Presidential assistants in higher education and their use of power, authority and influence

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PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND THEIR USE OF
POWER, AUTHORITY AND INFLUENCE

by

Michael A. Sass

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Michael A. Sass

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ABSTRACT

The position of presidential assistant (PA) is a regularly occurring senior-level administrative position within institutions of higher education. PAs are instrumental to the success of the organization in which they work. Unlike many other higher education positions that fall into a specific hierarchy related to authority, the PA position does not often do so.

This dissertation studied the lateral use of influence tactics among PAs in higher education to better understand their leadership capabilities and their use of influence to accomplish their work. Other demographic and contextual variables were also examined.

To compare behavioral influence tactics used by PAs in higher education with formal and informal authority, 39 participants completed the Presidential Assistants Demographic and Leadership Characteristics Survey and at least one Presidential Assistant Influence Incident Report Form. Incident forms were coded to identify the frequency of use of Yukl’s 11 behavioral influence tactics.

The responses of 30 PAs with informal authority and 9 PAs with formal authority revealed some inferences of slight differences in influence tactics use. For both groups rational persuasion, consultation, pressure and coalition tactics were used most often and in the same order of frequency. Personal appeal and exchange were preferred in the
same order of frequency but were almost never used. Apprising, ingratiation, inspirational appeal and legitimating tactics were used occasionally by both groups but preferences for these tactics was demonstrated in a different order. Kruskal-Wallis H tests indicated that PAs with formal authority were found to use collaboration, personal appeal and rational persuasion slightly more often than PAs with informal authority. More generally, PAs used inspirational appeal more frequently during employee relations incidents than during any other type of administrative situation. They also used consultation more frequently during event planning incidents than any other tactic.

This study was supported by previous research on the use of influence tactics and their outcomes, while suggesting possibilities for future research. Results also suggested a relationship between PAs perceptions of their sources of power and their use of influence tactics. Implications for research and practice as well as directions for future research are discussed.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this research project to five very important people.

To my parents, Eugene and Jocelyn, who provided me the gifts that every child so beautifully and desperately deserves: love, confidence, trust, faith, respect, humility and the ability to dream and to learn. Your sacrifices to make sure that your children received the rewards of education that you yourselves did not get are the only reason this was even possible.

To my children, Jonathan and Nicholas, who both gave up enormous amounts of time with their father to allow me to achieve this success. Please know that your presence has changed my entire world in ways that I could have never imagined. It has driven me to focus on wanting to be the best example for you of what life can hold. Hard work, perseverance, and dedication pay off in every possible way and I hope that this will be a testament to you of that. Thanks also for keeping me grounded and humble by laughing every time you say “Doctor Dad!”

Finally, and most importantly, this is dedicated to my most beautiful angel, my wife, Pamela Sue. No person in life can ever accomplish anything without a strong foundation of support to build their dreams upon. You have been, and continue to be, that rock for me and our family! You have sacrificed yourself, every day in every way, to ensure that I was able to achieve this lifelong goal. Whether I needed to be picked up and encouraged, sat down and spoken to or lifted up to soar, you have been there. Every chapter, every page, every paragraph and every period of this book are because of you! While this manuscript is written by my hand, it is not nearly as important as the book of my life and my heart. You are the coauthor of those things and I am blessed for the chapters we have already written and look forward to the thousands of chapters yet to come!
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation and the completion of the Ph.D. degree could not have been accomplished without the encouragement and support of many people.

To Dr. Jason Lane, who at first had taught me a few classes but who later agreed to become my advisor and committee chair once I had decided to pursue this focus on presidential assistants. You supported me through a process that was longer and more rigorous than any of us might have imagined. When life’s challenges sidetracked me, your encouragement helped me more than you can ever know. At every step of the way you never told me the road to go down but instead guided me into building my own path. You have earned my admiration, respect and gratitude. Thank you for your friendship!

Thank you to Drs. Hal Lawson and Karen Hitchcock who both willingly and excitedly took on the challenge of serving on my dissertation committee. Thank you for your wisdom, collegiality, encouragement and patience.

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To the faculty in the Educational Administration and Policy Studies department who supported my growth and development through this entire program. I thank you for all of your guidance and expertise.

Thank you to my colleagues, Julianne Messia, Elizabeth McGarry and Reid Ockerman who provided objective feedback on my work, listened carefully, asked all the right questions and kept me calm and confident throughout this process. I am honored by your friendship and inspired by your own commitment to scholarship.

To my research coding team, Thomas and JV, who were critical to my success in completing the analysis of this study. In the weeks we spent content analyzing the
influence incident report forms, I was constantly amazed at your work ethic and your insights. Thank you for your commitment to my research.

To my bosses, Drs. James Gozzo and John Pieper, along with my colleagues, Dr. Angela Dominelli and Mr. John Denio, who supported and affirmed me through every stage of this learning adventure. Their mentoring has been invaluable as I continue to develop my own capacities for leadership.

Without the support and guidance from all mentioned, I would not have been able to find my way to and through a Doctoral program. I am blessed to have you all in my life!
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Research Problem

During the last 25 years, the position of presidential assistant (PA) has been a rapidly growing senior-level administrative position within institutions of higher education (Miles 2000, Montell, The President’s Alter Ego 2000, Stiles 2008, Bassham 2009). The responsibilities of a presidential assistant are far too diverse to be adequately represented in any one job description. Probably one of the best attempts at describing exactly what PAs do was offered by James J. Scally (1997), one of the founders of the National Association of Presidential Assistants in Higher Education (NAPAHE). Put simply, “I do what needs to be done” (1). Those that choose to accept the role are active participants in the many leadership and support functions that occur across the institution. In many cases, the activities that PAs participate in are instrumental to the success of the organization in which they work. Though PAs usually operate outside of the standard hierarchy of the organization, they are often responsible for ensuring both the achievement of presidential initiatives and day to day institutional tasks. Surprisingly, while those in the PA position play an important role in the operation of their institution, there exists little research about them.

In the middle to late 1980s there were only a limited number of colleges and universities employing presidential assistants (Curchack, Remembering our Founders: The History of NAPAHE 2000, Montell, The President’s Alter Ego 2000). Through the
last decade of the 20th and first decade of the 21st century, the position of presidential assistant was being added at institutions of higher education in the United States at a rapid rate (McDade, Putnam and Miles, A report on the National Study of Assistants to the President/Chancellor in Higher Education 1999, Montell, The President's Alter Ego 2000, Stiles 2008). Recent estimates project that there currently are between 2000 and 3000 presidential assistants in higher education in the United States (Montell, The President's Alter Ego 2000, McDade, Putnam and Miles, A report on the National Study of Assistants to the President/Chancellor in Higher Education 1999). This represents that at least one-third to one-half of all postsecondary institutions in the United States have a presidential assistant. Even though the professional field experienced such rapid growth during the last 20 years, the rate of growth has begun to slow, primarily because the number of institutions that were adding a presidential assistant to their staff have already filled those positions (Stiles 2008).

There is no standard description of what the presidential assistant position is or exactly what this position is responsible for. The specific charges of this role can vary quite drastically and depend entirely on the institution at which the assistant works, the president for whom they work, and the individual who is filling the position (Fisher 1985, Malloy 2003, Cook 1993, Stringer 1977, Giddens 1971, Carlson 1991, O'Reilly 2000, Quatroche 1990). This lack of consistency in the position is no better illustrated than by the diverse titles that are used to describe it. Whether assistant to the president, special
assistant to the president, chief of staff, or any other name that may be used, those that fill this role are just as diverse as the names used to describe it. The individuals that take on these responsibilities come from varying demographic (e.g., gender, ethnicity, age, location, etc.) and experiential backgrounds (e.g., business, faculty, administrative positions in higher education, etc.) (Carlson 1991, Quatroche 1990, Curchack, Other Duties as Assigned: Presidential Assistants in Higher Education 2009, O'Reilly 2000).

Unlike so many other positions in higher education that fall into a specific hierarchy related to authority, the assistant to the president position does not often do so. Whereas nearly all others that report to the president in institutions of higher education such as deans and vice presidents have direct line authority, the assistant to the president does not. Though some assistants have some minimal line authority specific to their oversight of the office of the president, typically the presidential assistants are staff positions with no line authority at all (Anselm 1981, Stiles 2008). This lack of specific line authority does not mean that the assistant to the president is without power. The authority or power that comes to individuals in this role does not come from a specific governance structure, but is likely a result of proximity of the individual to the president (Anselm 1981, Stiles 2008). Opportunities exist on a daily basis for the assistant to be involved in discussions surrounding important decisions and to influence the president in numerous areas of institutional operations. While PAs often depend on implied (indirect) authority and power from their supervisors, they
can also become independent of their president and convert this power, due to presidential proximity, into power of their own (Fisher 1985).

Further evidence for the necessity of a descriptive and exploratory mixed-methods study of this nature is provided by the fact that other than the Stiles’ (2008) research, there exists almost no other exploration into the leadership practices of presidential assistants. Additionally, with the exception of those in the presidential role, senior administrators encompass the least studied and most misunderstood career field in higher education (Gmelch 2002). Information about senior administrators is sparse, and most of the research that does exist about leadership traits for administrators in higher education does not focus on PAs but, instead is centered upon those at the chief executive level (Doring 1992, American Council on Education 2007, Wessel and Keim 1994, Keim 2003, Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges 2006). Investigating such information with a focus on presidential assistants will allow those in the assistant position to better understand the power and authority they have in addressing the issues they face and how these may affect their influence and leadership process. It will also help assistants articulate their purpose, scope, and oversight to other senior administrators, particularly those who might be new to a role or to first-time presidents. Comparative analysis using both the demographic and experiential data will allow possible relationships between all of these variables to be identified.
This exploratory study, rooted in French and Raven’s (1959, Raven 1965) six social power bases and building upon the relationships between these power bases and proactive influence tactics (Yukl and Falbe, Importance of Different Power Sources in Downward and Lateral Relations 1991), will look at the relationships and associations that may exist between demographic variables, authority and how presidential assistants use influence tactics laterally in daily leadership situations.

Importance/Significance of the Study

There is not a great deal of literature discussing presidential assistants in higher education, and there is even less work focusing on their leadership. The only information that does exist focuses on the situational leadership styles and sources of power used by PAs (Stiles 2008). The lateral use of influence tactics by presidential assistants and their relationship to authority and social power have not been researched and discussed in the literature. A presidential assistant’s approach to leadership is dependent upon their specific position, the authority granted, and is influenced by the different situations that they encounter during the course of the work day. In addition, since their position affords the opportunity to influence both internal and external constituents, a descriptive study focused on emergent themes that researches presidential assistants’ lateral use of influence tactics would be relevant and beneficial.
Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this descriptive and exploratory, mixed-methods study was to examine the lateral use of influence tactics among presidential assistants in higher education. Other demographic and contextual variables such as age, gender, level of education, length of tenure in the PA position, perceptions of sources of power and the existence of line authority were also examined. Such a study was important given that:

1. There is a relationship between the sources of social power, as described by French and Raven (1959, Raven 1965), and interpersonal influence tactics (G. Yukl, Power and the Interpersonal Influence of Leaders 2009, Yukl and Falbe, Importance of Different Power Sources in Downward and Lateral Relations 1991). Stiles’ (2008) work is the only research thus far to focus on presidential assistants and their sources of power. However, while Stiles was interested in the interaction between a PAs leadership styles and sources of power, his work did not look specifically at the possible associations between sources of power and influence tactics used by PAs.

2. Power and authority are closely related, though they are distinct theoretical concepts. This close relationship between power and authority, coupled with the close relationship between power and influence, present interesting questions regarding the potential interaction between authority and the use of influence. While Carlson (1991) and Quatroche (1990) found that PAs exercise a great deal
of authority because of their proximity to the president, and while Stiles’ (2008) work briefly touched upon the differences between formal and informal authority (line and staff authority) for presidential assistants, the possible association between the authority and lateral use of influence tactics of presidential assistants has not been researched and discussed in the literature.

3. There exists well established research regarding the demographic and career data of individuals in the presidential assistant position (McDade, Putnam and Miles, A national study of assistants to the president/chancellor in higher education 1996, Green and McDade 1994, Carlson 1991, Miles 2000, O'Reilly 2000, Bassham 2009). However, there is little insight regarding potential relationships between these factors and a PAs use of authority and lateral influence.

This investigation is based upon recommendations of previous researchers to explore other leadership models and theories for applicability to the presidential assistant position in higher education (Carlson 1991, Stiles 2008, O'Reilly 2000).

Research Objectives

The Research Questions and Sub-questions

1. What influence tactics do presidential assistants in higher education use most often in the lateral direction in the completion of their job?
2. What patterns of the lateral use of influence tactics differentiate between presidential assistants in higher education with formal authority and presidential assistants in higher education with informal authority?

3. What are the influence tactics used by presidential assistants in higher education in the lateral direction in the diverse types of administrative situations they encounter?

4. What is the relationship between various demographic variables (including but not limited to: age, gender, ethnicity, type of institution in which they work and length of time they have worked for their organization) and the lateral use of influence tactics for presidential assistants in higher education?

**Theoretical Framework**

This descriptive study of emergent themes employed the use of two theoretical frameworks. The first is the Bases of Social Power as initially defined by French and Raven (1959) and later modified by Raven (1992) in his Social Power Model. While not the primary focus, the French and Raven framework provided a supporting structure in this study. The second framework, which was the primary focus in this study (and that is tied closely to the French and Raven taxonomy), is the work done by Yukl in the interpersonal power-influence approach to leadership. More specifically, this approach focuses on the use of influence tactics by managers. According to Yukl, influence is the “bridge between the power approach and the behavior approach to leadership” (G. Yukl, Leadership in organizations 1998, 207). It is the combination of these two
theoretical frameworks that provided the origin of this study. The following sections provide a brief overview of the frameworks while a more detailed description of these theories will be presented in Chapter II of this work.

**Influence and Power**

A PA’s uses and sources of power play an important role in our understanding of their lateral use of influence. The diversity in leadership situations that presidential assistants encounter each day demand that a PA use different sources of power in order to be effective. Previous studies propose that a leader’s use of specific social power bases favor certain leadership situations over others (Raven 1993, Hinkin and Schriesheim 1990, Rim and Erez 1980, Yukl and Chavez 2002, G. Yukl 2007, G. Yukl 2010). This study investigated the associations that have been reported to exist between the six social power bases and influence tactics (Bruins 1999, Cohen and Bradford 2003, Raven 1992, G. Yukl 2009, Yukl and Falbe 1991) and attempted to discover any associations that may exist between these power bases and influence tactics and authority.

Influence is viewed as a form of power. In his book, *Power*, Adolph Berle (1969) noted that the use of influence and power is a refuge from chaos. Rollo May (1972) expressed that in order to be spared from condemnation to a life of unhappiness, individuals must be willing to exercise power and influence.
Though distinct from one another, power and influence are not independent of each other. Grimes (1978) defined power as “control or influence over the actions of others” (727). Cobb (1980) sees power and influence as both being based upon some set of power resources. Rost (1993) describes influence as a process of interaction between superior and subordinate in which the superior attempts to convince the subordinate to alter their behavior. Pfeffer (1992) views power as the ability to influence others. Porter, Angle and Allen (2003) believed power to be the capacity or potential to influence. Rashotte (2007) acknowledges that power and influence are distinct from one another but that power is “the ability to force or coerce” an individual to act in a particular way. Even LeBreton (2008) discusses that much of the research on influence arose out of a lack of satisfaction with the preexisting conceptual frameworks with social power. The distinctions between influence and power are represented in Table 1. (Gregg 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inference</th>
<th>Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consideration of task or request</td>
<td>Compliance with command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success based on interpersonal skills</td>
<td>Success based on position and personal attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplished by persuasion</td>
<td>Accomplished by coercion or manipulation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from* (Bozeman 1997)

**French and Raven’s Model**

French and Raven’s Social Power Base Model (French and Raven 1959, Raven, Social influence and power 1965) is based upon their belief that differential power relationships define leadership. Through their research, French and Raven identified
the power bases as: reward, coercion, legitimate, referent, expert and informational. A table containing a description of each of the 6 Social Power Bases follows (French and Raven 1959):

**TABLE 2 – Social Power Bases and their Definitions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Power</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reward Power</td>
<td>Power whose basis is the ability to reward. Reward power depends upon an individual’s ability to administer positive valences and to remove or decrease negative valences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coercive Power</td>
<td>Power whose basis is the ability to punish. Coercive power depends upon an individual’s ability to administer negative valences and to remove or decrease positive valences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimate Power</td>
<td>Power which stems from internalized values in one individual which dictate that another individual has a legitimate right to influence them. Further, the first individual has an obligation to accept the second individual’s influence. This is probably the most complex of the powers mentioned here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referent Power</td>
<td>Power whose basis is the identification of one individual with another individual. The stronger the identification between these two individuals, the greater the referent power of one over the other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert Power</td>
<td>Power which stems from the extent of the knowledge of one individual over that of another individual within a given area. This relies heavily on the special knowledge or expertness that one individual willingly attributes to another individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Power</td>
<td>Power whose basis is the information or logical argument that one individual could present to another individual in order to implement a change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the course of their responsibilities, presidential assistants are expected to complete a vast array of administrative tasks from the mundane to the most complex. These tasks represent a wide range of institutional areas including but not limited to: managing the office of the president (Schaeffer 2009), managing the life of the president
Oversight of office or institutional finances (Carlson 1991), participation in institutional advancement (Lingenfelter and McGreevey 2009), supervision of presidential communications (Haven and Boatright 2009), administration of government relations (O’Reilly 2000) and acting as secretary to the board (Kelly 2009). The responsibilities of the PA go beyond just completing tasks across institutional areas but also require that they can organize, collaborate, negotiate and influence leaders at the institution, even though the PA often has limited or no line authority within the organization (Stiles 2008). In order to be successful in their work, the presidential assistant must be able to use all of French and Raven’s sources of power (Bensimon and Neumann, Redesigning Collegiate Leadership: Teams and Teamwork in Higher Education 1993, Anselm 1981, Birnbaum, Presidential Succession and Institutional Functioning in Higher Education 1989).

**Yukl’s Model**

Yukl’s Interpersonal Power-Proactive Influence Model “translates the potentialities of power and authority into the realized action of leadership” (Faeth 2004, 20). The work Yukl has completed on influence tactics has had a number of focuses including direction of influence attempt (Yukl and Falbe, Influence Tactics and Objectives in Upward, Downward, and Lateral Influence Attempts 1990, Yukl and Falbe, Importance of Different Power Sources in Downward and Lateral Relations 1991,

With respect to this study of presidential assistants, the relevant focuses were on the frequency of tactic use laterally, the objective of the lateral influence attempt, and the effectiveness of the lateral influence attempt. This was the first study to investigate the lateral use of influence tactics by presidential assistants in higher education. A PA’s lateral use of influence tactics plays an important role in our understanding of their ability to change the behavior, beliefs and/or values of an individual or group.

This exploratory, mixed-methods study identified the relationships and possible associations that may exist between demographic variables, formal and informal authority and how presidential assistants laterally use influence tactics in daily leadership situations. The independent variables will include demographic data, power
and authority. Authority, which is defined as “power granted for a purpose” (Heifetz 1994), can be separated into both formal and informal types. Formal authority is derived from a recognized organizational structure with delineated lines of responsibility and influence, while informal authority may exist outside of these recognized organizational role definitions. Remember that influence is defined as the effect of one party (the agent) on another (the target) (Feltner 2009). The dependent variable was the target’s willingness to carry out the agent’s request, which is one immediate outcome of an influence attempt.

TABLE 3 – Influence Tactics and their Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Tactic</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rational Persuasion</td>
<td>The agent uses logical arguments and factual evidence to show that a request or proposal is feasible and relevant for important task objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>The agent asks the target person to suggest improvements or help plan a proposed activity or change for which the target person’s support is desired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Appeals</td>
<td>The agent appeals to the target’s values and ideals or seeks to arouse the target person’s emotions to gain commitment for a request or proposal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>The agent offers to provide assistance or necessary resources if the target will carry out a request or approve a proposed change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprising</td>
<td>The agent explains how carrying out a request or supporting a proposal will benefit the target personally or help to advance the target’s career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>The agent uses praise and flattery before or during an attempt to influence the target person to carry out a request or support a proposal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Appeals</td>
<td>The agent asks the target to carry out a request or support a proposal out of friendship, or asks for a personal favor before saying what it is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>The agent offers something the target person wants, or offers to reciprocate at a later time, if the target will do what the agent requests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimizing Tactics</td>
<td>The agent seeks to establish the legitimacy of a request or to verify that he/she has the authority to make it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>The agent uses demands, threats, frequent checking, or persistent reminders to influence the target to do something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
<td>The agent enlists the aid of others, or uses the support of others, as a way to influence the target to do something.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The outcome of an influence incident refers to the ability of the agent (the PA) to either successfully or unsuccessfully convince the target (the person the PA is trying to influence) to complete a request. More detailed information on the outcomes of influence incidents is contained in TABLE 23.

While not graphically depicted above, one important piece of the presidential assistant position is that it is a role within higher education that is negotiated between the PA and the president. Additionally, it is also heavily influenced by the social ecology that exists at each institution. As such it should be assumed that these factors play a role in formulating how a presidential assistant will function and the way that power, authority and influence will be used.
Overview of the Methodology

Research Design

This study used a mixed methods (Tashakkori and Teddlie, Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research 2003) design. Such a design is a procedure using both quantitative and qualitative means for collecting and analyzing data within a single study, to understand a research problem more completely (Cresswell 2011, Cresswell, Goodchild and Turner 1996). The justification for using a mixed methods approach was that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods alone are sufficient to investigate the details of the situation (Cresswell, Plano Clark, et al. 2003). When quantitative and qualitative methods are used in combination, they complement each other and allow for a more complete analysis (Greene, Caracelli and Graham, Toward a Conceptual Framework for Mixed-Method Evaluation Designs 1989, Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998, Greene 2006, Brannen 2009).

The data were gathered through the use of incident report forms in which presidential assistants relayed critical incidents related to their use of influence in the lateral direction and through the electronic administration (Ritter and Sue, The Survey Questionnaire 2007) of a demographic survey. Presidential assistants were asked to complete an electronic version of an incident report form describing their lateral influence attempts on those individuals with whom they interact daily (peers). Each PA was asked to complete at least one incident report form. While forms for this study only
required one time submissions, participants were asked to complete entries as quickly as possible following the completion of each lateral influence incident. Instructions on how to complete the form were provided to each presidential assistant. Each incident described in the incident report forms submitted by the presidential assistants was coded to identify, in them, evidence of any of the eleven influence tactics defined by Yukl and described above. The survey instrument used for this study was an edited version of the Thirteen-Question Demographic Survey used by Stiles (2008) in his dissertation research. An investigator’s design of data methods for the study portrays the fundamental ideas of mixed methods research (Collins and O’Cathain 2009). Accordingly “methods should be mixed in a way that has complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses” (Johnson and Turner 2003, 299). The above discussed methodology was selected with these items in mind.

Many of the problems related to traditional surveys, such as having a known limited population, are solved by use of an electronic survey (Ritter and Sue, Introduction to Using Online Surveys 2007). While the incident report forms required lengthier amounts of time regarding collection, the use of an electronic survey provided the opportunity for more rapid receipt of responses directly from the identified population. This more rapid receipt of the survey responses allowed analysis of the data to begin while awaiting the receipt of responses from the report forms. Further, while these two forms of data collection are different, the information gathered from the
incident forms (situations in which influence tactics are used laterally, successful or unsuccessful nature of tactic use laterally, and frequency of tactic use in the lateral direction) and the information gathered from the survey (perspectives of influence tactic use from agents, frequency of tactic use, and information regarding authority and the social power bases) complemented each other. Such an approach allowed for a comparative confirmation of data collected from each method.

Population, Participants and Sample

First, participants were drawn from those presidential assistants that were current members of the National Association of Presidential Assistants in Higher Education (NAPAHE). The membership represented a cross section of the entire national population of presidential assistants in higher education institutions. The number of presidential assistants enrolled in NAPAHE as members during 2012-2013 was around 500. Second, using the National Center for Education Statistics’ College Navigator, a list of colleges and universities was established. College Navigator is a free consumer information tool designed to help students, parents, high school counselors and others get information about nearly 7000 postsecondary institutions in the United States. The websites of the colleges and universities listed were visited and the names and electronic mail (e-mail) contacts of presidential assistants was compiled. Nearly 900 names were gathered and merged with the contact information for the NAPAHE
membership. After deletion of all duplicates, a list of 1,461 presidential assistants was compiled.

Survey Measure

Presidential Assistant Demographic Information. Respondents were asked a range of demographic questions including but not limited to: age, gender, ethnicity, type of institution in which they work and length of time they have worked for their organization.

Assumptions

All research studies contain within their design some assumptions made by the researcher(s). It is important to clearly describe and understand these assumptions prior to the start of the project. When delving into the literature, nearly all of the research that exists on presidential assistants in higher education shows that there are no formal training opportunities for individuals entering this role. Most of the opportunities that do exist are primarily provided through meetings, seminars and on-the-job training activities (Carlson 1991, McDade, Putnam and Miles, A national study of assistants to the president/chancellor in higher education 1996, Miles 2000, O'Reilly 2000, Stiles 2008). Additional research has acknowledged that this lack of training has been one of the difficult parts of identifying the leadership roles of presidential assistants and that as this position grows more formalized and focused, training for these individuals will be even more necessary (Fincher August 1998). This lack of training may also play a role
in the desire of presidential assistants to continue employment as presidential assistants (Bassham 2009). Another factor for consideration is that the career path for individuals entering into the presidential assistant position is not consistent; ranging from clerical/secretary inside and outside of higher education to faculty to student affairs directors (Carlson 1991, O'Reilly 2000, Miles 2000). When you combine the lack of development opportunities for presidential assistants with the great diversity in their previous professional experiences it is reasonable to expect that there may be wide diversity in the presidential assistant’s response to different leadership situations (Stiles 2008).

For this descriptive study of emergent themes, it was assumed that the presidential assistants may or may not fall into the organizational hierarchy. Those presidential assistants that manage only the Office of the President, without oversight of other institutional departments, were not identified as line officers within the formal structure of power and authority. Instead they were identified as staff officers who may exercise the informal structure of power and authority granted to them by the president. Those presidential assistants with responsibility for and supervision of other functional areas at their respective college or university were identified as line officers within the formal hierarchy of power and authority at that institution.
Delimitations and Limitations

The following issues and concerns were recognized at the onset of this study as potential delimitations and limitations of the investigation. These include:

Delimitations

1. This study includes information about PAs representing various higher education institutions by size, status and Carnegie classification. Participants hailed from a range of accredited public, private/independent, and private/religious institutions that offer varying levels of degrees (two-year, four-year, masters, professional and/or doctorate degrees). Findings from the study may be reasonably applied to PAs who serve within these types of institutions.

2. Presidential assistant positions with the same title may encompass a wide range of duties that vary across higher education institutions. This study did not examine position titles for information regarding the actual duties or experiences within the titles. The sole exception is related to the number and type of direct reports that each PA had.

Limitations

1. A primary population of the volunteer members of the more than 1,400 names and electronic mail (e-mail) contacts of presidential assistants compiled from NAPAHE membership and the National Center for Education Statistics’ College Navigator. This number of PAs only accounts for approximately 40-50% of the
total presidential assistants in the United States. Though the study used a qualitative approach to convenience sampling, a limitation was that the sample population may not have been representative of the total population of PAs nationwide. Thus, results of this study may not be able to be generalized beyond the stated population.

2. The degree of objectivity of respondents to comment in their incident report form and survey responses without subjective bias. The presidential assistants participating in this study responded from their individual perspectives that included personal definitions and life experiences. This could have provided socially desired answers.

3. The individual personality and style of the respondents in this study. The collected data and results of this study were solely dependent upon and limited by the extent to which the participants were willing to accurately present and report their personal attitudes and behaviors.

4. Research limited to the presidential assistants of the college or university. Applications from the study could reasonably be applied to all PAs who serve in higher education institutions within the United States, but caution should be applied due to the limitation of this study. Further, generalization of the results of the study leading to application to other administrators in higher education institutions should also be done with caution.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this review is to provide a foundation to allow for the examination and comparison of the differences in the type of influence tactics used laterally by presidential assistants (PAs) in higher education. It will also allow for a discussion about the relationship between various demographic variables and the lateral use of influence tactics for PAs in higher education. This discussion will be presented in three parts. First, a brief background on the position of assistants to the president will be discussed. Second, a definition of the role of PAs in higher education will be identified and an analysis on the currently existing research/literature regarding PAs in higher education will be reviewed. Finally, an investigation of the sources of power, authority, and influence tactics and their use in leadership will conclude this section.

Background

Much of the research that has been conducted regarding presidential assistants in higher education has primarily occurred within the last 20 years. Unfortunately, even though this work has been completed recently, the research has still been rather sparse (Stiles 2008). There have been few studies found in peer reviewed journals (Whisler 1960, Giddens 1971, Stringer 1977). Additional commentaries on PAs are found in reports and periodicals (Fisher 1985, Cook 1993, Gilmour 1995, Montell, From
Presidential Assistant to President 2000, Montell, The President's Alter Ego 2000, Malloy 2003, Lingenfelter, Make Way for PAs: Presidential assistants are advancement officers, too 2004, Terry, et al. 2009). There has been one book published about the presidential assistant in higher education (Curchack, Other Duties as Assigned: Presidential Assistants in Higher Education 2009). Yet, the most significant research on this position has been conducted and presented in the form of six doctoral dissertations (Carlson 1991, Miles 2000, O’Reilly 2000, Stiles 2008, Bassham 2009, Gifford 2011).

To date, this dissertation research has explored: 1) demographics, 2) professional roles and functions, 3) responsibilities, 4) training and skills, 5) career paths, 6) leadership styles and power, 7) organizational commitment relative to career stages, and 8) typology of PAs based upon formal responsibilities (Carlson 1991, Miles 2000, O’Reilly 2000, Stiles 2008, Bassham 2009, Gifford 2011). In each of the previous studies conducted on presidential assistants, the researchers have suggested further investigations be carried out with this population. Carlson (1991) recommends taking a closer look at “the leadership behavior of assistants” (Professional Roles and Functions of Presidential Assistants in Contemporary Higher Education, 101). Miles (2000) proposes further studies into the qualitative attributes of PAs such as leadership traits to provide new insights into the position. O’Reilly (2000) suggests that the position be studied further to track the evolution of the position particularly in regards to power and influence. Bassham (2009) recommends that the presidential assistant’s
commitment to their position and institution should continue to be investigated as the
tenure of PAs is increasing while the tenure of presidents is decreasing. As such,
presidential assistants are becoming critical players in the leadership of institutions,
particularly because they can provide consistency and continuity in times of transition.
Gifford (2011) suggests that an investigation into the multiple roles of assistants to the
president with a specific focus on effectiveness may allow for the benefits of potential
role concentration. While this previous research has focused primarily on roles and
responsibilities and the careers of presidential assistants, the work done by Stiles (2008)
establishes a foundation for discussions about a PAs power sources and leadership
styles that can be used as a springboard for studying a presidential assistant’s use of
power, authority, and influence tactics.

Evolution of the Position of Assistants to the President

In order to appropriately define the role of assistant to the president in higher
education it is necessary to first investigate a more general approach to assistant
positions. The role of assistants to chief officers or chief executives is not unique to
higher education. Such positions have been and continue to be seen in the military, the
government, the corporate world, and in professional associations (O'Reilly 2000).
O'Reilly’s investigation into other fields has shown that there are ways in which the
tasks accomplished by assistants in these fields are both different from and similar to
those accomplished by assistants in higher education. Most of these differences are
centered on position titles, management style, hierarchical systems, and use of power and influence.

**Assistants to the President/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) outside Higher Education Government**

The best opportunity to investigate PAs in government is presented by looking at the President of the United States. Not unlike presidents in higher education, which will be discussed later on in the work, the early presidents in America were not surrounded by a great deal of support staff. Presidents since George Washington were in need of individuals to assist them with the responsibilities they had accepted with the position (Relyea 2008). Though history shows that Thomas Jefferson had only two support staff, by the end of Herbert Hoover’s presidency, over a century later, the support staff to the president numbered thirty-three and included one secretary to the President (then the title of the President’s chief aide), two assistant secretaries, two executive clerks, a stenographer, and nine other office personnel (Burke 2009). In 1939 Congress established the Executive Office of the President (EOP) which encompassed both the White House Office and the Bureau of Budget. The EOP was the first officially recognized and designated opportunity for assistants to the president funded by the federal government (Relyea 2008).

Probably the most recognized position in the Executive Office of the President is the Chief of Staff. The Chief of Staff is the highest ranking member of the EOP and
oversees all parts of the White House Office. The individual in this position also serves as the most senior aide to the president (Relyea 2008). A distinction commonly made at the executive level of the federal government clearly separates policy personnel from operating personnel. Policy personnel are usually appointed and are subject to removal upon a change in office after an election. Operating personnel are longer term employees who are more like civil servants. Though the chief of staff is treated as policy personnel, many “assistants to” in the government are operating personnel. (Whisler 1960)

Unlike the cabinet officers, the chief of staff does not fall into the direct line authority of the president but is classified as a support position (O'Reilly 2000). However, the chief of staff has direct supervision over all those within the White House Office. Though critical to the success of the president, the chief of staff is not a required position in the EOP. Whether or not there is a Chief of Staff is a determination made at the sole discretion of the President of the United States. Moreover the specific responsibilities of each Chief of Staff rely heavily on the individual appointed to the position as well as on the president whom they will be serving. (Burke 2009)

Corporate World

The position of assistant to the president/CEO also exists in the business world. However, unlike the established governmental structure discussed above regarding hierarchy and titles, the corporate world does not supply similar restrictions.
Comparable positions here offer varying titles as well as different reporting relationships for those in the position (O'Reilly 2000).

The title of Assistant to the President in the corporate world is used in one of two ways. Its description is either very vague and refers to an individual who does not hold an official position in the structure of the organization or is extremely specific and refers to someone who not only holds a legitimate position within the structural hierarchy of the organization but who reports directly to the chief executive and will support them (Whisler 1960). Whisler discusses that those assistants that end up as invaluable to the success of the president or the institution did not start out that way, but instead moved up to this level by proving their administrative value. Similar to positions in the government, the assistant to the president in the corporate world directly supports the president and is a staff position that typically holds no formal line authority within the organization (O'Reilly 2000).

As was briefly mentioned above, these positions in the business sector have a varying set of official titles. Usually individuals in these positions receive designations such as vice-president, corporate planner, senior vice-president, or executive vice-president (Knisley and Matlins 1980). Knisley and Matlins agree with Whisler that these individuals are formal corporate officers within the organization, however they note that this group does not always directly report to the CEO but instead may sometimes
be responsible to the president or chairman only. Like in so many other areas, these assistants are responsible for helping the president carry out his or her responsibilities.

**Military**

In the earliest days of the military, commanding officers were often found to be fighting side by side with their units. However, as the tactics of warfare developed and increased in complexity it became more and more likely that commanders would end up being injured. To insure that such injuries were less common, military commanders began using messengers to communicate with their soldiers. This approach became especially common during the mid to late seventeenth century when firearms began to dominate the battlefields. It was during this time that these messengers developed into the position now known as the *aide-de-camp* or literally translated the “camp assistant.” (tactics: changes in command 2009)

The aide-de-camp is “an officer on the personal staff of a general, admiral, or other high-ranking commander who acts as his confidential secretary in routine matters” (aide-de-camp 2009). A unique part of this position is its foundation on mutual agreement from both the superior and the subordinate and that the relationship can be terminated at the desire of either individual (Whisler 1960). The term is French and came to be during the time of Napoleon. Under Napoleon, these assistants were typically high ranking military officers who served in a behind the scenes capacity for the commander. Their roles were both to keep Napoleon constantly informed about
what was going on with his troops and the enemy and to transmit information from Napoleon to his units. As has been discussed in both the government and corporate examples of such positions, these assistants typically did not have delegated line authority or supervisory responsibilities. Though the aide-de-camp was responsible for official military duties, the position has become primarily social in nature in more recent times. More recently, in many countries, the name has also changed and is now known as the adjutant. (aide-de-camp 2009)

Conclusion

Whether in government, business, or the military, assistants to the president/CEO are an important part of organizational structure and managerial success. Though these professions are quite different, the assistant positions within them share quite a few similarities. First, there is a lack of clarity that exists in defining exactly what these assistants are responsible for (Stringer 1977, Cook 1993, Curchack, Other Duties as Assigned: Presidential Assistants in Higher Education 2009, Transue 2009). Much of the formal description for these jobs depends on the person in the career, the individual to whom they report, and the organization in which they work. Second, there is no agreement on or consistency in what the official title of these positions should be. In the government it may be secretary, assistant to the president, or chief of staff; in the corporate world it may be vice president, corporate planner, or executive vice-president; in the military it may be military assistant, adjutant, or aide-de-camp.
These numerous titles only add to the lack of a formal description of the job. Finally, whether or not the individual assistant falls into a formal line of authority or is permitted to supervise staff directly also differs. While in one location the assistant is placed into the vertical structure of hierarchy within the institution, at another location the assistant is placed into the horizontal structure of hierarchy. While in one location they are given supervision of direct reports in the organization, at another location they are not supervisors and hold no formal line authority.

**Presidential Assistant Position in Higher Education**

While the items discussed above exhibit many similarities for those in the assistant to positions, they clearly display a definite lack of clarity regarding the role of assistant to the president. More importantly, our investigation into these positions thus far has provided a foundation to the position in higher education. However, to solidify this foundation it is necessary to develop a basic understanding of the factors that made the appearance of this role inevitable in higher education specifically.

Beginning with the founding of Harvard College in 1636, higher education became a part of the American society. During the colonial years and well into the nineteenth century, institutions were often operated by just a single individual, the president (Goodchild and Wechsler 1997). He was responsible for both the academic and administrative tasks for the entire institution (O'Reilly 2000). As time progressed, the entire administration of the college or university was composed of the trustees, the
president, and a limited number of faculties all of whom could be seen as having the same focus (Veysey 1965). By the middle of the seventeenth hundreds we see the first individual with specific responsibilities listed as assistant to the president, become formally documented at Columbia College (O'Reilly 2000).

After the conclusion of the Civil War, colleges and universities in the United States began to experience a drastic change in their structure: “Before the Civil War most institutions had managed with a president, a treasurer, and a part-time librarian” (Rudolph 1990, 434). It was during this time that the number of administrators working at these institutions began to rise and the office of the president itself was also developing. Instead of being the sole administrator and faculty member, the president was becoming less involved with instruction and more involved with management of the organization (Gruber 1997), leading to the evolution of the assistant to the president administrative office (Giddens 1971).

As enrollment in higher education continued to grow and the demand for additional services kept increasing, institutions needed to respond appropriately. The response was the continued growth of administration to support these changes and allow more freedom to the faculty enabling them to stay focused on their fields (Rudolph 1990). In this regard administrators became a critical piece to the function of the academic community (Austin 1984). By the end of the nineteenth century the staff of the president had grown exponentially. Not only were administrators assisting with the
faculty, the students, registration, admissions, and finances but there also emerged a number of administrative assistants to the president. Rudolph (1990) relays that these assistants “were in charge of anything and everything – public relations, church relations, civic relations, student relations, faculty relations” (p. 435).

By the 1890s the single trustee at Princeton College assigned a faculty member to serve the new president as his assistant, and in the early twentieth century we see three other college presidents being allocated assistants by their respective boards (Leslie 1997). In 1904 the board of trustees at Oberlin College established the first formally titled position of assistant to the president, creating this administrative office at its annual meeting that year (Giddens 1971). After establishing the assistant to the president role the Oberlin board made it very clear that the position would assist the president with fundraising and in public relations (Giddens 1971).

Though PAs in higher education began to emerge at the beginning of the twentieth century this position was only in place at a very small number of institutions (five) by 1950. As the second half of the twentieth century progressed there was an ever growing number of assistants to the president. Between 1950 and 1969, of the institutions represented in Giddens’ sample (45), eighty percent of them acquired PAs during this time. By 1970 the position had become one of significant presence in higher education; however, these individuals were likely fixtures at only the much larger institutions (Montell, The President’s Alter Ego 2000).
Those in the position of presidential assistant in higher education continued to grow through the 1970s and 1980s (Montell, *The President’s Alter Ego* 2000). By 1987 there was a desire, by five of these PAs, to begin setting up annual meetings meant specifically for assistants to the president. These individuals established a steering committee to work on this session and began referring to themselves as Presidential Assistants in Higher Education (PAHE) (Curchack, *Remembering our Founders: The History of NAPAHE* 2000). It was through these sessions at a couple of conferences that the idea arose to survey current PAs in higher education. This survey received over 400 responses, 70% of the total surveys issued, and provided the first opportunity to formulate a true understanding of both the breadth and depth of this position in higher education (Quatroche 1990). By the year 2000 it was believed that the total number of PAs in higher education had grown to well over 800 and estimates are that there are over 2000 such individuals at colleges and universities today (Montell, *The President’s Alter Ego* 2000).

**Definition of Presidential Assistant in Higher Education**

In the interest of laying the groundwork to allow for a more concrete discussion moving forward, it becomes necessary to provide a formal, working definition of exactly what is meant by assistant to the president. The definition provided will be used as the explanation of the role of assistant to the president in higher education for the remainder of this work. The terms presidential assistant and assistant to the president
will be used interchangeably throughout this document. Such terms will be used to describe the individual at a college or university who serves on the president’s senior management team (Gifford 2011), reports directly to the president of the institution (Stiles 2008), is usually the president’s closest confidant (Montell, The President’s Alter Ego 2000), and may or may not have formal line authority (O’Reilly 2000, Anselm 1981). The individual’s opportunity to supervise other staff or exhibit true power and authority will vary depending upon the institution in which the assistant works. These titles will also encompass similar positions with the following names: Special Assistant to the President, Executive Assistant to the President, Chief of Staff, and Assistant to the Chancellor. It is important to point out here that most of the research that has been conducted regarding leadership has not centered on presidential assistants but instead has been focused on presidents in higher education (Doring 1992).

The Academic Presidency

Formulating the most comprehensive understanding of the position of presidential assistant in higher education cannot simply be done by focusing only on the PAs themselves. A critical component providing context to the role of the PA is an awareness of the college presidency. In the last decade, there has been a significant increase in the literature specifically focused on the presidency in higher education. In 2005, Padilla took a look at six extraordinary university presidents (Portraits in Leadership: Six Extraordinary University Presidents). Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, a
former president of both Hartford University and The George Washington University, wrote a book focused on the college presidency (Trachtenberg, Big Man on Campus: A University President Speaks Out on Higher Education 2008). Bowen’s book, Lessons Learned: Reflections of a University President (2011), was written about his experience as president of Princeton University. Based upon her experience as the president of the University of Puget Sound, Resneck Pierce (2012), authored a book to help provide a clear understanding of what presidents do. Trachtenberg, Kauvar and Bogue considered why university leaders fail and how to prevent it (Presidencies Derailed: Why University Leaders Fail and How to Prevent It 2013). The former president of Harvard University, Derek Bok, has recently undertaken a sweeping assessment of higher education with specific reference to the presidency (Higher Education in America 2013).

Leading an academic organization is a complex endeavor to undertake (Birnbaum and Umbach 2001, Boman and Gallos 2011). One of the recurring themes in the recent higher education literature is the perspective that the academic presidency has grown, and continues to grow, in complexity (Hendrickson, et al. 2013, McWade 2014). As institutions of higher education have continued to develop, the chief leadership role in these institutions has also expanded. The academic president is one of the most influential positions in the organization whose decisions directly impact the future of the organization and the future of the students who attend (Jackson 2015). The
key roles of university and college presidents have been defined as balancing unity among faculty and staff, budgeting, developing community relations, fundraising and planning (American Council on Education 2012). Today’s college president is faced with enormous expectations that could even be seen as unrealistic (Bruininks, Keeney and Thorp 2010, Bowen 2011, Pierce 2012, Kantabutra 2010). “Even among individuals who have prepared for and have successfully obtained an academic presidency, the demands of the job often overwhelm the ablest among them” (Hendrickson, et al. 2013, 245).

As the role of institutions of higher education has continued to grow and develop so, too, has the role of the academic presidency. Recently, increased calls for accountability, accessibility and affordability have continued to mount. Such demands have not only increased pressures on higher education in general, but they have also dramatically increased the pressures being faced by those in the academic presidency. These changes to the environment of colleges and universities will require leadership in higher education to bring forth more efficient and effective practices of operating these businesses (Selingo 2013, Christensen and Eyring 2011). All of this has only resulted in further increasing the complexity of the academic presidency. This perspective on complexity is perfectly captured by the writings of Clark Kerr (1963), the first chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, and twelfth president of the University of California:
The university president in the United States is expected to be a friend of the students, a colleague of the faculty, a good fellow with the alumni, a sound administrator with the trustees, a good speaker with the public, an astute bargainer with the foundations and federal agencies, a politician with the state legislature, a friend of industry, labor and agriculture, a persuasive diplomat with the donors, a champion of education generally, a supporter of the professions (particularly law and medicine), a spokesman to the press, a scholar in his own right, a public servant at the state and national levels, a devotee of opera and football equally, a decent human being, a good husband and father, an active member of the church. Above all, he must enjoy traveling in airplanes, eating his meals in public, and attending public ceremonies. No one can be all of these things. Some succeed at being none. (29-30)

Herman B. Wells, the eleventh president of Indiana University, spoke in direct agreement to this idea that the president cannot accomplish all of these tasks alone: “A university president never has all the talents required to deal with his many and varied duties as the leader of an important university faculty. Therefore, he must seek to have around him administrative aides of the highest competence, all of whom, if possible, complement his qualities” (1980, 120). Wells goes on further to state that: “If he [the academic president] is to be held responsible by the faculty, students, and trustees for the discharge of the work of the president’s office, he must be allowed to surround himself with the kinds of people who can interact best with him and each other and who can form together the most effective and efficient team” (1980, 121). These growing demands on the presidency seem to advocate all the more for the role of presidential assistants in higher education.
Professionalization of the Presidential Assistant Position in Higher Education

Unfortunately, the literature that exists on presidential assistants in higher education is very limited. This should not be surprising considering that, unfortunately, senior administrators (presidents, vice presidents, deans, etc.) at colleges and universities are the most misunderstood and least studied career field in higher education (Gmelch 2002). The literature that currently exists comes from a variety of sources such as edited books, reports, periodicals, journal articles, and dissertations. The most significant scholarly works completed on presidential assistants in higher education have been in the form of doctoral dissertations.

Roles and Functions of the Presidential Assistant Position in Higher Education

Some of the first research conducted on presidential assistants in higher education was conducted by Nancy J. Carlson (1991) and examined the professional roles and functions of assistants to the president at institutions of higher education in New England. The population for this study came from the seventy-one presidential assistants and sixty-eight colleges and universities on the official mailing list of the Steering Committee for Presidential Assistants in Higher Education, a part of the American Council on Education. This Steering Committee has been mentioned previously and was the predecessor of NAPAHE. Although all members were asked to participate in the survey and inventory process, only thirty-seven returned responses for evaluation.
In the evaluation of the survey data, Carlson finds that presidential assistants play a critical and essential role in the administration of their college or university. First and foremost, the assistant takes up the responsibility of completing routine tasks which frees up the president to spend his or her time participating in and accomplishing tasks and functions that only the president is capable of performing. The presidential assistant also controls the flow of information through the president’s office while, at the same time, controlling the access to the president by other individuals. All of these functions allow the presidential assistant to exhibit both personal and political power.

Many assistants are able to use their leadership abilities, previous experience, and the global view of the institution they have acquired to make decisions similar to those that the president would make. Because of this the assistant can serve as a capable sounding board for the president and represents an extension of the president that can help link the administrative functions of the institution. By extending the office of the president, the assistant can enable him or her to do the work of more than one individual. More often than not, the assistant works behind the scenes and away from the spotlight that often surrounds the president (this was also seen in the discussion of similar positions in the government, military, and corporate world). Doing so is necessary in order for the assistant to be effective. Ultimately, the efforts of the president and the PA must be combined and directed toward focusing and encouraging
others at the institution to advance the interests of the college or university and to work toward achieving its goals.

Carlson’s research established the importance of the hidden role of the PA. She emphasizes that the successful assistant must subordinate their own ego so that they present no direct or perceived threat to the president they serve or the other administrators they work with. Such an approach places the assistant at the same level of the institution as a vice president and yet they do not have to worry about the same direct responsibility or line authority. The primary focus for the PA should be on the process and the most effective way for them to operate is to be able to positively influence, inspire and persuade those they work with. (Carlson 1991)

Information on the roles and functions of the PA position continued to be built upon by James J. O’Reilly. Following the work done by McDade, Putnam, and Miles (McDade, Putnam and Miles, A national study of assistants to the president/chancellor in higher education 1996), O’Reilly conducted a study that used the same survey instrument. Unlike the McDade et al. research which eliminated those PAs at specialized institutions of higher education, this study applied their survey to those specialized institutions. O’Reilly analyzed the results of his survey using descriptive statistics, correlations, and cross tabulations. He also made comparisons to the earlier McDade et al. study results.
From his analysis, O’Reilly was able to show that the typical PA at specialized institutions of higher education is a middle-aged white female with a master’s degree who works at a private institution of less than 500 students. This is strikingly different data from the McDade et al. results and Miles’ (Miles 2000) analysis of them. Particularly striking is that females dominate the PA positions at specialized institutions compared to males being the majority at all other institutions. Not unlike the previous study, the typical incumbent was most likely the first person at the institution to hold the PA position.

Many of the results regarding PAs at specialized institutions of higher education were the same as those results shown about assistants to the president at other institutions of higher education. These major similarities are:

- They report directly to the president.
- They interact regularly with a number of senior officers and are considered to be senior management (Carlson 1991, Gilmour 1995, Lingenfelter, Make Way for PAs: Presidential assistants are advancement officers, too 2004, Malloy 2003, Miles 2000, Montell, The President’s Alter Ego 2000).
• They run the president’s office which frees the president to work on problems and projects upon which only the president can work (Malloy 2003, Miles 2000, Montell, The President’s Alter Ego 2000, Lingenfelter, Make Way for PAs: Presidential assistants are advancement officers, too 2004). This represents a similar conclusion from the Carlson study (Carlson 1991).

• They perform a gate-keeping function for the president, controlling the flow of information and controlling who gets in to see the president. These results also affirm similar conclusions put forth by Carlson (Carlson 1991).

This discussion of access again presents the idea of the influence that the PA can have on the president because of proximity. O’Reilly purports that both the president and the assistant are aware of this and that the assistant can work “to limit access to the president and, therefore, limit the ability of certain others to influence the president” (2000, 148).

Further statistical analysis conducted on the age, salary, gender, and duties of PAs was conducted. This analysis showed a diverse number of responsibilities, as well as different levels of responsibility, ages, and salaries amongst survey respondents. This investigation led O’Reilly to the realization that there may be two distinct groups of PA positions. The first is described as those assistants to the president that hold high responsibility positions and the second are those assistants to the president holding much lower responsibility positions. Those in high responsibility jobs were assumed to
have higher salaries. Though men and women were just as likely to have high responsibility as PAs, women were more likely to complete low responsibility tasks as well.

Additional analysis regarding gender in comparison to salary and seniority was conducted. These gender analyses showed that the typical male assistant to the president fell into the high salary range but had a short tenure. O’Reilly suggests that this may be because the PA position acts as a stepping stone for these individuals to some other position in higher education. This consistency did not exist with the female PAs in this survey. Women exhibited both short and long tenure in the position each with either a high or a low salary. Where one woman had a short tenure with a high salary similar to the men, there were other women with a short tenure and a low salary, a long tenure with a high salary, or a long tenure with a low salary. Here the suspicion is that specialized institutions may offer women more opportunities to hold these high level positions, but instead of coming to the institution from an outside location they may have been offered the opportunity to move from a position of low responsibility to one of higher responsibility. This may explain why they display such a diverse arrangement of options in the salary and tenure comparisons.

The most important conclusion that O’Reilly draws is that the assistant to the president is the personal advisor to the president (here again we see similarities to positions like these in other areas). The most accomplished and successful assistants
deal with all presidential issues and complex problems. They are good listeners, make recommendations to the president, and alert or caution him/her to the possible dangers that may arise during the course of their job. The assistant also uses their position to help the president make choices, recommends alternative courses of action, and because of proximity can make the president aware of things that without the assistant would not even get to the president. O’Reilly finishes his discussion by restating one of Carlson’s (Carlson 1991) conclusions: that with the president’s support, the PA oversees the decision-making agenda of the president. Assistants have proximity to the president, a daily opportunity to interact with the president, and the ear of the president, all of which have a direct relationship to their ability to influence the president in the decision making process: “Many of the thoughts and ideas that find their way into (or out of) presidential decisions and institutional policy could have begun with, or been shaped by, the presidential assistant” (O’Reilly 2000, 148).

Like some of the previous efforts to study presidential assistants in higher education, Antoinette G. Gifford used the formation of a typology to answer the basic question about the role of the PA. While others have looked more generally at career paths, career commitment and demographic descriptions of the role of the assistant to the president, Gifford is the first to attempt to define a specific description of this population. The primary objective of her research was “to capture a clear description of the role as well as explore differences in the position of presidential assistant and
develop a classification system or typology for understanding these differences” (Gifford 2011, 11). This dissertation was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the primary responsibilities found among presidential assistants? How can these activities be organized into a classification structure?

2. To what extent do these responsibilities relate to institutional characteristics such as size, control, and degree offerings?

3. To what extent do these responsibilities relate to personal and background characteristics of PAs such as degree attainment, prior experience and gender?

4. To what extent do these responsibilities relate to positional characteristics of PAs such as frequency of interaction with the president and others, and years in position?

Gifford based this investigation on the idea that it is necessary to create a greater understanding of the presidential assistant in higher education role and to bring greater clarity to the combinations of work that PAs perform. Further, she believed that the results could also contribute to the preparation, selection and development of future presidential assistants.

This study drew from information collected during the winter of 2003 – 2004 on the formal responsibilities of PAs collected through a survey of presidential assistants. The population, almost 1,800 in total, was identified through entries in the Higher Education Directory and membership in NAPAHE. Participants were those who
voluntarily chose to complete the online survey instrument. Of this group of potential participants 674 PAs successfully completed the online survey and were defined as the sample of this study.

In addition to the role specific questions of this survey, Gifford also collected information regarding demographic data about the survey participants; more specifically her demographic questions focused on gender, degree attained, years in position, salary, enrollment of the institution at which the PA worked, the highest degree offered at the institution in which the PA worked, and the type of institution at which the PA was employed. To collect her data Gifford used a survey that drew upon a questionnaire first developed by Miles (2000) in 1996 and adapted this survey to include questions that would be used to develop the work classification system of presidential assistants in higher education. These questions were developed from a review of job descriptions submitted by PAs that were housed with NAPAHE. After the initial data were reviewed, of the 674 responses received, the result was a usable data set that included responses from 642 presidential assistants.

Analysis of the data showed that the typical survey respondent in this study was a white, female who has worked in public higher education institutions with an enrollment of 9,999 students or less and has been in their current position for between three and a half and ten years. She also holds at least a master’s degree. These data are comparable to literature regarding presidential assistants as presented above (Carlson
1991, McDade, Putnam and Miles 1999, Miles 2000, O’Reilly 2000, Stiles 2008, Bassham 2009). On average, these individuals also earned $70,000 or less annually.

There were a few significant associations discovered during the analysis of the data. First, the most common role found among the survey group was administrative and included those responsibilities traditionally associated with the role of presidential assistant. Second, planning was most commonly attributed as the primary assignment for presidential assistants, with just over a quarter represented in the survey group. Third, in contrast, several roles (legal, student affairs, and constituent relations) were identified by a small subset of the response group. Finally, gender proved to be highly related to role dispersion with men assuming a greater breath of activity than women.

Investigating this information further found that women were more highly concentrated in the PA roles that were classified as support, whereas the men were more clustered in titles defined as managerial.

Professional Paths Leading to the Presidential Assistant Position in Higher Education

As previously discussed, Carlson (1991) examined the professional roles and functions of assistants to the president at institutions of higher education in New England. Additionally, Carlson also researched the educational backgrounds of these PAs and what positions and experience they acquired prior to entering the PA position. The data from this portion of Carlson’s study reveal that PAs came to the position of supporting the president from a diverse set of previous professional paths. The majority
(65%) of presidential assistants had served in previous administrative roles in higher education. The minority (8%) attested to an administrative position in business or industry. Twenty percent indicated prior service in an administrative position in government and 13% expressed other previous administrative experience.

Carlson also asked presidential assistants what prior experiences they believed were essential to be able to perform the position. Seventy-eight percent of PAs in higher education deemed a prior position in university or college administration to be essential. Fourteen percent believed a prior position in government, business, or industry was necessary. Yet, 8% of presidential assistants believed previous administrative experience to be unnecessary. While Carlson’s research took an introductory and surface level look at paths to the presidential assistant position in higher education, the work of Belinda Stephenson Miles looked at the career paths of PAs in much more detail.

Conducted in 2000, the focus of Miles’ research was on the career paths of PAs. More specifically, her interests were focused on whether or not there were specific professional paths that were more likely to lead to an individual becoming a presidential assistant. Miles’ work was conducted simultaneously to a study orchestrated by McDade, Putnam, and Miles (McDade, Putnam and Miles, A national study of assistants to the president/chancellor in higher education 1996) and was based upon the survey responses collected during this study. This research also sought to
increase the understanding about the differences that exist in how the role of the PA is conceived. Survey data were both qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed to identify whether or not a possible primary career path ideology would be advantageous for those in an assistant to the president position.

This study identified a three-tiered primary career path ideology ultimately leading to a position as a PA: 1) outside higher education secretarial/clerical, 2) inside higher education secretarial/clerical and 3) associate director/assistant director/professional staff. The primary career path was defined “based on the highest percentage of individuals who held a first prior position and other prior positions in common” (Miles 2000, 115). A coding scheme was applied to each of the positions listed by survey respondents in the career history section of the survey. The focus of this study was limited to the position held immediately prior to the first higher education professional employment position through the first PA position. Survey respondents who indicated that their assistant to the president role is conceived of as secretarial were excluded from the study.

The analysis performed on the collected data identified a number of important findings. First, the most commonly held position immediately prior to the PA position was that of associate director/assistant director/professional staff. Second, the presence of females and those from non-Caucasian backgrounds in the assistant to the president position is very limited. This may indicate that there may still be barriers that these
groups have to overcome. Third, the higher the level of education achieved by those in
the PA job the more senior the type of position they will hold and the shorter their path
to the assistant to the president role. This was equally positively correlated to work in
the opposite direction (i.e. the lower status PA roles with lower levels of education).
Finally, positive correlations were found to exist between the primary career path
variations and gender with lower salaries.

Further analysis of the data revealed that alternate career paths (particularly
those which included jobs as associate director/assistant director/professional staff, non-
academic dean or director, or higher education secretarial/clerical immediately prior to
the PA position) offered a more comprehensive and inclusive portrayal of job
progression to the assistant to the president position. There were also statistically
significant differences in how males and females reached the PA post, what types of
positions they held, and what kinds of institutions of higher education these individuals
worked at. Miles also conducted hypothesis testing that revealed differences in three
categories related to PA career experiences: the number of primary career path
positions held, job level, and whether or not career path included secretarial/clerical
experience. Most importantly, the identified primary career path ideology failed to
explain how most respondents to the survey reached their PA position. It was
discovered that variations to the primary career path better represented the
respondents’ job histories. (Miles 2000)
Retention and Career Commitment of Presidential Assistants in Higher Education

None of the previously discussed research on presidential assistants in higher education has touched upon a PAs retention in the position or their career commitment. While others have looked more generally at career paths and other demographic information, Bassham (2009) is the first to take a specific look at retention and career commitment regarding presidential assistants in higher education. This dissertation was guided by the following research questions: Is there a relationship between career stages and the three-components of commitment, and do career stages predict the commitment of presidential assistants to stay employed with their current institutions? Bassham based this investigation on the idea that identifying a PAs organizational commitment could be used to help optimize the work of presidential assistants. Further, it could provide insight to presidents about how to better retain and motivate their assistants. Such information would lead to a more effective work environment in the president’s office.

The population of focus for this study was all of the college and university presidential assistants in four-year degree-granting programs in both public and private higher education institutions in the United States. Participants were those who voluntarily chose to complete the online survey instrument. Bassham did extensive research to compile a list of individuals meeting the specific criteria classifying them as members of this population. In total 1,334 potential individuals were identified. Of this
group of potential participants 293 PAs successfully completed the online survey and were defined as the sample of this study.

To further focus his overarching research question Bassham collected information regarding demographic data about the survey participants, the organizational commitment of PAs, and the assistant to the president’s career stage variables. To collect his data Bassham used the Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment Scales of the *Three-Component Model Employee Commitment Survey (TCM)* and a demographic survey that he designed for this study. The TCM used for gathering data is a commercial survey that has been validated and found reliable. Of the 293 responses received only 279 were used and the response rate for this survey fell within acceptable online survey response rates.

Analysis of the data showed that the typical survey respondent in this study was a white female between the ages of forty-one and fifty, who had worked in higher education for more than fifteen years, and had been in their current position for between two and ten years. She also holds at least a bachelor’s degree. These data are comparable to literature regarding presidential assistants as presented above (Carlson 1991, McDade, Putnam and Miles 1999, Miles 2000, O’Reilly 2000, Stiles 2008). These individuals also appeared to exhibit the extroverted personality type (> 68%) more than the introverted one.
Though there was a limited response rate to the survey instrument, there were a few significant associations discovered during the analysis of the data. First, the findings in this study reinforce the concept that there is a relationship between the three-components of commitment and the career stage variables of presidential assistants in higher education. Second, presidential assistants’ commitment levels significantly influence their intent to stay employed with their institution. Third, a PA’s desire, an emotional commitment to the organization (affective commitment), influenced them to remain at their organization. Fourth, presidential assistants consider the costs of disassociation with their college to be too high (continuance commitment); therefore, they remain employed in their current position. Fifth, presidential assistants exhibit feelings of obligation to remain with the organization (normative commitment). Finally, the length a PA is employed with their institution influences the commitment level he or she has with the organization.

Leadership Styles and Uses of Power of Presidential Assistants in Higher Education

The last pieces of Nancy Carlson’s research examined the leadership behaviors of assistants to the president and what level of participation, if any, they had in overall institutional decision making. Carlson’s work points out that the PA has almost no direct power but, as was relayed previously, exercises a great deal of political power. This power is primarily derived from the proximity of the assistant to the president (Carlson elaborates on this to say that “daily contacts with, support, and confidence of
the president, however, give informal power to the assistant (97).”); here again we see similarities to similar positions in government, the military, and the corporate world. Add to this the ability to have access to confidential institutional information, to be involved in the important decisions, and to directly influence the president and his or her agenda and the opportunities for the assistant to the president to exert political power becomes very obvious. This power by proximity is present even though no real power has been delegated.

While Carlson’s work only touched upon a PAs leadership, use of power and ability to influence others, Stiles (2008) is the first to take a specific look at situational leadership styles and uses of power by PAs in higher education. This dissertation was guided by the following research question: “What is the association between higher education presidential assistants’ sources of power and their situational leadership styles?” (Stiles 2008, 221). Stiles based this investigation on the idea that since PAs have little or no direct line of authority, the sources of power that the assistants use in the leadership situations they encounter each day is of particular interest especially since they are considered to be the president’s alter ego (Montell, The President's Alter Ego 2000).

The population of focus for this study was chosen from the 2006 – 2007 active membership rosters for the National Association of Presidential Assistants in Higher Education (NAPAHE). NAPAHE had 534 active members during this year and
although all were invited to respond only 143 agreed to do so. Of these 143 respondents, Stiles reports that the majority of them were members that regularly participated in other surveys when asked for assistance. The NAPAHE membership was chosen for this study because they are known for cooperation and the organization represents assistants to the president across the nation.

To further focus his overarching research question Stiles collected information regarding demographic data about the survey participants, the sources of power that PAs use in the course of completing their daily duties and responsibilities, and the assistant to the president’s situational leadership styles. To do so both the Power Base Inventory (PBI) and the Leader Behavior Analysis 11 (Self) [LBAII (Self)] were used. The PBI analyzed the uses of the six power bases: reward, coercion, legitimate, referent, expert, and information. The LBAII (Self) was used to better understand whether the PAs situational leadership style used the directing, coaching, supporting, or delegating approach. Not all of the survey respondents participated in all of the instruments. Both of the tools that were used for gathering data are commercial surveys that have been validated and found reliable. They are also designed to assess both the uses of power and leadership styles of senior level administrators and managers.

Analysis of the data showed that the typical survey respondent in this study was a white, middle-aged female who came into the position through the hierarchy of higher education administration. She also holds at least a master’s degree. These data
are similar to the information shown by O'Reilly above (O'Reilly 2000). These individuals appear to have less education and are slightly older than male respondents and have served in the position for five years or less.

Though there was a limited response rate to the survey instruments, there was one significant association discovered during the analysis of the data between gender and the six power sources. The association between gender and coercion was significant. The analysis showed that males used coercion (discipline) far less often than their female counterparts. The male respondents were more likely to use the referent and information power sources than the female respondents. This is interesting because the supporting situational leadership style and the personal power sources associated with this leadership style are considered to be more personal. The female respondents in this study were more likely to use a power of position. They also tended to use the legitimate power source more than males. This power source is not personal, but is instead considered to be positional. A significant association was established between the supporting leadership style and the coercion power base used by women.

“Interestingly, this association is exactly the opposite of the theoretical assumptions that unite the two structural framework models” (Stiles 2008, 244). Gifford’s finding of differences by gender, though focused on a different topic than Stiles, reflects similar differences in gender among presidential assistants in higher education found by Stiles in his study.
Role Theory

As has been previously discussed, the specific charges of the role of a presidential assistant can vary quite drastically and depend entirely on the institution at which the assistant works, the president for whom they work, and the individual who is filling the position (Fisher 1985, Malloy 2003, Cook 1993, Stringer 1977, Giddens 1971, Carlson 1991, O’Reilly 2000, Quatroche 1990). We see this lack of consistency in the presidential assistant position in the diverse titles used to describe it, the varying demographic and experiential backgrounds of those in the role (Carlson 1991, Quatroche 1990, Curchack, Other Duties as Assigned: Presidential Assistants in Higher Education 2009, O’Reilly 2000), and in the differences in authority held by those in the position (Anselm 1981, Stiles 2008).

The idea of roles, “the fact that human beings behave in ways that are different and predictable depending on their respective social identities and the situation” (Biddle, Recent Development in Role Theory 1986, 68), did not develop into a theory until the early 1930s. Role theory says that people are members of social positions and that we all hold expectations for our behavior and those of other people (Biddle, Recent Development in Role Theory 1986). The origins of this idea of role came from the scripts that were memorized by stage actors (Biddle and Thomas, Role Theory: Concepts and Research 1966). Biddle and Thomas (1966) explained role theory as:

Individuals in a society occupy positions, and their role performance in these positions is determined by social norms, demands, and rules; by the role
performances of others in their respective positions; by those who observe and react to the performance; and by the individual’s particular capabilities and personality. (4)

Using this definition, the use of role theory becomes particularly insightful when applied to the position of presidential assistant in higher education. PAs in higher education are clearly individuals in academia who occupy leadership positions. Further, nearly their entire position is defined by the individual filling the role, the institution in which they work and the president whom they work for. No presidential assistant position is the same as any other and no PA is equally exchanged with any other. The success of those in the position is equally reliant on both the drive of the individual presidential assistant and the relationship they have established with their respective president.

The definition of specific formal roles in an organization provides both advantages and disadvantages to the organization (Bess and Dee 2008). From the negative perspective, defining roles so specifically can be detrimental because they limit the flexibility and adaptability of those within the organization. Additionally, such strictness can lead to the restriction of an individual’s responsibilities. Some of the benefits of specifically defined roles include clearly creating authority relationships, limiting the behaviors of an employee and regulating the behaviors of all employees. These advantages and disadvantages show that clear role definitions are a necessity for any organization.
The significance of a role within an organization could not be appreciated if the role existed in isolation. This is because the meaning of any role is interdependent with other roles in the organization; therefore they are complimentary (Bess and Dee 2008). In the case of presidential assistants in higher education, the roles of PA and of president depend on each other. There is no way that these positions could exist separate from one other.

**Boundary Theory**

Similar to the separation of responsibilities that are provided by roles within an organization, boundaries can be defined as the lines that demarcate different life domains (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fulgate 2000). Such boundaries are typically experienced by individuals in a mental sense but they are also regularly reinforced both materially and physically (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fulgate 2000). Our ability to easily view life as segmented into distinct compartments, such as work and family, provides strong evidence to support the existence of these boundaries (Nippert-Eng 1996).

Boundary theory (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fulgate 2000, Zerubavel 1993) proposes that individuals actively manage the strength of boundaries around roles. Boundaries can also be described by their degree of flexibility (Chatfield 2014). The flexibility of boundaries is determined by the demands on them by each role and the boundary’s ability to expand or contract as necessary (Clark 2000). For instance, in the case of presidential assistants, the ability to act as either a presidential assistant or to act in
place of the president requires a flexible boundary. In some cases, the PA acts in their own role; however, in others, they are acting in the *de facto* role of president.

Importantly, boundary theory recognizes that individuals are proactive in establishing and maintaining the borders, rather than simply reacting to their context (Clark 2000). In the case of presidential assistants, contextual factors (e.g., organizational standards, presidential expectations) have some influence in how PAs create and maintain boundaries. However, the administration of these boundaries is also an active process in which presidential assistants make decisions about the flexibility of their role according to their own preferences and situations.

**Negotiated Order Theory**

Negotiated order theory is the work of Anselm Strauss and some of his colleagues at the University of Chicago. The use of this theory called “into question the structural-functional and rational-bureaucratic explanations of complex organizations” (Day and Day 1977, 126). Additionally, negotiated order theory offered a perspective which showed that informal processes eventually shape the formal processes and vice versa. In Strauss’ work (1978), he emphasized that the functioning of an organization depended heavily on a negotiated order that existed amongst individuals and the groups within the organization. While organizations have formal bureaucratic structures that govern the way in which individuals and groups function, negotiated orders still develop. Ultimately, this means that the unofficial agreements that were
agreed to by people in the negotiated order of the organization undermined the official rules that governed the organization.

When the negotiated order of an organization is viewed in relation to power, it is seen from the perspective of the ability of different individuals within the organization to control the course of events and the actions of others. Power varies depending on the events and actions that are occurring. Additionally, power in organizations is situational, contingent and embedded within the social context of the institution. This characterization of power leads rather naturally to cases in which the usual subordinate winds up controlling an event. For the purposes of this study, this is the presidential assistant in the president-PA relationship. This framework demonstrates that a presidential assistant’s use of power is part of a negotiated order that exists between the PA and the president they serve. Additionally, the ability of the presidential assistant to successfully operate within the organization is also due to the negotiated order that has been established between the president and the other groups within the institution. Ultimately, an understanding of the negotiated order within an organization allows us to more effectively analyze a PAs use of power sources and which influence tactics are used in the various leadership situations they encounter.

Power, Authority, and Influence

When assessing the organizational structure of institutions of higher education, it becomes clear that PAs typically fall outside of the hierarchical structure (Carlson 1991,
Miles 2000, O'Reilly 2000, Stiles 2008). More specifically, though they report directly to the president they have little to no direct power/authority over divisional leaders (Carlson 1991, Miles 2000, McDade, Putnam and Miles, A report on the National Study of Assistants to the President/Chancellor in Higher Education 1999). Even with such organization, PAs are still able to accomplish nearly any task assigned to them. This study into a PA’s lateral use of influence tactics is based upon recommendations of previous researchers to explore other leadership models and theories for applicability to the presidential assistant position (Carlson 1991, Stiles 2008).

Social Power

A general definition of power is presented to begin this discussion. Power is “an actor’s ability to induce another actor to carry out his directives or other norms he supports” (Etzioni, Organizational Dimensions and Their Interrelationships: A Theory of Compliance 1968, 98). From the earliest days of organizational management theory there has been a focus on the central role of the manager to the operation of an efficient institution (Taylor 1911). Moreover, the relationship between a manager and their direct reports has equally occupied the early research (Weber, The theory of social and economic organization 1947). Additionally, since the 1920’s, theorists have identified the importance of social influence in the realization of goals within an organization (Follett 1941). This use of influence is particularly evident in the relationships between managers, peers and subordinates within these organizations. However it was not until
the introduction of the human element into the literature that we begin to see specific studies relating to human behavior, motivation, influence and power (Shafritz and Ott 1996). By 2000, a description of power and influence theories in which the manager has a direct effect or influence over others was presented (Bensimon, Neumann and Birnbaum, Higher education and leadership theory 2000). (Faeth 2004)

Kurt Lewin introduced an approach to leadership that forever transformed the way in which leadership was studied. Lewin discussed social power as the disparity between interpersonal force and resistance (Lewin, Analysis of the Concepts Whole, Differentiation, and Unity 1941). More specifically Lewin defined power as the “possibility of inducing forces of a certain magnitude on another person” (Raven, The Bases of Power: Origins and Recent Developments 1993, 228). In his development of this concept, Lewin believed that power has the ability to cover a large area and is played out in a field (Lewin, Constructs in field theory 1944). To help individuals visualize his concept, Lewin described the field of influence as a set of concentric circles emanating out from the agent until it engages the subject (Lewin, A Dynamic Theory of Personality 1935). Derived from this initial research on social power and fields, Lewin went on to investigate the social power of group interactions (Raven, The Bases of Power: Origins and Recent Developments 1993). This work paved the way for researchers to suggest that a source of power accompanies the characteristics of a leader and that the culture and symbolism of an organization judge whether the influence of a leader is either
strong or weak (Dahl 1957). Additionally, Lewin’s research paved the way for French and Raven’s investigation into the bases of social power (Raven, The Bases of Power: Origins and Recent Developments 1993).

In their foundational research regarding social power, French and Raven focused on what they believed to be the five bases of power: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power and expert power (French and Raven 1959). This research also discussed “information” as a form of influence included in expert power. After further research and refining of these initial bases a sixth power base was introduced: informational power (Raven, Social influence and power 1965). Raven further explored a potential seventh power base, connectional, however it was determined that this was only a variant of referent power and not a power base on its own (Stiles 2008). The current consensus in the literature is that the six power bases are the only primary measures (Erchul, Raven and Ray 2001, Peiro and Melia 2003).

As has been previously mentioned, the French and Raven power base taxonomy provides one of the frameworks for this study. This selection was made because a great deal of what has been learned about power in work organizations is based upon this typology (Schriesheim, Hinkin and Podsakoff, Can Ipsative and Single-Item Measures Produce Erroneous Results in Field Studies of French and Raven’s (1959) Five Bases of Power? An Empirical Investigation 1991). These six sources of power are still commonly discussed in the existing literature and will be summarized below.
1. Reward Power – depends on A’s ability to provide rewards for B (Bass and Bass 2008). Another way to think about this is that reward power is the ability to give to another person, things that they desire or to take away things that they do not desire (Hinkin and Schriesheim, Development and Application of New Scales to Measure the French and Raven (1959) Bases of Social Power 1989). This power base is often one that is used in a downward direction from superior to subordinate.

2. Coercive Power – is based upon an individual’s perception (P) that another individual (O) has the ability to mediate punishments for them (Raven and French, Legitimate Power, Coercive Power, and Observability in Social Influence 1958). More specifically, person B believes that person A can impose penalties for noncompliance (Bass and Bass 2008). Coercive power is used primarily in a downward (from superior to subordinate) or lateral (between colleagues of the same level) direction. One key to the use of coercive power is the need for the agent to observe the actions of the target to insure compliance.

3. Legitimate Power – In their original work French and Raven (1959) identify legitimate power as the most complex of the social power bases. They defined this base as power that arises out of internalized values in the target that determines that the agent has a right to influence the target and that the target
is obligated to accept this. In further research, this same definition was somewhat simplified by Hinkin and Schriesheim (1989) as “the ability to administer to another feelings of obligation or responsibility” (562). Unlike the necessity to have the supervisor observe the subordinate for compliance, legitimate power does not require the same. It is helpful to remember that as established in formal organizations, legitimate power is more about the relationships between positions than about the relationship between people (Raven and French, Legitimate Power, Coercive Power, and Observability in Social Influence 1958). This form of power is also known as positional power (Etzioni, A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations 1975).

Legitimate power is most commonly used in a downward direction although lateral use is also sometimes available.

4. Referent Power – is based upon the concept of identification (Warren 1968). Somewhat in contrast to legitimate power, referent power is also known as personal power because of its relationship to the staff member’s personal characteristics. Some of these characteristics include charisma, political skills and verbal ability (Bolman and Deal 2003). The more strongly a subordinate relates to a superior, the greater the referent power that the supervisor has over the employee (French and Raven 1959). Additional research has shown that individuals who believe that they have acquired the approval of a direct
supervisor often have a higher job satisfaction, understand their job’s function, and perform better than those who have not achieved the same perception (Podsakoff and Schriesheim 1985). Referent power is used primarily in the downward direction and the target is not usually consciously aware of the referent power that the agent has over them (French and Raven 1959).

5. Expert Power – “is based on B’s perception of A’s competence” (Bass and Bass 2008, 270). Put more simply, it is the ability of one person to give to another person knowledge, information or expertise (Hinkin and Schriesheim, Development and Application of New Scales to Measure the French and Raven (1959) Bases of Social Power 1989). While expert power usually applies in the downward direction it does allow for both lateral and upward applications as well.

6. Informational Power – is “based on presentation of persuasive material or logic” (Raven, Schwarzwald and Koslowsky, Conceptualizing and Measuring a Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence 1998). Unlike the remaining five power bases which are socially dependent, informational power is a socially independent power base (Raven, The Comparative Analysis of Power and Power Preference 1974). Informational power is deemed socially independent because it does not require oversight from the
agent. Moreover this power base is centered on a cognitive change in the target and this requirement is not one that can be forced by the agent. While this power is tied closely to expert power in French and Raven’s original work (1959) it was separated out as its own power base in later research (Raven, Social influence and power 1965). Informational power is typically used in a downward direction but has the ability to be used both upward and laterally as well.

While French and Raven’s model has been an important foundation for research regarding power and authority, there have been critics who have expressed concerns regarding the conceptual distinctions of this taxonomy. One of the primary complaints is that the power bases have little to no consistency in concept when looking at the bases’ source or origin of influence (G. Yukl, Leadership in organizations 1998). Another concern is that in the French and Raven model the five different power bases are neither distinct concepts nor are they defined in equal ways (Bass and Bass 2008). These inconsistencies were the driving force behind the desire to redefine the scales used to assess these power bases (Hinkin and Schriesheim, Development and Application of New Scales to Measure the French and Raven (1959) Bases of Social Power 1989). Though Hinkin and Schriesheim’s work addressed these inconsistencies, it only did so based upon the five original power bases and not the sixth one that was later added by Raven. Even though the French and Raven Social Power Model has received such
criticisms it still remains the prevailing taxonomy for social power research (Hess and Wagner 1999).

Authority

Though it may seem that power and authority are one in the same thing, they are in fact autonomous yet interdependent concepts. More directly, “authority is not power” (Bass and Bass 2008, 355). Weber described authority as the way in which the use of power is legitimated (1947). It has also been defined “as the right to select actions affecting part or the whole of an organization” (Aghion and Tirole 1997, 1), as coming from a leader’s knowledge and expertise in their position within the organization (Bass and Bass 2008), and power that has been granted to an individual for a very specific purpose (Heifetz 1994).

In the previous detailed discussion regarding French and Raven’s social power bases, the ideas regarding personal and positional power were presented. Personal power is based on the individual and their unique characteristics (J. R. French 1956). Positional power is based on organizational structure and situation (Sronce 2003). The power bases are classified as follows: reward, coercive and legitimate power are focused on position while referent, expert and informational are focused on person. Acknowledging these distinctions, Weber designed a scheme for classifying authority.

Authority has been defined as coming from the leader’s position, knowledge or expertise (Bass and Bass 2008). Yet Weber believed that authority was likely derived
from more than just position (Economy and Society 1968). Weber suggested that there were three distinct sources for authority in any organization: rational-legal, traditional and charismatic. Rational-legal authority is derived from the position one is in and is the power expected to be used in the work setting. Traditional authority is also based upon position however it is not derived from just the position alone. Instead it comes from tradition and past practices passed on and granted by the group. Finally, charismatic authority is not position based but is instead personally based. Charismatic authority resides solely with the individual. Regardless of which type of authority is used, the exercise of power is legitimated through authority (Weber, The theory of social and economic organization 1947). To further expand on the use of authority, the following sections will present a brief discussion of two ways in which authority can be described: formal versus informal and line versus staff.

**Formal and Informal Authority**

Authority has been classified as existing in either formal or informal capacities. Somewhat less descriptively, Blau and Scott identify formal authority as power legitimated by the formal organization and informal authority as power legitimated by the informal organization (Blau and Scott 2003). In other words, formal authority is tied specifically to organizational structure that has clearly delineated lines of responsibility and influence (Faeth 2004) while informal authority can be present and granted to those outside of hierarchical roles of the organization (Barnard 1938, Smith 1975). Some
consistent factors are expressed in definitions of formal authority: this type of authority is based upon “legitimacy, position, and the sanctions inherent in office” (Peabody 1962, 465) and “formal authority resides at the top” (Baker, Gibbons and Murphy 1999, 56). In terms of informal authority, it cannot be overemphasized that “authority may be granted to those whose knowledge or experience equips them for leadership, even if they are not formally designated within the organizational structure” (Faeth 2004, 15). This difference between formal and informal authority is critical to the understanding of the questions guiding this study.

**Line and Staff Authority**

While very similar to the discussion just presented regarding authority in both formal and informal forms, another approach is described as line versus staff authority. Line authority ties directly to formal authority and is related to directives given by the executive to staff members. Staff authority, on the other hand, often assumes that staff members have no direct authority over any area of activity. Moreover, the staff does not issue orders nor is it responsible for action. Using these definitions, it can be seen that staff authority ties more directly to informal authority. As might be expected from the descriptions presented, it is often agreed that staff authority is subordinate to line authority (Etzioni, Authority Structure and Organizational Effectiveness 1959).
Presidential Assistants and Authority

From these discussions it becomes apparent that presidential assistants will likely either be individuals with formal/line authority or informal/staff authority. In their book *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership*, Bolman and Deal (2003) describe line/formal authority in the following way: "a chain of command is a hierarchy of managerial and supervisory strata, each with legitimate power to shape and direct the behavior of those at lower levels" (51). Such authority permits the individual responsible for a divisional unit of the organization to give orders and assign tasks to those that work for them. On the other hand, staff/informal authority allows an individual to make administrative decisions and influence others, but not to make policy decisions that affect personnel, the budget, or academics. Though presidential assistants in higher education are typically found outside of the hierarchical roles of the organization (therefore likely using informal authority), there are those PAs that fall within the organizational hierarchy. These individuals use and possess formal authority and may approach leadership somewhat differently.

As has been previously stated, for this study it was assumed that the presidential assistants may or may not fall into the organizational hierarchy. Those presidential assistants that manage only the Office of the President, without oversight of other institutional departments, were not identified as line officers within the formal structure of power and authority. Instead they were identified as staff officers who may exercise
the informal structure of power and authority granted to them by the president. Those presidential assistants with responsibility for and supervision of other functional areas at their respective college or university were identified as line officers within the formal hierarchy of power and authority at that institution.

This approach to classification of formal and informal authority in presidential assistants in higher education is supported by the work completed by Carlson (1991) in which she “divided responsibilities into line and staff functions based on the following definitions: (a) line responsibilities include those positions in which the assistant retains the final decision-making authority, and (b) staff responsibilities include those that assist and counsel line managers in obtaining the organization’s objectives” (66-67). It is also supported by the discussion of line and staff authority with PAs in higher education provided by O’Reilly (2000). He describes line officers as having responsibilities and authority within specific divisions or departments within the organization while staff officers do not have line officer responsibilities nor do they have anyone reporting to them. More specifically, “an example of the latter would be an assistant to the president who directed the ‘Office of the President’ which was not in the line chain of command, but rather had a solely ‘staff’ function” (O’Reilly 2000, 14).

Influence Tactics

The discussions regarding power and authority just presented bring forth another construct that is critical to understanding the ways in which leaders are able to
be successful. Though determined by both power and authority, influence is a distinct construct (Hinkin and Schriesheim, Relationships Between Subordinate Perceptions of Supervisor Influence Tactics and Attributed Bases of Supervisory Power 1990, Yukl, Kim and Falbe, Antecedents of Influence Outcomes 1996). Moreover, influence is the means through which power and authority are transacted (Faeth 2004). Finally, influence is “the bridge between the power approach and the behavior approach to leadership” (G. Yukl, Leadership in organizations 1998, 207).

This topic becomes of particular interest to a discussion surrounding PAs in higher education. Even Stiles, whose dissertation was focused specifically on French and Raven’s Sources of Power Model, discusses that what is most important in the social power discussion is the potential influence that a leader may have over a follower (Stiles 2008). Though often in a staff position that exhibits informal authority with respect to the president, PAs are still able to accomplish all tasks assigned to them. To do so there is a reliance on a behavioral approach to leadership which makes an investigation into influence tactics critical. In order to be successful, a manager should be able to influence those both inside and outside of the organization in which they work. Of particular importance is the ability to influence those over which there is no formal authority (Yukl, Chavez and Seifert, Assessing the construct validity and utility of two new influence tactics 2005). These approaches are especially applicable to presidential assistants in higher education.
To this point the research regarding influence tactics has had many different focuses (see TABLE 4 for more detailed information). Studies have examined variables such as:


2. objective of the influence attempt (more detail regarding the directional use and outcomes of an influence attempt can be found in TABLE 4 below) (Yukl and Falbe 1990, Yukl and Falbe 1991, Yukl and Tracey 1992, Yukl, Guinan and Sottolano 1995, Schriesheim and Hinkin 1990, G. Yukl, Interactions in Organizational Change: Using Influence Tactics to Initiate Change 2004) (Michela 2008, Badenfelt 2011, Chavez 2000);

3. frequency of influence tactic use (Yukl and Tracey 1992, Bennebroek Gravenhorst and Boonstra 1998, McFarland, Ryan and Kriska 2002); and


For the purposes of this work, the four variables just previously mentioned will be particularly relevant in answering the research questions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Tactic</th>
<th>Commonly Used In</th>
<th>Occasionally Used In</th>
<th>Likely Outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rational Persuasion</td>
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<td>Commitment</td>
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<td>Personal Appeal</td>
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<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
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<td>Legitimating Tactics</td>
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<td>Pressure</td>
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<td>Apprising</td>
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<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Downward influence attempts</td>
<td>Lateral influence attempts</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
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</table>
The work Yukl has completed on influence tactics has been based upon previous research and models with the same focus. The Power Act Model was introduced by Kipnis (1976) and describes a leader’s use of influence tactics as a rational process. Further, the Kipnis model explains that a leader takes into account their own social resources, possible target resistance, costs and benefits and limits of their own power when deciding upon which tactics to use. Additionally, Raven (1992) built upon his work on power bases with French and developed the Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence. The model describes influence in regards to a leader’s bases of power and the costs and benefits of using specific influence strategies. While these models focused on influence tactics in relation to power, they did not work to specifically identify and classify influence tactics. This gap in the research was filled by an original study with a focus on the use of influence tactics by individuals at work (Kipnis, Schmidt and Wilkinson, Intraorganizational Influence Tactics: Explorations in Getting One’s Way 1980). Once this initial classification by Kipnis, Schmidt and Wilkinson had been designed, ongoing research concerning influence tactics has produced similar classifications.

Yukl identified the following limitations and potential problems with the work of Kipnis et al., (Yukl and Falbe, Influence Tactics and Objectives in Upward, Downward, and Lateral Influence Attempts 1990):
1. The range of influence tactics covered by their questionnaire was too narrow. More specifically, their work did not include tactics that were found to be relevant to leadership effectiveness.

2. The influence objectives that were covered by their work were also too narrow. This list needs to be expanded to incorporate other individuals that are essential to the work of management.

3. The research only focused on the individual’s self-perception of influence tactics and objectives.

Summary

In this part, literature was reviewed that discussed a range of topics related to the background of assistants to the president, the study of assistants to the president and CEO outside higher education and presidential assistants in higher education. Existing studies of PAs in higher education were also reviewed. Because of the dearth of research on presidential assistants in higher education, there is a need for additional knowledge on this rapidly growing position.

Literature also was reviewed concerning social power, the distinctions between formal and informal authority and influence tactics. The nature of development of the Social Power Bases and interpersonal influence tactics were discussed. The examined literature revealed that these theories were developed based on theoretical frameworks from integrated views of social power and influence and were used in a wide variety of
samples and settings. The gap of knowledge regarding presidential assistants in higher education and their use of power and authority was reviewed and the lack of literature of PAs in higher education and their use of influence was discussed. A need to examine presidential assistants’ and their lateral use of influence was presented.

The primary focus of this study was to discover the lateral use of influence tactics among presidential assistants in higher education and whether there is any association between the influence tactics that PAs use and other demographic and contextual variables. The Bases of Social Power as initially defined by French and Raven (1959) and later modified by Raven (1992) in his Social Power Model, in concert with the Interpersonal Power-Proactive Influence Model designed by Yukl are used as the conceptual framework for this study. Through these conceptual lenses, the presidential assistants’ lateral use of influence tactics can be analyzed in the context of the power bases they use.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodology used in the analysis of both the lateral use of influence tactics and their effectiveness by presidential assistants in higher education. For this dissertation, a mixed methods approach was utilized to examine the influence tactics used most often in the lateral direction by presidential assistants in higher education in the completion of their job. Further, what, if any, patterns of the lateral use of influence tactics differentiated between presidential assistants in higher education with formal authority and presidential assistants in higher education with informal authority. Areas discussed in this chapter include: (a) a review of the research questions; (b) the participants; (c) the instruments and the rationale for their choice; (d) the procedures and implementation; and (e) an analysis plan.

Review of the Research Questions and Sub-questions

This study focused on the following research questions:

1. What influence tactics do presidential assistants in higher education use most often in the lateral direction in the completion of their job?

2. What patterns of the lateral use of influence tactics differentiate between presidential assistants in higher education with formal authority and presidential assistants in higher education with informal authority?

3. What are the influence tactics used by presidential assistants in higher education in the lateral direction in the diverse types of administrative situations they encounter?
4. What is the relationship between various demographic variables (including but not limited to: age, gender, ethnicity, type of institution in which they work and length of time they have worked for their organization) and the lateral use of influence tactics for presidential assistants in higher education?

Participants

Non-probabilistic, population sampling was used in this study. The target group is presidential assistants in higher education. While the entire population of PAs in higher education is not known, several steps were taken to identify as many PAs in the population as possible. First, participants were drawn from those presidential assistants that were current members of the National Association of Presidential Assistants in Higher Education (NAPAHE). The number of presidential assistants enrolled in NAPAHE as members during 2012-2013 was around 500. Second, using the National Center for Education Statistics’ College Navigator, a list of colleges and universities was established. The websites of the colleges and universities listed were visited and the names and electronic mail (e-mail) contacts of presidential assistants was compiled. Nearly 900 names were gathered and merged with the contact information for the NAPAHE membership. After deletion of all duplicates, invitations to participate in the study were sent to 1,461 presidential assistants.
Out of 1461 invited presidential assistants, 119 initially indicated willingness to participate in the study. Of these 119 volunteers, 39 participants actually submitted both useable surveys and influence incident report forms.

It is important to note that the participants do not necessarily serve as a representative sample of the entire PA population. In fact, the study was designed to gather information from a non-probabilistic sampling. While attempts were made to survey the entire population of known PAs, only a self-selected sample responded and there is known dataset that tracks the overall demographics of the PA population – therefore, there is no way to compare the sample demographics to that of the entire population. Therefore, additional research would need to be done to determine if the study findings are representative of all PAs. However, the findings do serve as an important window into the professional life of this understudied population.

Participant Recruitment

Participant recruitment was accomplished through an email invitation letter that introduced this study and encouraged presidential assistants to volunteer to participate. There was an email invitation letter specific to NAPAHE members (Appendix A: Initial Invitation Email to NAPAHE Membership) and an email invitation letter specific to non-NAPAHE members (Appendix B: Initial Invitation Email to non-NAPAHE Membership). A brief description of the study, an explanation of the methodology and a means for volunteers to participate was provided in the invitation. Whether or not an
individual volunteered to participate and completed the informed consent, the Presidential Assistant Demographic and Leadership Characteristics Survey and at least one Presidential Assistant Peer Influence Incident Report Form was the determining factor of who was included in the convenience sample. Through this process, the sample was self-selected.

One week after the introductory email was sent, a reminder email encouraging participation in the survey was sent. This email reminded them about the focus of this study, provided an additional explanation about the methodology and that their participation was appreciated (Appendix C: Reminder Invitation Email to Presidential Assistants). A final invitation email was sent two weeks later and three weeks following the initial introductory email (Appendix D: Final Invitation Email to Presidential Assistants).

After the initial recruitment period, an insufficient number of presidential assistants had volunteered. A second reminder email was sent both thanking participants who had already volunteered and notifying others that there was still room for a few additional contributors (Appendix E: Second Invitation Email to Presidential Assistants).

**Instrumentation**

The following instruments were used for this study: first, participants were provided with an Informed Consent Form which gave an introduction and informed
them of the voluntary nature of the study. Those who agreed to complete the study consciously decided to do so by completing the form and returning it (Appendix F: Informed Consent Form); second, was the Presidential Assistants Demographic and Leadership Characteristics Survey (Appendix G: Presidential Assistant Demographic Survey) which is an edited version of the Thirteen-Question Demographic Survey used by Stiles (2008) in his dissertation research; and third, all participants partook in completion of at least one Influence Incident Report Form (Appendix H: Influence Incident Report Form) based upon an edited version of survey instruments for the collection of influence behaviors developed by Yukl, Guinan and Sottolano (1995) and Gupta and Case (1999). According to Stiles (2008):

The demographic survey was developed to survey those characteristics that are deemed most appropriate to analyze presidential assistants’ current statuses. The first criterion was to establish a link with previous studies conducted on presidential assistants to demonstrate population similarities and differences. The second criterion was to provide a data set for the analysis of gender. (100)

The incident form process evaluates the situational use of influence tactics by presidential assistants, the direction of tactic use and the effectiveness of influence tactic use. This use of both survey and incident form methodologies will yield similar, and yet different, types of data which together will provide an even more insightful approach to answering the research questions (Bradley 1993). It should also be noted that all information provided by the respondents was accepted at face-value. The data was all self-reported and no attempt was made to verify the veracity of the described incident
or the outcome of the incident. This was an intentional strategy designed to increase the likelihood of obtaining the highest response rate by reducing concerns that additional time and work would be necessary once a PA had finished their submissions. The reason for this choice was based upon the fact that these individuals (presidential assistants) have very busy schedules and this approach allowed for the removal of convenience barriers that could result in a lower response rate. However, the findings do serve as an important window into the professional life of this understudied population.

Demographic Survey

In his design of the Thirteen-Question Demographic Survey, Stiles was focused on compiling data that were “only central, current and common characteristics of presidential assistants” (Stiles 2008, 100). Stiles focused these questions on those characteristics that he believed would best describe the current individuals filling the role of assistant to the president. Further, he wanted to provide a data pool that would allow him to make connections with previous research conducted on presidential assistants and to identify potential similarities and differences between the sample populations. This desire to establish consistency between and across studies was one of the reasons for the use of this instrument in this study.
The questions in Stiles’ survey were founded upon a desire to gather the most basic demographic information possible on those individuals that were included within the sample population. The areas on which the Stiles survey focused were:

1. age
2. gender
3. gender of the president/chancellor
4. primary previous occupational background before becoming a presidential assistant
5. role description – clerical or administrative
6. ethnicity
7. highest degree earned
8. time in position
9. highest degree offered by the presidential assistant’s institution
10. public or private institution
11. institution’s total student enrollment (FTE)
12. current NAPAHE membership status

To construct the most appropriate tool for the collection of demographic data for this study, edits were made to the Thirteen-Question Demographic Survey developed by Stiles. While more than half of the questions from that survey were retained (nine in total) and reordered, the remaining four questions were deleted and replaced with new
items that were taken from other demographic survey instruments (Ritter and Sue, Questions for Online Surveys 2007) developed in studies that either focused specifically on presidential assistants in higher education (O'Reilly 2000, Miles 2000, Carlson 1991) or focused on the use of influence tactics (Faeth 2004). The thirteen questions that were used for this study cover the following areas.

1. age

2. gender of the presidential assistant

3. ethnicity

4. highest degree earned

5. current title (Miles 2000)

6. time in position

7. current base salary (O'Reilly 2000)

8. gender of the president/chancellor

9. institution's total student enrollment (FTE)

10. public or private institution

11. highest degree offered by the presidential assistant's institution

12. role description – clerical or administrative
   a. number of total employees that report to you (Carlson 1991)
   b. number of clerical staff
   c. number of administrators/divisional managers
i. divisional areas these administrators/managers represent

13. Researchers have identified several different sources of power that leaders use to effect change. On a scale from 1 to 5, please describe to what extent you see yourself having the power that comes from the following sources? (Faeth 2004)

1=none 5=very much

The power to offer something the other person wants.
The power to take something away from or punish another person.
The power that comes from your title or position in the organization.
The power that comes from your knowledge, experience, talent or expertise.
The power that you have because others like you or want to please you.
The power that comes from access to information that others require to do their jobs effectively.

The differences between the two surveys are listed in the table below.

**TABLE 5 – Differences between Demographic Surveys**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stiles Thirteen Question Demographic Survey Question Topic</th>
<th>Presidential Assistants Demographic and Leadership Characteristics Survey for this Study Exchanged/Added Question Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary previous occupation before becoming a presidential assistant</td>
<td>Current title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role description – clerical or administrative</td>
<td>Added number of total employees that report to the Presidential Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current NAPAHE membership status</td>
<td>Current base salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First part of email address</td>
<td>French and Raven’s Social Power Bases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reasons behind the need to exchange/add to these questions from the Stiles (2008) survey with the ones reported above were as follows:
1. The question regarding the presidential assistant’s primary previous occupation before becoming a PA was necessary for Stiles’ (2008) research into leadership styles and the use of power. While an understanding of previous career experience may be helpful, it was not a major focus of this study. In its place was inserted a question asking about the participant’s current title. There is agreement among both experts who have researched presidential assistants in higher education (Curchack 2009, Bassham 2009, Stiles 2008, Miles 2000, O'Reilly 2000, Carlson 1991, Gifford 2011) and amongst the PAs themselves, that there is no consistency among titles given to these individuals. Identifying the current title for the participating PAs in this study may help to provide clarity regarding the titles used and the types of authority and influence tactics that may be tied to them.

2. The Stiles (2008) question regarding role description focuses specifically and solely on the distinction between the clerical and administrative roles of presidential assistants in higher education. While this information was important for this study, it was not enough information about the PAs role and supervisory responsibilities to formulate a good understanding of their authority. To this end, inserted as an addition was a sub-question that addressed both the quantity and the nature (clerical or administrative) of any employees that report to each participating PA. With a focus on formal and informal authority and the lateral
use of influence tactics, information regarding direct reports was critical to this study.

3. The third question exchanged from the Thirteen Question Demographic Survey developed by Stiles (2008) asked about an individual’s current NAPAHE membership status. This study only focused on individuals currently serving in the presidential assistant position. With such a focus, it was unnecessary to inquire about whether each participant is a previously serving PA or is not a PA. Instead, this survey asked about each participant’s current base salary. This information was useful in this study as it helped to identify any trends that existed between a presidential assistant’s use of authority and influence tactics and their titles and salaries.

4. The final question from the Stiles (2008) work replaced in this survey regards the identification of each participant by the first half of their email address. While this information was used for tracking and identification in the Stiles work, it was not necessary in this study. More importantly, it was replaced by a question focused specifically on the social power bases as defined by French and Raven (1959). The social power base question provided important data regarding those in the presidential assistant position and their use of authority and influence tactics. It was for this reason that it was chosen to replace the email question for this study.
Influence Incident Reports

Influence incident reports are self-report instruments that allow individuals to report on the occurrences happening in their daily lives. Such methodology can capture the details and facts of a respondent’s experience in a way that is not possible using other, more traditional, research designs (Bolger, Davis and Rafaeli 2003). Written descriptions by participants provide information from multiple perspectives in each participant’s own words and focused on their feelings and impressions about each situation (Markwell and Basche 1998). This access to these events in their natural and spontaneous context is one of the primary benefits in using such methodology. Additionally, written descriptions of incidents can also greatly reduce the amount of retrospection that a respondent might engage in. These written descriptions provide an opportunity to decrease the amount of time between the actual experience and the recording of the experience (Bolger, Davis and Rafaeli 2003).

The Critical Incident Technique (CIT) developed by Flanagan (1954) “consists of a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems” (Flanagan 1954, 327). Researchers have used the technique in many ways regarding the study of leadership: a modification of it was used to study leadership competencies in Texas community colleges (Burnham 1983); Dean (1986) and Barnett (1989) used it to investigate the perceived effectiveness of leadership behaviors of community college
presidents; and Yukl and Van Fleet (1982) examined the effectiveness of military leadership. CIT has also been used to study the use, outcomes and effectiveness of influence tactics: Falbe and Yukl (1992) investigated the use and effectiveness of influence tactics for managers; Yukl, Kim and Falbe (1996) studied the outcomes of influence tactic use; and Gupta and Case (1999) examined the outcomes and effectiveness of managers influence tactic use. CIT presents descriptions of behavior that are obtained empirically by gathering data objectively with only a minimum of subjective inferences and interpretations. Information gathered from studies using critical incidents in their methodology provides an effective basis for developing subsequent measurement instruments (Dean II 1986).

For this study, participating presidential assistants were asked to complete at least one Presidential Assistant Influence Incident Report Form describing their lateral influence attempts with those individuals that they interact with on a daily basis (peers). This process allowed presidential assistants to pay attention to their lateral influence behavior and facilitated them being able to describe it more accurately. Each participant was asked to also provide examples of how the tactics are used, which allowed for analysis of not just tactic use and frequency but also tactic objectives and outcomes. Further, collection of multiple incidents from a single source is an approach often used by researchers when collecting qualitative data (Dutton, et al. 2001, Enns and
McFarlin 2005). Instructions on how to complete the Influence Incident Report Form were provided to each presidential assistant.

The influence incident report procedure was as follows: For each submission the presidential assistant was asked to provide a narrative account of an incident in which they had attempted to laterally influence those peers that they work with on a daily basis. Respondents were asked for incidents involving a request that was not routine or trivial and for which compliance was unlikely unless the agent used tactics other than merely a simple, polite request. Each presidential assistant was asked to provide one narrative account of an outward influence incident resulting in commitment, one narrative account of an outward influence incident resulting in compliance and one narrative account of an outward influence incident resulting in resistance. Following an adapted design to that used in the work conducted by Gupta and Case (1999) and Yukl, Falbe and Youn (1993), in each description, the presidential assistant were asked to reflect on questions about the following items:

1. the background and goals of the lateral influence attempt
2. the actual tactic(s) used to exert lateral influence
3. the involvement of other agents of lateral influence
4. the immediate and long-term outcomes of the lateral influence incident

These questions helped guide respondents in regards to what type of description is being looked for.
Procedures and Implementation

The process for the collection of all data in this study was done via electronic mail (email) (Ceaparu, et al. 2004). The reason for this choice was based upon the fact that these individuals (presidential assistants) have very busy schedules and collection of data via email likely provided the highest response rate. This approach allowed for the removal of communication and convenience barriers that could result in a lower response rate. Email submissions allowed participating PAs to quickly compose their lateral influence incidents and experiences and submit them. To further enhance confidentiality and security, a separate email account was created that only this researcher had access to and the account was used solely for the purposes of this study. The email account created for this study was then deleted once all data collection was completed and all forms were saved.

Once the email requests for volunteers had been distributed and all presidential assistant participants were identified, each one was assigned a randomly generated numerical code for identification purposes. The use of code numbers allowed for an increase in each respondent’s assurance of confidentiality (G. Yukl, Personal Correspondence 2012). The specific code assigned to each PA volunteer was included on all forms (Presidential Assistants Demographic and Leadership Characteristics Survey and Presidential Assistant Influence Incident Report Form) sent to the participant. A master cross-referenced list of codes and individuals was maintained and
for security purposes was password protected and kept separate from other research files. All reports were stored digitally on a secure computer with password protection.

All volunteers were sent an instrument distribution email (Appendix I: Instrument Distribution Email to Volunteers) that:

1. thanked them for volunteering to participate,
2. informed them of their randomly generated numerical code for identification purposes,
3. provided the Informed Consent Form, Presidential Assistant Demographic & Leadership Characteristics Survey and the PA-Peer Influence Incident Report Form along with a brief description of each item, and
4. stated a deadline five weeks from the date the instrument distribution email was sent.

Two weeks after the instrument distribution email was sent, a participation progress reminder email was sent. This email thanked volunteers for participating, reminded them about instrument items that were still incomplete and repeated the expected deadline date (Appendix J: Participation Progress Reminder Email). A final deadline reminder email was sent one week before the expected due date (Appendix K: Final Deadline Reminder Email to Volunteers). Once email responses were received, all forms were saved and all copies of the message were deleted.
Analysis

This research analyzed the personal accounts provided by the presidential assistants and looked for emergent themes regarding the lateral use of influence tactics. TABLE 6 provides an overview of the systematic approach used for data coding and analysis. The diagram provides a visual for how coding was performed on all data for the purposes of identifying and indexing relevant phenomena, commonalities and differences. Through this strategic process, converging lines of inquiry, patterns, similarities and differences were revealed.

TABLE 6 – Overview of Systematic Approach for Data Coding and Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presidential Assistants Demographic and Leadership Characteristics Survey</th>
<th>Influence Incident Report Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distributed and responses collected via email</td>
<td>Distributed and responses collected via email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analyzed to create a profile of presidential assistants participating in the study</td>
<td>Manually coded for identification of Yukl’s 11 influence tactics and incident outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 12B used to classify PAs as having either formal or informal authority</td>
<td>Quantitative analysis based upon final coding after agreement was reached between coders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coding System

The coding scheme used to content analyze the narrative responses was designed using both Flanagan’s (1954) critical incident methodology and the work done by Enns and McFarlin (2005) and Yukl, Falbe and Youn (1993). Flanagan’s technique uses factual reports given by observers of the incident to develop an objective definition of both effective and ineffective behaviors in a specific setting (FitzGerald, et al. 2008). Although this approach is typically used to analyze collected data so that specific categories can emerge from what was collected (versus presupposing what the categories will be), in this study the data was analyzed with a focus on categorizing them into the eleven proactive influence tactics defined by Yukl. This analysis provided frequency counts for the use of each type of tactic. Like this study, the work conducted by Enns and McFarlin (2005) focused on the lateral use of influence tactics (by executives to influence their peers). Their research used interview methodology instead of incident report forms, but they identified a coding scheme for identification of the eleven proactive influence tactics established by Yukl. Yukl, Falbe and Youn (1993) focused their work on the patterns of influence behavior for managers using forms for writing about critical incidents in using influence. Using a combination of items from these respective analyses provided both frequency counts for the use of each tactic and information about the effectiveness of each tactic used.
Coding Process

Each influence incident report form was coded into one of the eleven proactive influence tactics established by Yukl. The coders also evaluated the outcome of each incident as commitment, compliance or resistance. The identity of the subject and any information that could compromise confidentiality (institution name, target names, etc.) was removed before coding began. Three people coded each incident: the author and two external coders.

The two external coders were trained by and worked with the primary researcher. They were instructed on the proactive influence tactics and incident outcomes and provided with a definition list of both tactics and outcomes to assist in coding (Appendix L: Definition List of Influence Tactics and Outcomes). Additionally, the external coders were provided two example influence incidents, constructed by the primary researcher (Appendix M: Examples of Influence Incidents). The coders were asked to independently review and code these example influence incidents. Following this independent coding, the primary researcher reviewed the work done by the two external coders. Using these examples the team was able to run-through the coding process, engage in a dialogue about the incidents and ask any clarifying questions.

Each researcher independently read and coded each influence incident report form. Coding was conducted by each researcher in separate locations and at separate times. To increase inter-rater reliability of this study, after all three researchers had
finished their coding of a set of incidents, they met to confer about them and resolve any disagreements.

For every incident, each coder provided a list of their findings which the primary researcher compiled into a chart to identify the areas where there was disagreement. To resolve disagreement, each coder would identify the lines in each incident report that supported their code and share their rationale for their coding. The team would discuss and, typically, team consensus was reached and incorporated into the final coding document. If an incident was too ambiguous to allow resolution of coder disagreement it was discarded. The level of agreement between coders in their independent coding of incidents was moderately high; the same tactic codes were assigned in 92.453% of the incidents. The data analysis was based on the final coding made after agreement was reached. The entire coding process took approximately six weeks to complete.

The experience of the author as a presidential assistant in higher education could be seen as a complicating factor in this research. It could be identified as a potential opportunity for bias and advocacy. Such bias is recognized by the author particularly with regard to the expanded knowledge about the literature surrounding influence tactics and the clear understanding of the role and position of PAs in higher education. However, this experience provides the author a unique role as a primary investigator. Considering the understudied nature of this position, the author’s experience as a presidential assistant can be seen as a benefit because of the expertise it provides.
Potential for Error

While the external coders selected to assist in this research were well informed on the proactive influence tactics and outcomes used, there was a gap in understanding between the coders and the author. When disagreements in the coding arose, each person explained their reasoning and cited the section of the incident to support their findings. The conflict would be discussed until all parties mutually agreed upon a classification. If an incident was too ambiguous to allow resolution of coder disagreement, it was discarded.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the lateral use of influence tactics among presidential assistants in higher education. Further, it was to compare the differences in lateral usage of behavioral influence tactics between PAs with formal authority and those with informal authority. Respondents completed the Presidential Assistants Demographic and Leadership Characteristics Survey which included variables such as age, gender, level of education, length of tenure in the PA position, perceptions of sources of power and the existence of line authority. In addition, all participants completed at least one influence incident form.

The data were compiled and analyzed to answer the research questions pertaining to the lateral use of behavioral influence tactics. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the subject sample used in this study, to review the instruments used, and to evaluate the results in the context of the research questions.

Participant Characteristics

Response Rate

Out of 1461 invited presidential assistants, 119 volunteers were identified. Of these 119 volunteers, 39 participants submitted both useable surveys and influence incident report forms. Of the 39 participants, approximately a quarter were PAs with formal authority and three quarters were PAs with informal authority.
Demographics

The demographic composition of the study sample is reflected in TABLE 7. Analysis of the demographic data collected revealed that a typical composite picture of those in the position of assisting the highest executive officer of colleges and universities are white (89.74%) females (74.36%) between the ages of 46 to 55 years old (41.03%) with a master’s degree or higher (56.4%). The majority of participating PAs (56.41%) are from institutions with 5,000 students (FTE) or less with more than half of them (53.85%) having doctoral degrees as the highest degree offered. Public (48.72%) versus private (51.28%) institutions were nearly equally represented. These were all comparable to the National Association of Presidential Assistants in Higher Education (NAPAHE) 2012 demographic survey conducted of its members. Additionally, the data on gender distribution is also comparable to the recent dissertation studies conducted on presidential assistants in higher education (Gifford, Emerging from the Shadows: Toward a Work Typology of Presidential Assistants in Higher Education 2011, Bassham 2009, Stiles 2008).

This study has found that the numbers of presidential assistants in the salary range of $80,000 per year and higher have increased compared to the previous NAPAHE survey. Presidential assistants, in this study, that earned $80,000 per year and higher were 53.85% and only 40.47% in the NAPAHE results. Nearly 75% of PAs in this study have been employed as a presidential assistant in higher education for 10 years or
less. While comparable, this is slightly higher than the NAPAHE demographic survey results (68.05%). More than two-thirds (69.23%) of presidential assistants in this study have immediate supervisors (presidents/chancellors) who are male. Finally, 76.92% were PAs with informal authority while 23.08% were PAs with formal authority.

**TABLE 7 – Sample Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Study Participants</th>
<th>NAPAHE 2012 Survey Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 or younger</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 to 45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 to 55</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 to 65</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66 or older</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>74.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, Asian American, or</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American,</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>89.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic, Latino, Spanish</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college coursework</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates degree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree only</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some graduate work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some doctoral work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time in Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>46.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 years or more</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As one of the major purposes of this study is to differentiate between presidential assistants in higher education with formal authority and presidential assistants in higher education with informal authority, it was assumed, that the PAs may or may not fall into the organizational hierarchy. Those presidential assistants that manage only the Office of the President, without oversight of other institutional departments, were not identified as line officers within the formal structure of power and authority. Instead they were identified as staff officers who may exercise the informal structure of power and authority granted to them by the president. Those PAs with responsibility for and supervision of other functional areas at their respective college or university were identified as line officers within the formal hierarchy of power and authority at that institution.

Question 12B of the Presidential Assistants Demographic and Leadership Characteristics Survey was used to assess whether or not participating presidential
assistants had employees who were senior officers/divisional managers that reported
directly to them. Those PAs with direct reports who were senior officers/divisional
managers, were classified as those presidential assistants with formal authority. Those
participating PAs with no direct reports who were senior officers/divisional managers,
were classified as those presidential assistants with informal authority. A summary of
demographic and response variables comparing these two groups is contained in
TABLE 8.

TABLE 8 – Sample Demographics by Authority Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>N=39</th>
<th>Informal Authority</th>
<th>N=30</th>
<th>Formal Authority</th>
<th>N=9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 or younger</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 to 45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 to 55</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41.03%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.67%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 to 65</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.77%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66 or older</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.13%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>74.36%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>76.67%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.64%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.13%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>89.74%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>86.67%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates degree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.26%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree only</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.51%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some graduate work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.82%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.64%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some doctoral work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.51%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One characteristic that differed noticeably between presidential assistants with formal authority and those with informal authority was base salary. Nearly 89% of PAs with formal authority were making $90,000 and over, while only 40% of PAs with informal authority were making within the same range. The 40% value is closely related to the data provided by the NAPAHE 2012 survey data of their membership in regard to base salary. Yet, the 89% value among PAs with formal authority is nearly twice what the national data shows.
Current Direct Reports

In this survey, if a PA identified that they had direct reports they were asked to provide more specific information regarding whether those employees were members of the President’s/Chancellor’s clerical staff or if they were senior officers/divisional managers. These results were broken into seven different intervals ranging from zero employees to more than five employees.

With regard to employees that were members of the President’s/Chancellor’s clerical staff there were no PAs who had either four or five clerical direct reports. The largest group exhibits that PAs have zero direct clerical reports, representing 48.72% (n = 19) of the participants. The next most populous group are the PAs with two direct clerical reports (20.51%, n = 8). This is followed closely by the group of PAs with one direct clerical report (17.95%, n = 7). The group of PAs with three direct clerical reports represented 7.69% (n = 3) however, the group with more than five direct clerical reports (5.13%, n = 2) is the least populous.

None of the presidential assistants with direct reports who are senior officers/divisional managers have four, five or more than five employees that fall into this categorization. More than three quarters of participants (76.92%, n = 30) have zero senior officers/divisional managers reporting directly to them. The group with one direct senior level/divisional manager report and the group with two direct senior level/divisional manager reports were the next most populous with each representing
10.26% (n = 4). There was only one presidential assistant who had three direct senior level/divisional manager reports (2.56%) making this the least populous group. The divisional areas represented as reporting directly to the PAs included: college events/ceremonies, communications/public relations, human resources, institutional research and security.

**Use patterns of behavioral influence tactics**

The first research question refers to the frequency of tactic use by presidential assistants in higher education.

**Research question 1: What influence tactics do presidential assistants in higher education use most often in the lateral direction in the completion of their job?**

After coding and analysis of the influence incidents, there were 98 useable reports submitted. In order to determine frequency of tactic use in the lateral direction, the total number of times each tactic was used was divided by the total number of influence incidents. The tactics were ranked according to frequency of tactic use in the lateral direction. TABLE 9 lists the lateral use of behavioral influence tactics, by order of frequency, for presidential assistants in higher education.

The presented values are an indicator of the average frequency of use for each tactic. According to this ranking, the four tactics used most frequently by presidential assistants in higher education were rational persuasion, consultation, pressure and coalition tactics. All four of these tactics were used by PAs more than 28% of the time.
Even the least used of these four (coalition tactics) was used, on average, more than twice as much as the remaining seven tactics. The second tier of tactics, each used more than 10% of the time on average, consist of legitimating tactics, ingratiation and inspirational appeal. Apprising, collaboration and personal appeal were used between 5% and 10% of the time each. Exchange was the least frequently used influence tactic in the lateral direction only showing up around 3% of the time. Based upon the frequency means presented, it is clear that presidential assistants in higher education have strong preferences for the lateral use of some influence tactics over others. Rational persuasion is the most preferred tactic while exchange is the least preferred.

**TABLE 9 – Behavioral Influence Tactics by Frequency: PAs in Higher Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>% of Incidents for which Each Tactic Occurred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rational Persuasion</td>
<td>67.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>40.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>33.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimating Tactics</td>
<td>12.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>11.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Appeal</td>
<td>11.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprising</td>
<td>9.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>8.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Appeal</td>
<td>5.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>3.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research question 2: What patterns of the lateral use of influence tactics differentiate between presidential assistants in higher education with formal authority and presidential assistants in higher education with informal authority?**

TABLE 10 lists the lateral use of behavioral influence tactics, by order of frequency, for presidential assistants in higher education with formal authority. The
results regarding rational persuasion are consistent with previous research which shows that this tactic is used commonly in all directions (lateral, downward and upward) and that it is often used more for initial requests (Yukl and Tracey 1992). Additionally, the use of consultation is consistent with previous research, which indicates that this tactic is most frequently used more for lateral and downward requests (Yukl and Tracey 1992, Yukl, Kim and Falbe 1996). Further, like rational persuasion, consultation is also one of the most effective tactics in achieving a desired outcome (Yukl, Guinan and Sottolano 1995). For PAs with formal authority the use of pressure, which is used most frequently in a downward direction, may indicate the preference of these individuals to exploit power relationships in the process of leadership.

TABLE 10 – Behavioral Influence Tactics by Frequency: PAs with Formal Authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>% of Incidents for which Each Tactic Occurred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rational Persuasion</td>
<td>74.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>45.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>35.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
<td>22.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Appeal</td>
<td>16.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprising</td>
<td>12.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>12.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimating Tactics</td>
<td>12.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>9.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Appeal</td>
<td>9.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>6.45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 11 lists the lateral use of behavioral influence tactics, by order of frequency, for presidential assistants in higher education with informal authority.
Among PAs with informal authority, the order of preference for rational persuasion, consultation, pressure and coalition tactics is the same as the order of preference for PAs with formal authority. Consequently, because of the direction of influence and the effectiveness outcomes of both rational persuasion and consultation, this result is not surprising. However, for PAs with informal authority, the use of pressure may indicate the belief that these individuals see themselves in a hierarchical position when compared to peers even if no institutional line authority exists. Additionally, the preference for coalition tactic use is also expected because the direction of influence for this tactic is more lateral and up.

### TABLE 11 – Behavioral Influence Tactics by Frequency: PAs with Informal Authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>% of Incidents for which Each Tactic Occurred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rational Persuasion</td>
<td>64.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>40.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>32.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
<td>31.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>11.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimating Tactics</td>
<td>11.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Appeal</td>
<td>8.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprising</td>
<td>7.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>5.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Appeal</td>
<td>2.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>1.49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparison of PA’s with formal and informal authority behavioral influence tactics

### TABLE 12

TABLE 12 demonstrates that presidential assistants in higher education with formal and informal authority use similar patterns of influence tactics in the lateral direction. For both groups, the same four tactics (rational persuasion, consultation,
pressure and coalition tactics) were used most often and in the same order of frequency.

Similarly, personal appeal and exchange were preferred in the same order of frequency but were almost never used. Apprising, ingratiation, inspirational appeal and legitimating tactics were used occasionally by both groups but preferences for these tactics was demonstrated in a different order.

**TABLE 12 – Behavioral Influence Tactics by Frequency: PAs with Formal and Informal Authority**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>PAs with Formal Authority</th>
<th>PAs with Informal Authority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rational Persuasion</td>
<td>Rational Persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>Pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Inspirational Appeal</td>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Apprising</td>
<td>Legitimating Tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Inspirational Appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Legitimating Tactics</td>
<td>Apprising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Personal Appeal</td>
<td>Personal Appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>Exchange</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to explore the aforementioned differences in frequency rankings of behavioral influence tactics between PAs with formal authority and PAs with informal authority, tactic frequencies were analyzed using Kruskal-Wallis H Test. The Kruskal-Wallis H Test was the preferred statistical technique because of the non-probabilistic nature of the population sampling used to select participants. Three influence tactics – collaboration, personal appeal and rational persuasion - produced statistically significant differences between presidential assistants with formal authority and
The three tactics (collaboration, personal appeal and rational persuasion) that differ between the two groups share an intrinsic characteristic. Each is considered a soft tactic. Soft tactics are influence behaviors which are considered thoughtful and constructive. In each case, PAs with formal authority used the soft tactic slightly more frequently than PAs with informal authority. Additionally, both collaboration and rational persuasion are two of the four (the others are consultation and inspirational appeal) core influence tactics. They are called core tactics because they are “the most effective tactics for influencing target commitment to carry out a request or support a proposal” (G. Yukl, Leadership in organizations 1998, 181). Further, while personal
appeal is a not a core tactic (it is one of the seven supplementary ones) it is the only influence tactic that is most commonly used in lateral influence attempts alone.

Research question #3: What are the influence tactics used by presidential assistants in higher education in the lateral direction in the diverse types of administrative situations they encounter?

During coding and analysis of the lateral influence reports, the type of administrative situations described in these incidents were also identified. TABLE 15 lists the categories of administrative situations encountered by PAs, by order of frequency, for presidential assistants in higher education. While there were other categories identified, none of these occurred with the same frequency as those that are listed. In order to determine the frequency of administrative situations encountered, the total number of times each administrative situation was encountered was divided by the total number of influence incidents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>% of Incidents for which Each Category Occurred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External Affairs</td>
<td>27.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>20.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Relations</td>
<td>20.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events Planning</td>
<td>20.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance/Budget/Fundraising</td>
<td>8.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>6.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>5.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The presented values are an indicator of the average frequency for each type of situation. According to this ranking, the four most frequently encountered administrative situations described by presidential assistants in this study were external
affairs (including marketing, government & community relations, parent relations and alumni relations), academics, employee relations and events planning. All four of these situation types were encountered by PAs more than 20% of the time. Even the least encountered of these four was experienced, on average, more than twice as much as the remaining situations. The second tier of situation type, finance/budget/fundraising, was described by the PAs more than 8% of the time. Operations related situations were used approximately 6% of the time. Enrollment situations were encountered the least frequently only showing up around 5% of the time.

TABLE 15 lists, by order of frequency, the types of behavioral influence tactics laterally used by the PAs in this study in external affairs situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>% of Incidents for which Each Tactic Occurred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rational Persuasion</td>
<td>59.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimating Tactics</td>
<td>18.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Appeal</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprising</td>
<td>7.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>7.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Appeal</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rational persuasion (59.26%), coalition tactics (44.44%), pressure (44.44%) and consultation (33.33%) were each used more than one third of the time. With regard to
the use of rational persuasion in the external affairs incidents, PAs in this study shared things like:

“I explained why I thought another approach might be better.” (Participant 268245)

“The new idea would change the strategy…and I felt that it [a new strategy] might cause some confusion.” (Participant 210684)

In their incident reports on external affairs incidents, coalition tactics were described as follows:

“In my conversation I mentioned that I spoke with the Chief of Staff…who agreed that the process needed improvement.” (Participant 1017901)

“The written directives were conducted via email to the person in the specified position and to the Vice President supervising them.” (Participant 114448)

PAs discussed pressure in external affairs situations in their own words through statements like:

“I called him back and warned him that if he ever hung up on me again, I’d cite him for insubordination.” (Participant 623210)

“Very little progress was made despite frequent chasing.” (Participant 580415)

Finally, in relation to the use of consultation in external affairs situations, PAs in this study shared things like:

“I set up meetings with him where we would discuss activities and methods to achieve different goals.” (Participant 278798)

“I had contacted the Chief Investment Officer, the Chief Financial Officer and the Director of Facilities via email for help in responding to a letter that the president had received from two alumni.” (Participant 785580)
TABLE 16 – Lateral Behavioral Influence Tactic Use by Frequency: Academic Situations lists, by order of frequency, the types of behavioral influence tactics used in the lateral direction by the PAs in this study in academic situations.

### TABLE 16 – Lateral Behavioral Influence Tactic Use by Frequency: Academic Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>% of Incidents for which Each Tactic Occurred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rational Persuasion</td>
<td>70.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimating Tactics</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprising</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Appeal</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Appeal</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rational persuasion (70.00%), consultation (50.00%) and coalition tactics (40.00%) were each used more than 40% of the time. With regard to the use of rational persuasion in the academically related incidents, PAs in this study shared things like:

> “The Director was advised and encouraged to expand career resources and extend greater outreach to institutional leaders of graduate school programs to add to the depth and breadth of options and opportunities to our students.” (Participant 353868)

When looking at the use of consultation in academic incidents, statements like the following show this tactic:

> “I would redirect questions to the chair, asking if the proposed activity or speaker was relevant to or would appeal to the nursing profession.” (Participant 229435)
“After I completed the preliminary grant proposal, I sent it out to all team members and asked them to review the proposal.” (Participant 479952)

In the PA incident reports describing academic situations, coalition tactics were described as follows:

“I invited our Director of University Events to take part in the meeting.” (Participant 826554)

“My first step was to educate the Provost & VP (Academic) about the initiative so that I might leverage her support to engage the Deans in the process of identifying qualified students.” (Participant 126203)

**TABLE 17 – Lateral Behavioral Influence Tactic Use by Frequency: Employee Relations Situations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>% of Incidents for which Each Tactic Occurred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rational Persuasion</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Appeal</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimating Tactics</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprising</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Appeal</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rational persuasion (75.00%), consultation (30.00%) and inspirational appeal (30.00%) were each used more than thirty percent of the time. With regard to the use of rational persuasion in the employee relations incidents, PAs in this study shared things like:
“I was able to influence her through our discussion in which we weighed the pros-cons, assessed her situation and reviewed the issues she wanted to discuss with the vice president.” (Participant 254138)

“The Director was overseeing the survey project but needed support from the President’s Office to fully appreciate the new vision and priorities. … I discussed with him the type of questions and the use of communications throughout the project to engage staff and start to develop a more robust conversation about the vision and mission.” (Participant 392991)

In their incident reports describing employee relations situations, consultation was described as follows:

“We had a brainstorming session on ways to increase participation in the coming employee campaign and also talked about ways to increase buy-in from other divisions and departmental areas to assist with the campaign.” (Participant 266659)

“I invited her to brainstorm with me her own aspirations and desires for the position and I listened to her view of what works and what is lacking.” (Participant 161886)

PAs discussed inspirational appeal in employee relations incidents in their own words through statements like:

“Professor was reluctant to join the reception until a 45 minute conversation with me convinced him that his failure to participate would send the wrong message to his food service colleagues with whom he has often stood (symbolically) in any matter that affronts his highly attuned sense of social justice.” (Participant 175069)

TABLE 18 – Lateral Behavioral Influence Tactic Use by Frequency:

Events Planning Situations list by order of frequency, the types of behavioral influence tactics used in the lateral direction by the PAs in this study in event planning situations. Consultation (60.00%), rational persuasion (55.00%) and pressure (30.00%) were each
used more than thirty percent of the time. With regard to the use of consultation in the

events planning incidents, PAs in this study shared things like:

“We began meeting as a Commencement Committee to determine the date, time
and logistics of the ceremony…and to see what their thoughts were as to when
the ceremony should be held.” (Participant 182183)

“I expressed my concerns to the executive director of the Faculty-Student
Association, who brought the issues to the direct supervisor. She was great at
following up after events to get my feedback.” (Participant 460772)

In their incident reports on events planning incidents, rational persuasion was
described as follows:

“The next time that I met with VP, privately, I expressed my concerns and asked
VP to reconsider asking staff to "volunteer" to work commencement. I explained
to VP that commencement is a huge undertaking and that VP’s staff had played a
very large role in the past. With several new hires in key positions across the
university - positions intimately involved with commencement - we could not
afford to lose any more people with commencement experience and success. I
explained to VP that I understood the department's new, tighter focus, and that I
agreed with it. I, however, also explained that VP's department is part of the
larger university and that the department needed to be seen as a "team player"
and could not hold itself aloof from university-wide events. After all, being
visible only when they are asking for donations is not going to help them meet
their fundraising goals.” (Participant 210684)

PAs discussed pressure in events planning situations in their own words through
statements like:

“Finally, I had to set a final goal with her that gave her a deadline for either
doing her job as her supervisor set it up or finding another place of
employment.” (Participant 955601)

“One of the responsibilities of the President’s Office was the planning and
execution of the annual celebration of the University’s founding, which consisted
of a convocation and related activities. Some years ago our then new president
determined that the task had become too much… and suggested that the event be turned over to Advancement, which had more staff to execute such a large event. Advancement refused to take it on, citing too heavy a work load in their department. I was unwilling to let this tradition die and met several times with the VP for Advancement to try to affect a solution that we could both feel good about.” (Participant 673335)

### TABLE 18 – Lateral Behavioral Influence Tactic Use by Frequency: Events Planning Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>% of Incidents for which Each Tactic Occurred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational Persuasion</td>
<td>55.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprising</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimating Tactics</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Appeal</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Appeal</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 19 demonstrates the frequency of influence tactic use laterally in the four, aforementioned categories of administrative situations encountered.

### TABLE 19 – Frequency of Lateral Influence Tactic Use by Category of Administrative Situations Encountered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>% of Incidents for which Each Tactic Occurred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprising</td>
<td>7.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>7.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Appeal</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimating Tactics</td>
<td>18.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Presidential assistants in higher education use similar patterns of influence tactic use across these types of situations. Of interest is that rational persuasion, the most frequently occurring tactic in all directions and situations, occurred most often in only three of these four areas (external affairs, academics and employee relations). However, in the case of event planning situations, the use of rational persuasion was outpaced by the use of consultation. “Consultation involves asking an individual (or the members of a team) to suggest ways to attain a task objective or implement a proposed change” (G. Yukl, Influence Tactics for Leaders 2010). With regard to event planning situations, it seems reasonable that this tactic would be the most frequently used by PAs. Further supporting this, consultation, like rational persuasion, is one of the four core influence tactics (the others are collaboration and inspirational appeal). They are called core tactics because they are “the most effective tactics for influencing target commitment to carry out a request or support a proposal” (G. Yukl, Leadership in organizations 1998, 181).

Statistical analysis showed that there were no significant differences in the frequency of use across these situations for 10 of the influence tactics. However, the more frequent use of inspirational appeal during employee relations incidents (30.00%) was statistically significant when compared to the same tactic’s use during both
external affairs (3.70%) and academic (5.00%) situations. The use of inspirational
appeals involves an emotional or value-based entreaty. This is in direct contrast to the
use of logical arguments found in rational persuasion. Considering the sensitive and
very personal nature of addressing employee relations incidents, along with the fact
that inspirational appeals are focused on “arousing strong emotions and linking a
request or proposal to a person’s needs, values, hopes, and ideals” (G. Yukl, Influence
Tactics for Leaders 2010, 77) it is logical that this tactic would be used more in these
situations.

Demographic and Contextual Variables

Research question #4: What is the relationship between various demographic
variables (including but not limited to: age, gender, ethnicity, type of institution in
which they work and length of time they have worked for their organization) and the
lateral use of influence tactics for presidential assistants in higher education?

Age, Ethnicity, Gender, Highest Degree Earned, Time in Position

Age, ethnicity, gender, highest degree earned, type of institution in which they
work and time in position seemed to make very little difference in the use of influence
tactics by self-selected presidential assistants in higher education participating in this
study. Kruskal-Wallis tests failed to uncover any statistically significant differences in
the use of influence tactics when these variables were taken into consideration. The
findings in each of these demographic areas are supported by research in the field of
influence tactics which has failed to uncover many meaningful differences in tactic use:
1. Age (Faeth 2004, Landry 2009)
3. Highest degree earned (Bozeman 1997)
4. Type of institution in which they work (Bozeman 1997)

Bases of Social Power

Previous research (Hinkin and Schriesheim 1990, Yukl, Kim and Falbe 1996, Cohen and Bradford 2003) has suggested that the use of influence tactics is moderated by the influence agent’s perception of the type of power they hold in the organization. Using the social power bases as defined by French and Raven (1959), participating presidential assistants were asked to describe to what extent they saw themselves having the power that comes from the following sources: coercive, expert, information, legitimate, referent and reward. A single 5 point Likert scale was used for each type of power.

The social power base question provided important data regarding those in the presidential assistant position and their use of authority and influence tactics. The mean scale score for the use of each type of power was calculated by totaling scores for each scale and dividing by the number of scale items. The social power bases were ranked
According to mean scale score, Table 20 depicts mean power scores for presidential assistants in higher education.

When looking at the mean scale scores for all presidential assistant participants in this study, there were strong perceptions from PAs that their power came from both expert and legitimate sources. Using the definition of scale items provided to PAs when completing the survey, presidential assistants believed that they had “much” power from these two bases. Further, responses showed that PAs believed they had “some” power from reward, information and referent sources. The source that presidential assistants believed provided them with “little” power was the coercive power base.

**Table 20 – Bases of Social Power Ranked by Score: PAs in Higher Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Power Base</th>
<th>Mean Scale Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expert Power</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimate Power</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward Power</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Power</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referent Power</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coercive Power</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21 compares mean power scores for presidential assistants in higher education with formal and informal authority. Looking at the mean scale scores for presidential assistants with formal authority alone, showed there were strong perceptions from PAs that their power came from expert, information, legitimate and reward sources. Using the definition of scale items provided to PAs when completing the survey, presidential assistants believed that they had “much” power from these four bases. Responses showed that the referent source was the only one that PAs with formal
authority believed gave them “some” power. For this group, the source believed to provide them with “little” power was the coercive power base.

When looking at the mean scale scores for presidential assistant with informal authority, there were strong perceptions from PAs that their power came from expert sources. Using the definition of scale items provided to PAs when completing the survey, presidential assistants believed that they had “much” power from this base. Further, responses showed that PAs believed they had “some” power from legitimate, reward, information and referent sources. The source that presidential assistants believed provided them with almost “no” power was the coercive power base.

As TABLE 21 indicates, there was not much difference between the perceptions of PAs with formal authority and PAs with informal authority regarding their sources of power in the organization. When using this question in her research, Faeth (2004) calculated a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.40 and appropriately determined that the item did not represent a reliable aggregate measure of total power. However, in this study, the calculated Cronbach’s alpha value was 0.695 placing it in a more acceptable range regarding the internal consistency of this question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Power Base</th>
<th>PAs with Formal Authority Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>PAs with Informal Authority Mean Scale Score</th>
<th>Asymptotic Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coercive Power</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>0.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Power</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimate Power</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.526</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 22 depicts the bases of power ranked by frequency for presidential assistants in higher education. From this comparison we see that both PAs with formal authority and PAs with informal authority perceive expert power to be their strongest power base. Additionally, presidential assistants agree that referent and coercive power are the two least preferred of the power bases. While there is agreement among PAs with both formal and informal authority on their most and least preferred power bases to use, there were differences in regard to the order of the remaining sources. PAs with formal authority preferred to use the remaining power bases in the following order: reward second, information third and legitimate power fourth. Yet, PAs with informal authority preferred to use legitimate second, reward third and information fourth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Reward Power</th>
<th>4.22</th>
<th>3.60</th>
<th>0.087</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expert Power</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Referent Power</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.780</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 22 – Bases of Social Power Ranked by Frequency: Comparison between PAs with Formal and Informal Authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>PAs with Formal Authority</th>
<th>PAs with Informal Authority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>Legitimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Reward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Legitimate</td>
<td>Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Coercive</td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to determine whether there was a relationship between influence tactic use and bases of social power, correlations between tactic scores and power scores were
calculated. TABLE 23 shows the Pearson R correlations between power scale scores and reported influence tactic use. Pressure was negatively correlated with referent power (significant at the 0.01 level). Additionally, exchange was negatively correlated with legitimate power (significant at the 0.05 level). There was positive correlation (significant at the 0.05 level) between legitimating tactics and information power.

Apprising was positively correlated with both reward and coercive power (significant at the 0.05 level).

**TABLE 23 – Pearson R Correlation Data: Power Bases and Influence Tactics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Tactic</th>
<th>Coercive</th>
<th>Expert</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Legitimate</th>
<th>Referent</th>
<th>Reward</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apprising</td>
<td>0.3457*</td>
<td>0.1549</td>
<td>0.1505</td>
<td>0.0611</td>
<td>-0.0209</td>
<td>0.3169*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
<td>-0.0536</td>
<td>0.0316</td>
<td>-0.0037</td>
<td>0.2241</td>
<td>-0.2211</td>
<td>-0.1029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>-0.0729</td>
<td>0.0306</td>
<td>0.2989</td>
<td>-0.0724</td>
<td>0.0712</td>
<td>0.0744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>0.1259</td>
<td>0.0428</td>
<td>0.1368</td>
<td>0.2534</td>
<td>0.0232</td>
<td>0.2108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>-0.0071</td>
<td>0.2782</td>
<td>0.3028</td>
<td>-0.3291*</td>
<td>0.0527</td>
<td>0.0824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>-0.1009</td>
<td>0.0224</td>
<td>0.2106</td>
<td>-0.1588</td>
<td>0.0774</td>
<td>-0.2161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Appeal</td>
<td>0.1202</td>
<td>-0.1118</td>
<td>0.1593</td>
<td>0.1059</td>
<td>-0.2529</td>
<td>0.0424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimating Tactics</td>
<td>0.2040</td>
<td>-8.05 E-17</td>
<td>0.3222*</td>
<td>0.2602</td>
<td>0.1927</td>
<td>0.3089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Appeal</td>
<td>-0.1555</td>
<td>-0.1848</td>
<td>0.2044</td>
<td>-0.1749</td>
<td>-0.1899</td>
<td>-0.1468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>0.1410</td>
<td>-0.1246</td>
<td>-0.0855</td>
<td>0.0983</td>
<td>-0.4694**</td>
<td>0.2387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational Persuasion</td>
<td>0.1859</td>
<td>0.0303</td>
<td>0.1534</td>
<td>0.2152</td>
<td>-0.1738</td>
<td>0.2318</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

The Pearson’s correlations are naturally consistent with French and Raven’s bases of social power. In the case where a statistically significant difference was found at the 0.01 level, the relationship (pressure and referent power) presented as strongly negative. As a PA seeks to build and maintain referent power, the need to punish or
threaten would likely decrease. In those cases where statistically significant differences were found at the 0.05 level, the relationships were found to be either moderately positive or negative as appropriate. Apprising is positively correlated with both coercive and reward power. It would be expected that apprising (providing an explanation of how a request or proposal is likely to benefit the target person as an individual) would increase with a presidential assistant’s belief that their ability to reward or punish increases. Information power which deals directly with an individual’s ability to control information and usually comes from formal authority or position is related to legitimating tactics. As a presidential assistant gains knowledge and expertise, they would be more likely to use legitimating tactics to influence others. Exchange is negatively correlated with legitimate power. The need for a PA to offer a reward to someone to carry out a request (exchange) would understandably decrease the more the target believes that the presidential assistant has a right to make the request (legitimate power).

It is clear from the information contained in TABLE 23 that many of the correlations between influence tactic use and power sources are either negligible or weak. Several influence tactics used by presidential assistants, including the most frequently used tactic (rational persuasion), did not appear to be correlated with any particular sources of power. Two possible reasons for this may be:
1. The use of power sources are typically stable, while context heavily impacts the use of influence tactics.

2. PAs in this study could have listed a preference (high or low) for a specific power source but then chose influence tactics that do not draw upon that particular power base.

Outcomes

During coding and analysis of the influence reports, the outcomes of these incidents were also identified. TABLE 24 lists the potential outcomes of an influence incident and their descriptions.

**TABLE 24 – Outcomes of Influence Incidents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Outcome</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>The object of your influence attempt agrees with your decision or influence effort and makes an enthusiastic, voluntary effort to do what you have asked. The response comes not because the person has to but because he or she wants to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>The person you are trying to influence accepts your influence attempt, but apathetically or unenthusiastically. When the response to your influence attempt can be described as compliance, it is likely you have been successful in influencing the behavior, but not the attitudes of your influence target.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>The person you are trying to influence resists your efforts to influence his or her behavior and either avoids, ignores or actively resists your efforts at influence. This resistance can take several forms, which may include the following: • Refuse outright to agree to your attempts to influence them. • Ignore your efforts at influence. • Make excuses why they cannot do what you want. • Ask higher authorities to overrule your request. • Attempt to persuade you to withdraw your attempt at influence. • Delay acting on your influence efforts. • Make a pretense of complying while actively attempting to sabotage your efforts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to determine frequency of outcomes, the total number of times each outcome was arrived at was divided by the total number of influence incidents. The results were ranked according to frequency of outcome. TABLE 25 lists the outcomes of influence incidents, by order of frequency, for presidential assistants in higher education.

**TABLE 25 – Outcomes of Influence Incidents by Frequency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>% of Incidents for which Each Outcome Occurred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All PAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>42.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>38.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>18.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The presented values are an indicator of the average frequency of outcomes for incidents. According to this ranking, the most common result of an influence incident by presidential assistants in higher education was commitment. This outcome was achieved more than 42% of the time. The second most common outcome was compliance and it was achieved more than 38% of the time. This was only slightly less common than commitment. Resistance was the least frequently arrived at outcome only showing up approximately 18% of the time.

Similar to the reported frequencies for all PAs, the most commonly occurring outcome for presidential assistants with formal authority was commitment which showed up more than 45% of the time. Compliance happened second most and was achieved more than 41% of the time. The least frequently occurring outcome for
presidential assistants with formal authority was resistance which showed up approximately 12% of the time.

Among PAs with informal authority, the order in which the most common outcomes occurred is the same as the order for PAs with formal authority. The most common result of an influence incident by presidential assistants with informal authority was commitment. This outcome was achieved more than 41% of the time. The second most common outcome was compliance and it was achieved more than 37% of the time. Resistance was the least frequently arrived at outcome showing up approximately 20% of the time.

Comparison of outcomes between PA’s with formal and informal authority

TABLE 26 demonstrates that the outcomes of influence incidents that involve presidential assistants in higher education occur with similar frequency regardless of authority type. For both groups, commitment occurred most often. Similarly, compliance was second in terms of frequency. Resistance was the outcome that occurred least often with both groups.

**TABLE 26 – Outcomes of Influence Incidents by Frequency: PAs with Formal and Informal Authority**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>PAs with Formal Authority</th>
<th>PAs with Informal Authority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>Compliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>Resistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to determine whether there was a relationship between influence tactic use and outcomes, correlations between tactic scores and outcome scores were calculated. TABLE 27 shows the Pearson R correlations between influence incident outcomes and reported influence tactic use. Pressure was negatively correlated with commitment (significant at the 0.01 level). Additionally, consultation was negatively correlated with resistance (significant at the 0.05 level). There was positive correlation (significant at the 0.05 level) between legitimating tactics and compliance.

**TABLE 27 – Pearson R Correlation Data: Incident Outcomes and Influence Tactics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Tactic</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Compliance</th>
<th>Resistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apprising</td>
<td>0.0102</td>
<td>0.0369</td>
<td>-0.0596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
<td>-0.0913</td>
<td>0.0993</td>
<td>-0.0083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>-0.0323</td>
<td>0.0687</td>
<td>-0.0452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>0.0597</td>
<td>0.1317</td>
<td><strong>-0.2420</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>-0.0342</td>
<td>-0.0198</td>
<td>0.0687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>0.0839</td>
<td>-0.0839</td>
<td>-0.0017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Appeal</td>
<td>0.0187</td>
<td>-0.0839</td>
<td>0.0818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimating Tactics</td>
<td><strong>-0.1977</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.2138</strong>*</td>
<td>-0.0164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Appeal</td>
<td>0.1740</td>
<td>-0.0893</td>
<td>-0.1099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td><strong>-0.2680</strong></td>
<td>0.1419</td>
<td>0.1639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational Persuasion</td>
<td>0.1836</td>
<td>-0.0388</td>
<td>-0.1847</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

The Pearson’s correlations are consistent with Yukl’s previous work on influence outcomes. In the case where a statistically significant difference was found at the 0.01 level, the relationship (pressure and commitment) presented as weakly negative. This finding supports previous research which showed that influence attempts were more
likely to result in target commitment when the agent did not use pressure tactics (Yukl, Kim and Falbe 1996). In those cases where statistically significant differences were found at the 0.05 level, the relationships were found to be either weakly positive or negative as appropriate. Legitimating tactics are positively correlated with compliance. It would be expected that compliance would increase with a presidential assistant’s use of legitimating tactics (attempting to establish one’s authority or right to make a particular type of request). Consultation is negatively correlated with resistance. By definition, consultation occurs when the leader invites an individual, or the members of a team, to participate in planning how to carry out a request or implement a proposed change. This approach promotes buy-in from all participants. The likelihood that a target of a PAs influence would be more resistant to carry out a request would understandably decrease when consultation is being used.

It is clear from the information contained in TABLE 27 that many of the correlations between influence tactic use and outcomes are either negligible or weak. Several influence tactics used by presidential assistants, including the most frequently used tactic (rational persuasion), did not appear to be correlated with any particular outcome.

**Summary**

In this chapter the analytical processes and outcomes of this study on the use of behavioral influence tactics by presidential assistants in higher education with formal
and informal authority were described. Frequency rankings, descriptive statistics and
Kruskal-Wallis H tests were used to investigate the differences between these two
groups. Almost all (30) subjects were classified in the informal authority category, only
9 were in the formal authority category. Because of this dramatic size discrepancy,
statistically significant comparisons were not possible. However, the analysis
uncovered some evidence of slight differences in the use of influence tactics by PAs in
higher education with formal and informal authority. Presidential assistants with
formal authority were found to use collaboration, personal appeal and rational
persuasion slightly more often than presidential assistants with informal authority.
However, overall patterns and frequency of tactic use were similar between the two
groups.

The addition of demographic factors such as age, ethnicity, gender, highest
degree earned, type of institution in which they work and time in position seemed to
make very little difference in the use of influence tactics by presidential assistants in
higher education. Kruskal-Wallis tests failed to uncover any statistically significant
differences in the use of influence tactics when these variables were taken into
consideration.

There were strong perceptions from presidential assistants in higher education
that their power came from both expert and legitimate sources. The source that PAs
believed provided them with the least power was the coercive power base. Despite
statistical significance, however, correlations between particular sources of power and influence tactic use were low.

This research is supported by previous studies regarding the outcomes of influence tactic use. The most common result of a lateral influence incident by presidential assistants in this study was commitment followed by compliance and then resistance. Though statistical significance in these comparisons was present, many of the correlations between influence tactic use and outcomes were either negligible or weak. However, the results are supported by Yukl’s previous work on influence outcomes.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses the study’s findings, its implications and recommendations for further research. The findings of this study include an overview of the empirical research that was conducted. Attention is also given to the study’s implications for theory, research and practice. Finally, recommendations for future studies are presented along with a general conclusion.

Research Study Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine the lateral use of behavioral influence tactics among presidential assistants in higher education. Such a study was important given that:

1. the academic presidency has grown, and continues to grow, in complexity (Hendrickson, et al. 2013, McWade 2014). As institutions of higher education have continued to develop, the chief leadership role in these institutions has also expanded. Today’s college president is faced with enormous expectations that could even be seen as unrealistic (Bruininks, Keeney and Thorp 2010, Bowen 2011, Pierce 2012, Kantabutra 2010). These growing demands on the presidency seem to advocate all the more for the role of presidential assistants in higher education and a better understanding of how these individuals operate.

2. the future of the academic presidency has become more uncertain with the expectation of the retirement of many current presidents (Hendrickson, et al.
The presidential assistant could be an invaluable resource in the development of and the successful leadership for the next generation of presidents.

3. increased calls for accountability of higher education leadership have continued to mount. Such demands have increased pressures on higher education. These changes to the environment of colleges and universities will require leadership in higher education to bring forth more efficient and effective practices of operating these businesses (Selingo 2013, Christensen and Eyring 2011). The presidential assistant will play a critical role in these processes.

Significant Findings

The first research question explored patterns of influence tactic use in the lateral direction by presidential assistants in higher education.

1. **In lateral influence attempts, presidential assistants in this study preferred to use rational persuasion more than two-thirds of the time.**

Rational persuasion involves the use of explanations, logical arguments, and factual evidence to explain why a request or proposal will benefit the organization or help to achieve an important task objective. A few important pieces of information about rational persuasion will be helpful here: first, rational persuasion is one of the four core tactics (the tactics most likely to elicit commitment as an outcome by any individual); second, rational persuasion is successfully used in all directions; and third,
rational persuasion is frequently used both alone and in combination. Such information reveals that rational persuasion is one of the most, if not the most, diverse influence tactics in terms of its application. When taking all of these factors into consideration it makes sense that, in their desire to achieve commitment for the president’s goals the most efficiently and effectively, the presidential assistants might prefer to use rational persuasion the most frequently. The results regarding rational persuasion and PAs are not unreasonable. It is interesting however, that rational persuasion exhibited the strongest preference for influence tactic use among PAs considering that this tactic is not the most commonly used tactic for lateral influence attempts (the focus of this study). This priority for the use of rational persuasion could have something to do with the preference of PAs in higher education to utilize the expert power base. More discussion about this will occur under number six below. Additionally, the high preference for the use of rational persuasion may be influenced by a presidential assistant’s desire to accomplish institutional and presidential goals. More discussion about this will occur under number two below.

2. **In this study, the influence tactic of personal appeal was almost never used by presidential assistants in higher education.**

When looking at the lateral use of influence in the incidents provided by PAs in this study, it is somewhat surprising to see that they would use personal appeal so infrequently. This is particularly true because personal appeal is the only influence
tactic whose sole, most common use is in the lateral direction (Yukl and Tracey 1992, Yukl, Falbe and Youn, Patterns of Influence Behaviors for Managers 1993). This result shows that while the direction of the influence attempt is an important factor impacting which tactics are used, there are clearly other contextual and situational elements involved in determining which influence tactics will be most effective. These other factors include things like the objectives and outcomes of the influence attempt.

In terms of objectives, personal appeal is most often used as an influence tactic when the agent is looking to obtain a personal benefit (Yukl, Guinan and Sottolano 1995). More specifically, personal appeal is only relevant for certain requests such as getting a personal favor or changing a scheduled meeting. In the context of the work of presidential assistants, the use of personal appeal would benefit the PA in obtaining assistance but, it may not be a beneficial influence tactic to use when looking to accomplish either institutional goals or the goals of the president. Such objectives may require more direct use of core tactics like rational persuasion and consultation.

Additionally, the less frequent use of personal appeal by PAs in this study may be impacted by the presidential assistant’s desired outcome of a specific influence incident. In the case of institutional or presidential goals, it would make sense that PAs would be looking to achieve target commitment and not merely compliance. Such desires would likely lead to the use of tactics which regularly result in commitment (i.e. rational persuasion and consultation), of which personal appeal is not one. Personal
appeal is most likely to result in target compliance rather than commitment (Yukl and Chavez 2002) which may indicate reluctance on the part of presidential assistants to use this tactic.

3. For the presidential assistants in this study, the use of influence tactics in lateral attempts resulted in either commitment or compliance more than 80% of the time.

While the outcomes of influence attempts have been measured in many ways across different studies, this research asked presidential assistants to explain in detail their perceived outcome of the influence incident. For an agent, in this study the presidential assistant in higher education, the ultimate success of an influence attempt is a matter of degree. However, the use of influence tactics presumes the compliance and/or commitment of the targets upon whom the tactics are being used. The outcomes of influence incidents that involve PAs in higher education occur with similar frequency regardless of authority type. For both groups, commitment occurred most often. Similarly, compliance was second in terms of frequency. Resistance was the outcome that occurred least often with both groups.

For the PAs in this study, there was a high level of effectiveness in terms of desired outcome with commitment (>42%) or compliance (>38%) being achieved more than 80% of the time. The higher level of commitment here seems logical because the presidential assistants were asked to submit influence incidents that described a request
that was not routine or trivial. For the accomplishment of tasks that are more difficult and complex, the most desired outcome is commitment (Yukl and Chavez 2002). Similarly, the achievement of compliance as the next highest outcome is also somewhat expected. When a PA is not concerned about the specific type of positive outcome for a request, compliance may be all that is necessary to move a task along. As such, some requests made by presidential assistants may not require a total commitment to be successfully accomplished.

a. There was a statistically significant negative correlation between a presidential assistant’s use of pressure and achieving commitment.

These results are supported by previous research which has shown that influence attempts are less likely to result in commitment when pressure tactics are used (Yukl, Kim and Falbe 1996). Commitment requires that the target agrees with your decision and makes an enthusiastic, voluntary effort to do what was asked. Most importantly, this response comes not because the person has to, but because they want to. The use of pressure tactics involves threats, warnings, and assertive behavior to achieve a target’s successful completion of a request. It is reasonable, then, to expect that pressure and commitment would affect each other in an antagonistic way.

In this study, presidential assistants in higher education used pressure tactics in lateral influence incidents more than one-third of the time. This was the third most frequently used influence tactic by PAs. Pressure tactics are most frequently used in a
downward direction (Yukl and Tracey 1992) so its prevalence here in this study focused on lateral influence attempts is of interest. This more frequent use of pressure may indicate a desire on the part of PAs to exploit power relationships in the process of leadership. Additionally, pressure tactics are tied directly to an individual’s use of coercive power which presidential assistants in this study preferred to use the least of all social power bases. The significance of these findings lies in the realization that this population, while claiming they are reluctant to use a strong positional power base (coercion), actually rely on an influence tactic that is direct and related to positional hierarchy.

b. There was a statistically significant positive correlation between a presidential assistant’s use of legitimating tactics and achieving compliance.

These results are supported by previous research which has shown that influence attempts are likely to result in compliance when legitimating tactics are used (Falbe and Yukl 1992). The use of legitimating tactics involves the agent’s attempts to establish their authority or right to make a particular type of request. Compliance occurs when the agent has been successful in influencing the target’s behavior, but not their attitudes. This significant positive correlation between legitimating tactics and compliance is reasonable to expect.

The results of this study have shown that presidential assistants in higher education preferred to use legitimating tactics only occasionally. While this result in
itself is not compelling, when viewed in the context of the PA’s preferences for the use of social power something interesting does appear. Presidential assistants in this study identified legitimate power as their second most preferred form of power to use and yet, in their use of influence, legitimating tactics were not one of the four tactics most prevalently used. Further complicating this only occasional use of legitimating tactics is the fact that these tactics are used most in a lateral direction (Yukl and Tracey 1992) which was the primary focus of this study. This merely occasional use of legitimating tactics may have something to do with the “hard” nature of this type of influence. Hard tactics require the use of positional power and the authority that accompanies these positions. As such they are typically used in impersonal and manipulative ways. Further, the infrequent use of legitimating tactics by presidential assistants probably results from the fact that most PAs are staff people with limited authority. This makes it particularly difficult to explain your authority for a request if you do not have any. The explanation that your supervisor wants something done can sometimes be used to influence a peer, but this involves a combination of legitimating and coalition tactics. While legitimate power (a positional power base) is clearly a preferred choice for presidential assistants, this population does not prefer to use the corresponding influence tactic as willingly. Such information may give a glimpse into how presidential assistants see their positions with regard to actual authority.
c. There was a statistically significant negative correlation between a presidential assistant’s use of consultation and achieving resistance.

These results are supported by previous research which has shown that influence attempts are less likely to result in resistance when consultation tactics are used (Yukl, Kim and Falbe 1996, Yukl and Tracey 1992). Resistance occurs when the target person opposes the efforts of the agent to influence their behavior. This can occur through avoidance, refusal, disagreement, stalling or looking to change the agent’s mind. In consultation, the agent (the presidential assistant) invites the target to participate in planning how to carry out a request. Consultation is one of the most effective influence tactics in achieving a successful outcome. Typically, the use of consultation tactics are not met with resistance but instead result in commitment. It seems reasonable then, that there would be a significant negative correlation between consultation and resistance.

The second research question investigated if there were any differences between tactics used by PAs with formal and informal authority.

4. In this study, presidential assistants with formal authority used the influence tactics of collaboration, personal appeal and rational persuasion more often than presidential assistants with informal authority.

With a limited number of presidential assistants in this study being classified as having formal authority it is difficult to draw strong conclusions about these differences. Thirty subjects were classified in the informal authority category, only 9
were in the formal authority category. However, based upon what we see, results indicated that presidential assistants with formal and informal authority use similar patterns of influence tactics. The same four tactics (rational persuasion, consultation, pressure and coalition tactics) were used most often and in the same order of frequency. Similarly, personal appeal and exchange were preferred in the same order of frequency but were almost never used. Apprising, collaboration, ingratiation, inspirational appeal and legitimating tactics were used occasionally by both groups but preferences for these tactics was demonstrated in a different order.

Kruskal-Wallis H tests revealed that three influence tactics – collaboration, personal appeal and rational persuasion – produced statistically significant differences between presidential assistants with formal authority and presidential assistants with informal authority. In each case, PAs with formal authority used the tactic slightly more frequently than PAs with informal authority. Ultimately, a presidential assistant’s authority had only a minimal effect on the pattern of tactic use. Similarities in the frequency rankings of tactic use indicate that contextual and situational variables exert more influence in the choice of tactic use than the type of authority.

The underlying assumption of this research was that there would be statistically significant differences in the use of some influence tactics by presidential assistants with formal and informal authority. It was expected that the legitimate power that comes
along with formal authority and the preferences of PAs for the coercive and legitimate
types of administrative situations they encounter.

5. **In this study, presidential assistants used the influence tactic of inspirational appeal more frequently during employee relations incidents than during any other type of administrative situation. This difference was statistically significant.**

Coding and analysis of the influence reports identified that presidential assistants were involved in a diverse set of administrative situations. These situations included external affairs (including marketing, government & community relations, parent relations and alumni relations), academics, employee relations, events planning, finance/budget, operations, enrollment and students. The four most frequently described types of situations by presidential assistants in this study were those in external affairs, academics, employee relations and events planning.

Statistical analysis showed that there were no significant differences in the frequency of use across these four types of administrative situations for 10 of the influence tactics. However, the more frequent use of inspirational appeal during employee relations incidents was statistically significant when compared to the same
tactic’s use during both external affairs and academic situations. The use of inspirational appeals involves an emotional or value-based entreaty. This is in direct contrast to the use of logical arguments found in rational persuasion. Considering the sensitive and very personal nature of addressing employee relations incidents, along with the fact that inspirational appeals are focused on “arousing strong emotions and linking a request or proposal to a person’s needs, values, hopes, and ideals” (G. Yukl, Influence Tactics for Leaders 2010, 77) it is logical that this tactic would be used more in these situations.

6. **Presidential assistants, in this study, used the influence tactic of consultation more frequently during event planning incidents than any other tactic.**

Presidential assistants in higher education use similar patterns of influence tactic use across the four most frequently described types of administrative situations. While rational persuasion, the most frequently occurring tactic in all directions and situations, occurred most often in the areas of external affairs, academics and employee relations, consultation was used most frequently in event planning situations. “Consultation involves asking an individual (or the members of a team) to suggest ways to attain a task objective or implement a proposed change” (G. Yukl, Influence Tactics for Leaders 2010). With regard to event planning situations, it seems reasonable that this tactic would be the most frequently used by PAs. Further supporting this, consultation, like rational persuasion, is one of the four core influence tactics (the others are collaboration
and inspirational appeal). They are called core tactics because they are “the most effective tactics for influencing target commitment to carry out a request or support a proposal” (G. Yukl, Leadership in organizations 1998, 181).

The final research question introduced a number of demographic and contextual variables into the analysis.

7. Factors such as age, ethnicity, gender, highest degree earned, type of institution in which they work and time in position seemed to have little effect on the lateral use of influence tactics by presidential assistants in higher education in this study.

Age, ethnicity, gender, highest degree earned, type of institution in which they work and time in position seemed to make very little difference in the use of influence tactics by self-selected presidential assistants in higher education participating in this study. Kruskal-Wallis tests failed to uncover any statistically significant differences in the use of influence tactics when these variables were taken into consideration. The findings in each of these areas are supported by research in the field of influence tactics which has failed to uncover many meaningful differences in tactic use.
8. Presidential assistants, in this study, believed that their greatest source of power came from the special knowledge that they possess about the best way to do things (the expert base). There was not much difference between the perceptions of presidential assistants with formal authority and presidential assistants with informal authority regarding their sources of power in the organization.

Using the social power bases as defined by French and Raven (1959), participants in this study were asked to describe to what extent they saw themselves as having the power that comes from these sources. There were strong perceptions from PAs that their power came most from both expert and legitimate sources and came least from coercive sources. Based upon the presidential assistant’s preferences of power, in this study, PAs believed themselves to be personal leaders (as exhibited through their inclination to use expert power the most). This preference for expert power is supported by the use of rational persuasion as the most frequently used influence tactic by presidential assistants in the lateral direction. Of additional interest here is the fact that this finding is in opposition to the research conducted by Stiles in which he found that the expert power base was one that PAs had little use for.

The presidential assistants in this study believed that their strongest source of power came from one of the personal power bases (expert power). Personal power is derived from one’s relationship to others rather than one’s position in the hierarchy.
This is of particular interest because it is in direct opposition to the research conducted by Stiles. The results of his work found that the PA’s strongest preference for the use of power came from one of the positional powers (the legitimate base). Position power includes formal authority and control over punishments, rewards, and information. This result may show a shift in the preferences of presidential assistants in higher education with regard to their use of personal power over positional power.

The demonstrated preference by PAs to use the personal power base of expert and their preference to not select the directive power base of coercion are important findings. It is apparent from the selections of power in this study that the position of presidential assistant in higher education has likely been changing over time. With the growth of this position in higher education and its current prevalence, the role of PAs may now be seen as more validated and accepted by those in the higher education community than it was before. As such, the use of personal power bases may now be both more allowed and more viable. Such validation of the role of a presidential assistant may also have begun to reduce the previous necessity of the use of positional power (i.e. relying on the authority of the office) to accomplish work. The increased legitimacy of the PA position and the growing tenure of those in the role may also be adding an increased value to the use of expert power.

In this study, presidential assistants in higher education with formal authority scored higher than presidential assistants with informal authority on perceptions of
coercive power, information power, legitimate power and reward power. In general, this information suggests both sensible and intuitive results. Coercive, legitimate, information and reward power are all forms of positional power. Positional power is based on organizational structure and situation (Sronce 2003). As such it makes sense that these power sources would be more strongly perceived by presidential assistants with formal authority.

Presidential assistants in this study with informal authority scored higher than presidential assistants with formal authority on perceptions of referent power and the two groups scored equally on expert power. Again, these results are rather intuitive. Referent and expert power are forms of personal power. Personal power is based on the individual and their unique characteristics (J. R. French 1956). As such it makes sense that referent power would be more strongly perceived by PAs with informal authority. Additionally, it is reasonable that PAs with informal authority should either perceive the use of expert power more than or at least equally as strongly as PAs with formal authority. Ultimately, there was not much difference between the perceptions of PAs with formal authority and PAs with informal authority regarding their sources of power in the organization.

As a presidential assistant’s perception of their information power increased, so did their use of legitimating tactics. As reward and coercive power increased, the use of the apprising tactic increased. An increase in legitimate power scores was associated
with a decrease in the use of exchange tactics. As a PAs perception of their referent power increased their use of the pressure tactic decreased. In general, these correlations were statistically significant but weak. The results, however, offer some support of the general power constructs in the French and Raven scale.

Implications

Research Implications

The research findings have several implications for leadership in higher education. First, while those in the presidential assistant position play an important role in the operation of their institution, there exists little research about them. Not only does there exist little research on PAs in higher education generally, there is practically no other exploration into the leadership practices of presidential assistants more specifically. This study provides new viewpoints on the role that presidential assistants play in the achievement of presidential initiatives and day to day institutional tasks.

Second, this investigation adds to the growing body of research on the use of influence by leaders in organizations. Populations of study in previous research on the use of influence tactics have included: leadership within corporate business, master’s in public administration graduates, master’s in business administration graduates, pastors and lay leaders in religious organizations, biomedical and biotechnical workers, married couples, government and military leaders and teachers and leaders in elementary and secondary education. This study takes a closer look at the use of
influence tactics in a previously uninvestigated group within higher education leadership.

Third, one of the greatest challenges encountered during this research study was the recruitment of participants. While 119 presidential assistants initially expressed interest in participating in the study, 39 participants actually submitted both useable surveys and influence incident report forms. Additionally, 24 participants submitted useable surveys but did not submit influence incident report forms and therefore had to be excluded from participation. This data suggests that while the use of influence incident report forms provided a stronger qualitative ability to learn about the influence tactics used by presidential assistants in the lateral direction, they were also a more involved method of collecting data. Considering the very busy schedules of PAs in higher education this collection approach seems to have proven too time consuming for many volunteers. It also could have contributed to the lack of participation of other potential participants.

Finally, nearly all previous research has focused on individuals within organizations that have very traditional lines of hierarchical authority (business, military, government, etc.). While the environment of higher education also follows very typical hierarchical authority lines, the role of the presidential assistant in colleges and universities regularly doesn’t. This study offered a new perspective by
investigating the complex relationships between presidential assistants and the institutions and individuals they serve.

Practical Implications

The research findings have several practical implications for leadership in higher education. For presidential assistants, the results of this study will allow those in the assistant position to better understand the power and authority they have in addressing the issues they face and how these may affect their influence and leadership process. More specifically, a better understanding of their lateral use of influence will allow PAs to more effectively navigate the landscape of higher education in terms of accomplishing presidential goals effectively and with as little disruption to the organizational hierarchy as possible. Further, these assessments will provide presidential assistants in higher education a better understanding of the skills necessary to be successful in their positions. Such enhancements should encourage PAs to seek out continuing professional development opportunities that further develop their role as a presidential assistant.

For presidents and chancellors, the information obtained in this study can provide them an opportunity to examine and assess the roles that presidential assistants play on college and university campuses. Further, it provides a more insightful understanding of the methods used by presidential assistants for accomplishing tasks and allows presidents to more systematically fashion opportunities for growth that
simultaneously meet the needs of the institution while helping assistants along in their
careers. Moreover, such an enhanced understanding will allow presidents to more
thoughtfully construct presidential assistant positions to meet the needs of the college
and the leadership. Finally, as the future of the academic presidency has become more
uncertain with the expectation of the retirement of many current presidents, the
presidential assistant could be an invaluable resource in the development of and the
successful leadership for the next generation of presidents.

Theoretical Implications

The literature reviewed in this study has shown that the use of influence tactics
plays an important role in our understanding of an individual’s ability to change the
behavior, beliefs and/or values of an individual or group. A major contribution of this
study is that it tested the theory regarding the use of influence tactics with a new
population, presidential assistants. Additionally, the literature has shown that the
specific charges of the role of a presidential assistant can vary quite drastically and
depend entirely on the institution at which the assistant works, the president for whom
they work, and the individual who is filling the position (Fisher 1985, Malloy 2003,
No presidential assistant position is the same as any other and no PA is equally
exchanged with any other. The success of those in the position is equally reliant on both
the drive of the individual presidential assistant and the relationship they have
established with their respective president. The findings in this study reinforce these concepts.

When an organization is viewed in relation to power, it is seen from the perspective of the ability of different individuals within the organization to control the course of events and the actions of others. Power varies depending on the events and actions that are occurring. When looked at through this lens, a presidential assistant’s use of power and influence tactics is part of a negotiated order that exists between the PA and the president they serve. Additionally, the ability of the presidential assistant to successfully operate within the organization is also due to the negotiated order that has been established between the president and the other groups within the institution.

This study found that in lateral influence attempts, PAs have a preference for the use of rational persuasion while also preferring not to use personal appeal. This study also provided some inferences that there may be different preferences of influence tactic use whether the presidential assistants in higher education have formal or informal authority. Lastly, the study found that PAs prefer to use different influence tactics for the different types of situations in which they find themselves. The findings in this study have shown that who presidential assistants in higher education are and what they do are both clearly defined by influence.
Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the pattern of influence tactic use in the lateral direction by presidential assistants in higher education. There were a few limitations of this study. First, the nature of this research is not comprehensive to all leadership contexts. Due to the focus on presidential assistants in higher education, which is a very diverse and not clearly defined position, the applications of this research will be limited to similar leadership situations.

Future research should include a more comprehensive sample of the entire population of presidential assistants. This would allow for a better and more in-depth understanding of both the demographic makeup and the trends of this unique population.

The research conclusions have been focused on the position of PA and may not be representative of other higher education leadership. Research in other types of higher education leadership may produce different results. However, the results of this research have produced some general principles relevant to other senior leadership in colleges and universities.

This study focused on only one direction of influence behavior. It examined the exercise of influence laterally with co-workers at the same level of the organization. Peers were selected as the target of influence to gain more information about interactions in lateral relationships. This focus did not allow for comparison of
information about the presidential assistants use of influence in either upward (supervisory) or downward (subordinate) relationships.

This research has taken an important step forward in understanding the lateral use of influence tactics by presidential assistants in higher education. While this contribution creates a solid exploratory foundation for understanding this emerging professional group, the study itself highlights several areas for future research.

The exploratory nature of this research with a focus on presidential assistants in higher education, concentrated specifically on the use of behavioral influence tactics in a lateral direction. Laterally is one of only three possible directions that influence tactics can be used. In order to establish a more comprehensive and holistic view of the use of influence by presidential assistants it would be beneficial to investigate the use of influence by PAs in both the upward and downward directions as well. Such information would provide more insight to potential similarities and/or differences of the use of influence tactics by PAs presented in this study.

The focus of this study was a mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) approach to the research methodology. While a very effective way of learning about both lateral influence tactic use and the outcomes of such tactic use, a stronger quantitative research methodology would enhance the findings. Having the opportunity to use both a validated and reliable instrument like the agent and target versions of the Influence Behavior Questionnaire (IBQ) would offer opportunities to more
effectively compare the results to other populations that have been studied. Such
comparisons would only enhance the findings of a study making them more substantial
because of the use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Additionally,
when dealing with a population as busy as presidential assistants, the use of survey
methodology like the IBQ may simplify the process of recruiting participants and make
data collection easier.

Like this study, research on influence tactics has integrated previous research on
both power and authority. The results of this research show that power and authority
are used in a variety of ways and are impacted by both the structure of the organization
and the context in which they are used. Though in this study a PA’s authority had only
a minimal effect on the pattern of tactic use, the lack of differences between presidential
assistants with formal and informal authority highlights additional chances for research
related to formal and informal leadership.

This study focused primarily on the social power model. Future research should
include exploration of different leadership and power structures or further explore
strengthening the current model. It is possible that another model may be more
appropriate for studying presidential assistants in higher education. Of particular
interest here would be a specific investigation into the preferences of PAs for either
personal or positional power sources.
Another area for future research is to further explore the use of influence tactics among other senior leadership positions within higher education. Since this research only included presidential assistants within higher education, there is a need for other administrative contexts in order to better understand the use of influence tactics in higher education leadership more generally. To this point, the researcher is only aware of this study and the study conducted with academic deans (Gregg 2003). Therefore, more work is needed in order to more thoroughly understand the relationships of influence tactics in higher education leadership.

The overall study of topics such as power, authority and influence is very complex. These concepts are easily and readily impacted by variables related to situations, demographics and contexts as well as any possible combination of these factors. Such potential influence only complicates the study of these concepts even further. While this limited study began to investigate the use of authority, power and influence by presidential assistants in higher education and to provide an introductory look into the outcomes of these influence episodes, there was no attempt to account for other important features such as precursors of influence and patterns and combinations of influence tactic use. Further, there was no in depth examination of the outcomes of influence tactic use for presidential assistants in higher education undertaken. The information provided in this study about the lateral use of influence tactics by presidential assistants in higher education has provided a foundation to research in this
area. While an understanding of how influence tactics are used laterally by this population is important, the outcomes of tactic use are a necessary component of understanding true effectiveness. A more specific and detailed look at the lateral use of influence tactics and the achieved outcomes will provide better insight to how tactics can be used by presidential assistants to attain desired goals.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, since most of the research regarding the use of behavioral influence tactics has been conducted among business and limited other professions, this study provides support for the model to be applicable among educational professionals. Results from this study may assist presidential assistants in higher education in examining their role as leaders within colleges and universities. Additionally, it may assist PAs, and the presidents they serve, in identifying specific opportunities for training that will help to more effectively formalize and focus the leadership roles of presidential assistants.
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Appendix A: Initial Invitation Email to NAPAHE Membership

To: NAPAHE Membership

Subject: Presidential Assistant (PA) Research Study

My name is Michael A. Sass and I am a fellow presidential assistant who has been a member of NAPAHE for the last 4 years. I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Administration and Policy Studies in the School of Education at the University at Albany, State University of New York. I write today to invite your assistance with a study of how PAs use power, authority, and influence to help them accomplish their myriad responsibilities. This study has been reviewed and approved by the NAPAHE Board of Directors.

The data from this study will be used as part of my doctoral dissertation, entitled: *Presidential Assistants in Higher Education and Their Use of Power, Authority and Influence.* My advisor, Prof. Jason Lane is also a former presidential assistant and NAPAHE member. We both hope that the findings from this study can be shared with our colleagues via the various NAPAHE and other networks as a way to advance knowledge of the profession and add to our collective wisdom as to how best serve in these critical, but under-acknowledged, roles.

Earlier research on the use of power, authority and influence by presidential assistants in higher education has been very limited. The purpose of this research is to examine the use of influence tactics among PAs in higher education. Such tactics can be very difficult to identify and are largely context dependent, but they have a great deal of influence over how effectively we fulfill our responsibilities. Because of these contextual issues, the data for this study cannot be collected through a simple survey or phone interview.

Data for this study will be collected in the following ways:

1. A brief survey that will gather basic demographic data and ask a few questions related to your perceptions of power

2. Written summaries of circumstances when you had to use influence tactics to accomplish the goals of your office. These written summaries will then be emailed to the researcher.

The survey will take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. In order to gain the necessary information to analyze influence tactics, each participant will need to complete at least three influence incident report forms during a four week window. Each report should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. All responses will be
voluntary and will meet stringent standards of confidentiality as approved by the University at Albany’s Institutional Review Board. Please be assured that responses will only be reported in the aggregate with those of other participants and no identifying information will be included. Participants will receive more detailed instructions.

It is my hope the study will produce results that are publishable beyond the dissertation. Interested participants will be provided with a copy of the final study results upon written request.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at the email address listed below. If you may have any questions and/or concerns that may help you decide to participate in this research study, please also contact me at the email address listed below. Inquiries concerning the dissertation process may be directed to my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Jason Lane. Thank you for your consideration of this study. With your support we will be able to make a contribution to the knowledge base surrounding this administrative position.

Principal Investigator:    Dissertation Chair:
Michael A. Sass            Jason Lane, Ph.D.
518-694-7367            518-442-5095
PAinfluence@yahoo.com       jlane@albany.edu
Appendix B: Initial Invitation Email to non-NAPAHE Membership

To: Presidential Assistant

Subject: Presidential Assistant (PA) Research Study

My name is Michael A. Sass and I am a fellow presidential assistant who has been a member of NAPAHE for the last 4 years. I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Administration and Policy Studies in the School of Education at the University at Albany, State University of New York. I write today to invite your assistance with a study of how PAs use power, authority, and influence to help them accomplish their myriad responsibilities.

The data from this study will be used as part of my doctoral dissertation, entitled: Presidential Assistants in Higher Education and Their Use of Power, Authority and Influence. It is my hope that the findings from this study can be shared with our colleagues as a way to advance knowledge of the profession and add to our collective wisdom as to how best serve in these critical, but under-acknowledged, roles.

Earlier research on the use of power, authority and influence by presidential assistants in higher education has been very limited. The purpose of this research is to examine the use of influence tactics among PAs in higher education. Such tactics can be very difficult to identify and are largely context dependent, but they have a great deal of influence over how effectively we fulfill our responsibilities. Because of these contextual issues, the data for this study cannot be collected through a simple survey or phone interview.

Data for this study will be collected in the following ways:

1. A brief survey that will gather basic demographic data and ask a few questions related to your perceptions of power

2. Written summaries of circumstances when you had to use influence tactics to accomplish the goals of your office. These written summaries will then be emailed to the researcher.

The survey will take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. In order to gain the necessary information to analyze influence tactics, each participant will need to complete at least three influence incident report forms during a four week window. Each report should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. All responses will be voluntary and will meet stringent standards of confidentiality as approved by the University at Albany’s Institutional Review Board. Please be assured that responses will only be reported in the aggregate with those of other participants and no
identifying information will be included. Participants will receive more detailed instructions.

It is my hope the study will produce results that are publishable beyond the dissertation. Interested participants will be provided with a copy of the final study results upon written request.

**If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at the email address listed below.** If you may have any questions and/or concerns that may help you decide to participate in this research study, please also contact me at the email address listed below. Inquiries concerning the dissertation process may be directed to my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Jason Lane. Thank you for your consideration of this study. With your support we will be able to make a contribution to the knowledge base surrounding this administrative position.

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Dissertation Chair:  
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Appendix C: Reminder Invitation Email to Presidential Assistants

To: Presidential Assistant
Subject: Reminder of an Opportunity to Participate in Presidential Assistant Research

Recently, you should have received an email from me asking for your participation in my dissertation research concerning Presidential Assistants in higher education and their use of power, authority and influence. If you have not yet had a chance to volunteer, I hope you will do so. The process will take approximately 45 minutes per week to complete.

All responses will be voluntary and will meet stringent standards of confidentiality concerning the participant’s name and institution affiliation. Please be assured that responses will only be reported in the aggregate with those of other participants.

It is my hope the study will produce results that are publishable beyond the dissertation. Interested participants will be provided with a copy of the final study results upon written request.

As a fellow Presidential Assistant, I am quite excited about undertaking this research.

Thank you,

Michael A. Sass
University at Albany
Appendix D: Final Invitation Email to Presidential Assistants

To: Presidential Assistants

Subject: Final Reminder of a Presidential Assistant (PA) Research Study

About three weeks ago you likely received an email from me (see below) asking for your participation in my dissertation research entitled *Presidential Assistants in Higher Education and Their Use of Power, Authority and Influence*.

I would like to thank all those presidential assistants who have already volunteered their time and insight and have chosen to participate. The response has been tremendous. If you have not volunteered to contribute to this research, I encourage you to do so. I still have room for a few more volunteers and wanted to raise this opportunity again in case others would still like to participate.

The findings from this study will be used to advance knowledge of the profession, to help PAs better understand how they use power and to expand knowledge of available tools for extending influence.

As a fellow Presidential Assistant at Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, I am quite excited about undertaking this research and hope that you will volunteer. **If you are interested in participating in this study or have any questions and/or concerns that may help you decide to participate in this research study, please contact me at the email address listed below.**

Thank you,

Michael A. Sass
518-694-7367
PAinfluence@yahoo.com
Appendix E: Second Invitation Email to Presidential Assistants

To: Presidential Assistant

Subject: Reminder of a Presidential Assistant (PA) Research Study

About two months ago you likely received an email from me (see below) asking for your participation in my dissertation research entitled Presidential Assistants in Higher Education and Their Use of Power, Authority and Influence.

I would like to thank all those presidential assistants who have already volunteered their time and insight and have chosen to participate. If you have not volunteered to contribute to this research, I encourage you to do so. I still have room for a few more volunteers and wanted to raise this opportunity again in case others would still like to participate.

The findings from this study will be used to advance knowledge of the profession, to help PAs better understand how they use power and to expand knowledge of available tools for extending influence.

As a fellow Presidential Assistant at Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, I am quite excited about undertaking this research and hope that you will volunteer. If you are interested in participating in this study or have any questions and/or concerns that may help you decide to participate in this research study, please contact me at the email address listed below. I am also attending the NAPAHE conference this weekend and would love to discuss my study with you more.

Thank you,

Michael A. Sass
518-694-7367
PAinfluence@yahoo.com
Appendix F: Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to volunteer to participate in a descriptive and exploratory research study entitled *Presidential Assistants in Higher Education and Their Use of Power, Authority and Influence*. The purpose of this study is to examine the use of influence tactics among presidential assistants (PAs) in higher education. I know how busy your schedule can be and appreciate your willingness to participate as I seek to learn more about the role of presidential assistants. I hope that the results from this study will help PAs better understand and more successfully navigate the relationship with their professional peers.

I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in the study. The principal investigator in this study is Michael A. Sass, a doctoral candidate in Educational Administration and Policy Studies in the School of Education at the University at Albany. For further information about this study Michael can be contacted at PAinfluence@yahoo.com or at 518-694-7367.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or you may leave the study at any time - even after you’ve agreed to participate. Your decision will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw early, no new information identifying you will be gathered after your withdrawal date. Information that has already been gathered may still be used and given to others.

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to participate in the following:

1. One survey that will ask you both demographic questions and questions related to your perceptions of power. It would take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.
2. To submit at least three incident report forms that should take no more than 45 minutes a week for four weeks to complete.

All research records will be stored securely on a password protected drive. While the records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law, the possibility exists that external regulatory agencies and the University at Albany may inspect the records.

I do not anticipate any risks and I hope that the research will offer insights into the role of PAs that may provide information leading to a strategic redefinition of the role of PA which may manifest agency on the part of the assistant.

If you have any concerns with this study, please contact Michael A. Sass, the lead researcher conducting this investigation. He can be contacted at PAinfluence@yahoo.com or 518-694-7367. If you have any inquiries regarding this dissertation study, Jason Lane, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Educational Administration and Policy Studies at the University of Albany can be contacted. He can be reached at jlane@albany.edu or at 518-442-5095. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any concerns about the study, you may contact:
I have read and understand this consent form. I have had the opportunity to ask any necessary questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ Yes           Participant #:
Appendix G: Presidential Assistant Demographic Survey

Participant #: 

Presidential Assistant Demographic and Leadership Characteristics Survey
This survey is designed to ascertain the demographic and leadership characteristics of participants in the study: Presidential Assistants in Higher Education and Their Use of Power, Authority and Influence. The rest of the data will be collected from participants using incident report forms, which should have been explained to you in an earlier email.

Please answer these questions before completing the influence incident report forms. If you have not been informed about the influence indent reports forms, please email Michael A. Sass at PAinfluence@yahoo.com.

For this survey, the position of presidential assistant may include positions with titles such as: Assistant to the President, Special Assistant to the President, Executive Assistant to the President, Chief of Staff, Assistant to the Chancellor, and so forth. Select the appropriate item from the drop down list or fill in the blank where indicated.

1. What is your age?
   a. 35 or younger
   b. 36 to 45
   c. 46 to 55
   d. 56 to 65
   e. 66 or older

2. What is your gender?
   a. Female
   b. Male

3. What is your ethnicity?
   a. American Indian or Other Native American
   b. Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander
   c. Native Hawaiian
   d. Black or African American, Non-Hispanic
   e. White, Non-Hispanic
   f. Hispanic, Latino, Spanish
   g. Other

4. What is your highest degree earned?
   a. High school diploma
   b. Some college course work
   c. Associates degree
   d. Bachelor’s degree only
   e. Some graduate work
   f. Master’s degree
   g. Some doctoral work
5. **What is your title?**

6. **How long have you been in this position?**
   - a. Less than 5 years
   - b. 5 to 10 years
   - c. 11 to 15 years
   - d. 16 to 20 years
   - e. 21 years or more

7. **What is your current base salary?**
   - a. Below $20,000
   - b. $20,000 to $39,999
   - c. $40,000 to $49,999
   - d. $50,000 to $59,999
   - e. $60,000 to $69,999
   - f. $70,000 to $89,999
   - g. $90,000 and over

8. **What is the gender of your president/chancellor (campus CEO)?**
   - a. Female
   - b. Male

9. **What is your institution’s total student enrollment (FTE)?**
   - a. 2,000 or fewer students
   - b. 2,001 to 5,000 students
   - c. 5,001 to 10,000 students
   - d. 10,001 to 15,000 students
   - e. 15,001 to 20,000 students
   - f. 20,001 or more students

10. **What is the status of your institution?**
    - a. Public
    - b. Private/Independent
    - c. Private/Religious

11. **What is the highest degree offered by your institution?**
    - a. Associates or other two year degree
    - b. Baccalaureate
    - c. Masters
    - d. Professional
    - e. Doctoral

12. **How many current employees report directly to you?**
    - a. 0
    - b. 1
    - c. 2
A. How many of the above mentioned employees that report directly to you are members of the President’s/Chancellor’s clerical staff?
   a. 0
   b. 1
   c. 2
   d. 3
   e. 4
   f. 5
   g. More than 5.

B. How many of the above mentioned employees that report directly to you are senior officers/divisional managers?
   a. 0
   b. 1
   c. 2
   d. 3
   e. 4
   f. 5
   g. More than 5.

C. What divisional areas do these managers that report directly to you represent?

13. Researchers have identified several different sources of power that leaders use to effect change. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1=none and 5=very much, please describe to what extent you see yourself having the power that comes from the following sources?
   a. The power to offer something the other person wants.
      1=None 2 3=Some 4 5=Very Much
   b. The power to take something away from or punish another person.
      1=None 2 3=Some 4 5=Very Much
   c. The power that comes from your title or position in the organization.
      1=None 2 3=Some 4 5=Very Much
   d. The power that comes from your knowledge, experience, talent or expertise.
      1=None 2 3=Some 4 5=Very Much
   e. The power that you have because others like you or want to please you.
      1=None 2 3=Some 4 5=Very Much
f. The power that comes from access to information that others require to do their jobs effectively.

1= None  2  3= Some  4  5= Very Much

When finished answering all questions please save this document to your computer. Then send the completed survey via email to PAinfluence@yahoo.com.
Appendix H: Influence Incident Report Form

Presidential Assistant – Peer Influence Incident Report Form
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this descriptive and exploratory research study about Presidential Assistants in Higher Education and Their Use of Power, Authority and Influence. The information that you will be providing will help us gain further insight into the methods used by presidential assistants to influence others. This study is focused on how you have attempted to influence those peers that you work with on a daily basis. On the following pages you are asked to provide a narrative account of an incident in which you have attempted to influence any of the individuals mentioned above.

In order to ensure that we receive the same type of information from each research participant, we have included a series of questions to help guide you in regards to what type of description we are looking for. Please read over all of the questions in advance of beginning to describe the influence episodes that you have been involved in. The submissions that we receive will be content analyzed and categorized. In order to ensure the integrity of the data, we are asking you to fill in the spaces below. All personal identifiers will be removed prior to analysis and publication.

Your help with this research project is sincerely appreciated!

If you have any questions, please contact:
Michael A. Sass, the lead researcher conducting this investigation. He can be contacted at PAinfluence@yahoo.com or 518-694-7367.
Influence Attempt by You

Participant #:

General instructions: Please think of a time when you influenced a peer that you work closely with on a daily basis toward the attainment of an organizational, group, or individual professional goal. In a paragraph or two, describe the influence attempt. Provide as much detail as possible, with quotes or examples of what you said and did. The incident you describe should involve a request that is not routine or trivial. Explain the objective or purpose of the influence attempt (what you wanted your peer to do). Briefly describe the outcomes of the influence attempt and include evidence indicating it resulted in resistance, compliance, or commitment (definitions are below) by your peer. To help you see what type of description we are looking for please read over all of the following questions and definitions before beginning your description.

1. **Background of influence episode and your goals in attempting it.** Why did this influence episode take place? What circumstances, problems or issues led you to exert influence on this individual? What was your purpose? Why was it important for you to exert influence on them?

2. **Methods or tactics used by you to influence this individual.** What methods or tactics did you use to influence this person? What was your approach or strategy? How did you exert influence on them?

3. **Involvement of others in the influence episode.** Were there other people involved in this incident? Did you solicit help or support from others? If others were involved, why did you involve them and how were they involved?

4. **Immediate outcome of the influence episode.** What was the immediate outcome of the influence attempt for you or the organization? What were the positive or negative consequences of this episode? What were the immediate consequences for you?

**Definitions**

1. **Commitment** – occurs when the person you are attempting to influence internally agrees with a request and makes a great effort to carry it out effectively.

2. **Compliance** – occurs when someone is willing to carry out a request but is apathetic rather than enthusiastic about it and will make only a minimal effort.

3. **Resistance** – occurs when the target person is opposed to a request and tries to avoid doing it.
Please provide the following information about the individual whom you influenced:

Age of individual (estimate if necessary):

Individual’s gender: Please click here and select one.

How many employees report to this individual: Please click here and select one.

Position/title of the individual:

Please use the space below to describe your influence incident. To insure the confidentiality of participants please refer to the individuals only by title in your description. The box will expand as you type your description:
Appendix I: Instrument Distribution Email to Volunteers

Thank you so much for your willingness to volunteer to participate in my study! I am very excited about the contribution that we will be able to make to the knowledge base surrounding this administrative position.

As in any study where participants are being asked to provide information regarding their specific work experiences, confidentiality is of the utmost importance. In order to maximize confidentiality, each volunteer has been assigned a randomly generated numeric code to identify them for this study. The code will be included on all forms sent to you. Your code number is XXXXXX.

Attached to this email are three documents that will be used to collect the data for this study:

1. **An informed consent form**
   First, it will be necessary for you to read the informed consent document and to check the box at the bottom agreeing to participate in this study. While participation is voluntary, I cannot collect any data from you without first collecting this completed form. Please save the completed document to your computer and then return it to me via email at PAinfluence@yahoo.com.

2. **Presidential Assistant Demographic and Leadership Characteristics Survey**
   Second, I will ask that you complete the survey which is designed to ascertain the demographic and leadership characteristics of participants in the study. Please complete and return this survey before moving on to the influence incident report forms. When completed save the document to your computer and then return it to me via email at PAinfluence@yahoo.com.

3. **PA-Peer Influence Incident Report Form**
   Lastly, you will be asked to complete **at least three** of these influence incident report forms; one for an influence attempt resulting in commitment, one for an influence attempt resulting in compliance and one for an influence attempt resulting in resistance. Each report form should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. While I am asking that you complete only one of these per week over the next 3-4 weeks, you are welcome to complete them at your leisure. **Please only include one incident per form.** When completed save each document to your computer and then return it to me via email at PAinfluence@yahoo.com.

I would like to ask that you have all items submitted to me by no later than Month, Day and Year. If you have any questions at all, please let me know. I am happy to
guide you through this process in any way that I can so as to reduce any stress or uncertainty. Your help with this research project is sincerely appreciated! Be well.
Appendix J: Participation Progress Reminder Email to Volunteers

Name,
First, let me say thank you for your participation!

Second, I wanted to check in to see how things are coming and be sure that you did not have any questions that I may be able to help you with. As a reminder, I am awaiting the following items: an informed consent form, the Presidential Assistant Demographic and Leadership Characteristics Survey and the three PA-Peer Influence Incident Report Forms. I would like to ask that you have all items submitted to me by no later than Day, Month and Year.

Let me again say thank you for your willingness to participate! Please let me know if there is anything I may be able to do to help you.

Thanks and be well.
Appendix K: Final Deadline Reminder Email to Volunteers

Name,
First, let me say thank you for your participation!

This is just a reminder that the requested deadline for my study is next Day, Month and Year. I am awaiting the completed informed consent, presidential assistant demographic and leadership characteristics survey and the three PA-Peer Influence Incident Report Forms. I hope that you will be able to complete them.

If you have any questions, please let me know. Be well.
## Appendix L: Definition List of Influence Tactics and Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Tactic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rational Persuasion</td>
<td>involves the use of explanations, logical arguments, and factual evidence to explain why a request or proposal will benefit the organization or help to achieve an important task objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Appeal</td>
<td>involves an emotional or value-based appeal, in contrast to the logical arguments used in rational persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>the leader invites an individual (or the members of a team) to participate in planning how to carry out a request or implement a proposed change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>common examples include providing praise, acting deferential, and acting friendly before making a request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Appeal</td>
<td>involves asking someone to do a favor based on friendship or loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>involves the explicit or implicit offer to reward someone for carrying out a request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Tactics</td>
<td>involve getting help from other people to influence the target person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimating Tactics</td>
<td>involve an attempt to establish one's authority or right to make a particular type of request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>include threats, warnings, and assertive behavior such as repeated demands or frequent checking to see if the target person has complied with a request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprising</td>
<td>involves an explanation of how a request or proposal is likely to benefit the target person as an individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>involves an offer to provide necessary resources and assistance if someone will agree to carry out a request or approve a proposal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Outcomes</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>The object of your influence attempt agrees with your decision or influence effort and makes an enthusiastic, voluntary effort to do what you have asked. The response comes not because the person has to but because he or she wants to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>The person you are trying to influence accepts your influence attempt, but apathetically or unenthusiastically. When the response to your influence attempt can be described as compliance, it is likely you have been successful in influencing the behavior, but not the attitudes of your influence target.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Resistance | The person you are trying to influence resists your efforts to influence his or her behavior and either avoids, ignores or actively resists your efforts at influence. This resistance can take several forms, which may include the following:
- Refuse outright to agree to your attempts to influence them.
- Ignore your efforts at influence.
- Make excuses why they cannot do what you want.
- Ask higher authorities to overrule your request.
- Attempt to persuade you to withdraw your attempt at influence.
- Delay acting on your influence efforts.
- Make a pretense of complying while actively attempting to sabotage your efforts. |
Appendix M: Examples of Influence Incidents

Incident #1: In my role as presidential assistant, one of my responsibilities is to help the president in managing and resolving complaints. After my first few years of service I realized that our approach to handling these issues was done very haphazardly (i.e. there was no structure regarding how complaints were brought forth, who addressed them initially, when or if the president should be involved, etc.). During this time I initiated an effective program to control the handling of complaints in the office. I wanted to see the method utilized by the other members of the President’s Cabinet (vice-presidents) throughout their offices, but I felt that they would consider me to be intruding if I approached them directly. Therefore, I asked my administrative assistants (who were happy with the program I had initiated) to tell the administrative assistants in other offices and divisions about the time to be saved in dealing with these issues that arose from the use of the method. The administrative assistants told their respective Cabinet member, that they were supporting, and soon the Vice-President’s came to me for information about my program. The new program streamlined the manner in which complaints were handled, provided clear expectations, outlined responsibilities for all staff and saved significant time for all employees.

Incident #2: Strategic planning is one of my responsibilities as a presidential assistant. Each semester I am required to prepare a strategic planning progress report for the President and the Board of Trustees. Accomplishing this task requires that I work with the respective Vice Presidents in each functional area to gather information from their subordinates. Sometimes these submissions are slow in getting to me. In a recent incident such as this one the report was slow in coming from the area of Enrollment Management. In follow up conversations with the Vice President of Enrollment Management she stated that it is difficult to supply this information because it is a very busy time of year for recruitment and this report will require her subordinates to lose focus. In responding I acknowledged the busy time of year and understood the additional “strain” that this would put on her division however I told her that I still needed the report by the requested deadline. The Vice President asked for an extension to the due date stating that a bit more time would be very helpful. Unfortunately, I was unable to grant the extension because the deadline that had been given was the latest possible date that could have been provided while still allowing time for compilation of all information and the writing of the formal report. The Vice President was not very pleased and stated that she wasn’t sure the task would be completed by that time. I reminded her that this report was requested by the President for the Board of Trustees and that if I did not have her submission on time it would be left out of the final report submitted to the President and the Board. While the Vice President left the conversation very unhappily, I did have her division’s submission for the strategic planning progress report by the deadline it was requested.