Research Outlets in Sport Marketing: The Need for Increased Specialization

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While Weese recently recommended that JSM and NASSM become more practitioner-oriented, Cuneen and Parks argued that JSM and NASSM need to maintain a more theoretically-oriented approach. Further, Cuneen and Parks agreed with Weese’s suggestion that a new practitioner-oriented journal could be developed in order to meet the current needs of practitioners and to provide opportunities for both types of research. The authors of this paper would like to go further and suggest that it is important to allow for both types of research within the various content areas. However, despite the popularity of sport marketing in North America, there is currently only one practitioner-oriented journal specializing in this area. The authors of this paper believe that there is an immediate need for a theoretical sport marketing journal that, together with the Sport Marketing Quarterly, will contribute to the development of this content area.

Two recent articles in the Journal of Sport Management (JSM) have presented somewhat different perspectives on the future of both JSM and the North American Society of Sport Management ([NASSM], Cuneen & Parks, 1997; Weese, 1995). In a young, developing discipline such as sport management, such discussions are helpful in determining the direction of the field. We would like to applaud the authors of both articles for contributing to the on-going discussion about the future of the field of sport management. We would also like to enter this dialogue by addressing an issue we believe is critical to the future development of this field. Building on the suggestions of Chelladurai (1992), it is our belief that NASSM needs to encourage increased specialization within sport management-related research. Therefore, the purposes of this paper are to offer (a) a perspective on the developing areas of specialization in the field of sport management, (b) an argument

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for supporting this specialization, and (c) the argument that the area of sport marketing is in need of immediate attention for development.

**The Evolution of Sport Management**

Sport management is a relatively young field compared to more established subject matters (e.g., chemistry, economics, sociology, psychology). Although there may be some controversy about the actual beginning of sport management as a distinct field of study, it is clear that it was still a very small field in the early 1980s (Parkhouse, 1996). Estimates suggest that there were only about 20 programs in the U.S. at this time as well as a handful of programs in Canada (Parkhouse, 1996). However, sport management experienced significant growth during the next 10 to 15 years. Developments in the field include: (a) the creation of almost 200 new programs (Parkhouse, 1996; Weese, 1995); (b) the establishment of NASSM as the field’s main scholarly organization; (c) the creation of *JS**, as the main journal for the field; (d) the adoption of the NASPE-NASSM Sport Management Program Standards; (e) the creation of a few specialized journals (e.g., *Journal of Legal Aspects of Sport, Sport Marketing Quarterly*) and specialized conferences (e.g., Sport, Physical Education, Recreation, and Law Conference) that focus on specific content areas within sport management; and (f) global development in sport management as demonstrated by the increased number of sport management organizations outside of North America (e.g., European Society for Sport Management, Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand).

The creation of additional programs has had a number of effects on sport management, including an increase in the number of sport management faculty. Consequently, this increase has meant more researchers in the field. The record number of abstracts received for the 1997 NASSM Conference (Mawson, 1997) is one example of the impact of the growing number of faculty. In addition, the number of presentations at the NASSM Conference has more than doubled from 1987 to 1997. The record number of submissions and the growth in the number of presentations are especially significant, because there is now a limit (two) on the number of submissions allowed for each presenter. While one of the reasons for the cap was to limit the burgeoning size of the conference, the other reason was to make more opportunities for presentations available to a greater number of authors. In fact, the number of authors presenting at the 1997 NASSM Conference (161) was about three times the number of authors at the 1987 Conference (54). While this strategy has increased the number of different authors, it still limits those authors who are extremely productive (those who would like to submit more than two presentations). Overall, the increase in faculty suggests that the research outlets that may have been sufficient in 1987 are clearly not enough for the number of faculty currently doing research.

The demand for more research outlets is evident in the number of smaller conferences that have been started and in the addition of sport management-related sessions at the conferences of other associations (e.g., AAHPERD). Although the number of conferences for sport management presentations and the number of
sport management-related journals have grown in recent years, the number of research outlets are still insufficient. The limited number of research outlets is a major concern because "expectations of the professorate are in a state of transition, with an emphasis on scholarly productivity replacing the traditional emphasis on service" (Parks & Bartley, 1996, p. 120).

The creation of *JSM* and NASSM were both critical steps in establishing a means of communication within this growing field, and both were helpful in improving the quality of sport management research. However, it appears sport management faculty may now be asking too much of both the association and its journal. The journal and NASSM's conference have provided a place to publish and present articles focusing on areas such as organizational behavior, organizational theory, marketing, finance, legal issues, facility management, and ethics. They have been forced to be a "catch-all" journal and a "catch-all" conference, which has created some problems that we will address later. In addition, the growing number of sport management faculty need more than one journal and one conference as research outlets. Although *JSM* has increased from two to four issues per year, it still provides only a limited opportunity for publishing.

The adoption of the NASPE-NASSM Sport Management Program Standards was also an important step for the field of sport management (National Association for Sport and Physical Education–North American Society for Sport Management, 1993). The primary purpose for developing the standards was to identify the minimum body of knowledge necessary for a quality sport management curriculum. With a large number of new programs, the standards helped provide guidance to those who were in the position of developing these programs, particularly because many of these individuals were either young assistant professors or experienced faculty moving from another area (e.g., physical education, recreation administration). The curriculum standards encouraged schools which wanted to be approved to hire more than one sport management faculty member. It is no secret that many of the programs developed during the 1980s were one-person programs. Universities would hire one faculty member who was expected to be an expert and teach in all of the sport management content areas. It was during this period of time that Chelladurai (1992) noted that many faculty had "spread [themselves] too thin to be able to specialize in any one aspect and create a unique body of knowledge in that specialization" (p. 216).

Now schools must have two to five faculty members to meet the "critical mass--faculty" standard for undergraduate and graduate program approval. Based on the high number of programs seeking approval (Sport Management Review Council of NASSM and NASPE, 1996), it can be assumed that many of the schools are moving away from the one-person programs of the past. This change has a significant impact on the current discussion for a couple of reasons. First, it has allowed sport management faculty to become more specialized in both their teaching and their related research. Although many sport management faculty still have more than one area of focus, they are increasingly in a position to become more specialized, which is essential for creating the bodies of knowledge Chelladurai (1992) felt were important for the field’s future. Further, the increase in
specialization suggests that adding journals that attempt to meet the needs of all areas of sport management is probably not the best way to deal with the growing number of faculty discussed earlier. As we will argue later, it appears more logical to embrace this increased specialization and support it with more specialized journals.

Second, the change in staffing also suggests that most faculty could cite at least a few content areas in which their expertise is limited. While faculty in the past had to develop at least some expertise in a variety of content areas, many faculty today are in a position where they can completely ignore certain content areas in both teaching and research. Third, the program standards have provided comprehensive content areas and a good starting point for our examination of the current state of the specializations in sport management.

**Evolution of Content Areas in Sport Management**

The NASPE-NASSM Sport Management Program Standards have clearly delineated the major content areas (subdisciplines) within the field of sport management. Among these are a few that are identified as critical for both masters and undergraduate programs. In addition to field experiences, there are six areas cited in both: management in sport, legal aspects of sport, social and behavioral dimensions in sport, finance in sport, ethics in sport, and marketing in sport (National Association for Sport and Physical Education–North American Society for Sport Management, 1993).

A recent survey of resources being used in the Master’s content areas gives some indication of the development of each of these areas (Pitts & Mahony, 1997). In management, there are approximately six available textbooks that are specific to the management of sport. The *Journal of Sport Management (JSM)* was the most often used journal by those developing classes in this area (Pitts & Mahony, 1997). The heavy use of *JSM* in developing this content area makes the future of this publication of critical importance. Although we agree with Weese’s (1995) suggestion that providing practical research to professionals in the field is important, we side more with the comments of Cuneen and Parks (1997). Cuneen and Parks presented a strong case that NASSM and *JSM* need to continue to focus on theoretical research written for an audience familiar with "scholarly writing." While this research certainly may have some practical significance, and *JSM*’s editorial policy suggests that authors discuss these practical implications, some highly theoretical research may not always have immediate significance for practitioners. Overall, we agree that it is essential that both "NASSM and *JSM* [remain] the primary outlets for the exchange of scholarly ideas and the dissemination of research in sport management" (Cuneen & Parks, 1997, p. 128).

It is critical for the future of the field that sport management researchers produce strong, theoretically grounded research that will be respected by colleagues in other fields and by the universities that employ sport management faculty. While publishing articles geared to practitioners is good for the field, a decision to focus the efforts of researchers too much on the needs of current practitioners could
prevent the field’s young professionals from developing a strong theoretical research agenda. This may not always affect practitioners today but will affect their efforts in the future. If sport management researchers try to focus heavily on practitioners’ needs without a thoroughly developed body of knowledge, researchers will be in danger of putting “the cart before the horse.” Sport management researchers will be more helpful to practitioners if they base their suggestions on a well-developed, theoretically-based body of research, some of which may not have immediate implications for sport managers. In fact, rushing to provide major practical implications of a new theoretical concept may not be serving practitioners’ best interests. A theory must often be tested a number of times in a variety of situations before its implications are completely understood and before the theory is widely accepted. While sport management researchers are developing and testing theories and building a unique body of knowledge, the field needs a journal focused on meeting the interests of these researchers in order to allow for the field’s continued development. Although research in sport management has improved during its short history, it still has a long way to go before reaching the point of some of the more established subject matters. Although a number of general management journals were identified (e.g., Harvard Business Review, Academy of Management Journal), JSM was the only sport specific management journal that was identified by respondents in Pitts and Mahoney (1997). A change in JSM’s focus could leave a large portion of the quality research published there without an appropriate “home.”

Moreover, there are now enough professionals doing quality research in the management content area to allow for more journals focusing on the management of sport. Therefore, we support the suggestion made by both Weese (1995) and Cuneen and Parks (1997) that the NASSM Executive Council examine the need and desirability for a more practitioner-oriented journal in the area of management. The field has many professionals who might prefer to publish in such a journal and to write for this type of audience. We agree with Chelladurai (1992) that each of us has different “abilities and talents” and do not believe that “worth of the [more practitioner-oriented] orientation” is any less than the more theoretical orientation (p. 217). Both research written for “a scholarly audience” and research written for sport management practitioners are important to the future of the field, but they will not always be equally important in the same journal or in a particular article. The two-journal approach in the area of management would satisfy the need to produce the theoretically-based research necessary for the future development of the field and to produce research, as suggested by Mintzberg (1982), that is more immediately useful to practitioners.

We believe this dual-focus approach (separate publications geared at either a scholarly audience or a practitioner audience) could be the model for the development of the other content areas. In fact, researchers in the legal aspects of sport content area appear to have already taken this approach. The study by Pitts and Mahony (1997) found that in addition to producing 13 textbooks, researchers in this content area have four research journals available for publication. Some of these are written more for sport practitioners, while others are focused toward
academic scholars. Sport law researchers also formed their own association (Society for the Study of Legal Aspects in Sport and Physical Activity) and have their own conference (Sport, Physical Education, Recreation, and Law Conference). These moves have allowed the legal aspects of sport to become one of the field’s most well developed content areas and have greatly enhanced both the quality and quantity of research related to sport law.

The question then becomes: If the legal aspects of sport content area appears to be well-established and the management in sport area is moving in a similar direction, what is the current state and future of the other areas? The content area of social and behavioral dimensions of sport has been developed primarily by faculty in sport history and sport sociology. Although there are many sport management faculty who have focused at least some of their research efforts on sport history (e.g., Fielding, 1984; Hardy, 1997) or sport sociology (e.g., Crosset, Benedict, & McDonald, 1995; DeSensi, 1995; Sack, 1988), these areas have largely been developed by individuals outside of sport management. They have their own organizations (e.g., North American Society for Sport History, North American Society for the Sociology of Sport) and their own journals (e.g., Journal of Sport History, Sociology of Sport Journal), and these tend to be well-developed areas of research. Although sport management faculty need to be supportive of the further development of this content area, it appears unlikely that the NASSM membership will need to determine or change the development of research in this area.

The content areas of finance in sport and ethics in sport are the least developed areas of specialization. There are two books in sport ethics and one book on finance in sport, and these books are all very recent (Pitts & Mahony, 1997). At the present time, there are no journals focusing on these areas specifically. However, many of the sport related journals publish articles with a focus on ethics (e.g., Sutliff & Freeland, 1995). Although a journal focusing on ethical issues in sport management may be an appropriate long term goal, there does not appear to be enough research in this area to justify a separate journal.

Sport finance may be underdeveloped because there are very few individuals considered specialists in this area. A roundtable session on resources used in developing courses in sport finance at the 1997 NASSM Conference was well attended, but it was clear that many of those present had a limited background in this area and were there mostly to seek advice in attempting to teach a sport finance class. Therefore, it is unlikely that many of those present will be focusing their research on sport finance. Although we would love to see a journal of sport finance as an outlet for research in this area, we do not believe there is enough research specific to this area (with the exception of some very good research on stadium financing) to justify a separate journal at this time. Those doing research related to sport finance (e.g., Howard, 1997; Mahony & Pastore, 1998; Sack, 1997) will probably have to continue to look towards other sport journals (e.g., Journal of Sport Management, Journal of Sport and Social Issues) as outlets for their research. Additionally, the sport management professorate must seek to recruit qualified doctoral candidates who are willing to select this as one of their areas of specialization before developing a separate journal and an annual conference in this area.
Content Area in Need of Immediate Attention:
Sport Marketing

Although the development of the content areas of sport ethics and sport finance are a future concern, the direction of the sport marketing content area is in need of immediate evaluation and discussion. Sport marketing is, along with management in sport and sport law, one of the more developed and popular content areas. The study by Pitts and Mahony (1997) found that most programs offer courses in management in sport, legal aspects in sport, and sport marketing, while fewer offer courses in the other content areas. Because management in sport and sport law have their own journals and conferences, it is critical that the sport management professorate now support the same for research in sport marketing.

Respondents in the study by Pitts and Mahony (1997) identified five textbooks being used by professors that focus specifically on sport marketing. In addition, approximately 25–30% of the presentations at the last three NASSM Conferences have been related to sport marketing, which was generally as much or greater than the number related to the management of sport. Some programs (e.g., the University of Oregon, the University of Northern Colorado) are even focusing specifically on sport marketing. Marketing is also an area in which sport practitioners are seeking help. A number of sport organizations are struggling to produce a profit (Howard & Crompton, 1995) in a highly competitive marketplace, and many are seeking to improve their marketing efforts in order to improve the strength of their organization (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 1993).

Our main concern is with the future direction of the research and the development of a body of knowledge in this content area. The Sport Marketing Quarterly is currently the only journal available specifically focusing on sport marketing. Although SMQ clearly has filled a need in this area, it is not sufficient. From the beginning, SMQ has tried to meet the needs of both practitioners and researchers (Branch, 1992). In fact, an examination of the editorial board shows almost equal representation of these two groups. However, we believe it is difficult if not impossible to completely satisfy the needs of both audiences. Practitioners are generally going to be more concerned with immediate application of the research results, while some researchers are more concerned with establishing a theoretical framework for better understanding a phenomenon and publishing in a journal with a reputation for quality theoretical research.

Moreover, recent issues of SMQ have suggested that the editors are going to be more concerned with the application of the research SMQ will publish (Hardy & Sutton, 1997). The journal appears to be headed towards becoming similar to the new practitioner-oriented journal suggested by Cuneen and Parks (1997) and Weese (1995). Although we certainly agree there is a need for a sport marketing journal that appeals to practitioners and that SMQ will be able to fulfill this need, the editorial decision by SMQ leaves sport marketing researchers with no place for the “exchange of scholarly ideas” (Cuneen & Parks, 1997, p. 128), which may not have immediate practical implications. Researchers in sport marketing will never be able to accomplish all that they are capable of in this area if they only publish...
research focusing heavily on practical applications. As suggested by Parks (1992), "informed, consistent action cannot exist in the absence of a theoretical framework" (p. 225). This should be a primary concern for the field, and we suggest, therefore, that the time is right for the NASSM membership to take a leadership role in developing a journal for theoretically-oriented sport marketing research. The addition of such a journal is justified for a number of reasons.

First, the Sport Marketing Quarterly is not going to be appropriate for some of the research that is being done in sport marketing. Although SMQ will continue to make a valuable contribution to our field and recent data would suggest that it is becoming very rigorous (Slack & Howard, 1997), we believe there are enough individuals doing research in this area to justify an additional journal. Again, having a journal focused on practitioners without a journal focused on theory will put the field in danger of "putting the cart before the horse." Practical research without a well-developed body of knowledge to support it will not be useful over the long-term.

Second, if the field does not develop a theoretically-oriented sport marketing research journal, the growing number of theoretically-oriented sport marketing researchers will be forced to choose from a number of options for publication, none of which are very good. These choices include the following four:

(a) Theoretically-oriented sport marketing researchers can try to make their research more practically oriented so it will appeal to SMQ.

Asking researchers to change the focus of their research, especially when their original focus would have made a great long-term contribution to research in sport marketing, is not acceptable. The field will end up discouraging the type of research that is needed for long-term survival, both as individuals seeking job security and as a field seeking greater acceptance in the academic community.

(b) Theoretically-oriented sport marketing researchers can submit the article to a nonsport marketing journal.

Although this may be the best alternative currently available, it has some disadvantages. In general, these journals have not published articles related to sport marketing. A review of recent issues (1994–1997) of major marketing journals (e.g., Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Research, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Sciences, Journal of Consumer Research) found almost no mention of anything related to sport. In fact, an index of all articles published in the Journal of Consumer Research from June 1974 through March 1994 ("Summaries and index," 1994) indicated that there were no articles published related to "sport" or "athletics."

The question is, why have sport marketing articles not been published in these journals? There are a number of possible explanations. First, it is possible that business school faculty still do not respect research focused on sport and may believe that sport management faculties are made up of former "jocks" who lack the intelligence and skills to produce quality research. Our personal experiences with some business school faculty suggests this is true. Second, it is possible that
sport marketing researchers have not been submitting to these journals. This may be related to fears of an antisport bias or that their articles would not survive the rigorous review process in those journals.

Third, it is possible that most of the major marketing journals are more concerned with publishing articles that contribute to building a general marketing theoretical framework and are not seeking articles that focus only on a specific industry. In fact, our review of marketing journals found that there were very few articles that focused on a specific industry. In most of the articles, the products or services being examined were generic items such as detergent (Deighton, Henderson, & Neslin, 1994), cereal (Krishnan & Rao, 1995), or hardware (Smith & Andrews, 1995). In these studies, the products or services being examined were not important; the general theory that was being examined was the focus. Because the focus of these journals appears to be on developing a general marketing knowledge base, many of them may not be interested in articles that have a very specific focus, such as fashion, public policy, and sport. They may expect journals in these particular areas to be responsible for building their own specific knowledge base, which is a logical expectation. In a recent discussion, the editor of a general marketing journal made it clear that this was exactly how he felt. Thus, sport marketing articles may not be accepted because they simply do not meet the goals of these journals.

In addition, even if manuscripts are accepted, the articles will be spread out over a number of journals. In order for sport marketing researchers to be able to build a solid body of knowledge, it would be helpful in the early stages if the research could be found in a few journals. Although database search engines are helpful in finding such articles, they are not immediately updated, and it is possible to miss important articles if the right descriptor is not used. Therefore, important articles may get “lost,” and colleagues doing similar research are less likely to find them and read them. Moreover, even if the articles are eventually found, the knowledge base development process has been unnecessarily slowed.

(c) Theoretically-oriented sport marketing researchers can submit the article to the Journal of Sport Management.

Although JSM has been publishing articles with a marketing focus (e.g., Amis, Pant, & Slack, 1997; Milne, McDonald, Sutton, & Kashyap, 1996), we do not believe that the Journal can meet the needs of the growing number of sport marketing researchers. As was discussed earlier, the overall growth in faculty sizes in sport management has allowed individuals to become more specialized. While this is beneficial for the future of research, it makes it extremely difficult to find editorial review board members who are equally skilled at reviewing articles in areas such as sport marketing, sport law, management in sport, sport finance, and sport ethics. One must question the adequacy of the review process in this case.

A good review process depends on using reviewers with a high level of expertise in the focus area of the article, because even the most conscientious reviewers will struggle trying to review an article in an area where they have done little or no research. For example, one would not expect that a professor in chemistry
could generally review an article in physics as well as a physics professor even though the chemistry professor would probably have at least some background in physics. Sport management faculty must recognize that the field is at a point at which some scholars are becoming more specialized; expecting reviewers to be able to review articles across all content areas is unrealistic and unfair to both the reviewer and the reviewee. Few other academic journals expect the amount of expertise currently asked of JSM editorial review board members. Over time, it makes more sense for JSM to focus increasingly on articles related to the management of sport and to recruit editorial review board members who do most or all of their research in organizational behavior and organizational theory.

(d) Theoretically-oriented sport marketing researchers can submit the article to one of the other sport journals.

If the article has a sociological or psychological basis, journals such as the Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, the Journal of Sport Behavior, and the Journal of Sport and Social Issues may be possible choices. Again, the researchers will probably have their papers reviewed by board members who have done little or no research on the sociology or psychology of fans and other sport consumers. Although these journals do occasionally publish articles with this type of focus (e.g., Wakefield, 1995; Wann & Branscombe, 1993), it is rare, and they clearly are not focused on sport consumer research. In addition, only some of the marketing research has enough of a sociological or psychological basis even to be considered for publication in these journals. Overall, we do not believe that there are enough good options for sport marketing papers to adequately meet the needs of the research currently being conducted in this area. At the 1997 NASSM Conference, there were a number of papers presented that would appear to be without a “good home” but perfect for a journal of theoretically-oriented sport marketing research (e.g., Armstrong, 1997; Chalip, Vander Velden, & Green, 1997; James, 1997). Although this research will have practical implications, the articles would probably be better focused toward a more academic audience.

Third, there is adequate growth within the field of sport management in general, and sport marketing as an area of specialization, to support more scholarly journals. The addition of almost 200 programs means more research. Moreover, studies on sport management programs show that sport marketing is one of the most frequently offered courses (Pitts & Mahony, 1997). Because the “institutional criteria by which scholarship is evaluated will become increasingly stringent” (Cuneen & Parks, 1997, p. 128), these additional faculty will need well-respected journals in which to publish. This is particularly true for those at Carnegie Foundation Research institutions. In addition, a small number of business school faculty in marketing have begun to look at sport as an area to research and the creation of this journal would encourage their continued efforts. We believe that, as suggested by Chelladurai (1992), it is to the advantage of the sport management professorate “to co-opt them as partners in our pursuits” (p. 217). A high quality, theoretical journal in sport marketing will encourage more quality research in this area by faculty within and outside sport management programs.
Fourth, a journal of theoretically-oriented sport marketing research will make it easier for faculty and students to monitor research in sport marketing. A centralized location for much of the research will also help build the body of knowledge more quickly. Sport marketing researchers will be more aware of what other researchers are doing and more quickly build on their ideas.

Fifth, the journal will have an editorial board consisting of faculty who have focused most or all of their research in the sport marketing content area. This type of editorial board would be more appropriate than leaving the review process to editorial board members of other journals (e.g., *Journal of Sport Management, Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*), who may have little or no sport marketing expertise. In some ways, sport management faculty are still “spreading [themselves] too thin” (Chelladurai, 1992, p. 216) and need to become more specialized in the future as both researchers and reviewers. A scholarly journal and a scholarly review board in sport marketing will also increase the field’s “credibility and prestige within the academy” (Cuneen & Parks, 1997, p. 128).

Additionally, this type of journal is needed very soon. One practitioner-oriented journal in sport marketing is not sufficient for building a body of knowledge and for scholarly communication. Scholarly rigor is important for the future development of this content area. In addition, none of the current options for highly theoretical articles in sport marketing are satisfactory. The field has researchers with the interest to support this type of journal and eventually a separate conference, and the future of this area is dependent on these opportunities.

If the sport management professorate does not make efforts to create such a journal soon, it may be created by a group outside of sport management, and the NASSM membership may not be able to provide leadership and direction to the development of this content area. As Chelladurai (1992) warned, the sport management professorate must “hustle and lay claim to our domain lest others take over the field by default” (p. 216). Sport management faculty have argued for a number of years that marketing, as well as the other content areas, are unique when examined in the context of sport. If the NASSM membership allows other groups to provide the leadership and direction to the development of a knowledge base in each of the content areas, then they are in danger of becoming unnecessary as a group. Moreover, we believe that sport management faculty are better prepared than generalists to provide this leadership. Although these faculty are adequately laying claim in both the management of sport and legal aspects of sport areas, NASSM members are in danger of losing the leadership role in sport marketing. While the American Marketing Association’s decision to add a section on sport marketing certainly provides more research opportunities in this area, it does suggest that the opportunity to be leaders in sport marketing is tenuous.

**Conclusion**

We expect to see increased specialization in a number of sport management content areas. As programs expand, add more faculty, and broaden their course offerings, specialization is imminent. The sport management professorate should embrace
this increased specialization as an opportunity for all researchers to utilize their unique talents and interests. In fact, increasing specialization is a natural part of the evolution of an academic discipline. One needs only to look at other disciplines such as psychology, economics, and sociology to see that they each have become more specialized throughout the 20th century.

Specialization is critical for developing a unique body of knowledge and a "profession is not worth its name if it is not based on a body of knowledge unique to its field" (Chelladurai, 1992, p. 217). The more focused sport management faculty become in their research, the better their production will be as scholars. Specialization will improve the type and quality of research as well as expand the diversity of topics within the specialization.

Finally, the sport management professorate must also be careful not to grow too quickly. While faculty in the field need to recognize and embrace their diversity, it is also important to recognize that “there is strength in unity” (Chelladurai, 1992, p. 218). We expect that NASSM will always be the “primary professional association for sport management academics” (Cuneen & Parks, 1997, p. 126) and that JSM will continue to be the primary means of communication for the sport management professorate. Increases in specialization should not be interpreted as moves towards separation. The field has relied on unity for its success in the past, and it will be necessary for its success in the future.

References


