THE EVER-EVOLVING LANDSCAPE IN SPORTS COMMUNICATION:
GAINING INSIGHTS FROM COLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

by

ANTHONY ALEXANDER MEIER

B.S., Duquesne University, 2013

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Mass Communications
A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2015

Approved by:

Major Professor
Angela M. Powers

Copyright

ANTHONY MEIER

2015

Abstract

Communication in sports continues to rapidly evolve, redefining roles of not only the fan, but the traditional media and the organization's sports public relations professionals as well. The latter in particular has seen their role grow tremendously as new media continues to break down barriers between fan and organizations, giving them considerable influence on the slew of new content available to fans as well as how traditional media will cover sports in general. Utilizing Bey-Ling Sha's Dimensions of Public Relations, this study employs in-depth interviews with the top communications professionals in the Big 12 to gain further perspective on the roles played by the fans and traditional media in the communication process, while also further gaining insight into the sports PR field.

Keywords: Communication, Sport, Traditional, New, Media,

Dimensions of Public Relations

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

ACC   Atlantic Coast Conference

AD   Athletic Director

BCS   Bowl Championship Series

CoSIDA   College Sports Information Directors of America

EPL   English Premier League

MLB   Major League Baseball

NACDA   National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics

NFL   National Football League

NHL   National Hockey League

PAC-12   Pacific-12 Conference

PGA   Pro Golfers Association

SEC   Southeastern Conference

SID   Sports Information Director

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Ever-evolving communication in sports media continues to redefine the roles of not only the consumer, or the fan, but also the news media professionals and the organizations and institutions driving the industry. The act of watching, following and consuming mediated content in sports is arguably as popular as ever, with new forms of media allowing fans unprecedented access to their favorite teams and athletes. Consequently, almost every aspect of business in sports has skyrocketed to fulfill a seemingly insatiable need of the general public. Hours of available sports programming have ballooned from over 35 thousand to 116 thousand hours-plus in the past decade alone – an exceptional 232 percent increase – while the audiences consume more hours, collectively, than ever before at nearly 33 billion hours this past year (Nielsen, 2014). Mobile media, or new media, gives fans the power to follow sports using multiple platforms simultaneously and become more than just users of mediated content, but participants in the process (Gantz & Lewis, 2014; Gregory, 2010).

Organizations now utilize this "social web" to "break down the barriers between the organization and its consumers by creating more tangible and vibrant relationships" (Boyle & Haynes, 2014, p. 134-35). Barriers broken see traditional media such as the beat writers who cover these organizations and their once-revered "unique access to a ringside seat" wane in both literal access and overall importance (Boyle & Haynes, 2014, p. 139). Such sweeping changes trend toward what Hutchins and Rowe (2012) coined "networked media sport," or, "the movement away from broadcast and print media towards digitized content distributed via networked communications technologies" (p. 47).

With this shift away from the traditional to the new, communication and public relations professionals working for these organizations find themselves at the forefront of the evolution in

media sports communication. Sports information directors, or communication directors, are now tasked with fulfilling the "growing trend in which teams and leagues produce content that is intended to compete with traditional media outlets while also strategically using this content to enhance the department's brand equity" (Whiteside, 2014, p. 143).

Not only has the dynamic with the traditional media, especially at the non-revenue sport-level, changed rapidly, but also the emphasis on producing content for the fan has, arguably, taken on greater emphasis in all aspects of this profession. Carter Henderson, Associate Athletic Director for Public Relations and Communications at the University of Washington (Burns(b), 2014) explains this shift best.

> Gone are the days when the gold standard used to be, if we could encourage you to set gohuskies.com as your home page, then you'll go on the website. Who does that anymore? Now the challenge is how do we deliver great content but make it compelling enough that you want to share it with your network as well. (para. 10)

These changes have been so pronounced, trying to highlight, or at least make some sense of, how this affects what has traditionally been a "behind the curtain" profession has become a more than worthwhile topic to explore as it affects all facets of the sports communication process.

A Look at the Profession

> Communication directors are at the very point of confluence in all that is taking place in college athletics with regard to the communications evolution, and they will continue to be.
> - John Humenik, former Executive Director of the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA) (Stoldt, 2008, p. 463).

Traditionally referred to as collegiate sports information directors [SID], these individuals serve as "PR specialists, event managers, media liaisons, publications and web professionals, and administrators" (Moore, 2013, p. 451). Well-studied, this profession has long been defined by researchers as a demanding position, where the professionals work considerable hours and feel immensely under-appreciated by their respective employers (Whiteside, 2014;

Battenfield, 2013; Moore, 2013; Stoldt, 2013; Stoldt, 2008; Hardin & McClung, 2002). Mired in a "technician" role, Stoldt (2013) outlines an SIDs' five areas of primary responsibility to include: generating positive publicity, providing services to the media, working with coaches and athletes, producing legacy media (such as media guides), and creating content for new and social media.

Recently, however, efforts to re-brand, or re-define, what characterizes a traditional collegiate SID have coincided with this "communications evolution." Voices, such as John Humenik's, highlighted above, have called for SIDs to redefine their role and title to communication directors, "…one title paints the picture of a mechanic and the other an architect. There is simply more value in how others view a person who is an architect and has strategic capacity and interests" (Stoldt, 2008, p. 460). Research has shown the shift already occurring, as in a recent survey involving athletic directors (AD), only 14 percent of the sample identified the phrase sports information in the "top PR officers' titles" (Ruihley and Fall, 2009, p. 406). Schools, such as those of the Big 12, have followed suit as well, with all 10 schools' communication departments forgoing the traditional "sports information" moniker.

The merits of such aggressive campaigns are hardly disagreeable either. Hutchins and Rowe (2009) described the "digital plentitude" within sports media as "one where selected sports organizations and media companies are changing their business practices to embrace the creative and superabundant distribution opportunities afforded by the Internet" (p. 360). This abundance of opportunity to connect with fans in a direct manner, bypassing the traditional media in the process, and to promote and build favorable publicity directly from the organization itself, only adds to the aforementioned responsibilities placed on communications professionals. Directly at

the center of the confluence, the actions of these individuals affect all three areas of the traditional media cycle.

In this case, this study will look to evaluate the professionals at the center of this confluence. Further dissecting not only their role and effect on the traditional media and audience in this communication process, but also the impact the current landscape has on the profession itself.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The Fan/Consumer

Described as "SocialMediaSport," Bowman and Cranmer (2014) discuss the current role of the fan as one in which they "actively seek and create meaningful connections with their favorite athletes, organizations, media, and each other through the co-production and dissemination of a larger sport narrative" (p. 213). No longer consumers of only information provided, fans now access the growth of digital, mobile, and social media to pick and choose what content they prefer from a plethora of options.

More importantly, digital options for the fan have not "cannibalized sports viewership," but rather have complemented it with a vast majority of fans partaking in the act of "second-screening" during the viewing of live events (Gregory, 2010, p. 8; Benigni et al., 2014; Nielsen, 2014). In fact, during the 2013 Bowl Championship Series (BCS) title game alone, well over 25 million viewers generated 4.4 million tweets – surpassing the previous year's total by almost 400 thousand tweets (Nielsen, 2014). Furthermore, as recently as 2012, Nielsen reported 86 percent of tablet owners and 84 percent of smartphone users in the United States accessing a "second screen" while watching sports programming.

With the barriers between fans and organizations lowered, sports teams have taken advantage of the mobile-app culture and, in the process, have taken on the gatekeeper role. Benigni, Porter and Wood (2014) describe the phenomenon as such:

> Rather than tuning into ESPN or another team-agnostic source, the app-enabled college fan is likely to go directly to the school's app to access scores, news and fan-based information, as it is aggregated by that university/team. (p. 231)

Offering a "walled-garden" approach, organizations are not only employing their own apps towards fans but using social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to connect with fans in a direct manner (Boyle & Haynes, 2014).

As fans continue to pursue sports information from the "primary source," in this case the organization is both "simultaneously engaging and credible," certain researchers, such as Whiteside (2014), suggest there is an unavoidable business interest at stake (p. 145). This inherent advantage provides considerable means of "establishing and maintaining a strong brand identity and for encouraging repeat consumption" from a marketing perspective (Wallace, Wilson and Miloch, 2011, p. 423). Recent research appears to support this notion, with adults who have visited NCAA.com being 59 percent more likely to have purchased sporting goods within the last six months (Nielsen, 2014). Publicity and marketing efforts, however, are at least assumed to be different, with the former considered to be more credible to fans compared with the latter (Kwak & Kim, 2013).

The Traditional Media/Journalist

Perhaps most negatively affected, traditional media, or more specifically journalists, has seen its role diminish considerably. Not only are fans, especially younger fans, increasingly choosing to interact and receive information via social media instead of traditional outlets such as newspapers and radios (Broughton, 2012), but also organizations continue to implement communications initiatives appearing to compete directly with traditional media (Burns(a), 2014; Burns(b), 2014; Davis, 2015; Gillespie, 2014; Coombs & Osborne, 2012; Garfield, 2010; Wei, 2015; Wyshynski, 2015).

In this case, new media "circumvents journalists and (potentially) marginalizes them" compared to the traditional model of journalism in which the journalist served as the mediator

between the sports entity and the fan (Bowman & Cranmer, 2014). Additionally, audiences are ushered to their desired destinations by the organizations and its athletes. (Bowman & Cranmer, 2014).

For example, the globally popular English Premier League (EPL) continues to focus on controlling the message within their own walls, with the beat writers suffering and, in turn, creating a wholly new information-dissemination dynamic (Coombs & Osborne, 2012). The researchers carried out a case study involving the local media and found startling revelations such as "[the EPL] strives to control their own message, monetizing information by offering first looks and new information to their audiences" and "rather than finding ways to help reporters best do their job…clubs often treat journalists as second-class citizens" (p. 423; p. 419). While such claims may appear harsh, especially the latter, the inherent conflict of business and producing traditional news content rears its head once again.

Of course, when garnering any substance stateside from the Coombs and Osborne (2012) study, it is prudent to note there are clear differences between sports public relations in the United States and any international sport. Take into consideration the comments made by the National Football League's (NFL) Vice President of Football Communications, Mike Signora, on international sports media relations, where "the entire concept of opening a locker room is foreign to journalists all around the world" (Doherty, 2010). While maybe not as extreme as the cases highlighted in the EPL, American journalists are still struggling to find footing in this new media landscape. For instance, recent interest in Periscope, an app which allows for users to broadcast anything live from their phones and "makes everyone a television network" (Travis, 2015, para. 17), has seen direct consequences for journalists (Abbruzzese, 2015; Wei, 2015; Wyshynski, 2015). Seamlessly linking with Twitter, the app is another avenue for traditional

media and organizations, to reach their respective audiences, though the latter has tightened the

clamps on what is allowed and not allowed to shoot for journalists. The Pro Golfers Association

(PGA) Tour, for one, notably stripped journalist Stephanie Wei's credentials for the entire season

after she shot video of a practice round prior to the WGC-Cadillac Match Play Championship

(Wei, 2015). In another instance, the National Hockey League (NHL) outright banned any media

from using the app, or its lesser-used counterpart, Meerkat, to protect the exclusivity of

broadcasting companies (Wyshynski, 2015). This hold on exclusivity, especially considering the

money put into sports programming, would certainly be considered reasonable. Wei and

Wyshynski though both mentioned the utilization of the app by employees within the respective

organizations.

> The real driving force behind this? Well put it this way: As I write this, Mike
> Babcock of the [head coach of the] Detroit Red Wings is speaking through the
> NHL's official Periscope channel. You do the math. (Wyshynski, 2015, para. 13)

Additionally, Wei described the PGA Tour's usage of Periscope as one where "the way

the rules are now make access a closed shop and monopolizes the space to just the Tour's social

media accounts and website" (para. 32). Both, potentially, an initial reaction to the handling the

immediacy of this new landscape, each case represents a larger problem for leagues, as

highlighted by Abbruzzese (2015):

> Sports leagues find themselves in a strange place. There has never been more
> money or more ways to monetize their content. At the same time, there's also
> been an explosion in the number of sources to access that content, with many of
> them circumventing the usual media partners that leagues have worked with for
> decades. (para. 18)

At the collegiate level, holds on access are less intense, but cases such as the leaked

memo from Athletic Director Dan Radakovich of Clemson University to the athletics

communications staff appear to only add further speculation money and control will continue to

shunt traditional media to the side. Said Radakovich, "It will always be important to treat the media professionally and provide them with the tools to do their jobs. However, it is not the singular focus or even the foremost priority of our department" (Gillespie, 2014, para. 4). Hired by Clemson in 2013, Radakovich doubled down on his previous statements, with the university's athletic communications team releasing an article on the department's site highlighting this shift in perspective – "Telling human interest stories about student-athletes is not necessarily the purview of traditional media; more and more fans are looking to us to be that news source," said Radakovich (Davis, 2015, para. 9).

When shifts in access weren't of note, leagues and teams have also gone to hiring former beat writers to produce content and resorted to breaking major news on league-funded networks (Garfield, 2010).

One instance, described as a "watershed moment" by Tim Franklin, managing editor of Bloomberg News, was Major League Baseball (MLB) broadcasting on its own network, MLB Network, Mark McGwire admitting to using performance-enhancing drugs (Garfield, 2010). This stunning event appeared to symbolize "a paradigm shift from traditional legacy news organizations to new media," but also raised concerns of the future of "honest" journalism in sports communications. Concerns such as will the difficult questions be asked in this current landscape, and will the journalists "going from newspapers to the direct employ of the teams they cover" be able to keep an "arm's-length relationship" in their generating of coverage (Garfield, 2010)? For now the landscape appears to dictate traditional media continuing to "struggle to find viable business models to sustain their work in an era in which news content appears ubiquitous and often free at the point of consumption" (Boyle & Haynes, 2014, p. 139).

The Sports PR Professional

For a profession described to hold low institutional value by its constituents, the present landscape of media sports communication presents a wealth of opportunities to advance the field for sports PR professionals. However, such opportunities come with considerable responsibilities. Wherein along with the traditional duties mentioned before, these individuals are now tasked with releasing information directly competing with traditional media outlets, further highlighting the "journalists in residence" aspect of the profession (Moore, 2013; Grunig & Grunig, 1989).

But the added weight may provide an opportunity for these professionals to discard the "stigma" of symbolizing the role of a technician, where passiveness has led to a potentially over-emphasis on the technical aspects of the job and a diminishment in their administrative influence (Moore, 2013). Moreover, a position of virtual anonymity has generated sentiments of servitude and have led to such feelings as anger, frustration, cynicism, burnout and even turnover (Stoldt, 2013).

> There is no question that 'managing' all of this is much more complicated than it used to be. However, as I indicated, this situation provides us with a meaningful opportunity to become leaders and architects in these discussions instead of mechanics and to thus demonstrate value and the impact of strategic thinking.
> -Humenik (Stoldt, 2008, p. 462)

Sports communications professionals appear to have already begun taking the new responsibilities with open arms. Schools such as University of Southern California and the University of Washington have implemented initiatives to give fans an "all-inclusive" experience. The USC communications department staff has incorporated social media tools like Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to "really get a sense of what is going right now within the USC athletic community" and encouraging fans to visit the school's website for "authentic USC

content," according to Jordan Moore, Director of Social Media at the USC Athletic Department (Burns(a), 2014, para. 3).

In the case of the University of Washington, the communications staff has created unique, statistical-based visuals to share with fans to "showcase top-level accomplishments" (Burns(b), 2014, para. 3). According to UW's Henderson, the staff does not view the initiative, termed "Data Points," as a "revenue generation mechanism," but as an avenue to create unique content for its fans (para. 9). Sentiments within the field itself reflect the initiatives carried out by USC and Washington as well, with 81 percent of respondents, registered members of CoSIDA, in a recent survey carried out by G. Clayton Stoldt (2012) agreeing social media has enhanced the practice of public relations. Furthermore, this opened a low-cost way for organizations to develop relationships with key members of the public.

The spotlight within these cases has shifted to the sports PR professional taking a considerable role in not only disseminating information but also marketing the organization in a beneficial manner. A theme that, if continued, will potentially advance the profession out of the less than ideal sentiments reflected by previous research.

Theoretical Underpinning

Primarily focusing on the motivations of sports PR professionals in the current landscape, the Dimensions of Public Relations presents a suitable theoretical framework for this research endeavor. Defined by Grunig and Hunt (1984), public relations is "the management between an organization and its publics" (Grunig, 1984, p. 6). Striving to characterize how organizations in particular conduct public relations in certain environments, Grunig (1984) drafted four initial models citing historical references: press agentry/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetric, and two-way symmetric. Press agentry's motive was that of propaganda where

publicity was sought "using emotion and unfulfilled promises to get the public's attention" (Waters, 2013; p. 67; Grunig, 1984). The second model, public information, focused rather on dissemination of information where truth was the unifying principle. Grunig described both models as "one-way" forms of communication in which the audience had no role whatsoever in the transmission of information.

The latter two focused on communicating with the public and had considerably different motives. Two-way asymmetry could be likened to "market research" where organizations reached out for public opinion but only for the sole purpose of bettering a previous campaign, whereas two-way symmetry "realigned its focus from message creation and delivery to relationship management" (Waters, 2013, p. 68; Grunig, 1984). Grunig and Grunig (1989) as well as a bevy of future researchers have found validation for all four models but conclude none to be mutually exclusive, instead "tools used by practitioners in any or all of the models" (p. 37).

Rather than employing traditional models deemed too restrictive, Sha (2007), replicating Grunig's earlier research, proposed seven all-inclusive dimensions of public relations. Four scales – two-way communication, symmetrical communication, ethical communication, and conservation – represented the strategic side of public relations, while another three – mediated communication, interpersonal communication, and social activities – focused on the tactical functions (Waters, 2013).

Strategically, two-way communication draws parallels with Grunig's previous two-way symmetry model, where listening to and researching the public's opinion is key. Symmetrical communication attends to the organization's and stakeholders' relationship, ethical communication factors Wan action's effect on the public, and conservation is organization-specific, focusing on certain ideas or principles in regards to a particular agenda. Tactical

dimensions, on the other hand, focus on physical actions, such as mediated communication, which delves into what outlets are used for information dissemination.

Waters (2013) mentions Sha's seven dimensions have yet to be utilized in the realm of sports but have been validated in multiple areas of public relations practices. This research will look to employ Sha's (2007) dimensions, as they "offer a more complex way to measure organizational relationships with stakeholders across space, time, and new media, thus enabling more sophisticated organizational efforts…" (p. 13).

Historically, sports organizations have been considered to partake in one-way communication, driven by the technical, public-information aspects of public relations (Jackowski, 2007; Stoldt, 2013; Waters, 2013; Whiteside, 2014). Organizations Grunig (1984) would fit under the public-information model, where the markets are "large and stable" and present little organizational need for feedback from consumers, and rather choose to disseminate "factual information about products or services" (p. 44). However, as Sha (2007) notes, public relations research has long lauded the two-way symmetrical model of communication as "the ideal model of ethical public relations" (p. 5). And, furthermore, in this current landscape where engagement is key, "public relations theorists argue that facilitating two-way, or dialogic communication is imperative in building an effective relationship with a given public" (Whiteside, 2014, p. 148).

Trends such as the ones highlighted above may already seem to portend a shift in one-way to two-way communication for organizations, although previous research has yet to confirm this notion. Moore and Carlson (2013) in a recent study of college sports PR professionals found sentiments towards two-way communication to be almost non-existent:

> When asked, most [respondents] made no mention of the opportunity to interact with and gather information from audiences. Even when probed, the idea of two-

way communication was ignored. Rather the vast majority of respondents said they utilize social and multimedia tools to "get the word as quickly and efficiently as possible." (p. 123)

Whether or not the above excerpt applies to the entire field of sports PR remains to be seen, but the benefits of moving away from one-way model to a two-way model of communication has been researched to include undeniable benefits. For example, Dittmore, Stoldt, and Greenwell (2008) found fans who participated in organization-run weblogs were more likely to highly identify with their respective team, while Grunig and Grunig (1989) noted public relations practitioners with "knowledge, training, and experience to practice a two-way model of public relations are more likely to be included in the organization's dominant coalition" (p. 60).

The opportunities within new media have certainly opened avenues for the profession to shake the overarching theme of "under-appreciation." Building upon findings by Stoldt, Miller, and Comfort (2001) in their survey of Division I collegiate athletic directors on the field, Ruihley and Fall (2009) were able to show a notable shift in values by administration in the past decade or so. While Stoldt et al. (2001) found ADs identified the communications staff as the most involved in public relations activities; they also rated the staff's ability to perform technical tasks to be higher than those of the managerial variety. Conversely, Ruihley and Fall (2009) found ADs identified these professionals first as "problem-solving facilitators," where "working in a variety of capacities – not only as communication technicians" (p. 408). Still, self-assessments of the profession continue to hover negatively, as exemplified by Stoldt & Vermillion (2013). Surveying members of CoSIDA, only 6.7 percent recognized themselves as serving in primarily managerial tasks. Both Stoldt (2013) and Ruihley and Fall (2009) said further study into this field could help in dissecting the mixed findings so far. Following first Grunig's suggestions and

now Sha's for the public relations field, sports PR professionals could greatly benefit in a changing of mindset from one-way to two-way communication and further distance themselves from the "journalist in residence" portrayal. Thus, finding out if these professionals put an emphasis in two-way communication may prove a positive step in the advancement of this field.

Purpose of Study

Simply stated, sport cannot exist without communication.
(Pederson, 2012, p. 57)

The landscape and the roles are changing in sports communication, a process vital to connecting fans, cultures, communities and entire countries to a unique theater that has remained constant for a countless number of years. The focus of this research endeavor is placed on the public relations professionals, who, behind the curtain of anonymity, have long been tasked with assisting the traditional media and now are responsible for connecting their employers with the fans passionately following them. While past research has pigeonholed the profession in sentiments of low institutional value and mired in a technical role, the opportunities to grow in institutional value and as a field overall have allowed for the possibility to discard such negative connotations.

Questions surrounding not only the profession but also the fans and traditional media involved in the communication process can be further clarified by researching this field. In a profession where "the distinction between marketing and public relations is a blurred one," and concerns exist over business interests clouding traditional news content, questions such as what is the motivation behind generating team-related content will be addressed. For the traditional media, whose role currently sits in a flux, the question of what role the journalists play in this new media landscape will be highlighted. Most importantly, for the professionals of the sports

PR field, how do these individuals view their current status in the realm of sports and what is their view on the future of the sports communication process?

As Pederson (2012) notes, the field of sports communication "is truly wide open for theoretical and pragmatic research on strategic communication in sport" (p. 64). Like sports itself, the communication process within provides two key elements of unpredictability and immediacy (Whannel, 2013). The goal of this research endeavor is to gain more clarity while attempting to further understand how sports PR professionals cope with the demands of immediacy in the communication process.

Research Questions

- What are the motivations of generating content through new media?
  - Do communications offices put emphasis on two-way communication? If so, how?
- What is the value and role of the journalist?
  - How do communications offices value traditional media?
- What are the current views on the field of sports public relations?
  - Has the current landscape benefited or hurt the profession? If so, how?

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Sample

Research in sports communication will be enriched as scholars "'prioritize getting access to sports organizations and to media organizations as they fashion their sport-centered product'" (Pederson, 2012, p. 63; Wenner, 2006, p. 57). With that in mind, a purposive sample was chosen for this research focusing on the associate athletic directors of each communications department in the Big 12 Conference. Totaling 10 respondents, an emphasis was placed on speaking with the highest-standing individuals of the communications staff, as in accordance with Grunig's (1984) suggestions, speaking to "higher-level managers" provides a "broader perspective on the actual behavior of the entire PR department" than those of the technicians (p. 17).

Furthermore, gaining perspective from Big 12 professionals presented a unique perspective in collegiate athletics in regards to the Power 5 Conferences – ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac 12, and SEC. Not only are Big 12 schools under contract for an annual average of $200 million by ESPN and FOX through 2024-25 (Dosh, 2013), they are also one of the few conferences to not have a conference-run network – in this case, disregarding the Longhorn Network. With this set-up, almost all content is created by the athletic department, whether in-house or outsourced remains to be seen, but the perspectives gained were unique to each school rather than in regards to the Big 12 Conference as a whole.

Of the original sample of 10, eight individuals were successfully interviewed. Two departments could not be reached for comment due to both experiencing a transition at the associate AD level during the time of data collection. Due to this subtraction, three respondents were added to the sample to further substantiate the data pool and act as a control for the eight interviewed within the Big 12. Of the three additions, each had current or past experience

working within the conference and also taken on notable roles within CoSIDA – both factors were taken into account when making additions to the original sample.

The sample as a whole consisted of white males, all over the age of 40. Regarding professional background, each respondent had a minimum of at least a decade of experience within the field. Only two of the 11 respondents have held their current position for more than 10 years, while five respondents were hired to their current position within the athletic department in the past five years. Previous experience of the sample showed only two respondents had worked full-time for the institution they're currently employed by. Additionally, each respondent had served in lower-level roles in the collegiate or professional ranks prior to taking on a leadership role. These roles included serving as an assistant sports information director for a variety of sports, as well as, in some cases, earning promotion in-house after being the department's second in command for several years.

Procedure

In-depth interviews took place mid-March through May of 2015, and was the method chosen for data collection as much of the research highlighted in previous sections had focused on gaining knowledge through surveys and content analysis (Clavio, 2011; Cooper & Cooper, 2009; Dittmore, Stoldt, & Greenwell, 2008; Hardin & McClung, 2002; Moore & Carlson, 2013; Stoldt, Miller & Comfort, 2001; Stoldt & Narasimhan, 2005; Stoldt, Noble, Ross, Richardson & Bonsall, 2013; Wallace, Wilson, Miloch, 2011). This form of research has been also a staple method of data collection in qualitative circles (Qu & Dumay, 2011).

The interviews were conducted via Skype calling, recorded and later transcribed by the author – save for the local interview conducted in-person with Kansas State's head of athletics communications. While in-person interviews may appear to be more valuable than the phone

variety, certain research contends phone, or non in-person, interviews can be equally useful as speaking to a respondent in-person (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). More specifically, when accounting for the context of the study, which in this case does not require an "immersion" into the world of the respondents, employing technology to conduct the research, in most cases, renders the technology "transparent" (p. 116). Regarding confidentiality, the participants' identities were withheld due to some of the questions dealing with sensitive material on the sports PR profession. Instead, labels, Organization 1-8, were used for the eight respondents from the Big 12 and the three additional respondents were referenced as Expert 1-3.

The respondents were contacted via e-mail with phone interviews taking place once a date and time were agreed upon. The interviews followed a semi-structured approach; allowing for open-ended questions "best facilitated conversation and created an environment in which the interviewees were 'partners in research'" (Place, 2015). Interviews averaged anywhere from 30 minutes to over an hour.

Carried out in a similar vein to the case study by Coombs & Osborne (2012) and in-depth interviews by Place (2015), the questions asked in this project also narrowed in on core areas of interest. In this case, respondents were questioned on three specific areas – audience, media and the sports PR profession. While interviews did follow a certain core structure, the data collection allowed for a high level of variance, where respondents were given an opportunity to expand upon open-ended questions and carry the conversation. In the cases of curt responses, probe questions such as "Why?", "How?", and asking for specific examples were used to stimulate a higher level of detail from the respondent (Place, 2015).

Each interview opened with the same prompt – "What are the motivations or goals when producing content through new media?" Purposefully broad, this question provided a suitable

introduction into the research for the respondent, while giving the researcher an opportunity to further expand upon audience-centric questions. Topics broached within this section included the respondent's opinion on the merits of one-way communication versus two-way communication, as well the usage of analytics in regards to an audience's social media usage. Respondents were also prompted to consider whom they believed to be their core audience when disseminating information.

Following this portion of questions, respondents were asked to give their opinion on the value placed by their offices with regards to traditional media. Taking cues from the earlier highlighted example of Clemson Athletics (Gillespie, 2014), these questions focused on if there had been any philosophical changes to information flow and access for news professionals. Requesting for specific examples, as well as gaining perspective on the idea of a sports organization operating as its own news outlet further aided gauging the overall gravity of any changes within this once traditional process. If the respondent displayed clear agreement with the idea of organizations taking an emphasis on disseminating its own news, they were then asked to describe how the traditional media would fit into such a model.

The concluding group of questions shifted focus away from the audience and media to the profession of sports communications. Within this section of the interview respondents, were asked to reflect and place some sort of value on their work and whether or not the field had progressed from the less than ideal descriptions illuminated by researchers such as Moore (2013) and Stoldt (2008, 2013). Also highlighted, respondents were prompted to detail whether or not the additions to workload with social media benefited or hurt the profession. Furthermore, opinions on the future of the field, as well as whether or not it had grown from an institutional standpoint were also queued. In most cases, the final question was "What is more valuable to

you, or what do you do more on a day-to-day basis: communicate clearly to a journalist or a fan?" The goal was for the question to serve as a final tie-in to incorporate the three core theme areas, as well as allow for the respondent to make a case for either group or both.

Following the conclusion of the 11 interviews, the data was transcribed and broken down line-by-line to find parallels or themes among the sample's answers. A similar technique was carried out Place (2015) in her data analysis using thematic analysis and immersion/crystallization to parse out relevant data.

Limitations

Much like other forms of qualitative research, the in-depth interview is not without its limitations. Methods have been described to incorrectly assume the participants are moral, truth tellers and to be inherently non-objective. Qu & Dumay (2011) argue the idea of in-depth interviews as "nothing more than casual everyday conversations" is off base with the necessity lying in the researcher taking the time to "develop as much expertise in relevant topic areas as possible" (p. 239). Thus, the success of employing such a method relies heavily on the researcher's dedication to not treating the endeavor as a "trivial enterprise," but an intensive process requiring careful preparation.

There is the issue of studies on new media communication becoming irrelevant almost as soon as they are completed. For instance, Clavio (2011) looked at social media and the college football audience specifically, and concluded, based off survey results from fans, that athletic departments should be wary of investing considerable resources into Twitter. Fast forward only four years later and any college athletic department without an official Twitter account, to say the least, has fallen behind the pack in this new media landscape.

Sample size presented another issue, as speaking with the highest-standing communications professionals in the Big 12 might not present enough data to make any substantial claims. There was also the question of whether or not speaking with the athletic directors, the overall heads of these athletic departments, may be more prudent. While this can be argued, it must be noted in surveys of ADs by Stoldt et a. (2001) and Ruihley and Fall (2009) the professionals within the communications offices were agreed upon almost unanimously as the most involved with the PR activities of each athletic department. Also as mentioned before, in accordance with this study's theoretical underpinning, Grunig (1984) noted speaking with the "managers" of PR staffs as considered to garner the best overall look at the activities and motivations of a communications office. Since this research was exploratory in nature, this method of data collection was expected to create an ideal foundation in producing a further stream of research in the sports communication process.

Chapter 4 - Results

The Audience

Engagement

Gauging the new landscape within sports public relations, respondents agreed almost unanimously when it came to their primary audience, the profession had taken on a wholly changed strategy. With the new addition of social media, Organization 1 described the current climate as "much more encompassing." Since previous sole emphasis on the media had been shifted, or split, into several directions to include fans and various stakeholders, "now everything you do is the big picture."

Organization 2 portrayed the landscape as a "unique crossroads," attributing the label to not only athletics communications but athletics as a whole.

> I think we're at a unique crossroads in our profession and I guess I would say, not even in a communications or media relations perspective, but everybody in athletics as a whole, because I think we're all right now trying to find the best way to one, reach your fans but two, also making sure when we reach them that they're listening and then not only take it a step further that after they listen, hopefully they are invested and are supportive of us.

"Engagement" – a term attributed almost entirely to fans and other various stakeholders for each respondent – was described by all organizations as a clear-cut motivation when prompted about the motivations or goals in producing content through these new media channels. Figure A.1 depicts the overall statements generated by the sample on an organization-by-organization and expert-by-expert basis in regards to engagement, showing relationships between specific organizations based off particular themes fleshed out in the data analysis process.

Figure A.1 Statements by sample on engagement.
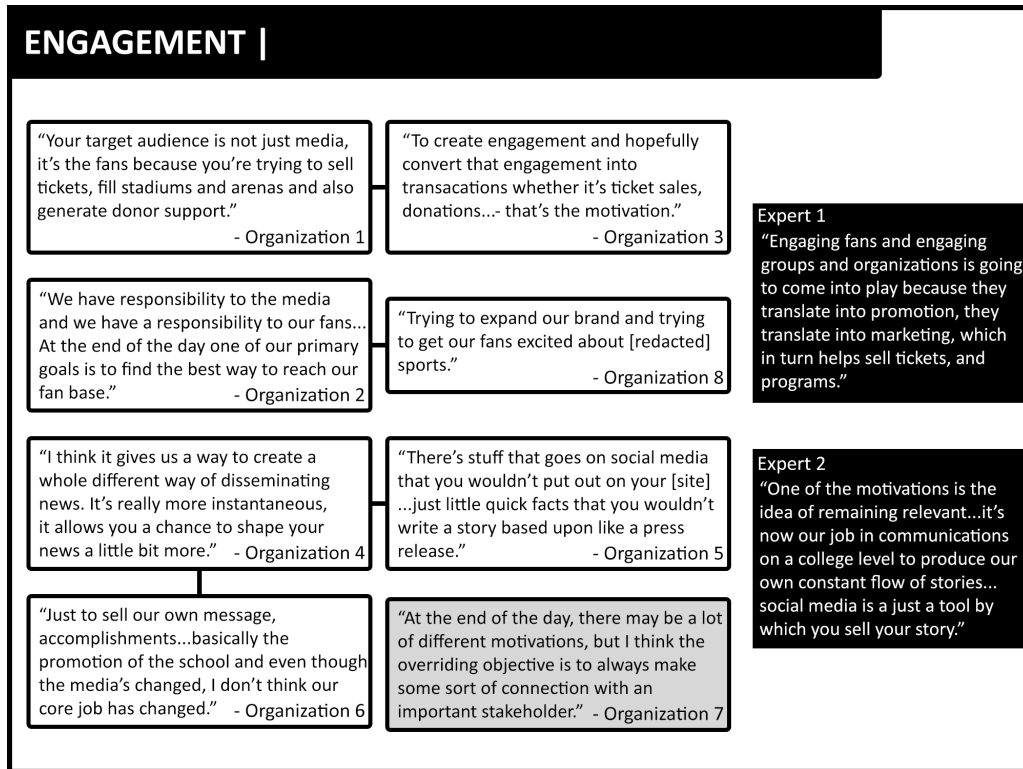
Note. Quotes were condensed and combined for formatting purposes.

These themes took hold in a variety of manners. For some, the revenue-generating aspect afforded in this landscape took precedence. Organization 3 described one example, "The motivation is obviously to create engagement and hopefully convert that engagement into transactions whether it's ticket sales, donations, [redacted] donations, or [club] memberships or merchandise – that's the motivation." Others echoed this sentiment in similar styles, such as Organization 1 describing the profession's motivations lying in "trying to help generate crowds, donor support." Expert 1, meanwhile, noted these examples as an "emerging opportunity" for SIDs. The latter elaborated on his statement as one where athletic directors are looking at the "bottom line" of "selling tickets and generating revenue."

> Engaging fans and engaging groups and organizations through social media are going to come into play because they translate into promotion, they translate into marketing, which in turn helps sell tickets, and programs that aren't winning

games are going to go that route to help generate interest and attention and hopefully to push forward better tickets sales. I think that bottom line comes into play in a lot of decisions, that financial one.

When not viewed through the lense of revenue-generation, respondents described engagement as the advantages of message control by connecting directly with fans and stakeholders via social media. Believing this process has become "a natural shift based on where the fans are going and communicating now," Organization 4 said it is a "big way of getting our information out." The respondent expanded upon the notion by noting this particular type of channel "allows you a chance to shape your news a little bit more the way you want it," such as the use of the infographics and quick bits of information in tweets.

Organization 5, for example, described using these new channels to release "little quick facts that you wouldn't write a story based upon like a press release" otherwise not released on the website. Believed to be a better audience-informing option, several of these professionals mentioned visual-based content and short prose as the best way of disseminating a message.

> I think people have shorter attentions spans than they used to and they don't want to read a lot of text and I think that getting quick information out is very important and that's the beauty of social media – an example of where you would utilize that over something like a feature story.

Expert 2 mentioned how this shift has become a core responsibility for the profession to better inform their audience, describing it as "the idea of remaining relevant." Citing the inkling of fading traditional media, the job of an athletics communications professional is to "create compelling content for our own stories because we can't allow the media anymore to be the sole proprietor of telling the story for us." Similarly, this notion was shared by Organization 4 who stated, "I think our school website and everything, nowadays, are just as vital as media websites."

Furthermore, Organization 8 mentioned the advantages engagement presents in expanding the university's brand, as well as getting fans excited about the university's sports teams.

Even Organization 6, who did not see the audience landscape as rapidly altered, still admitted to social media changing the way a university releases their message and the ease in which they accomplish the task. Perhaps more noteworthy was the respondent's description of the core motivations as "the goal remains in our office to get our message into the mind, hearts and souls of as many people as we can." Believing the "core job" of the profession as not changing to a great extent, the respondent still emphasized selling "our own message, accomplishments, maybe correcting things/correct perceptions, basically the promotion of the school." With motivations easily likened to the examples above, a debate of whether or not the audience landscape has experienced such a transformation is possible. In the situation of Organization 3, social media provided a new element as departments realized they now have the content and "just didn't have the tools to necessarily get it to people" in a direct manner.

For the most part, in an overall sense, respondents' motivations with regards to engagement displayed clear connections in one manner or another. In the case of Organization 7, it summarized the said connection as such:

> I think it probably varies on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes it may be a call to action, so, for example, we got a 100 seats left for Saturday's basketball game – here's the line for tickets. So it may be a call to action more times than not. We try not to necessarily beat folks over the head with the hard sell. Other times it may be more of an infographic, just to kind of give folks some nuts and bolts – for instance, today is game day for [redacted] men's basketball, here's the channel, here's the time and all that sort of thing. Other times it may be where we want the – we want some engagement from them, so [redacted] has just won the Big 12 Player of the Year award, give it a retweet to congratulate [redacted]. And other times, it just may be a bit informational or it may be, 'hey, here's a cool picture of our players at Dr. Seuss Day at a local school.' At the end of the day, there may be a lot of different motivations, but I think the overriding objective is to always

make some sort of connection with an important stakeholder – whether that's a season ticket holder, somebody who's sitting on the fence trying to decide whether to come to an event, or whether it's somebody, who, hey, we just want to make them feel good about being an [redacted] fan that day.

While Organization 3 elaborated engagement as a core motivation which will eventually result in one or more of the examples described above.

Engagement kind of captures a lot of things because with engagement, the more you're engaging, the more people are going to want to engage with you so that's going to increase your numbers. The more you're engaging, the more you're able to tell your story so you're able to educate and inform people. The more you're engaging, the more you're able to generate content that is exclusively yours and people don't have access to. And it's really – I kind of feel that it's becoming that badge of honor so to speak. We're providing the bad Office Space reference: We're providing the flair that people can go and put on their own social media platforms to brag about their allegiance to us. That's kind of what the whole process is, is in by doing that obviously it's spreading our message, our brand and it's really kind of got the, you know, the fans are helping us in delivering that message.

Two-way communication

With such an emphasis on engagement, it was no surprise the respondents also had strong sentiments on two-way communication. Specified in Figure A.2, the respondent's emphasis on accessibility to their audience varied extensively, but all agreed some level of connection with a fan or stakeholder was extremely beneficial.

Figure A.2 Statements by sample on two-way communication.

TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION |

"People want to interact with the brands they're invested in...They want to know that the brand cares about them, the brand knows who they are...that's the expectation." - Organization 7

"There's a subtlety to it...just really, I guess, elevating our fans so to speak... provides them a little positive feedback for what they're doing and why they should engage with us." - Organization 3

"More of a focal point now than ever... you want to know what your fans want... to be able to communicate with them and two-way dialogue [via] social media is a way to do that." - Organization 2

"My first concern would be take care of informative question needs and not so much the cutesy social engagement. Although if we do a little bit of that, fine." - Organization 8

"Our stakeholders, we value their opinion. That's one thing about social media, you can connect with them...the best way to enagage with your donor and fan base... is by being accessible." - Organization 1

"I don't want to say straddling the fence, but that's probably accurate - there's a certain segment of the fan base you definitely know you want to communicate with." - Organization 6

"We do try to help as far as connecting with our fans and booster groups... Nowadays there's four of five more options to do...It's a lot more steps from point A to point B." - Organization 4

"I think the [No. 1] thing you want to do is engage your fans...allow them inside your program...with social media you have instant access...which is the path we're heading down." - Organization 5

Expert 2
"We are public relations and communications professionals that also have a hand in customer service...those that do the two-way communication the best and answer questions and help; they're usually the best..."

Expert 3
"If we can react to either what our fans and alumni are looking for or our institutions by getting feedback on social media platforms, then we want to know that."

Note. Quotes were condensed and combined for formatting purposes.

Branding played a major role for multiple respondents when it came to the utilization of two-way communication. Organization 7 described a university's brand as one where people want to know "the brand" isn't "this obscure thing" they "can't touch." The respondent surmised, rather, the audience wants "to know the brand cares about them…knows who they are. That's the expectation of consumers all across the board." He drew heavily from pertinent business world facts, explaining:

> 'Hey, I'm a person doing laundry, if I got out a tough stain, maybe I'll tweet out a picture to Tide and they'll retweet me.' So I think that if you go to a restaurant and have a great meal and you let them know, you expect they're going to give you a favorite or a retweet. I think that's the expectation not just in the sports world, but in the world of consumer brands in general right now.

For example, the respondent for Organization 3 specifically mentioned his department's shaping of their social media presence as one which "provides a little feedback for what [the

fans] are doing and why they should engage" with their university team. Previously feeling

social media platforms were demanding, "do this, buy this, get this – it was really us telling the

fans what to do." Now, the respondent mentioned "subtle" changes, in which the department

produces unique content to accompany the announcement of ticket sales. However, not all

examples were revenue-centric; to further "elevate" social media audiences, he mention utilizing

a fan's tweet, creating a graphic and posting the edit to social media. This notion of elevating a

fan base was echoed by Organization 2, who stated social media had made two-way

communication more of a "focal point now more than it ever" had been. Emphasizing the

necessity of creating dialogue between fans and stakeholders, the respondent explained, "you

want to know what your fans want and you want to be able to communicate with them and two-

way dialogue through social media is certainly a way to do that." Additionally, Expert 3 noted a

desire to "react" to feedback garnered by fans in regards to his department's social media usage.

Expert 2 was led to view branding opportunities within two-way communication through

the lense of customer service.

> I think two-way communication is becoming more and more apparent in our
> industry because for the longest time this profession, this job, it was just one-way.
> We were standing on a street corner shouting our news, now with technology and
> being social, now there's an engagement factor. Now there's ownership.

The respondent described pushing his staff to become more active on social media

because he wanted them to be viewed as resources fans could reach out to at any time.

> We are public relations and communications professionals that also have a hand
> in customer service. We have to serve the media, we have to serve the fans, serve
> alumni, season-ticket holders, coaches, staff, student-athletes, everyone. We have
> a lot of constituency groups. That's where the two-way communication comes in
> and usually most of the time, those that do the two-way communication the best
> and answer questions and help; they're usually the best customer service.

Other respondents did not mention this emphasis in customer service explicitly, although others agreed the two-way dialogue emphasis had led to a greater amount of responsibility for the professionals involved. For example, Organization 4 stated the added emphasis resulted in not only servicing the media, but "four or five" different outlets in order to reach key stakeholders and booster groups.

He also described the current situation as having "a lot more steps to go to get from point A to point B," where SIDs are tasked with helping not only the media but keeping the website and several social media platforms up-to-date. Organization 5 mentioned while he wanted fans to feel connected to the program, the "instant access" portion made it difficult to keep an actual dialogue with the entire fan base. For the most part, his department erred on the side of answering "a lot of stuff on social media with people because we don't have the time…because you could get 150 of those [questions] a day and you just don't have the time to do it." Instead choosing to aggregate such inquiries and use it as influence for a later post on social media to hopefully inform the audience.

In some cases, two-way communication did not necessarily mean departments opening themselves up to the entire fan base or public, but rather being able to connect directly with particular groups and stakeholders. Organization 1 mentioned, "it's important to hear back from people" and social media allows such a connection, where "the best way to engage with your donor and fan base and generate support and revenue is by being accessible to them." He added the department would obviously not change their way of disseminating information based off one fan's opinion. Similarly, Organization 6 described his department as being not completely settled in how they handle fan interaction.

> I would say that we are – I don't want to say straddling the fence but that's
> probably accurate – there's a certain segment of the fan base you definitely know

you want to communicate with. There is also a group, every school has them and every organization has them, who are not going to be happy no matter what with what you do. And you have to understand that going in and so, we are entering the process of hiring a social media coordinator and we will re-evaluate exactly what we want to do in terms of interaction.

When creating dialogue was not a focus, Organization 8 described two-way communication as serving an informative purpose for fans. His concerns were more rooted in examples such as making sure a fan found the right gate into a sporting event or where tickets could be bought. He stated his "first concern would be take care of informative question needs" because "a lot of people are going to [use a medium like Twitter or Facebook] rather than pick up a phone and call the ticket office or the main athletic department phone line." Not to say the engagement factor in the examples above was not of importance, but the respondent felt "sports fan social media users aren't necessarily looking for a pen pal online to joke around with."

Analytics

Coinciding with strong sentiments on engagement and two-way communication, measuring audiences with some form of analytics appeared to be a key trend. While not uniformly discussed by each respondent, six out of the eight respondents within the Big 12 (minus Organizations 5 and 8) and eight out of the overall 11 mentioned some utilization and merit to analytics. Figure A.3 indicated the most vocal respondents on analytics focused heavily on the idea of return on investment, although certain levels of usage varied mainly due to resource management from a department standpoint.

Figure A.3 Statements by sample on analytics.

ANALYTICS |

"When you work in an industry that's based in qualitivative analytics...never really had the the kind of 'wow' quantitative stuff that upper-admin. would want to see."   - Organization 3

"We certainly do know what our fans are clicking on and...watching. Analytics are a big, big part of it...if you don't know what your fans want then they're not going to come back to you."   - Organization 4

"You know there's always a cost analysis with [analytics]. I think from a nuts and bolts standpoint, I think there's probably a lot of advantages to [outsourcing]."   - Organization 2

"Some of those guys are killing themselves to do all that [social media] stuff instantaneously, I wanted a tangible arrangement to know exactly what we're getting out of that."   - Organization 6

"We have some analytics we receive, tells us some of our our effectiveness - what people are looking at."   - Organization 1

"We do have a social media specialist... just to get a sense of 'what is the pulse of our fans?'...usually can get a pretty good sense of with some of the free analytics..."   - Organization 7

Expert 2
"I think analytics are crucial... I don't want to keep doing something if it doesn't work... The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting to get a different result. Why be insane...?"

Expert 3
"I have members of my staff track that for us, then we'll kind of look at it as a staff...what that helps us do is in future years looking at what we did and seeing if it makes sense to continue along that path or...to alter that a little bit."

Note. Quotes were condensed and combined for formatting purposes.

Analytics provided Organization 3 a concrete method of quantifying and illuminating the importance a communications department has for the athletic department.

> When you work in an industry that's based on qualitative analytics, it's hard to compare with what we're doing in the communications side compared to what the development office is doing because they can translate, 'hey, our staff went out and made this much money this week in donations.' Our marketing office can say, 'hey we saw a 15 percent increase in attendance based on our marketing efforts.' Communications never really had those kind of analytics, the kind of "wow" quantitative stuff that upper-administration would want to see.

Along with hiring a social media person he emphasized importantly as a "numbers geek," Organization 3 mentioned the utilization of calculating ad value within a printed publication, as well as an analytics company for social media-centric data. In calculating ad value, the department looked at if a story appeared on a certain page and for a certain length, his numbers specialist can determine how much the specific area would have cost the university to pay for an

ad and chalk said numbers up as department savings. For social media, the external company

tracked all social media activity by the department so they "can translate what tweets transferred

into ticket revenue...store revenue." Covering both the printed and digital realms, the respondent

said this focus on analytics allowed his department to calculate what campaigns made the

"biggest bang" in regards to interactions and so forth. Outside from revenue-centric motives, the

respondent also made note of an internal emphasis to "track the impressions" garnered via social

media.

> If we send out a tweet, yeah that's great we reached this many people – this many
> people originally saw it – but I want to see how many ripples that goes. So if you
> retweet it, how many of your friends got to see it and so on and so on – that's the
> kind of stuff that's impressive about social media that you can't really get with
> just posting a press release on the web.

In the case of Organization 6, the instantaneous nature of covering a live sporting event

on social media led his employees to producing quality, in-depth content on the spot. Desiring

for a "tangible arrangement" on knowing exactly what they're getting out of this work, the

respondent said the department was "smack dab in the middle" of searching for a company to

help quantify those effects – similar to Organization 3's outsourcing. Though not completely

settled into the utilization of analytics, the respondent likened the importance of these methods to

the subscription numbers of newspapers.

> Is this only good for 300 people who are looking at our photo galleries? If there's
> a newspaper with a 300 subscribers, we're probably not going to credential them.
> So I want to know if all the work we are doing and the extra work and the above
> and beyond call of duty work that we're doing, are we reaping some benefit from
> that?

For Expert 2, he cited the definition of insanity, where "doing the same thing over and

over and over and expecting to get a different result" would make no progress. His usage of

analytics was rooted in not wanting to "keep doing something if it doesn't work." Social media

allowed for plenty of flexibility in this respect, as everyone is still learning. Like Organization 3, there was a clear desire to delve deeper into the analytics offered by platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. Not believing the static number of retweets or favorites to give "you the true success of that post," his department looked at those numbers in an in-depth manner multiple times to flesh out further meaning.

> I think analytics are crucial, I think there are people that aren't using them and they're missing out because the schools that are using them, I guarantee you they're using analytic tools. They want to see what works, they want to see the demographic numbers because that's critical to your success.

Likewise, analytical return on investment for Expert 3 involved members of his staff tracking particular numbers on all of the department's platforms – numbers his staff, as a whole, would evaluate later on. The respondent said analytics in this case allowed for the department to calculate in future years "what [they] did and seeing if it makes sense to continue along that path or whether it makes sense to alter that a little bit."

Organization 4 voiced the benefits of analytics in the sense their department has 18 different sports to monitor and it was crucial knowing what fans are "clicking on and what they're watching" and what resources need to be employed for what content. Detailing how the department employs their "web guy" to collect monthly analytics on "unique views, number of total visitors, what stories and what videos are getting hit the most," the respondent said, "if you don't know what your fans want then they're not going to come back to you."

Organization 1 also mentioned utilization of analytics, although not nearly to the extent as other respondents, describing how analytics help in determining the "effectiveness" of content. Outside of this particular motive, the respondent said gathering statistical data allowed for the department to realize the overwhelming amount of fans, and even recruits, who access their website via a mobile device rather than a desktop or laptop computer. This discovery, in

turn, led to the creation of a responsive site this past year where the web and mobile versions became "all one site."

While differing perspectives on return on investment dominated much of the discussion on analytics for the sample, two organizations brought up a particular issue when considering committing to such a method – lack of resources. Both organizations did mention the utilization of free analytical tools, but, for example, Organization 2 cited not having an "outside group" to "dive a little bit deeper into the details" of which posts are and are not most effective. The respondent was also the only one to note the Big 12 Conference itself potentially looking at an analytical group to benefit the each university.

> You know there's always a cost analysis with [outsourcing]. There's a staff analysis there. Ok, we have all this data, is there a program that combs through it all for you? Do you need somebody to comb through all that? And then what do you do when you have it? There are certainly different parts of it that would have to be explored. I think from a nuts and bolts standpoint I think there are probably a lot of advantages to doing it. I know that's what the conference is looking at right now. Is this something that we can all run into together? And not only utilize from an institutional standpoint, but from a conference perspective?

Organization 7 made of note of the resource management issue as one where there is clearly "some really outstanding technology out there" able to measure analytics, but programs the department did not have the "budget wherewithal" to seriously consider. Like Organization 2, there was still interest collecting data via the free avenues and the respondent, in this case, mentioned even having a full-time social media specialist on board to help analyze data. Although outsourcing may have appeared a fruitful option in the now and the future, both organizations agreed the current free offerings gave a "pretty good sense" of the "pulse of [their] fans."

Blending of Marketing and Communications

Possibly a direct consequence of the respondents taking on a broader view of their respective audiences, another theme to emerge from the interviews was a greater emphasis on collaborating with the marketing department. Noted by Organization 3 as a "the next big thing" where there is a "graying of the lines between marketing and communications," this trend took on multiple forms among the sample.

In some cases, the profession taking on a "dual role" of responsibility represented this graying. Organization 4, the lone respondent to take this position (See: Figure A.4), noted the communications side as putting in equal effort to the marketing staff with regards to helping sell tickets and get the university's word out. Adding, "There's no question there's a dual role," the respondent said much of these efforts were represented by the usage of individual team Twitter and Facebook accounts, where promotions play a key role in reaching audiences.

Figure A.4 Statements by sample on blending of marketing/communications.

BLENDING OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS |

"We do meet a couple times a week just to make sure everyone's on the same page...there's no doubt there's much more of a marketing influence on what we do..." - Organization 6

"To a degree we already are doing both - the marriage of that, all of those areas need to be meshed well or they need to be married...if not, it's just going to muddy your message." - Organization 2

"It's all integrated. It's all for a common cause...You have to work nowadays with your marketing staff... to have a consistent theme and messages." - Organization 1

"There's a need to [collaborate], as far as video content, graphics produced, informative, almost announcement-type text that needs to appear and reach fans." - Organization 8

Expert 3
"We have an annual communications meeting...we added the digital media folks... and this year we're adding the marketing folks to that. Because at our schools, those parties are working together so closely..."

"At the end of the day, we're all marketing and we're all kind of creating the content...I feel like we're all in the same boat doing the same job. So that's an interesting dynamic." - Organization 3

"The line is really blurry and continues to get blurrier...while we all have titles, we're all kind of involved in the same objective, which is to get folks engaged with the brand..." - Organization 7

"We do work together, but their accounts are a little different than how we run our accounts...more on our end sports-related, fact-based...marketing is more the overall branding..." - Organization 5

"Here at [redacted], we work very well with our marketing people, but we're just as much trying to help sell tickets, and we do have a separate staff...there's a dual role." - Organization 4

While Organization 2 did not foresee the two professions ever completely merging due to factors such as resource management, there was to "a certain degree" his department taking on both roles. The respondent said there are plenty of core responsibilities for the communications professional which remain static, such as servicing the media, but also now a need to operate in this landscape with "the same vision and same message that the rest of the [marketing] staff is doing to sell tickets." Without this "marriage" of the two fields, he felt the department's message was almost guaranteed to end up muddied.

Organization 8 also touched briefly on the importance of consistency, where collaboration was necessary in reaching fans via such avenues as "video content," "graphics," and "informative almost-announcement type text" on social media. Organization 6 shared similar sentiments in message consistency, where the sharing of team social media accounts between the two departments represented collaboration. The respondent mentioned the necessity of meeting a couple times a week to keep consistency in message themes throughout both departments. Adding, "there's no doubt that there's much more of a marketing influence on what [communications] do, as opposed to seeing a basic, generic news release."

Elsewhere, multiple respondents highlighted marketing influence on the profession as more or less unifying overall goals within the athletic department. Organization 3 described the case of then head of the Miami Hurricanes communications, marketing, and ticket sales, Chris Freet, who oversaw the physical offices of marketing and communications literally combining. The respondent said such a move was an "interesting concept because at the end of the day we're all marketing and we're all kind of creating content" in reference to the communications side. Noting roles for each when considering who would handle fan experience responsibilities, in-game duties and writing press releases, both departments possessed the overall goal to place all

individuals "in the same boat, doing the same job." Organization 7 echoed this notion, stating the departments having frequent discussions as to what constitutes marketing or communications in a landscape where "the line is really blurry and it continues to even get blurrier." The respondent described how despite individual titles, each person was involved in the same objective of getting the audience to invest, engage and take action for the brand.

> In a perfect world if, for instance, we're having a 'It's Pinkout Night at [redacted] to support Breast Cancer Awareness, Play 4Kay,' then there's definitely going to be an aspect of that the marketing folks are responsible for in terms of procurement, design and distribution of shirts, but then there's almost an element from in terms of making sure 'Hey, we're communicating why you should come to the game,' how this will benefit the charity and what you can do to take further action on your own. Whether that's through setting up interviews during the week leading up, whether how it's presented on the website, how it's presented on social media, it's all very interconnected.

Organization 1 discussed collaboration in a similar vein, making note of examples such as the football and basketball media contacts working "hand-in-hand" with their respective marketing counterparts. The respondent explained the goals are "all integrated. It's all for a common cause. You're all promoting the same cause, it's to support your university." Concurring with Organization 6, he mentioned the importance of consistency in message, where, "you have to work nowadays with your marketing staff to build relationships and have a consistent theme and messages. He provided the example where the media contact handling the baseball Twitter account and the marketing department handling the overall athletics Twitter account must be synchronous anywhere from the message theme to the graphics disseminated.

Outside of those two core themes, the remaining respondents, save for Experts 1 and 2 who did not discuss the topic, had unique takes on communications and marketing collaborating. The respondent for Organization 5 was not as quick to mesh the two professions together, despite admitting to his office writing in a marketing style "to excite a fan base." Noting collaboration in

the overall dissemination process, he described the communications side as taking on a more "sports-related, fact-based information" motive compared to the marketing's focus on "overall branding" for the athletic department. Rather, the main point of emphasis for the graying between the two fields came in the impact on sports outside the normal media-covered football and men's and women's basketball. Drawing on men's golf as an example, he described the landscape as one where the parent of a student-athlete in the sport can now get any information they need through the department website and social media accounts – sources all worked jointly, or in some level of collaboration, by marketing and communications. Compared to the past where the parent's only sources of information, the newspaper or news media, didn't put as much of a priority on the sport in their coverage. The benefits for this respondent have been tremendous for the overall promotion and branding of the university's athletics.

Taking on a broader scope on the impact of blending marketing and communications, Expert 3 noted how the annual convention for communications directors has slowly begun to add individuals outside of the athletics communications realm. He mentioned the inclusion of digital media professionals about "3-4 years ago" and now the inclusion of marketing professionals to the latest convention in June of 2015. Not only showing a clear shift in how these fields are viewed at a national level, he said there was now a recognition "those two parties are working together so closely.".

Other

Outside of the four major themes to the audience, several respondents offered unique perspectives on varying topics.

For one, respondents discussed the importance of social media in relation to the traditional website for an athletic department and whether or not the latter had replaced the

former as the main information channel for their respective audiences. Organization 2 expressed

the importance of social media, stating if this new form of communication had not yet replaced

the website, the two channels were at least "1A and 1B." The respondent noted the necessity in

collegiate communications circles to shift to responsive websites functional on mobile devices,

similar to what Organization 1 had recently carried out. The respondent elaborated upon this

sentiment, stating, "if you don't have a responsive site, no one is going to go to your website

because one, it's not functional for [mobile usage]." He added the audience would in most cases

rather go through a mobile app or social media if a responsive site was not available. Such

developments were not considered positives either by the respondent, as he said the goal of his

department was to make the website the "place that everybody goes to for anything."

Organizations 3 and 7 shared similar observations in the significance of the website but

were not prepared to identify social media as the preeminent channel for information. Both noted

the website as "the hub of information," but rather viewed social media as an accessory or

avenue for the audience. Describing the website as the "living, breathing encyclopedia of

knowledge of the program," Organization 7 likened social media to a carnival barker at the

circus or the appetizer of a main course.

> The social media piece is…I guess one way to look at it is the social media piece
> is kind of the carnival barker saying, 'Hey, look at this, this is pretty interesting,'
> so you're trying to pull folks into that circus tent, which is your website. To
> whether, they take a longer read of a feature on a student-athlete, who they might
> be interested in, or to pull them in to become that in an ideal world, whether it's
> Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, I think the idea is those social media pieces are
> kind of like an appetizer and you're trying to wet their appetite a little to give
> them entrée to something a little bit bigger.

Viewing the relationship through a more historical lense, Organization 3 looked at the

impact of past creations such as live blogs embedded on a department's website during live

events. These blogs provided fans who, unable to see the game or have a place to watch, an

avenue to follow the game, ask questions and receive feedback from a communications professional working the platform at the time. The respondent surmised presently a majority of his audience probably couldn't even remember what the platform was called, stating, "Twitter kind of took that [interaction] to the next level."

Organization 6 viewed social media as the channel to disseminate information, but didn't believe "you can fall in love with it." The respondent noted core stakeholders, the people "who are still writing the biggest checks," and may or may not have been part of the "social media growth," still needing to be reached in a variety of manners. His department, in this respect, made sure to still emphasize both traditional and new forms of media.

To emphasize specific social media platforms, Organizations 1, 4, and 8 briefly touched upon the topic. Organization 8 described its priorities as "a little bit fluid," noting Twitter and Facebook as the top two of emphasis. The respondent added Facebook would probably have the highest numbers according to analytics but also felt Twitter useful in "sharing information and linking places."

Focus on Facebook was also present for both Organization 1 and 4, who noted its usage had not decreased, despite perceptions of the platform as the "old person's social media." Organization 4 put an "equal emphasis" on all platforms, specifically noting the roles of not only aforementioned Facebook, but also the roles Twitter and YouTube play. Describing those three platforms as the "heavy ones" for usage, the respondent said the department's goal was "to stay up on the trends." In addition to managing Facebook and Twitter, Organization 1 discussed the challenges of favoring certain social media channels when there are members of the university's audience who refuse to get on such platforms. For example, the respondent noted individuals still choosing "the old school way" of filling out physical forms to renew season tickets and

bypassing the online option. Such examples, have led to his office continuing to print out season ticket brochures but also, as he mentioned earlier in the department's shift to a responsive website, focusing on the growing mobile crowd.

Lastly, Expert 2 provided insight regarding the methods his department uses to balance the line between organic and planned content when disseminating information on social media. While admitting, "in a perfect world," he would prefer everything produced organically, his department utilizes a "strategy calendar that encompasses our social channels and our website, so there are that we post at certain times." He added the plan allows for buffers for random items such as breaking news, so this information can be shared immediately. More emphatically, the respondent discussed the importance of not "forcing content or feeling compelled to do it." He explained an organization must walk a fine line and not force itself into conversations, "if you don't have something to say, don't say it." Such sentiments were rooted in protecting the brand, where these social channels are "not a megaphone," but a telephone allowing for two-way communication. And while the respondent believed analyzing engagement "crucial" in the department's strategy calendar, he cautioned not falling into a "false sense of security" with numbers which highlight what has been successful, but certainly weren't grounds for repeating or forcing out more of the same content.

The Media

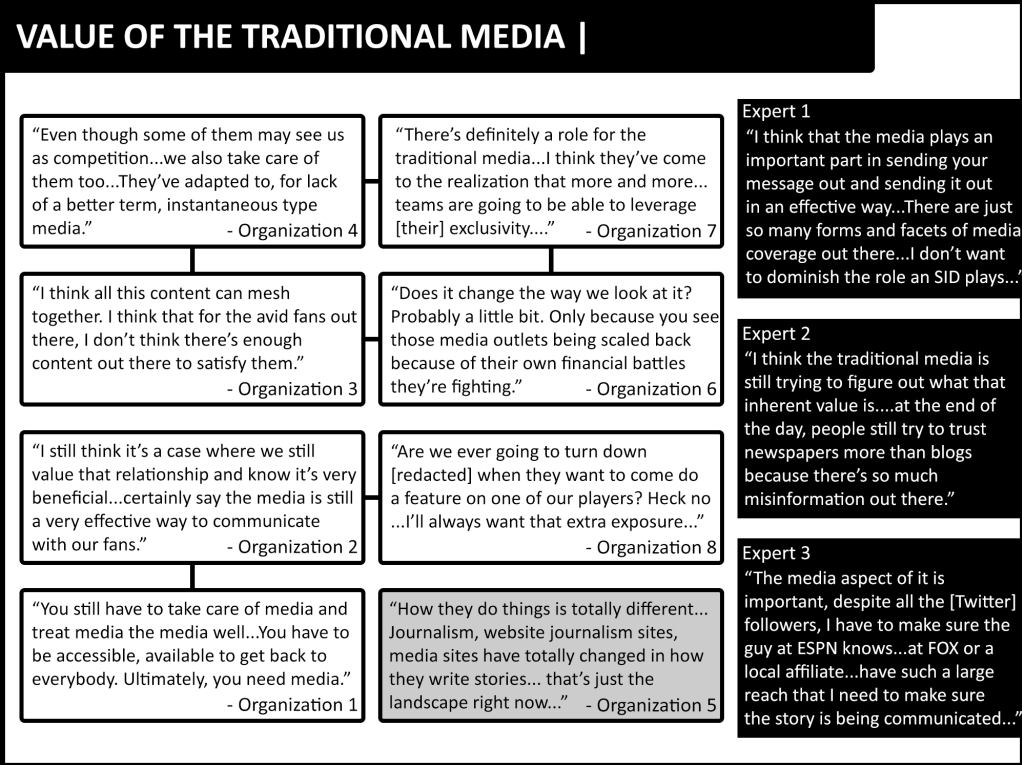### *Value of the Traditional Media*

In stark contrast to the sentiments vetted from the audience section, which saw several consistent themes develop among the sample, the respondents' thoughts on the traditional media varied immensely. When prompted to gauge their value of the traditional media in light of examples within collegiate circles like at Clemson University (Gillespie, 2014), respondents for

the most part agreed the traditional media to continue to hold substantial value within their respective offices. Further uniformity of responses then halted as each organization interpreted this value and their relationship with traditional media in a distinct manner.

For a majority of the organizations, as indicated by Figure A.5, there appeared an agreement in the fact the relationship had changed between the two entities.

Figure A.5 Statements by sample on value of the traditional media.

VALUE OF THE TRADITIONAL MEDIA |

"Even though some of them may see us as competition...we also take care of them too...They've adapted to, for lack of a better term, instantaneous type media." - Organization 4

"There's definitely a role for the traditional media...I think they've come to the realization that more and more... teams are going to be able to leverage [their] exclusivity...." - Organization 7

Expert 1
"I think that the media plays an important part in sending your message out and sending it out in an effective way...There are just so many forms and facets of media coverage out there...I don't want to dominish the role an SID plays..."

"I think all this content can mesh together. I think that for the avid fans out there, I don't think there's enough content out there to satisfy them." - Organization 3

"Does it change the way we look at it? Probably a little bit. Only because you see those media outlets being scaled back because of their own financial battles they're fighting." - Organization 6

Expert 2
"I think the traditional media is still trying to figure out what that inherent value is....at the end of the day, people still try to trust newspapers more than blogs because there's so much misinformation out there."

"I still think it's a case where we still value that relationship and know it's very beneficial...certainly say the media is still a very effective way to communicate with our fans." - Organization 2

"Are we ever going to turn down [redacted] when they want to come do a feature on one of our players? Heck no ...I'll always want that extra exposure..." - Organization 8

Expert 3
"The media aspect of it is important, despite all the [Twitter] followers, I have to make sure the guy at ESPN knows...at FOX or a local affiliate...have such a large reach that I need to make sure the story is being communicated..."

"You still have to take care of media and treat media the media well...You have to be accessible, available to get back to everybody. Ultimately, you need media." - Organization 1

"How they do things is totally different... Journalism, website journalism sites, media sites have totally changed in how they write stories... that's just the landscape right now..." - Organization 5

Note. Quotes were condensed and combined for formatting purposes.

Along with noting it did not stop taking care of beat writers or papers around the state, Organization 4 characterized the traditional media as one having "caught up with the times." The respondent explained those outlets having websites, Twitter accounts, among other channels, and "adapted, for a lack of a better term, to instantaneous type media." While admitting some of those outlets may view the respondent's department as competition, the traditional media tended to be in conjunction all the same with the university's sports, teams and coaches.

If you ask them they would say that the fans have a right to know, they have a right to the other side of the story and that may or may not be true, but it's not like we quit and turned our backs on traditional media. I don't think you can do that. We still work with them, but I'll emphasize again: traditional media knows that they're outdated too so they've changed their way, also.

Organization 7 looked at the current issue in a similar vein, with the respondent discussing past experience in the field. He described being a part of one of the first "content-driven" websites at the professional sports level, where along with rosters and player biographies, "there was some real, regular content." Armed with the information, the respondent recalled deciding how to balance producing internal news while not "alienating the media, the local paper, the folks that had traditionally covered or had that role." He surmised the issue was still prevalent, noting examples such as Twitter where the ease of dissemination has allowed for departments "to go ahead and tweet" instead of calling up a beat writer for an announcement. The respondent added the traditional media was still valued even in such cases. Rather, mostly he believed in this landscape, the media "coming to the realization more and more that teams are going to leverage exclusivity or access" for internal gain in a situation "that's just part of today's reality."

Comprehending the possible shift made by universities resulting in devalued traditional media, Organization 3 noted such trends are dependent on whether or not the local media puts organizations under constant scrutiny. For the respondent, however, there appeared no such sentiments, as his department placed similar value in both the traditional media and its own in-house content. He believed all content could coexist with each other, likening this relationship to the second screen concept in which fans watch television while also using their mobile device. In such cases, he reasoned these potentially competing forms of content were filling the insatiable

need of the die-hard sports fans. Moreover, the respondent said cutting out the media altogether would surely "create some hostilities."

Organization 6 took on a more sympathetic view on traditional media, while also admitting to viewing those outlets in a different manner. According to the respondent, much of this change had occurred because of outlets enduring notable issues, such as the scaling back of certain entities due to financial struggles. He identified these individuals as "the people who do the most homework, the people who are the most thorough, gather the most facts before publishing [content]," and are now "slowing being squeezed out by masses." Along with a focus on in-house content the respondent explained the department, by default, had opened themselves to credentialing new age media, such as bloggers, simply based on the landscape "changing everyday and because of the sheer number of people in the social media world." Even in such cases, the department still judged the overall group of media members based on their work, tending to lean a little bit more in favor of credentialing individuals from traditional circles.

In the cases of three other organizations, the respondents were not as quick to characterize their respective relationships with the traditional media noticeably altered. For Organization 2, like Organization 3, the understanding of the concept of, "why do we want so-and-so paper to break news when we can attract people to your stuff by breaking that news ourselves?" Similarly, the respondent said the media remained "a very effective way to communicate with our fans," and he did not "see [the department] straying away from" utilizing it. He noted the undeniable reach of such outlets to connect and inform fans and season ticket holders, who continue to use "newspapers and radios and televisions, in terms of that media coverage" to keep up with the university's teams. Organization 8 and Expert 3 shared similar thoughts on the traditional media's reach. The former said his department did not place higher

value on producing features in-house compared to a feature request from an influential local publication. Adding the media's value as remaining static within his department, the respondent said such opportunities for "extra exposure" in the example above would always be welcomed "and that's not even talking yet at the national level" for media requests. Expert 3, on the other hand, said even with the large amount of followers on his department's account, there remained considerable value in keeping both national outlets, like ESPN and FOX, and local affiliates informed. He cited the "large reach" such outlets have in communicating the messages of these universities to the masses.

Organization 1 was equally adamant to not downplay the media's value to a university's athletic department, stating, "you still have to take care of the media and treat the media well." Harping on the importance of relationships with the media for sports PR professionals specifically, the respondent cited an ultimate need for their resources. Similar to Organization 4, the respondent noted the traditional media had adapted to ensure its reach remains influential. Even if traditional avenues such as newspapers have diminished in value, he said fans still look to those individual's opinions via Twitter and read their content in digital form.

> I think sometimes people lose track of that because they get caught up with hiding behind a computer or their phone and just tweeting or doing everything electronically. But it still comes down to the premise of our field has not changed. It's people; you got to be terrific with your relationships with media. You got to cultivate them.

Only one organization appeared to take on a definitively negative view on a newly adapted traditional media. Organization 5 described the methods of beat reporters as "totally different," where clear changes in how stories were reported compared to "10-15 years" ago. The respondent mentioned a desire by reporters to garner "clicks" on their stories via social media by creating eye-catching headlines. Citing the financial struggles of the news industry in general, he

lamented the influence advertisers had in this regard, as they presented clear cause for reporters

to go this route. The stories in these cases were deemed "smaller," "shorter," "more condensed,"

bypassing the use of "direct sources," and in some cases involve the reporting of stories created

from "rumors or message boards." All a result of this new media landscape, the respondent saw

no clear solution for such trends, stating departments having "to accept that it's not going to go

away, it's probably even going to get worse." He further elaborated on this notion, providing an

example of such reporters covering a coach's press conference.

> And we've really seen a change in that in how, for example, if a newspaper reporter comes in for a press conference, one quote from a coach that I don't want to say is controversial, but is something, boom that's the prime story the next day. It's not really a story, it's just like a tweet or it's just like a quick little this coach said this and they want you to get on their website and that's how they can prove to sell advertising now. It's a totally different model than the way it was from when I started 20 years ago; it's not even close to being the same.

Such instances aside, the respondent specifically emphasized continuing to value the

media's presence. He emphasized importance to the media's reach, understanding the

university's audience as one still accessing the content produced by the media through various

channels.

Sentiments by Experts 1 and 2 highlighted certain themes brought forth by the

organizations in regards to the traditional media's value. Expert 1 reinforced the value of

relationships with the media and its reach. Describing the "many forms and facets of media

coverage," the respondent still found those outlets "important part" in sending out a department's

message and in an effective way. He reiterated the media's importance remains essential even in

the face of print outlets like newspapers and so forth enduring noticeable change. Emphasizing

the role an SID plays in this process, he said it was not only an SID's role to disseminate

information, but also to "service all media." Encapsulating a wealth of responsibilities in this

respect, Expert 1 stated he did not "want to diminish the role an SID plays in terms of his responsibilities to service all those various outside media sources."

Expert 2, however, touched on a variety of topics, including evaluating the media's value in respect to its current struggles also mentioned briefly by Organizations 5 and 6. Stating the traditional media as still determining what its inherent value might be in this new media landscape, the respondent used examples such as the overall failed implementation of digital paywalls by newspapers – an outlet in particular he believed still in search of finding its place. He took note of the "sensationalism" brought forth by the rise in "citizen bloggers," where "traditional journalists go by the wayside." The respondent still believed the general population to hold more trust in traditional avenues. He also took note the influential segment of the population garnering news via "six, seven, 11 o'clock newscasts on TV" and "by reading the morning's paper" – a point also highlighted by Organization 2 above.

Lending further credence to the notion of traditional media adapting, Expert 2 further described newspapers remaining relevant "because now they can update the news as it occurs." Not held to a print deadline like in the past if a game is ongoing, the eventual story may not make the print edition, but will surely reach audiences via the web. He summarized his overall thoughts on the matter as one where the most pressing matter for traditional avenues like print and television is continuing to try and discover the best way to "monetize" this instantaneous information.

> You can have subscriptions, this, that and the other, but how do you really embrace that and monetize? And I think that's becoming more and more of an issue, as you see traditional journalists go by the wayside for the likes of really citizen bloggers that are working through TMZ and Deadspin and all that. And now everyone with a smartphone makes them a journalist, so I don't know if there's a clear-cut answer to that. I still think everyone is trying to figure it out and I don't know if that time is coming anytime soon where we all find a magic pill to figure it out.

Role of the Traditional Media

In regards to role, clearer cut themes emerged focusing on the media's ability to serve as watchdog over institutions, as well as provide audiences both expert opinion and an objective view.

Organization 6 summarized the watchdog role as remaining a role for these individuals to "keep an eye" on entities, whether they be a "university or a government or a country or a corporation." Pairing this example to his own department, he emphasized these outlets as still holding a "very, very, very important place." The watchdog role in this case came in his own department's evaluation, where the respondent explained paying attention to "certain media in the state" when they had an opinion on the university – positive or negative. Knowing any situation presented both positive and negative responses from the general masses, the opinion of certain media members, who had been covering the university's athletics for years, was always taken into special consideration. Furthermore, the respondent added such media as incredibly important in putting events "in context, historical evaluations of where you are, where you're coming from, where you're going to."

Likewise, Organization 5 noted the media as providing insight on stories not traditionally published directly from an athletic department. The respondent said there remains a need for "people who are going to analyze what's happening in an athletic department and put their opinions on it." He compared the information wants and needs of a die-hard fan versus a casual fan, where the latter will be more inclined to search for the "objective viewpoint" provided more often than not by the media. For example, this objective viewpoint came to the forefront for the respondent in the cases of accepting the media's role remains to report on news considered "not in a positive light" towards the university.

All three experts also shared this sentiment. Expert 2 summarized such situations as, "if you rely on schools [to report the news], all you're going to get are stories about sunshine, puppy dogs, and rainbows." Even in the current landscape, where he described the media no longer being the "sole proprietor" of the telling the university's story, he said there remained a role for "the mainstream media." He added this dynamic serving as "more or less a checks and balances system," where "traditionally, you still need somebody that can give that unbiased vantage point." Keeping a role for the media also substantiated the university as a legitimate source in the respondent's mind. Said Expert 2, "if schools are the only ones disseminating that information, you're going to lose trust. And we want our fans and our readers and our viewership to view us as a trustworthy media source."

Expert 3 noted multiple valuable roles for the traditional media, including the desire of fans "still going to want the opinion of experts." Characterizing this expert opinion as "a third party opinion," and "somewhat unbiased," he cited the large viewership ratings national outlets continue to garner because "people trust their judgment." Even in the case expert opinion may not be as valued, he concluded, "traditional outlets are still very important if not for anything just to keep [organizations] honest" from pushing "a certain agenda." Expert 1 made similar points, describing the traditional media as "always going to be in play in distributing information." He believed the fans would continue to have a constant desire for the full story from these individuals in contrast to a university's content, which "has a strategy", "a philosophy" and "policies."

Outside of the traditional media still holding a role in providing an objective opinion, multiple respondents shared a variety of opinions, noted in Figure A.6.

Figure A.6 Statements by sample on role of the traditional media.

ROLE OF THE TRADITIONAL MEDIA |

"I still think you need people keeping an eye on you, whether you like it or not, I think we need that...I think they're greatvfor putting things in context... historical evaluations..." - Organization 6

"There has to be watch dogs, there has to be people who are going to analyze what's happening in an athletic department...I still feel that's needed in society." - Organization 5

Expert 1
"Always going to be in play in distributing information...as a fan or as someone who has the hunger or thirst for that information, I want to get the full story and a school has a strategy...a philosophy and they have policies."

"There's just so much stuff we can't offer. We can't offer what's going on in recruiting...all that information that the fans really want to know...that neutral... unbiased view..." - Organization 3

"Any entity...outfit...organization that wants to tout itself through social media can never truly...replace the media ...more trust into the objectivity and the neutrality of [media]." - Organization 8

Expert 2
"You still need somebody that can give that unbiased vantage point because if you only rely on the schools, all you're going to get are stories about sunshine, puppy dogs and rainbows. And that's only going to last so far..."

"There's a definite balancing act...still value in recognizing these [broadcasters] are going to be talking to a lot more people than you're going to be able to speak to on your own..." - Organization 7

"A lot of [the media's role] may depend on where you are located...if you're in a very large city...I might have a better chance of drawing people by utilizing our own resources." - Organization 2

Expert 3
"There's a reason all those shows on ESPN get such high ratings, it's because people trust their judgment, and they also want the third party opinion or the somewhat unbiased opinion of some of those folk..."

"I don't think traditional media help you out that much more when it comes to recruiting...We take care of our own backyard and let everything else fall where it may." - Organization 4

"That's unfortunate with media [today] as we've seen. Some people are so consumed in wanting to be first with something to get more retweets and to get their [followers] up." - Organization 1

Note. Quotes were condensed and combined for formatting purposes.

For one, already discussing a strong belief in all forms of content being able to coexist, Organization 2 touched on any possible diminishing role for the media as dependent on surrounding circumstances. The respondent compared desire or need for media coverage between a large and small school, where the latter may not be as inclined to turn down said coverage. Conversely, he noted in areas, like a city, containing multiple sports teams, those universities may feel more comfortable taking on the role of sole proprietor.

Organization 8 had comparably strong feelings on the matter of role, stating "any entity, outfit, organization that wants to tout itself through social media can never truly replace the media." He emphasized his belief, and hope, in the consumer valuing "the objectivity and the neutrality of a media organization," and there remaining a "need for neutral, objective voices to cover the news." Furthermore, the respondent downplayed the scope and validity in the media's

role diminishing in the current landscape. He chalked up "the friction or the angst" felt by the media in "getting marginalized or wedged out by a sports entity" as "a little bit displaced," harping on the "need" for media.

In relation, Organization 7 also touched on the balancing act athletic departments must undergo with the media in today's landscape. The respondent noted "any people in the media who get the most agitated are probably the local beat folks." He cited while the reach of local media remains notable, they might be reaching the same individuals his department reaches on its own. Despite this sentiment, the respondent emphasized the importance of not alienating the media, stating, "great advice in this business that's been around for a long time is don't pick fights with people that buy ink by the barrel." He echoed similar thoughts made by Organization 1, where sports PR professionals must have the ability to "strike that balance between being cooperative and trying to maintain a great relationship [with the media], while at the same time trying to produce content on your own." This importance was attributed to the media in general, though he took note of the role some individuals at the national level especially, where broadcast teams literally have the ability to take games to millions of people. His department in this case still put continued emphasis on producing content and conducting production meetings specifically with these media individuals in mind.

Viewing the importance of an unbiased viewpoint through a different lens, Organization 3 noted how the media's ability to report on both sides affected the content his department decides to publish. He brought up the internal struggle of producing in-house previews and recaps for live events, essentially identical content produced by outside media sources. In most cases, the respondent said analytics showed fans were much more inclined to visit the university

site for information such as photos, highlights and the event's box score. Thus, hinting at such instances as wastes of workflow for his department.

> I look at the Google Analytics and...if [fans are] going to our page, they're going to just look at the box score, they're going to look at the photos, they're going to look at the highlight video – they're not reading the story. Because I think that the fan is smart enough to know that we aren't going to talk about the player that's in the slump, or the injury – get in depth about how someone's performance about coming back from an injury. You don't have that neutral or, I guess, unbiased view when you're putting a recap on your website. We all slant it one-way…

The respondent also mentioned the wealth of information available to fans, including a key area universities cannot explicitly report on. Similar to his earlier thoughts on the second screen concept in regards to the traditional media's value, he said universities "can't offer all that information that the fans really want to know." Such information included recruiting, especially in regards to football, which has continued to become a huge topic of conversation for fans across the country. The respondent mentioned the national scope signing day commands, where outlets such as ESPN continue to increase their high school coverage to satiate the thirst of information on recruiting. He said the value for the universities in this landscape are rooted in "things that [fans] never had access to before" like "showing a little celebration video after a big win in the locker room." However, this reach cannot extend to the recruiting realm, where discussing aspects such as which athletes are "on a campus visit" cannot be made available directly from the universities due to NCAA regulation. This point was also brought up by Expert 3, who noted such disparities as there are too many fans "that want information and a school's going to limit what it wants to put out there."

In contrast, Organization 4 also discussed the value in recruiting information, but did not view traditional media as the direct source for such information. The respondent said traditional outlets, such as newspapers, and TV and radio stations, were virtually of no use in this respect.

Rather, newer digital media types, especially websites functioning for the sole purpose of disseminating recruiting information were responsible for helping the university reaching a "different audience." Adding to this sentiment, Organization 1 described the obsessive value of such information, in some instances, becoming especially troublesome for universities. These digital media outlets inevitably lead to information leaking on, for example, Twitter well in advance of a formal announcement. He cited departments still having to undergo human resources procedures before releasing information on instances like a new coaching hire or the signing of an athlete to a National Letter of Intent. This delay sometimes lead to misinformation, which in the case of the respondent, can place the university in not the most "flattering light." Drawing from a past experience with a former beat writer, whom the respondent described as a "Twitter-holic," he said the writer published information prematurely and was eventually proven incorrect. In this case, the impact of one incorrect tweet in conjunction with the writer's desire for "retweets" to drive up his followers resulted in misshaping the public's perception. The respondent said, immensely similar to the qualms laid out by Organization 5 earlier, "that's the unfortunate thing with media nowadays...some people are so consumed in wanting to be first with something, to get more retweets and to get their follower number up." Organization 4 added input on such instances, fortifying the department's emphasis to present its student-athletes and coaches "in the best way possible." With the power to shape messages in the digital media current landscape and instances like the one highlighted by Organization 1, the respondent viewed the media's role in the process as "we take care of our own backyard and let everything else fall where it may."

Thoughts on Media Access and Information Flow

Perhaps fueled by the changes in information dissemination, the sample produced an interesting array of opinions on the traditional media when it came to access and information flow. For one, the majority of the sample, as denoted in Figure A.7, described what could only be characterized as a "newsroom mentality."

Figure A.7 Statements by sample on access and information flow.
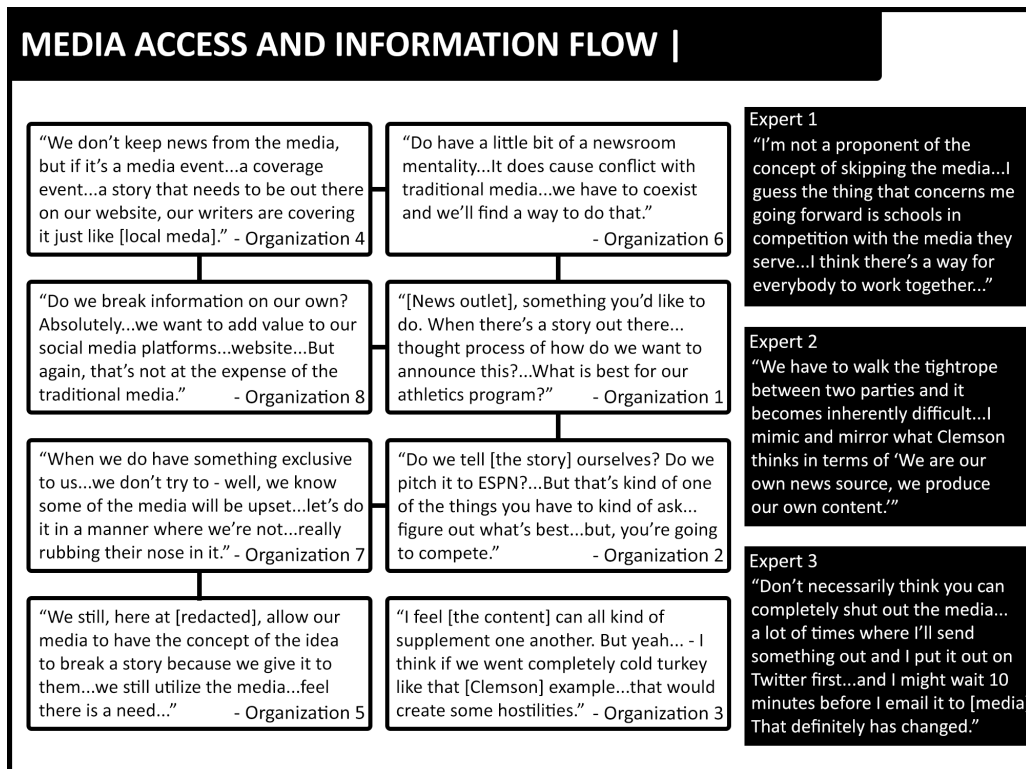
Note. Quotes were condensed and combined for formatting purposes.

Organization 4 laid out this sentiment in potentially the most extreme manner by describing his office, his writers operating to cover events "just like our local beat writers are covering it." The respondent mentioned a definitive focus in covering and presenting news exactly like the media from writing to video production. Discussing the matters almost as a competition, he said, "the way you get more hits and more viewers...is by how good you are...giving [the audience] content that makes them want to come back." Competitive aspects

aside, he made point to reiterate his office not keeping news from the media. Describing such potential restrictions in access as "not professional," the media were not shut out from covering events. Now his department staff covered the events in a similar fashion, hopefully "working harder" and "doing a better job."

Describing his office's internal motivations as "a little bit of a newsroom mentality," the respondent from Organization 6 also admitted to a competitive aspect being present with the media. The respondent noted the production of in-house content, such as blogs, magazines, podcasts and video production for live events, making his department, "in essence," a "media company." With such a mentality, there was natural "conflict" with the traditional saw, although he wasn't sure there would be a resolution. Instead, like several other respondents, he saw an eventual need to "coexist." Said the respondent, "We've always had changes in media, it's always been that way. But we do, very much, have a mindset that we are our own newsroom, but we still are a media service as well."

For Organization 1, the respondent described possessing a newsroom mentality as "something you'd like to do." He added his department evaluated announcing news in "What is best for our athletics program?" Whether this meant disseminating the information through the athletic director or via a team's Twitter account, there remained a need for everyone within the department "to be in sync" prior to such instances.

Organization 8 had strong sentiments on the matter as well, stating its office "absolutely" breaks its own news and "would be foolish not to." There was a vigorous desire noted to be "the first and foremost information" for its fans, but "not at the expense of the traditional media." The respondent saw such trends of taking advantage of the options available to the department currently. He noted sending information to the media "in a timely manner," but also posting

content on the same subject "minutes earlier." Stating, "I don't know why we would not take advantage of that news that we are creating on our own," the respondent did view this trend as exclusive to university athletic departments. In any case, these trends did not diminish the value and role played the media in his office, rather technology had afforded his department the ability to capitalize on its own information. Likewise, Expert 3 admitted to disseminating information in a similar fashion. Citing examples from Twitter, he explained the information posted on the website would then appear on the Twitter account. After an average of 10 minutes, he would then decide to email the announcement to the necessary media.

Expert 2 described the changes in access and information flow as a "seismic shift." At the root cause for the respondent was social media affording instantaneous information to the masses and, consequently, coaches wanting to lessen media access and availability - an issue of immediacy, also shared by Organization 1. Similar to the balancing act comments by Organization 7, he described the issue as "serving two masters," where the communications professional must "walk this tightrope in between two parties and it becomes inherently difficult." Citing the case of Clemson in this regard, he sympathized a lot of what the university employed, "I really mimic and mirror what Clemson thinks in terms of 'We are our own news source and we produce our own content.'"

Conversely, Expert 1 met the newsroom trend and any potential restrictions in media access by organizations with dissatisfaction.

> I'm not a proponent of the concept of skipping the media, and I realize that's an approach that's in play out there with a lot of schools – I don't know if a lot if the right way of saying it, but with some schools. They're looking at ways to get the message out to their fan base and others and they feel like – and they're putting low priority on the media. And that strategy to me has some flaws and is one that bothers me. I'm a bit old school, I guess. I feel like, I think that the media plays an important part in sending your message out and sending it out in an effective way.

Another organization, which chose not to be directly attributed, also highlighted the

pitfalls in potentially boxing out the media in any manner. Sharing concerns almost identical to

the actual examples illuminated by Coombs & Osborne (2012) on the English Premier league,

the respondent said the media will resort to focusing on the "bad stuff" if boxed out by

organizations. He described the situation as "if you take away from [content]...the only stuff

you're leaving is the stuff they can go and dig up." The respondent mentioned no desire in

allowing such restrictions on information flow "because [the media] need to generate their

readership no matter what, and if you're not giving them the [content] they want, they're going

to find something to write about."

In the cases of other organizations, the respondents all noted handling the "balancing act"

in today's landscape in different manners. Organization 5 said it still found value in tipping the

media and allowing them to break stories.

> We don't have set rules, but we still utilize the media. I know a lot of schools
> have almost said, screw them, we're just putting it out on our own and we're not
> going to worry about them. But we still, I think here at [redacted], allow our
> media to have the concept of the ideas to break a story because we give it to them.
> Because we could be where we just cut them out and we're going to put
> everything on our website, we're going to break everything, we're going to do
> this. It's getting to a point where a lot of schools can do that and...I can see where
> a lot of media are getting scared because their value is dropping and their power is
> not what it used to be.

Organization 7 also strategized its own "exclusive information" with the media in mind.

The respondent said his department strived to publish this information "in a manner where we're

not poking a stick in their eye and really rubbing their faces in it." Knowing some of the media

may take offense to not receiving the information initially, the respondent viewed this manner of

handling the information the best course for his department. Like Organization 8, there was not a

set plan, but "a nuanced conversation that you continue to look at every time you put something

out." Hoping there would remain a mutual understanding with the media, these outlets would continue to receive story opportunities from "time to time." Overall, the respondent noted athletic department's handling of media access, as one on a "sliding scale," in which there was not necessarily a right or wrong answer." He cited the example of the University of Florida, which employs two full-time beat writers and cover its teams much like the traditional media - Organization 4 appeared driven in a similar manner. In such cases, these decisions for the respondent were predicated on "what they think is best for them and the resources that they have."
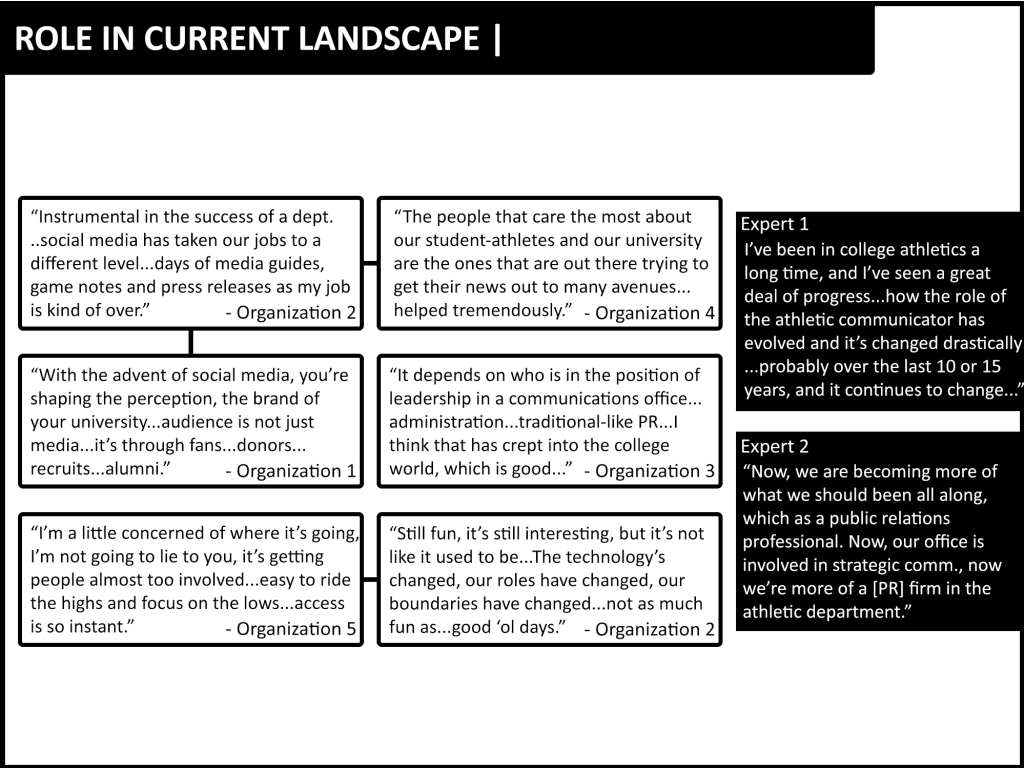
Organizations 2 and 3 both shared similar notions on location in regards to the media's access. The respondent from Organization 2 also, similar to Organization 1, discussed the matter of allowing the media certain features as a decision made on a case-by-case basis. He described deciding whether to tell a human interest story on an interesting background detail of a football player in house, or instead pitch the story to ESPN, the local paper and so forth - "How are we going to best tell it?" Admitting choosing the in-house option would surely result in a natural competition between the department and its media, the respondent said, "it's just going back to knowing who your audience is...and we want to provide them with what they want." And for outlets, both national and local, such dilemmas are "just part of their deal" in covering his department.

The Profession

Role in Current Landscape

Respondents displayed a variety of opinions when evaluating the profession in its present state. As specified in Figure A.8, the assessments were mostly rooted in positive notions as respondents discussed the all-consuming nature the profession has taken in the past five years.

Figure A.8 Statements by sample on profession's current role.

ROLE IN CURRENT LANDSCAPE |

"Instrumental in the success of a dept. ..social media has taken our jobs to a different level...days of media guides, game notes and press releases as my job is kind of over."   - Organization 2

"The people that care the most about our student-athletes and our university are the ones that are out there trying to get their news out to many avenues... helped tremendously."   - Organization 4

Expert 1
I've been in college athletics a long time, and I've seen a great deal of progress...how the role of the athletic communicator has evolved and it's changed drastically ...probably over the last 10 or 15 years, and it continues to change..."

"With the advent of social media, you're shaping the perception, the brand of your university...audience is not just media...it's through fans...donors... recruits...alumni."   - Organization 1

"It depends on who is in the position of leadership in a communications office... administration...traditional-like PR...I think that has crept into the college world, which is good..."   - Organization 3

Expert 2
"Now, we are becoming more of what we should been all along, which as a public relations professional. Now, our office is involved in strategic comm., now we're more of a [PR] firm in the athletic department."

"I'm a little concerned of where it's going, I'm not going to lie to you, it's getting people almost too involved...easy to ride the highs and focus on the lows...access is so instant."   - Organization 5

"Still fun, it's still interesting, but it's not like it used to be...The technology's changed, our roles have changed, our boundaries have changed...not as much fun as...good 'ol days."   - Organization 2

Note. Quotes were condensed and combined for formatting purposes.

Organization 2 described the profession as one still "very instrumental in the success of a department," adding social media has taken the job "to a different level" both internally and externally. The respondent discussed the previously mentioned blending of marketing and communications to the audience, citing it as a prime example of the field taking on a more diverse role within an athletic department. Furthermore, the dichotomy between producing in-house content and allowing the media its own share of content has created a different set of responsibilities when creating and maintaining relationships. Although a difference remains regarding the gravity of change for the profession depending on sport, the respondent also said, "I like to tell people now that the days of media guides, games notes and press release as my job is kind of over." Rather, he viewed the key role in this landscape as maintaining strong lines of communications with both his fans and the media.

Organizations 1 and 4 also relished the opportunities afforded to the profession in the current landscape. The latter respondent stated the landscape as helping "tremendously" in allowing "the people that care most about our student-athletes and our university" to create and disseminate the news. He noted the importance in being able to not rely as heavily on the media, especially in cases of clamoring for coverage on lesser-publicized sports - non-football and basketball, essentially. Reconsidering analytics on readership, he understood the lack in coverage from the media's perspective but noted all of the department's sports as "important." Organization 1, on the other hand, discussed the impact of social media, where now "you're shaping the perception, the brand of your university." As mentioned, the media has become simply another part of the audiences this profession takes into account on a day-to-day grind. In addition, the respondent noted the change in young professionals in the field, describing them as "technologically-advanced."

> When you look at the younger people who come on board now in this field – boy, they're technologically advanced. I'm still kind of old school. There's social media outlets I've never even heard of. People will throw out terms and I'm like, 'I don't even know what that is.' Everybody with their phones – the field's changed. You go out there and capture video now. You have a big a tennis win and your media relations contact is not just putting out an infographic on the win, but he's also capturing video of the coach or the team celebrating and tweeting that out.

Further discussing the all-encompassing aspect of the profession, Organization 3 chose to view these changes in role on a case-by-case basis. The respondent mentioned the importance of "who is in the position of leadership in a communications office," in which the role responsibilities rely on the administration. In any case, he pointed to the profession taking on a "traditional-like PR, especially what you see in PR agencies," mindset. Such changes were noted as welcomed ones, as the profession has begun sourcing the "PR principles and strategies" picked up in experience to "establish a brand, identify what a brand is and protect that brand."

Strongly mirroring the latter sentiments of Organization 3, Expert 2 stated, "Now, we are becoming what we should have been all along, which was a public relations professional." He discussed the impact in communications departments taking part in strategic communications, allowing for the profession to become "more of a public relations firm in the athletic department."

Contrarily, Expert 1 chose to view role on a case-by-case manner, while also taking note of the importance of leadership at the administration level. Drawing from over two decades of experience in the field, he supported the notion of the field changing dramatically. In the same sense, while some responsibilities have shifted and changed in scope, the respondent was also quick to mention how some tasks remain constant and there is a clear difference between working at a Division I school compared to, for example, Division II.

> I've been in college athletics a long time, and I've seen a great deal of progress and I've seen how the role of the athletic communicator has evolved and it's changed drastically. In particular, probably over the last 10 or 15 years, and it continues to change I think. There are some fundamental aspects of what we do that remain consistent and will probably always remain consistent. We are the resource and the source of information for all the various publics that care about the athletic program and it's our responsibility to send the information, to distribute the message, whatever that determines to be. And the other thing that is in play, certainly, is the scope of and size of offices. In some situations, the SID wears many hats. The small college level, you've got people in this role that are administrators, that are coaches and sports information directors. The time that they can devote to this role is limited, and this is a very time-consuming job. At the Division I level, where offices you have multiple people in play, you have specific responsibilities assigned to people.

Taking on a decidedly more lukewarm outlook, both Organizations 5 and 6 illuminated a few negatives aspects in the current landscape.

For the respondent from Organization 5, he described his sentiments as "concerned of where [the profession] is going...it's getting people almost too involved." Expanding upon this notion, the instantaneous access has allowed for audiences to easily ride the highs and "focus on

the lows." The respondent mentioned the satisfying example of producing content after a big win, and seeing said content "blow up" on social media with countless shares, likes and retweets. On the flip side, he discussed the inevitably of having a "bad loss," where some individuals in the audiences act "like it's the end of the world." In such cases, there was a personal factor for the respondent, "The one thing I love about my job is the relationships I build with student-athletes and coaches and you get to know them. You kind of go to battle with them and you're in the trenches with them." Describing the highs and lows of social media in the profession as a "rollercoaster," he deeply disliked seeing said student-athletes and coaches get "trashed" on social media and consequently being "affected by it." He lamented the fact the profession had no control in these situations since "you can't get combative with your fans because then that's a story...you just kind of have to take it."

> Great example, I belong to a fitness club and I lift in the mornings every Tuesday, Thursday and this last week I went in there, I have a class, and the teacher didn't show up. Yeah, I was disappointed because I got up at freaking 4:45 in the morning and drove across town to get there. Yeah, I was down and disappointed. I didn't get on their Facebook account and rip them. But that's accepted and I'm sure some people probably did. I was like, okay, I'm down, disappointed, took me 20 minutes and I went home. Today, it's accepted for you to voice your opinion on everything. It's hard.

Concluding these issues, the respondent surmised, "it's going to be a fine line for a lot of athletic departments." In this case, the "beauty of social media has created a lot of warts and unfortunately I don't think there's an answer and I don't think we can control that side of it."
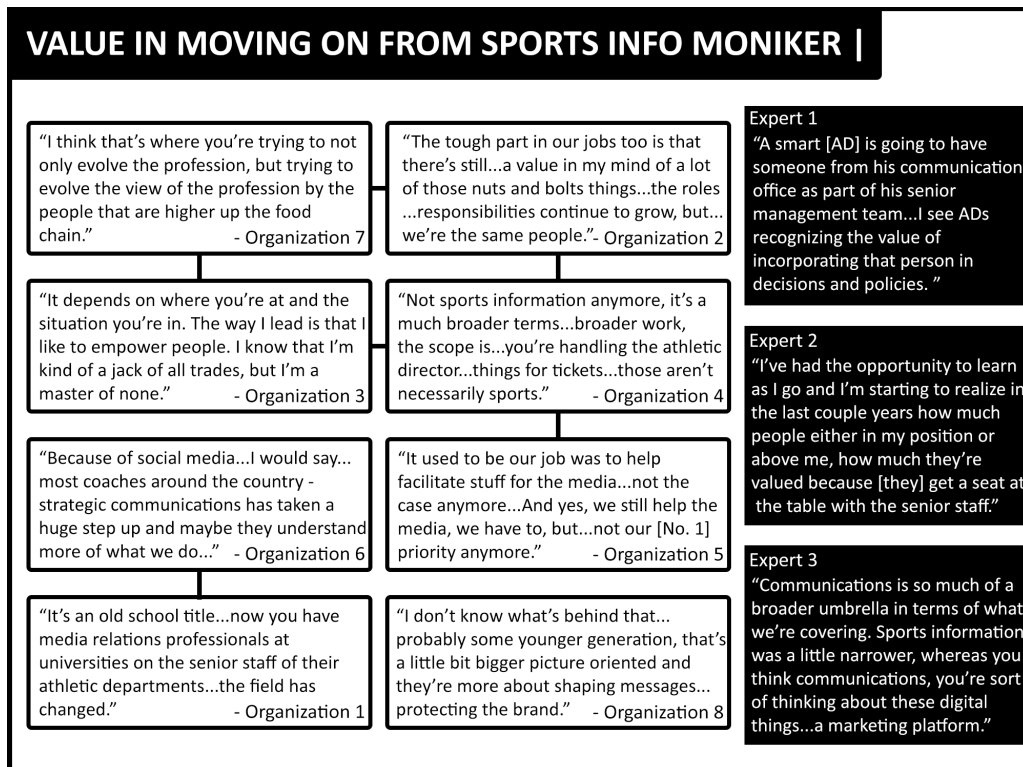
Similarly, but not nearly as in-depth or specific, the respondent from Organization 6 described the profession as "still fun, it's still interesting, but it's not like it used to be." Harkening back to previous experience, he harped on the rather negative shifts in relationships with the media due to technology. There was a clear emphasis in the changing boundaries, where the profession "in the late 80's" was a "100 percent, 90 percent media services operation and the

relationships were different and the relationship the media had with coaches were different." Not placing blame on either group, he accepted the current landscape as a result of "technology's changed, our roles have changed, our boundaries have changed. But it certainly is not as much fun as it was in the good ol' days."

Value in Losing the Sports Information Moniker

Prompted to consider the impact, first implored by former CoSIDA Executive Director, John Humenik (Stoldt, 2008), in moving away from the sports information moniker to labels such as athletics and strategic communications, respondents agreed these changes have led to a different mindset in better defining their value and role in an athletic department. Similarly, any further advancement in the profession was reliant on strong support from the administration - themes all further highlighted in Figure A.9.

Figure A.9 Statements by sample on moving away from sports information.

VALUE IN MOVING ON FROM SPORTS INFO MONIKER |

"I think that's where you're trying to not only evolve the profession, but trying to evolve the view of the profession by the people that are higher up the food chain." - Organization 7

"The tough part in our jobs too is that there's still...a value in my mind of a lot of those nuts and bolts things...the roles ...responsibilities continue to grow, but... we're the same people."- Organization 2

Expert 1
"A smart [AD] is going to have someone from his communications office as part of his senior management team...I see ADs recognizing the value of incorporating that person in decisions and policies. "

"It depends on where you're at and the situation you're in. The way I lead is that I like to empower people. I know that I'm kind of a jack of all trades, but I'm a master of none." - Organization 3

"Not sports information anymore, it's a much broader terms...broader work, the scope is...you're handling the athletic director...things for tickets...those aren't necessarily sports." - Organization 4

Expert 2
"I've had the opportunity to learn as I go and I'm starting to realize in the last couple years how much people either in my position or above me, how much they're valued because [they] get a seat at the table with the senior staff."

"Because of social media...I would say... most coaches around the country - strategic communications has taken a huge step up and maybe they understand more of what we do..." - Organization 6

"It used to be our job was to help facilitate stuff for the media...not the case anymore...And yes, we still help the media, we have to, but...not our [No. 1] priority anymore." - Organization 5

Expert 3
"Communications is so much of a broader umbrella in terms of what we're covering. Sports information was a little narrower, whereas you think communications, you're sort of thinking about these digital things...a marketing platform."

"It's an old school title...now you have media relations professionals at universities on the senior staff of their athletic departments...the field has changed." - Organization 1

"I don't know what's behind that... probably some younger generation, that's a little bit bigger picture oriented and they're more about shaping messages... protecting the brand." - Organization 8

Note. Quotes were condensed and combined for formatting purposes.

Organization 7 described this shift as being referred to as a sports information director (SID) like hearing "nails on the chalkboard." The respondent said there was a clear desire in not only trying to "evolve" the profession, but "evolve the view" of the people "higher up the food chain." To obtain success in these cases, the biggest contribution professionals in today's landscape can make is not only developing these messages but also making sure to reach key groups. While also referring to himself in the vein of a "strategic person developing and implementing messages," the respondent reiterated there was a continued need for "the nuts and bolts" of the profession to get done. This level of "expectation" in both spectrums presented a challenge both reliant on "progressive thinking" by the individual in the position, as well as his or her upper administration. For the most part, the respondent saw these, albeit potentially small, changes in mindset as a shift in the right direction.

Also touching on balancing responsibilities, Organization 2 said, "there's still very much a value in my mind of a lot of those nuts and bolts [aspects]." Responsibilities such as providing a "historical perspective" and "game operations" still remained in realm of necessity - reinforcing the notion of "expectation" first put forth by Organization 7. The respondent described the shifting of titles in the sense of everything within the profession evolving, but the professionals remaining the "same people." And the tasks, especially the traditional ones, becoming "just as important in other ways." Thus, he felt any shifts in value and mindset in relation dependent on factors such as the school, its situation, and its number of staff, resources and so forth.

Organization 3 highlighted this viewing of such shifts in a case-by-case manner. The respondent not only took into account the administrative perspective but said any increase in value rested on the individual's desire to advance. Stating, "I don't think your job description

defines the respect you receive," he placed importance on a professional's ability to develop relationships with his sports coaches and create a PR plan fit to their liking. Social media certainly provided the tools for advancement in this respect, but the individual must learn to get his superiors to understand "if I need help in this area, there's somebody I can lean on."

> A perfect example is I got a garage full of tools and I only know how to use half of them. It's not like my wife is going to look at me and think that I can finish our basement by myself because, yeah, I get these tools for Christmas because I'm at a point where there's not a lot out there and I'm like, 'yeah, I like to dabble with the woodwork stuff a little bit.' But I've only used about half of them. Am I expert in that area? No. Should people respect my woodworking? No, I wouldn't respect because it's not good quality. But if I keep at it and it's something I can develop then yeah, I can maybe do something else when this thing is done, but at this point I wouldn't respect my quality of woodworking. So I think it is more about the individual and how you present it – how you present the tools, knowing how the tools can be fit together to complement each other and all-around encompass what you're trying to do, whatever that campaign is or that message you're trying to deliver for that either coach, that program or that department.

Organization 4's respondent made note of the university's recent shift in the communications department's title to athletics communications because "we're doing so much more than sports." He described how his department has now been tasked with "handling things for the athletic director," "tickets," "the fundraising arm" of the university - aspects which are "a function of the athletic department." Additionally, like Organization 7, there was an emphasis on the profession's value from an administrative perspective relying on the higher ups in charge. The respondent was not as concerned as being referred to as a "strategic communicator," believing all individuals in this profession there "for the same goal." Instead, any administration not putting an emphasis on communications were "making a great mistake in today's world." When this was not emphasized, he predicted "all it's going to take is one crisis of bad publicity" and "you would see great change in the way strategic and/or just regular communications are handled."

In regards to expert opinion, all three were uniform in their stance on making communications an emphasis at the administrative level. Additionally, Expert 1 discussed commissioning an outside company for a recent study on perceptions of both athletic directors and sports PR professionals on their own communications department. In the study, he found athletic directors to have a perceived higher value on the profession than the professionals themselves. Noting this discovery as a positive, there remained a necessity for sports PR professionals to push "to play a greater role in helping guide and shape policy and continue to enhance his role" within an athletic department. Any trends in growing value the respondent did not see as relatively new, citing his role on a senior management team over a decade ago. He did admit if an athletic director were smart, they would have a person in this field able to "provide a voice." And in today's landscape, it is something "growing a bit more" as athletic directors recognize the "value of incorporating" these professionals.

Expert 3 viewed the shifting in titles as an important part of "branding," better helping cover the "broader umbrella" in which the profession operates. He believed the profession gaining more value from a strategic thinking perspective; where there continues to be a greater appreciation in these individual's ability to communicate effectively and efficiently to both the public and media. An example of this greater appreciation came during the conference realignments in 2012. These professionals were tasked with employing strategy and "thinking globally," allowing for an elevation of the profession. The respondent added universities without "a communications staff member as part of [its] senior staff is really making a mistake" because they are best equipped to know what must be communicated to key audiences.

In a similar vein to Organization 3, Expert 2 said "in order for our profession to advance," these professionals must be willing to put a "foot in the door" and earn "a seat at the

table with the senior staff" was "critical." He reiterated the role as one including "fundamental SID tools," but also becoming "a marketing strategist" and "a content strategist." With a change in mindset and title, there was necessity in the willingness of an individual to adapt to the current landscape. From an administrative perspective, adapting was also key, allowing for the professionals to "navigate through certain situations and set up [an] administration for success with the media." He noted personal experience including creating a crisis communications plan for his department, a style guide for social media - "things 10 years ago that wouldn't have happened."

Like the sentiments shared by several respondents on the profession's role having a more encompassing feel to it, Organization 5 equated these shifts in relation to the changing of titles. The respondent made note of how the department went from being referred to as sports information up until the "early 2000s," before switching to media relations and then athletics communication "about five or six years ago." Illuminating the breadth of work in this profession, the department's latest title reflects this position not only works for the media but "for the fans...everybody." Said the respondent, "The media, when I first started, would be 100 percent of what we gear toward and now, it's probably 20-30 percent." He added the other "70 percent of what we do" is engaging fans, while still helping the media, it's not the "number one priority anymore." Similar to previous outlooks on Olympic sports benefitting in this landscape, he noted the "minor sports and schools" being afforded basically "equal treatment" in coverage due to the possibilities afforded by the Internet.

Finding further value in the shift away from sports information, Organizations 1 and 6 shared unique perspectives on the matter. The respondent for Organization 6 found the position's value growing in the eyes of coaches thanks to social media. He discussed the profession taking
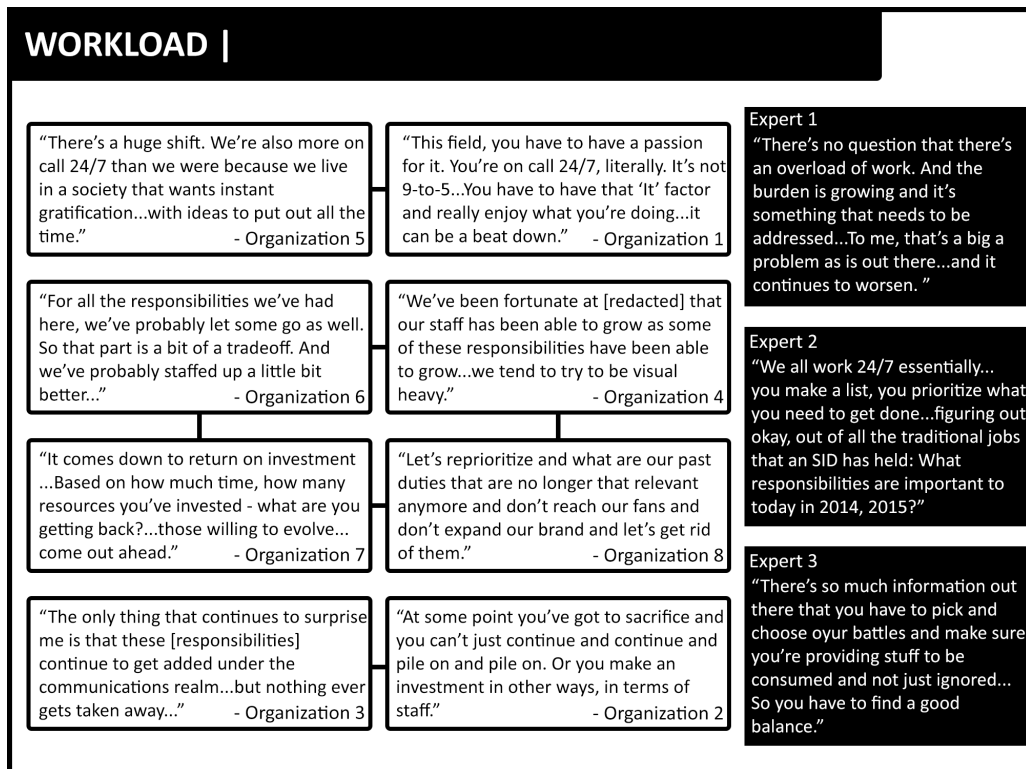
on a "huge role" on recruiting because of platforms like Twitter and Instagram. Further stating most coaches in the country have seen the value of strategic communications rise and "maybe they understand more of what we do and why we do it." Organization 1, on the other hand, applauded the phasing out of sports information, referring to it as "an old school title." The respondent went as far as to mention student-athletes not necessarily knowing who their "SID" is, but knowing their "media relations director." Furthermore, along with providing "a better description of what the profession is," the title change has played a part in gaining respect at a national level. He discussed CoSIDA becoming a part of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics [NACDA] Convention in recent years, stating "there's more respect-level for the field by being a part of NACDA." These changes have allowed professionals to interact with athletic administrators across the board, providing a "welcomed change" and the ability for further growth.

Not buying into any sort of discernible shift was Organization 8, who said, "I don't know what's behind that" and "there are "still PR folks out there who are into crunching numbers and producing lots of notes…" While admitting certain aspects of the profession have changed a little bit, he attributed "the bigger picture oriented" motivations like "protecting the brand" a little bit more to the "younger generation." Any shifts in value from an administrative viewpoint, and as mentioned above multiple times, came on a "case-by-case basis." Instead, such advances rested "in the individual," and administration would be "wise" to "at least tap" into the any potential valuable insight. Only if these individuals had proven valuable at what they do - "see around some corners and kind of sense what's coming, sense what's important for their school, how to protect their brand...shape messages."

Thoughts on Workload

With all the respondents agreeing the field taking on a more encompassing role within athletic departments, there was no surprise strong opinions were voiced about workload. Presented in Figure A.10, these themes were varying in nature, but also unified, for the most part, by one premise: adapting traditional roles into a new landscape chock full of responsibility.

Figure A.10 Statements by sample on workload.

WORKLOAD |

"There's a huge shift. We're also more on call 24/7 than we were because we live in a society that wants instant gratification...with ideas to put out all the time." *- Organization 5*

"This field, you have to have a passion for it. You're on call 24/7, literally. It's not 9-to-5...You have to have that 'It' factor and really enjoy what you're doing...it can be a beat down." *- Organization 1*

"For all the responsibilities we've had here, we've probably let some go as well. So that part is a bit of a tradeoff. And we've probably staffed up a little bit better..." *- Organization 6*

"We've been fortunate at [redacted] that our staff has been able to grow as some of these responsibilities have been able to grow...we tend to try to be visual heavy." *- Organization 4*

"It comes down to return on investment ...Based on how much time, how many resources you've invested - what are you getting back?...those willing to evolve... come out ahead." *- Organization 7*

"Let's reprioritize and what are our past duties that are no longer that relevant anymore and don't reach our fans and don't expand our brand and let's get rid of them." *- Organization 8*

"The only thing that continues to surprise me is that these [responsibilities] continue to get added under the communications realm...but nothing ever gets taken away..." *- Organization 3*

"At some point you've got to sacrifice and you can't just continue and continue and pile on and pile on. Or you make an investment in other ways, in terms of staff." *- Organization 2*

Expert 1
"There's no question that there's an overload of work. And the burden is growing and it's something that needs to be addressed...To me, that's a big a problem as is out there...and it continues to worsen."

Expert 2
"We all work 24/7 essentially... you make a list, you prioritize what you need to get done...figuring out, okay, out of all the traditional jobs that an SID has held: What responsibilities are important to today in 2014, 2015?"

Expert 3
"There's so much information out there that you have to pick and choose oyur battles and make sure you're providing stuff to be consumed and not just ignored... So you have to find a good balance."

Note. Quotes were condensed and combined for formatting purposes.

Some respondents discussed the 24/7 nature the field has undertaken with the addition of new media channels. Organization 5 described a "huge shift" in the workload, "I think we're probably doing a little more, just because we're on call more, having to get information out so quickly now...everyone wants something ASAP." The respondent cited the "24-hour news cycle" and "social media" as the core reason for this change in responsibility. To counteract the added burdens, his office has virtually done away with printing publications - "I'm not going to lie to

you, it's awesome not doing a publication." Instead, the focus has shifted to social media infographics. Taking into account both the audience and potential recruits, the department belief is these groups "would rather see what's happening out there on the web, on your website...social media." And while the added responsibility of creating in-house content for the department website and posting social media graphics at 8 or 9 o'clock is present, he said, "you're doing more work, but you're also taking away a lot of the other responsibilities that you had to do before."

In the case of Organization 1, the respondent also admitted to being "on call 24/7, literally." He used the example of working a baseball game and a rain out or delay occurring. An immediate need would be present to make sure all the fans and media receive the announcement via social media. In another personal example in which "you never know what's going to come up," he described thinking he had a Sunday morning off before eventually being pulled into the office to handle two sports. The immediacy and the growing reliance on mobile devices contributed to such instances, which the respondent said, "it's hard to just turn it off and say you're not going to do any work." With such a demanding schedule, he didn't bemoan this added responsibility as much as note the individuals in this field "have to have a passion for it" to succeed. He discussed the perceived glamour of working sports, with many people not understanding the concept of being available seven days a week, six months out of the year for a sport like football.

> I mean you're going seven days a week. And all of the sudden as you get older, sometimes priorities change...It's understandable, it's not negative. It's just some people realize after a while, 'boy, I need to have a little change in philosophy of how I view my life.'

Expert 2 supported this consuming dilemma to great length, preaching the necessity of having a solid "work/life balance." In his opinion, the profession spent decades concerned with

quantity and volume rather than quality. This included going to great lengths and working countless hours to ensure tasks were completed to perfection. Quoting John Wooden, "Never mistake activity for achievement," the respondent said, "you work 15 hours a day and you got all these things going on, but what do you have to show for it? Stress. No social life. You're miserable." From a department standpoint, he implemented methods for his staff focusing on making lists to prioritize what needs to be accomplished daily. The added responsibility brought on by the current landscape has only made such methods more crucial. Said the respondent - "What responsibilities are important today in 2014, 2015? What do we keep? What do we get rid of?" Almost "downsizing some of those duties," he admitted attempting to stabilize a "normal schedule" as "some days it's possible, some days it's not." When not possible, he encouraged staff, especially ones "in-season" with their sports, to "not come in until noon" on nights they've had to run a home game. If returning from a long road trip, he offered similar solutions, telling staff to "take their time coming in the next day," or if the trip had been over a week "to take a day off...to decompress."

Regarding adaptations within traditional roles, the respondent also mentioned doing away with a considerable amount of "the quantity" when producing print materials. Such cases included reducing game notes and emphasizing visual representation of stats. Perhaps most interesting, he discussed proposing these materials by "using the same content, but using them in three distinctly different areas." The motivation for undergoing this method centered completely on the fact this profession "no longer serving one master," but rather "multiple groups."

> So, the content we curate – let's take our infographic for example when we do our games notes. We do them for football, we do them in infographic format that satisfies the media, satisfies the TV talent for that week and the radio talent. We also send it to our donor database and they love it and it satisfies that group. And then from there we can cut the notes into multiple graphic packages that we can tweet out during the week and that satisfies the fans' appetite for information.

Now our game preview infographic, which is typically on a Thursday, we'll save one or two tidbits that we don't give to the media and we'll save it for Thursday and they'll end up using some information from that. Fans and alumni will share the infographics, the media will share them and then we do the same thing postgame for football. So you have to be creative in how you package things, but also on the flip side, you can send something to the media as one way, but you can recreate it simply in another representation and send that to the fans or alumni. And it's the same information, but it's presented differently and you satisfy multiple groups.

Describing the method above as remaining "a delicate balancing act," the new dynamics have allowed for an "exciting time in this profession." Said the respondent, "I'm interested to see how much further we can go."

Organizations 4 and 6 both mentioned adding in-staff to help counteract the demands of this profession. Similar to Organization 5, the respondent from Organization 6 described the current workload as a trade off, "I would say that for all the responsibilities we've had here, we've probably let some go as well. So that part is a bit of a trade off." Also mentioning his department "staffed up a little bit better" than in years past, the respondent appeared to not have any grave concerns regarding an expanded workload. He discussed working prior to the Internet's rise, where updating the website on the spot after a live event wasn't a priority. In today's age, such responsibilities are a given, lending him to say "you prioritize different." Not to say his views on the workload were positive; the respondent said the emphasis on technology had not "changed the workload dramatically, it was already pretty bad, it made the world more efficient." The "tradeoff" in this case was the ease in having "information at our fingertips" to disseminate in an instant. The respondent from Organization 4, meanwhile, felt his department has been "fortunate" to see the staff grow "as some of these responsibilities have been able to grow."

Unsurprisingly, both organizations, as well as Expert 3, had similar focuses in the adaptation of traditional roles, discussing a greater focus in digital content to print. For Organization 6, this focus meant producing game notes in which "bigger is not always better." The respondent questioned the value in even producing said notes past the sports "that are constantly on radio and constantly on TV." Taking a "visual heavy approach," he reasoned "today's generation just doesn't want to read and read and read gobs and gobs and gobs of copy." The shift away from print materials also extended to media guides, where only print runs for football, men's basketball and women's basketball continued "for the simple reason that [the university] make money off them." Expert 3 lent his office's shift in emphasizing video content and cutting down on writing in general to "the shorter attention span" of the fan. Careful to not downplay traditional roles overall, he concluded, "there's so much information out there that you have to pick and choose your battles and make sure you're providing [content] that's going to be consumed."

Organization 4 also described media guides making "a much smaller press run," and cutting back on game notes "to some extent," especially in the case of Olympic sports. Still, the respondent found value in "live media" for the media present at live events. The goal of these traditional roles was then used to "repurpose" and "package differently." Thus, while the department may "sell more of [its] story with video," there remains a need for a considerable amount of the traditional roles "as long as you still have a live event, live radio, live television."

For Organization 7, handling workload came down to "return on investment" - similar to the thoughts laid out by several respondents in regards to analytics. The respondent felt in order to handle the current surplus of responsibilities, individuals in this field must be "willing to evolve and take an honest evaluation of how you're spending your time and how you're using

your resources." He said the professionals willing to embrace this philosophy would "come out ahead" of those "resistant to change." In a more technical sense, the respondent also discussed lessening print materials. Questions with regards to this shift included focusing time and effort on materials possibly gaining support from a sponsor, or, in other cases, maybe eliminating paper entirely and shifting focus to creating a downloadable app for fans. The respondent included, "Those are the questions that folks are engaged in now is what traditions are worth keeping and which ones should die and be fondly remembered."

Organization 8 had a similar perspective when discussing return on investment with changes in technology. The respondent described looking "for areas that aren't as important anymore and aren't bringing us [return on investment] on our time." He noted reducing the pages in game notes and not making "big, gaudy media guides" because "that same individual now has to do so much more on the social media front and digital front." As for overall workload, there wasn't any lamentation - "I don't know that I can necessarily say that we've increased by 'x' percent and woe is us." Rather, he emphasized a focus in reprioritizing and getting rid of "past duties that are no longer that relevant anymore and don't reach our fans and don't expand our brand."

While a fair share of the respondents did take on a tempered view of the profession's workload, there were also less than positive takes by some. Characterizing the profession as nearing a "tipping point" with regards to these responsibilities, Organizations 2 and 3, as well as Expert 1, all had strong thoughts on the matter.

Quick to note technology helping the profession from an overall standpoint, the respondent from Organization 3 also voiced his "surprise" in these new responsibilities continuing "to fall under the communications realm, but nothing ever gets taken away." He

believed there would become "a tipping point" because "you can't be good at everything, you can't be great at anything."

> Our approach is we try to be good at everything, but we know we can't be great at it because there's too much. And it's maintaining your website, writing spotless, clean copy that's error-free and grammatically correct, media guides without mistakes in them, you know, you cannot be great at everything when there's 50 things now that you're working on a daily basis.

In addition to the wealth of responsibility placed on the profession, the respondent also noted another trend as "probably his biggest concern." Delving into the countless outlets available in social media, he described "constant conversations" his department has in a landscape where "you know you can only cover so much terrain." Using the mobile application Meerkat, he said, "if you get into Meerkat and you spend all your time in Meerkat then what else is going to suffer?" Contemplating this "struggle," the respondent could not determine "if it's good or bad," by explaining "there's a lot of moving parts these days." Organization 2 mirrored these comments, stating, "at some point you've got to sacrifice and you can't just continue and continue to pile on and pile on." Also unable to offer any sort of concrete solution, the respondent did note making "an investment" in terms of staff as a possible stopgap - an instance both Organizations 4 and 6 noted as helping to alleviate some of the burden.

Expert 1 said there was "no question that there's an overload of work. And the burden is growing and it's something that needs to be addressed." He noted the reliance on graduate assistants and students play in offices to "help cover the load" in facilitating statistics and distributing information. Describing the current expectation as "strong and the hours they put in are so significant," the respondent emphasized having to give some things up "at some point." For the time being there remained constant discussions on the topic to search for a solution, although he still believed the profession is "growing in difficulty."

The job is taking on a lot more responsibility in social media and the website and all those types of things – 20 years ago you didn't have websites, you didn't have social media. You reported results to your print and electronic media and that was it. Now you've got to send stuff on Twitter. You've got to send stuff on the website, it's just growing. And technology is improving and you can do some of those things at the same time and I know you can post on Twitter, post on your website – you get all that done and technology is helping. But, the solution's not there yet. To me, that's a big a problem as is out there. The demands on their time and how they're compensated. That issue has been there for a long time and it continues to worsen, in my opinion, instead of getting better.

Future of the Profession

Several respondents offered their take on what the future might hold for the profession. For the most part, the opinions all appeared to unify under the umbrella of the individuals in this field must possess a willingness to adapt. In the case of a few respondents, not only was adapting a pressing need for the future, but also handling some, maybe not so apparent, pitfalls within social media.

While noting there remains value in adapting to an environment "always evolving," Organization 4 also had strong thoughts on the deterioration of credibility thanks to social media. According to the respondent, "as much as social media has helped people in our profession, it's also created a ton of headaches for people in our profession." Such headaches have come thanks to journalists, fans and student-athletes alike, where nobody has "to answer to anybody" and post "wrong information" to platforms like Twitter and Facebook "that can be harmful and hurt people." The cases of student-athletes were brought forth, as students post to social media "when they have no business being on...regardless of what the avenue is." For media, the respondent noted a strong belief in media "not being credible like it used to be" thanks to these outlets. He concluded such issues would continue to be a hurdle "as long as someone does not have to be held accountable or be held credible." Despite this, the respondent did offer perspective on an environment where he did not "believe anything to be steadfast." Furthermore, the individuals in

this field would be wise "to stay on top" of whatever new technology springs forth in the coming years.

Expert 3 had similar qualms with the media's eroding credibility in the current landscape. "The need of some people to be first," as highlighted elsewhere, was viewed as a constant hurdle. Though he did admit to some media still performing their tasks in what the respondent "would consider the right away." In those cases, the professional "can't cover every single outlet that's out there," rather "you have to prioritize" and make sure to monitor the outlets "most important...for your particular institution and conference."

"The biggest challenge" for Organization 8 revolved around the fan and student-athlete interactions on social media, which allowed for less control on the sports PR side to "protect the brand." Compared to maybe 10 years ago, where the "person wearing the PR hat" might have had control in such interactions, these instances were "a little bit problematic." Outside of the potential social media issues, the respondent's take on the importance of adapting in the field was blunt. The respondent included, "if you're the kind of individual that bemoans change and wants to be set in your ways...you're probably not a good fit in today's PR age." He added, "You better be flexible. You better be fluid. You better be forward thinking in order to keep your brand and your school as relevant as possible."

Adding to the adaptability being a must mindset were Organizations 1 and 6, and each also shared unique perspectives on the coming impact of technology. For Organization 6, the respondent described the future of the profession "operating at the whim of technology." Viewing the profession itself as not "that unique in a world" where "technology changes [the landscape for us]," he believed all the "seismic...gigantic changes" the profession has taken as rooted in technology. Organization 1 summarized the importance of being technologically adept,

"you need people that help with digital media, the social media side than you do with just the pure, old SID." Adding, "you really have to be aware of what is out there right now," the respondent mentioned his office was in the process of adding a "digital media position" for this very reason.

For Expert 2, an unwillingness to adapt "is what is going to severely hinder the growth" of the field. He emphasized a need for professionals in this field "to be proactive about [changes in technology], not reactive. If people "sit on" such changes, "reluctantly" adopting them after a few years, "that's what's going to cause [the field] to be behind the times and archaic." Like Organization 3, the respondent described the wealth of "nifty tools" available to the field and the necessity in trying "to be ahead of that curve."

> You hear so much about people in this industry that we're not respected. We're not going to be as a profession until we learn to step up and get with the times and be accepting of change and not against it.

While several of the respondents were strongly linked in their descriptions of the field needing to have a will to adapt, the respondent from Organization 7 drew from experience in the professional ranks. Highlighted in Figure A.11, the respondent offered his take on why the field has been and might continue to be reticent to such change.

Figure A.11 Statements by sample on future of the profession.

FUTURE OF THE PROFESSION |

"It's always evolving and you just got to keep an ear open and an eye open to see what's going on...as much[social media] has helped, it has damaged things out there." - Organization 4

"If you're the kind of individual that bemoans change...probably not a good fit in today's PR age...biggest challenge for us is...fans can interactly directly with student-athletes." - Organization 8

Expert 2
"You hear so much about people in this industry that we're not respected. We're not going to be as a profession until we learn to step up and get with the times and be accepting of change and not against it. "

"I think nowadays you need people that help with digital media, the social media side...You can be old school sometimes, but you really have to be aware of what is out there right now." - Organization 1

"Technology changes it for us. And then we adapt. We've gone through...gigantic changes since probably 2008...I just think we're all sort of operating at the whim of technology." - Organization 6

Expert 3
"The need of some people to be first, as opposed to being right, I think is a major negative in terms of dealing with the media...it's important to prioritize stuff and cover what needs to be the most important thing for your [dept.]."

"There's a sense that even collegiate sports is big business, you're dealing with student-athletes and there's probably a hesitation and reluctance to over commercializing..." - Organization 7

Note. Quotes were condensed and combined for formatting purposes.

The respondent viewed the difficulties in growing responsibilities, the blending of marketing and communications and so forth as questions "not just in the world of sports, but in communications in general." Applying the garage full of nifty tools "have maybe been adapted a little bit more quickly" in "the professional world" or "the Fortune 500 world" because those are "all very for-profit organizations." Concluded the respondent, "even though collegiate sports is big business, you're dealing with student-athletes and there's probably a hesitation and reluctance to over-commercializing."

Chapter 5 - Discussion

The Audience

> Are PR offices using new communication technology solely to inform their
> publics, or are they taking advantage of the interactive capabilities of social media
> and multimedia to gain a better understanding of their audience's wants and
> needs?
> (Moore & Carlson, 2013, p. 111)

Taking into consideration the responses posited by both the organizations and experts
alike, an emphasis in understanding their audience seemed readily apparent. For one,
organizations all shared a strong focus on engagement with various fans and stakeholders when
discussing the motivations carried out in creating content through new media. This focus was
shared throughout, as the merits in engaging in two-way communication and utilizing analytics
to measure their respective audiences were also points of emphasis. Described by Organization 1
as a landscape where content produced within organizations previously targeted media and now
is "also towards fans," such themes presented a clear shift in priority for the sports PR
professional. Furthermore, these themes supported research carried out discussing the changed
methods of communication for organizations in wake of options in the new media landscape
(Benigni et al., 2014; Bowman & Cranmer, 2014; Boyle & Haynes, 2014; Hutchins & Rowe,
2009; Stoldt et al., 2013; Stoldt & Vermillion, 2013; Wallace et al., 2011; Whiteside, 2014).

Interestingly, perspectives varied in terms of what these themes meant to each
respondent. Engagement presented advantages in revenue-generation or message control for
some organizations, while two-way communication played a major role in branding and/or
creating dialogue with an important group. In such cases of variances, the idea brought forth by
Boyle and Haynes (2014) of organizations "understanding the flows of communication between
different stakeholders" being a challenge was apparent. More importantly was the clear link

between the three core variables in relation to the audience. Organization 7's discussion of the "case-by-case" basis in which engagement was motivated encapsulated almost all of the motivations brought forth by the sample - revenue-generation, message control, inform, etc. Moreover, respondents shared Bowman and Cranmer's (2014) take on social media for sports organizations, where the goal was not so much to break down the fourth wall for the fan but bring the audience backstage. Organization 3 highlighted this aspect best, detailing engagement's many benefits including "providing the flair" for audiences and producing content "that is exclusively yours."

On two-way communication, the question posed by Moore and Carlson in their 2013 study applies even more so, as the motivation for such a query came thanks to their research drawing no notable responses on the topic of two-way communication. Instead, "when probed," "the vast majority of respondents" utilized the media to get "word out as quickly and efficiently as possible" with "no mention of opportunity to interact with and gather information from audiences" (p. 123). Compare such a finding with the sentiments laid out presently by nearly the entire sample on not only two-way communication, but also engagement and analytics and a clearer understanding into the motivations may be beginning to take hold. Terms such as "branding," "engaging," and "accessible" by the respondents in regards to their respective departments all called attention to a desire to connect and "gain a better understanding of their audience's wants and needs" (Moore & Carlson, p. 111). While agreement in utilizing two-way communication, which Organization 2 noted as "more of a focal point than ever," varied from "the best way to engage with your donors or fan base," to making the brand not into "this obscure thing" fans cannot touch (Stoldt et al., 2013). Sentiments all mirroring research conducted by Wallace et al. (2011) and Whiteside (2014), where the former characterized these

examples as entities communicating "unfiltered messages directly to the consumers." Adding the

ability "provides a significant and strategic means of establishing and maintaining a strong brand

identity and for encouraging repeat consumption" (p. 423).

Furthermore, analytical usage being noted by a majority of the respondents was a positive

trend for the field, especially when taking into account the study by Stoldt & Vermillion on the

profession (2013).

> Less than half of the respondents indicated that their organizations were
> measuring social-media communication about their organizations or conducting
> research regarding the impact of their organization's social-media activity. (p.
> 198).

While analytical usage was not mentioned uniformly throughout the organizational sample, the

two organizations not included had clear investment in both engagement and two-way

communication. Organization 5, for instance, discussed the advantages in informing the audience

in unique ways like infographics and desiring two-way communication with particular audiences.

Meanwhile, Organization 8 discussed the ability to "expand the brand" and also inform

stakeholders. In either case, the desire to connect with an audience could have easily translated to

the sentiments discussed by the remaining respondents on analytics. The desire for many of the

respondents were rooted in phrases such as "if you don't know what your fans want then they're

not going to come back to you" or wanting "a tangible arrangement to know exactly what we're

getting out of" a certain social media campaign. In addition, the inclination of organizations like

Organization 3 and Expert 2, to find deeper meaning in this data underlined what can only note

as a positive trend to a critical approach in social media.

> Critical approaches to social networked media have noted that the 'bean counting'
> approach to 'followers' on the microblog Twitter or 'likes' of videos uploaded on
> YouTube only tells the partial story of engagement with such media texts, and
> indeed, tells us absolutely nothing about the qualitative experience" of clicking
> through various texts on a bevy of different devices.

Perhaps more important to note, while sentiments were fleshed out regarding analytics, there appeared just as much of a room for growth. Instances such as Organizations 2 and 7, where lack of resources factored into full investment, exemplified where this particular area of focus could potentially change in the coming years. Both respondents stated finding a great deal of value in using analytical tools and a desire to hopefully employ them at a later date. Then in the case of Organization 1, while the respondent's attitude towards analytics may have appeared lukewarm, the department's shift to a responsive website for mobile users was important to note. Not only was there a clear cause and effect present in regards to audience feedback; the respondent displayed an understanding of the department's audience as it currently stands. An audience, which Gantz & Lewis (2014) described turning to and valuing "communication technology that is by their side, affordable, and easy to use" (p. 23). Moreover, the shift to a responsive site, as well as, the hiring of digital media specialists mentioned by other respondents further reinforces research contending sports organizations have changed their business practices to coincide with the current communication climate (Benigni, et al., 2014; Boyle & Haynes, 2014; Hutchins & Rowe, 2009; Whiteside, 2014).

A compelling side effect from this emphasis in audience engagement was the noted blending, or collaboration, of communications with marketing. Described by respondents in such terms as both departments sharing the same "goal," "objective" in "creating a consistent theme and message," this manifestation provided insight into a developing new aspect of the sports PR profession.

> Media relations have therefore always formed an aspect of sport, and the historical connection between sport, communications and what we now understand as the promotional industries of advertising, marketing, and public relations is both long and strongly interlocked with the operational activities of

most sports administrators, teams, leagues, governing bodies, athletes and associated agencies. (Boyles & Haynes, 2014, p. 133)

Not only did this trend further substantiate research highlighting shifts in business practices but the necessity for collaboration outlined by the organizational respondents was clearly linked to the emphasis in audience relationships. Similar to the sentiments on analytics, there appeared no set conclusion for which this trend would end. The mentioning of weekly meetings between the two departments and continued discussions of what constitutes marketing or communications all pointed to these departments continuing to adapt and evolve. Burns(a) (2014) characterized, "most sports teams, athletic departments and brands are continuously re-evaluating their online presence and how they can better cater to fans and consumers" (para. 1).

Although the trends highlighted above did seem to support the concerns by Whiteside (2014) of the primary source of information, in this case the organizations, having an unavoidable business interest at stake, the sample left plenty of room for interpretation. Revenue-generation was a stated interest by some organizations, but moreover respondents were clearly utilizing the advantages afforded by social outlets. Aspects such as creating a dialogue with fans, providing customer service in the way of two-way communication pointed to a desire to "break down barriers" with fans, highlighted in previous research (Bowman & Cranmer, 2014; Boyle & Haynes, 2014; Hutchins & Rowe, 2009; Whiteside, 2014).

Additionally, and perhaps not surprisingly, expert opinion on these themes pointed to the communications personnel potentially having different motives compared to an athletic director. Expert 1's discussion of engagement encapsulated this difference neatly when he highlighted these lowered barriers as an "emerging opportunity" for sports PR professionals in regards to organizational value. The side effects of helping to generate interest in selling tickets and so forth were more characterized as an inevitable side effect delving into these channels - summarized by

both Organization 3 and 7. Further support of this notion was brought forth by both Experts 2 and 3 in their thoughts on analytics, where return on investment was cited, but more so in hopes of creating of an effective social media plan both beneficial to their respective departments and audiences - "seeing if it makes sense to continue along that path" (Expert 3).

Organizational and expert opinion alike thus presented a bevy of potential themes in regards to audience-centric motivations. Engagement allowing for message control and branding opportunities, among others, supported research where "multimedia technologies" have allowed for "controlled information, thus ensuring the story is told in the desired manner" (Moore & Carlson, 2013, p. 112). Meanwhile, the graying line between marketing and communications reinforced notions of "sport public relations" as "both a marketing and management tool to be integrated throughout the operations and processes of a sport organization" (p. 57). By the same token, the respondents presenting varying levels of commitment relevant to themes such as analytics and two-way communication, where an emphasis in engaging stakeholders and fans was evident throughout. All accentuating the landscape of "networked media sport," where "the language of sport" is "one of branding, sponsorship, event management, public relations, and television rights, and most crucially in the context of digital communications, social media activity" (Moore & Carlson, 2013, p. 135; Hutchins & Rowe, 2012).

The Media

Whereas a unifying theme underlined much of the variance prevalent for respondents in regards to audience, the same could not be said for their sentiments on traditional media. While certainly not as dire as the examples laid out by Coombs and Osborne (2012) in their case study on local beat writers in the English Premier League, there was a definitive shift in role and value for these outlets. Finding themselves on different ends of the spectrum, organizations described

the value of the traditional media in multiple facets, ranging from an "invaluable" reach to a value affected by the over-saturation of information in today's landscape.

Reinforcing the notion of organizations becoming the "gatekeepers" of information in this landscape were respondents describing their offices as having a "newsroom mentality." Extremely important to note, these trends certainly supported a communication landscape surmising, "social media circumvents journalists and (potentially) marginalizes them" (Bowman & Cranmer, 2014, p. 221). Cases like Organization 4, in which the respondent explicitly mentioned "if it's a coverage event," his writers were going to cover an event just like "the local beat writers are covering it," or Organization 6, where the respondent admitted to a newsroom mindset creating natural conflict with the traditional media, each highlighted this inherent competition. A competition which Whiteside (2014) described as the sports PR professionals being placed "at the forefront" of a "growing trend" where content produced competes directly with traditional media outlets, while also "strategically" enhancing "the department's brand equity" (p. 143).

Although these sentiments on access and information flow seemed to present a bleak picture for the traditional media, variance within the three core themes (value, role and access flow) made the overall picture all the more cloudy. For instance, both Organizations 4 and 6 discussed role and value of the traditional media in manners directly in contrast to what a newsroom mentality might entail. The respondent from Organization 6 was seemingly sympathetic in his assessment of the traditional media's value, where a change in relationship appeared more of a factor of technology and financial struggles in the print industry. Shared elsewhere by Organizations 1 and 4, these notions on changed or adapted traditional media supported the ideas brought forth by "digitization" (Boyle & Haynes, 2014). Sentiments, in this

case, described the impact for journalism "at a range of levels," where "organizations are struggling to find viable business models to sustain their work in an era in which news contents appear ubiquitous and often free at the point of consumption" (p. 139). Leading to these noted struggles even Expert 2 reinforced this notion, characterizing the media's value as one it is still trying to figure out.

Continuing within positive sentiments, Organization 4 noted these outlets having recognized they are outdated, and are working to acclimate themselves to the current climate. Respondents brought up examples such as the role of journalists in social media and newspapers as more increased utilizing the web as a focus for content dissemination. Furthermore, Organization 7 highlighted this landscape by noting there remains a clear role for media, although these outlets are coming to the realization organizations "are going to leverage" its "exclusivity or access." Overall sentiments in this case certainly mirrored some of the issues brought forth in Coombs and Osborne's (2012) research. Journalists in the study lamented aspects such as clubs striving to control the message or break information on its own terms. Either was notably apparent for multiple organizations, such as the respondent for Organization 8, who despite not buying into relationships changing with the media, said his department "absolutely" breaks its own news and "would be foolish not." Another instance of seemingly contrasting opinions by the same organization only supported the relationship between an organization and its media as still evolving.

Regarding any semblance of consistency among respondents, such cases were certainly found in the media's role as serving "watchdog," or providing an "objective" voice or "expert opinion." Similar to the opinions on reach, aspects such as recruiting information and providing the other side of the story were clearly still looked upon as necessary in today's landscape. These

roles were also accepted, where definitive responses ranged on the matter from "fans will always trust the objectivity and neutrality of the media" to fans still desiring "the opinions of experts." Each case echoed the research collected by Stoldt et al. (2013) in a survey of sports PR professionals. The study found, among several other themes, these professionals agreed traditional media still holding higher expectations of credibility among the general public compared to social channels.

Also in line with Stoldt et al. (2013), some respondents from the study shared agreement in these multiple forms of content complimenting each other. Cases such as Organization 2 and 3, which each voiced an explicit belief in the content produced by organizations and content by news outlets being able to coexist. Even Organization 6, which mentioned a newsroom mentality, discussed the eventual necessity for these forms of content to compliment each other. In addition, there were no hints of the views taken from Coombs & Osborne (2012) such as journalists facing treatment like "second-class citizens" and being left "out in the cold" by organizations for information (p. 419). Organizations, such as 5 and 7, discussed continuing to provide the media with "tips" for stories or when publishing its own breaking news, to not rub their beat writer's "face in it." For Organization 2, the discussion of where to publish a story or which outlet to utilize continued to present itself on a case-by-case basis, exemplifying the difficulty the profession manages in handling disseminating information with the presence of groups outside of the media. While such instances might be considered trivial, maintaining a positive relationship with the traditional media still appeared to take emphasis amongst the sample.

Of course, outliers were present such as the respondent from Organization 4 mirroring the views by Clemson's Dan Radakovich (Davis, 2015; Gillespie, 2014). Both noted an importance

in helping the media, but like Radakovich's statement of the media (Gillespie, 2014, para. 3), where these outlets were "not the singular focus or even foremost priority of the department," the respondent noted a priority first, and perhaps obviously, in university and athletics and how "that plays out with [journalists], the media and stuff, I really can't answer."

Expert opinion also further characterized this wide array of split amongst the respondents on the value of traditional media. On one side, Expert 1's strong dissatisfaction with any sort of boxing out of the media highlighted the traditional roles within the profession. His value in the media's reach and expert opinion were met in sharp contrast to the sentiments of Expert 2. The respondent empathized with the methods carried out by Clemson, citing the climate of media based on location - a point also shared by multiple respondents. In any case, there was still emphasis in the watchdog role, despite having his department partake in a newsroom mentality. Possibly the embodiment of the sample in general, Expert 3 touched on sentiments in regards to value, role and access flow covering both ends of the spectrum. The respondent found value in the media's reach and discussed the importance of an expert opinion when mentioning releasing news on the department's platforms in advance of disseminating the information to the media.

Consequently, trying to find any true themes or definitive opinions within this sample proved extremely difficult when looking at the value of the traditional media. The relationship has clearly changed as evidenced by the presence of a newsroom mentality, as well as taking advantage of breaking news on social channels. Even so, importance in relationships was still stressed by the sample, as was the emphasis in organizations not having abandoned the media. The most extreme cases of a lessened focus in these traditional channels, such as Organizations 4 and 6, even had variance lending to the relationship having changed but not altered to the dire straits illuminated by previous research (Bowman & Cranmer, 2014; Coombs & Osborne, 2012;

Whiteside, 2014). Furthermore, the hopeful opinion on these forms of content eventually

coexisting contributes to the positive sentiments carried out by previous research (Stoldt et al.,

2013), where "the unpredictable nature of sports" will continue to drive "consumer demand"

(Dittmore & Fields, 2013, p. 229). Like the respondent from Organization 7, who characterized

the breadth of these issues on a "sliding scale," deduced, "there is no right or wrong way" to

handle the media, but clearly the value and role remain "one of things [sports PR professionals]

are trying to grapple with."

The Profession

With such changes in regards to not only the audience but the value of the media within

the profession, the themes developed from the sample on the profession itself came as no

surprise. Respondents outlined a field in which their roles had become "all-encompassing" and

the workload in the digital age had a strong "24/7" aspect to it, in which the professionals were

always in demand. Such sentiments certainly coincided with the research conducted by Butler et

al. (2013), in which "immediacy" served as the guiding "factor" in a "digital-first" age (p. 221).

The further struggle and challenge to incorporate these new media roles within the profession's

traditional ones was a topic of discussion among several respondents. In almost all cases, these

challenges were viewed in a positive light, wherein the opportunity to grow as a profession was

readily apparent.

Gauging the overall value of these findings proved rather simple, as respondents

appeared to show no sentiments to the low morale or under-appreciation which marked so much

of the previous research on the profession (Whiteside, 2014; Battenfield, 2013; Moore, 2013;

Stoldt, 2013; Stoldt, 2008; Stoldt & Vermillion, 2013; Hardin & McClung, 2002). Descriptors

like the field being taken to "a new level" and having a major role in "shaping the brand" of the

university exemplified much of the sample when it came to noting the current landscape.

Additionally, when taking into account the efforts of rebranding away from the sports

information moniker by individuals like John Humenik (Stoldt, 2008), respondents echoed the

sentiments laid out by the former executive director of CoSIDA. Summarized by his desire to

move the profession into an "architect" role, thoughts like those of the respondent from

Organization 4 hinted at the possibility of this rebranding effort taking hold. The respondent

discussed how the role has become "so much more than sports," where taking on the athletics

communications moniker has helped in highlighting these shifts in responsibility and importance.

Meanwhile, noted emphasis in digital material by essentially every organization, as well as a

willingness to part from antiquated roles showed a clear inclination to adapt with the current

landscape - a necessity propagated by past research (Moore, 2013; Stoldt, 2008; Stoldt, 2013).

> Understanding multiple publics and stakeholders, and how to manage their
> expectations, attitudes and behavior is now a full-time occupation of
> communications managers. (Boyles & Haynes, 2014, p. 137)

Perhaps the most consistently cited change within the profession was the handling of

"multiple groups" – a theme static throughout all three facets of this study, in which the effect on

the profession was indisputable. Described by Organization 2 in handling not only the media but

fans, coaches, student-athletes, administrators among others, the profession has taken on a

certainly more demanding light, but allowed for room for growth. Instances like Expert 2's

developing of social media strategies, a crisis communications plan, and having a "seat at the

table with senior staff" further illuminate cases in which the profession has advanced out of the

doldrums of "playing relatively limited roles within their organization" (Stoldt et al., 2001, p.

164).

Such instances were not representative of the field of the whole, as multiple organizations described these advancements heavily dependent on location and the individuals heading upper administration. Though agreeing administrations would be foolish to not take advantage of the expertise of these professionals, respondents like Organization 8's and Expert 1 were wary of buying into any discernible change in the profession's value and role in today's landscape. Both noted there remained plenty of individuals still involved in the "stats guy" role, especially when considering the differences from the Division I to Division II level. Value being dependent from an administration was particularly interesting, as the perception was cited by seven of the 11 respondents in total. A major theme throughout past research (Ruihley & Fall, 2009; Stoldt, 2013; Stoldt et al., 2001), such sentiments certainly lent to previous concerns this topic may have been better explored by speaking to the athletic directors instead of the top communications officials. Regardless, respondents like Organization 8's and Organization 3's were not quick to give credit to the current landscape being solely responsible for advancing the profession. The latter's harping on the individual's ability to foster relationships highlighted both another challenge within the field, as well as the importance traditional roles still served in the field.

Furthermore, other concerns raised by the sample regarding the social media climate gave reason for pause. Organization 5's lamenting of social media cheapening credibility among individuals in their interactions with student-athletes and coaches was eye-opening and continues to be a prevalent issue in today's new media landscape. An issue most recently brought to light by such cases as those University of Alabama's football player Cade Foster and University of Wisconsin basketball play Sam Dekker struggling on their respective national stages (Christensen, 2015). For both athletes, poor performances earned a shocking amount of vitriol including tweets stating, "Drink bleach" and "I'm gonna kill you and your family" (Christensen,

2015, para. 5/6). Difficulties in this respect have also lent to a lack of control on the professional's behalf, as these outlets are a PR nightmare waiting to happen – according to a survey by Fieldhouse Media of college student-athletes, "73 percent have a Twitter account, and 94 percent are on Facebook" (Christensen, 2015, para. 33).

Organization 6 had similar lamentations as the respondent discussed the changed relationships due to technology, directly affecting groups like the media and coaches, where access has become a rare commodity. The tradeoff in this case was the respondent's description of believing the coaching staff of his respective sports garnering a better understanding of his role overall. Benefits of being involved in the recruiting and social media aspects have afforded such cases, like for Clemson and its football SID.

> While personal relationships with prospects and visits to our campus are still the more important part of recruiting, communication through social media and other outlets is very important, said Dabo Swinney, head football coach. We have added many staff members to this area and they have done a great job getting prospects to see information about our school and the football program. It certainly has an impact, especially the graphics and the videos that are produced.

Moreover, the noted benefits to "smaller sports" - excluding football, basketball and so forth- by respondents throughout the research definitely lends credence to the position's growing importance and not just at the upper management levels. While the individuals handling these sports may fit the journalist in residence descriptor more so than the sample interviewed, the advantages afforded by social channels has added depth to the role. Such cases mirror ones like the University of Washington's Associate Athletic Director for Public Relations and Communications, Carter Henderson, employing infographic-centric social media plans. In being able to highlight all of the university's sports, Henderson said, "fans become more informed about the key pieces of information with the lesser known sports program" (Burns(b), 2014,

para. 5). Additionally, Clemson's shift in vision, where "the department makes it a priority to generate publicity for Olympic sports" has paid dividends in this regard (Davis, 2015, para. 15).

Not all trends within the sample were as positive; one of the major concerns of previous research in the field remains unresolved. While some samples did cite technology affording an ease of use and the letting go of some traditional roles resulting in a "trade off" of sorts, cases similar to the one above highlighted the growing workload among sports PR professionals. Though not overwhelmingly negative, there were not exactly any positive sentiments to note, either. Organization 6 described his department adding staff to allay the growing responsibilities and trading off responsibilities but was also sure to describe the workload as "already pretty bad." Adding to the importance of this unresolved issue, some of the most vocal advocates of the changed landscape in general - Organizations 2 and 3, as well as Expert 2 - all had strong concerns over workload. While low morale was not apparent from these respondents, the questions on workload certainly supported the unease illuminated in past research (Battenfield, 2013; Hardin and McClung, 2002; Stoldt, 2008; Stoldt, 2013; Stoldt et al., 2001; Whiteside, 2014). While individuals like Humenik view this scope of responsibility in the lense of opportunity, real concerns are certainly apparent. The mentioning of an inevitable "tipping point" and the piling "on and on and on" of duties to the profession still leaves the questions for individuals across the board of when will this issue be truly addressed. For now respondents are left to search for solutions in a situation they can neither characterize as "good or bad," or as Expert 1 states the issue as having "been there for a long time and it continues to worsen, in my opinion, instead of get better."

While workload still remains an issue for a profession attempting to purge itself of less than ideal past views, the theme of adapting and moving forward was clearly prevalent among

the sample. As mentioned before, simple changes within handling traditional roles and a willingness to embrace the new in the new media landscape provides an exceptionally positive outlook for the profession. Research contending the field as slow to adapt (Clavio, 2011) and still mired in a passive role with no morale (Moore, 2013) can, at least for this study, be diminished. Thoughts on the future of the profession by the sample further illuminated this positive trend moving forward as the respondents who discussed the topic all noted a necessity in taking on a proactive role. Sentiments shared by past research, in which pushing for a larger role and keeping pace with the times were looked upon as key contributors to a successful future for the profession (Jackowski, 2007; Stoldt, 2008; Stoldt, 2013).

Theoretical Impact

Theoretically, Bey-Ling Sha's Dimensions of Public Relations provided an excellent framework for this study, illustrating perhaps the most important trend of all for the profession. Placing great emphasis in aspects such as two-way communication and engagement, Sha's Dimensions presented the ideal manner in which an organization is expected to conduct public relations. Also factoring in Grunig's Models of Public Relations, such claims are only further substantiated.

Take for instance the sentiments brought forth by both Organization 3 and Expert 2, which illuminate the profession's gradual trek towards practicing traditional public relations. Reiterated from the results, the respondent from Organization 3 described a mindset within the profession as "now traditional-like PR, especially what you see at agencies." Expert 2, meanwhile, discussed the individuals within this profession becoming "what we should have been all along, which was a public relations professional." Further likening his own department to "more of a public relations firm within an athletic department."

In an overall sense, the trends taken from the sample as a whole throughout the study all highlight this shift. Where Moore and Carlson (2013) could not draw any emphasis in two-way communication out of their sample, this study found each respondent, organizational and expert alike, to discuss the benefits and emphasis in employing such a tactic. Certainly falling under the umbrella of "two-way symmetrical model," this has been the "ideal model of ethical public relations" for Sha (2007, p. 5). Two-way communication's merits also found support in further research on sports communications (Jackowski, 2007; Stoldt, 2013; Whiteside, 2014). While there is certainly an argument to be made in some of the sample practicing asymmetric instead symmetric communications, where the organization only "sought to change its target publics," both fall under the two-way communication model (Sha, 2007, p. 8). Thus, providing an immense shift for practitioners in this field, as previous research had organizations mired in one-way communication models - termed by Grunig & Grunig (1989) as Press/Agentry or Public Information Models and not nearly as effective in building relationships with an audience (Jackowski, 2007; Whiteside, 2014). Additionally, as noted once more by Grunig & Grunig (1989), practitioners "with the knowledge, training and experience to practice a two-way communication model of public relations" were more likely "included in the organization's dominant coalition" (p. 60).

Further adding value to the profession, Sha's Dimensions outside of two-way communication were applicable elsewhere in the study. Tactical dimensions such as mediated communication highlighted organizational utilization of social media - "through some kind of mass media technology, such as the Internet or broadcast television" (Sha, 2007, p. 9). Interpersonal communication, while focused mainly on face-to-face interaction, could also be applicable to the engagement theme. The Social Activities dimension, which emphasizes

interaction between the organization and stakeholders at live events provides further evidence in the sample practicing traditional public relations.

Also worth noting is the blending of marketing and communications gives credence to research conducted by Grunig & Grunig (1989), where "the distinction" between the two parties "is a blurred one" (p. 28). While, like the sample outlined, each department does have their own duties, PR practitioners "often do supply marketing departments with the necessary technical skills to communicate about products through means other than paid advertising" (p. 28). Thus, according to research, these professionals provide public affairs and marketing support.

Why this trend may appear new, Organization 7's take on the matter was an interesting insight. As mentioned before, the respondent drew from professional experience, surmising collegiate athletics, though "big business," as having a "hesitation and reluctance to over commercializing collegiate athletics." This is not to say these organizations have now dropped this concern but rather the tools afforded in the social media age have allowed for a more traditional PR mindset - a notion shared explicitly by Organization 3. Lending further proof to this notion, research by both Stoldt et al. (2001) and Ruihley and Fall (2009) highlighted the level of ability individual within this field possess. Surveying athletic directors the calculated return on investment by the researchers was overwhelmingly positive.

> The mean return on investment (ROI) reported for their department's PR efforts was 732 percent. The ROI figure is particularly notable because scholars conducting a global study identifying factors associated with excellence in PR reported that the estimated ROI identified by chief executive officers for the top ten percent of organizations studied was 266 percent. (Stoldt, p. 486)

> In determining the tasks PR officers perform, the results illustrated high levels of agreement – with all tasks averaging more than a 3.5 mean score. These findings indicate the PR professionals in a college athletics environment are performing and living up the expectations of their supervisors. (Ruihley & Fall, 2009)

Now these professionals are armed with the tools allowing them to "strategically enhance" their respective university's "brand equity" (Whiteside, 2014; p. 143). Furthermore, already slowly earning recognition from a national level as exemplified by the field's inclusion at NACDA, being "relegated to publicists and 'journalists in residence'" may be a thing of the past. Couple such examples with an explicit thirst by to adapt to the ever evolving new media landscape and the opportunity for growth within the field is tremendous.

Further Research

This study, exploratory in nature, was meant to serve as a framework for continued research in the field. Having further processed the development of several notable themes, including noted shifts in this profession's motivations for developing content through new media, the opportunities for further research are expansive.

For a communications process involving at least two other groups, I believe it would be prudent to consider further research into questioning the journalists and fans. Similar to the study conducted by Coombs and Osborne (2012), gaining perspective of the journalists, especially local beat writers, would present an interesting dynamic sure to provide depth to this study. Likewise, fan perspective on what roles organizations play in their consumption of information on a day-to-day basis could present important findings. While studies like Kwak & Kim (2013) deduce "publicity is considered a more credible source of information and more persuasive" than marketing/advertising-driven messages, finding out if fans differentiate value between certain posts of organizations on social channels would be a worthwhile venture (p. 178). Furthermore, as discussed by multiple respondents, analytics do present the opportunity for the organizations to gain "the pulse" of their respective audiences, but what value could opinions from the targeted audience contribute to such notions?

Outside of the obvious two groups worth studying, emphasis by the sample on the profession gaining value from an administrative standpoint certainly points to the necessity in further probing athletic directors on how they value the position in today's landscape. Past research continues to harp on the sports PR professionals feeling under-appreciated and having a low morale, but studies focusing on athletic director's opinions have varied. The research of Stoldt et al. (2001) certainly pointed to the profession having value more in technical tasks but also discussed the extremely impressive calculated return on investment drawn from the opinions of these individuals in administrative positions. Ruihley and Fall's (2009) survey of athletic directors finding "four of the top six responses were in regard to managerial responsibilities" paint a wholly different picture (Stoldt, 2013, p. 489). Coupled with Expert 1's discussion of studies recently carried out by his staff personally may shed light on the profession potentially growing in the eyes of these individuals from an administrative standpoint.

Lastly, studies focusing on different levels of sports, regarding collegiate and professional or the multiple levels of collegiate athletics must be addressed. Similarly noted by the sample, the discussion of many the effects of the new media landscape being dependent on location prevent a necessary avenue of further research. Not only would potentially interviewing PR professionals at the Division II level be worthwhile, but also looking at different communications departments within the Power Five - ACC, Big Ten, Pac-12 and SEC. Additionally, research methods as an explicit case study or surveys covering a wider breadth of respondents could prove valuable with the current findings of this research. Multiple respondents attributed the themes and issues throughout this study more than once to the sports communications world in general. Finding out any differences from a conference level to a divisional level to even at the professional level would go a long way in defining the role and

value of not only the sports PR professional but also the fan and the traditional media in this new

media landscape.

Chapter 6 - References

Abbruzzese, J. (2015). Periscope could change sports broadcasting, but leagues are still scared. http://mashable.com/2015/05/07/sports-periscope-piracy/

Battenfield, F. L. (2013). The culture of communication in athletics. In P. M. Pedersen (Ed.), Routledge handbook of sport communication (pp. 441-450). New York: Routledge.

Bowman, N. D., & Cranmer, G. A. (2014). SocialMediaSport: The fan as a (mediated) participant in spectator sports. In A. C. Billings, & M. Hardin (Eds.), Routledge handbook of sport and new media (pp. 213-225). New York: Routledge.

Boyle, R., & Haynes, R. (2014). Sport, public relations and social media. In A. C. Billings, & M. Hardin (Eds.), Routledge handbook of sport and new media (pp. 133-142). New York: Routledge.

Broughton, D. (2012). Survey: Social media continues to fuel fans. Retrieved November 13, 2014, from http://www.sportsbusinessdaily.com/Journal/Issues/2012/07/16/In-Depth/Catalyst-Survey.aspx

Burns(a), M. J. (2014). Sports teams, athletic departments focused on 360-degree social experience for fans. Retrieved December 2, 2014, from http://www.forbes.com/sites/markjburns/2014/11/26/sports-teams-athletic-departments-focused-on-360-degree-social-experience-for-fans/

Burns(b), M. J. (2014). Washington athletics caters to fans 'appetite' for visualized data. Retrieved November 11, 2014, from http://www.forbes.com/sites/markjburns/2014/11/01/washington-athletics-caters-to-fans-appetite-for-visualized-data/

Butler, B., Zimmerman, M. H., & Hutton, S. (2013). Turning the page with newspaper: Influence of the internet on sports coverage. In P. M. Pedersen (Ed.), Routledge of handbook of sport communication (pp. 219-228). New York: Routledge.

Clavio, G. (2011). Social media and the college football audience. Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics, 4, 309-325.

Christensen, J. (2015). College athletes feeling the love/hate on Twitter. http://www.startribune.com/college-athletes-feeling-the-love-and-hate-on-twitter/304836191/

Coombs, D. S., & Osborne, A. (2012). Sports journalists and England's Barclays Premier League: A case study examining reporters' takes on modern football. International Journal of Sport Communication, 5, 413-425.

Cooper, C. G., & Cooper, B. D. (2009). NCAA website coverage: Do athletic departments

provide equitable gender coverage on their athletic home web pages? The Sport Journal, , September 8.

Coyle, P. (2010). Teams active in social media build strategic advantage. Retrieved November 13, 2014, from http://www.sportsbusinessdaily.com/Journal/Issues/2010/01/20100104/Opinion/Teams-active-in-social-media-build-a-strategic-advantage

Davis, H. (2015). A new game plan. http://www.clemsontigers.com/ViewArticle.dbml?ATCLID=210181800

Dittmore, S. W., & Fields, T. E. (2013). Content, copyright, and carriage: Issues for sports media rights in the digital age. In P. M. Pedersen (Ed.), Routledge handbook of sport communication (pp. 228-238). New York: Routledge.

Dittmore, S. W., Stoldt, G. C., & Greenwell, T. C. (2008). Use of an organizational weblog in relationship building: The case of a major league baseball team. International Journal of Sport Communication, 1, 384-397.

Doherty, J. (2010). CoSIDA/NFL PR directors communications webinar. http://www.asapsports.com/show_conference.php?id=63687

Dosh, K. (2013). A comparison: Conference television deals. Retrieved October 25, 2013, from http://espn.go.com/blog/playbook/dollars/post/_/id/3163/a-comparison-conference-television-deals

Gantz, W., & Lewis, N. (2014). Fanship differences between traditional and newer media. In A. C. Billings, & M. Hardin (Eds.), Routledge handbook of sport and new media (1st ed., pp. 19-31). New York: Routledge.

Garfield, B. (2010). A network of their own. Retrieved November 13, 2014, from http://www.onthemedia.org/story/132664-a-network-of-their-own/transcript/

Gillespie, B. (2014). Commentary: Clemson reinvents media access. Retrieved September 9, 2014, from http://www.thestate.com/2014/05/19/3454873/commentary-clemson-reinvents-media.html

Gregory, S. (2010). Why sports ratings are surging on TV. Retrieved September 16, 2014, from http://content.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,2010746,00.html

Grunig, J. E. (1984). Organizations, environments, and models of public relations. Public Relations Research and Education, 1(4), 6-29.

Grunig, J. E., & Grunig, L. S. (1989). Toward a theory of public relations behavior of organizations: Review of a program of research. Public Relations Research Annual, 1(1-4), 27-64.

Hardin, R., & McClung, S. (2002). Collegiate sports information: A profile of the profession. Public Relations Quarterly, 47(2), 35-39. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.er.lib.k-state.edu/docview/222397338?accountid=11789

Hutchins, B., & Rowe, D. (2009). From broadcast scarcity to digital plentitude: The changing dynamics of the media sport content economy. Television & New Media, 10(4), 354-370.

Hutchins, B., & Rowe, D. (2012). Sport beyond television: The internet, digital media and the rise of networked media sport. New York: Routledge.

Jackowski, M. (2007). Conceptualizing an improved public relations strategy: A case for stakeholder relationship marketing in division I-A intercollegiate athletics.. Journal of Business and Public Affairs, 1(1)

Kwak, D. H., & Kim, Y. K. (2013). The impact of sport publicity on fans' emotion, future prediction, and behavioral response. In P. M. Pedersen (Ed.), Routledge handbook of sport communication (pp. 178-187). New York: Routledge.

L'Etang, J. (2013). Critical perspectives in sports public relations. In P. M. Pedersen (Ed.), Routledge handbook of sport communication (pp. 503-511). New York: Routledge.

McCarra, K. (2010). Open door. Retrieved November 13, 2014, from http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jun/28/world-cup-reporting-technology

Moore, J. (2013). Strategic influence and sport communication leaders. In P. M. Pedersen (Ed.), Routledge handbook of sport communication (pp. 451-460). New York: Routledge.

Moore, J. H., & Carlson, A. (2013). Reaching the audience: New communication technology practices in college sports public relations. Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science, 23(1), 109-126.

NewMediaTrendWatch. (2013). Mobile devices. Retrieved October 13, 2014, from http://archive.today/SDmdl#selection-342.0-342.1

Nielsen. (2012). DoubleVision: Global trends in tablet and smartphone use while watching TV. Retrieved September 30, 2014, from http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2012/double-vision-global-trends-in-tablet-and-smartphone-use-while-watching-tv.html

Nielsen. (2014). 2013 year in sports media report. Retrieved September 16, 2014, from http://www.nielsen.com/content/dam/corporate/us/en/reports-downloads/2014%20Reports/year-in-sports-media-report-2013.pdf

Pedersen, P. M. (2012). Reflections on communication and sport: On strategic communication and management. Communication & Sport, 1(1/2), 55-67.

Place, K. R. (2015). Exploring the role of ethics in public relations program evaluation. Journal of Public Relations Research, 27, 118-135.

Qu, S. Q., & Dumay, J. (2011). The qualitative research interview. Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management, 8(3), 238-264.

Ruihley, B. J., & Fall, L. T. (2009). Assessment on and off the field: Examining athletic directors' perceptions of public relations in college athletics. International Journal of Sport Communication, 2, 398-410.

Scholl, H. J. (2013). Evaluating sports websites from an information management perspective. In P. M. Pedersen (Ed.), Routledge handbook of sport communication (pp. 289-299). New York: Routledge.

Sha, B. (2007). Dimensions of public relations: Moving beyond traditional public relations models. New Media Impacts on Conventional Thinking in Public Relations, , 3-26.

Stern, A. (2014). Instagram poised for big year in college football as schools up visual content. Retrieved September 9, 2014, from http://www.sportsbusinessdaily.com/Daily/Issues/2014/08/28/College-Football-Preview/Instagram.aspx

Stoldt, G. C. (2008). Interview with John Humenik, executive director of the college sports information directors of America. International Journal of Sport Communication, 1, 458-464.

Stoldt, G. C. (2013). College athletics communications: Evolution of the field. In P. M. Pedersen (Ed.), Routledge handbook of sport communication (pp. 482-492). New York: Routledge.

Stoldt, G. C., Miller, L. K., & Comfort, P. G. (2001). Through the eyes of athletics directors: Perceptions of sports information directors, and other public relations issues. Sport Marketing Quarterly, 10(2), 164-172.

Stoldt, G. C., & Narasimhan, V. (2005). Self assessments of collegiate sports information practitioners regarding their professional expertise. International Journal of Sport Management, 6(3), 252-269.

Stoldt, G. C., Noble, J., Ross, M., Richardson, T., & Bonsall, J. (2013). Advantages and disadvantages of social media use: Perceptions of college athletics communicators. CoSIDA E-Digest, November 13, 2014-62-67.

Stoldt, C. G., & Vermillion, M. (2013). The organizational roles of college athletics communicators: Relationship to the use and perceptions of social media. International Journal of Sport Communication, 6(2), 185-202.

Sturges, J. E., & Hanrahan, K. J. (2004). Comparing telephone and face-to-face qualitative interviewing: A research note. Qualitative Research, 4(1), 107-118.

Travis, C. (2015). Periscope is a game changer. http://www.foxsports.com/college-football/outkick-the-coverage/periscope-is-a-game-changer-052115

Wallace, L., Wilson, J., & Miloch, K. S. (2011). Sporting Facebook: A content analysis of NCAA organizational sport pages and big 12 conference athletic department pages. International Journal of Sport Communication, 4, 422-444.

Waters, R. D. (2013). Applying public relations theory to increase the understanding of sport communication. In P. M. Pedersen (Ed.), Routledge handbook of sport communication (pp. 66-75). New York: Routledge.

Wei, S. (2015). How using periscope got my PGA tour media credential revoked. https://the-cauldron.com/how-using-periscope-got-me-kicked-off-covering-the-pga-tour-1ea37ffac209

Wenner, L. A. (2006). Sports and media through the super glass mirror: Placing blame, breast-beating, and a gaze to the future. In A. A. Raney, & J. Bryant (Eds.), Handbook of sports and media (pp. 45-60). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Whannel, G. (2013). Reflections on communication and sport: On mediatization and cultural analysis. Communication & Sport, 1(1/2), 7-17.

Whiteside, E. A. (2014). New media and the changing role of sports information. In A. C. Billings, & M. Hardin (Eds.), Routledge handbook of sport and new media (pp. 143-152). New York: Routledge.

Wyshynski, G. (2015). NHL bans media from using periscope, meerkat to subvert rights-holders. http://sports.yahoo.com/blogs/nhl-puck-daddy/nhl-bans-media-from-using-periscope--meerkat-to-subvert-rights-holders-014748870.html