, altercation, or disagreement between two players as a ‘teaser’ to build audience excitement (Messner, et al., 2000, p. 387).

Some research has addressed the ways depictions of athletes engaged in various acts of deviance are depicted and have suggested that, “Mediated portrayals of student-athletes can provide strong role models for real world student-athletes” (Finley & Finley, 2005, p. 1). Finley and Finley studied films depicting high school athletes’ use of drugs and alcohol. Although serious drug addiction was depicted negatively in the films they analyzed, casual consumption of drugs and alcohol was not shown as problematic. Underage drinking of alcohol was generally associated with people having a good time and either celebrating victory or drowning their defeat. Aggression, too, was generally acceptable, as there is often a boys-will-be-boys attitude coming from the coaches. Yet sport, in cinema, is for the most part a depoliticized world. Even when problems in sport are depicted, they are rarely addressed in ways that show viewers it is the system, not just the individuals, that needs to be corrected (Whannel, 2008). Coaches in the films are generally willing to overlook the use of alcohol and cigarettes by players, and, “Any drug that is performance enhancing, or is even perceived to be, is accepted and even promoted by the coaches” (Finley & Finley, 2005, p. 15).

Finley and Finley (2005) suggested that these depictions not only impact student-athletes, who may use them as a model for their behavior, but non-athletes as well. They commented,

...non-athletes may feel as though all athletes drink and use drugs. This might impact their feelings about athletes and perhaps even their support for their school. It is possible that non-athletes will be concerned about the ways that drug and alcohol use is dealt with, basing their perceptions more on media depictions than on reality at their particular school (p. 10).

They also noted that media coverage of sport-related violence may impact the development of appropriate policies, programs, and punishments.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research was guided by the following questions:

1. How many incidents of deviance were presented in the films (in total and by film)?
2. What types of acts of deviance were depicted in these films?
3. Who was the instigator of the deviance?
4. What was the response to the deviance?
5. What common themes emerge in quasi-realistic film coverage of male revenue-generating sports?

### **METHODOLOGY**

A content analysis of five sport films that depicted deviance and/or physical and emotional violence was performed. Deviance includes behavior that falls outside of the norms of society, including acts that would be considered unethical, immoral, and illegal.

Deviance has been subdivided in the existing literature into the categories of underconformity and overconformity (Coakley, 2006). According to Coakley (2006), underconformity involves ignoring or rejecting societal norms, subnormal actions, and in extreme cases can lead to anarchy. Conversely, overconformity involves the unquestioning acceptance of norms, leading to supranormal actions and in extreme cases leads to fascism. Given that both underconformity and overconformity represent departures from mainstream behavior, there are inherent dangers to each. The current research did not seek to categorize the deviance in the films into these subcategories. Rather, the researchers were interested in determining the behaviors that we agreed were immoral, unethical, illegal, perverse, and even evil, as Coakley demonstrated that these exist at both ends of a continuum of actions, sandwiching the normal range of accepted behavior (Coakley, 2006).

The researchers analyzed films depicting male high school or college-level football and basketball. Each of the selected films emphasized the treatment and behavior of the athletes on and off the field, with minimal side stories that detract from the focus of sport.

Films were selected based on a number of criteria. First, sport films that focused on the sports of football and basketball in a high school or college setting were chosen. The researchers were not interested in comedy films, as they did not intend to analyze happy violence (Gerbner et al., 1994). Second, films that depicted sports in a realistic or quasi-realistic manner and those that focused on current sport, defined for these purposes as 1990 and beyond, were selected. Third, films that had reached the general public, as opposed to more obscure documentaries, were of interest for this study. Therefore, the films selected were easily available for rental at local video stores and were ranked in the top 50 all-time grossing sport films. The researchers set a minimum box-office gross of \$20 million and accessed [boxofficemojo.com](http://boxofficemojo.com)'s database of movie financials to obtain a list of sport films that had grossed \$20 million or more. A total of 34 movies in the genre of "Sport Drama" had box office totals of \$20 million or more. Of those, 11 (32%) films were based on football or basketball at the high school or college level. Of those 11 films, five were not about current times (1990 and later) and were thus eliminated from this analysis (*Hoosiers*, *Glory Road*, *Remember the Titans*, *Rudy*, and *We Are Marshall*). *Coach Carter* was not used because the central focus of the film was more about overcoming the status quo and fighting against the system than about the behavior of athletes and the responses to that behavior.

This left five films for the researchers to analyze: *Friday Night Lights*, *Varsity Blues*, *Blue Chips*, *The Program*, and *He Got Game*. This research examined the amount of deviance and violence that was depicted throughout the films, which characters instigated the act(s), which characters were the victims of the offense, and the response to the deviance and violence from the community, coaches, and other members of the athletic establishment. One criticism of past media affects studies is that they have focused almost exclusively on physical violence, ignoring the dangerous psychological abuse that should be included. Mustonen and Pulkkinen (1997) maintained that threats, nonverbal behavior, and anger should be included as well. To that end, this study not only analyzed physical violence, but acts of verbal abuse as well.

Once all three researchers collaborated and created a refined master list of all violent or deviant behavior depicted in the five films, a quantitative analysis was conducted to show the raw number of violent or deviant acts depicted as well as the frequency of acts by type. Using a process similar to analytic induction (Merriam, 1998), each researcher independently identified the main themes related to deviance and violence depicted in each of the films. These themes were then shared, and the researchers refined them until a collaborative list was developed (as described by Merriam, 1998). Additionally, each researcher developed a matrix of all examples of deviance from each film. These were also shared, and the researchers came to consensus on how to categorize each example.

### **FILM DESCRIPTIONS**

*He Got Game* is the story of Jake and Jesus Shuttlesworth. Jake (Denzel Washington) is incarcerated in Attica for accidentally killing his wife. His son Jesus (NBA star Ray Allen) is the most sought after high school basketball player in the nation and is raising his younger sister, Mary, virtually alone in Coney Island, New York. The story takes place over one week, when the Governor of New York, a big basketball fan, has released Jake so that he can convince Jesus to attend his alma mater, Big State University. The prison warden says the governor is willing to offer Jake early parole if he is successful. Jesus struggles with the decision as to which college to attend or whether to announce his eligibility for the NBA draft. He receives unwanted advice



and pressure from a variety of sources, including family, friends, his coach, local street criminals, his girlfriend, and an agent.

*Varsity Blues* depicts a fictional football team from West Canaan, Texas, a town where high school football is a way of life. When star quarterback Lance Harbor gets hurt, second-string quarterback and intellectual John Moxon (James Vanderbeek) must step in to maintain the Coyote's dynasty and the record of Coach Bud Kilmer (Jon Voight). Kilmer is a cruel dictator with a win-at-all-cost mentality. Eventually the players, led by Moxon, rebel against Kilmer, expel him from the big game, and coach themselves to victory.

*Blue Chips* focuses on controversial and passionate Coach Pete Bell (Nick Nolte), who is under fire for having his first losing basketball season with a group of hardworking, but mediocre, players. Under pressure from athletic boosters, he allows payments to be made to three big-time recruits: Ricky Roe, Butch McRae (NBA star Penny Hardaway), and Neon Beaudeau (NBA star Shaquille O'Neal). Although the team wins with the influx of these new players, Bell is racked with guilt over his actions. His guilt is exacerbated when he learns that his star player took money to shave points several years ago from the same booster who is paying his current players. Coach Bell sees the errors of his ways and comes clean at a press conference and quits college coaching.

*Friday Night Lights* is based on the book by the same name, written by H.G. Bissinger. It chronicles the 1988 football season at Permian High School in Odessa, Texas, examining the personalities of the major players and coaches as well as the ups and downs of the team in a town where high school football is everything. The pressure is on for Coach Gary Gaines (Billy Bob Thornton), who is the love of the town for his potentially state-championship winning team. That is, until star running back Boobie Miles is out for the season due to a knee injury. The team rallies after several losses and makes it into the state finals due to the exceptional hard work and the integrity of every player. They lose to a bigger, faster, and dirtier team, but the season is a catalyst for several players to leave the small town and for the reparation of a father-son relationship.

*The Program* depicts a college football program led by Heisman Trophy candidate Joe Kane (Craig Sheffer) and Coach Winters (James Cann), who is feeling the pressure to achieve after missing a bowl game for the second year in a row. The pressure is passed on to athletes and new recruits, who do whatever it takes, including using performance enhancing substances in order to help win more games. Coach Winters, the alumni, and others in the athletic system look the other way, and even pull strings for athletes who are failing classes and getting into trouble. Nothing will get in the way of the football team as they reestablish themselves as a winning program.

### RESULTS

The researchers found 244 total incidents of violent or deviant behavior in the five films (as illustrated in Table 1). *Varsity Blues* had the highest number of violent or deviant incidents with 59 (24% of the total). *He Got Game* was the lowest, with 36 incidents of violent or deviant behavior throughout the film.

The researchers next identified 23 different categories or types of deviance or violent behavior depicted in the films. Table 2 shows the eight most frequently cited categories of violent or deviant behavior displayed in the films and examples for each category. Table 3 illustrates the total number of incidents accounted for by these eight categories and the percentages for each category. These eight represented 172 (70.5%) of the total number of incidents depicted in the films. Physical and emotional abuse was the category of violence or deviance depicted most frequently, with 56 incidents (accounting for almost 23% of all violent or deviant behavior



portrayed in the films). The second highest category of deviance was related to academic misconduct, with over 10% of all incidents in the study.

Based on an analysis of the scenes in which the incidents of violent or deviant behavior occurred, the researchers then went about identifying the instigators, the victims, and the response by the coach, authority figure, or system in order to recognize and label common themes throughout all the films. Table 4 outlines the eleven transcending themes the researchers found and specific examples of each theme. The category of violence or deviance that was the most pervasive in each film is presented in Table 5.

### 1. *Coach as an all-powerful figure controlling athletes' lives and anyone else he can*

These films depicted two broad types of coaches; the caring and the non-caring. While the caring coaches behaved with what seemed to be empathy and general concern for their players, both types of coaches were depicted as controlling their player's lives. The caring coaches generally did things that can be viewed as helpful but overly paternalistic. For instance, Pete Bell in *Blue Chips* was portrayed as a coach who honestly cared for his players, particularly one of his older players, Tony. When Tony was failing a class, Bell arranged for him to be tutored. He announced he would "not let Tony fail." When Tony expressed concern about his girlfriend getting pregnant, Bell had an assistant buy him condoms. Such gestures highlighted the degree to which Bell had or tried to get control over his players' personal lives.

In *He Got Game*, the coach was not a prominent figure. Yet we still learn he arranged for the apartment Jesus and Mary are living in, and he provided them with some form of monetary payment. In *The Program*, Coach Winters took Kane's motorcycle keys in a benevolent but overly paternalistic gesture. The message portrayed was that if the coach is generally a kind person, the audience should excuse any violent or deviant behavior committed because the coach is just doing what he thinks is in the best interest of his team. Deviance of this sort is justified, it seems, when the coach cares for his athletes.

A very different portrayal of an all-powerful coach was that of Coach Kilmer in *Varsity Blues*. Kilmer was the ultimate dictator type of coach, controlling everything and everyone. For example he knew Mox cared about academics more than football, and threatened to derail his academic scholarship to Brown University if Mox didn't cooperate and do everything his way. He knew every weakness of each player, and exploited them to get what he wanted. Players were just cogs in his football program machinery and as soon as they are no longer useful, they were replaced.

### 2. *The coach, authority figure, or system fails to respond to acts of violence or deviant behavior*

In each film, the coaches, others involved in the athletic system, and even local community members and parents were aware of an array of deviant acts committed by the athletes. Many times, they elected to ignore these problems. In *Blue Chips*, Coach Bell essentially told the Athletic Director he intended to bribe new recruits. The only response the A.D. gave was that he "doesn't want to know anything about it." In *Friday Night Lights*, Don Billingsley's abusive dad verbally and physically attacked him during the first practice of the season just for fumbling the football. The team, the local media, a number of community members, and the coaching staff all observed this act yet no authority figures intervened; allowing the assault to escalate until the high school players had to separate the two.

Coach Winters overlooked and minimized the evidence that Lattimer was using steroids until he assaults a young lady in *The Program*. Later, when Lattimer was supposedly clean and the

team wins the final game, it was clear from the look on Winters' face that he suspected his player was still abusing steroids. Yet he said and did nothing about it, reinforcing his priorities of on-field success over dealing with deviant behavior. In *Varsity Blues*, it was not just Coach Kilmer but the entire town that knew about, and did nothing to stop, the team's carousing and illegal behaviors. Not only were there few if any consequences depicted for the athletes' various acts of deviance or violence, but in many cases these acts receive absolutely no acknowledgement. The message to viewers is that these incidents are normal or at least acceptable, and thus not worthy of comment or action. This theme has the potential to have a broader social impact than the first theme because while the first theme revolved around the coaches exerting their sphere of influence and controlling their athletes on the field, when they decide to let the deviant behavior of athletes off the field go unchecked it impacts the entire community.

### 3. *The coach, authority figure, or system as the instigator of the violent or deviant behavior*

In many cases, it was the coach or someone involved specifically with the athletic system that actually instigated the act of violence or deviance. In *Blue Chips*, it was Bell's desire to win that made him turn to Happy (a team booster) to arrange payoffs to new recruits. In *He Got Game*, the collusion runs deeper, with the warden offering to pull strings to let Jake out of prison if he could coerce his son Jesus to go to Big State University. In *The Program*, we saw several incidents including Coach Winters pulling strings to get Bobby Collins re-admitted after he was expelled for having a young lady (Coach Winter's daughter who was also expelled and not re-admitted) take a test for him. After his first game, Darnell was given \$50 from an alumnus. He was told by a teammate that he should expect even bigger payments from boosters and alumni once he becomes a bigger star. Coach Kilmer arranged to have trainers inject Lance Harbor with cortisone, and tried to do the same with Wendell Brown when they suffer knee injuries in *Varsity Blues*. Coach Kilmer also instigated numerous physical attacks on some of his players.

### 4. *Successful coaches are in your face: Verbal abuse is standard operating procedure*

These films created the perception that the only way to motivate a team or individual player is to verbally berate them. For instance, the opening scene of *Blue Chips* showed Coach Bell ranting at his team in what can be described as a tantrum in which he accurately emulated the actual model for the character, the infamous Coach Bobby Knight. Toward the end of the film, Coach Bobby Knight (playing himself in the film) was actually shown verbally abusing referees, and as in real life, they failed to show any legitimate consequences. Coach Kilmer from *Varsity Blues* seemed to have no other means of communicating besides verbal assaults, as he was depicted regularly yelling at or insulting players. Even Coach Winters (*The Program*) and Coach Gaines (*Friday Night Lights*) verbally insulted their players during practices, although they generally did it without yelling and throwing tantrums. Gaines yelled at Chris Comer in one of the earliest scenes of the film, asserting he did not try hard enough and could not follow simple plays. Later, he yelled at Mike, taunting him by saying, "Do you want people to think you're the village idiot?" and "you are playing like a fool." Mike was clearly upset, and was shown fighting off tears when he and the coach met after the game. Although Winters and Gaines were less likely to yell and scream at their players, this behavior was not absent in the films. Rather, both allowed assistant coaches to verbally abuse their athletes with an in-your-face approach. Both Coach Winters and Coach Bell were shown verbally antagonizing members of the media as well. Most of the coaches in these films were portrayed as highly successful and, as with the themes mentioned above, audience member that want to emulate the success of these coaches would take cues from these coaches

5. *Sport is the best, maybe only, ticket out of a bad environment*

In *Blue Chips*, a major part of Coach Bell's recruiting strategy involved the athletes getting out of their current environments, especially for Butch McRae, who was living in apparent poverty in Chicago, and Neon, who appeared to live in poverty as well in rural Louisiana. *He Got Game* featured a montage of scenes designed to show how Jesus' success could prevent him from going the "way of the neighborhood"—to a life of drugs and violence. Virtually every character "wanted a piece of Jesus" as a means of personal advancement in a neighborhood where such advancement was difficult. Even his uncle and his girlfriend were looking to better their lives through opportunities offered to Jesus. Both claimed they "deserved" to live better. Mike Winchell's goal in *Friday Night Lights* was to get out of Odessa, although he tempers this with concern over leaving his sick mother. Football was seen as his vehicle to do so. In another scene, a young lady named Melissa threw herself at Mike, commenting that because he played football he was going to get out of that small town. Mike and Don talked a lot about getting out of Odessa as well, in particular during a scene in which several of the players were in a field shooting guns. In *Varsity Blues*, a main topic of conversation between Mox and his girlfriend Jules was getting out of West Canaan. Similarly, after Lance was injured and no longer looked like her ticket out of West Canaan, Darcy threw herself at Mox, who she saw as the next way out. When Mox told her she should stop hitting on him because she loves Lance, she made a comment suggesting that her relationship with him was never about love but about how his notoriety could help her get out of town.

6. *Stereotypical portrayal of athletes*

These films reinforced a number of existing stereotypes about athletes. Racial stereotypes were seen or used in *Friday Night Lights*, where Boobie is a stereotypical egocentric Black performer/athlete who was portrayed as borderline illiterate who needed help reading his recruitment letters from various universities. He mentioned repeatedly how little he needed to practice because of his natural talent, and he talked about himself in the third person. Darnell also demonstrated the hyper-ego of a future star in *The Program*. *Blue Chips* portrayed Neon as huge and powerful, who was big on talk and game but short on academic talent. Both he and Butch were conniving as well, and in it just for the notoriety and the cash. Neon seemed to need money to motivate him to do anything, as depicted in the scenes where Jenny Bell was tutoring him and he would not try to correctly answer a question until she bribes him. He later demanded to collect the money she offered when he gets a passing SAT score. White recruit Ricky Roe was portrayed as the simple small town farm boy, who was also motivated by money, which is clear when he approached the coaches very calmly and asked for \$30,000.

The streetwise Black athlete from the hood was represented through Jesus in *He Got Game* and Darnell in *The Program*. *He Got Game* featured several scenes in which Jesus was advised by others, including his father, that if he made the wrong decision on where to play next year, he will end up "just another nigger on the block." The "angry Black man" was another racial stereotype that appeared in these films. In *The Program*, we saw Alvin using racial epithets and angry taunts to get fired up on the field. In *Varsity Blues*, Wendell expressed to Mox that he was being used by Kilmer as just another slave. Yet another stereotype of athletes was the big dumb jock, perhaps represented best by the maple-syrup swigging fat man Billy Bob in *Friday Night Lights*. Billy Bob also represented the homophobic football player, as he commented early in the film "I will fear no faggots." In at least one case, Ray in *The Program* was offered as the stereotypical smart athlete. He was also depicted as a jerk and an "Uncle Tom." This tendency to depict black athletes as unintelligent has been well-documented (Andrews, 1996; Finley & Finley, 2006; Jhully, 1989; Sailes, 2000; Wenner, 1995; Wilson & Sparks, 2001). The issue received a great deal of attention in 2003, when conservative radio shock jock Rush Limbaugh claimed Eagles' quarterback Donovan McNabb was overrated. Underlying Limbaugh's

comments was the notion that black athletes are not as proficient at positions in which quick thinking is required (Kennedy & Bechtel, 2003).

In many occurrences in these films, secondary characters would refer to Black athletes using racial epithets. For instance, at a dinner party in *Friday Night Lights*, all the guests gave Coach Gaines unsolicited advice on the team. One woman commented that he should play Boobie on the defense as well as on offense, saying, “That big nigger is not going to break.”

This was intended to illustrate the small-town racism of Odessa. Another problem identified was when Black characters used this language themselves. For example, in *He Got Game* players regularly used the “n word” to describe themselves and others. The depictions of racial and general athletic stereotypes in these films can foster these views in the minds of the audience.

### 7. *Sexism and the portrayal of the female body*

In these films, women were depicted as just another tool to be used by the players, coaches, and the system. Both *He Got Game* and *The Program* featured females being used to recruit top athletes. In *The Program*, Autumn was a “tutor” and a campus “escort,” although it was clear from the conversations she had with Darnell that he believes her to be much more. It seems likely this impression was fostered by his teammates and coaches, or at least it was never corrected. The sexism in *He Got Game* is even more overt, with Jesus being told by Chick when he visited that the girls are there for his enjoyment. A later scene showed him engaging in sexual activity with two of the young ladies who were virtually throwing themselves at him. Although it was not as overt, the notion that girls are an enticement to enroll at a particular school was used in *Blue Chips* as well. Ricky expressed to Coach Bell that he really only wanted to go to college to meet girls, and Bell emphasizes, both at the Roe’s home as well as on campus, that there was no shortage of girls at the school. Many of the scenes in which the booster Happy was depicted showed him with multiple girls hanging on his arm.

Girls also threw themselves at the athletes in *Varsity Blues* and *Friday Night Lights*. In *Varsity Blues*, we saw Darcy first latch on to Lance Harbor, who was the current star. When he was hurt, she flirted with Mox (the new star), inviting him to her house and then displaying her body in what is the now well-known whipped cream bikini scene. In another scene, Tweeter coerced some underage girls into getting naked and riding along with him in a stolen police car. Yet other examples of sexism in *Varsity Blues* were the multiple scenes involving the health education teacher who was also a stripper. The boys were thrilled to run into their teacher at the strip club, and after an initial period of shock, she was happy to sit down with them, share a drink, and remind them they now have a “little secret.” In *Friday Night Lights*, Melissa saw Mike as her vehicle out of Odessa, and taunts him for being gay until he agreed to have sex with her. Don was interrupted by his father when he was about to have sex with a young lady (Maria), whose name he doesn’t even know.

Women in these films would do anything to help an athlete, ranging from the overt sexual acts described above to the young lady who took a test for Bobby Collins in *The Program*. Perhaps the most disturbing example of sexism, however, was in *The Program*, when Lattimer would not take “no” for an answer in a moment of apparent steroid rage and was poised to rape a young lady. He physically assaulted the woman before teammates finally intervened. Although the coach punished him by making him miss three games, the conversation between him and the assistant coaches suggested Winters was more happy that the young lady’s family decided not to press charges (her dad is a big supporter of the team) than he was concerned that his player tried to rape a woman. Additionally, the coaches covered up the suspension, making up a story that it was the result of an injury. Tweeter’s attitude in *Varsity Blues* toward women—that they

are simply there to provide men sexual pleasure—was grounds for serious concern. At one point, he entered a party singing, “she broke my heart, so I broke her jaw.”

### 8. *Academics: Not a priority, but just another hurdle in the pursuit of top athletic performance*

It was clear from each of these films that these boys and men were athletes first and foremost and only considered students as an afterthought. Coach Bell recruited Neon, for instance, despite a discussion of his unacceptable SAT score. He then went on to arrange tutoring that would be just enough for Neon to obtain an acceptable entrance score. In a later scene in a classroom, Neon made a spectacle of himself, and Ricky was shown in class caring only about the attractiveness of his female classmates. There were repeated conversations between athletes in *The Program* about how if you're on the team they'll never let you fail. “You might never get a degree,” Alvin tells Darnell, “but you'll stay eligible.” Later, comments were made indicating that Alvin was nearly illiterate. Athletes were shown selling test answers to others as well. When Collins was caught having the coach's daughter take a test for him, Coach Winters was angry, yet his anger seemed more directed at how obvious he was in his cheating and that Collins used his daughter than at the fact that he cheated. And, later in the film, Winters appealed before an academic board to get Collins reinstated, since the team needed him with Joe Kane lost to rehab (another curious situation where an athlete leaves school for several weeks with no discussion about missing academics, only about his triumphant return to the team). During that appeals hearing, we heard the “stuffy” professors explaining that Collins did not deserve to be reinstated since he was getting poor grades in easy, non-degree track courses. But another professor, a friend of the team, sympathized with the difficulty of being a student-athlete, and this coupled with Winters' appeal made the effort successful.

At the high school level, we saw the athletes in *Friday Night lights* wishing to leave the dead-end town of Odessa, but generally not viewing academics as their vehicle to do so. Don and Mike told Chavo that he was the lucky one, since he did have the grades to leave, but this did not seem to prompt them to study harder to do the same. The opening scene of the film showed Mike's mom drilling him on football plays, not school work. Boobie Miles commented in the film, “I get straight As.” When the reporter asked, “in what?” Boobie responded, “There is only one subject, it's football. There is [sic] no other subjects.” Later, Boobie needed help reading his recruitment letters. Additionally, a radio caller commented on why the team was floundering, stating: “they do too much learning in the school.” In *Varsity Blues*, Mox was considered the intellectual member of the team, and he was derided for it by Coach Kilmer and even his own father. Kilmer repeatedly told him he was the “dumbest smart kid he knows,” and that despite being so smart he cannot follow simple football plays. On the day he received notification that he had been accepted on a full scholarship to Brown University, his dad barely congratulated him, instead saying they “needed to talk about that night's game.” Joe Harbor, Lance's dad, was heard commenting that he was holding his younger son back a year in school so he would be bigger for freshman football. The absence of any discussion about academics in *He Got Game* also sends the message to viewers that it is only Jesus' basketball skills, not his intelligence, that matter.

### 9. *Cheating as commonplace and necessary to compete*

Cheating occurred in a variety of ways in these films, and was generally depicted as a normal and accepted means to achieve a given end. As noted earlier, this included cheating by coaches and cheating instigated by athletic boosters. It took many forms, from recruiting violations to point shaving. *Varsity Blues* even began with Mox narrating that, “while in this country there are rules we all have to follow, in West Canaan, football has its own rules.”



Athletes cheated regularly. They took money to throw games or ensure the team did not cover the spread (Tony from *Blue Chips*), they took illegal performance-enhancing substances (Lattimer in *The Program*), and they were shown as more than willing to receive illegal payments (the new recruits in *Blue Chips* and players in *The Program*). If they could not pass a class, they would cheat to do so (Collins in *The Program*). In conversations with Happy (the booster) in *Blue Chips*, it became obvious that cheating was endemic at the school, since Happy referred to football recruits being given money and other items to entice them to the school as well. He repeatedly assured Coach Bell that no one would ever know about it and that the money was “completely clean.”

### 10. *The team as the community foundation*

In most of the communities depicted in the films, the team was everything. Average citizens seemed to tie their very identity to the success of the team in *Friday Night Lights* and *Varsity Blues*. Community members showed up regularly to watch and critique practices, and radio callers clearly were emotionally tied to every moment of the games and every decision by the coaches. Local restaurants provided the athletes free food, store clerks gave them alcohol, and the police looked the other way or trivialized what in other cases would be considered serious violations of the law (i.e., stealing a police car, assault). Boosters regularly showed up to tell Coach Gaines what to do and how critical it was that he wins. When the team did not, irate callers called for his firing and townspersons placed “for sale” signs in his yard. When Lance went down with the knee injury in *Varsity Blues*, his father’s comment “Lord, don’t do this to me” suggested he was more concerned with the notoriety in the community than with his son’s long-term health. Sam Moxon, on the other hand, was thrilled that the injury to Lance would give his son the chance to play, clearly displaying some degree of pleasure that the misfortune for another would be to his personal benefit. The importance to the community was also true in *He Got Game*, although it was displayed somewhat differently. Here conversations between Jesus and his friends, as well as Jesus and his greedy uncle, showed that these people were living vicariously through his basketball success.

The opening scene in *The Program* showed the university president telling Coach Winters that the team’s losses were an embarrassment to the program, the school, and the community, and if he didn’t start winning he would be fired. Immediately thereafter, Coach Winters saw and commented on the effigies of him that community members hung after the team’s loss.

### 11. *No pain, no gain: Short term success without regard for the long term cost to the athletes*

The coaches and their supporters seemed to care very little about the long-term opportunities for the athletes in these films. Rather, they were very concerned about short-term success (i.e., winning games). Coaches in many cases did things that jeopardized the health of their athletes. For example, In *Varsity Blues*, Coach Kilmer injected Lance Harbor with cortisone and let him play with a serious knee injury that ruined his chance to play football collegiately. When a doctor commented that the injury was due to playing on an already damaged knee, as evidenced by the buildup of scar tissue, Kilmer played dumb. Similarly, Kilmer was poised to do the same to Wendell, had Mox and the other players not intervened. Early in the film, Kilmer ignored Wendell’s complaint that he was tired and his knee hurt, responding, “Never show weakness.” Wendell also expressed that Kilmer did nothing to help him with recruiters, instead just using him on the field for immediate gratification, making him his “Black work horse.” Despite obvious evidence Billy Bob was suffering from an apparent concussion, Kilmer taunted and coerced him into playing, which could have seriously injured or even killed him. Although he was a more sympathetic character, Coach Gaines in *Friday Night Lights* allowed Boobie to play even though it was fairly clear that he and his uncle were not being truthful about the doctor’s recommendations regarding his knee. When Don Billingsley’s shoulder was



injured during the final game, Coach Gaines and the trainers simply popped it back in and let him play on.

In *Blue Chips*, it was not the athletes' health that was of concern so much as it was their chance for success outside of the sport. Coach Bell did little to create a climate of academic success or even hard work. In fact, he commented that the first losing team shown in the film worked hard and it got them nowhere. He did, however, refer regularly to his athletes as "animals" and "thoroughbreds," suggesting they were more like horses to be driven to exhaustion than they were young athletes to be nurtured for the future. Similarly, in *The Program*, Coach Winters was actually careful with Joe Kane's health, taking his motorcycle keys so he didn't jeopardize his Heisman chances, but he took great liberties with his players' opportunities academically. Although Alvin could barely read, for instance, he was drilled on and performed well at memorizing football plays.

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The results of this study provided support for the notion that gamesmanship has become more important than sportsmanship in today's world of sport. Today's athletes are taught that sport is a zero-sum game that they must win at all costs (Eitzen, 2003). The effect is that cheating, violence, and other forms of deviance come to be viewed as simply what must be done to win. It becomes increasingly easy for coaches, athletes, and administrators to justify deviant behavior, arguing that everyone is doing it (Finley & Finley, 2006; Sage, 2000).

These films clearly reinforced what Coakley (2006) has called the sport ethic. The sport ethic "is a set of norms that many people in power and performance sports have accepted as the dominant criteria for defining what it means to be an athlete and to successfully claim an identity as an athlete" (p. 168). Coakley (2006) explained that the sport ethic is promoted by coaches, supporters, fans, and media, and then is internalized by athletes. Whannel (2008) noted that a significant theme in sport films is that of winning respect and forging identity. In the case of these films, respect is earned through winning, not through hard work, balanced success in both athletics and academics, or by being a good human being. This is true of most athletes, coaches, parents, and the communities portrayed in these films.

Another concern is that these films normalized deviance and violence to viewers. Viewers who themselves might be athletes may see these films as models for the way they are expected to act and be treated, following Social Self Theory. Modeling the behavior seen in these films would further justify the physical and verbal abuses of young athletes by dominating and controlling coaches. Further, drawing on the work of Paik and Comstock (1994), coaches and athletes may learn that their deviant behavior does not and should not have any significant negative consequences.

If young athletes model the same type of behavior as the players in these films with the expectation that the coaches, parents, community, and athletic system will tolerate the deviant behavior but this does not happen, the athletes could be surprised to find out they may face severe consequences. This could include suspensions or expulsions from the team and/or school, and in some cases jail time with a criminal record that could follow them for the rest of their lives.

Following the cultivation hypothesis, coaches and those involved in managing sport viewing these films may over-estimate the number of teams that are cheating or promoting some form of deviant behavior. They may believe such behavior is inevitable, making it more likely they will take an "everyone's doing it" approach. Fans, too, may feel that these behaviors are not necessarily acceptable, but are what must be done to be successful in sport today.

The depictions of how to manage acts of violence or deviance are important as well. Several scholars have noted that films generally promote a conservative approach to the control of crime or deviance (Lenz, 2005; Rafter, 2000). This is true in these films as well. That is, when a response of any sort is shown, it involves some type of punishment to the individual athlete, rather than addressing the systemic issues. It is nearly impossible to fix problem behavior without addressing the root causes of it. Systems and structures that encourage or fail to respond to deviance are part of the problem. They must be analyzed and adjusted for deviance and violence to be eliminated.

The use of stereotypes and sexism to entertain and inform about high school and college sports is problematic as well. Again, these films show the entire athletic system and the surrounding communities looking the other way and even encouraging degenerate behavior with women. While certainly this depiction of females as mere vehicles for the males' sexual pleasure may have a negative impact on male viewers, female audience members may also be negatively impacted by viewing this type of depiction. These films generally portray the women as happy and willing to service men, and female viewers may feel this is how they are to behave.

Academically it would be difficult for student athletes to watch these films and feel as though their hard work in the classroom would pay off. Rather, the message is that it is acceptable to be a dumb jock; in fact, it is what is normal and expected. There is no need to worry, as sports are the ticket to a better life. Phillips (2000) discussed the concept of allegiance, or who viewers are supposed to feel strongly about or identify with in a film. In these films, it can certainly be argued that viewers are supposed to identify with the non-academic, charismatic player who loves to have fun and stir up trouble, rather than the studious and serious athlete.

Future research should explore whether the same themes emerge in other quasi-realistic films featuring sport. Research could address whether these themes appear to be indicative of a more recent approach to sport films, or whether the same concepts are utilized in films depicting earlier decades. Additionally, research could analyze films depicting other sports, other levels of sport, and sport films focused on female participants to see if the same affirmation of the sport ethic emerges.

In the interim, it is recommended that sport administration programs address popular culture representations of sport. Programs should engage student in discussions about these depictions, addressing how they are both realistic and unrealistic, and the implications. Doing so would help students see both the problems and potential of sport, and the challenges and successes of sport administrators. Sport films can be used as a vehicle to discuss deviance and cheating in sport, the management of it, and the effectiveness of programs and policies. Sport films can prompt discussion of when and how deviance and violence have become normalized, and how this normalization threatens the very essence of sport.

### REFERENCES

- Andrews, D. (1996). The fact(s) of Michael Jordan's blackness: Excavating a floating racial signifier. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 13(2), 125-58.
- Baker, A. (2003). *Contesting identities: Sports in American film*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Barak, G. (1994). Between the waves: Mass-mediated theories of crime and justice. *Social Justice*, 21, 133-147.

- Beckett, K., & Sasson, T. (2000). *The politics of injustice: Crime and punishment in America*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge.
- Berkowitz, L. (1965). Some aspects of observed aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2, 359-369.
- Bok, S. (1998). *Mayhem: Violence as public entertainment*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Briley, R. (2005). Sports in film, television, and history: Introduction. *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies*, 35(2), 17-18.
- Browne, N., Webb, T., Fisher, K., & Cook, B. (2002, April). American film violence: An analytic portrait. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 17(4), 351-370.
- Bruce, T. (2004). Marking the boundaries of the "normal" in televised sports: The play-by-play of race. *Media, Culture, and Society*, 26(6), 861-879.
- Carter, C., & Weaver, C. (Eds.). (2006). *Critical readings: Violence in the media*. Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.
- Caudwell, J. (2008). Girlfight: Boxing women. *Sport in Society*, 11(22), 227-239.
- Charlesworth, A., & Glance, S. (2005). Smoking in the movies. *Pediatrics*, 116(6), 1516-1528.
- Coakley, J. (1998). *Sports in society: Issues and controversies*. (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Coakley, J. (2006). *Sports in society: Issues and controversies*. (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Doyle, A. (1998). "Cops" Television policing as policing reality. In Cavender, G., & Fishman, M. (Eds.). *Entertaining Crime*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Duncan, M., Messner, M., Williams, L., & Jensen, K. (1990). *Gender Stereotyping in Televised Sports*. Los Angeles: The Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles.
- Eastman, S., & Billings, A. (2001). Biased Voices of Sports: Racial and Gender Stereotyping in College Basketball Announcing. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 12, 183-201.
- Eitzen, D. (2003). *Fair and foul? Beyond the myths and paradoxes of sport* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Felson, R. B. (1996). Mass media effects and violence behavior. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 103-128.
- Finley, L., & Finley, P. (2005). Dunks and Drunks: Depictions of drug and alcohol abuse among high school athletes in film. *Essays in Education*, 12, 1-20.
- Finley, P., & Finley, L. (2006). *The sport industry's war on athletes*. Westport, CT; Praeger.
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1994). Growing up with TV: The cultivation perspective. In Bryant, J., & Zillman, D. (Eds.). *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 17-42). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

- Gerbner, G. (2006). Television violence at a time of turmoil and terror. In Weaver, C., & Carter, C. (Eds.). (2006). *Critical readings: Violence and the media* (pp. 45-53). Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.
- Gerdes, L. (Ed.). (2004). *Media violence: Opposing viewpoints*. Westport, CT: Greenhaven.
- Giroux, H. (2007). Private Satisfactions and Public Disorders: Fight Club, Patriarchy, and the Politics of Masculine Violence. Retrieved from [http://www.henrygiroux.com/online\\_articles/fight\\_club.html](http://www.henrygiroux.com/online_articles/fight_club.html)
- Grossman, D. (1995). *On killing: The psychological cost of learning to kill in war and society*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown, & Co.
- Gruneau, R. (1989). Making Spectacle: A Case Study in Television Sports Production. In Wenner, L. (Ed.) *Media Sport* (p. 134-154). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Hardin, M., Lynn, S., & Walsdorf, K. (2005). Challenge and conformity on "contested terrain": Images of women in four women's sport/fitness magazines. *Sex Roles*, 53(1/2), 105-117.
- Hinds, M. (1993, October 19). Not like the movie: A dare leads to death. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F0CEED7123AF93AA25753C1A965958260>
- Holtzman, L. (2000). *Media messages*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Huston, A., Watkins, B., & Kunkel, D. (1989). Public policy and children's television. *American Psychologist*, 44, 424-433.
- Hyland, D. (1990). *Philosophy of sport*. New York: Paragon House.
- Jones, G. (2008). In praise of an 'invisible genre'? An ambivalent look at the fictional sports feature film. *Sport in Society*, 11(2), 117-129.
- Jhully, S. (1989). Cultural studies and the sports media complex. In L. Wenner (ed.). *Media, sports, and society* (pp. 70-94). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Jhully, S. [Director] (1999). *Tough guise* [motion picture]. Media Education Foundation.
- Jhully, S. [Director] (2002). *Wrestling with manhood: Boys, bullying, and battering* [motion picture]. Media Education Foundation.
- Kappeler, V., Blumberg, M., & Potter, G. (2000). *The mythology of crime and criminal justice*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Kennedy, K., & Bechtel, M. (2003, December 13). Welcome to Rush week. *Sports Illustrated*, 99(14), 22-24.
- Kibby, M. (1998). Nostalgia for the Masculine: Onward to the Past in the Sport Films of the Eighties. *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, 7(1), 16-28.
- Kusz, K. (2006). Why be a Jackass?: Media Images of Young White Men in and out of Sport in New Millennium America. In Prettyman, S., & Lampman, B. (Eds.). *Learning Culture through Sport: Exploring the Role of Sports in Society*.

- Kusz, K. (2008). Remasculinizing American white guys in/through new millennium American sport films. *Sport in Society*, 11(2), 209-226.
- Leonard, D. (2006). 'Is this Heaven?': White sporting masculinities and the Hollywood imagination. In King, C., & Leonard, D. (Eds.). *Visual Economies of/in motion: Sport and film* (pp. 165-194). New York: Peter Lang.
- Lenz, T. (2005). Conservatism in American crime films. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 12(2), 116-134.
- Lichter, S., Lichter, L., & Rothman, S. (1994). *Prime time: How TV portrays American culture*. Regenery.
- Manganello, J. (2008). Teens, dating violence, and media use: A review of the literature and conceptual model for future research. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*, 9(3), 3-18.
- McDonald, I. (2007). Situating the sport documentary. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 31(3), 208-225.
- Merriam, S. (1998) *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Messner, M., & Sabo, D. (Eds.). (1994). *Sex, violence and power in sports: Rethinking masculinity*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.
- Messner, M., Dunbar, M., & and Hunt, D. (2000). The televised manhood formula. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 24(4), 380-94.
- Mustonen & Pilkkinen, A, (1997). The nature of screen violence and its relation to program popularity. *Aggressive Behavior*, 23(4), 281-92.
- Paik, H., & Comstock, G. (1994). The effects of television violence on antisocial behavior: A meta-analysis. *Communications Research*, 21(4), 516-546.
- Pearson, D., Curtis, R., Haney, C., & Zhang, J. (2003). Sport films: Social dimensions over time, 1930-1995. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 27(2), 145-161.
- Perlmutter, D. (2000). *Policing the media*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Phillips, P. (2000). *Understanding film texts: Meaning and experience*. British Film Institute Publishing.
- Poulton, E., & Roderick, M. (2008). Introducing sport in films. *Sport in Society*, 11(2), 107-116.
- Prince, S. (Ed.). (2000). *Screening violence*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Rafter, N. (2000). *Shots in the mirror: Crime films and society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rowe, D. (1998). If you film it, will they come? *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 22(4), 350-359.
- Rowe, D. (2008). Time and timelessness in sport film. *Sport in Society*, 11(2), 146-158.

- Sage, G. (2000). *Power and ideology in American sport: A critical perspective*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Sailes, G. (2000). The African-American athlete: Social myths and stereotypes. In D. Brooks & A. Althouse (Eds.). *Racism in college athletics* (pp. 53-64). Morgantown, WV: Information Technology, Inc.
- Schehr, C. (2000). Martial arts films and the action-cop genre: Ideology, violence, and spectatorship. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 7(3), 102-118.
- Slocum, D. J. (2001). *Violence and American cinema*. New York: Routledge.
- Snyder, S. (1995). Movie portrayals of juvenile delinquency: Part 2. Sociology and psychology. *Adolescence*, 30(118), 327-337.
- Springhall, J. (1998). *Youth, popular culture and moral panics*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Surette, R. (1998). *Media, crime, and criminal justice: Images and realities*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Wallenfeldt, J. (1989). *Sports movies: A guide to nearly 500 films focusing on sports*. New York: Cinebooks Home Library Series.
- Weaver, C., & Carter, C. (Eds.). (2006). *Critical readings: Violence and the media*. Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.
- Wenner, L. (1989). (Ed.), *Media, sports and society*. Newberry Park, CA: Sage.
- Wenner, L. (1995). The good, the bad, and the ugly: Race, sport, and the public eye. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 19(3), 227-231.
- Whannel, G. (2008). Winning and losing respect: Narratives of identity in sport films. *Sport in Society*, 11(2), 195-208.
- Wilson, B., & Sparks, R. (2001). Impact of black athletes media portrayals on Canadian youth. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 2-4, 1-36.



**Table 1**

**Summary Breakdown of Incidents of Violent or Deviant Behavior Displayed in Each Film**

<b>Movie Title</b>	<b>Total Incidents of violent or deviant behavior</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Varsity Blues	59	24.18%
Friday Night Lights	53	21.72%
The Program	51	20.90%
Blue Chips	45	18.44%
He Got Game	36	14.75%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Category</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Physical &amp; Emotional Abuse</b>	<b>Friday Night Lights</b> – Father berates son after losing a football game. <b>Varsity Blues</b> – Coach tries to choke a player.
<b>Academic Misconduct</b>	<b>The Program</b> – Star college linebacker can't read and brags about buying test. <b>Friday Night Lights</b> – Running back talking about school "I get straight A's. There is only one subject, its football. There is no other subjects."
<b>Alcohol Related Misconduct</b>	<b>Varsity Blues</b> – After underage player gets drunk at a party he steals a police car and drives around town drunk. <b>He Got Game</b> – Uncle offering alcohol to his underage nephew in an effort to make peace.
<b>Bribery</b>	<b>Blue Chips</b> – Players requesting and getting money, cars, houses, etc... to come play basketball for the University. <b>He got Game</b> – High school coach offers star player money for information on which college he is interested in.
<b>Violent or Negative Speech</b>	<b>Varsity Blues</b> – player preparing for game "I will fear no faggots." <b>Varsity Blues</b> – player singing at party "she broke my heart so I broke her jaw."
<b>Female Body (Negative Portrayal)</b>	<b>He Got Game</b> – Women used in the recruiting process to insure the recruits have a pleasurable experience. <b>Varsity Blues</b> – Whipped cream bikini scene (the only way a young woman can get out of the town and get a better life is to use her body to seduce a star athlete).
<b>Sport Above All Else</b>	<b>Varsity Blues</b> – Coach talks player into playing after suffering a possible concussion because the team would suffer if he did not play. <b>The Program</b> – Coach helps his player get reinstated after the player and the coaches own daughter get expelled because she took a test for the player.
<b>Sexual Misconduct</b>	<b>Varsity Blues</b> – Players exposing themselves to the women's auxiliary club. <b>Varsity Blues</b> – Star QB and cheerleader caught having sex in public.

**Table 3**

**Category Breakdown of Incidents of Violent or Deviant Behavior Displayed in the Films**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Physical & Emotional Abuse	56	22.95%
Academic Misconduct	25	10.25%
Alcohol Related Misconduct	21	8.61%
Bribery	20	8.20%
Violent or Negative Speech	16	6.56%
Female Body (Negative Portrayal)	12	4.92%
Sport Above All Else	12	4.92%
Sexual Misconduct	10	4.10%

**Table 4**

**Transcending Themes of Violent or Deviant Behavior**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Coach as an all-powerful figure controlling athletes lives and anyone else he can	<b>Varsity Blues</b> – Coach Kilmer threatening Mox’s college scholarship if he does not obey him.
The coach, authority figures, or system failing to respond to acts of violence or deviant behavior	<b>The Program</b> – Coach Winters covering up the assault and attempted rape of a young woman by his star defensive lineman.
The coach, authority figure, or system as the instigator of the violent or deviant behavior	<b>Varsity Blues</b> – Coach Kilmer grabbing and yanking players around by their helmets.
Successful coaches are “in your face.” Verbal abuse is standard operating procedure	<b>Blue Chips</b> – Opening scene when Coach Bell goes on a halftime tirade yelling at all his players.
Sport is the best, maybe only, ticket out of a bad environment	<b>Friday Night Lights</b> – Conversations between the players talking about how football is there only way out of Odessa.
Stereotypical portrayal of athletes	<b>Blue Chips</b> – The “Dumb Jock” aspect of the players both in and out of the classroom.
Sexism and the portrayal of the female body	<b>He Got Game</b> – During his recruiting trip Jesus is given two women to have sex with.
Academics: Not a priority just another hurdle in the pursuit of top athletic performance	<b>The Program</b> – Albert’s response about how the Program will keep them eligible, “you might not get a degree but they will keep you eligible to play”
Cheating as commonplace and needed to compete	<b>The Program</b> – The steroid abuse and the different methods used to cover it up.
The team as the community foundation	<b>Friday Night Lights</b> – The amount of media coverage including preseason interviews and nonstop radio coverage of the teams every move.
No pain, no gain: Short term success without regard for the long term cost to the athletes	<b>Varsity Blues</b> – Coach Kilmer convincing players to use short term treatments without explaining the long term ramifications.

**Table 5**

**Highest Category of Violent and Deviant Behavior Displayed in Each Film**

<b>Movie Title</b>	<b>Top Incident/Behavior</b>	<b>Count</b>
Varsity Blues	Physical & Emotional Abuse	15 (25.42%)
Friday Night Lights	Physical & Emotional Abuse	18 (33.96%)
The Program	Physical & Emotional Abuse	10 (19.61%)
Blue Chips	Bribery	15 (33.33%)
He Got Game	Physical & Emotional Abuse	9 (25.00%)

### *Coming Soon*

from CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS:



700 Kent St.  
Durham, NC 27701  
919-489-7486  
www.cap-press.com

## *Sport and Criminal Behavior*

By Jason Lee and Jeffrey Lee

Sport is filled with much paradox. Sport, by nature, is inherently based on athleticism, fitness, strength, and other seemingly healthful benefits. Though such benefits are common, there is the constant presence where the unhealthy and inappropriate associations exist.

This dichotomy is quite prevalent in many forms in contemporary sport. Among the most troubling occurrence with contemporary sport is the increasingly visible prevalence of criminal behaviors associated with sport. This text seeks to examine some of the most relevant and thought provoking occurrence of criminal and quasi-criminal behavior in sport.

Through identifying pertinent issues, including motives and causes associated with such actions, this work aims to present a comprehensive view at these issues while providing regarding ways such matters can be effectively dealt with in contemporary society. Among the topics to be addressed in this work include: drug issues, violence, gambling, ticket scalping, hazing, fraud in nonprofit sport, homeland security issues and disaster preparedness in sport, intellectual property (trademark law, copyright misappropriation, and criminal implications), and beyond.

#### About the authors:

Jason Lee is a professor of sport management at the University of North Florida.

Jeffrey Lee is a professor criminal justice at Troy University.

Forthcoming Summer 2009 • ISBN: 978-1-59460-502-4

Read more about this title and keep updated on its status at: <http://www.cap-press.com/books/1929>

## *Branded: Branding in Sport Business*

By Jason Lee

This book is a resource that examines significant brands and the points of interest associated with the success (and sometimes failures) of the profiled brands. Brands in this work span sport, recreation, and beyond, and each chapter sheds light on actions which have utilized sport business to cultivate brand equity.

The concept of branding is important and has generated great interest in academic and professional circles. Brands range from a collection of images that represent products to a variety symbols associated with products and their producers and consumers build associations and affinities through to these brands. By serving as the embodiment of the accumulation all the information connected to companies, people, places, goods, and services, brands profiled in this work will address successful (and sometimes not so successful) practices and provide points for discussion and further examination.

The information provided in this work can serve as a stand alone read or as a supplemental text in a variety of academic settings. To further enhance the information provided in this work, each chapter is developed to include (1) an **Opening Line-up** section which overview the company and the cases being addressed, (2) a basic **Timeline** identifying relevant historical events and providing points of reference regarding significant points of history for the brands, (3) a **The Final Score** component at the conclusion of the profile which critically examine industry perspectives and implication regarding the profiled brands, (4) the identification of key concepts in the **Post-Game Comments** section, and the opportunity for further theoretical explorations can occur through answering issues addressed provide **Discussion Questions** section (this section would be useful for facilitating class discussions). Furthermore, **web based resources, tables, side boxes, and figures** are provided to offer further background information for the brands being profiled.

#### About the authors:

Jason Lee is a professor of sport management at the University of North Florida.

Forthcoming Summer 2009 • ISBN: 978-1-59460-506-2

Read more about this title and keep updated on its status at: <http://www.cap-press.com/books/1930>





### THE OFFICIAL VISIT EXPERIENCE OF NCAA DIVISION I RECRUITED STUDENT-ATHLETES

HEATHER J. LAWRENCE, PHD, OHIO UNIVERSITY

CHRISTINA MERCKX, PHD, ATC, SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA UNIVERSITY

EDWARD HEBERT, PHD, SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA UNIVERSITY

---

#### INTRODUCTION

While examining the culture of intercollegiate athletics, one could confuse the criticisms of the past with those today. Since the 1800s, individuals calling for the reform of intercollegiate athletics have described improper recruiting of student-athletes, disorderly conduct promoted by sport, and the expense of intercollegiate athletics (U.S. House of Representatives, 2004; Welch, 1996). The desire to eliminate concerns about intercollegiate athletics and create fair competition has led to volumes of rules and regulations organized by various governing bodies. The most powerful of these governing bodies is the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). NCAA rules govern behaviors ranging from when a college coach can first contact a high school athlete to how many meals a student-athlete is permitted to receive on the day of a competition (NCAA, n.d.). There are so many rules specific to recruiting that an entire section of the NCAA Manual is dedicated to it (NCAA). The media has often portrayed recruiting as a rogue affair with institutions of higher education having little regard for NCAA rules and local, state, and federal laws (Anderson & Dohrmann, 2004; Goral, 2004; Jacobson & Suggs, 2004; Wieberg, 2005). The purpose of this research was to explore the behaviors of NCAA Division I-recruited student-athletes during their official recruiting visits.

The NCAA has established specific guidelines governing the recruitment of student-athletes. In most cases, an individual who has an interest in playing college sports is considered a recruit, prospective student-athlete, or prospect when he/she begins ninth grade (NCAA, 2008). An “official visit” is defined by the NCAA as “any visit to a college campus by you [the prospect] and your [his/her] parents paid for by the college” (p. 18). The second type of campus visit available to prospects is the unofficial visit, which is “any visit by you [the prospect] and your [his/her] parents to a college campus paid for by you [the prospect] or your [his/her] parents” (p. 18). Prospective student-athletes are allowed up to five official visits beginning the first day of their senior year of high school (NCAA, n.d.). The intent of both the official and unofficial visit is to assist prospects in making informed decisions regarding college choice.

A recruit on an official visit is allowed a maximum of 48 hours to visit and evaluate the campus (NCAA, n.d., Bylaws 13.6.4 & 13.6.4.1). During the 48-hour period, coaches, athletic administrators, and current student-athletes allow the prospect to evaluate the academic, athletic, and social aspects of the university and the surrounding community. Recruits are assigned a “host” who is responsible for assisting the recruit in attending scheduled appointments, sharing what it is like to be a student (or student-athlete) at the institution, and providing activities throughout the visit (Bylaw 13.6.7.5). Common academic activities on recruiting trips include meeting with athletic academic advisors, meeting with professors, and attending classes. Athletically, recruits can attend practices, spend time with the coaching staff and team, and meet other support personnel in the athletic department. During time that is not scheduled by athletic coaches and staff, activities are at the discretion of the recruit and host. Generally, activities include those which allow the prospect to experience campus life such as attending campus and social events and relaxing with other students.

This study specifically examined the experience of prospective student-athletes while on official recruiting visits to NCAA Division I institutions during the academic years 1999-2000 through 2004-05. Three specific research questions were addressed:

- (1) Which activities are most prevalent on a Division I official visit?
- (2) Do the behaviors of recruits on official visits vary with demographic variables?
- (3) Did the behavior of recruits on official visits significantly change after the implementation of new recruiting rules in 2004?

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Universities have a great deal at stake when recruiting student-athletes. Escalating financial gain for schools that win in football and basketball and are featured on television have made securing top recruits a key aspect of coaches' jobs. In 2003, Langelett examined the relationship between recruiting and team performance in NCAA Division IA (now called the Football Bowl Subdivision) football and found evidence that recruiting does affect team performance over the following five years. The same study demonstrated that football teams finishing in the top 25 nationally seemed to be able to attract higher-ranked recruits in the future, which creates a cycle. With competitive success (leading to institutional financial gain) an expectation for most coaches, recruiting is an important part of coaches' jobs.

The official visit is the only opportunity an institution to financially support a campus visit and show a recruit what the institution has to offer. Research has demonstrated that the official visit is an important aspect of the recruiting and college selection process for student-athletes. Mathes and Gurney (1985) examined student-athlete choice of colleges and determined that the coach and the campus environment were the most important factors in the college selection process. Additionally, Frost (2003) found that the campus visit was the most important part of the selling portion of the recruiting process for men's college basketball programs. Also in 2003, Letawsky, Schneider, Pedersen, and Palmer focused on factors related to college choice decision making for student-athletes at one large Division I institution. Their results showed that the official on-campus visit was among the most important factors in determining college choice.

Occasionally, individuals involved in recruiting have violated NCAA, local, state, and federal law during the official visit. Reported NCAA recruiting violations extend beyond the official visit, but between 2000 and 2004 there were 31 schools penalized by the NCAA for major recruiting violations (Goral, 2004). When these violations occur, the media has been quick to pick up the story, casting a negative light on the institution. Allegations of official visit misconduct have included (a) football players and coaches using strippers, alcohol, and drugs to entertain football recruits during official visits (Anderson & Dohrmann, 2004; Jacobson & Suggs, 2004; Wieberg, 2005); (b) a recruit arrested and charged with burglary and attempted sexual battery while drinking in a bar with another recruit and players (Anderson & Dohrmann); and (c) a recruit arrested and charged with a felony count of setting off a hotel fire extinguisher and misdemeanor battery for hugging a woman without her permission (Anderson & Dohrmann). Also in 2004, the owner of Hardbodies Entertainment reported providing strippers to recruiting parties to at least six institutions over a 20 year period (Anderson & Dohrmann). These behaviors are embarrassing for the university and expensive, even if no wrongdoing is ultimately found. One institution expected to pay over \$800,000 for the investigation, legal fees, and university personnel associated with the allegations of misconduct of football recruits (Goral).

The NCAA's response to the media attention was the creation of a Task Force on Recruiting, charged with proposing legislation which ultimately served to further clarify, standardize, and restrict what can occur on an official visit (NCAA, 2004a). Based on the work of the Task Force,

the NCAA adopted additional legislation specifically prohibiting certain types of luxury transportation, lodging, and meals for prospective student-athletes in August 2004. Other rule changes included eliminating personalized scoreboard presentations, game-day simulations, and the use of recruiting aids such as personalized jerseys during official visits (NCAA, 2004b). It should be noted that none of the legislative rule changes adopted in 2004 were explicitly related to behavioral expectations of the recruit.

The second component of the rule changes required individual NCAA institutions to develop their own policies for official visits. Specifically, NCAA bylaw 13.6.1 states,

An institution must have written departmental policies related to official visits that apply to prospects, student hosts, coaches and other athletics administrators that are approved by the institution's chief executive officer and kept on file at the institution and conference office. The institution is responsible for the development and enforcement of appropriate policies and penalties regarding specified areas, as identified by the NCAA Division I Board of Directors. The institution shall have an outside entity (e.g., conference office) evaluate its policies related to official visits once every four years. The institution may be held accountable through the NCAA enforcement program for activities that clearly demonstrate a disregard for its stated policies (NCAA, n.d.).

The NCAA Division I Board of Directors had previously endorsed recruiting rules that prohibited use of alcohol, drugs, sex, and gambling in recruiting (NCAA, 2004a), but ultimately passed a policy that stated, "Campuses must develop written policies that specifically prohibit inappropriate or illegal behavior in recruiting" (NCAA, 2004b, ¶ 9). The requirement for institutions to develop their own recruiting policies within certain parameters led many institutions to analyze their policies and practices or to create new policies.

Any rule the institution implemented as part of its own recruiting policy also became subject to NCAA enforcement as part of this new legislation (NCAA, n.d.). For example, an institution that prohibited the consumption of alcohol by a prospective student-athlete on an official visit would be found in violation of NCAA rules if any prospective student-athlete were found to have consumed alcohol on an official visit. The combination of the potential for NCAA rule violations and that the institutional policy had to be approved by the chief executive officer brought attention to official visit conduct that previously was absent at some institutions. There are over 300 NCAA bylaws that mention the official visit and 98 related to recruiting and the official visit (NCAA, n.d.). Regardless of the number of rules, the ultimate decision-making responsibility about behaviors during official visits is the responsibility of the recruit and his or her host.

## **METHODS**

### **PARTICIPANTS**

The population for this study consisted of student-athletes across all three classifications of NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics (previously Division I, IAA, and IAAA and currently Football Bowl Subdivision, Football Championship Subdivision, and Division I). All respondents reporting at least one official visit during the academic years 1999-2000 through 2004-05 were included in the final sample (n = 2,005). A representative sample of 2,005 student-athletes was obtained for this study. Men represented 53% and women 47% of this sample and 2003-04 NCAA data showed that men account for 56% and women 44% of student-athletes at Division I institutions (NCAA, 2006). With respect to race, it was found that 76% of the respondents were White, 15% were Black, and 10% were from other racial backgrounds. To establish adequate group sizes for data analysis, ethnicity was collapsed into the categories of White (76%) and Non-White (24%). For comparison, the results of a 2005-06

NCAA study revealed that 65% of student-athletes were White and 35% were Non-White (NCAA, 2007).

Thirty-two sports were represented in the data collection with the largest percentage obtained from football (10.7%), women's soccer (10%), and women's volleyball (6%). Sport participation also was categorized as revenue or nonrevenue for the purposes of data analysis. Determination of revenue (football, men's basketball, and women's basketball) and nonrevenue (all other sports) was established in a study examining factors of college selection for student-athletes (Letawsky, Schneider, Pedersen, & Palmer, 2003). There were 179 (9%) multi-sport student-athletes represented in the sample. The NCAA reported in 2003-04 that 54% of student-athletes in revenue sports were Non-White, but only 16% of nonrevenue sport student-athletes were Non-White (NCAA, 2007). In this sample, 53% of the revenue sport student-athletes and 17% of nonrevenue sport student-athletes were Non-White, indicating a representative sample. When asked about their scholarship status, 79% reported receiving athletically related aid; of those, 37% reported they were receiving a full athletic scholarship. Finally, the majority of the respondents (69%) indicated that they engaged in one or two official visits during the recruiting process.

### **INSTRUMENTATION**

In constructing the questionnaire, feedback on format and content was solicited via e-mail from all 297 Division I senior woman administrators with e-mail addresses listed in the 2004-05 National Directory of College Athletics. The feedback was utilized in the questionnaire design where appropriate. The final questionnaire consisted of three sections. First, demographic information was solicited from participants. The second section sought to gather information on student-athletes involvement in specific behaviors. Finally, two open-ended questions were asked. The first question was about host money expenditures during official visits and the second question asked student-athletes about recruiting rules they would like to see changed.

Anonymity of the participants, participating institutions, and institutions where student-athletes took an official visit was important. To ensure anonymity, participants were asked about their experiences on any of their official visits, not specifically about the official visit to the institution they ultimately chose to attend. This eliminated the possibility that the researchers would be able to identify individual institutions where reported behaviors occurred and increased the likelihood that institutions would allow student-athletes to participate and questions would be answered honestly.

### **PROCEDURES**

Two hundred and ninety-seven athletic administrators holding the designation of senior woman administrator were asked via e-mail to administer the questionnaire to all or a portion of their student-athletes. The e-mail list was generated from information contained in the 2004-05 National Directory of College Athletics. The senior woman administrator is commonly involved in student-athlete welfare issues and thus was chosen as the agent for administering this survey. Sixteen senior woman administrators responded favorably. The 16 administrators represented a broad geographic region and all three NCAA Division I classifications. Information collected from the senior woman administrators indicated a possible distribution of 5,080 surveys.

Senior woman administrators agreeing to participate were provided questionnaires, an equal number of blank envelopes, and instructions for administering the survey. Student-athletes were instructed to complete the survey if they chose, seal it in a blank envelope, and return the sealed envelope to the athletic official administering the questionnaire. Student-athletes choosing not to participate were instructed to leave the survey blank, seal it in the envelope,



and return it with the completed surveys. Institutions then returned all the sealed envelopes to the researchers.

Of the 5,080 questionnaires distributed, 3,826 were returned for a return rate of 75%. Only two of the 3,826 participants chose not to participate in the study and returned the questionnaire completely blank as instructed, for an extraordinarily high response rate of 99.9%. Of the surveys returned, 64 were deemed unusable and an additional 1,759 participants completed the questionnaire, but indicated no involvement in an official visit during the recruiting process and were eliminated from data analysis. A final sample size of 2,005 participants who participated in at least one official visit during the recruiting process was established.

Descriptive statistics and chi-square tests for differences of proportions were conducted using SPSS 13.0. The chi-square test of differences of proportions was used to analyze differences in participation in behaviors based on demographic variables. Non-responses on specific questions were eliminated from data analysis.

### RESULTS

The first question this study sought to answer was, “Which activities are most prevalent on a Division I official visit?” To answer this question, a descriptive analysis of the data was conducted (Table 1). Activities were divided into three categories: academic/athletic, social, and deviant. When examining academic and athletic experiences, 78% (1,477) of student-athletes reported they met with an academic advisor on at least one of their official visits, and 46% (786) met with a professor. Athletically, 23% (291) practiced their sport on campus.

Social variables related to the official visit experience were also examined. Sixty-nine percent (1,310) of recruits spent at least one night with a current student-athlete, 33% (640) spent at least one night in a hotel, and 18% (340) had a curfew at one or more institutions. The variable of attending an athletic event was categorized as a social behavior since no distinction was made as to which sports event was attended. Results showed that 63% (1,036) attended an athletic event. Alcohol was consumed by 30% (546) with 12% (228) going to a bar. On-campus parties were attended by 40% (770) and off-campus parties by 34% (660). Less than 2% (44) visited a strip club (44) or used recreational drugs (44). Related to sexual activity, 4% (82) reported engaging in consensual sexual touching, while 3% (59) reported engaging in consensual sexual intercourse during one or more of their recruiting visits.

Deviant behaviors were considered those with elements of violence, potential violence, or lawlessness involved with the behavior. The results indicated that less than 2% (28) of recruits engaged (either as the aggressor or the victim) in unwanted sexual touching and less than 1% (8) were involved in rape. Results for other deviant behaviors were also very low including: (a) robbery (13, 0.7%), (b) weapons possession (12, 0.6%), (c) vandalism (20, 1%), (d) threat of violence (16, 0.8%), and (e) fist fight (23, 1.2%).

Regarding NCAA recruiting rules, 93% (1,860) of the participants indicated they understood the rules. However, when asked if they received a souvenir from any institution, 6% (118) responded that they did receive a souvenir from one or more of the institutions they visited. Receiving a souvenir violates NCAA recruiting rules and the most frequently listed item (by those indicating receipt of a souvenir) was an article of clothing (63%).

The researchers also wanted to determine how “student hosts” spent their allocated “host money.” An open-ended question asked the participants how the recruit “host money” was spent. Participants noted multiple items on which host money was spent. Due to the open-ended nature of the question, multiple responses per participant were analyzed with the most



frequent response being “food and non-alcoholic beverages” (72%, 1310) followed by “entertainment” (13%, 244), and “alcohol” (6%, 112).

The next research question was, “Do the behaviors of recruits on official visits vary with demographic variables?” To respond to this question, a chi-square test of differences of proportions was conducted to examine significant differences in behaviors based on gender, ethnicity, and sport participation (Table 2). Gender ( $n = 1,999$ ) was the first demographic variable analyzed. Chi-square analysis indicated that males were more likely than females to attend on- and off-campus parties, clubs, and bars. Additionally, males were more likely to engage in behaviors associated with partying such as drinking alcohol, using recreational drugs, and sexual behaviors. It was also determined that males were more likely to participate in vandalism and fist fights than females.

The second demographic variable under investigation was ethnicity. Participants were divided into White and Non-White for data analysis resulting in 1,506 (76%) White and 486 (24%) Non-White participants (Table 3). White recruits were more likely to stay with a student-athlete while Non-White recruits were more likely to stay in a hotel and meet with a professor on their official visit. White prospects were more likely to drink alcohol, but Non-White recruits were more likely to have a curfew, go to an underage club, use recreational drugs, go to a strip club, and engage in consensual sex. Non-White recruits also were more likely to be involved in rape, robbery, weapons possession, the threat of violence, or a fist fight.

The final demographic variable under investigation was sport participation. Although 32 sports were represented in the data, analysis was conducted by dividing sport participation into the categories of revenue (football, men’s basketball, women’s basketball) and nonrevenue (all other sports). Participants who indicated participation in both a revenue and nonrevenue sport were eliminated from data analysis resulting in 1,703 responses (Table 4). Recruits from revenue sports were more likely to meet with an academic advisor and a professor than athletes from nonrevenue sports. Nonrevenue recruits were more likely to stay with a student-athlete on their official visit; revenue recruits were more likely to stay in a hotel and have a curfew during their official visit.

Attending an on-campus or off-campus party and visiting an underage club were also more likely if the recruit participated in a revenue sport. Engaging in sexual behaviors such as consensual touching and consensual sex were also more frequent for revenue sport recruits. Rape, weapons possession, vandalism, threat of violence, or participating in a fist fight all were significantly more prevalent among revenue sport recruits (although the results were significant, the numbers were very low).

The final research question was, “Did the behavior of recruits on official visits significantly change after the implementation of new recruiting rules in 2004?” The year of the prospect’s official visit was treated as a demographic variable in this study. Participants were coded as either “pre” (those taking official visits 1999-2000 through 2003-04) or “post” (those taking official visits after the 2003-2004 academic year). Participants taking official visits in multiple years who would be considered in both the “pre” and “post” category were excluded from this data analysis. Official visits were analyzed based on 62.5% (1,242) recruits taking one or more visits from 1999-2000 thru 2003-04 and 37.5% (745) of the recruits reporting taking one or more visits in post category (Table 4). No differences were found between groups for any variable in the academic/athletic category. Many of the social behaviors with negative connotations were significantly more likely for recruits taking official visits from 1999-2000 through 2003-04. Going to a bar, attending on-campus and off-campus parties, drinking alcohol, using recreational drugs, visiting strip clubs, and engaging in consensual sexual touching and consensual sex all were significantly less likely to occur after the new NCAA rules

were implemented. Additionally, participation in robbery, vandalism, the threat of violence, and fist fights all were significantly less likely after the new rules were implemented.

### **DISCUSSION**

This study sought to explore the experience of prospective student-athletes on their official recruiting visit(s). Although there always is speculation as to what occurs on the official visit, this study was the first to solicit information directly from student-athletes regarding their experiences and quantitatively analyze such information.

When considering which activities are most prevalent on a Division I official visit, a number of positive aspects were uncovered. It is encouraging to discover that 78% of all prospective student-athletes surveyed met with an advisor and 46% met with a professor. Certainly it would be ideal if all prospective student-athletes met with academicians, be it advisors or professors. However, it seems that institutions are highlighting academics during official visits through either academic advisors or professors. Recruits are in the final year of high school and many have not decided on an academic major at the time of their recruiting trip. Thus, the prevalence of meeting with an academic advisor as opposed to a professor is understandable. Institutions should continue their efforts to have recruits meet with professors, as these meetings provide information regarding the academic expectations at the university and course of study available to recruits.

It also appears that the NCAA and its member institutions have done an acceptable job educating prospective student-athletes regarding the rules of recruiting; nearly 93% of those surveyed reported having an understanding of the NCAA recruiting rules. It was troubling that even though almost all recruits indicated an understanding of NCAA rules, 118 (6%) individuals indicated receiving a souvenir from an institution, which violates NCAA rules. Institutions should continue to be proactive in educating student-athletes about NCAA rules, starting at the initial recruiting contact.

While the findings in this study regarding prevalent social activities on official visits are attention-grabbing, practitioners would not be surprised. Prospective student-athletes reported participating in some social behaviors that could be considered negative during their official visits. Social behaviors reported included alcohol consumption, recreational drug use, attending parties on and off campus, visiting strip clubs and bars, and engaging in unwanted sexual contact. Overall, 30% of those surveyed reported consuming alcohol during their visit and 12% reported going to a bar. Of those student-athletes that reported consuming alcohol on their official visits, 96% were under the legal age of 21 at the time of their visit. Data collected by the NCAA (2001) indicated that 78% of student-athletes used alcohol and the results from the National Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) (2004) were that 56% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported drinking at least one alcoholic beverage within the previous 30-day period (U.S. Department of Health, 2004). Although the recruiting visit percentages are lower than national data, the recruiting visit occurs over a 48-hour period, and 45% of the participants in the study indicated that they took only one official visit. Thus, reducing drinking on official visits should be addressed by coaches and administrators.

When examining national averages, other social behaviors engaged in by recruits also are prevalent in the general 12<sup>th</sup> grade population. Seven percent of participants in this study reported engaging in consensual sexual contact or intercourse. Based on national averages, 62% of students have engaged in sexual behaviors by the time they reach the 12<sup>th</sup> grade (U.S. Department of Health, 2004). However, recruits generally are entering unfamiliar territory with people they have not previously known when making an official visit to a college campus, which makes the behavior extremely risky. With this in mind, institutions should address the risks of sexual activity when they inform recruits of their expectations for the visit.

The media attention given to instances of deviant behavior on official visits is troubling. These results demonstrate that specific incidents of deviant behavior of recruits are not representative of the vast majority of recruits. For example, 0.4% of recruits reported involvement in rape and 1.2% indicated involvement in a fist fight. Although one instance of fighting or rape is too many on an official visit, these results are much lower than the national media would have the public believe. As a comparison, MMWR data show that 11% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders experienced forcible sexual intercourse and 27% reported involvement in a fight (within a 30 day period preceding data collection) (U.S. Department of Health, 2004).

When evaluating the findings of the second research question, “Do the behaviors of recruits on official visits vary with demographic variables?,” a few findings are worthy of discussion. Gender plays a significant role in the likelihood of participation in social and deviant behaviors. This was expected, given the findings of national surveys from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For nearly all negative social behavior and deviant behaviors among youth between the ages of 10 and 24, males participated at a higher level than females surveyed (U.S. Department of Health, 2004). This is congruent with the findings of this study and is representative of many of the behaviors reported in high-profile NCAA recruiting scandals. Results showed that males participated in consuming alcohol, using recreational drugs, and engaging in sexual intercourse significantly more frequently than females during their official visits. Miller, Merrill, Barnes, Farrell, and Sabo (2005) found that for high school students “participation in sports was associated with marginally more misconduct for girls and marginally less misconduct for boys” (p. 189). Although this study did not indicate the percentage of athletes and non-athletes engaging in misconduct, it does demonstrate that there may be a relationship between sport participation, gender, and behavior in this age group.

It was discovered that prospects in revenue sports were more likely to meet with athletic academic advisors and professors during their official visits compared to those from nonrevenue sports. Additionally, a greater number of Non-White students met with a professor (44%) than did their White counterparts (38%). Typically, revenue sports host multiple recruits on a given weekend which may make arranging meetings with academic personnel easier. It is encouraging that revenue sport and minority student-athletes are being exposed to the university academically. However, nonrevenue recruits visit with professors at a rate of only 32%, which is cause for unease.

During the recruiting trip, revenue sport recruits and Non-White participants were significantly more likely to stay in a hotel and have a curfew during their trip. This might relate to the “recruiting weekend” structure of revenue sports, which are comprised of over 50% Non-White student-athletes. Nonrevenue sport recruits and White recruits were much more likely to stay with a student-athlete, which might be related to a limited amount of available funding for nonrevenue sports to support hotel stays. Recruits in revenue sports also had a significantly higher rate of attending parties on- and off-campus, visiting underage clubs, going to strip clubs, and engaging in consensual sexual touching and intercourse. It could be argued that the “recruiting weekend” structure in revenue sports lends itself to attending parties, using drugs, and engaging in sexual behavior. However, this group also had a higher instance of having a curfew, which needs further study.

The most startling finding regarding ethnicity is the difference in the number of student-athletes that reported drinking alcoholic beverages on their recruiting visits. Nearly twice as many Whites (31%) reported drinking alcohol on their recruiting visit as Non-White participants (17%) and alcohol consumption was not significant with regard to sport participation. It is possible that the differences noted in the numbers who reported participating in alcohol consumption are related to the differences in how athletes were housed and whether they were placed under a curfew by the institutions they visited.

An area of continued media scrutiny and attention is the area of deviant behaviors among college recruits. After evaluation of the data in this study it was found that a small but significant difference does exist when examining ethnicity and deviant behavior. As noted in Table 2, Non-Whites reported greater involvement in deviant behaviors such as rape, robbery, weapons possession, and fist fights than their White peers. Revenue sport participants were involved in rape, weapons possession, vandalism, threat of physical violence, and fist fights at a slightly higher (but statistically significant) rate than nonrevenue sport recruits. These findings suggest the need for further study. It is possible that deviant behaviors are underreported or exaggerated between ethnicity and sport participation due to the self-reported nature of the study.

The third question, “Did behavior of recruits on official visits significantly change after the implementation of new recruiting rules in 2004?” explored participation in certain behaviors based on the year of the visit. Many factors could have had an impact on the changes in behavior of recruits on official visits after 2004. In a short period of time in 2004, intercollegiate athletic recruiting went through rule changes and intense media scrutiny. First, recruits, student-athletes, and coaches at the University of Colorado were found to have engaged in inappropriate behavior that caught the attention of the national media (Anderson & Dohrmann, 2004; Jacobson & Suggs, 2004; Wieberg, 2005). Then, the NCAA created a task force to consider and recommend new restrictions on the recruitment of prospective student-athletes (NCAA, 2004a). In March 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives held a hearing to address the alleged abuses during the recruiting process and to provide a forum for open discussion on the topic. Finally, the NCAA recommended and passed legislation that placed new restrictions on recruiting and required institutions to develop their own recruiting policies and held them accountable for the actions of recruits during the official visit (NCAA, 2004b).

As stated above, one aspect of the rule changes requires athletic departments to have a set of policies that govern the official visit on their campus and that the university president must sign off on the policies (NCAA, n.d.). Additionally, NCAA bylaw 13.6.1 states that “the institution may be held accountable through the NCAA enforcement program for activities that clearly demonstrate a disregard for its stated policies” (NCAA, n.d.).

The most significant behavioral change after 2004 was in the number of recruits using alcohol on their official visits. Prior to 2004, an average of 32% of recruits reported drinking on their official visits between 1999-00 and 2003-04; in 2004-05, only 19% did. Other behaviors that were significantly reduced included going to a bar, attending an on- or off-campus party, using recreational drugs, visiting a strip club, engaging in consensual sexual touching and intercourse, robbery, vandalism, the threat of violence, and participating in fist fights. Given these findings, media attention to the issue of recruiting, the efforts of the NCAA, and individual institutions' examination of internal policies may have resulted in positive social changes on official visits while reducing participation in risky and deviant behaviors. Whatever the reason, recruits demonstrated more positive behavior after 2003-2004 academic year compared with the averages of the 5 prior years.

### **LIMITATIONS**

This study is limited in a few areas. First, an accurate determination of how often specific behaviors occur can be made if student-athletes identify during which official visit the behaviors occurred. This study focused on the occurrence of the behavior and did not address how many times the individual student-athlete engaged in the behavior. The collection of these data was sacrificed to ensure a large sample size. The researchers believe that identifying institutions where behaviors occurred would have limited the participation of the institutions in this research. Second, due to the method of obtaining a sample, it is possible that the sample may not be representative of the experience of all student-athletes. Finally, due to the

sensitive nature of some of the behaviors discussed in this research and the self-reporting survey method, it is possible that student-athletes may have under-reported or over-reported some items in uncomfortable subject matters.

### **IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION**

There are many related areas of research that warrant scholarly examination. A future follow-up study examining the same variables would be useful in determining changes in recruiting behaviors over a period of time. It would be ideal to analyze these behaviors based on the number of times the behavior occurs instead of the mere presence of the behavior. Additionally, researching the content of individual institutional recruiting policies would aid in interpreting the findings of this study. The high level of alcohol use occurring during official visits also is a potential topic of study, as is the examination of which behaviors are related to other behaviors on official visits. The legal questions of potential institutional liability associated with alcohol consumption on the official visit also should be investigated.

In conclusion, both practitioners and academics should be aware of the reality of what occurs during a NCAA Division I official recruiting visit. The future of intercollegiate athletic recruiting provides fascinating future discussions and research. Results of this study will aid institutions in structuring their recruiting policies and behavior expectations for recruits. The official visit is intended to provide the prospective student-athlete insight into the institution and the coaches a chance to become acquainted with and evaluate the prospect. These findings provide a base for future recruiting research and information on the official visit experience of NCAA Division I recruited student-athletes.

### **REFERENCES**

- Anderson, K., & Dohrmann, G. (2004, February 23). Out of control? *Sports Illustrated*, 100, 64-69.
- Frost, R. (2003). *Recruiting procedures for men's college basketball programs*. Unpublished master's thesis, Ball State University, Muncie, IN.
- Goral, T. (2004, May). At all costs [Electronic version]. *University Business*, 40-51.
- Jacobson, J., & Suggs, W. (2004, June 6). Nobody walks. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 50, A29.
- Langelett, G. (2003). The relationship between recruiting and team performance in division IA college football. *Journal of Sport Economics*, 4, 240-245.
- Letawsky, N. R., Schneider, R. G., Pedersen, P. M., & Palmer, C. J. (2003). Factors influencing the college selection process of student-athletes: are their factors similar to non-athletes. *College Student Journal*, 37, 604-610.
- Mathes, S., & Gurney, G. (1985). Factors in student athletes' choices of colleges. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 26, 327-333.
- Miller, K., Merrill, M., Barnes, G., Farrell, M., & Sabo, D. (2005). Untangling the links among athletic involvement, gender, race, and adolescent academic outcomes. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 22, 178-193.
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (n.d.). NCAA division I legislative services database. Retrieved from <https://web1.ncaa.org/LSDBi/exec/bylawSearch>



National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2001). NCAA study of substance use habits of college student-athletes. Retrieved from

<http://www.ncaa.org/wps/ncaa?ContentID=282>

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2004a, July 20). Division I management council endorses new rules for recruiting student-athletes. Retrieved from

<http://www.ncaa.org/wps/ncaa?ContentID=10119>

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2004b, August 5). Division I board of directors approves major recruiting reform package. Retrieved from

<http://www.ncaa.org/wps/ncaa?ContentID=8309>

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2006). *2003-04 NCAA gender-equity report*. Retrieved from

<http://www.ncaapublications.com/ProductsDetailView.aspx?sku=GERONLINE>

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2007). *1999-00 - 2005-06 NCAA student-athlete race and ethnicity report*. Retrieved from

<http://www.ncaapublications.com/ProductsTileView.aspx?t=race&c=&s=0&p=0&y=0&index=xml>

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2008). *2008-09 Guide for the college bound student-athlete*. Retrieved from

<http://www.ncaapublications.com/ProductsTileView.aspx?t=guide%20for%20the%20college&c=&s=0&p=0&y=>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2004, May 21). *Morbidity and mortality weekly report: Youth risk behavior surveillance-United States, 2003*. Retrieved from

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/SS/SS5302.pdf>

U.S. House of Representatives. (2004, March 11). *College recruiting: are student-athletes being protected?* (Serial No. 108-64). Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office

Welch, P. D. (1996). *History of American physical education and sport*. Springfield, IL: Thomas, C. T.

Wieberg, S. (2005, August, 29). Barnett's probation not over. *USA Today*. Retrieved from [http://www.usatoday.com/sports/college/football/big12/2005-08-29-colorado-barnett\\_x.htm?POE=click-refer](http://www.usatoday.com/sports/college/football/big12/2005-08-29-colorado-barnett_x.htm?POE=click-refer)



**Table 1**  
**Official Visit Behavior – Descriptive Statistics**

Behavior	Reported Non- Participation		Reported Participation		Total Respondents
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
<u>Academic/athletic behavior</u>					
Met with academic advisor	426	22.4%	1,477	77.6%	1,903
Met with professor	938	54.4%	786	45.6%	1,724
Practiced sport	999	77.4%	291	22.6%	1,290
<u>Social behavior</u>					
Attended an athletic event	617	37.3%	1,036	62.7%	1,653
Stayed with a student-athlete	589	31.0%	1,310	69.0%	1,899
Stayed in a hotel	1,277	66.6%	640	33.4%	1,917
Had a curfew	1,548	82.0%	340	18.0%	1,888
Went to an underage club	1,739	89.9%	196	10.1%	1,935
Went to a bar	1,694	88.1%	228	11.9%	1,922
Went to an on-campus party	1,153	60.0%	770	40.0%	1,923
Went to an off-campus party	1,256	65.6%	660	34.4%	1,916
Drank alcohol	1,298	70.4%	546	29.6%	1,844
Used recreational drugs	1,882	97.7%	44	2.3%	1,926
Went to a strip club	1,909	97.9%	40	2.1%	1,949
Engaged in consensual sexual touching	1,886	95.8%	82	4.2%	1,968
Engaged in consensual sex	1,898	97.0%	59	3.0%	1,957
<u>Deviant behavior</u>					
Engaged in unwanted sexual touching	1,930	98.6%	28	1.4%	1,958
Involved in rape	1,961	99.6%	8	0.4%	1,969
Involved in threat of violence	1,942	99.2%	16	0.8%	1,958
Participated in vandalism	1,944	99.0%	20	1.0%	1,964
Participated in robbery	1,962	99.3%	13	0.7%	1,975
Involved in weapons possession	1,957	99.4%	12	0.6%	1,969
Participated in fist fight	1,937	98.8%	23	1.2%	1,960

**Table 2**

**Significant Official Visit Behavior by Gender**

Behavior	Gender		Chi-Square
	Male	Female	
<u>Academic/athletic behavior</u>			
Met with academic advisor	69.8%	77.2%	$X^2(1) = 24.18, p < .01$
Met with professor	44.8%	34.4%	$X^2(1) = 22.45, p < .01$
<u>Social behavior</u>			
Stayed with a student-athlete	59.6%	70.6%	$X^2(1) = 26.38, p < .01$
Stayed in a hotel	35.9%	28.5%	$X^2(1) = 12.48, p < .01$
Had a curfew	19.0%	15.2%	$X^2(1) = 5.03, p < .05$
Went to an underage club	11.4%	8.3%	$X^2(1) = 5.13, p < .05$
Went to a bar	14.1%	8.9%	$X^2(1) = 13.56, p < .01$
Went to an on-campus party	42.9%	34.6%	$X^2(1) = 14.33, p < .01$
Went to an off-campus party	38.7%	28.0%	$X^2(1) = 25.96, p < .01$
Drank alcohol	30.0%	24.9%	$X^2(1) = 6.66, p < .05$
Used recreational drugs	2.9%	1.5%	$X^2(1) = 4.59, p < .05$
Went to a strip club	3.4%	0.7%	$X^2(1) = 20.00, p < .01$
Engaged in consensual sexual touching	7.3%	1.2%	$X^2(1) = 47.13, p < .01$
Engaged in consensual sex	4.7%	1.3%	$X^2(1) = 20.45, p < .01$
<u>Deviant behavior</u>			
Engaged in unwanted sexual touching	2.4%	0.5%	$X^2(1) = 13.32, p < .01$
Participated in vandalism	1.6%	0.4%	$X^2(1) = 8.03, p < .01$
Participated in fist fight	1.7%	0.6%	$X^2(1) = 6.07, p < .05$

**Table 3**

**Significant Official Visit Behavior by Ethnicity**

Behavior	Ethnicity		Chi-square
	White	Non-White	
<u>Academic/athletic behavior</u>			
Met with a professor	37.6%	44.2%	$X^2(1) = 6.69, p < .05$
Practiced sport on-campus	12.9%	19.8%	$X^2(1) = 13.95, p < .01$
<u>Social behavior</u>			
Stayed with a student-athlete	69.5%	52.5%	$X^2(1) = 46.80, p < .01$
Stayed in a hotel	28.7%	42.2%	$X^2(1) = 30.77, p < .01$
Had a curfew	14.5%	24.7%	$X^2(1) = 26.80, p < .01$
Went to an underage club	7.5%	16.9%	$X^2(1) = 36.50, p < .01$
Drank alcohol	30.7%	16.5%	$X^2(1) = 37.80, p < .01$
Used recreational drugs	1.7%	3.7%	$X^2(1) = 7.27, p < .01$
Went to a strip club	1.5%	3.5%	$X^2(1) = 7.94, p < .01$
Engaged in consensual sex	2.2%	5.1%	$X^2(1) = 11.33, p < .01$
<u>Deviant behavior</u>			
Participated in rape	0.1%	1.4%	$X^2(1) = 17.34, p < .01$
Participated in robbery	0.3%	1.6%	$X^2(1) = 9.79, p < .01$
Participated in weapons possession	0.2%	1.9%	$X^2(1) = 16.76, p < .01$
Participated in threat of violence	0.5%	1.6%	$X^2(1) = 5.73, p < .05$
Participated in a fist fight	0.6%	2.9%	$X^2(1) = 16.78, p < .01$

**Table 4**

**Significant Official Visit Behavior by Sport Participation**

Behavior	Sport participation		Chi-square
	Revenue	Nonrevenue	
<u>Academic/athletic behavior</u>			
Met with an academic advisor	81.4%	70.3%	$X^2(1) = 19.14, p < .01$
Met with a professor	63.1%	32.0%	$X^2(1) = 123.16, p < .01$
Practiced sport on-campus	18.1%	13.9%	$X^2(1) = 4.30, p < .05$
<u>Social behavior</u>			
Attended an athletic event	58.3%	50.4%	$X^2(1) = 7.57, p < .01$
Stayed with a student-athlete	48.7%	73.1%	$X^2(1) = 82.38, p < .01$
Stayed in a hotel	55.5%	21.7%	$X^2(1) = 167.27, p < .01$
Had a curfew	28.6%	13.9%	$X^2(1) = 46.48, p < .01$
Went to an underage club	17.1%	8.0%	$X^2(1) = 27.31, p < .01$
Went to an on-campus party	51.5%	35.9%	$X^2(1) = 30/91, p < .01$
Went to an off-campus party	39.4%	33.0%	$X^2(1) = 5.56, p < .05$
Went to a strip club	3.5%	1.5%	$X^2(1) = 6.14, p < .05$
Engaged in consensual sexual touching	8.0%	3.3%	$X^2(1) = 16.31, p < .01$
Engaged in consensual sex	5.3%	2.5%	$X^2(1) = 8.07, p < .01$
<u>Deviant behavior</u>			
Participated in rape	1.0%	0.2%	$X^2(1) = 4.48, p < .05$
Participated in weapons possession	1.5%	0.3%	$X^2(1) = 7.54, p < .01$
Participated in vandalism	2.3%	0.5%	$X^2(1) = 9.75, p < .01$
Participated in threat of violence	2.0%	0.5%	$X^2(1) = 8.99, p < .01$
Participated in a fist fight	.0%	0.7%	$X^2(1) = 13.54, p < .01$

**Table 5**  
**Significant Official Visit Behavior Pre-and Post-2004 NCAA Rule Changes**

Behavior	Reported participat		Chi-square
	Pre-chæ	Post-change	
<u>Social behavior</u>			
Attended an athletic event	49.0	53.6%	$X^2(1) = 4.00, p < .05$
Went to a bar	14.0	6.8%	$X^2(1) = 23.80, p < .01$
Went to an on-campus party	42.6	31.9%	$X^2(1) = 22.27, p < .01$
Went to an off-campus party	37.4	25.6%	$X^2(1) = 29.33, p < .01$
Drank alcohol	32.4	18.5%	$X^2(1) = 45.57, p < .01$
Used recreational drugs	3.0%	0.9%	$X^2(1) = 8.95, p < .01$
Went to a strip club	2.5%	1.1%	$X^2(1) = 4.89, p < .05$
Engaged in consensual sexual touching	5.2%	2.1%	$X^2(1) = 10.89, p < .01$
Engaged in consensual sex	3.7%	1.5%	$X^2(1) = 8.29, p < .01$
<u>Deviant behavior</u>			
Participated in robbery	1.0%	0.0%	$X^2(1) = 7.85, p < .01$
Participated in vandalism	1.4%	0.3%	$X^2(1) = 6.52, p < .05$
Participated in threat of violence	1.1%	0.3%	$X^2(1) = 4.30, p < .05$
Participated in a fist fight	1.6%	0.1%	$X^2(1) = 9.70, p < .01$

### **EXAMINATION OF JOB DESCRIPTIONS IN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATION: APPLICATION OF GENDER TYPING OF MANAGERIAL SUBROLES**

**LAURA BURTON, PHD, UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT**  
**ERIN HAGAN, MBA, UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT**

---

#### **INTRODUCTION**

There is continued evidence of a decline in women's roles within the administration of athletic programs at the intercollegiate level (Acosta & Carpenter, 2006). Women are most often an associate or assistant level administrator in intercollegiate athletic departments, working with a male senior level administrator and a male associate level administrator. In 2006, only 18.6% of universities had a female athletic director. At the Division I level, only 9.3% of the athletic programs were headed by women. Men have developed institutionalized control over the most senior levels of intercollegiate athletics and sport administration (Shaw & Slack, 2002; Whisenant, Pedersen, & Obenour, 2002). When women do have access to leadership positions in intercollegiate athletics, they are segregated into less powerful and less esteemed athletic director positions at Division II and Division III universities (Whisenant et al., 2002). In addition, current female athletic directors report negative stereotypes regarding their ability to lead as one of the most significant barriers they face in their careers (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006).

Gender role theory has been used as a framework to examine why women are underrepresented in senior management positions in business. This examination has included evaluation of gender stereotypes of managerial roles that can be divided into masculine, feminine or gender neutral subroles (Atwater, Brett, Waldman, DiMare, & Hayden, 2004). Managerial subroles identified as masculine included allocating resources, delegating and punishing; feminine subroles included providing corrective feedback, planning and organizing, and supporting employees (Atwater et al., 2004). Gender stereotyping of managerial subroles may act to constrain women from being perceived as competent for senior managerial positions. The purpose of this study was to evaluate job descriptions for senior level athletic administration positions to examine if the different types of job descriptions written for these positions use managerial subroles that are gender typed as more masculine, feminine, or gender neutral.

#### **GENDER CONSTRAINTS IN ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATION POSITIONS**

The constraints women face in advancing to athletic director, or senior level administrative positions in intercollegiate athletics, begin early in their careers. Internships within sport organizations are considered crucial to the future career success of students in sport management (Moorman, 2004). As a result, the experiences students receive during the internship process have significant impact on their ability to advance in sport administration. However, male and female interns have not received the same types of experiences working in intercollegiate athletics. Cuneen and Sidwell (2007) reported that male interns were more often employed full-time, were more often mentored by male administrators, and received more work experience in communication and corporate sales. Female interns were more likely to work only part-time, were less likely to receive mentorship from male administrators, and most often worked in compliance departments. Most disturbing, female interns were more likely than male interns to be assigned clerical duties, and were more often asked to perform these duties by male administrators (Cuneen & Sidwell, 2007). This disparity in administrative duties continued into entry-level positions in intercollegiate athletics, as men were most often in positions in business affairs, fund raising and marketing, and women were relegated to

academic advising, compliance or life-skills coordinator positions (Suggs, 2005). The entry-level positions held by men provided them with the skills to move into athletic director positions, yet the jobs women held more often lead to assistant or associate level positions (Suggs, 2005).

At the senior administration level, women are underrepresented within intercollegiate athletics (Acosta & Carpenter, 2006). Women in leadership or administration positions reported significant constraints to success within these positions because of continued perceptions that women do not have the ability to lead athletic departments (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006; Inglis, Danylchuk, & Pastore, 2000). A majority of women working within intercollegiate athletic administration identified gender bias and discrimination as significant barriers to becoming athletic directors (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006). Female athletic directors reported being given unequal workloads when compared to their male colleagues, including having additional responsibilities over and above administrative functions, such as teaching and coaching (Inglis et al., 2002). In addition, female administrators reported being expected to deal with all gender related issues within their respective department, including committee work dealing with gender issues.

Perhaps one of the most significant constraints to women's advancement to athletic director was the development of the Senior Woman Administrator position, as this position consigned women to oversight and management of only women's sports and/or non-revenue producing men's sports (Whisenant et al., 2002). In addition, at the senior administrative levels, women reported having oversight of the 'cutesy' sports (e.g., gymnastics, tennis, golf) while men were responsible for revenue producing sports, including football and men's basketball (Inglis et al., 2000; Whisenant, et al., 2002).

There exists a perception that women do not have the knowledge or experience to oversee revenue producing sports which further impedes women's advancement to senior administration positions (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006). By maintaining oversight of revenue producing sports, male administrators have continued to control the most powerful administrative positions at both the institutional level and also at the governance level of intercollegiate athletics (i.e., NCAA) (Whisenant et al., 2002).

Gender typing of work that is delegated to women in intercollegiate administration can act as an additional barrier to advancement to the most senior levels of athletic administration. Evaluation of the importance of managerial work in intercollegiate athletics has indicated that financial management, evaluation, and conflict resolution are some of the most important managerial tasks for athletic directors (Danylchuk & Chelladurai, 1999). Tasks identified as more important at the assistant director level included information seeking, coordination and marketing. Women report inequities in distribution of administrative responsibilities in intercollegiate athletics, including being assigned to compliance and academic counseling activities, activities that are not identified as important at the senior level of administration (Inglis et al., 2000; Suggs, 2005). These inequities have also been noted during the internship experience for women in intercollegiate athletics (Cuneen & Sidwell, 2007). Women in administration also reported spending more of their time on managerial activities that did not provide them opportunities for advancement, including spending more time on communication activities (e.g., processing paperwork and formal exchanges of information) and less time on networking, a powerful mechanism for advancement in intercollegiate athletics (Whisenant & Pedersen, 2004).

### **GENDER ROLE STEREOTYPING IN MANAGEMENT**

Though there has been some evolution in perceptions of a manager to more fully encompass traits possessed by both men and women, overall the role of manager continues to be perceived as a masculine role (Atwater et al., 2004; Dueher & Bono, 2006; Schein, 2002; Willemsen,



2002). Role congruity theory explains that when women engage in masculine or male-dominated roles, such as those deemed necessary and desirable in leadership positions, they are evaluated less favorably than men because management and leadership roles are more stereotypically associated with men (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Typically, people have congruent beliefs about men and leadership, but dissimilar beliefs about women and leadership. This creates highly redundant expectations for men and leaders, and contradictory expectations for women and leaders. In addition, when evaluated for leadership positions in industries that were not congruent with their gender role (i.e., male dominated industries), more prejudice was shown toward female candidates (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006).

However, the role of manager is not necessarily a universal role. There exists variation in the different types of managerial roles that can be used within management positions (Atwater et al., 2004; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Yukl (2002) developed a taxonomy of managerial subroles that can be used to better understand the variety of roles that managers engage in to be effective. Within Yukl's taxonomy, fourteen managerial roles were identified that were generic enough to explain the behaviors of many different types of managers, yet were also specific enough to address the unique situations confronted by individual managers. Using Yukl's subrole classification, Atwater et al. (2004) examined if particular managerial subroles were associated with stereotypical masculine or feminine behaviors.

Atwater et al. (2004) made changes to Yukl's (2002) original taxonomy combining recognizing and rewarding into one role, subdividing monitoring into evaluating employees and monitoring work activities, and adding providing corrective feedback, disciplining and punishing. A total of 19 managerial subroles were evaluated resulting in 13 of those 19 identified as either more masculine or more feminine. Providing corrective feedback, developing and mentoring, recognizing and rewarding, communicating and informing, planning and organizing, and supporting were identified as more feminine managerial subroles. Punishing, problem solving, disciplining, delegating, strategic decision making, and allocating resources were identified as more masculine (Atwater et al.). Given this stereotyping of subroles, men and women can be perceived as acting outside of their appropriate gender roles when engaging in certain managerial roles.

### **STEREOTYPING OF JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

Job descriptions are used to detail responsibilities, duties, working conditions and activities required of a position (Anthony, Kaemar, & Perrewe, 2002, as cited in Whisenant et al., 2005). As with stereotyping of particular managerial roles, additional research involving evaluation of the job descriptions of interscholastic athletic directors uncovered systematic barriers in how job descriptions are written which prevent women from qualifying for those positions (Whisenant, Miller, & Pedersen, 2005). Women were negatively impacted by qualifications written into the job descriptions for 17% of interscholastic athletic director positions evaluated by Whisenant et al. (2005), as those job descriptions required applicants to serve as both head football coach and athletic director at the high school level.

In addition, as discussed previously, female administrators at the intercollegiate level continue to be directed to managerial roles and tasks considered more appropriate for women, including academic counseling, promotions and compliance (Inglis et al., 2000; Suggs, 2005). The job descriptions that are used to recruit and screen potential applicants for athletic administration positions may be written in a manner that includes roles, duties and responsibilities that are gender typed. If such job descriptions are written in a manner that highlights more masculine managerial subroles (Atwater et al., 2004), the job description itself may be an additional barrier for women seeking such positions. Administrators that use job descriptions to evaluate qualified applicants for such positions may inadvertently screen out particular applicants

because their gender is not congruent with the gendered subroles included in the job description (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Therefore the purpose of this research was to evaluate if job descriptions for senior athletic administrator positions were written using more masculine, feminine or gender neutral managerial subroles. If job descriptions do contain more masculine managerial subroles (e.g., strategic decision making, allocating resources) these descriptions may constrain women from being perceived as qualified or capable of performing the roles necessary to be successful in such senior athletic director positions. In addition, because women in intercollegiate athletics report being relegated to more feminine appropriate roles within administration (e.g., compliance, academic counseling, promotions), the job descriptions for these positions may contain fewer masculine managerial subroles and a greater number of feminine or gender neutral subroles (e.g., providing corrective feedback, communicating, and informing).

### **METHOD**

#### **PROCEDURES**

##### **DEVELOPMENT OF JOB DESCRIPTION CODES**

Prior to evaluation of athletic administrator job descriptions, an initial sample of job descriptions ( $n = 10$ ) was reviewed in order to develop a list of five common phrases used in the job descriptions (Table 1). Job descriptions are not typically written with specific managerial subroles as described by Yukl (2002). Job descriptions usually do not contain specific subroles such as managing conflict, communicating and informing, providing corrective feedback. Therefore, following the development of a list of five commonly used phrases for job descriptions, a sample of interscholastic athletic directors ( $n = 40$ ), representing small private boarding schools in the Northeast, were surveyed via an anonymous online survey to assess the five most important managerial subroles as classified by Yukl (2002) required for each common job description phrase. Based on the results reported from the interscholastic athletic directors, the five managerial subroles most frequently identified as important to each common job description phrase were selected to represent that job description phrase (Table 1). A common job description phrase was labeled as masculine if the phrase was identified to contain more masculine typed managerial subroles, feminine if the phrase was identified to contain more feminine typed managerial subroles, and gender neutral if the phrase was identified to contain more gender neutral managerial subroles (Atwater et al., 2004) (Table 1).

##### **CONTENT ANALYSIS OF JOB POSITIONS POSTINGS**

Content analysis procedures were used to evaluate the gender typing of job descriptions for intercollegiate athletic director positions (Neuendorf, 2002). Using the available search engines for positions in intercollegiate athletics (e.g., NCAA, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, NACDA) job position postings for Division I, II, and III athletic administration positions were collected from September, 2006 to April, 2007. To be included in the analysis, the position title had to include director of athletics, senior administrator of athletics, associate director, or assistant director of athletics. Division I, II and III athletic administration job descriptions announcements ( $n = 171$ ) were collected for possible analysis. The majority of job descriptions were collected from Division I ( $n = 135$ ), followed by Division II ( $n = 25$ ), and then Division III ( $n = 11$ ). Based on the administration positions that were posted during the year of data collection, the following positions were selected for analysis: athletic director, associate athletic director, compliance director, development director, marketing director, and operations director. Senior Woman Administrator positions were specifically excluded from the analyses, as these positions are designed for and filled by a female administrator in an intercollegiate athletic department. A systematic random sample of job descriptions was drawn for Division I in an effort to balance representation of job descriptions across all Divisions. The only exception was the inclusion of

all job description announcements for athletic director at the Division I level ( $n = 5$ ). Also included in coding at the Division I level ( $n = 30$ ) was associate athletic directors ( $n = 5$ ), compliance director ( $n = 5$ ), development director ( $n = 5$ ), marketing director ( $n = 5$ ), and operations director ( $n = 5$ ). At the Division II level ( $n = 20$ ) was athletic director ( $n = 8$ ), associate athletic director ( $n = 3$ ), compliance director ( $n = 3$ ), development director ( $n = 3$ ), marketing director ( $n = 1$ ), and operations ( $n = 1$ ). For the Division III level, the following job descriptions announcements were coded, athletic director ( $n = 5$ ), associate athletic director ( $n = 1$ ), development director ( $n = 1$ ), and marketing director ( $n = 1$ ).

The authors of this paper served as the primary coders for analysis of the job description announcements. Both coders (a sport management professor and a doctoral student in sport management) were involved in development and analysis of the online survey which was used to identify the five managerial subroles most frequently identified as important for each job description phrase. Based on this information each code was used as a guide for the common job description codes established in the first part of this project (Table 1). To maintain consistency in coding, each coder was instructed to review only the stated job duties or position responsibilities. Required qualifications or details regarding the universities were not included in the analysis of the job description announcements. The coders together reviewed one job description to establish a baseline regarding how to appropriately code the data. After that initial consultation, the job descriptions were independently coded by each researcher.

### RESULTS

In order to establish credibility in the findings, coding analyses were compared between the two coders. Consistency in assignment of job position announcements to the five common job phrases by the two coders was evaluated using both percent agreement and intercoder reliability accounting for chance agreement using Cohen's kappa (Neuendorf, 2002). Codes were analyzed by examining whether each coder had coded at least one phrase in the job description into one of the five managerial subroles. Overall, percent agreement and Cohen's kappa were within acceptable levels as noted by Neuendorf, with the exception of "developing relationships with external stakeholders." Percent agreement for the code "leading a program" was 92% with an intercoder reliability  $K = .62$ . For the code "monitoring a program," the coders agreed on placement of the code into the appropriate job description announcement for 88% of the codes with an intercoder reliability of  $K = .71$ . Percent agreement for the code "developing relationships with external stakeholders" was 56% with intercoder reliability of  $K = .25$ . For the code, "serving as departmental liaison", the coders agreed on placement of the code into the appropriate job description for 98% of the codes with an intercoder reliability of  $K = .92$ . Finally, for the code "supervising staff", the coders agreed on placement of the code into the appropriate job description for 81% of the codes with an intercoder reliability of  $K = .61$ .

Frequencies and percentages of the results of the coding of common job description phrases are reported in Table 2. The codes were analyzed to evaluate if job descriptions for senior athletic administrator positions were written using more masculine, feminine or gender neutral managerial subroles. The most frequently occurring common job description code for the position of athletic director was leading a program at the levels of Division I (40%), Division II (35%) and Division III (34%). Leading a program was also the most frequently coded job description phrase for associate athletic director for Division I (36%) and marketing director for Division II (60%). At the associate athletic director position for Division II, monitoring a program was the most frequently coded job description phrase (58%). Serving as a departmental liaison was the most frequently coded job description phrase for associate athletic director at the Division III level (28%). Monitoring a program was the most frequently coded job description phrase for Division I (43%) and Division II (44%) compliance director (no job descriptions were evaluated for Division III Compliance director). Developing relationships with external stakeholders was the most frequently coded job description for Division I (51%),

Division II (77%) and Division III (41%) for development director. Developing relationships with external stakeholders was also the most frequently coded job description phrase for Division I (41%) and Division III (43%) marketing director. For the operations director position at the Division I (38%) and Division II (20%) levels, monitoring a program was the most frequently coded job description phrase.

### **DISCUSSION**

This research examined job description position announcements to evaluate if job descriptions for senior athletic administrator positions were written using more masculine, feminine or gender neutral managerial subroles. Results of the analysis indicated that job descriptions for athletic director positions across all three divisions contained more phrases that were coded in the masculine job description phrase, leading a program, (i.e., planning and organizing, allocating resources, motivating and inspiring, strategic decision making, and clarifying roles and objectives) when compared to all other job description codes for the athletic director position. One aspect of role congruity theory indicates that women are not perceived as having the skills necessary to be successful leaders because women lack the masculine characteristics necessary in leadership positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Women may not be perceived as capable of performing in the role of athletic director if the managerial requirements documented in the job description contain more masculine managerial skills (Eagly & Karau). The position of athletic director continues to be dominated by men, specifically at the Division I level (Acosta & Carpenter, 2006), and if job descriptions for athletic director contain more masculine job description phrases then those descriptions will continue to favor male applicants (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In addition, though not directly examined in this research project, if the athletic director position is perceived as requiring more masculine managerial skills, when women are in athletic director positions, they may be unfavorably evaluated for exhibiting the skills required to be successful in such positions (Eagly & Karau).

When evaluating other senior administrative positions, the job descriptions for compliance director contained more phrases that were coded in the feminine job description phrase, monitoring a program (i.e., providing corrective feedback, evaluating employees, supporting, monitoring work activities, developing and mentoring personnel). Supervising staff, also a feminine managerial subrole, was most frequently coded at the operations director position at the Division II level. Job descriptions for the position of compliance director may be written to benefit women, as those descriptions contain more feminine managerial skills. Indeed, women are more likely to be represented in compliance positions than in other positions in intercollegiate athletics as there is a relatively equal balance between men and women in compliance positions, yet the operations director position is most often held by men (NCAA, 2006). Only senior woman administrators and life-skills coordinator positions have greater representations of women in intercollegiate athletic administration (NCAA). There is no research to date that has examined if men are perceived negatively when engaging in more female typed managerial roles (Atwater et al., 2002). However, given the relatively equal balance between men and women in compliance positions and the greater representation of men in operations positions (NCAA), it does not appear that men are perceived to lack the requisite skills for those positions. It is of interest to note that compliance is one area of athletic administration that has not helped individuals move into positions of power, specifically to the athletic director position (Suggs, 2005). Therefore, the position of compliance director may serve to constrain women from moving into athletic director positions, as women are not perceived to have the masculine managerial skills that their male colleagues in compliance positions possess (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Whisenant et al., 2002).

The job description positions for development director across all three Divisions contained more phrases that were coded as the gender neutral job descriptions phrases, developing relationships with external stakeholders (i.e., consulting others, networking, communicating

and informing, strategic decision making, clarifying roles and objectives). However, it is important to note that results of the intercoder reliability analysis for this gender neutral job description phrase were below acceptable levels for content analysis research (Neuendorf, 2002). Therefore results reported for “developing relationships with external stakeholders” must be interpreted with caution.

The job descriptions for marketing director positions also contained more phrases that were coded as the gender neutral job descriptions phrase developing relationships with external stakeholders, at the Division I and III level. With job descriptions written using more gender neutral managerial roles, it would appear women and men would be perceived as capable of successfully performing in the roles of marketing director and development director. However, more men hold marketing director and development director positions across all Divisions of intercollegiate athletics (NCAA, 2006). As previously discussed, marketing is also considered a gateway position leading to the position of athletic director (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006).

Researchers have examined how leaders are assigned based on type of task requiring leadership for either gender neutral (e.g., planting a garden), masculine (e.g., playing football), or feminine tasks (e.g., planning a wedding). Men were considered more appropriate or competent leaders for tasks considered masculine appropriate or gender neutral, yet women were only perceived as competent to lead tasks that were specifically designated as feminine (Ritter & Yodder, 2004). In addition, in environments that are considered male appropriate (e.g., athletics), men were consistently provided advantages in leadership positions deemed congruent with their gender role (Garcia-Retamaro & López-Zafra, 2006). The current research also supports these findings, as men are more likely to hold positions that list in the job description requirements more masculine managerial skills or more gender neutral managerial skills, and even for positions requiring more feminine managerial skills (i.e., operations director) (NCAA, 2006).

This research suggests that, as written, job descriptions for specific positions within athletic administration may be biased toward applicants. The job descriptions for the most powerful positions in intercollegiate athletics, the positions of athletic director, are written in a manner that favors male applicants. When trying to apply for positions at the level of athletic director, women may be perceived as not having the masculine managerial skills necessary to perform the managerial roles required in that position (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Women may also be at a disadvantage when applying for positions that require more gender neutral managerial skills (e.g., development director and marketing director), as those positions also will favor male applicants over female applicants (Ritter & Yodder, 2004). Though the job description is only one aspect of a multi-stage process toward evaluating potential candidates for positions, the gender-typed nature of written job descriptions could introduce an additional barrier that women must overcome when trying to reach the position of athletic director. The statistics regarding gender representation in athletic administration positions clearly support the notion that men continue to dominate the majority of those positions, including the athletic director position (Acosta & Carpenter, 2006).

It appears that other positions within athletic administration contain more feminine managerial skills and as such would be perceived as more appropriate for women. Again, statistics examining gender representation of positions in intercollegiate athletics support this notion for positions in compliance, academic advising and life-skills coordinator (NCAA, 2006). However, women tend to be over represented in those areas of administration that are perceived to be less powerful, and less likely to lead to advancement to athletic director positions (Suggs, 2005).



### **LIMITATIONS**

The limitations to this study should be noted. First, in the initial stage of development of the coding categories for common job description phrases, interscholastic athletic directors were asked to identify the most important managerial subroles for each commonly used job description phrase. Athletic directors at the intercollegiate level may have identified different managerial subroles as appropriate for the job description phrases. Though this may be a potential limitation, athletic directors at the interscholastic level are aware of what is required in different managerial positions in athletic administration, even if the programs at the interscholastic level are much smaller when compared to the programs run by intercollegiate athletic directors.

Second, only those job announcements that were posted from September 2006 to April 2007 were evaluated in this research. Because there were no operations director positions posted at the Division III level, there was no way to code managerial subroles for those positions. An additional limitation was the lack of an adequate number of job announcements for academic advisor or academic support service personnel. These positions have been characterized as more appropriate for women (Grappendorf & Lough, 2006; Inglis et al., 2000) and are more often filled by women (NCAA, 2006).

In addition, there was a noted limitation in the use of only two content coders. Potential bias could have occurred as a result of using only two coders in the analyses of the job descriptions. The trustworthiness and credibility of findings could have improved with the use of additional coders, and having such coders review multiple job descriptions as a group, prior to individual coding. An additional limitation that must be addressed was the poor percent agreement and intercoder reliability rating for the common job phrase “developing relationships with external stakeholders.” This common job phrase, evaluated as a gender neutral job phrase, was most often coded into positions for development director and marketing director positions. These results must be interpreted with caution.

The decision to exclude job announcements for senior woman administrators could be considered an additional limitation. This position has been designed for and filled by women. However, the aim of this research was to evaluate positions that are considered available to both men and women; therefore use of job descriptions that are designed specifically for women would not have contributed to the questions posed in this project.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of this research, the managerial responsibilities as written in job descriptions for specific positions in athletic departments appear to be gender biased, and most often favor male applicants, especially for those positions that are considered more powerful in athletic administration (e.g., athletic director). Written job descriptions for positions within athletic administration may be an additional factor contributing to the continual decline in the number of women in athletic director positions. Future research should continue to explore if job descriptions act to constrain women from more powerful positions in athletic administration, if there are perceptions regarding more gender appropriate positions within athletic administration, and if those perceptions influence how job descriptions are written. In addition, researchers should examine if job descriptions have an influence on the subsequent interview and selection of candidates for particular positions.

### **REFERENCES**

Acosta, R.V., & Carpenter, L. J. (2006). *Women in intercollegiate sport: A longitudinal study twenty-nine year update (1977-2006)*. Retrieved from <http://webpages.charter.net/womeninsport>



- Anthony, W., Kaemar, K., & Perrewe, P. (2002). *Human resource management: A strategic approach* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
- Atwater, L. E., Brett, J. F., Waldman, D., DiMare, L., & Hayden, M. V. (2004). Men's and women's perceptions of the gender typing of management subroles. *Sex Roles, 50*, 191-199.
- Cuneen, J., & Sidwell, M. J. (2007). Differences on the job for female and male sport management interns. *Sport Management Education Journal, 1*, 1-17.
- Danylchuk, K. E., & Chelladurai, P. (1999). The nature of managerial work in Canadian intercollegiate athletics. *Journal of Sport Management, 13*, 148-166.
- Dueher, E. E., & Bono, J. E. (2006). Men, women, and managers: Are stereotypes finally changing? *Personnel Psychology, 59*, 815-846.
- Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review, 109*, 573-598.
- Garcia-Retamero, R. & López-Zafra, E. (2006). Prejudice against women in male-congenial environments: Perceptions of gender role congruity in leadership. *Sex Roles, 55*, 51-61.
- Grappendorf, H., & Lough, N. (2006). An endangered species: Characteristics and perspectives from female NCAA Division I athletic directors of both separate and merged athletic departments. *The Sport Management and Related Topics Journal, 2*(2), 6-20.
- Inglis, S., Danylchuk, K. E., & Pastore, D. L. (2000). Multiple realities of women's work experiences in coaching and athletic management. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal, 9*, 1-19.
- Moorman, A. M. (2004). Legal issues and the supervised internship relationship. Who is responsible for what? *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance, 75*, 19-24, 34.
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- National Collegiate Athletic Association (2006). *2005-06 Ethnicity and Gender Demographics of NCAA Member Institutions' Athletic Personnel*. Retrieved from [http://www.ncaa.org/library/research/race\\_demographics/2005-06/2005-06\\_ethnicity\\_gender\\_demographics.pdf](http://www.ncaa.org/library/research/race_demographics/2005-06/2005-06_ethnicity_gender_demographics.pdf)
- Ritter, B. A., & Yoder, J. D. (2004). Gender differences in leader emergence persist even for dominant women: An updated confirmation of role congruity theory. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 28*, 187-193.
- Schein, V. E. (2001). A global look at psychological barriers to women's progress in management. *Journal of Social Issues, 57*, 675-688.
- Shaw, S., & Slack, T. (2002). 'It's been like that for Donkey's Years': The construction of gender relations and the cultures of sports organizations. *Culture, Sport, Society, 5*, 86-106.
- Suggs, W. (2005). Faces in a mostly white, male crowd. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 51*(31), p. A34.

Willemsen, T. M. (2002). Gender typing of the successful manager – A stereotype reconsidered. *Sex Roles, 46*, 385-391.

Whisenant, W., Miller, J., & Pedersen, P. M. (2005). Systematic barriers for athletic administration: An analysis of job descriptions for interscholastic athletic directors. *Sex Roles, 53*, 911-918.

Whisenant, W. A., & Pedersen, P. M. (2004). The influence of managerial activities on the success of intercollegiate athletic directors. *American Business Review, 22*, 21-26.

Whisenant, W. A., Pedersen, P. M., & Obenour, B. (2002). Success and gender: Determining the rate of advancement for intercollegiate athletic directors. *Sex Roles, 47*, 485-491.

Yukl, G. A. (2002). *Leadership in organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

**TABLE 1**

**COMMON PHRASES IN JOB DESCRIPTION AND FIVE MOST IMPORTANT MANAGERIAL SUBROLES FOR THAT COMMON PHRASE**

Job Description Phrase	Gender Subrole	Managerial Subroles				
Leading a Program	Masculine	Planning and organizing (Feminine)	Allocating resources (Masculine)	Motivating and inspiring (Gender Neutral)	Strategic decision making (Masculine)	Clarifying roles and objectives (Gender Neutral)
Monitoring a Program	Feminine	Providing corrective feedback (Feminine)	Evaluating employees (Gender Neutral)	Supporting (Feminine)	Monitoring work activities (Gender Neutral)	Developing and mentoring personnel (Feminine)
Developing Relationships External Stakeholders	Gender Neutral	Consulting others (Gender Neutral)	Networking (Gender Neutral)	Communicating and informing (Feminine)	Strategic decision making (Masculine)	Clarifying roles and objectives (Gender Neutral)
Serving as Departmental Liaison	Gender Neutral	Consulting others (Gender Neutral)	Providing Corrective feedback (Feminine)	Managing conflict (Masculine)	Supporting (Feminine)	Networking (Gender Neutral)
Supervising Staff	Feminine	Evaluating employees (Gender Neutral)	Providing corrective feedback (Feminine)	Developing and mentoring personnel (Feminine)	Motivating and inspiring (Gender Neutral)	Communicating and informing (Feminine)

**TABLE 2**

**FREQUENCIES AND PERCENT FREQUENCIES OF CODING OF COMMON JOB DESCRIPTIONS BY POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT**

	Leading a Program (Masculine)	Developing Relationships with External Stakeholders (Neutral)	Serving as Departmental Liaison (Gender Neutral)	Supervising Staff (Feminine)
	<i>f</i> (%)			
Position				
Division I Athletic Director	17(40)	6(14)	5(12)	5(12)
Division II Athletic Director	22(35)	10(16)	3(4)	8(13)
Division III Athletic Director	12(34)	9(25)	1(3)	5(14)
Division I Associate Athletic Director	13(36)	10(27)	5(14)	3(8)
Division II Athletic Director	2(17)	0(0)	0(0)	3(25)
Division III Athletic Director	4(19)	3(14)	6(28)	3(14)
Division I Compliance Director	11(34)	0(0)	5(15)	2(6)
Division II Compliance Director	3(33)	1(11)	0(0)	1(11)
Division I Development Director	13(27)	24(51)	3(6)	2(4)
Division II Development Director	0(0)	17(77)	1(4)	1(4)
Division III Development Director	2(16)	5(41)	2(16)	0(0)
Division I Marketing Director	6(17)	14(41)	5(14)	1(3)
Division II Marketing Director	3(60)	1(20)	0(0)	0(0)
Division III Marketing Director	2(12)	7(43)	0(0)	2(12)
Division I Operations Director	7(22)	5(16)	4(13)	3(9)
Division II Operations Director	0(0)	1(20)	1(20)	2(40)

### THE PRACTICE AND TEACHING OF CRITICAL THINKING IN SPORT MANAGEMENT

ROBERT C. SCHNEIDER, EDD, THE COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT, STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

WILLIAM F. STIER JR., EDD, THE COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT, STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

---

#### INTRODUCTION

Not new to education, critical thinking is a valuable teaching and learning tool and has been in circulation at least since the time of Socrates (McKendree, Small, Stenning & Conlon, 2002). As stated by de Bono (n.d.), the purpose of thinking is to end with some action. Critical thinking, according to Halpern (1999), refers to “the use of cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome” (p. 70). Thinking was defined by de Bono as “The operating skill with which intelligence acts upon experience” (para. 6). Almost everyone agrees that one of the main goals of education, at any level, is to help develop general thinking skills, particularly, critical thinking (van Gelder, 2005). Further emphasizing the value of critical thinking was Halpern (1998), who recognized thinking citizenry as the most valuable asset and investment of any society in the future.

Given the problems that confront sport managers on a day-to-day basis, the need to be able to think critically, arrive at decisions, and take appropriate and timely action is fundamental to the job of managing sport organizations (Stier, 2004). Although critical thinking is an essential aspect to the education of sport management students, the difficulty of teaching, practicing, and eventually mastering critical thinking can be daunting. According to van Gelder (2005), mastering critical thinking is about as difficult as becoming fluent in a second language, in part, because humans are not naturally critical. Elder and Paul (2002) pointed out that thinking and analyzing the many parts of a subject at an advanced level without disciplined practice is unnatural to the human mind. Elder and Paul also adhered to the notion that few students think well within domains.

#### THE NEED TO ADDRESS CRITICAL THINKING IN SPORT MANAGEMENT

All sport managers routinely deal with problems that require decision making in the performance of their everyday duties and responsibilities (Stier, 2004). Those who have the ability to critically think will be more adept at effectively resolving the many problems they will face throughout their professional careers. Managing sport is a real life endeavor. In real life, according to Halpern (1998), critical-thinking skills are needed whenever people grapple with complex issues, and ill-defined problems. There are numerous complex problems in sport that often require sport managers to use critical thinking when arriving at solutions to problems.

Having the ability to critically think through problems and arrive at defensible solutions and positions is a skill that should be expected, if not required, of all sport managers. To reiterate, as stated by de Bono (n.d.), the purpose of thinking is to end with some action. When sport managers arrive at a solution, and prepare to take action, they must be capable of defending their position. As indicated by Yanchar and Slife (2004), the person arriving at the decision should be able to anticipate criticism that could be directed at his position and be able to suggest how one might respond to the criticism. The process of critical thinking will not only provide sport managers with a logical basis from which to base actions, but also from which to defend actions.

Sport management instructors must master the craft of teaching critical thinking and, in turn, sport management students must grasp instructors' teachings and ultimately master the skill of critical thinking. This article includes: (a) various approaches to critical thinking, (b) common components of the skill of critical thinking, (c) domain knowledge of critical thinking, (d) importance of practicing critical thinking, and (e) insights to teaching sport management students how to think critically. The foundation of and general content of this article is based on recurring themes in the literature related to critical thinking.

### **VARIOUS APPROACHES TO CRITICAL THINKING**

Identifying and understanding skills that are common to the various approaches of critical thinking can be helpful to those practicing and teaching sport management. As sport managers understand how to incorporate the components of critical thinking into the overall process of critical thinking, they will be better able to effectively arrive at solutions to problems. After reviewing the literature related to critical thinking, common critical thinking components were identified, summarized, and presented in this section.

In describing critical thinking, Willingham (2007) held the view that the following are components of critical thinking: "seeing both sides of an issue, being open to new evidence that disconfirms your ideas, reasoning dispassionately, demanding that claims be backed by evidence, deducing and inferring conclusions from available facts, and solving problems" (p. 8). Designed by Edward de Bono, who has studied critical thinking since 1974, the Cognitive Research Trust of Cambridge (CoRT) Thinking Programme is widely used in educational settings throughout the world and, in part, includes consideration of other people's priorities, views, and objectives (de Bono, n.d.). Cognitive scientists have studied many phenomena that are particular aspects or dimensions of critical thinking, which van Gelder (2005) summarized into the following succinct "lessons": critical thinking is hard, practice makes perfect, practice for transfer, practical theory, and belief preservation. Paul and Elder (2002) indicated that it is to learn to think within the subject's logic to: question, gather, assess, and interpret information insightfully; reason through to conclusions; assess the point of view of the discipline; use the language of the discipline to communicate effectively with others; and to relate the discipline to other subjects and to life.

Several sources indicated that asking questions is a component of critical thinking for which various purposes are served. The use of questions to simply elicit information was emphasized by de Bono (n.d.). Elder and Paul (2003) pointed out that when questions are asked, individuals are allowed to generate alternative meanings and are forced to deal with complexities. Asking questions facilitates critical thinking and allows for development as thinkers (Elder & Paul; Yanchar & Slife, 2004). The use of thoughtful questions is beneficial to the learner (the person asking questions) in that questions help the learner make connections and the greater the number of connections that can be made, the greater chance the student will be able to recall, at a later date, the concept (Halpern, 1998). Ivie (2001) introduced a six level critical thinking model centered on the claim that critical thinking must begin with a central question and be grounded in factual knowledge. The central question calls for propositions with reasoning, the analysis of underlying assumptions, and written evidence to support at least three different positions concerning the question.

If sport managers can digest and implement the various approaches to critical thinking they will enhance their ability to arrive at good solutions to problems. Sport management instructors will also improve their teaching skills if they gain a full understanding of skills common to the various approaches to critical thinking for the purpose of solving problems.



### **COMPONENTS COMMON TO CRITICAL THINKING**

Before the skill of critical thinking can be mastered by sport managers its basic components must be understood. As sport managers learn and understand the basic components necessary to think critically, they will be able to arrive at solutions to problems in the athletics workplace. Instructors of sport management who master the components of critical thinking will be better prepared to demonstrate and teach the skill of critical thinking to their students.

In the following section, components of critical thinking are identified within the various approaches to the skill of critical thinking and serve as a basic guideline for sport managers who engage in the skill of critical thinking. After each component is described, a sport problem is presented that calls for a solution through critical thinking. Discussion ensues as to how the particular component of critical thinking can be achieved within the overall process of critical thinking. Following the discussion, a sport management teaching activity/strategy is included for the purpose of providing strategies for teaching the components of critical thinking.

### **THE EIGHT COMPONENTS**

#### **1) ARRIVE AT CONCLUSIONS AND MAKE INFERENCES THROUGH A LOGICAL REASONING PROCESS BASED ON FACTS**

One must first identify the elements within a problem that make it a problem. Some elements within a problem may be more relevant than others. Part of learning, according to Halpern (1998), is to decide which information is relevant to the problem. Facts that are related to relevant elements within the problem must not only be identified, but also reviewed and assessed. Scientific research studies and experts in the field related to the problem are examples of sources of fact-based information. After identifying the fact-based information, it is necessary to examine the data logically. The critical thinker should logically and systematically make inferences and arrive at conclusions that are based on facts/data related to the relevant elements making up the problem. As indicated by Ivie (2001), thinkers base opinions on substantive information, facts, and sound logic.

Identifying relevant elements in a problem can be better understood with the following example. The public perception of a commissioner's professional sports league might be one that has become increasingly negative due to the feeling or perception that players in the league are routinely using steroids to enhance their athletic performances. The commissioner, through a logical process of reasoning based on facts, must arrive at conclusions to the issue of steroid use in this professional sports league. The fact based reasoning component of critical thinking can be met if the commissioner utilizes facts to arrive at a solution to the problem of negative public perception. The commissioner must identify facts and review credible evidence related to steroid use by athletes that not only include enhanced athletic performances, but also the short- and long-term physical and psychological side effects. Scientific data must be sought concerning the effects of steroids on the health of adults as well as youth. Facts concerning the fairness of using steroids to gain an advantage must be analyzed. The research studies reviewed must employ appropriate research procedures. The commissioner cannot base inferences, assertions, and conclusions on hearsay, anecdotal sources, or gossip.

#### ***SPORT MANAGEMENT TEACHING ACTIVITY/STRATEGY***

Teachers of sport management should provide their students with a problem and first ask them to identify the elements within the problem that actually make it a problem. Next, students should be asked to identify facts that are related to the relevant elements within the problem. Then, the students should make inferences, assertions and draw conclusions through a logical process based on the facts relevant to the problem

### **2) GATHERING INFORMATION THROUGH QUESTIONS**

One way to acquire information related to the problem is by asking problem related questions, first to oneself and then to others such as experts and coworkers who have an interest in and/or understanding of the problem. Persons who have, in the past, dealt with similar problems often have helpful information that can be obtained through questioning. In addition to asking questions, information related to the problem should be obtained through additional means such as literature, and personal experiences. Even with an adequate depth and breadth of domain knowledge (knowledge related to the problem), sport managers should still seek out information to acquire current knowledge related to and necessary to resolve a problem through critical thinking.

Asking problem related questions can be used when attempting to solve most any problem. When trying to decide whether or not to eliminate football from a Division I athletics program to save money, the athletics director should gather as much information as possible through questions and other means. The gathering of information component of critical thinking can be met by asking questions of experts and those who have a vested interest in the elimination or retention of football from the athletics department, as well as persons who have dealt with similar types of problems in the past. The athletics director should first ask oneself questions that are directly and indirectly related to the problem. Views of athletics department personnel within the department might add to the base of information necessary to arrive at a good decision. Athletics directors from outside universities who have dealt with the elimination of Division I football or similar financial issues might also be questioned for their insights related to the problem. Moreover, the athletics director should read as much literature as possible regarding the topic of dropping football from college athletics departments and in particular Division I programs. Literature need not be directly related to Division I football but might also include information that is indirectly related to the problem. For instance, the downsizing of organizations outside of sport might offer some insights that can be helpful in understanding downsizing of athletics and more specifically the elimination of Division I football from an athletics department.

### ***SPORT MANAGEMENT TEACHING ACTIVITY/STRATEGY***

To begin the activity, instructors can first provide students with a problem. Next, students should be required to gather information related to the problem by asking questions to experts, coworkers, and persons who have dealt with a similar problem in the past. Information should also be acquired by means other than questioning, such as personal experiences and searching the literature. After having acquired as much information as possible through questions and other means, the students will have satisfied the information gathering component of critical thinking.

### **3) BEING OPEN TO NEW EVIDENCE THAT DISCONFIRMS PREVIOUSLY HELD IDEAS AND BELIEFS**

It can be difficult to change a preconceived notion or opinion that is not supported by theory or fact. But, as a critical thinker, when empirical evidence disconfirms an idea, one must be receptive to a change in previous thought. Prior to accepting a claim, however, sport managers must demand that new claims be supported by real evidence, rather than anecdotal information. The critical thinker must be receptive to new, fact-based evidence even if it results in a change in one's position on the matter. Past positions should not simply be presumed as correct for the present and future unless current empirical evidence and knowledge confirms and supports positions.

The component of critical thinking that calls for being open to new evidence that disconfirms previously formed ideas can be met by the athletics director when attempting to solve problems. For example, names of the athletic department mascot can be problematic despite

longstanding traditions that support the name. In this case athletics directors can simply listen to and gather new evidence concerning the appropriateness of mascot traditions and nicknames that focus on a particular ethnic group. In the past, evidence may have indicated that the mascot related traditions were entertaining, allowed for the expression of school spirit, and unified the student body. If, however, current evidence indicates that the mascot traditions are insensitive to an ethnic group, the athletics director, as a critical thinker, must be receptive to this new evidence. The athletics director should be receptive to fact-based evidence related to the mascot/nickname issue and be open to new ideas that disconfirm ideas and prior beliefs regarding the school mascot and nickname. If the new fact-based evidence supports a change in an athletics department's nickname and/or mascot traditions, the athletics director should include this evidence based component of critical thinking into the overall process of critical thinking.

### **SPORT MANAGEMENT TEACHING ACTIVITY/STRATEGY**

Instructors can provide students with a scenario that, on present fact-based evidence, is perceived to be a problem. The scenario should be one that has existed for years, but based on past evidence has not been perceived as a problem. Students should be asked to be open to new evidence even if it may disconfirm their previously held and longstanding beliefs and ideas related to the scenario. If the students deem the evidence to be valid and fact-based, they should incorporate it into their overall process of critical thinking. The students should also be asked how they might incorporate the new evidence into the overall process of critical thinking.

### **4) UNDERSTANDING THE POLITICS OF AN ISSUE/PROBLEM**

Critical thinking goes beyond the gathering of facts and being able to reason logically; a conscious effort must be made by the critical thinker to integrate facts and logical reasoning with the political motives of persons surrounding the problem. After having gained a grasp on the political issues surrounding a problem, one must incorporate that knowledge into the process of critical thinking and reasoning when arriving at a solution to the problem. Other people's aspirations, objectives, agendas, and overall motives in the sport organization should be considered. In order to think critically, persons must be willing to take the time and effort to gain an understanding of how persons close to the problem might be affected by it. The critical thinker must have an astute understanding of the political atmosphere including the motives of persons surrounding the problem. One should have a keen awareness of the dynamics of various persons' interests in the outcome of the problem and how they might attempt to influence its outcome. The political interests and agendas of persons close to the problem complicate the problem in ways that make it challenging to quantify and integrate such political interests and agendas into a process of logical thinking.

Meeting the component of critical thinking that addresses understanding the politics of an issue/problem can be illustrated by examining the controversy of fighting in professional hockey. If a group of season ticket holders are pressuring the commissioner of the league to establish and enforce rules against fighting in the league, the commissioner must know who supports fighting in hockey and who does not. Beyond the small portion of season ticket holders, the commissioner should know or learn the aspirations, objectives, agendas, and overall positions as well as political motives of players, coaches, fans, and the general public. Critical thinking can take place after gaining such knowledge and integrating it with facts relevant to the question of whether or not to legislate against fighting in hockey. In order to resolve the problem at hand, the commissioner must have an astute awareness of political forces and the influences those forces may have on the problem.

### **SPORT MANAGEMENT TEACHING ACTIVITY/STRATEGY**

Instructors can provide students with a problem/scenario and ask them to identify and address the political elements of the problem. More specifically, instructors should ask

students to identify the aspirations, objectives, agendas, positions, and political motives of those close to the problem. An emphasis should be placed on identifying persons and constituencies who may have an interest in manipulating aspects within the scenario to bring about an outcome that they believe will be favorable to their personal or professional cause, goal, or agenda. Personality and character traits of the persons who are involved in the scenario should be developed and provided to the students prior to asking them to identify, discuss, and determine the role that political elements associated with the scenario will play in the process of critical thinking.

### **5) USING ANALOGIES**

The identification of similarities between a current problem facing a sport manager and a previous problem can be helpful in solving the sport manager's current dilemma. In attempting to resolve a current problem through analogies, sport managers can draw parallels from a similar type of problem from the same or maybe even a different field. Identifying similarities between past and present problems will stimulate thinking through questions and discussion that will provide insights as to how similar actions used to solve the past problem might also be effective (or ineffective) in solving the present problem. When comparing the past problem to the present one, the sport manager has the advantage of knowing the outcome and side effects of the actions used to deal with the past problem and can use this information to help solve the present problem.

An interscholastic athletics director may find the use of analogies helpful when confronted with the challenge of continuing the full operation of the athletics department even after a significant budget reduction. When using the analogy component of critical thinking to help arrive at a solution, the athletics director will identify situations, both from the field of athletics and from other aspects of life, from which analogies can be drawn that are useful in solving the current budget problem.

In making an analogy, the athletics director might identify similarities between a professional baseball franchise that is suffering from a shortage of operating funds and one's own athletics department's reduced budget situation. The athletics director then might identify strategies that the general manager of the professional baseball team is using to continue the effective operation of the professional franchise. Similar strategies or offshoots of the operating strategies of the baseball franchise might be used by the athletics director to manage the current budget problem.

Analogies from a field outside of athletics might also be used by the athletics director to solve the budget problem. The athletics director might identify similarities for the purpose of making analogies between a business that is experiencing a financial down cycle and the athletics department's reduced budget. Discovering measures that are being taken by the CEO of the business in order to continue its effective operation in a recessed financial climate might well be helpful in solving the athletics director's budget problem. In the event that similarities can be identified between the business' financial down cycle and the athletics department's reduced budget situation, some of the budget strategies being used by the business CEO might be able to be applied to the athletics director's reduced budget problem.

### ***SPORT MANAGEMENT TEACHING ACTIVITY/STRATEGY***

Instructors can give students a current sport management problem and ask them to resolve it by identifying similar problems that have taken place in the past. Students may draw from past problems that are directly related to the problem at hand or may draw from problems that were not necessarily related to sport.

Next, the students can be asked to identify similarities between the current and past problems. Connections between the actions taken to resolve the past problems and the resultant outcomes of those actions should be analyzed. Then, as part of the attempt to arrive at an acceptable and appropriate solution to the present problem, the actions and resultant outcomes of the past problem should be studied. A determination can then be made—based on studying similarities between the past and present problem—as to what actions might be effective in arriving at an acceptable solution to the present problem.

### **6) SEEING MORE THAN ONE SIDE OF AN ISSUE**

In seeing multiple sides of an issue, one is able to identify and analyze the different arguments, positions, and proposals that support the differing positions regarding the issue. When viewing more than one side of an issue, one must consider not only the theory supporting proposals but also the practicality of each proposal. If sport managers base decisions on theory, assumptions, and practical implications, they will have a sound basis from which to present a defense to their critics. All theories, despite variance, at many levels are founded upon assumptions regarding what actually exists (Yanchar & Slife, 2004).

It is necessary to keep in mind that domain knowledge is necessary to see more than one side of an issue. In seeing more than one side of an issue the critical thinker must consider other persons' views. Various sources for different ideas/views, according to Elder and Paul (2002), include personal experience, socialization, and the studying of different academic subjects.

Seeing more than one side of a problem can be of use to a sports information director who is faced with the problem of a powerful coach trying to gain additional press coverage for his program. Meeting the component of critical thinking that calls for seeing more than one side of the issue, requires the sports information director to seek out and understand the various perspectives of the problem beyond one's own view. In seeking out various perspectives to the problem, the sports information director might include drawing on personal experiences, which will likely be influenced by the sports information director's background; socializing with other sport information directors, administrators, co-workers, students, and fans; and, reading and studying both professional and general literature related to the problem. The sports information director should incorporate the various perspectives of the problem into the process of critical thinking when attempting to arrive at a solution to the problem of the powerful coach exerting pressure to gain additional press coverage for his team.

### ***SPORT MANAGEMENT TEACHING ACTIVITY/STRATEGY***

Instructors may provide a realistic problem situation to the sport management students while asking the students to see more than one side of the issue by outlining and explaining their own perspective based on personal experiences. The students should also seek out other sides of the problem through interacting and socializing with others who are knowledgeable with the type of problem being faced, and by obtaining and reading appropriate and timely literature pertaining to the problem. Moreover, the students should be asked to describe how, and to what extent, they will incorporate all sides of the problem into the process of critical thinking.

### **7) ASSESS AND INTERPRET INFORMATION WITH DISPASSIONATE (WITHOUT PASSION) INSIGHT**

One cannot allow passions, emotions, or feelings to enter into or influence the critical thinking process. Although having passion for such things as personal and professional goals can serve one well in terms of being energized to the point of expending the necessary effort to achieve success, when engaged in the process of critical thinking, passion cannot be allowed to influence one's insights when assessing and interpreting information for the purpose of arriving at a solution to the problem. Substantive knowledge directly and indirectly related to the problem is required if one is to reason without passion; for, if one is to reason dispassionately



there must be substance behind and supporting one's reasoning. Yelling, screaming, and fist pounding might be effective techniques to influence and persuade others through intimidation, but these passion-based actions are not forms of reasoning and are not based on logic or facts. Speaking with a passion and energy can certainly move an audience, but if the message is not supported by a strong foundation of facts and data, it runs the risk of faltering under fact-based counter claims. With regard to critical thinking, individuals must base insights and perspectives to problems void of their passions, emotions, and feelings.

Consider a college athletics director who must arrive at a solution concerning a proposal to eliminate football from the athletics department. As a former football coach, the athletics director has a strong emotional tie to football and is passionately against the proposal to eliminate football. The component of critical thinking that calls for interpreting and assessing information with dispassionate insight requires the athletics director to disregard passion, emotions, and feelings when analyzing information. In order to properly engage in the process of critical thinking, the athletics director must put aside passionate feelings and the strong personal desire to retain football and analyze the problem/proposal to eliminate football void of passion, emotion, and feelings.

### ***SPORT MANAGEMENT TEACHING ACTIVITY/STRATEGY***

Instructors can require students to select a sport related problem for which they have strong passionate feelings. Next, the students should be asked to begin to interpret information related to the problem without allowing their passion, emotions, and personal feelings to influence their process of critical thinking.

### **8) HAVING OR OBTAINING DOMAIN KNOWLEDGE**

Domain knowledge is generally perceived to be a necessary component in order to effectively arrive at solutions to problems through critical thinking. Simply stated, domain knowledge can be described as knowledge of the subject matter related to the problem at hand. For example, if an athletics director expects to be able to use critical thinking to arrive at a good solution to a problem in the athletics department, at the very least the athletics director's domain knowledge should include an understanding of athletics.

More preferably the athletics director's domain knowledge should combine general athletics knowledge with knowledge more directly related to basic operational aspects that are universal to most athletics departments. Even more beneficial to the athletics director's critical thinking would be in-depth domain knowledge of the objectives of the department, inner-workings of the athletics department including departmental politics, goals of individual employees, and special circumstances specific to the department. As the domain knowledge of the individual athletics director increases in depth and breadth, the likelihood of making well informed and good decisions through critical thinking becomes more probable.

Critical thinking, according to Willingham (2007), is domain based thinking. In other words, the better one's level of understanding of a problem's domain, the more capable one will be at arriving at good solutions to problems. Willingham underscored the importance of domain knowledge through the explanation that there is not a set of critical thinking skills that can be acquired and deployed regardless of context. Having domain knowledge or an understanding of the context of the problem provides one with the ability to analyze problems from various perspectives. "You cannot think critically about topics you know little about or solve problems that you do not know well enough to recognize and execute the type of solutions they call for" (Willingham, p. 12).

Domain knowledge can be acquired through experiences while employed in a particular domain. In the case of the sport manager, general domain knowledge in athletics/sports can be



acquired while employed in the field of athletics. If however, the sport manager is required to arrive at a solution to a more specific problem within athletics, the sport manager may have to think critically beyond the general sphere of athletics. To that end, the sport manager may have to seek out domain knowledge beyond what is naturally acquired as an athletics department employee. Domain knowledge specific to a problem can often be acquired through reading professional literature, examining prior actions in similar situations, and questioning those knowledgeable of and close to the problem.

For example, if the president of an amateur sports association is expected to arrive at a solution to a controversy associated with establishing a minimum age requirement for female gymnastics, the administrator must have domain knowledge. In other words, there is a perception in some circles that many very young female gymnasts may not be mature enough to endure the physical, mental, and emotional stresses and rigors required of them to train and compete at elite levels. Before being able to make the best minimum age policy decision, the president should have a well-documented understanding of the problem, which will be the case after having or having obtained domain knowledge related to the field of gymnastics.

Recall, that even though a general level of domain knowledge is necessary to critically think, it is preferable to go beyond a general level and have or obtain an in-depth and thorough knowledge of the subject related to the problem. The commissioner must learn the physical, psychological, and emotional effects on females who train and compete at elite levels in the sport of gymnastics. In order to satisfy the component of critical thinking that calls for having or obtaining domain knowledge, the president can seek out knowledge related to the effects of elite training and competition on various ages of female gymnasts. Some ways to achieve domain knowledge in the area of appropriate participation ages of female gymnasts include reading related literature, consulting experts and/or medical doctors, and interviewing youth and adult female gymnasts.

### **SPORT MANAGEMENT TEACHING ACTIVITY/STRATEGY**

Instructors can provide sport management students with a realistic problem that requires domain knowledge. Next, the instructor should ask the students to outline the steps and the ways they will gain domain knowledge related to the problem.

### **THE CHALLENGE OF TRANSFERRING CRITICAL THINKING ACROSS DOMAINS**

It seems that, to some extent, a level of domain knowledge is necessary to be able to critically think and arrive at solutions to problems; however, that is not to say that the skills of critical thinking cannot be transferred across domains. Though the importance of mastering a body of knowledge was recognized by van Gelder (2005), he also went on to say that beyond a certain point, improvement depends upon acquiring some theory.

The idea that skill in thinking is developed as a byproduct of subjects (domain knowledge) was dismissed by de Bono (n.d.). In other words, domain knowledge aside, in order to be able to think critically, the ability to apply skills associated with critical thinking is necessary. Halpern (1998) claimed that critical thinking can be learned and, in fact, does transfer to novel domains of knowledge. According to Paul and Elder (2002), thinking occurs across and within disciplines, as well as across and within domains of knowledge and experiences. The challenge, of course, lies in being able to apply the skills generally associated with critical thinking to a wide range of problems across various domains and to arrive at solutions to those problems. Halpern (1999) pointed out that the use of different examples is helpful when attempting to teach the transfer of critical thinking skills across domains. Improving the ability to critically think across domains might be better met if the application of the skills of critical thinking is applied not to just one domain, but rather to a variety of domains.

### **REPEATED USE OF CRITICAL THINKING, REGARDLESS OF DOMAIN**

Assuming that domain knowledge between persons is similar, it will be the person who uses critical thinking on a day-to-day basis who will be more apt to effectively, accurately, and consistently transfer critical thinking across domains. For example, if there are two real estate attorneys and neither has domain knowledge of athletics, yet one of them frequently engages in critical thinking in the domain of real estate, it is that individual, through the transfer of critical thinking skills across domains, who will be more apt to arrive at suitable solutions to problems that may confront the sport manager. If however, a third real estate attorney repeatedly uses critical thinking skills in that person's real estate job *and* has a strong level of domain knowledge in athletics, it will be the third real estate attorney who will be the most effective critical thinker of the three.

Similarly, those persons whose jobs require meaningful thinking of some sort might be more likely to transfer such thinking skills across domains. Domain knowledge alone, according to de Bono (n.d.), does not make for an effective critical thinker since critical thinking skills are necessary as well. Occupations that require the use of meaningful thinking skills for the purpose of solving problems might transfer across domains more effectively than occupations that do not require extensive thinking. In layman's terms, if a person's job requires an individual to continually critically think, those practiced thinking skills will transfer to other jobs that require critical thinking as well. In short, a person who repeatedly uses critical thinking at one's job, and is masterful at the process of critical thinking, may not have to have a full mastery of domain knowledge to effectively transfer critical thinking across domains.

An athletics department example might further illustrate the difficulty of transferring within a general domain from a non-critical thinking position to a position that requires critical thinking. Consider the career of an athletics department equipment room employee whose job it is to fill equipment orders. Even with domain knowledge of athletics and an overall understanding of the inner-workings of the athletics department, over the years the equipment room employee, in reality, may not have used any critical thinking skills. If, one day, the equipment room employee was asked to move into the sport management position of athletics director, the transition would be difficult and maybe even impossible to make.

Given that sport management positions require critical thinking, the equipment room employee who has no general domain knowledge and no use of critical thinking skills, may experience severe difficulties solving problems that are a part of managing a sophisticated and complicated sport operation. Making it difficult for the equipment room employee to transfer critical thinking skills across domains to that of athletics director is the lack of job related critical thinking experience coupled with domain knowledge relating to the overall operation of the total athletics program.

### **TRANSFERRING OF CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS BETWEEN SIMILAR AND DISSIMILAR DOMAINS**

Does critical thinking experience in particular domain areas lend itself to more effective transfer of critical thinking skills to other domain areas? It may be that there is a more effective transition of critical thinking skills among persons who share broad based knowledge areas. For example, even though the real estate attorney, in the previous example, may frequently practice critical thinking skills throughout a typical day, that attorney may struggle, when compared to a sports coach, when attempting to transfer thinking skills to problems confronting an athletics director.

The difference may lie in the fact that sports coaches and athletics directors are from a similar domain area, one that is related to athletics/sports, whereas the real estate attorney's domain area, in which one routinely applies critical thinking skills, is generally unrelated to

athletics/sports. Of course, it is assumed that the coach also utilizes critical thinking skills as frequently as the attorney. In this case, the difference in transfer effectiveness might not be in the process of critical thinking but in the similarity or dissimilarity of domain knowledge. The sport coach would typically have an advantage over the real estate attorney during the transfer of critical thinking skills to the new profession of athletics director because the domain knowledge of a coach, when compared to a real estate attorney, is more similar to that of an athletics director.

### **THE NATURAL TRANSITION OF COACHES TO THE POSITION OF ATHLETICS DIRECTOR**

If the transfer of critical thinking skills, in fact, does transition with little difficulty to and from similar domain areas, this might explain, in part, why coaches, historically, seem to have transitioned well to the position of athletics director. Through coaching, domain knowledge related to athletics is acquired and critical thinking skills are practiced in the area of athletics on a daily basis. When required to think critically as an athletics director, coaches and former coaches may have an advantage since, through their coaching, they may have already gained a broad based knowledge of athletics.

### **COMBINING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS WITH DOMAIN KNOWLEDGE**

Even though there may be some transfer of critical thinking skills from domain to domain, sport managers would be best served to gain a mastery of domain knowledge and combine it with superior critical thinking skills. Willingham (2007) recognized the need for critical thinking to be intertwined with the content of thought/domain knowledge. Effective thinking, according to de Bono (n.d.), does require an information base (domain knowledge), and when the information base is inadequate, it must be supplemented by the use of thinking skills.

In a teaching situation, it might be emphasized that students are able to think critically in one situation, but not another, because the process of thinking and knowledge of the subject matter may have a synergistic relationship. Merely receiving lectures on the content of a subject will in itself not teach one to think (Elder & Paul, 2002). Experts in teaching science recommend that scientific reasoning be taught in the context of rich subject matter knowledge (Willingham, 2007). "Teaching content alone is not likely to lead to proficiency in science, nor is engaging in inquiry experiences devoid of meaningful science content" (Committee on Science Learning..., 2007, p. 335). Similarly, it might be argued that proficiency in managing and solving problems in a sport organization/setting is not reached exclusively through either domain knowledge or knowing the process of critical thinking but, rather, through a combination of the two.

### **IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICING CRITICAL THINKING**

To become an effective critical thinker, the skills of critical thinking must be consistently practiced (de Bono, n.d.; van Gelder, 2005). Knowing that one should think critically is not enough, and not the same, as actually practicing and improving the skill of critical thinking. Observing others who are engaged in the process of critical thinking might help one understand how to think critically, but ultimately in order to consistently arrive at good decisions through critical thinking, one must practice the process of critical thinking on a consistent basis.

From a teaching perspective, as van Gelder (2005) indicated, students must have opportunities to practice the skills of critical thinking; simply being exposed to good critical thinking is not enough (van Gelder). Halpern (1999) pointed out that through the use of multiple examples, students can learn how to think. Students can also practice and refine their critical thinking skills through the use of case studies (Stier, 1998). McDade (1995) discussed in further detail how case studies contribute to critical thinking.

### **INSIGHTS TO TEACHING SPORT MANAGEMENT STUDENTS HOW TO THINK CRITICALLY**

As the field of sport management continues to entrench itself as an academic discipline in higher education, an emphasis on sound pedagogical methods is paramount and must be ongoing. Understanding how to teach critical thinking is necessary to teach it effectively and efficiently. It must also be noted that the success of teaching critical thinking is highly dependent on the instructional skills and experience(s) of the individual teacher. Regardless of the academic background of the instructor or the language used to describe critical thinking, Halpern (1999) maintained that critical thinking shares a set of common assumptions, that there are identifiable critical thinking skills that can be taught and learned, and when students learn these skills and apply them appropriately, they become better thinkers. Yanchar and Slife (2004) contended that students need to be taught the difference between the theoretical and practical and combine the two in a way that allows them to arrive at a solution which they can logically defend.

The process of teaching critical thinking, according to Halpern (1999), should be overt, conscious, and open to scrutiny during instruction, as instructors model their own thinking process. Thinking skills need to be explicitly and consciously taught and then used with many types of examples so that the skill aspect and its appropriate use are clarified and emphasized (Halpern, 1998).

It is essential that sport management instructors are able to teach students how to incorporate the components of critical thinking into their own thinking process. Students can be provided with fill-in-the-blank templates or a sequence of steps to follow when thinking, but ultimately, in order to reach higher levels of critical thinking, students, as well as sport managers, must be able to include, in a holistic manner, critical thinking components. Often problems do not take on a form that allows for a clean step-by-step analysis; thus, true critical thinkers must be able to apply critical thinking components in a way that works.

In terms of critical thinking and arriving at appropriate and timely solutions to problems, Bonnette, McBride, and Tolson (2001) preferred teacher facilitated, student-centered teaching methods and the creation of situations where students actively pursue solutions over the traditional teacher-centered method of drill and repetition. Instructors who are teaching students to think critically should focus on teaching students how to draw upon and exercise component-related critical thinking skills. Students can be asked to apply such skills to in-class case studies and practicum experiences that include hypothetical as well as actual decision making (Stier, 1999).

As recommended previously, sport management instructors should place students in situations that consistently require critical thinking. Keep in mind, however, that these same students must also acquire, through teaching or other means, a strong foundation of domain knowledge in order for their critical thinking skills to be fully effective/efficient in arriving at solutions to problems. The acquisition of domain knowledge is often acquired exclusive from the other components of critical thinking. And as students obtain more and more domain knowledge they will be able to more effectively apply the other components of critical thinking to problems.

### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

Central to the effectiveness of sport managers is the ability to arrive at good solutions to problems through critical thinking. Although anyone can arrive at solutions to problems, the sport manager who arrives at the best solutions to problems must master the eight components of critical thinking that were listed and discussed in this article. The first seven critical thinking components are process oriented and are as follows: (a) arrive at conclusions and make inferences through a logical reasoning process based on facts; (b) gathering

information through questions; (c) being open to new evidence that disconfirms previously held ideas and beliefs; (d) understanding the politics of an issue/problem; (e) using analogies; (f) seeing more than one side of an issue; and (g) assessing and interpreting information with dispassionate insight. The eighth and final component of critical thinking calls for sport managers to have or obtain domain knowledge—knowledge related to the content of the problem with which they are faced.

There is little doubt that applying the seven process oriented components of critical thinking in combination with a mastery of domain knowledge is the most effective means of using critical thinking to arrive at solutions to problems. It is inconclusive, however, as to what extent, if any, the seven process oriented components of critical thinking and the mastery of domain knowledge component of critical thinking can be used mutually exclusive of one another to arrive at good solutions to problems.

In terms of teaching, sport management instructors should focus on the following two general student learning outcomes related to teaching critical thinking: ensuring that students (a) reach a full understanding of the eight components of critical thinking, and (b) are able to effectively apply the seven process oriented components to problems and also master domain knowledge related to sport related problems. Finally, teachers must also provide sport management students with opportunities to practice the application of the process components. In doing so, sport management students will be able to arrive at good solutions to sport management related problems through critical thinking, which is integral to the success of the sport manager.

### REFERENCES

Bonnette, R. McBride, R.E., & Tolson, H. (2001). The differential effect of indirect instruction in the teaching of sport skills on critical thinking and self-esteem of early adolescent boys placed at risk. *Sport, Education and Society*, 6, 183–198.

Committee on Science Learning, Kindergarten through Eighth Grade. (2007). Conclusions and Recommendations. In R. A. Duschl, H. A. Schweingruber, & A. W. Shouse (Eds.). *Taking science to school: Learning and teaching science in grades K-8* (331-356). Washington, D.C.: National Academic Press.

de Bono, E. (n.d.). *The CoRT thinking programme*. Retrieved from <http://www.edwdebono.com/debono/cort.htm>

Elder, L., & Paul, R. (2002). Critical thinking: Teaching students how to study and learn (part II). *Journal of Developmental Education*, 26(2), 34-35.

Elder, L., & Paul, R. (2003). Critical thinking: Teaching students how to study and learn (part IV). *Journal of Developmental Education*, 27(1), 36-37.

Halpern, D.F. (1998). Teaching critical thinking for transfer across domains. *American Psychologist*, 53, 449-455.

Halpern, D.F. (1999, Winter). Teaching for critical thinking: Helping college students develop the skills and dispositions of a critical thinker. *New Directions for Teaching & Learning*, 1999(80), 69-74.

Ivie, S.D. (2001). Metaphor: A model for teaching critical thinking. *Contemporary Education*, 72(1), 18-22.

McDade, S. A. (1995). Case study pedagogy to advance critical thinking. *Teaching of Psychology, 22*(1), 9.

McKendree, J., Small, C., Stenning, K., & Conlon, T. (2002). The role of representation in teaching and learning critical thinking. *Educational Review, 54*(1), 57-67.

Paul, R. & Elder, L. (2002). Critical thinking: Teaching students how to study and learn (part I). *Journal of Developmental Education, 26*(1), 36-37.

Stier, W. F., Jr. (1998). *Problem solving for coaches*. Boston: American Press.

Stier, W. F., Jr. (1999). *Managing sport, fitness, and recreation programs: concepts and practices*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Stier, W. F., Jr. (2004). *Athletic administration — Successful decision making, risk taking and problem solving*. Boston: American Press.

van Gelder, T. (2005). Teaching critical thinking: Some lessons from cognitive science. *College Teaching, 53*(1), 41-46.

Willingham, D.T. (2007). Critical thinking: Why is it so hard to teach? *American Educator, 31*(2), 8-19.

Yanchar, S.C., & Slife, B.D. (2004). Teaching critical thinking by examining assumptions. *Teaching of Psychology, 31*(2), 85-90.



### **INSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE: MIKE FRANZESE**

**INTERVIEW BY JASON W. LEE, PHD, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA  
EDITOR, SMART**

---

**Lee: Mr. Franzese, thank you very much for taking time out of your busy schedule to share your insight on the important issues of sports gambling and the role organized crime in sports gambling. You have a fascinating story. Can you tell us a bit about your background and how you got into organized crime?**

Franzese: My dad was the underboss of the Colombo Crime family in the 1960s. When he received a 50 year prison sentence in 1967, I was a pre-med student in college when he went off to do his time in 1970 in Leavenworth Penitentiary. My life changed. I left school. My dad proposed me for membership in the Colombo Family and I was inducted in 1975.

**Lee: How high did you rise within the Colombo family (and what did that entail)?**

Franzese: I rose in the life by being a good soldier, understanding the politics of the mob life and by making a very significant amount of money. I was appointed a caporegime (captain) in 1980 by the Boss.

**Lee: How were you able to get out?**

Franzese: Long story here. Combination of knowing the life intimately well, never testifying against my former mob associates and by outlasting almost everyone I knew in the life who is either dead or in prison for life. And, because Jesus Christ had my back! That's the main reason. God had another plan and purpose for my life.

**Lee: What safety concerns do you have today?**

Franzese: Very few. I don't challenge the guys. I can't go back to Brooklyn to live, but I'm not in fear.

**Lee: Why is sports gambling so attractive to organized crime operations?**

Franzese: Most mobsters love to gamble and love the business of gambling. The concept of risking a little to make a lot is very appealing. Also, mobsters know gambling is a weakness they can exploit in others.

**Lee: What other organized crime groups are heavily associated with sports gambling?**

Franzese: I had personal experience with the Russian mob's involvement in illegal gambling. I also know the Russian mob looks to extort Russian athletes into compromising the outcome of games in which they participate to gain an edge in their gambling operations. La Cosa Nostra does the same, with any athlete they can reach.

**Lee: How significant was sport gambling to your overall business operations?**

Franzese: Very significant to the overall operation of the mob. Fairly significant to my own operations. I was generating millions of dollars per week in the gasoline business. Nothing compared to that in terms of my overall earnings during that time.

**Lee: How does that compare to the status of the profitability of sport gambling today?**

Franzese: I can assure you, there is more money in it today for the mob than during my day, only because of the significant increase in gambling opportunities through the Internet, casinos, and video poker machines.

**Lee: What other criminal activities are tied to sport gambling (and which of these are of greatest concern)?**

Franzese: Extortion and loan sharking are other illegal business activities the mob engages in as a result of its illegal gambling operations.

**Lee: For those not familiar with your work, could you detail what you do, as well some of the organizations, sport and otherwise, that you have worked with and/or been invited to speak to?**

Franzese: Regarding my work with gambling, my objective is to inform and educate athletes and other personnel involved in sports on both the professional and college levels as to the dangers gambling can pose to them personally as well as to the integrity of the sport in which they compete. I currently work regularly with the NBA (National Basketball Association), MLB (Major League Baseball), NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) Division I, II, and III Universities around the country, ATP (Association of Tennis professionals), AFCA (Association of Football Coaches of America), and many high schools nationally.

**Lee: What does a typical month look like for you, in regards to travel and appearances?**

Franzese: Travelling 2-3 weeks per month. Several appearances all over the country. Writing articles; involved in TV and film productions.

**Lee: Explain why such organizations are so interested in having you come in and speak to their athletes?**

Franzese: To prevent an athlete, coach, official, or anyone associated with their sport to engage in gambling activity or associate with anyone involved in gambling that might cause them to compromise the integrity of their sport.

**Lee: In your opinion, how substantial is America's gambling problem-how does sports gambling stack up to the overall issue gambling in the U.S.?**

Franzese: Very substantial and growing rapidly thanks to the Internet, poker on TV, the proliferation of casinos throughout the country. There is an undercurrent of gambling issues people are experiencing in America, as well as throughout the world. Sports gambling is on par with every other form of gambling. Very popular.

**Lee: Outside of Nevada, what are the sports gambling hotbeds in the U.S.?**

Franzese: Until recently sports gambling was only legal in Las Vegas. As of now, it is the only "hotbed" area for sports gambling in the U.S. However, the Internet picks up the slack across the country, even though gambling on sports is illegal, unlicensed and unregulated on the Internet.

**Lee: Do you feel that society takes too lenient of a view on the issue of illegal sport gambling?**

Franzese: Yes. They just don't get it unless they get bit by it.

**Lee: How prevalent is gambling among athletes on the collegiate level?**

Franzese: Very prevalent. Not only among athletes, but among college students in general. Especially on the Internet.

**Lee: How does this compare to gambling involvement by professional athletes?**

Franzese: The pros are more involved in my experience because they have the money, obviously. Gambling is an extension of their competitive nature.

**Lee: Do you see any reason for hope that the status of illegal sports gambling will be able to improve (Why?/Why not?)?**

Franzese: No. I see it growing. We now live in a global gambling community. Illegal sports gambling will continue to grow along with the growth of legal gambling. They go hand in hand.

**Lee: Do you have any final parting words or advice for our readers?**

Franzese: I am not an anti-gambling proponent across the board. My goal is merely to educate and inform people that gambling in its many forms can be dangerous. It can be just as addicting as alcohol or drugs. For those with an addictive or compulsive personality, its "pick your poison," drugs, alcohol, pornography...gambling. I see no harm in social gambling that does not impact your behavior, or your bank account in a negative way. Unfortunately, I have seen COUNTLESS LIVES destroyed from gambling abuse. Families, friends and business associates of the gambler included.

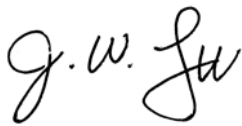
Young, old, black or white. Doesn't matter. Gambling abuse can be an equal opportunity destroyer. It can creep up on you and get you hooked before you realize what's happening. My advice to those who engage in gambling in any form is to know your limits, understand your own personality and BE CAREFUL!

### **SMART Is Going on Hiatus**

SMART Readers:

SMART is going on hiatus following this issue. Since its inception, SMART has served as a source for the sharing of topics of interest pertaining to Sport Management and peripheral fields of study. The journal has welcomed examinations of various aspects including contemporary issues, special topics, and common culture impacting relevant areas of interest. Throughout the duration of SMART, as editor, I have sought to stay true to this. The last 5 years has seen growth in the publication of a diverse array of quality manuscripts. I believe that this double issue, including the special issue component of Sport and Popular Culture and the Media, is a testament to that. I want to extend my thanks to all contributors to SMART, including: prospective authors, published authors, article reviewers, review board members, and our readership.

Sincerely,



Jason W. Lee, Editor

