

**Using content analysis methodology in sport management legal research**

*Michael Carroll, University of Florida*

*Dan Connaughton, University of Florida*

*John O. Spengler, University of Florida*

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Abstract 340**

By and large, conventional legal research in sport management consists primarily of basic social science methods of analyzing one seminal case or a handful of cases to discuss a legal topic of interest, oftentimes on the heels of a significant recent case decision that may hold implications for the future in that area of law. The body of case law is continually growing, and effective research into what courts do and how and why they do it, can be illustrative in determining not only where the law has been but also where it is going. Hall and Wright (2006) propose that content analysis methodology takes legal research further than the traditional scholarly routine of reading a collection of cases, identifying common themes, and commenting on their significance.

Content analysis is a form of descriptive research in which the researcher examines a class of social artifacts typically composed of written documents, reads the documents, records the consistent features of each one, and draws inferences about the use and meaning of those documents (Krippendorff, 2004). Although it is most prevalent in the communications field, this methodology is widely used by sport management researchers. Kelley and Turley (2004) utilized content analysis to examine Super Bowl advertisements over a period of seven years. Content analysis has been used to examine gender bias in sports reporting (Pedersen & Whisenant, 2003). Additionally, Li and Cotten (1996) used content analysis to examine the content in introductory sport management classes across the United States.

The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate the content analysis process step by step and discuss its value in conducting research involving sport management-related case law. Utilizing content analysis to study case law benefits the sport management field because it may reveal patterns or trends that only emerge in large amounts of data, as well as give researchers a better understanding of factors that may affect the outcome of a case. Additionally, content analysis may describe more accurately the body of case law and decided cases in a given topical area of interest, as opposed to reliance on more subjective or anecdotal study (Wall & Wright, 2006). This study addresses a number of issues in content analysis methodology, including (1) a description of general research design, (2) historical use of content analysis in legal research (3) benefits and limitations of content analysis, and (4) sport-related areas of law that would be conducive to this research methodology.