An Exploration of the Administrative Influence of NCAA Regulation: A Case Study of the Changes in the "Big Football University" Athletic Academic Support Unit from 1991 - 2014

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Abstract of Dissertation

An Exploration of the Administrative Influence of NCAA Regulation:
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Athletic programs have been an exciting staple of the higher education experience for over a century. Although student athletes have been studied near exhaustively in higher education research, less attention has been paid to the relationship of athletic academic staff members and corresponding institutional operations in supporting student athlete goals. This study was designed to create a full, rich description, ultimately contributing to the literature of the cultural, social, economic, and academic environment of the staff of the athletic academic support unit from 1991-2014. The overall research question is thus: How has NCAA legislation shaped the administrative institutional action at the "Big Football University" athletic academic support unit from 1991-2014?

A case study methodology was chosen for the research design. The study utilized a constructivist epistemological orientation and two theoretical lenses: Organizational Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory. Data collection was conducted through interviews with key informants and primary and secondary document analysis. Data displays, domain analysis, and open coding was be used to answer the research question. To increase both internal and external validity, trustworthiness tactics were used ensuring that the results matched reality, that there was a saturation of data, and that a truthful portrayal was created by providing a clear synthesis of patterns found. During data

analysis, four constructs were used as macro categories for themes including University Responses, Identity Changes, Legislative Influences, and Leadership and Role Conflict.

The results from this study led to three major findings. First, the data collected has the ability to contribute data furthering research in the fields of Social Identity Theory, Organizational Identity Theory, and constructivist epistemology influences in higher education environments. Next, the hyper focus of the study on one institution's administrative choices was a pragmatic choice by the researcher to be able to recommend how other schools can adjust their own support services if they are faced with similar scenarios. And lastly the study highlights the need for more athletics research to improve practice within the field.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Athletic programs have been an exciting staple of the higher education experience for over a century. Rife with both scandals and soaring victories, those who administer, work, and participate in collegiate athletics constantly walk a fine line of providing intellectually stimulating developmental experiences for student athletes while maintaining a talent base that allows for a competitive edge. During the recruiting season, therefore, the regulatory body of the NCAA and individual institutions constantly set mandates to reform athletic academic programming, affecting student athlete experiences (Ferris, Finster, & McDonald, 2004; Gaston-Gayles, 2004). Even though the number of student athletes is tiny compared to the entire general student body, "from less than 2% of the general student body at large Division I institutions to 30% or more at some highly selective Division III liberal-arts colleges" (Brand, 2006, p. 17), their actions within the institution influence the entire campus community. A small amount of students participate in formal athletic programs, but the rest of the student body spends an incredible amount of time, energy, and money to support the athletic programming. The symbols and history of a winning athletic program is powerful to maintaining the strength of affinity, especially to students and alumni donors. The lasting power is given by those who have loyalty to the institution's programs. If these programs are seen to falter, the perception of the strength of the institution is upended. The reaction to a saga being changed or ruptured is usually negative. Student athletes bear the responsibility of athletic victory while maintaining a strong academic record. The strength of the culture of

the athletic program is undoubtedly affected by the institutional structure within which it resides. This structure is also supported by the academic support units tasked with providing academic guidance and tutoring to student athletes. This structure currently is not standardized, and improvements to the student athlete academic experience are constantly sought. This study looks specifically at one example of a higher education institution that enacted the regulations of the NCAA to comply not only with new legislation regarding academic tutoring, but to actively create a new administrative structure and organizational culture to support student athlete success. This chapter provides the context of the problem, as well as brief summaries of the case study research design and justification as the chosen methodology, explanation of the epistemological orientation and theoretical constructs, and limitations for the study.

Statement of the Problem

Although student athletes have been studied nearly exhaustively in higher education research, less attention has been paid to the relationship of athletic academic staff members and institutional operations in supporting student athlete academic goals. Student athletes in higher education settings are expected to perform both athletically and academically at their peak while attempting to cope with extreme demands on their time, motivation, and health. Student athletes, especially minority students, when lacking proper support, tend to perform unsatisfactorily academically in the resulting hostile environment (Melendez, 2008; Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007). There is a stereotype present in higher education settings that student athletes are "dumb jocks" who are unconcerned with obtaining academic credentials (Czopp, 2010; Lally, & Kerr, 2005). In a 2007 study by Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, and Jensen, the researchers wanted to see the "athletes'

views of how they are perceived and treated by faculty and other students and their response to this treatment. The authors studied 538 athletes at a large Division I academically selective public university, with 314 respondents being male and 224 being female (Simons et al., 2007). The most important finding from the research was that "fully a third of the athletes reported negative perceptions by their professors and TAs and less than 15% reported positive perceptions" (Simons et al., 2007, p. 256). These negative perception feelings were also reported at a higher level for revenue athletes at 42.9% than non revenue athletes at 30.6% (Simons et al., 2007). When faced with overt hostility from other students regarding their supposed elite status and special accommodations, student athletes' "most common response was to reject the stigma and work harder (35.0%). Only 3.0% reject it by complaining to the professor while 7.1% complain to a higher power which in most cases is their athletic academic adviser. However a substantial percentage implicitly accept the stereotype by not participating in class (32%), dropping the class (15.8%), or not attending (5.0%) (Simons et al., 2007, p. 266). For nearly half of the student athletes surveyed, "many implicitly or explicitly accept the stigma by attempting to hide their athletic identity from their professors in order to avoid the stereotype" (Simons et al., 2007, p. 267). The report found negative stereotypes for both men and women and all races of students who participated in the study.

An additional study probed whether or not participation in sports affected the educational experience to any significant degree. Symonds used a factorial design using data obtained from the College Student Report (based on NSSE) from 2005 at one institution (2009). The survey was administered by NSSE staff to the first year and fourth

year students. The analysis focused on the engagement experiences of athletes versus non-athletes and non-revenue generating sport participants versus revenue generating participants. Most importantly, Symonds found that “at the cooperating institution, even though academic support services are available to all students, revenue sports athletes perceived less environmental support than non-revenue athletes” (Symonds, 2009, p. 165).

Equally worthy of study is the potentially damaging negative perception that campus members have of student athletes. Harrison, Comeaux, and Plecha (2006) created a study that attempted to understand how faculty influenced student athlete academic success. Harrison et al., wrote, “specifically, this study examines selected faculty interaction measures of academic achievement among student athletes in the revenue-producing sports of men's basketball and football” (2006, p. 277). This study was focusing on the environmental factors facing student athletes and their academic achievement. Harrison, et al. used data found in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Student Information Form and the College Student Survey (2006). A more specific sample was taken for use by the researchers, which included 693 student athletes at predominantly White institutions participating in football and basketball (Harrison et al., 2006). The authors used the “Input-Environment-Outcome (I-E-0) model for studying the impact of college on students” (Harrison et al., 2006, p. 293) which allowed the researchers to determine faculty interaction impact while controlling for individual student characteristics. The data demonstrated that a positive relationship was found in respect to academic achievement when faculty encouraged student athletes to attend and plan for graduate school (Harrison et al., 2006). Lastly, the research showed

that “institutional type and control were not significant predictors of academic success for this study. For example, attending a university, a 4 year state college, public, or private institution had no bearing on student athlete-faculty interaction and its impact on GPA” (Harrison et al., 2006, p. 281). The researchers took some liberties with the research to use as proof that students who were more engaged with faculty would then be more successful in school and graduate school. Beyond that, the main implication of the study is that faculty are being portrayed as ignorant of student culture, especially of student-athlete culture; and need to be aware of student athlete needs when they attempt to interact with faculty, but not outwardly treat them differently so as to encourage their student identity and academic success.

Evidence that the environmental constraints placed on student athletes negatively affected academic performance however is conflicting. Ferris, Finster, and McDonald (2004) wanted to discover if there was a better way to determine the rates of undergraduate graduation since “the federally mandated graduation rates alone do not provide a valid comparative measure across all Division I-A universities” (p. 556). The authors’ specific research questions centered on discovering the differences in graduation rates comparatively of student athletes and the entire student population at varying athletically successful universities (Ferris et al., 2004). The researchers constructed their database from NCAA Graduation-Rate Reports from 1992-2002 for Division I-A universities, and then “supplemented this database with institutional academic profiles for the fall 2002 freshman cohorts as reported in the College Board's 2001 College Handbook, as well as the annual finishes for each university in the Sears Directors' Cup, a reward that honors broad-based athletic success, since 1993” (Ferris et al., 2004, p. 560-

561). They then conducted simple comparisons as well as sophisticated statistical analysis of variables. Ferris et al. first discovered that "as a group, Division I-A athletes graduate at a rate 1.1% lower than other students," (2004, p. 561) but the authors lamented not being able to point to individual universities for reasons why this was occurring.

The researchers also found that the "mean graduation-rate difference between athletes and their student cohorts is zero and the distribution is symmetric, suggesting there is no average difference in the graduation rates between athletes and their student cohorts across all universities" (Ferris et al., 2004, p. 563). Unsurprisingly the researchers also found that "as university graduation rates increase, athlete graduation rates also tend to increase" (Ferris et al., 2004, p. 564). No current data set for all Division I-A schools exists using these specific data set comparisons, so to make assessments regarding graduation rates could be seen as an exercise in uninformed extrapolation.

Academic support systems have gained popularity with researchers, but this does not necessarily translate to adoption at most institutions. Dudley, Johnson, and Johnson (1997) created a study, novel for its time, that it looked at what was then a relatively unknown student population, student athletes. The authors studied a specific program at a Midwestern university called the Cooperative Evening Study Group Program to see if it was an effective tool for students to integrate into a collegiate lifestyle (Dudley, Johnson, & Johnson, 1997). Dudley et al. wanted to answer numerous questions of the program's effectiveness. The research framework revolved around discovering if the students were able to work cooperatively to finish assignments, if they felt that the environment was supportive of their needs, and if their perceived friendships were strengthened by the

program (Dudley, Johnson, & Johnson, 1997, p. 450). The data collection occurred in 1993-1994. There were 107 students in the program, but 50 were selected (25 males and 25 females) randomly to participate in the study. The students had already been placed in groups to act as a base, but were then given the option of attending meetings based on math, a computer lab session, "common course" where "students taking the same class were encouraged to complete assignments in cooperative learning groups" (Dudley et al., 1997, p. 452) and quiet study (Dudley et al., 1997, p. 452). Using descriptive statistics, the researchers found that "by and large, the participants' reactions to the program were favorable" (Dudley et al., 1997, p. 456). Also, they found that "student athletes believed that the other participants cared about how much they learned and wished to help them do so" (Dudley et al., 1997, p. 455). This study was important to future work in the field of student athlete development because it is an example of one of the first forays into measuring the effectiveness of such programs.

But there are still lingering questions of which supports are appropriate as the developmental stages of student athletes are not yet widely accepted. In *A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes* (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011), the authors believed that the numerous student development theories that are in use by student affairs practitioners, while effective in understanding the majority of student populations, are ineffective when attempting to discern student-athlete issues. Comeaux and Harrison (2011), having asked the question "What would a model look like that would effectively address the development that athletes go through?" created a new model for usage. This model is called the Model for Student-Athlete Academic Success. This authors did make note that this model was generated for the student-athletes who are housed in Division I

institutions. Their conceptual model, "offers a culturally inclusive approach, applying the SB [Scholar-Baller] paradigm to influence student–athlete academic success at Division I institutions" (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011, p. 237). The authors, while they did not use this new model on a student population by the time of publication, were confident that their creation would serve an incredibly vital link to new research on the intellectual development of student athletes (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). In instances when the model will be used, "the implementation of the SB curriculum and other effective culturally relevant tools through academic support services will increase the likelihood of student– athletes' motivation and engagement in the social and academic domains" (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011, p. 241). Utilizing a SB curriculum, the authors believe that the student-athlete centered programs will be better able to focus on the development of their social as well as academic skills once more empirical evidence has been obtained.

Studies previously conducted of the rigors that student athletes face link together to portray an environment that still has not effectively regulated academic progress to a measure that satisfies both institutions, students, and the NCAA. Environmental challenges pose a risk to academic achievement, but the degree of this risk is debatable. Some research shows that students are given support, but are then not taking advantage of it. There is general disagreement as to what is the best support system to use, and institutional support varies. Also, cultural misgivings at campuses persist about the educational value that student athletes contribute off the field, potentially damaging their academic potential.

Winning teams, record setting coaches, large sport personalities, and a community belief in the sanctity of an athletic program can be an integral part of a university's

cultural saga. “When students define themselves as personally responsible for upholding the image of the college, then a design or plan has become an organizational saga” (Clark, 1972, p. 275). Student beliefs in the saga (wanting to attend games, wear school merchandise and jerseys, athletes choosing a certain school over another based on their winning record) is a powerful tool. But it is all possible because the political power holders at the university, (i.e.) the President, Board of Trustees, or coaching staff, allow the environment to flourish.

The political environment of a higher education institution can determine an athletic program’s cultural strength from the administration buy in from the school community, and the treatment of coaches and staff by campus constituents. Within more contentious discussions regarding athletic programming and campus members, the question of whether athletic departments are to be considered central to a university’s mission have become more common. Politics and athletics are inextricably interwoven both at the institutional level and the macro level. Although housed within academia, college revenue generating sports are subject to external market forces and political forces in regards to pressures like fluctuations in ticket revenues, endorsement deals, accusations of students not being treated fairly, and when scandals emerge either from the misconduct of staff and coaches or student athletes. “Since organizations depend on their environment for resources they need to survive, they are inevitably enmeshed with external constituents whose expectations or demands must be heeded” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 235). Unlike most units in higher education institutions, athletic departments are forced to constantly deal with the internal demands of the institutional desires and external markets, sometimes with dramatic results. Athletic programs are growing larger

with more power and are increasingly independent from their parent institutions. For two of the largest programs, “the departments at the Universities of Florida and Georgia are even set up as 501(c)(3) organizations separate from their parent institutions” (Suggs, 2003, p. 1).

Institutional and individual identity, when faced with change in a tangential unit such as athletic departments programming, is further complicated as the members are not always thought to be an academically important part of an institution’s mission or goals. This “pigeon holing” (Mintzberg, 1979) has allowed athletic programs to be functionally autonomous because they bring in extensive revenue, and the coaching skills necessary to develop and recruit a well-honed winning team is difficult to understand and replicate. The niche experience has created a popular perception of athletics: That the main goal of higher education institutions with large scale athletics programs is only to produce student athletes capable of having a winning season. The governance within the institutional structure makes one assume that athletic programs would operate just as academic units do, with a hierarchy of units and positions of administrators and faculty in alignment with the mission and goals of a university. This traditional structure allows for understanding of who has authority and emphasizes functions, tasks, responsibility, and a division of labor. The structure provides the method of job design to fortify institutional goals. If the members of the organization do not feel as though they can contribute to the institutional goals, a contentious environment can result.

Athletic programs are unable to exist in a vacuum. Studies that create detailed historical accounts of the evolution of academic support programming for student athletes

can provide a necessary bridge in scholarly research in understanding the relationships between institutions, the NCAA, staff, and student athletes.

Purpose of the Study

Integral to the attempts to have adequate educational attainment for student athletes was, among other precedents, the 1991 NCAA mandate that dictated that all Division One student athletes be given academic tutoring and support (Meyer, 2005). The purpose of the study was to delve into an example of an academic support unit for student athletes in a university, specifically at the Big Football University, to determine the resulting bureaucratic structures to support it. Studying this policy's effects in conjunction with other broad institutional actions contributed context and means for further analysis as to what environments were successful for staff members in providing superior academic support to student athletes.

The Big Football University and Early Academic Tutoring

Thelin's primer on the financial and administrative aspects of athletics in higher education, titled "The Old College Try: Balancing Academics and Athletics in Higher Education" (1989) provided an invaluable resource in demonstrating the challenges to the scope of the NCAA and the economic concerns of amateur sports. Calls for reform in the late 1980s encompassed every facet of the athletics program in institutions, including financial aid structure, president oversight limitations, accreditation, and player eligibility. Most important was Thelin's (1989) extensive review of the paradox in which public universities must operate. This was also expanded by Baxter and Lambert (1990) who reminded:

> Large public universities are contradictory; they tend to serve the local business community and uphold the democratic commitment to self-improvement through

> education and amateur athletics. These schools mimic the elite, but also represent 'service stations' that cater to local athletic boosters who profit materially and emotionally from successful athletic programs. (Baxter & Lambert, 1990, p. 410)

Thelin (1989) discussed the Big Football University as an oft cited example for other institutions to see how a campus has successfully negotiated the demands of both athletic and academic success. Thelin (1989) provided a detailed account of the athletic department budget of the Big Football University in 1989, which operated with $15 million supporting, among facility management, 130 employees "including a travel agent, mechanics, carpenters, and engineers, along with several hundred part-time employees who work at games" (Thelin, 1989, p. 16). Not mentioned in Thelin's description was a portion of the budget dedicated to academic tutoring, but the Big Football University provided student athletes with earlier versions of academic tutoring. In 1981, the Big Football University created an academic support unit for student athletes called the Student-Athlete Academic Support Program. The program was lauded by other schools and the NCAA as an exemplary program to emulate when trying to create academic environments that would increase student athletic success. Before the students would be recruited to the football or basketball teams, the Big Football University coaches would "make their assessment of each recruit's potential to fit in and succeed based on interviews with the student-athlete's parents, coaches, instructors, counselors, high school principals, and alumni" (Walter & Smith, 1986, p. 42). If students were accepted to the team and the school, a summer orientation was mandatory to reassess the student's ability for a second time, discussions between primarily "the academic advisor to the Athletic Department, the head coach, and the director of the Student-Athlete Academic Support Program" (Walter & Smith, 1986, p. 42). At-risk students were then assigned specialists

for academic tutoring and mentoring, as well as mandatory hours to be spent in the academic facility to complete homework (Walter & Smith, 1986). After the first year, the student was then assessed for a third time. It was then when "instructional sessions for a given student are either phased out or are continued for a second year at the discretion of a committee consisting of the academic advisor, head coach, and director of the support program" (Walter & Smith, 1986, p. 43). The Big Football University's program history provides a case study site that can be a tool for current practitioners, researchers, and policy makers as a generalizable example to other large programs.

The 1991 NCAA Tutoring Mandate

After seeing positive results in individual institutions that advocated academic support services for student athletes, the NCAA mandated in January 1991 that academic and counseling services were to be made available for member institutions that were in the Division I category (Meyer, 2005). The actual NCAA legislation adopted, 16.3.1.1 Academic Counseling/Support Services, reads as follows:

> Member institutions shall make general academic counseling and tutoring services available to all student-athletes. Such counseling and tutoring services may be provided by the department of athletics or the institution's nonathletics student support services. In addition, an institution may finance other academic and support services than the institution, at its discretion, determines to be appropriate and necessary for the academic success of its student-athletes. (Adopted: 1/10/91 effective 8/1/91, Revised: 4/25/03 effective 8/1/02, 5/9/06). (NCAA.com).

This legislation formalized the idea that all Division I athletes, those with the most demanding schedules and most pressure to be athletically successful, had a right to have adequate academic support. It was an effort on the part of the NCAA to correct the variance in support programs among its member institutions, and force schools to dedicate time, funding, and human resources to helping student athletes navigate college

curriculum and classes successfully. The NCAA did mandate that Division One athletes be given specialized academic support. However, this is *not* a mandate for Division Two or Division Three schools and it is up to the individual institution whether or not to spend the money to create a specialized unit for student athletes. It was acknowledged that "outstanding academic facilities and superior administrative staffs are expensive to develop and maintain. According to the NCAA, a lack of financial resources hinders academic success at all levels of education" (Blackman, 2008, p. 236). The disparity in resources between programs made it difficult for the NCAA to institute wide sweeping reform mandates that could have been enacted quickly. In response, "in 1990-1, the NCAA also began to subsidize these services through a new Academic Enhancement Fund by providing stipends in the amount of $25,000 to each NCAA Division I school to support academic programs specific to the college athlete" (Ridpath, 2010, p. 256). As of 2010, it is now $58,000 per school (Ridpath, 2010). Although the NCAA could not have anticipated the consequences from the variety of legislation for academic reform, "approved academic services expanded to include counseling services for career awareness, eating disorders, and other areas, and beginning in 2002 institutions were permitted to finance any academic-support services determined to be appropriate and necessary for student-athletes' academic success" (Meyer, 2005, p. 16).

The purpose of the study was to delve into an example of an academic support unit for student athletes in a university that was able to follow the NCAA mandate and potentially create a new bureaucratic structure to support it, specifically the Big Football University. This study contributes to knowledge about internal organizational structures that change with external organizational directives; how a university responds to an

external organization calling for a restructuring of internal processes; and how legislation from an external organization can change the identity of the staff involved.

Research Question

The main interest of the study was to create a full, rich description, ultimately contributing to the literature of this topic, of the cultural, social, economic, and academic environment of the staff and administrators of the Academic Support Services unit at the Big Football University from 1991 to 2014. The intention was to discover how legislation led to various individual actions, potentially discovering themes guiding the study's data collection and analysis. This study was supported by unveiling university responses, identity changes both internally and externally, and the influence of leadership in implementing NCAA legislation. The overall research question was thus: How has NCAA legislation shaped the administrative institutional action at the Big Football University athletic academic support unit from 1991-2014?

In the creation of the research question, the researcher was operating under assumptions and conjectures before data collection. Conjectures established at the onset of the study design included the supposition that demonstrable changes to the administrative machinations of the academic support unit would be found. It was also assumed that there would be indications of confusion and different interpretations of the policy as it is implemented into the academic support unit culture. It was also theorized that with the organizational adjustments, perceptions of efficacy and job design would have been affected. Foreshadowed problems included those of limited access available to the researcher for archival data, a lack of response from potential interviewees, and researcher bias.

Statement of Significance

The significance of the study is seen in its contribution to future research focusing on administrative and organizational changes in higher education units, future methodology development, and completion of a full, historical record. A case study methodology was an appropriate choice as this study is examining an event that has influenced contemporary research, policy creation, and administrative development in higher education.

This case study addresses how staff members in academic support processes are influenced today and why they do not necessarily result in student academic success or positive organizational change. The results of this study add to scholarly research and literature. The results assist in providing not just a descriptive work, but a study challenging the issues that are applicable in current athletic academic support services. It also contributes to literature regarding the combination of social identity theory in organizations as it pertains to athletic organizations, a gap in research. This study is a worthy addition to the body of research conducted using a methodology which is not heavily featured in qualitative work. Practitioners will find that in the results generalizable facets that can be adopted in their own environments. The critiques and conflict management tactics are applicable in other settings, and the findings provide a blueprint for further studies investigating how institutions can enact administrative changes based on a member organization's control. Policy makers benefit when another regulation is passed, as they will be able to use this study to anticipate potential problems

that staff and administrators will face. The findings can be used as a learning tool for efficacious methods of incorporating policy, and as a historical record to the changing of an organizational identity based on directives from an outside influence.

Summary of Conceptual Framework

This constructivist study was supplemented by two theoretical constructs: the Social Identity Theory and Organizational Identity Theory. In constructivism, there is no objective truth and all knowledge is socially created and taught to other members (Crotty, 1998). Social Identity Theory postulates that individuals "tend to classify themselves and others into various social categories" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 20). He and Brown (2013) described organizational identity "as the socially constructed product of relationships between collectively held, and socially structured individual cognitions regarding who the organization is" (p. 7). The theories provided lenses through which data was collected and analyzed. Both theories are based in the constructivist view that culture and identity, and ultimately comfort with environmental change, are socially created and changed with both internal and external pressures. Using both theories to create a dual level analysis of organizational change at the Big Football University is a tactic not previously used in research, and provided an in-depth portrait of staff specific machinations in the athletic support services unit.

Summary of Methodology

The methodology chosen for the study is that of case study. The data collection was gleaned from semi-structured interviews and document collection. An interview protocol was created by the researcher. Semi-structured interviews with administrators, graduate mentors, learning specialists, and other individuals in the unit garnered data

about their perceptions of the identity, perceived results, and university response in regards to the unit's success. Data analysis using data displays, domain analysis, and theoretical coding found relevant patterns and themes while creating a holistic portrait of the unit of analysis. A narrative accompanied by found themes was used to clearly present the data to answer the research question.

Limitations and Delimitations

As with any research, there are limitations that bind this study. The data collections methods chosen; document analysis and interviews have inherent issues with legitimacy and accuracy. There are limitations with case study methodology as a research design. Case studies are not meant to have exact replication or direct applicability, but more theoretical generalizability in the findings (Merriam, 2009). The sample of a heavily funded, public university in the Midwest contains characteristics that will potentially alienate readers as they do not represent all available academic support programs.

Delimitations were also present in shaping the boundaries of the study. The study only took place at one institution, the Big Football University. This site was chosen as it was an excellent candidate for a high profile institution that produced, through careful research, generalizable solutions to staff management success in other heavily funded, high pressure athletic programs. This study focused on the interactions of the organizational environment and staff members. The inclusion criteria to create the sample was administrative individuals who worked in the academic support unit in a staff capacity from 1991-2014, persons involved in any administration oversight committees, and faculty members from departments that worked directly with the program. Case

study research is unable to completely trace every aspect of the unit of analysis under investigation; however through adherence to the study design and careful data collection, the researcher maximized all potential avenues of discovery.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sought to address the myriad of variables present during the incorporation of NCAA tutoring legislation starting in 1991 at the Big Football University support unit for student athletes. As scrutiny intensifies on higher education institutions to provide worthwhile educational experiences to student athletes, those in charge of increasing graduation rates and educational attainment will be seeking knowledge of successful programs. A novel approach to add to both bodies of literature regarding systematic case study inquiry and organizational cultural adaptation, this study's results contribute to more effective organizational systems for other athletic academic support units.

Chapter Two of this dissertation includes a literature review that traces the development of critical NCAA reform efforts, university responses to the presence of athletics in the collegiate setting, and how prior case studies of athletic units contributed to this study's methodological focus. Chapter Three is dedicated to a detailed discussion of the research design, data collection plans, and tactics for data analysis. Chapter Four houses the study's findings and implications, and Chapter Five presents a discussion of the study's findings and suggestions for future research.

Definition of Key Terms

Amateur: Being categorized as an amateur, (i.e.) not being permitted to profit from participating in collegiate sports, also inhibits the ability for agents and secondary representatives to interfere or negotiate with schools

Big Football University: Pseudonym used for case study site

Division One: A category of athletic participation for students within the NCAA

1. Comprised of 167,089 student athletes in 2009-2010 in 347 member institutions
2. Scholarships can be awarded to student athletes based on athletic ability

Legislation/Regulation: Legislation refers to specific member-approved rules that are described in greater detail in the document which led to sweeping reform and change in higher education athletics. Regulation is used to describe all other NCAA existing rules.

NCAA: The National Collegiate Athletic Association is the regulatory organization for amateur collegiate athletics. The NCAA is a democratic system that cannot set mandates unless the member organizations approve. In a voting process, member institutions of varying types agree upon the laws and mandates of academic standards, athletic programs offered, and budgets all agree upon the laws and mandates in a voting process (Potuto, 2010). Over 450,000 student athletes and over 1100 institutions participate in the NCAA.

Revenue Generating: Refers to athletic programs that are able to generate a profit. This includes Men's Basketball Programs and Football programs in some Division One conferences.

Student Athlete: A student enrolled in a higher education institution that is on a roster for an NCAA member institution in a revenue generating sport

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the review is not only to provide historical and cultural context for the study, but to gain nuanced understanding of previous research that has investigated similar questions of academic support structures in athletics. For comprehension of the historical development of the relationship between the NCAA and higher education institutions, as well as the evolution of tutoring for student athletes, this chapter presents a discussion of the history of the NCAA, the current strength of NCAA influence, and academic tutoring progression. This chapter concludes with an analysis of previously conducted studies that further elucidate the importance of having a carefully conducted case study of an athletic academic support unit to contribute to the body of knowledge already accumulated.

Method of the review

At the onset of creating the literature review, online resources were used with access being granted from the MyAladin portal at the Gelman Library website at the George Washington University. Educational literature databases were another primary focus for searching, with considerable attention being given to Academic Search Premiere, Project Muse, the ERIC.gov (Education Resources Information Center) in the US Department of Education abstracts database, and ProQuest Research Library Plus. After exhausting the supply of pertinent articles from those sources, the search expanded

to non-education centered databases such as PsychINFO which houses psychology literature, the Social Sciences Citation Index which houses sociology literature, and JSTOR. As can readily be seen, the search terms used varied widely throughout the literature review's construction process.

Initially, the topics pursued were of how student athletes' curricular goals were established and how co-curricular settings were based upon these institutional goals. Using just the term "student athlete" ensured that greatest yield of literature, but also created an additional process to eliminate extraneous articles. When using just "student athlete" as a search term, many articles that appeared dealt with tracking athletes and their extracurricular activities such as sexual patterns, drug and alcohol abuse, and other negative behaviors. Closer attention was paid to articles that had words in the title similar to "organization," "NCAA," "learning", and "identity". After cursory inspections and gaining some traction in that search, it was prudent to look at articles that were somewhat peripheral to the initial search, but still provided insight into the identity of athletic organizations, associated employees, and their experiences in a collegiate setting. This also included efforts to find data regarding academic supports for student athletes from an outside perspective. The research found created a portrait of the identity and academic challenges that student athletic units face in an academic collegiate context.

Early NCAA Development

The NCAA is the most widely recognized and enduring organization associated with collegiate athletics. Its creation has left an indelible mark upon the mandates of higher education institutions and sports. But the prevalence of athletics programs in higher education and its appropriateness therein has been debated for well over a century.

A complete nuanced history of the thousands of rules the NCAA has instituted in its quest to create amateur athletic standards is exhaustive. What is most pertinent to this study is the organization's meteoric growth, issues of student eligibility, and the NCAA's dedication to managing athletic success and academic rigor for student athletes.

Questions as to how higher education institutions could maintain high academic standards and athletic contests existed well before the creation of the NCAA. For example, some believed that athletic pursuits in college greatly benefitted the individual development of students.

> Burning the midnight oil has been a fault of the man attached to indoor life and it has always demanded a heavy penalty in the end. It was to destroy this sort of thing – the pouring over books all day and the burning of oil at midnight, that athletic exercises were instituted in colleges. ("The College Athlete," 1883)

Sports were seen as a means to exemplifying the benefits of a college's ability to build a sense of community among students, "and nowhere else is it needed so much as in college; for education is of its very essence self-centered and in a sense selfish" (Few, 1904, p. 329). Sporting events were attended by thousands of spectators and bonded a community with local higher education institutions. For example, in 1890, the 15th annual field meeting of the Inter-College Association of Amateur Athletics in America attracted over 8,000 spectators and "nearly every one of the fifteen colleges connected with the association was well represented" ("Inter-Collegiate Athletics," 1890). Early organizations recognized the need to make college sports as an amateur, institution sponsored activity. "Since 1888, the Amateur Athletic Union has sought to preserve amateur sports against the encroachments of professionalism" (Woody, 1955, p. 247). However, not all believed that colleges should incorporate commercial sports endeavors into their educational financial goals as it placed undue pressure on students to succeed in

non-academic pursuits. As far back as 1892, it was postulated that college students would not effectively acclimate after leaving college when being given accolades as a student athlete. It was worrisome

> whether it is wholesome for a college youth to win the amount of attention and applause that fall to the lot of a successful athlete, seeing that he must soon leave college and begin professional or business life at the bottom of the ladder, where, for a time at least, obscurity will take the place of fame. ("The College Athlete's Slump," 1892)

Rivals in the Ivy League, Princeton and Harvard, constantly addressed each other publicly to try to answer questions of if collegiate athletics could be managed to be a positive activity for students. President McCosh of Princeton in 1886 proposed that "Harvard, the oldest college, call a conference with a view to create some restrictions which will allow all the benefits and cut off the evils of inter-collegiate sports" ("President McCosh," 1886). No conference was organized, and as both schools did not cut off any programs and continued the use of professional players, national attention was paid to what was seen as a perversion of the aims of collegiate athletics.

> For the sake of the reputations of Yale and Princeton as honest, fair-dealing, manly American universities, it is to be hoped that the professional player in collegiate athletics will be banished from existence and that intercollegiate contests will become in fact what they are supposed to be, a struggle between actual students from the two contending universities. ("Collegiate Athletics," 1893)

Others in the media created suggestions for institutions to take an ethically sound route to standardizing athletics without penalizing a specific school for infractions. "Rules are made to purify athletics and keep them on a healthy basis, and they are not formulated to give one college an advantage over another" (Few, 1904, p. 334).

Beyond recruiting practices that were unethical and the use of questionable "students," collegiate athletics programs nationally suffered extraordinary numbers of

injuries and deaths. In 1904 alone, 21 college students were killed and over 200 were injured playing football (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998). The violence of football attracted the attention of President Theodore Roosevelt who in 1905 encouraged university leaders to reform the game in a substantial and consistently uniform way. In 1906, meetings arranged by Henry M. Cracken, chancellor of New York University, attended by over 75 institutions, resulted in the Intercollegiate Athletic Associated of the U.S. (IAAUS), later renamed the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in 1912 (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998, p. 33).

Although the alarming trend of injuries among the student athletes was certainly addressed, more so "problems relating to amateurism and eligibility rules received as much, if not more, attention at the first NCAA annual meeting in 1906" (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998, p. 33). It was believed that "athletes were made legitimate not only by requiring them to be amateurs and refraining from profiting from their athletic prowess, but also by efforts to equate sports with socially redeeming values" (Flowers, 2009, p. 358). The NCAA began the unenviable task of creating best practices for its member institutions in all realms of collegiate sports and its operations. Twelve years later at the 1918 NCAA convention it was mandated "in every college and university, the Department of Physical Training and Athletics should be recognized as a department of collegiate instruction, directly responsible to the college or university administration" (Covell & Barr, 2001, p. 419).

Meanwhile, the debate of if athletics with commercial underpinnings belonged in higher education continued. In 1926, to determine the level of corruption and negative practices happening in its member institutions, the NCAA, the Association of American

Colleges, and the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools asked the Carnegie Foundation "to investigate the conflict between the university as a liberal institution that develops the intellectual life and as a utilitarian service station that promotes business, industry, and organized athletics on a commercial basis" (Baxter & Lambert, 1990, p. 413). The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching was a highly respected organization founded by "industrialist Andrew Carnegie and Henry Pritchett, president of M.I.T., together in 1905" (Baxter & Lambert, 1990, p. 408). The results of their study were not surprising. Written by Howard J. Savage, the Carnegie Report lambasted the culture that had been created around the collegiate athletic sphere. "The Carnegie Report opposed granting athletic scholarships and special admissions for athletes" (Baxter & Lambert, 1990, p. 413). The report also found that the "exaggerated importance of athletics has brought about a poor administration of the problem of scholastic eligibility which is being attacked with hardly more than a mere show of conscientiousness" (Cowley, 1930, p. 31). Within the 112 institutions studied, it was found that almost two thirds of the undergraduate student body (63%) participated in sports "regularly or intermittently" (Cowley, 1930, p. 32). Savage's report concluded that there were a number of significant problems in collegiate athletics including

> (1) widespread opinion among alumni that college registration depends upon successful athletics teams, an opinion which the investigators found to be unwarranted;
> (2) the evil effects of recruiting and subsidizing that probably persist into business and professional life;
> (3) commercialization defined as 'that condition which exists when the monetary and material returns in play, sport, and bodily and moral well-being;
> (4) the lack of intellectual challenge to the young and alert mind;
> (5) the control of athletics by imitative methods rather than through adaptive growth; and
> (6) the failure of athletics to contribute appreciably to morals and conduct.
> (Cowley, 1930, p. 34-35)

The Carnegie Report was the first widely recognized systematic critique of collegiate athletics programming. The NCAA's reaction to the report was to increase the regulations to curb commercialization and promote amateurism among student athletes. Again the NCAA faced criticism, but this time detractors did not find favor with the seemingly endless rules regarding eligibility and acceptable play. It was lamented that

> there are age limits, scholarship standards, transfer rules, amateur rules, freshman rules, stipulations as to what is legitimate academic work and what is not, lists giving the games to be played in one week, and the history of each one of them is that they are formulated to control the other fellow or to control some troublesome situation in an expedient fashion without counting the cost to those who might be trying to foster athletics for the benefit of all boys regardless of their age, income, or previous condition of servitude. (Oberteuffer, 1936, p. 440)

In 1939, rather than reducing the regulations to appease detractors, the NCAA imposed even more regulations for eligibility and fair play beginning in 1939 in regards to championship games. These rules were then transferred to all games beginning in 1946, "stating that only those student-athletes admitted to their schools under the same admission standards as all other students would be eligible and that participants must be enrolled in a full course of study as defined by his school at the time of competition" (Covell & Barr, 2001, p. 421). The rules adopted in 1946 were dubbed the "Sanity Code," and detailed strict recruiting practices to attempt to hold student athletes to the same academic and admission standards as all students. Some institution leaders however were wary of the benefits, "due to concerns that the NCAA could only enforce the rule selectively, thereby leaving some schools at a competitive disadvantage as compared to others, and no president relished the idea of a losing program on his campus" (Covell & Barr, 2001, p. 422).

The NCAA "had no effective enforcement powers until 1948" (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998, p. 35) and corruption at individual institutions was finally being somewhat controlled. As the NCAA grew in stature, it was "granted increased power to represent and regulate the athletic interests of member institutions" (Baxter & Lambert, 1990, p. 404). By the end of World War I, popularity of collegiate athletics beyond football had increased. By the mid 1950s, "sports such as speedball, touch-football, volleyball, and the development of class, fraternity, student-faculty, and other contests are phases of this promising extension of sports for all" (Woody, 1955, p. 247). With the increased variety of sports played, administrative demands placed on the NCAA became more vital.

Early Academic Reform Efforts

Eligibility for student athletes was a major concern for the NCAA in preserving both athletic contests and maintaining academic rigor for student athletes during their collegiate career. The NCAA had difficulty controlling, at the time, academic progress of individual student athletes once in the institution, but could control what student athletes would be eligible to be recruited by its member institutions. At the 1965 NCAA convention, it was adopted that students must have earned a 1.6 grade point average in the student's sixth, seventh, and eighth semester of high school. This was later increased to 2.0 at the 1973 conference (Covell & Barr, 2001, p. 427). Also in 1973, "under pressure from coaches who wanted greater control over their players and the ability to 'fire' them for poor athletic performance, the NCAA instituted one-year scholarships, renewable annually at the athletic department's discretion" (Sperber, 1991, p. 2). These renewable scholarships and academic GPA standards were used for the next decade for

recruitment. From 1975-1980, only 42.9% of Division I-A football players graduated (Covell & Barr, 2001, p. 431). It was only 1975 that the NCAA created the requirement that "college presidents sign an annual statement that the athletic department staff is familiar with the rules of the NCAA and that nobody on the staff has recently been found in violation of the rules" (Cole, 1976).

However, in the beginning of the 1980s, calls for greater standards for eligibility to protect student athletes began to gain popularity among higher education institutions. The NCAA contacted ACE (American Council on Education) to try to create a piece of legislation that would correct for eligibility imbalances and admission standards for student athletes without losing the aims of the NCAA and student athlete academic pursuits. "Given these realities, the ACE (American Council on Education) committee had to come up with a piece of legislation that would: (1) Allow most schools to continue to apply separate and lower academic standards to athletes and (2) Convince the public that the legislation would do just the opposite" (Sack, 1984, p. 2). The Committee came up with what was commonly known as Proposition 48. Proposition 48 was adopted in January 1983 and became effective in August 1986 (Sellers, 1992).

> Under Proposition 48 a prospective student-athlete must have at least a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) in a set of core curriculum courses as well as a score of at least 15 on the American College Testing Program (ACT), or a combined score of 700 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), to be eligible to participate in college athletics during his or her freshman year. (Sellers, 1992, p. 49)

"Proposition 48 also stipulated that student athletes must have "achieved a 'C' average in eleven designated high school courses which include English, mathematics, social sciences, and physical sciences" (Edwards, 1984, p. 14). Students who only met some of the academic requirements were dubbed "partial qualifiers" (Sellers, 1992). Starting in

1986, Division 1 member institutions were required to report graduation rates (Mallette, 1992). This placed increased pressure on institutions to have academic support units, or something akin to them, that successfully graduated student athletes. Proposition 42, originally written in 1989 to exclude partial qualifiers from receiving any financial aid, it was amended in 1990 "to forbid partial qualifiers only from receiving *athletic* financial aid during their freshman year" (Sellers, 1992, p. 49) but still allowing students to qualify for need-based aid.

The NCAA also makes its member institutions beholden to the Academic Progress Rate (APR) calculation for each of its program to have at least a 60% graduation rate to ensure eligibility and not face penalties. "The APR is a two-point system, with one point awarded each term for each scholarship student-athlete who meets the NCAA's academic-eligibility standards, and an additional point for each student-athlete that remains in school" (Carson & Rinehart, 2010, p. 5). The APR started in 2004 and was able to create evidence yearly of academic progress instead of graduation rates calculated from a six year window (Christy, Seifried, & Pastore, 2008). Specifically in the APR rule,

> after two years, an athlete must have completed 40% of the school's requirements for graduation (as opposed to 25% under the old system); at the end of three years, an athlete must have completed 60%; and after four years 80% of the school's requirements for graduation must be completed. (Christy, Seifried, & Pastore, 2008, p. 2)

In 2005, the NCAA began the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) for Division I schools, which "removes athletes who leave an institution in good academic standing from the denominator and adds those who transfer in and eventually graduate to the sample"

(Southall, 2012, p. 19). These reforms were among various legislative actions by the NCAA to enhance student athlete academic experiences.

University Reactions to NCAA Reform

The NCAA believed that individual institutions were responsible for guiding student athletes through their collegiate academic experience. Student athletes were expected to excel athletically, but also successfully manage demanding college classes. Higher education institutions had a variety of programs and opinions as to how student athletes could cope with their dual responsibilities. The programs varied from "comprehensive approaches forming veritable campus departments to a single full- or part-time adviser who may be responsible only for members of a single team" (Funk, 1991, p. 126). Student athletes accomplished this with not much success. The role of the influence of student athletes determining their academic path was dramatically lessened in the early 1970s, especially when "only remnants of student participation in athletic administration programs in which student governments have some control over the distribution of fee allocations to athletics" were common (Renick, 1974, p. 545).

In the 1970s, "advising and counseling for college student athletes focused on three main areas: class scheduling, academic tutoring, and time management" (Broughton & Neyer, 2001, p. 48). For athletic staff, the pervasive operating assumption was that demands on the student athlete's time were something to be managed with an adult level of maturity and time management skills. In a guiding textbook for administrators published in 1971, academic advisors were trained in the idea that "not only must the student athlete do his best in studying, but he is also responsible for his own educational goals, for charting his progress toward that goal, and for requesting help should he need

it" (Hawthorne, 1971, p. 278). In schools that did not have academic support units, coaches acted as academic advisors for their players (Hawthorne, 1971, p. 284). Schools reportedly eschewed suggestions for reform, such as tracking degree progress, communication with faculty, accessibility to remedial math and reading programs, and other expensive recommendations (Hawthorne, 1971).

In the 1980s, several beliefs permeated the athletic departments public perceptions that

> there is widespread cheating in recruiting, that academic standards are being waived in the admission and retention of talented athletes, that athletes are kept eligible with nonacademic courses and then dumped with neither degrees nor education when their eligibility has expired, and that college and university presidents are either accomplices in these practices or are powerless to control them. (Becker, Sparks, Choi & Sell, 1986, p. 432)

For college and university presidents in the 1980s, the decision to become involved with athletic scandals was one that could yield negative results, especially politically (Becker, Sparks, Choi & Sell, 1986). There was controversy with the adoption of Proposition 48 as it was argued that the rule disproportionately affected smaller schools, historically black schools, and minority students. "An approach that discourages the recruitment of 'less competent' individuals becomes especially deleterious when the criteria used to discriminate has a significantly greater adverse impact on a certain population (blacks) without really increasing the ability to predict academic success" (Sellers, 1992, p. 57). The changing requirements for recruiting student athletes still did not affect the level of academic tutoring the students received once enrolled. In 1987, Cullen, Latessa, and Byrne distributed surveys to head football coaches at 192 Division I schools with 122 returning completed surveys. Most importantly in the survey, the researchers focused questions regarding "views on academic reforms within collegiate athletics" (Cullen,

Latessa, & Byrne, 1990, p. 52). Regarding Proposition 48, 48.7% of coaches favored the rule, and 37% strongly favored it. As to student athlete academic performance, 28.1% of coaches believed that the main reason why athletes did not graduate was a lack of motivation and interest in school. Only 24.6% of coaches believed that the student athletes either didn't believe in college or were not capable of completing the work. When asked of reforms that could ameliorate low graduation rates of student athletes, only 13.5% believed that counseling/monitoring/tutoring would help. Researchers Estler and Nelson, based at a Division I institution that won a hockey championship in the early 1990's, commented that "the academic culture over previous years demanded that we not talk too much about athletics because such talk would appear to draw even more attention to a nonacademic aspect of a university that far more easily gained public attention than did more central research, teaching, and service" (Estler & Nelson, 2005, p. 3).

In addition to coaches, academic support units' staff faced a negative perception both inside and outside higher education as enablers who did nothing more than keep student athletes' grades high enough to maintain their eligibility. For example, "academic advisors who show little concern for eligibility will soon find themselves in situations where they are unable to provide help for anyone" (Funk, 1991, p. 128).

Recent research has revealed that similar to concerns of inadequacy in the early 1990's, faculty members are still unsure as to the value of athletic competition in higher education. In research supported by the Knight Commission, researchers Lawrence, Ott, and Hendricks (2009) found that faculty members do not place athletics as a high institutional priority, and believe that athletics "is a separate, commercial enterprise operating under its own set of rules" (Lawrence, Ott, & Hendricks, 2009, p. 78). In those

surveyed about reforms, “only one in ten faculty believe that there is a greater than 50 percent chance that such initiatives would result in meaningful change on their campus” (Lawrence, Ott, & Hendricks, 2009, p. 79). Finally, the research revealed that faculty were not sure who controlled the financial aspects of athletics, and who has the strength to influence administrative decisions (Lawrence, Ott, & Hendricks, 2009).

The researchers Cooper and Weight (2011) were interested in the differences between athletic administrators in both revenue generating programs as opposed to those who were not. A survey was created and sent to the athletics directors at Division I level institutions (342 institutions), resulting in 155 complete respondents (Cooper & Weight, 2011). Although both types of directors were concerned with academic achievement, revenue directors were more focused on fundraising and revenue creation, while non-revenue worried most about conduct in competition and socially (Cooper & Weight, 2011). This study’s values lies in its ability to add to the discussion about schools in a similar conference trying to imitate one another based upon NCAA rules and values in an effort to succeed monetarily (Cooper & Weight, 2011). The authors recommended that non-revenue coaches use tactics of revenue sports because of recession era budget cuts places emphasis on Division I revenue sports, specifically football and men’s basketball (Cooper & Weight, 2011).

The APR has not been resoundingly accepted as an adequate measure of student athlete success, and its motivations have been questioned. Christy, Seifried, and Pastore (2008) created a study to assess preliminary opinions from athletic directors, faculty athletic representatives, senior women administrators, and head coaches of if the APR is a valid method of assessing student athlete success. The researchers provided an emailed

questionnaire to the groups at six institutions in the Bowl Championship Series (Christy et al., 2008) with a final sample size of 75 completed questionnaires. The questionnaire revealed several themes, including that "64% believed the APR will have a positive impact on intercollegiate athletics" (Christy et al., 2008, p. 6) specifically relating to more stringent admission policies when recruiting. Conversely, 32% believed that "the APR would have little or no impact on college athletics" (Christy et al., 2008, p. 7), with one administrator characterizing the APR as a "PR tool" (Christy et al., 2008). Another concerning theme found revealed that the APR could possibly negatively influence student athlete academic experience. Respondents predicted environments where "coaches, to ensure the academic success of their student-athlete, may create an environment of 'watered down' curriculum so the student-athlete will be able to "succeed" in the classroom" (Christy et al., 2008, p. 8). This study provides evidence that administrators and coaches do not believe that relying merely on reform or the NCAA to create sweeping, effective academic regulations.

Ridpath's 2010 study focused on the perceptions of the student athletes' usage of academic services, conducted with a survey distributed to 358 senior standing student athletes at non-BCS Division I schools. The results concluded that "for certain segments of the surveyed population, specialized academic support services are viewed more as a necessity rather than a luxury in the APR era" (Ridpath, 2010, p. 265). Research found that male minority students felt that the service was necessary to remain academically eligible, men's football and basketball used the services more than other groups, and male students use the services more than female students (Ridpath, 2010).

In this modern era, it was the responsibility of the NCAA to control for abuses, as well as "controlling the recruitment, distribution, and subsidization of player talent" (Flowers, 2009, p. 356). Although the NCAA is making strides to reform athletics and try to preserve the academic pursuits of student athletes, the legislation is not enough, and what units are doing now is not translating into successful graduates.

External Financial Influences on Student Athletics

Financial success for the NCAA has been found through maintaining students in an amateur status, and television contracts. One of the NCAA rules that student athletes must agree to is to relinquish current and future revenue based on their abilities in order to be eligible to compete. The NCAA requires that student athletes sign Form 08-3a, which states,

> You authorize the NCAA [or a third party acting on behalf of the NCAA (e.g. host institution, conference, local organizing committee)] to use your name or picture to generally promote NCAA championships or other NCAA events, activities or programs. (Holthaus, 2010, p. 376)

The resulting action is that during their four to five years of playing collegiate athletics, "despite the revenues and profits universities derive from the acclaim of star players, the NCAA prohibits student-athletes from receiving any of the financial benefits derived from their fame or the use of their likenesses" (Holthaus, 2010, p. 370). This even applies to when the student athletes are considered "former" student athletes.

The NCAA also has historically controlled the television appearances of games "with the rationale of preventing erosion of game attendance due to televised home football games" (Mawson & Bowler, 1989, p. 79). As means of comparison, in 1959, NBC paid the NCAA $2.2 million in broadcasting fees. This number rose to $12 million per year, paid by ABC, in 1968. By 1974, "television networks were paying $13.5

million per year for NCAA football telecasts" (Mawson & Bowler, 1989, p. 80). Less than a decade later, "in May 1981, the NCAA awarded 4-year contracts to both ABC and CBS for 14 games per year on each network at $132 million per network" (Mawson & Bowler, 1989, p. 81). However, "on June 27, 1984, the Supreme Court in NCAA v. Board of Regents terminated the NCAA's control over football television contracts. The court found the NCAA's control monopolistic" (Frey, 1987, p. 56-57). Even with the loss of total control over television broadcasts of collegiate games, the NCAA gained a significant financial grasp of the collegiate athletic market. The financial opportunities that individual institutions could benefit from by participating in a championship game were astronomically high. In 1983, for example, "sixteen post-season NCAA division 1 football bowl games paid $27,576,107.20 to the schools and conferences involved" (Edwards, 1984, p. 5). In 2010, the NCAA had an operating budget of over $500 million, has a large stake in the $4 billion market for collegiate athletic licensing, but does not allow for students to make any revenue off of their athletic efforts. Despite making substantial profits from these student athletes, neither the NCAA nor its member organizations compensate them or allow them to seek outside compensation. The tax-exempt organization "has entered into billion dollar television deals and receives a piece of the four-billion-dollar-a-year collegiate licensing market" (Sundram, 2011, p. 544). In 2011, the NCAA signed a "ten-year, $6 billion dollar deal with CBS for the rights to broadcast its college basketball tournament" (Sundram, 2011, p. 548). Also in 2011, "32 NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) coaches and 11 NCAA Division I men's basketball coaches earned more than $2 million annually" (Southall, 2012, p. 18).

Internal Stressors to NCAA Reform

The NCAA's former President Myles Brand argued that the specialized academic support programs have sent a strong message to student athletes that lessons learned through playing a collegiate sport can also be applied towards real world scenarios. For example, "in mastering their game, student-athletes gain skill in critical thinking and problem solving. These cognitive skills transfer to learning in the sciences, humanities, and other areas. Being successful on the field of play requires observation, weighing alternatives, assessing probabilities, and hypothesizing solutions" (Brand, 2006, p. 12). However, this has not prevented institutions from escaping criticism when faced with NCAA violations.

The NCAA is a bureaucratic entity with its regulations not stopping numerous instances of student and coach infractions. The most notorious infractions, usually student athletes from Division 1 football and basketball programs, are the most publicized and serious. As collegiate athletics participation grew in popularity, schools began to see problems including "pay for play, controlling agent tampering, recruiting abuses by coaches, boosters and others, the recurring specter of gambling and point shaving" (Covell & Barr, 2001, p. 416).

> Problems in these sports—whether widespread or sporadic, real, exaggerated, or simply perceived—constitute a familiar list: bloated coaches' salaries, undue donor influence, acceleration of commercialization, criticism that student-athletes are not really students and/or that they are exploited, and overall perceptions that college athletics is corrupting the academic missions and integrity of colleges and universities. (Potuto, 2010, p. 261)

In 1989 at the University of Oklahoma, "a young woman was gang-raped in the athletic dormitory, one football player shot another, and the star quarterback (who had appeared in anti-drug announcements) was arrested for selling cocaine" (Myers, 1990, p.

49). Astoundingly between 1984 and 1989, the NCAA "publicly reprimanded 83 programs for rules violations" (Myers, 1990, p. 49). In the 1980s and 1990s, there were 266 major NCAA infractions (Southall, 2012, p. 18).

One of the most famous cases of extensive NCAA violations by a student or program occurred at the University of Southern California. Football player Reggie Bush, the Heisman Trophy winner from the national championship in 2004,

> accepted thousands of dollars in cash payments, airline tickets for his parents to attend away football games, a free limousine service, expensive clothing, a vehicle, free lodging in Las Vegas, and a rent-free home and cash for his parents. (Weston, 2011, p. 555)

However, the punishment was doled to USC, not to Bush personally. This led to increased criticism of the "unevenness" held by the NCAA. "NCAA sanction powers extend only to member institutions, not to individual coaches, players, agents, boosters, or involved individuals who are not direct members of the NCAA" (Weston, 2011, p. 564).

Furthermore, the NCAA regulation enforcement and punishments for violations are not allocated equally among all categories of institutions. "These rules involve, often-times in excruciating detail, regulations concerning initial and continuing academic eligibility, recruitment of prospective student-athletes, financial aid and athletic scholarships, play and practice limits, bans on the receipt of extra-benefits, and standards for amateurism" (Weston, 2011, p. 561). Because every situation is treated as a "case by case" scenario, schools have difficulty anticipating what the penalty for violations will be. Claims are made by member organizations that "an allegation should be dropped because the enforcement staff failed in what is argued as its duty to track down all investigative leads and interview all witnesses with potential exculpatory information"

(Potuto, 2010, p. 317). The NCAA can and does issue sanctions that can dramatically affect a student athlete's life, but not uniformly to all athletes programs.

In current research, the majority of articles that criticize the NCAA dealt with issues of the legality of the NCAA and its financial influence over programming and available funding to adequately support student athletes. Holthaus (2010) gave a detailed account of how the NCAA violates anti-trust agreements; albeit a weak argument that the courts have consistently ruled against. It would be relatively simple to find evidence to the contrary, and pending court trials are trying to do just that. Sundram (2011) had similar arguments in that he believes in the inevitability that as the stakes are raised for student athletes and the chance to go professional becomes more lucrative, the NCAA will most likely lose its antitrust lawsuits. Not surprisingly, the majority of Blackman's (2008) article outlined the various legal arguments that students could use if they wanted to pursue legal action against the NCAA. However, his grievances were based on evidence of racial and socioeconomic discrimination. The author believes that because of the numerous mandates by the NCAA for increased academic standards and accountability, it has severely limited opportunities for students of low socioeconomic backgrounds that do come from adequate K-12 systems, namely students of African American and minority descent.

The found gap in research provides the context of how the NCAA is able to control the financial undertakings of institutions, but scholars are unable to pinpoint financial reasons as the sole cause for student athletes' lack of academic success.

Reform Recommendations

There has been a history of reform recommendations from external organizations, with limited success. In response to this lack of effective guidance for student athletes, in 1975, the National Association of Advisors for Athletes (N4A) was created (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). This professional association however was not part of the NCAA. Some institutions did not wait for the NCAA or other organizations to create the blueprint for effective academic support services for student athletes. By 1986, "approximately 55 percent of all D1 institutions offered some type of academic support system to their student athletes" (Funk, 1991, p. 126). Spending had also increased. By 1991, Pennsylvania State University was spending over $600,000 annually "on advisors, tutors, study hall monitors, a career development psychologist, and a sports psychologist" (Sperber, 1991, p. 5).

In October 1989, the Knight Foundation Commission trustees sought to examine the proliferation of corruption in higher education athletics and possible academic and administrative solutions. Surveys conducted by the Commission found various examples of nefarious practices in athletics departments, since "nearly a third of present and former professional football players responding to a survey near the end of the decade said they had accepted illicit payments while in college, and more than half said they saw nothing wrong with the practice" ("A Call To Action," 2001, p. 9). An additional poll found that eight out of ten Americans agreed that "athletics programs were corrupted by big money" ("A Call To Action," 2001, p. 9). Most alarmingly,

> In a 1991 survey conducted for the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 87 percent of the college faculty members who were interviewed, 86 percent of the members of Congress, 78 percent of the student sports editors, 76 percent of the college trustees and the state legislators, 75

> percent of the faculty athletics representatives and of the general public, 70 percent of the college presidents and the alumni leaders, 68 percent of the senior women's sports administrators, and 64 percent of the conference commissioners agreed that "in too many universities with big-time athletics programs the academic mission has not been given proper priority over the athletics program. (Sigelman, 1995, p. 248).

In contrast, one of the most balanced perspectives of the benefits of the NCAA was found in a 1991 article by Steiber. Although he did include the usual conflicts that the NCAA presents of contracts and potential for rule violations in the pursuit of championship records in a "cartel-like" environment, he did list some benefits to the NCAA. He begins with the reminder that the NCAA's rules resulted in an extreme reduction in injuries, and places safety to student athletes as paramount. It is a common complaint that student athletes are forced to remain in amateur status and are unable to profit off of NCAA activities, while students in programs like music are awarded "amateur" scholarships and can still earn money with side paying opportunities. However, Steiber (1991) does place some of the blame on institutions themselves as they are a member organization that has to agree to vote upon changes. He predicted that "without the NCAA restrictions, the best student athletes would tend to go to those schools that would pay the highest wages" (Steiber, 1991, p. 447) resulting in an environment that resembled the professional sports draft, even further from the original academic mission from universities. Steiber (1991) warned that if the NCAA was dismantled, "it could substantially reduce one of the major sources on which most colleges and universities depend to finance academic scholarships, faculty research, and teaching – the gifts from alums and friends" (p. 449).

Sperber (1991) was critical of the lauded 1991 Knight Commission report that recommended NCAA member institutions have their accreditation linked to their ability

to follow NCAA rules, which completely dismisses the academic prowess of departments. Several recommendations have been created since 1991, with varying acceptance. Steiber (1991) recommended allowing students to be able to accept outside funds based on ability, and that only faculty members would be able to adequately reform the athletics department functioning. Weston (2011) decided to take a more proactive stance within his study, listing ideas that included requiring the NCAA to regulate coach salaries, or having a "tax" on high performing schools with the funds generated going to all member schools. Lawrence, Ott, & Hendricks (2009) recommended that in the future, ideas for reformatting student athletics was less restricted to garner more opinions and options for restructuring, the ever favored shared governance model popular in higher education.

A 2013 study by Comeaux suggests that innovation, not merely reform, is needed to create academic centers with "evidence-based practices" that can increase the effectiveness academic support. He recommended that to close the gap of student athletes not being academic successful, "practitioners who manage academic support centers must also find new and imaginative ways to engage and re-engage student-athletes" (Comeaux, 2013, p. 283). Comeaux (2013) developed a Career Transition Scorecard as a tool to motivate practitioners to gather data about their own institution in an action research perspective, and to be more creative and innovative in developing standards and measures for academic success instead of only a graduation rate. The study advocates that practitioners look to specific campus solutions based upon the cultural norms. This raises a troubling precedent in which engaging student athletes is to be achieved by only gazing inward for inspiration. While there are unique characteristics to every campus, if there

isn't a culture of change or creativity, the support unit advancements will never gain traction among true stakeholders. Although one can agree that evidence based practices should be encouraged, only utilizing the ideas and strengths of the staff members at a single institution emphasizes complacency and tunnel vision.

While eliminating the NCAA is a tempting hope to detractors, the failures in self-regulation led to the creation of the NCAA initially because institutions were not doing an adequate job. A flurry of recommendations have been touted in recent research, but none advocating analysis of current programs as they apply to the total identity of Division I institutions.

Current Case Study Research

Under review are Kennedy's 2007 work titled "A Historical Study of the Development of the Total Person Program: The evolution of academic support services for student-athletes at the University of Missouri", Carroll's (2006) dissertation titled "Leaving the Big Time: A case study of two universities that moved their athletics programs to division three", and R. Bayard's (2003) dissertation titled "The academic mission of the university and corruption in intercollegiate athletics: A case study of their coexistence."

Kennedy's (2007) work illustrated that the athletic academic support program morphed from primarily counseling to academic tutoring, was influenced by Title IX funds, and that buy-in from the football coaches and staff were crucial to its development and stability (Kennedy, 2007). Carroll (2006) focused on the profiles of Hardin Simmons University and Chapman University and the environmental and cultural factors that changed during their divisional changes. In the presentation of data, changes to the

individual higher education environments like school pride, job design, financial consequences, academic reputation, coach student and faculty reactions were found at both institutions. Bayard (2003), in a departure from case study research, proposed a hypothesis that asked "does a college or university's potential for greater visibility, prestige and revenues, by way of its intercollegiate athletics program, outweigh the potential for a tarnished academic image created by athletic scandals and improprieties?" (Bayard, 2003, p. 34). Profiling three universities, conclusions were uniformly negative.

Kennedy (2007), Carroll (2006), and Bayard (2003) had similar strengths in their studies regarding methodology, analysis, and validity. All three dissertations had a bounded time period under review, a specific unit of analysis in the academic support unit, and used a variety of sources including document analysis, interviews with former and current institutional staff at the NCAA and chosen institutions, and researcher created instruments. Although the researchers were looking at specific institutions, the research questions and analysis focused on discovering general themes when assessing the best management scheme for institutional athletic funding and divisional responsibilities.

Critiques of the studies did reveal limitations in the conclusions found by the authors. All three authors, Kennedy (2007), Carroll (2006), and Bayard (2003) did not utilize a conceptual framework or epistemological orientation in their research design. This calls into question what data was overlooked or not incorporated in the final analysis. Also, in Bayard's (2003) work, the author could have spent more time explaining why NCAA infractions were specifically the focus of the study as opposed to other variables. Also, by describing athletics as "corrupting" academic missions in the title, a researcher bias is revealed.

Nevertheless, the three case study dissertations supply not only an indication of the variety of complexity in studying athletic units, but also context for current research in athletic units. Kennedy's (2007) study was a creative endeavor and contributes to the small body of literature that looks to specific institutions without the veil of anonymity. Carroll's (2006) work gave a glimpse of the inner workings of academic support units in athletics reconciling the organizational identity changes with divisional moves. Bayard's (2003) work found that athletic support staff continue to have a conflict in their duties within a higher education institution, and this can lead to reluctance to openly critique the NCAA system. Bayard (2003) found that the responses from institutional staff portrayed the schools as victims of overbearing NCAA legislation, and that they were unable to speak freely which may have damaged the data collected. He theorized that the difficulties laid in not having participants convinced that adequate anonymity measures would be taken.

The three studies describe the importance of having sound methodological steps such as careful detailed data collection and addressing issues of validity and generalizability. They also provide a model for data collection and analysis in future research regarding athletic units in higher education. However, this proposed study specifically is strengthened by a conceptual framework and epistemological orientation to further solidify the findings. This study used theoretical lenses, Organizational Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory, which provided a more focused and detailed data set, moving away from only descriptive conclusions.

Conceptual Framework

There are two theories that provided guidance in this study, Organizational Identity Theory (OIT) and Social Identity Theory (SIT). This study benefitted from a multi-level conceptual framework that allowed detailed analysis of the intertwined nature of individual actors and organizational actors. First, Organizational Identity Theory provided a macro view of social and cultural tenets of the institution. The most widely recognized definition of organizational identity is from the seminal work of Albert and Whetten (1985) which first articulated that organizational identity existed. Organizational theories, as well as theories of social meaning and belonging, are valuable as higher education is changing rapidly in an era of greater accountability and assessment, especially in peripheral units like athletics. Scholars have disagreed to the fractured nature of the definition of organizational identity as its tenets have been adopted by a variety of disciplines and from many theoretical perspectives (Ravasi & van Rekom, 2003). He and Brown (2013) described in concise detail organizational identity in the constructivist perspective as the "relatively shared understandings concerning what is central, distinctive, and enduring about an organization, that give meaning to members' experiences of work, and which derive from a complex of interactions by multiple actors from across professional groups and hierarchical levels" (He & Brown, 2013, p. 8).

Organizational Identity Theory also holds that reality has a malleable interpretation, that the individuals who assign themselves to the organization are more able to "fulfill such psychological needs as safety, affiliation, self-enhancement, and self-actualization, while the organization gets members who are more likely to act in ways congruent with organizational goals and needs" (Mills et al., 2005, pp. 599-600).

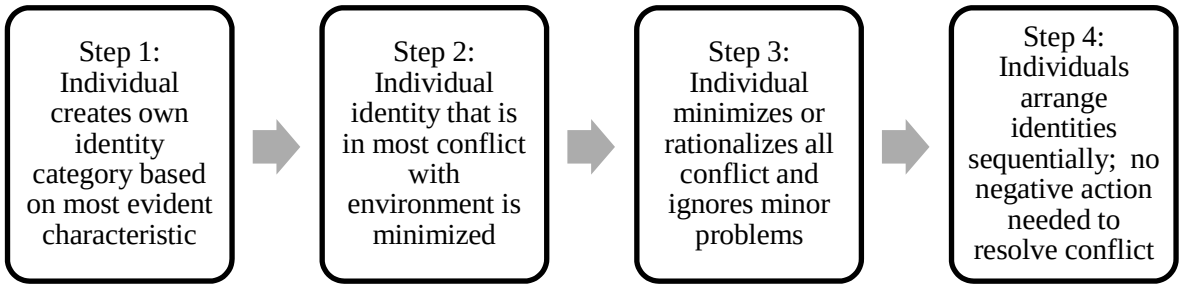
Organizational Identity Theory recognizes aspects of a group's functioning, responsibility, and common features from a higher level prospective.

In Social Identity Theory, "social groups provide systems of categorizations to define one's identity, and members conform to the norms and stereotypes of their social groups" (Mills et al., 2005, p. 601). Developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, and first applied to an organizational setting in the seminal work by Ashforth and Mael (1989), "according to SIT, people tend to classify themselves and others into various social categories, such as organizational memberships, religious affiliation, gender, and age cohort" (p. 20). These categories are also recognized and absorbed by individuals based upon group expectations which is helpful as "social groups provide systems of categorization to define one's identity, and members conform to the norms and stereotypes of their social groups" (Mills et al., 2005, p. 601). Social Identity Theory is a tool for individuals to feel an interactive part of a social environment, and to acknowledge the roles of power within different identities (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

The most important implication of Ashforth and Mael's (1989) work is the application of Social Identity Theory in an organization in which individuals experience role conflict. The Social Identity Theory does have a limiting factor in that when an individual lays claim to multiple identities and is not provided an adequate coping mechanism for dual demands, there lies the possibility for "double standards, apparent hypocrisy, and selective forgetting" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 35). Despite this, SIT can be applied to organizational settings to analyze data on an individual level to discover large implications of behavior and motivations. Ashforth and Mael (1989) articulated the

process that individuals face in an organization when experiencing role conflict to reconcile multiple identities and categories in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Ashforth and Mael (1989) Role Conflict Resolution Process



This process is essential to the researcher to attempt to pinpoint how conflicts in the political and social climate of the athletic unit were reconciled by staff members in various levels of power and leadership.

Both theories are based in the constructivist view that culture and identity, and ultimately comfort with environmental change, are able to be socially created and modified from various factors. This is also supplemented by research showing that "…organizational identity is seen as something formed by the interaction and construction of meaning between internal and external audiences of the organization" (Mills et al., 2005, p. 599). Changes in the field now reflect the idea of identity as "a social construction susceptible to variation and change" (Mills et al., 2005, p. 600).

The relationship between the NCAA and higher education institutions is complicated in that when mandates are passed to schools, it is not a merger or deliberate

reorganization, but an administrative change directed by an outside organization. Baxter and Lambert's 1990 study provided a detailed study of the complex relationship between the NCAA and member institutions with the intention of discovering additional perspective "by combining economic and cultural explanations to reveal competing rationalities and the ebb and flow of domination in the institutional process" (p. 403). The authors found that "corporate and state elite influence standardized the credentials that confer status and membership in a wider collectivity" (Baxter & Lambert, 1990, p. 407). Since the NCAA developed into a parallel robust organization as higher education grew, the sense of collectivity among higher education professionals and practitioners grew as well. The dual nature of athletic employees however can lead to role conflict. Employees in athletics programs are trained to operate with business acumen as a priority, but within an academic environment (Buer, 2009). When generating an appropriate identity in an organization, different responses abound when looking to athletic departments and university partners, as "athletics are likely to have a persistent orientation that is in significant conflict with the university generally, but the two cannot simply agree to part ways; athletes must be students and institutions have control" (Buer, 2009, p. 112).

The risk with discovering Social Identity Theory in organizations is that it allows for individuals to not completely comply with the values and beliefs of the group, and leads to internal conflict if the roles do not have the proper leadership to be allowed to separate (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The rules that the NCAA instituted at Division 1 schools were socially constructed, and had to be incorporated into an established academic culture, changing the operations and identity of the athletic support unit. For the individuals involved, their roles will vary in that one can be part of the Big Football

University community, part of the athletic community, part of the NCAA community, while belonging to individual categories relating to gender, race, age, and other demographic indicators.

Synthesis of Conceptual Framework and Found Organizational Research

The conceptual framework chosen for the study allowed for an analysis missing from most organizational research – data analysis compiled from both a macro and micro view of interactions. Organizational Identity Theory is necessary to determine how staff roles and personal identifications to overarching organizational characteristics are intertwined to trace the changing importance of legislative action in an institution as it applies to departmental management. It is impossible to pinpoint one specific action or environmental characteristic as the specific reason for a successful office. Social Identity Theory in the context of organizational environments allows for a new tangent of research. It allows for the researcher to extract for focus specific conflicts and potential resolutions of conflicting external and internal goals for staff members in an athletic support unit.

While the two theories are strong individually, and not an extension of one another, they can be used in conjunction to identify and analyze any reoccurring themes of staff member experiences as legislative actions by the NCAA and the institution transformed their work environment. Current research drills into very specific cultural experiences which is limiting both in scope, and in the ability for other researchers to generalize any findings to other environments. The current gaps in research focus around critiques of the ability of the NCAA to ascertain what academic reforms are appropriate, why reforms are not producing satisfactory graduation rates, and that violations to

policies are still occurring. There is no standard model for athletic academic units, and researchers are now encouraging only looking to case specific sites for inspirations. Financial oversight of the NCAA is continuing to create role conflict for staff and student athletes alike, and a remedy has not been found when only gazing inwardly. Present research using case study methodology does not emphasize using conceptual frameworks, potentially creating an even larger gap in available research and flawed conclusions. This study addresses part of the existing gaps in research by focusing on the staff member population only, and allowing for analysis of the coexistence of external institutional regulations and internal institutional regulations as it affected intended student athlete success.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The focus of this study was how the Big Football University's Academic Support Services unit changed after the 1991 NCAA mandate requiring that all Division 1 athletes be made available to academic counseling and tutoring (Meyer, 2005). Research questions that guided the data collection and analysis were discovering the facets of the unit during the years of 1991 to 1995. The overall research question was thus: How has NCAA legislation shaped the administrative institutional action at the Big Football University athletic academic support unit from 1991-2014?

The purpose of the study was to delve into an example of an academic support unit for student athletes in a university, specifically at the Big Football University, to determine the resulting bureaucratic structures to support it. This study contributed knowledge about organizational structures that change with external organizational directives; how a university responds to an external organization calling for a restructuring of internal processes; and how a rule can change the identity of the staff involved.

The significance of the study is seen in its contribution to future research in theoretical design, future methodological development, and completion of a full documented record. This study contributes research in the field of identity theory framework application, and the standardization of case study methodology. Practitioners will benefit from detailed analysis of the methods of disseminating information and role conflict resolution that can be implemented in other environments.

Assumptions established at the beginning of the study design included the supposition that demonstrable changes to the administrative machinations of the academic support unit would be found. It was also theorized that with the organizational adjustments perceptions of efficacy and job design would have been affected. Some conjectures included the ideas that conflict in identities and roles would not be reconciled through administrative demands, that there would be a difference between formal and informal approaches, and that certain individuals in positions of leadership and power would be determining the organizational identity through a socialization process. It was also assumed that there would be indications of confusion and different interpretations of the policy as it is implemented into the academic support unit culture. More questions to guide the study were revealed as data was collected, creating an evolving inquiry path. Questions revolved around the changes that occurred at both an individual level and an institutional level. Foreshadowed problems included those of limited access available to the researcher for archival data, a lack of response from potential interviewees, and researcher bias.

Discussed in this chapter is the selection of a case study methodology, a constructivist epistemology, use of Organizational and Social Identity theories, data collection methods, data analysis methods, ethical considerations, and limitations to the study.

Research Design

Case study research is primarily concerned with a single unit of analysis answering questions of “how” and “why” an event or phenomenon has occurred (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Put simply, a case study is “an in-depth description and

analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). One of the most basic benefits of a case study is that it "provides an in-depth study of this 'system,' based on a diverse array of data collection materials" (McCaslin & Scott, 2003, p. 449). This "bounded system" as it is usually termed is to create a comprehensive synthesis of one unit. The parameters of this bounded system are set by the researcher and must have finite data collection in a distinct time frame. An adequate case study needs to be a "real-life phenomenon, not an abstraction such as a topic, an argument, or even a hypothesis" (Yin, 2009, p. 32). This case study is one that "focuses on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon" (Merriam, 2009, p. 43).

Case study methodology should be used in this study due to its parameters, research questions, and intended data outcomes. This study was identifying organizational processes and asking "how" and "why" questions which are indicative of a case study (Yin, 2009). Although the case site and research question was concerned with events that began in 1991, the unit was continually evolving, and had contemporary figures involved that the researcher could interview, as well as an intact environment a direct observer could access. This case study presented the opportunity for more than just document analysis or physical artifact collection, lending more data than a traditional static historical record. Further, the study was focused on a specific setting and time period, or what Merriam (2009) describes as a bounded system. In the study, there was a finite number of people involved, a specific date range under review, and finite data to be collected in a single setting with the intent of presenting a holistic understanding.

Epistemological Orientation

Strengthening and guiding the data collection was an epistemological orientation of constructivism, as well as two theoretical constructs: the social identity theory and organizational identity theory. This study followed Yin's (2009) recommendation that theory must be in place before a study's data collection has started in order to not be overwhelmed with data and refine what is being collected.

Crotty (1998) detailed the importance of epistemology in research design as the careful understanding of articulating how knowledge is known and assimilated in the creation of a research design. Such understanding is crucial in order for a researcher to discern the appropriate guiding theoretical perspective. The epistemological orientation of this study, constructivism, "is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). There are "truths" that are only constructed socially, and can be seen as "rules" in an organization and culture. He extols that "there is no objective truth waiting for us to discover it. Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities of our world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8).

Important to this study was the belief that constructivism is influenced by cultural events in creating a reality, so "while humans may be described, in the constructionist spirit, as engaging with their world and making sense of it, such a description is misleading if it is not set in a genuinely historical and social perspective" (Crotty, 1998, p. 54). Because a constructivist reality is fluid, dynamic, and open to multiple

interpretations of shared experiences, the two theories appropriate for this study, Organizational Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory, incorporate this flexible view of organizational effectiveness and movement.

Epistemology is the lens that influences the conceptual framework and ultimately the methodology. In constructivism, there is no objective truth, so it keeps open the idea of subjective action research in the form of a case study. In a case study, when analyzing data, pattern-seeking "forces investigators to look beyond initial impressions and see evidence through multiple lenses" (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 533). As constructivist views become more prolific in educational research, "issues of meaning, sense-making, culture, and identity construction have become central concepts" (Mills, Bettis, Miller, & Nolan, 2005, p. 599). The methodology allowed for multiple interpretations of reality, and multiple lenses for the final analysis.

Sample

In order to have saturated data collection, the researcher was concerned with finding a site at a large public university that would have a well-documented history of athletic support, as well as one that had an established culture of academic support. The specific unit of analysis is the Big Football University Academic Support Unit structure and employees between 1991 and 2014. In a single case study, Yin (2009) wrote that the chosen sample "requires careful investigation of the potential case to minimize the chances of misrepresentation and to maximize the access needed to collect the case study evidence" (p. 50). By only focusing on one institution, (i.e.) one case site, this "careful investigation" recommendation would be followed. The research site specifically is the Big Football University athletics academic support unit.

The inclusion criteria to create the sample was administrative individuals who worked in the academic support unit in a staff capacity from 1991-2014, persons involved in any administration oversight committees, and faculty members from departments that worked directly with the program. The exclusion criteria included student athletes, undergraduate student tutors, coaches, reporters, NCAA officials, or general Big Football University community members.

Based upon review of publically available budgets and payroll ledgers, individuals based upon the inclusion criteria were identified as potential interview participants. Attention was given to "key informants" (Yin, 2009) who were able to provide detailed information. Although there were individuals who had a more recognizable leadership within the program and were contacted first, the interviews themselves were organized to allow for a "snowball" sampling opportunity for interviewees to refer and suggest others who were interested in participating in the study.

Public directories, social media, publically available mailing addresses, and personal contacts at the Big Football University were used to specify the sample of individuals used for interviews and provide further contact information. The archival data of this unit was found in university archives and in online records.

Merriam (2009) addressed the notion that being able to generalize findings from case study research as being an important byproduct if it occurs, but such findings are not necessarily an intended outcome of case study research. This study has findings that can be used to further theory development and provide practitioners with realistic guidance to improve their own athletic academic support systems. The Big Football University provided a case study site that had a long history of creating academic support services

for student athletes with novel approaches. Interviews were semi-structured which increased the chance of similar responses leading to generalized pattern deducing by the researcher. The Big Football University was also valuable to study as a case because of its high profile nature and ability to have findings generalizable to other well-funded large public university environments.

Data Sources

One of the main strengths of conducting a case study is that unlike static historical research which relies heavily on document analysis, it supplements "two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian's repertoire: direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the events" (Yin, 2009, p. 11). The two sources of data for this study were document analysis and interviews.

The researcher collected a variety of documents to be analyzed. The Big Football University libraries and archives were primarily utilized as were documents located online from both the case site and the NCAA. Once the research arrived at the archives, document selection criteria had to be established. The boxes of documents provided by BFU in the archives were listed under the overarching heading of "Athletics" and were from a time period of the early 1900's to the present. The researcher focused on the boxes that were within the years of 1991-2014, totaling over 30. The files within the boxes were then organized generically with labels of "Coaches", "Committees", and other similarly vague terms. Some files were only labeled with a span of years or by a coach's name. The researcher first went through the boxes and pulled all documents relating to NCAA reform and any communications from the President regarding athletics. Then, the researcher performed a second scan of the documents that looked for anything related to

NCAA communications that dealt with student athlete academic issues. The final third scan of the boxes of documents in the archives included all documents that related specifically to NCAA academic advising, the SASP, and student athlete mentoring. Documents that were collected include meeting agendas, personal communications, notes, letters, transcripts of staff meetings, meeting minutes, essays in student applications, staff calendars, brochures, financial aid brochures, orientation booklets, student newspapers, regional newspapers, organizational charts, and presidential memos. These also included archival data from the NCAA representatives to BFU, budget and personnel records, mission statements, brochures, training material, meeting notes, and correspondence as the academic support unit changed. The documents collected also provided crucial information about the individuals to potentially contact for interviews as well as symbols and interactions of factors surrounding the functioning of the unit. Document analysis gave boundaries to the study, and reinforced the idea that the perception of the changes in the support unit had to be socially constructed and portrayed publicly in a manner that may have contrasted with the internal consensus.

Interviews with individuals that fit in the inclusion criteria for this study and agreed to participate were conducted. Interviewing of participants and document collection occurred simultaneously. The interview protocol targeted specific experiences of perceived educational outcomes, instilling a new academic and organizational culture, structural stressors of a new unit, adaptability to an external organization's rules, and the level of university support. The interviews were semi-structured but focused (Merriam, 2009) to obtain a variety of experiences from those involved in all staff levels of the academic unit. The instrumentation used in this study was in the form of an interview

protocol created by the researcher (Appendix B). The questions fell into three categories covering potential aspects of individual demographics, knowledge, and relevant experiences. The background questions established familiarity with the site and athletics operations, and familiarity with expectations of NCAA compliance in a large program. The knowledge questions ascertained factual information of known processes, and personal descriptions and anecdotes to bolster other information. The experience questions centered on individual behaviors and activities that mitigated role conflict and emphasized collaboration. Table 1 further categorizes the questions from the interview protocol as they relate to possible themes.

Table 1

Interview Questions Relationship to Literature Constructs

Constructs Found in Literature	Applicable Interview Questions
University Responses	Questions 4, 5, 8, and 9
Identity Changes	Question 2, 6, 7, and 11
Legislative Action Influences	Questions 3, 5, and 8
Leadership and Role Conflict	Questions 1, 4, and 10

Interviews and document collection provided sufficiently strong data for the researcher to answer the research question concerned with the nuanced understanding of how legislation shaped administrative action.

It had been arranged that the researcher would also collect direct observation data. The researcher planned to spend three four hour sessions in the current Academic Support Services unit to bear witness to the machinations and culture present. Knowing that this case study is primarily concerned with change prompted by individuals acclimating to a new culture, program, and organizational goal, the study was

strengthened as “immersion in the setting and rests on both the researcher’s and participants’ worldviews” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 55).

Direct observation of the now functioning department would have provided a valuable opportunity to see the unadulterated impressions and comments those in the culture hold and function within as “the researcher proposing a study in a particular setting could argue that human actions are significantly influenced by the setting in which they occur and that one should therefore study that behavior in those real-life situations” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 53). Erickson’s (1985) three guiding principles were to direct prior strategic planning to evaluate any relationships or patterns discovered, “guided by deliberate decisions about sampling and by intuitive reactions” (p. 71). The three steps that would have been used (Erickson, 1985) included “identifying the full range of variation in modes of formal and informal social organization” (p. 80), “collecting recurrent instances of events across a wide range of events” (p. 80), and “looking at events at any system level” (p. 80).

The researcher was confident at the outset of the study that participation in the study would be positively received by individuals contacted due to the generalized nature of the interview protocol questions, positive intention of the study, and the transparency of the researcher’s background. It is the current belief of the researcher that recent events in the Big Football University athletics department, the Big Football University campus at large, and events nationally in athletics during the time of data collection significantly limited the interaction of potential participants and their willingness to contribute their opinions and voices to this study as well as led to the denial of direct observation opportunities at the site.

Most significantly, in the recent past, a scathing series of articles was written a local newspaper that sought to "expose" fraudulent and improper actions by the Academic Success Program at Big Football University, implying that many student athletes received a subpar education to ensure NCAA eligibility. This online newspaper article so greatly damaged the external perspective of the Academic Success Program that six years after its original publication, the Vice President of Communications at Big Football University still have publicly available online all of the supporting documentation for the questions raised by the newspaper. There are multiple pages of information in question and answer format refuting the assertions made in the articles including that student athletes are steered towards general studies or kinesiology degrees, that they are given special privileges, and that a disproportionate amount of student athletes take independent study courses. That the links, documents, and valuable website space are still active six years after the publication of the original newspaper report is a testament to the still rippling affects within the Big Football University community the articles caused, and a demonstration that a response is still needed.

Next, the Big Football University community at the time of the study's data collection and writing was having significant, stressful campus change on multiple levels of leadership in an especially condensed time frame. The President of the University retired, and a new administrator was brought on the month that data collection began. Shortly after the Athletic Director then resigned. This individual's tenure was marked by controversies including a large number of employees quitting the athletics department, increased athletics events' ticket prices, and criticisms of player safety with the coaching staff. This drew considerable national criticism of the Athletics Department, and

contributed evidence to a highly contentious conversation both in the NFL and the NCAA of the risk of significant brain injuries even when using protective padding and helmets. A few months later the Head Football Coach was fired.

Concurrent with the events affecting the operations and perceptions of athletics at Big Football University were recent national events casting a negative light onto the sphere of athletic academic support. At the time of writing, there were near daily disturbing updates from UNC-Chapel Hill as 3,100 students were involved in “paper classes” to maintain eligibility. The athletic academic support unit at UNC-Chapel Hill had been found guilty of manipulating thousands of student athletes to take non-academically vetted or managed independent study courses from the African and Afro-American Department to maintain eligibility from 1993-2011(Cadawalder, 2014). The classes were primarily favored by student athletes, and student tutors in the academic support unit “crossed the line between permissible and impermissible assistance and drafted parts of the papers that student athletes submitted for credit in classes” (Cadawalder, 2014, p. 4). Believing that the rigors of a research university would ensure academic trustworthiness, UNC at Chapel Hill “failed to conduct any meaningful oversight of the AFAM department and ASPSA” (Caldawalder, 2014, p. 6). This has led to a wave of former student athletes suing UNC (Ganim, 2014), as well as multiple terminations of complicit faculty members and staff.

The events both on and off Big Football University’s campus fostered a secretive and alarmed national field of athletics support professionals who were understandably reluctant to speak to a stranger about their professional experiences. The events mentioned, it is the researcher’s belief, led to changes in the data collection that, in a

lesser study, would have led to a breakdown of core evidentiary components. The researcher unfortunately experienced a rescinded ability to have direct observation at Big Football University which initially endangered the planned direct observation path and triangulation efforts. However, it is important to remember that qualitative research is emergent, and allows for discovering new methods of data collection. Due to the willingness of participants, this study was still able to benefit from rich data and detailed analysis. The implication of this lack of transparency in future athletics research is addressed and discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Data Management

The researcher spent eight months collecting data from May 2014 through December 2014 with two trips to the Big Football University site itself. To have a supply of primary and secondary documents, documents were collected at Big Football University archives and online. Interviews were managed following the steps described by Merriam (2009) which included digital recording, taking notes during the interview process, and taking notes after the interview was complete for reflections, impressions, and any questions raised.

The Big Football University is a public university, and some salary reports are available online to any interested party. This provided, using the exclusionary criteria, the names for those employed in athletics post-2002. An additional group of contacts of individuals employed from 1991-2002 was gleaned from publicly available documents in Big Football University's historical archives. This resulted in a possible pool of 93 individuals. Thirty four individuals were deleted from the list due to death, or an inability through normal means to obtain contact information. Nine individuals responded

specifically asking to not be contacted again. The researcher eventually, both through email and phone conversations, confirmed a total of 8 interview commitments.

Interviews were conducted in a neutral setting such as a library meeting room, over the phone, or online communication such as Skype or email conversations. The researcher planned to conduct interviews that lasted one hour to ninety minutes. The majority of interviews lasted one hour. Participants were then contacted for accuracy and any clarifications. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher, with no third party interactions, to have a full record of verbal non-language cues such as pauses, sighs, and stammers. The researcher was the only person collecting and analyzing the raw data for the study.

Once the data was collected, coding and keys were used for privacy to hide specific identities. An Excel workbook with contact information was kept on a personal computer in a locked office. The coding key was destroyed as soon as the data was collected. Participants in the study were identified with letters, and general references to staff level were included in the analysis. No hard copy of the contact information was made available, and it was not placed in an online location. The computer did not leave the residence and was password protected both for the hard drive and specific files. To ensure confidentiality, identifying measures were removed immediately after the interview was conducted and participant interaction was no longer needed.

Data Analysis Procedures

As Yin (2009) advised, it was critical to have an analytic strategy in place while in the data collection phase to “treat the evidence fairly, produce compelling analytic conclusions, and rule out alternative interpretations” (p. 130). Therefore, to find relevant

patterns and themes in answer to the research questions, strategies of data displays, theoretical coding, and domain analysis of field notes was used.

First, the researcher followed the analytical tactics created by Huberman and Miles (2007) known as data displays. These data displays were created to categorize and synthesize disparate pieces of data. The categories were created by the researcher based upon a demonstrated repetition of similar ideas found in multiple types of sources. As the researcher arrives at tentative conclusions based on data categories, moving from display to generate analytic text, the end goal reveals itself as developing explanations based on evidence found. A strong advantage to this tactic of initial data categorization is that it visualizes relationship patterns that, when reanalyzed, provide opportunity for corrections, previously ignored patterns, and adjustments. Data displays were created to incorporate all types of evidence found in a visual format, strengthening external validity through triangulation and raw data inclusion.

D.A. Spradley's (1980) seminal work in the creation of domain analysis in qualitative research was used in analyzing the field notes created from data collected. Domain analysis is useful in the analysis stage as it creates a full description of an environment and all cultural processes within into smaller, more generalizable phenomenon. Using the ethnographic tradition of creating domain analyses from interview data, the researcher created the three pieces of data needed for a domain analysis – cover terms, semantic relationships, and included terms. Spradley (1980) recommends a six step method to creating a domain analysis including (1) identifying an appropriate semantic relationship, (2) preparing a domain analysis worksheet, (3) selecting data, (4) selecting smaller pieces of data that "fit" into the chosen relationship,

(5) repeating the process for all other relationships, and (6) creating a working list of all of the domains to fit into larger themes.

Using the data displays and domain analysis, the researcher moved to categorizing data in theoretical coding. Anticipated codes fell into the parameters of the strength of social rules and structures that individuals created and impressions of the efficacy of the administrative change, as detailed in Table 2. The codes listed were merely a starting point for analysis.

Table 2

Preliminary List of Anticipated Theoretical Codes

Code	Code Full Name	Description
CFJB	Confusion with Job Responsibilities	Identifying any role conflict
TUCH	Tutoring Changes	Identifying role conflict and unit redesign
INCV	Informal Conversations	Casual descriptions of changes in the unit
FOCV	Formal Conversations	Formalized administrative meetings articulating the goals and redesign
IPCM	Communication about expectations	Can include all presentations of changes in a hierarchical setting
MLCM	Multi-Level Communications	Communication between all levels of staff and campus constituents
MAUM	Macro Expectations from Big Football University	University-led expectations of success and design of unit
MIIN	Micro Expectations from individual	Individually assigned expectations of success and design of unit

Table 3 details the full list of created theoretical codes that were used in the final study.

Table 3

Data Analysis Categories from Full Evidence

Code	Code Full Name	Description
CFJB	Confusion with Job Responsibilities	Identifying any role conflict
TUCH	Tutoring Changes	Identifying role conflict and unit redesign
INCV	Informal Conversations	Casual descriptions of changes in the unit
FOCV	Formal Conversations	Formalized administrative meetings articulating the goals and redesign
IPCM	Communication about expectations	Can include all presentations of changes in a hierarchical setting
MLCM	Multi-Level Communications	Communication between all levels of staff and campus constituents
MAUM	Macro Expectations from BIG FOOTBALL UNIVERSITY	University-led expectations of success and design of unit
MIIN	Micro Expectations from individual	Individually assigned expectations of success and design of unit
PHYS	Physical Resources	Physical Changes (building, resources, etc.)
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association	direct mention of a mandate, rule, operating system
FORC	Formal Communications	direct mention of a mandate, rule, operating system
INFC	Informal Communications	informal changes announced or discussed by the university
FORR	Formal Responses	Formal responses to queries, issues, etc.
DUAL	Dual Role	Dual job responsibilities with departments and others working within the ASP
OUTP	Outside Perceptions	Out of unit perceptions of efficacy, appropriateness of unit's operations
OPER	Operations	Operational functioning rules

The key to the strength of the sources is how familiar and well trained a case study researcher is at acknowledging the seemingly infinite number of sources that can be accrued in defining an abstract concept as "culture." To the researcher's advantage is the creativity allowable in discovering new avenues for collection, and flexibility in recognizing value in all data found. The benefits of the collection activities are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

Expected Data Contributions to Research Question

Collection Activities	Purpose
Documents	Established the environment and exterior image of social identity
Interviews, documents	Familiarity with athletic cultures, practitioner responsibilities, knowledge of internal arrangements and organizational demands
Interviews, documents	Formal arrangements and the adherence to them; conflicts in interpretation
Interviews, documents	Experiences of behaviors and activities, anecdotes, perceptions and opinions

Data Presentation

Data presentation in the following chapters consists of narrative research. Creswell (2003) defines narrative research as a qualitative inquiry consisting of taking individual accounts of an experience and then retelling the stories into a cohesive chronology. In answering the research question using areas of narrative, certain topics

will be illuminated within the narrative based upon nested codes for specific elements and themes.

The focus of analysis was the organizational structure as it relates to staff experiences, not individual specific histories or biographies. The structure of the narrative was found around the constructs already discovered in existing literature, but the data itself ultimately yielded the final list of applicable themes. Narrative analysis will be used to work with the data displays, domain analysis, and discovered codes to develop a comprehensive answer to the research question.

Trustworthiness

A variety of trustworthiness techniques to increase the validity of the study were used including thick description and triangulation. Thick description was used to create a holistic portrait on which to base initial impressions and environmental features. The goal was to attain what Kreftig (1991) defined as "truth value" as it increases the trustworthiness of a study if "it presents such accurate descriptions or interpretation of human experience that people who also share that experience would immediately recognize the descriptions" (p. 216). To achieve the intended level of detail during data collection, the researcher wrote analytic memos to detail the paths of research and early attempts at coding as collection progresses. This type of descriptive validity (Johnson, 1997) reduced chances for bias by the researcher.

Next, as the data moved from descriptive to nuanced analysis, triangulation further ensured validity and saturation in the findings. Triangulation provided an opportunity to piece similar bits of data from multiple types of sources to strengthen found relationships and patterns. The strength of triangulation, as articulated by Field and

Morse (1985) and summarized by Kreftig (1991), is that "this strategy of providing a number of different slices of data also minimizes distortion from a single data source or from a biased researcher" (p. 219). This was important when proposing patterns in the data as it forced the researcher to identify the inherent motivations and biases. The researcher incorporated as much raw data as possible into the findings, and provided a strong audit trail to account for any conclusions drawn when raw data cannot be explicitly stated.

Due to a variety of reasons (some unknown to the researcher), there was a final tally of eight completed interviews with the researcher using the study's protocol. As the prolific case study scholar Yin instructs, "every case study investigator should be well versed in a variety of data collection techniques" (2006, p. 119). This led to the researcher relying more heavily on previous research training to combine multiple levels of analysis of archival data, interview data, and current document analysis. To create triangulation, the interviews that the researcher was able to conduct were split into two categories for analysis. The ultimate decision was made to separate the interview data based upon the roles of the individuals within and outside of the unit. The data and subsequent analysis from the interviews and additional evidence is later presented in greater detail in Chapter 4. The wealth of data that was collected eventually led to a complete code list to create more holistic appearances of concepts. This code list was integral in creating visual maps of all of the data collected that led to the final themes discovered. These themes and corresponding constructs are discussed in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

It is important to discuss the implications of the current intercollegiate athletics climate as this study was partially sidetracked by events on the Big Football University campus, events nationally that questioned the ethical practice of student athlete academic support, and the ensuing insecurity of potential participants. This led to a recreation of the triangulation effort in the original methodology to preserve the strength of the study itself. However, the limitations presented provide merely context to the data collection, and reinforce the idea that the best laid research plans are flexible, adaptable, and can maintain the qualitative inquiry process with outstanding results.

Human Subject and Institutional Review Board Accommodations

After this proposal was accepted by the dissertation committee, the researcher followed Institutional Review Board guidelines established at George Washington University to ensure that risk was minimized, that participants were informed of their rights to decline participating, and that all ethical considerations were included. An information form was created (Appendix A) based upon published The George Washington University guidance at their Institutional Review Board website to ensure participant safety during data collection and confidentiality during analysis.

Limitations of the Study

As with any research, there are limitations that bind this study. First, documents collected present issues of accuracy and validity. Documents are inherently limited, not created for research purposes, and are at times not able to address the original creator's perceptions and biases (Merriam, 2009). Collecting data from interviews can be problematic if there is a logistical lack of accessibility, or if the researcher asks questions that do not relate enough to the research questions to create applicable data.

Lastly, in its lack of direct exact replication, there are limitations with case study methodology as a research design. Case studies are not meant to have exact replication or direct applicability, but more theoretical generalizability in the findings (Merriam, 2009). The sample of a heavily funded, public university in the Midwest contains characteristics that will potentially alienate readers as they do not represent all available academic support programs. Also in case study data presentation, strong internal validity can be compromised when a lack of raw data is present and narrative results are presented (Yin, 2009). Case study research is unable to completely trace every aspect of the unit of analysis under investigation; however through adherence to the study design and careful data collection, the researcher maximized potential avenues of discovery.

Pilot Study

The researcher contacted a current Midwestern NCAA compliance official at a NCAA member institution to pilot the first version of the interview protocol for this study. This individual did not have any previous contact with the researcher, and based upon his professional experience, was an excellent candidate to provide unbiased responses and critiques of the proposed interview protocol. The notes from the responses were destroyed to ensure anonymity for the official, and initial impressions from the discussion that followed the mock interview resulted in changes to the protocol. This resulted in clarification to questions, suggestions for probes, and inclusion of more specific points for data collection based on his experiences. For example, the official recommended that some of the questions also look to how the student impressions of the changes could have affected how the staff created their own reactions, and to ask

questions that addressed changes to physical resources like office space, facilities, and specific sources and channels for funding.

Subjectivity Statement

While pursuing a MA in higher education, the researcher worked as a graduate student mentor in a student athlete academic support unit. The researcher worked under the title of Graduate Student Mentor, tutoring student athletes four to five days a week on topics like reading comprehension, time management, study skills, and basic compositional writing. As a mentor, one served as a topic specific tutor for freshman-level English, history, and writing courses.

It was the researcher's first exposure to working with student athletes, as well as experiencing how NCAA rules influenced the daily operations of the administrative and curricular staff. It was also the first exposure to understanding how a niche culture of student athletes functioned in a higher education setting. As a White female, the researcher did not match the gender or race of students, essentially acting as an outsider until a trusting relationship was built with the students. It was ultimately a stressful and intellectually stimulating year long experience that influenced the researcher's doctoral pursuit. The researcher is influenced by graduate studies in recognizing student development stages, race relations in higher education, effective learning strategies for different types of students, and the organizational and administrative varieties that large higher education institutions utilize. It is important to the researcher to discover how student athletes at all Division 1 schools can be academically successful, and how the administrative structures surrounding them could facilitate that success. As a fourth year doctoral student in a higher education administration program at a selective private

university, the researcher's personal perspectives are influenced by constructivism and organizational theory.

Conclusion

A case study methodology was chosen as the single case is in a bounded unit answering questions of how the Academic Support Services unit changed since 1991 and if there were any lasting positive contributions to current functioning that can be applied to other programs. A constructivist epistemology and identity theories assert that society and culture are organizational environments that are socially created and learned, and that those structures create a reality. Identity theories have the ability to provide a dual lens for analysis, first on the organizational level and on the individual level to answer the research question. Data collection was conducted through interviews with key informants and primary and secondary document analysis. Data displays, domain analysis, and theoretical coding were used to answer the research questions. Limitations in this study included a lack of findings from direct observation and a limited number of willing key informants available to participate. To increase both internal and external validity, trustworthiness tactics were used ensuring that the results match reality, that there is a saturation of data, and that a truthful portrayal is created by providing a clear synthesis of patterns found.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Review of Data Constructs Based Upon Previously Found Literature

As detailed in previous chapters, there were four constructs found in literature illustrating the paths that institutions and individuals primarily take when measuring the influence that NCAA legislation has over administrative structures. These constructs, previously discovered through the literature review and used for data gathering and analysis, included University Responses, Identity Changes, Legislative Influences, and the influence of Leadership on Role Conflict. These constructs appeared heavily in the discovered evidence, and were then logically used to frame the findings of this study.

University Response Construct Overview

The NCAA had given individual institutions the responsibilities for enacting their rules to successfully guide student athletes to graduation. Universities are now facing increased scrutiny for their athletic academic support practices as improvement in recruiting standards and graduation rates are continually being sought. Financial pressures as well as internal campus pressures have led to universities grudgingly accepting intercollegiate athletics as an integral component in the student collegiate experience. This influenced the researcher's creation of the interview protocol with questions asking for descriptions of the individuals' working environment, perception of NCAA influence in their daily operations, and of larger campus community reactions to the Student Athlete Support Program (SASP).

Identity Change Construct Overview

Individuals working in athletic units in higher education are plagued with feelings of alienation and isolation as their work is thought to be an external silo environment outside of higher education's traditional mission. Individuals need to create a sense of belonging, as the internal and external pressures affect how they feel regarding their work and the importance of their roles in the student athlete experience. The interview protocol questions dealt with perceptions of changes in the support unit directly attributed to NCAA legislation, any changes that were encountered administratively, and the perception of how the roles changed.

Legislative Influence Construct Overview

Early academic reform efforts were met with resistance by both universities and athletic staff as the NCAA exerted more control over daily operations and internal decision making. However, beginning in the late 1980's after several instances of abuses and exploitation of student athletes, there was greater national consensus for eligibility and recruiting controls to protect student athletes.

Leadership and Role Conflict Construct Overview

As athletics increased its financial and cultural domination of some campuses and relationships became strained, higher education leadership was tasked with developing and maintaining positive relationships with both internal stakeholders and external organizations. The strained relationship between institutions and their financially rewarding athletic departments- at the expense of student athletes- maintaining an open line of communication between faculty and athletic staff, and contributing to reform recommendations were just a few of the highlighted tasks that the role conflict presented.

Review of the Research Question

This study was created using the epistemological focus of constructivism, in which there is no objective truth and all knowledge is socially created and taught to other members (Crotty, 1998). This was supplemented by transposing the Social Identity Theory and Organizational Identity Theory as guidance for triangulating data collection and analysis. Both theories are based in the constructivist view that culture and identity, and ultimately comfort with environmental change, are socially created and changed with both internal and external pressures. The purpose of the study is to delve into an example of an academic support unit for student athletes in a university that was able to follow the NCAA mandate and potentially create a new bureaucratic structure to support it, specifically the Big Football University. The overall research question thus is: How has NCAA legislation shaped the administrative institutional action at the Big Football University athletic academic support unit from 1991-2014?

Overview of Data Collection

Following the data analysis path illustrated in Chapter Three, codes were created using thematic analysis to find overarching themes to answer the research question. Also following the planned data presentation detailed in this study's methodology, this chapter presents a chronological map of superficial changes, but a more detailed and intensive view of the cultural and social changes that occurred within the SASP.

In addition to the interviews previously discussed, there was also a final tally of 30 primary documents from 10 boxes in the Big Football University archives pulled personally by the researcher based on the focus of the study and scholarly determination as to which were the most pertinent to analyze. Hundreds of pages of primary documents

were analyzed, but were first placed into categories for each of organization. The archival information was separated by the library chronologically, and then by either topic or committee interest. Most prevalent in the archives were meeting notes from a variety of athletics-related groups such as NCAA accreditation review years, policy and procedure topics, and other administrative issues that faced the department. Other types of documents found that were pertinent to the study included self-study draft items with corresponding notes, letters from BFU leadership to either outside organizations or outside of the athletic unit, reports from internal BFU groups, operations manuals, and student athlete handbooks. An additional fifteen current articles from newspapers contributed to the study with less focus on having them available for analysis as primary documentation was more valued. Human subjects were a crucial source of evidence to this study's data collection. In order to maintain confidentiality for participants who are both past or present employees, de-identification was maintained throughout the chapter. Participants' information presented does not reveal age, gender, positions held, current titles, or other identifying information. Similarly, identifying information from primary documents have been redacted to improve confidentiality without harming the integrity of the data collected from the documents.

It was also decided that this study's findings were not going to be written by descriptively listing each document found, as that would lead to mere discourse similarities, and attempting to draw conclusions based upon that supposition would provide nothing more than a simple "compare and contrast" report. The data collected created a more complete list of qualitative codes to categorize found data, which were

eventually merged to create themes, and the themes were then categorized into constructs to be discussed within this chapter.

This resulted in the four constructs with corresponding findings of University Responses, Legislative Influence, Identity Changes, and Leadership and Role Conflict. Although the researcher had some guidance for macro constructs based upon evidence found in the study's literature review, data collection and analysis eventually produced codes and themes for the corresponding findings.

Review of Current Big Football University Commitment to Athletics

The Big Football University (BFU) is a Midwestern four year research intensive doctoral granting institution. Consistently ranked in the top ten of universities both nationally and internationally, the approximately 44,000 graduate and undergraduate students enjoy 19 schools and colleges, 263 degree programs, and over $1.3 billion in research expenditures in 2014 (BFU Office of Financial Operations, 2014). Being a public university ensures that the majority of business, human resource, and financial documentation are available for public perusal.

One of the best sources of information regarding the trends and challenges faced by the BFU system is the Annual Financial Report published by the University CFO's office. At the time of the writing of this dissertation, the 2014 Annual Report provided in sharp detail the extreme dedication BFU continues to provide to the athletic endeavors of student athletes. In 2014, "student athletes had one of the highest academic performances in the history of the department. A record-tying six students earned Academic All-American honors and 447 achieved a 3.0 cumulative grade point average for two consecutive terms" (BFU Office of Financial Operations, 2014, p. 33). Men's gymnastics

won the national title in 2014, and six sports were in the top teams in the Big 10 conference – men's basketball, men's gymnastics, softball, men's swimming and diving, and women's tennis (BFU Office of Financial Operations, 2014). BFU had an incredible total of over 15 teams competing in the post-season. These remarkable accomplishments all demonstrate the incredible level of expertise that is expected of student athletes at the Big Football University.

In response, the University has dedicated space and attention to consistently increase their athletic presence on campus. Recently completed athletics construction projects include the painting completed in various stadiums in 2013, a sports museum renovation completed in 2014, a new softball center facility completed in February 2014, and a new baseball complex completed in 2013 (BFU Office of Financial Operations, 2014).

There are also multiple athletics projects in progress. BFU is building a new field hockey center, a new field hockey stadium, and completing field improvements (BFU Office of Financial Operations, 2014). Most interesting in terms of this study's focus is that the University is in the planning stages of building a Department of Intercollegiate Athletics Operations Center (BFU Office of Financial Operations, 2014). This study focuses on legislative influence from 1991-2014, but with the ever increasing expenditures dedicated to athletic prowess, other researchers will undoubtedly use BFU as a case study in the future as it continues to navigate the unprecedented financial, physical, and cultural facets of the student athlete/higher education relationship.

Evidentiary Findings

Construct #1: University Responses to NCAA Legislation in the SASP

Three findings were placed within the construct of University Responses, which centered upon the finding that upper administration at BFU was crucial to the SASP's operations remaining legitimate in the campus perception in terms of attention and physical resources.

Finding #1: Important to the success of the SASP and its later added programs was the positive input of upper administration, such as the VPs and President.

In a macro perspective of SASP operations, upper levels of administration provided legitimacy and a buffer of influence to implementing SASP rules and goals. There was an acknowledgement from those interviewed that the University, due to its size and prestige, had created an environment that has made an unusually strong relationship between athletic achievement and academic achievement. One participant remarked that BFU has "probably moved farther away [from the traditional higher education mission] than anyone ever intended it. We didn't have television contracts, we didn't have as many bowl games as we have now. Those things have created lots more pressure on student athletes and for the people who have to provide support for them" (Participant #115, personal communication, 2014).

The interviews provided an additional window into the efforts of the SASP that were supported by upper level administration which led to a positive benefit in their daily functioning. One interviewee noted that during her time at working in the SASP with student athletes "I also appreciated BFU's support for the woman athletes you know, on at least the level that I was working" (Participant #172, personal communication, 2014).

She further detailed “I’m sure there were probably coaches who maybe didn’t feel that way, the coaches in woman sports that might not have agreed with that. But I thought they were really cutting edge particularly around women’s athletics” (Participant #172, personal communication, 2014). This was in reference to gender equality and attention being given to the equality efforts for female coaching, student athletes, and other gender based programming that the University supported. And in the wake of the newspaper allegations previously discussed, BFU’s President was quick to make a public statement that “we were deeply disappointed in both the approach and tone of the coverage of such an important issue…The overall treatment did not lead to accuracy or balance, and did not fairly represent the University's serious commitment to the academic success of our student athletes.” (press release, 2008, p. 1).

The interviews also revealed that the coaches played an important role in conveying to the external and internal communities that the importance of SASP operations was only going to increase as NCAA eligibility concerns became paramount. Initially within athletics, “I don’t think the coaches paid much attention to it because I think there’s a notion that sort of indicated whatever road you come up with, I suspect we’ll be able to operate within it and not be terribly threatened by it” (Participant #115, personal communication, 2014). But with the increased role of the SASP and increased levels of oversight from upper administration, the roles shifted to give legitimacy to ensure eligibility compliance and setting higher academic standards. One participant explained in detail the importance of how a certain figurehead in Athletics set the standard to increase the coaches’ and student athletes’ acceptance of the SASP:

> I think because we had a great leader on campus who supported this effort, they were easily – readily falling in line with what we were outlining for them with

> their levels of participation. When I say the campus leader, at that time, the [Football] Head Coach. So we had the support element in place working with us so when it came to the student athletes to develop either an opinion in what they were involved in, or think about how they felt about it generally. Coach said this is part of the program, this is not just football, it's for all of athletics, and it's got to be good. So that really vocal and really dynamic presence helped, I think, to move it forward in terms of supporting student athletes especially academically (Participant #147, personal communication, 2014).

The Big Football University administration set a precedent of becoming involved both internally and externally in supporting SASP endeavors while maintaining an open critical line of communication with concerned faculty. Changing a campus culture to adhere to the importance of SASP began with the administration acknowledging the faculty presence. As participant #115 explained,

> historically, when we were not where we are now with tv contracts and things and the students simply had intermural things on their campuses and competed among themselves, and at one point they wanted to compete against other universities but the faculty said that would interfere with their studies. When they finally agreed to allow competition, it was with the understanding that athletic participation would always be under the auspices of the faculty. Well that was then, and not now. Because it got away from the faculty. And so, the future will depend upon the degree to which the faculty want to reengage" (personal communication, 2014).

The faculty has felt recently that it can engage with discussions of SASP operations. In 2009, publicly available documents detailed from the Faculty Senate at Big Football University recommendations to upper administration that included moving advisors out of the SASP, having LSA in charge of eligibility for students that are in academic peril instead of the Board of Athletics, and having the reporting line move away from the Provost to the Student Academic Affairs committee in LSA.

The recommended changes have not occurred and did not seem to gain traction with administration as it is not mentioned in other documentation found. This document, while the changes were not put into effect, summarizes a pertinent example of another

group trying to navigate the murky relationship of the role of higher education and student athlete successes. Years earlier this sentiment was echoed by a former president who stated “I do not want a University where various parts simply decide how to deal with things and the University, which we are supposed to represent in the central administration, is only informed about" (newspaper article, 2002, p. 1).

Finding #2: SASP staff recognized the importance of the University responding in support of the SASP in order to mitigate undue negative media or national attention.

The University response to NCAA legislation throughout the existence of the SASP was important to the staff, and conveyed both at and individual and institutional level.

As early as 1996 questions were raised in a campus forum of how self-assessment information would be interpreted outside of the athletics department and that of the campus in regards to student athlete success. At a meeting of the Academic Integrity subcommittee of the Athletic Certification group working for NCAA accreditation, tensions arose over

> whether to use a chart in the final report showing the number of exception admissions that enroll in the Kinesiology Division. Two different concerns: a) a tendency of the peer reviewers, and the media to focus only on the numbers, rather than the process by which these standards are attained, and b) understanding that this information is already publicly available and it will be asked for anyway so it should be included. No consensus on the final decision, although stronger sentiment prevails towards leaving the information out of the final report (Meeting Notes, 1996a, p. 1) .

The group ended up leaving the portion of the report unchanged, but it aptly demonstrates that the group was very aware of the potential for undue University attention on a larger

scale, and based upon the interpretation of the available data by those not involved intimately in the decisions made for student athletes administratively.

The chance of negative media exposure based upon SASP's actions gave strength to the goals and concerns brought up by the staff. "Presidents paid more attention to it because presidents do not like to be embarrassed. Low APR scores had a way of embarrassing universities and I think presidents did not want to be listed in that group" (Participant #115, personal communication, 2014). As a former president said, "you can take any of the issues that have been raised in the media over the past two or three years. Every single one of those issues has been a collective effort on the part of the Athletic Department and on the part of the administration," the president said. "Take any of those issues, and you have University involvement" (press release, 2002, p. 1).

Finding #3: The physical resources increased dramatically in a relatively short time.

Unsurprisingly the increase in resources from the University, both in available sources of funding and physical space, allowed the SASP to focus on student athletes' academic needs. The physical resources changed dramatically in a relatively short amount of time, and gave much more legitimacy to the operations therein.

A common thread presented in the collected data was the frustration of not having ample physical space available to have a demonstrable recognizable gathering point for the program. Daily responsibilities were affected by the physical setup for student athletes and their staff. Participant #172 described how staff members that needed to work together were in different buildings which often proved difficult. Participant #172 also remembered that in the daily operations of the unit, the communication between the

peripheral units changed when following NCAA rules of documenting medication used to treat ADHD. “The academic support building had just been built, so they moved out of the administration building and over into the next academic support building” (Participant #172, personal communication, 2014).

In regard to the programming instituted by the unit, the physical realities also proved to be negative. Participant #147 described that in the unit as the programming developed, finding space for the student athletes to consistently use was difficult. He described that “we were trying to find space. And what we did not want to do was, at that time, to have space that was going to be in the athletic domain. We wanted space on central campus so that the students could feel, and get an exposure to, a lot of what you know the other students were experiencing on campus. So until we eventually found space we just sort of moved around” (Participant #147, personal communication, 2014). Eventually the program landed its primary operations in the Undergraduate Library, but this was an imperfect solution as “you didn’t have designated room space – we had space so there were chairs and tables” (Participant #147, personal communication, 2014). Participant #108 began and ended her day with multiple locations on campus in order to ensure that student athletes were following NCAA academic mandates. She described that to start her day at 7:00(am) a.m., she began at the library “to make sure that the expected people were at study table were actually with books and studying as opposed to reviewing tape. When I got done with that I usually went back over to [name removed of campus building]” (Participant #108, personal communication, 2014). Then, at Study Table later in the evening, in the engineering building on campus, “I would actually sit in the room with them – all 20 of them – and they checked into that room and stayed in that

room" (Participant #108, personal communication, 2014). This conundrum was solved in 2006 when a superior building named after its main benefactor, was given for use by athletic academic supports services at BFU. Opened in 2006, this 38,000 square foot building boasts 6 classrooms, 1 conference room, 17 individual tutorial rooms, 3 study lounges, and a computer lab to host study tables, tutoring, and general academic support programs for BFU student athletes (name withheld, 2007, PPT slide).

Because of the increased demand for oversight of student athletes, the department expanded. As of the 2014 publicly available website, the SASP has maintained operations of a fully funded caliber. There are 26 staff members with titles such as program analyst, counselor, assistant counselor, tutorial assistant, and learning services assistant. The unit still operates out of their dedicated Academic Center. The unit has a variety of programs that have expanded beyond ensuring that student athletes show up for mandatory time spent in a library conference room. These include career services, a leadership academy, and numerous other opportunities for student athletes.

Illustrated below in Table 5 is publicly available salary information compiled by the researcher to aptly demonstrate the relatively quick funding trajectory that the athletics department was able to enact. Salary information prior to 2002 to a similar degree of detail is not publicly available online. When requested at the BFU Historical library, the researcher was informed that salaries not available online had not been made public due to University regulations. The researcher was not given a time frame of when those documents would be available for review. The table below creates a visual representation of the funding made available to athletic department employees with a difference of over $20,000 in only 12 years. While this figure also included the salary of

coaching staff, the available positions that dealt with compliance, academic advising, and other SASP roles increased from 8 individuals to 17 by 2014.

Table 5

Big Football University Department of Athletics Salary Information

Year	Number of People in the Department	Average Salary
2002-2003	226	$51,500.73
2003-2004	225	$52,111.89
2004-2005	231	$55,172.42
2005-2006	234	$57,235.57
2006-2007	240	$59,684.48
2007-2008	241	$63,931.63
2008-2009	252	$70,592.24
2009-2010	250	$72,035.34
2010-2011	253	$73,382.64
2011-2012	281	$75,503.35
2012-2013	321	$76,110.82
2013-2014	336	$79,684.32

The resources that were flowing into the department forced the staff to reflect upon how NCAA mandates were to be funded and enacted. Participant #172 remarked as to "I was quite surprised at how creative, innovative, cutting edge BFU was and I think some of that comes with having the resources to be creative" (personal communication, 2014).

Participant #115 pondered

> there's always been sort of a question about academic support and how much academic support is reasonable and realistic. As we began to put more resources and develop bigger and larger academic support units, the question would be 'are we getting different kinds of athletes, are we recruiting different kinds of athletes, are we putting more pressure on athletes so that more academic support is needed?' (personal communication, 2014).

This also raised discussions among resource allocation between different levels of staff, including coaches.

> You may have fewer athletes in one program because it is not as big a fund provider, but, all the athletes in the program should receive equal access to counseling, tutoring, coaching, and assistance with the guidance in their career development. So the reaction – there wasn't like an overt reaction of – this is awful – there were people who questioned, well, why? Why do we have to do more for women's athletes in terms of tutoring and counseling and that sort of thing? (Participant #116, personal communication, 2014).

The participant determined that the consternation was attributed to the issue of resources allocation and a sense of coaches' protecting their perceived financial interests to keep programs functioning smoothly.

University Responses were determined to be vital to SASP expanding its functions in support of student athletes and the staff members by having consistent positive input from upper administration in regards to legitimizing the efforts on campus, responding in support of athletics support activities publically, and an increase in physical and monetary resources to enact more programming.

Construct #2: The NCAA legislative influence was not discussed by participants as affecting their daily operations.

An unusual theme presented itself through data analysis of the lack of acknowledging that the NCAA was in fact a force of change in day to day decision making and administrative influences. Participant #108 acknowledged that her position was created by NCAA funds, while Participant #172 struggled to describe an example of what changed in her position due to oversight. It is interesting to note that within the interviews, the participants did not uniformly agree that the NCAA directly affected their job responsibilities or daily functioning. Responses ranged from "Oh absolutely" with a detailed explanation following or a definite "No." Participant #115 spoke of the APR is a viable tool, but for faculty and how it highlighted teams that were not doing well. The conversation focused mainly on how it impacted the lack of certain faculty oversight as the departments expanded into more positions. The conversation then steered away from the NCAA with a mention of the APR. Participant #115 recalled "all of these questions were around as to why we are doing it, why are we going, and what does improving academic support or increasing resources – what does that mean and I still think those questions are viable and valuable." (personal communication, 2014, Participant #115). When Participant #102 was asked if there were any changes attributed to the NCAA, the response was "you know, not really. When it came to academic support unit, that was just who I reported to, I was in that unit but I was not involved at all with the knowledge and tutoring and the meetings for those people." (personal communication, 2014). Participant #147 began talking only about improvements at the school and did not specifically mention if the actions taken were prompted by the NCAA mandates or creative

functioning from the faculty members themselves. Also mentioned was the funding made available by the NCAA, but not the mandates. When Participant #108 was tasked with creating programmatic changes in the unit, instructions involved working with N4A [National Association of Athletic Academic Advisors] continuing "So I became pretty knowledgeable for the time, so what other people were doing and what the different models were they were using and used that to create what we did (Participant #108, personal communication, 2014). When Participant #116 was asked, the individual did respond with the idea that the NCAA self-study forced those involved in the report to look at the imbalance of funding and administrative resources between the sports teams, but did not parlay that into the conversation about the identity as an NCAA influenced employee or how it affected daily functioning. Again, this was not prompted by any negative comments about the NCAA and its communication to schools, but its absence is worth noting.

It is important to note the absence of the aforementioned construct of legislative influence being included in this study to the degree of the other constructs.

Construct #3: Identity Changes in the SASP due to NCAA Induced Role Conflict

Three findings were placed within the category of identity changes due to NCAA role conflict issues including discussing aspects of job importance, individual and campus expectations of the athletics department, and communication difficulties both internally and externally in conveying NCAA goals.

Finding #1: The duplication of services performed by staff members in the SASP was a point of consternation among campus partners.

As the functioning of the unit developed in conjunction with NCAA expectations and university rigors, it was discovered by the researcher that a potential duplication of academic advising services for student athletes has been a point of contention on campus, to the confusion and discouragement of campus partners. This phenomenon was first recognized in a 1994 budget task force report that informed the campus community that "duplication of services performed on the 'Hill', along with a complex maze of staff that tend to inhibit effective use of student time, are the concerns. Streamlining the system while delivering quality support should be the goal" (BFU Budget Task Force, 1994, p. 3). The committee concluded that

> some of our support services to student-athletes and other departmental units are inadequate. We feel that this is due in some cases to problems with organizational structure. As a result, we believe that there are being performed of questionable importance and service provided that are duplications of effort. In short, we feel that our support services can be significantly improved by more effective organization structures and clearer goals and direction for support departments (BFU Budget Task Force, 1994, p. 2).

These concerns were also expressed in a 1995 report that, although advocated for an expanded space allocation to the program, recommended that

> the University should conduct a review of the activities of SASP over the last several years. The last review took place in 1987 when [name redacted of Athletic Director] retired. A review of the SASP would address several issues that have been raised repeatedly, including:
>
> - Conflicting and confusing relationships between SASP staff and academic support staff in the students' academic units

- Duplication of services offered in other units
- Increasing dependence of athletes, particularly football and basketball players, on the SASP support staff
- Qualifications and counseling experience of some SASP staff

(name withheld, 1995, p. 1).

The recommendations illustrated by the two internal financial reports possibly impacted SASP functioning. By 1996 detailed instructions were included for both staff and student athletes explaining the complimentary role that the SASP support staff maintained.

> The advising services of the Student Athlete Support Program are used to supplement those of the student's designated advisor of his/her academic unit. SASP advisors are experienced in dealing with the specific needs of the student athlete. SASP advisors advocate for the student athlete and assist the student with the successful balance of academic and athletic obligations" (96-97 Operations Manual, p. 8 and 13).

This exact paragraph also appears in the 98-99 Student Athlete Handbook. It was again reiterated almost ten years later in the 2003-2004 Student Athlete Handbook. The instructions read that

> *the advising services of the ASP should be used in conjunction with the advising service of your school, college, or division* [italics in original]. SASP counselors are familiar with the specific needs of student-athletes. They are here to advocate for your needs and assist you in balancing your academic and athletic commitments (p. 15).

This was most likely in reaction to the opinion on campus regarding the identity and roles inherent for staff members in the SASP.

Part of the role for an individual working in the SASP was to act as an advocate for student athletes, and that "appropriate faculty contact is required of all academic advisors. This may occur in response to a negative progress report or in an advocacy role for the student-athlete" (96-97 operations manual, p. 19). Participant #102 remembered

her role as an advocate for students as having to interact with other departments on campus in a more traditional academic advisor role. Beyond working occasionally with a faculty member on behalf of a student athlete, Participant #108 created steps in her position that were much more in the vein of a traditional academic advisor:

> I did some worksheets for the team in terms of this is how you know if you are eligible or not, these are the grades you have to earn, this is how you figure out a 2.0 grade point average. Then I had something that was how do you choose your classes and make sure they have the information they needed- it was just like advising…So, I really kind of took student general advising things and tried to get them to own their academic progress. That to me was very important and I think that was a little different style than I had seen in many of the places that are more typical athletic centered people doing it (Participant #108, personal communication, 2014).

This interaction, or "duplication" of services, however, was seen by participants interviewed as an unavoidable and integral overlap due to their roles' expectations as support staff for both the University and the NCAA.

Finding #2: Advisors are in positions with myriad responsibilities from the NCAA that are complicated, presenting unique staff specific challenges.

The unusual responsibilities placed on staff in the SASP in order to maintain both the NCAA and University oversight of student athletes and their lifestyles led to complicated staff roles and identities. Staff were expected to, in varying degrees, act like psychological experts, career counselors, academic advisors, nutritionists, student mediation advocates, and admission counselors. Highlighted by the found data was the variety of expectations and programs that the SASP would have to enact.

NCAA mandates provided some of the expectations that staff members had to abide by. For example, BFU had a dual reporting line "where the academic support

program reports to both the university – usually the Provost's office – and athletic department. Big Football University made its change in 2005. An internal audit of the SASP from 2007 found the aforementioned duality of advising services, and that "student files maintained by ASP counselors do not contain evidence that students are actively participating in setting their academic goals. NCAA regulations state that student-athletes should play an active role in this process" (audit report, 2007, p. 4) with the added recommendation that student athletes complete a goal setting form and an "Academic Counselor Role Clarification" form (audit report, 2007). The audit also found that the SASP counselors are to develop expertise regarding student privacy and data management (audit report, 2007). When Participant #108 was tasked with creating programmatic changes in the unit, instructions involved

> You need to go to the N4A [National Association of Athletic Academic Advisors] and call these people. So I ended up calling like everybody in that conference, and what do you do and how do you do it and how do you set up your program and how do you do this and how do you do that. So I became pretty knowledgeable for the time, so what other people were doing and what the different models were they were using and used that to create what we did (Participant #108, personal communication, 2014).

Participant #115 also spoke to the necessity of continuing a national presence for staff, as an opportunity to bounce ideas off other staff members was critical. "And so part of our roles and this was why being involved at the national level with faculty reps gave us an opportunity to interface with the NCAA, in order to try to get legislation that would benefit us" Participant #115, personal communication, 2014). The NCAA regulations that the SASP had to adhere to also created role conflict between support staff and faculty which did not abate during the tenure of one of the individuals interviewed. This individual remarked that,

> I think that the tension on college campuses will continue and it will probably get greater because you know, in theory, the faculty is in charge of the academics in a university, and you don't have sort of athletic academic people. You just have academic people. You bring in those, you assist, you help, but the question that I think will continue to be – what is the role of the faculty in general as it relates to student athletes versus athletic depts. And their responsibilities relative to it (Participant #115, personal communication, 2014).

Participant #116 had a more positive view of the impact of NCAA legislation on their role conflict, while noting that "even though it was a gender equity issue and initiative, I think it had an overall improvement in the quality of academic support provided to people who were in the non-major producing programs whether they were men or female" (personal communication, 2014).

BFU professional requirements made of staff members also contributed to this sense of role conflict. Historically, the SASP staff had job requirements that allowed SASP staff to act in multiple capacities. For example, "in the case of an alleged violation of the code by a student-athlete, SASP advisors may act in a liaison capacity with the Office of Student Conflict Resolution in the resolution process" (96-97 Operations Manual, p. 10). In regard(s) to the Class Excuse Policy, if the student athlete was unable to coordinate with the faculty member, "further facilitation may be provided by the SASP advisor. Any problems concerning the acceptance of class excuses by faculty should be reported to the SASP advisor who will assist in contacting the appropriate faculty advocate to resolve the matter" (96-97 Operations Manual, p. 21). Also, it was expected that

> SASP advisors may serve as a 'sounding board' and confidante for student athlete concerns. These may include, but are not limited to, academic problems, homesickness, interpersonal and social issues. SASP advisors are not professional counselors and do not prescribe treatment. If, at any time, an advisor feels a student would benefit from professional counseling, the student will be referred to the appropriate office within the University (96-97 Operations Manual, p. 22).

In 2005, according to publicly available salary information, the first appearance of the term “Academic Advisor/Counselor” was used in the SASP, replacing Student Advisor and Student Services Associate.

Participant #116 described this as “a focus on balancing the types of support that were given for tutoring, and assisting student athletes with their academic programs, counseling, helping them complete their academic programs” (personal communication, 2014). Participant #147 described the work of colleagues in the unit as

> liaisons to the different schools and colleges for student athletes, so with the school of education, with at that point kinesiology that sort of reared its head, liaisons to all the academic programs to work with athletes advisors and some of the deans and assistant deans of the college so that we could be assured that there were not going to be any complicated issues that would arise regarding the student athletes, their performance, their schedules, their level of participation, etc. (personal communication, 2014).

Participant #172 described the shared responsibilities of staff members in the SASP due to the increasing number of student athletes and participated in an “academic support transition” where teams were divided among staff members. Participant #108 recalled that even with a full-time staff support person and 3 teaching assistants, the work load was one that placed an incredible amount of pressure on staff, describing that

> there was more that we were expected to do, and then our compliance person left, and I ended up doing compliance and the academics from August until November. And I finally said I’m going to apply for the compliance job. That’s more manageable than the stress of the academic support (Participant #108, personal communication, 2014).

Finding #3: The SASP staff had responsibilities for exchanging information internally, but also acted as liaisons to campus departments every time the NCAA made changes that affected their operations and responsibilities.

NCAA regulation is complicated, fluid, and has a tendency to change quickly. It is up to college campuses to quickly adapt to those changes to ensure compliance, but also to have the campus informed of the new rules. When the NCAA made changes that affected operations, the SASP had the responsibility of exchanging information with those inside the unit and also acting as liaisons to campus departments. As was reiterated in the Operations Manual, "SASP staff plays a part in department education by attending coaches, staff, and team meetings where they provide updates to coaches, staff, and students regarding academic and university policies, new programs, eligibility issues, and other pertinent information" (96-97 Operations Manual, p. 23).

Participant #147 detailed this responsibility for communication as crucial not only for the unit, but also for his career.

> The situation arose where there was an investigation into one of our programs by the NCAA and I had been the primary correspondent between the Big 10, Big Football University, the athletics and the NCAA around eligibility, admissions, and was familiar with all of the players at that point. And when the Athletic Director went to the Big Ten and was talking about the investigation, when they arrived back to campus, the person who was appointed to conduct the investigation said, "#147, I don't know these folks, I don't know the system, and you have been dealing with them you lead this investigation!" And I said, yes, I will and I did (personal communication, 2014).

Nevertheless, the responsibility was there however to explain and actively engage others outside of the unit as to the importance of complying with NCAA oversight. One participant described the transition as such:

> It was probably the first time that we found a way to have coaches stand up and say, 'oh wait a minute – we need to make sure the APR doesn't fall below the number that's going to get us in trouble.' So, from that point of view, in just observing that, that was probably the first time that we were actively engaging coaches in the discussion and outcome. Because I think prior to that, most of the coaches were not into academic support units. 'You take care of that and I'll take care of the coaching' (Participant #115, personal communication, 2014).

Participant #147 stated that for NCAA compliance efforts in the unit, “it was sort of a three-tiered approach that I had to constantly be sort of aware of and also, serving as a communicator among the sports teams and the administration of the university around compliance issues” (personal communication, 2014).

The identity changes and compromises experienced by the staff members in the SASP was due to a number of factors including a duplication of services of academic advising that caused confusion for both staff and student athletes, job responsibilities that went beyond mere advising and broached aspects of counseling and teaching, and acting as communications liaisons for an external organization’s goals that were not always clear to the BFU academic community.

Construct #4: Importance of Unit Leadership When Navigating Pressures of the SASP

The positive impact of leadership within the SASP led to the discovery of three themes central to the unit’s long term development and success including engaging management to specifically outline expectations of SASP individuals, an adherence to the BFU athletic identity when navigating difficult situations, and encouragement for working with other departments on campus to engage the BFU community in athletic endeavors.

Finding #1: Advisors in their daily operational roles were affected by the decisions of leadership both inside and outside of the athletic academic unit.

While similar to the idea that the identity of the staff members was based upon nebulous ideas of redundant responsibilities with core academic units, the actual

responsibilities of the SASP staff as was expected from leadership both internally and externally was varied and influenced daily by NCAA rules. Discussed in the interviews and apparent in documents was that the leadership from coaches and other units within the university was crucial to SASP developing operations.

Participant #115 lamented that as support services continue to expand, those who traditionally had been in positions of oversight like the Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR) and compliance officers would be less responsible for some of the daily operations while providing leadership: “I think that as things grow, the departments get bigger, they specialize, they bring in people to sort of cover the road, some of the roads that the Faculty Athletic Representatives have, and it does become less” (Participant #115, personal communication, 2014). It was even discovered through the study’s research that coaches provided leadership to the SASP when making academic decisions for student athletes. For example, it was found in an operations manual that while all incoming first years were required to attend the study table program for additional tutoring, “the number of [nights at study table] required is determined by the SASP advisor and the head coach” (96-97 operations manual, p. 14).

It was only 2007 that an internal audit discovered that in the years prior, the “SASP does not have documented policies and procedures pertaining to staff training and development,” and that the “SASP does not maintain support documenting rules education and other training classes/courses completed by academic counselors” (audit report, 2007, p. 10-11). It was recommended, and reported as completed in the audit in the creation of a database of staff training and development, that the unit create a

systematic training annually where members are recorded training for “annual rules education.”

Within athletics itself, the leadership created an environment for SASP staff that was both stressful and provided guidance for roles. The SASP had a reporting structure to the director of athletics, (96-97 operations manual, p. 3), but also in a grander sense to the NCAA. In describing daily concerns, Participant #147 provided a comprehensive list of the regulations that affected his daily operations when he recalled that

> it was more so around rules and regulations, conduct, ethical conduct within athletics whether it was from recruitment, continuing eligibility, there were a number of final points that needed to be addressed on an ongoing basis to be sure that the university was in good stead following the university rules about eligibility academic progress etc., and admissions of course!

More recently, a PowerPoint slide from a director in the SASP created a brief list of tasks also responsible under the SASP umbrella for support staff including:

- Distribute scholarship book vouchers
- Distribute provost letter regarding extra-curricular activity
- Coordinate all campus housing for student-athletes
- Provide an annual student-athlete planner
- Sasp staff referrals for LD students
- Arranges all approved university accommodations
- Refer, coordinate, and finance all LD/ADHD testing and screening through the Department of Psychology (2007, PPT slide).

Finding #2: There is a strong commitment to defending and remaining loyal to the Big Football University athletic identity.

This study was prompted by the assumption that the NCAA mandate 16.3.1.1 would have had far reaching and traceable implications within BFU Student Athlete Support Program function. The actual NCAA legislation adopted, 16.3.1.1 Academic Counseling/Support Services, reads as follows:

> Member institutions shall make general academic counseling and tutoring services available to all student-athletes. Such counseling and tutoring services may be provided by the department of athletics or the institution's nonathletics student support services. In addition, an institution may finance other academic and support services than the institution, at its discretion, determines to be appropriate and necessary for the academic success of its student-athletes. (Adopted: 1/10/91 effective 8/1/91, Revised: 4/25/03 effective 8/1/02, 5/9/06). (NCAA.com).

The researcher's goal was to achieve triangulation to strengthen the validity of the results found, as well as reduce the chance for researcher bias. A surprising development was that the NCAA regulation that the researcher believed would have been the most responsible for the changes in the unit is not mentioned on any interviews or in documents. In fact, other NCAA legislation and factors were cited from the participants as profoundly more important and beneficial for student athlete success.

Favored for discussion by Participant #147 was Proposition 48. He believed that this NCAA mandate led to more influence over the SASP.

> So even though he knew there were some student athletes, especially in football and some other revenue generating sports who came in under prop 48, he [Head Football Coach] still wanted to make sure that they had done a quality job in recruiting these individuals, and even though they didn't necessarily have the academic components, that were comparable to those others who were being admitted to BFU, he still felt they had the capacity to succeed and in large part they did persist. Nonetheless, that was the legislation that afforded not only BFU but other institutions to do the same thing, and I think it began to help us realize the nature of the support that needed to be able to provide to those students if we wanted them to succeed at all (Participant #147, personal communication, 2014).

Participant #115 cited the APR as the most important piece of NCAA legislation as it related to SASP functioning.

> I think the designation of the APR [Academic Progress Report] was probably the most critical because prior to that, we were sort of looking at the academic progress on sort of a broad way. In fact, we were looking broader, we were looking at it over a four year period of time. The development of the APR gave us the opportunity to look at that progress in real time. And so, I can't think of anything else that wasn't more important in terms of academic progress than the

> development and the implementation of the APR (Participant #115, personal communication, 2014).

To others interviewed, most important was not NCAA legislation, but the advocacy role and proactive nature of the staff of the Academic Support Unit that discerned what was most advantageous to student athletes. Participant #172 believed that it was the individual nature of the support staff taking a vested interest in student athletes' success, while maintaining what some would refer to as an overly involved stance.

> I think for academic support, to be able to from my vantage point, academic support's ability to help advise counsel students involved in the course selections, during various parts of their schedules so if in season because they have to travel more, maybe taking scheduling coursework in a way that helps maximize their success that is really essential for them. Because the more stressed they were in the classroom the more stressed they were overall, and the more coaches would see that (Participant #172, personal communication, 2014).

Participant #108 provided an anecdote that illustrated the level of interaction that was needed by advisors and faculty members since NCAA legislation did not protect student athletes from the normal perils of education. The individual remembered that student athletes were not given adequate feedback from a natural resources professor regarding their academic standing in a course, and that when some students failed the midterm, her response was action.

> And I looked at the grades that came back from the test – jiminy – the Tom Bradys of the world were failing it! But why did this Johnny on the spot fail it? I went and talked to the professor and he said, 'oh yeah it's my TA. This is the first exam she ever made up and it was too hard. So I'll make it up on the final and I'll make it easier.' And I was like come on! (Participant #108, personal communication, 2014).

While that is certainly not the exemplary conduct of a faculty member expected in higher education, no amount of NCAA legislation will be able to overcome human foibles. Even the unit itself did not make mention of the NCAA mandate or any specific

legislation to be vital enough for its creation or the components' functioning at present. In its own created support manual, the SASP described the reasoning of the creation of the unit as such:

> The present structure of the Student Athlete Support Program was adopted in 1991. The policies and procedures outlined in this operations manual have and will continue to evolve and develop. Numerous influences in the 1990's have initiated changes in the operation of the program. The increases in the number of varsity sports and student athletes, expansion of NCAA legislation, and changes in the University requirements and curriculum are a few of the ongoing issues to which the program has responded (96-97 operations manual, np).

As was predicted in previously found research, the strength of belonging to a larger identity was the most important aspect to convey by the participants to the researcher, fulfilling the idea of loyalty and safety within silence.

Finding #3: There is a strong history of utilizing NCAA legislation to mold the SASP program, encouraging oversight from multiple departments on campus to accomplish both university goals of academic success and NCAA goals of ethical sports participation.

Contrary to the popular public perception that athletics departments operate in a space independent to the regulations, mission, and goals of a university, BFU's SASP had instituted an environment of transparency. There were several examples discovered of the changes implemented by SASP leadership to comply with NCAA and university expectations. As was articulated in 1996,

> With the arrival of a new director in 1994, and the increased interest in the Department's activities from the Regents, BFU Athletics has undergone a departmental reorganization. Of note in this reorganization is the created of a Mission and Vision statement for the Department. The Department of Athletics

> has operated now without either of these two statements since its founding. Those important documents are now used to help guide the daily decisions that affect the Department, as well as the decisions that impact the future success of BFU Athletics (name withheld, meeting notes, 1996b, p. 4).

This was reiterated by the participants interviewed. Participant #116 explained that due to this change, a sense of self-reflection was practiced by the unit.

> I can honestly say I don't think there was intent to not have balance – I think there was an unawareness of how unbalanced things got because each of the programs operated kind of more independently. And nobody looked across programs in the way of determining what kind of academic support there was. I just think the NCAA self-audit mandate made us take a different perspective on how academics were run (personal communication, 2014).

This collaborative effort was expanded as the responsibilities of the staff increased. For example, the ability to certify eligibility through GPA's and course progression "involves a collaborative effort by the Eligibility Coordinator, the Scholarships Coordinator, and the Compliance Coordinator, and the Office of Admissions, the Office of Financial Aid, and the Office of the Registrar" (96-97 Operations manual, p. 8). One of the stated operating principles of the SASP mission statement in the 1996-1997 operations manual is to "develop collaborative relations with University and external agencies and program which serve the student athlete" (96-97 Operations manual, p. 2). Also found was the instance that "SASP assists the coaching staff with the review of incoming freshperson credentials, provides consultation with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions on issues of BFU admissibility, and prospective NCAA initial eligibility. This involvement provides for early screening of potentially "at risk" academic students as they matriculate to the University" (meeting notes, 1996a, p. 3). Also, the SASP worked with Financial Aid personnel and Scholarship Coordinators to ensure that student athletes managing their student accounts as well as have appropriate

counseling if necessary (96-97 operations manual, p. 26). The unit's leadership was dedicated to improvements including other BFU groups for final oversight of their operations.

> The collaborative communication between SASP and the units which is required on scheduling advice, class attendance, faculty input and academic performance serves as an ongoing evaluation of SASP activities with the student athlete population. The annual academic certification of student athletes ultimately resides with the authorized deans and directors of the academic units, the office of the registrar, and the faculty athletics representative and their respective attestations regarding a student's satisfactory progress and academic good standing (meeting notes, 1996a, p. 2).

Once leadership in the unit had conveyed and finalized the importance of including other units on campus, this moved to affecting the daily operations of the staff members. Participant #102 detailed

> I met with every student athlete and we went over all of the requirements for their degree. I provided the information and the rules that they needed to know in order to continue their eligibility, or what their GPA or what their credit towards their program needed to be. I submitted NCAA and [NCAA Conference] petitions, I monitored all of the student athlete financial aid and scholarships they received, that was in conjunction with the financial aid. We worked to determine was comparable aid, what aid students could receive and what they couldn't that would count towards the NCAA equivalency requirements (personal communication, 2014).

Participant #102 referred this process as "double insurance" and "checks and balances" when describing the extensive monitoring of student athlete progress that took place in the unit (personal communication, 2014). Participant #147 reported that "the assistant deans of the faculty advisors we worked with were obviously full of support because looking at the records and credentials of the students being admitted, they knew the needs of those students too. So they were supportive of the effort" (personal communication, 2014). Participant #172 detailed that in an effort to provide programming to student athletes, responsibilities were given to interface with groups like

the Conflict Mediation Center, a sexual assault prevention group, and the Alcohol Awareness Group based in the Counseling Center, acting as a "liaison person" to secure funding for speakers and other programs (personal communication, 2014). As the SASP expanded, leadership within the unit developed programming that necessitated a collaborative environment on campus.

As leadership of the SASP proactively became involved in the decision making process, results indicated an increase in loyalty to the BFU identity, an increase in willingness to encourage collaboration with other units on campus, and increased communication of NCAA goals in support of SASP efforts.

Conclusion

Four constructs based upon previously conducted research were used as bracketing structures for the cultural and social themes in categorized evidence. Positive University responses to the SASP were necessary to provide legitimacy towards the campus, to avoid negative media and community attention, and in expanding the physical resources of the SASP. Identity changes of the SASP included role conflict over questioning a duplication of services, conflict over the responsibilities demanded by both NCAA and Big Football University professional requirements, and the challenges of being liaisons to the campus at large. Leadership in the SASP was crucial to staff to navigate the external and internal pressures acting upon the unit's operations, the implementation of a strong organizational identity, and in providing opportunities for staff to interact and collaborate with other departments on the Big Football University campus.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study, while answering the research question, was to provide a narrative thematic account of an athletic academic support unit in a higher education environment in order to determine the bureaucratic and cultural strategies that allowed successful enacting of NCAA policies resulting in student athlete success. This study was unusual in its execution in that the focus of data collection and analysis focused specifically on the experiences of the staff members involved and impacted by NCAA decision making at a NCAA designated D1 institution. The study created with a time line starting in 1991 with the passing of NCAA Tutoring Mandate legislation traced political, cultural, and administrative actions that corrected variance in the athletic academic support program to help student athletes successfully navigate the academic pressures of their collegiate experience, but also assisted the staff with the resulting increases in external and internal pressures as athletics prowess at BFU increased. The most salient findings to this end included the recognition of the importance of administrative leadership from all levels of support giving legitimacy to the efforts of the SASP, the need for individual staff members to bridge their interpretations of their roles to the campus at large, and the difficulties that leadership faced within the unit itself in creating an environment that was collaborative and inclusive for staff members while appeasing both campus and NCAA goals.

Development of Constructs and Themes

The theoretical coding that was used as the final stage of data analysis eventually led to housing the themes into the four constructs detailed in the findings, illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6

Theoretical Coding Within Evidentiary Constructs

Themes	Construct	Codes Used
Importance of Upper Administration Involvement	University Responses	FOCV, IPCM, MAUM
Reduction of negative attention	University Responses	FORC, MAUM, OUTP
Increases in physical resources	University Responses	PHYS, OPER
Dual identity responsibilities	Identity Changes	DUAL, OUTP, MLCM
Campus conflicts	Identity Changes	TUCH, CFJB, IPCM
NCAA communication responsibilities	Identity Changes	FORC, NCAA, OUTP
Perceived NCAA influence on job function and daily activities	Legislative Influence	NCAA
Job description vs daily operations	Leadership and Role Conflict	CFJB, MIIN
Strong athletic identity leading to lack of institution transparency	Leadership and Role Conflict	NCAA, INCV
Campus oversight of SASP	Leadership and Role Conflict	DUAL, NCAA

In the study it was found that there is a financial emphasis on athletics units that staff are faced with that is difficult for higher education professionals in other spheres to

comprehend. Even if their positions do not directly relate to financial contracts or purchasing, the success of the athletic program not only ensures the continued existence of student athletic academic support units in athletics programs, but also the legacy of the school. This leads to an incredible amount of pressure on individuals to have a functioning unit that can create demonstrable results for student athletes while navigating the external pressures from the NCAA. Organizational Identity Theory supported the constructs of University Responses and Leadership and Role Conflict. Within the constructs it was found that the institutional goals and leadership within the SASP both worked towards a shared understanding of the culture and providing a framework for the staff members to understand their roles in relation to the campus at large. Social Identity Theory supported the constructs of Identity Change and NCAA Influence. The study found that the participants were in constant negotiation with their own perceptions of their identity within the unit in relation to the unit's goals, as well as their own personal interpretations of their responsibilities.

The three constructs used as macro categories for major findings discovered included University Responses, Identity Changes, and Leadership and Role Conflict.

University Responses Construct and Findings:

One of the most pressing influences acting upon staff members in an athletic academic support unit is that of the goals of the University and the ability achieving the stated goals while remaining compliant with NCAA rules. The NCAA as an external organization has a level of oversight on higher education functioning and decision making that is unique to the collegiate athletics sphere. The rules created by the NCAA impact the administrative functioning and structures within an institution on a daily basis.

Universities were then tasked with collaborating with the NCAA in order to remain eligible in a conference, to have student athletes remain eligible to play, and have support staff in place to accommodate the demands of athletics programs. As the scrutiny and financial responsibilities increased in the SASP due to NCAA oversight, so too did the importance of a unified University Response when faced with implementing new legislation or responding to a crisis. It was found through data analyzed that the BFU's upper administration played a vital role in maintaining compliance with NCAA regulations as well as creating legitimacy for the SASP as their actions at times were in conflict with BFU macro decision making. The construct of University Responses was illustrated in the data with instances of multi-departmental meetings sanctioned by the University to achieve academic and athletics goals, both formally and informally. It was also evidenced by public affirmations of SASP's expertise and role in student athlete development as a benefit to BFU's campus. The codes for information leading to found themes in the University Responses construct included FOCV (formal conversations and administrative meetings articulating the goals and redesign of the support unit), IPCM (communications about expectations of the unit including all presentations of changes in a hierarchical setting), MAUM (macro expectations from BFU about expectations of success and designs of the unit), FORC (formal communications of a direct mandate, rule, or operating system), FORR (formal University responses to queries, issues, etc.), and OUTP (out of unit perceptions of efficacy and appropriateness of the unit's operations).

Identity Change Construct and Findings:

NCAA oversight is unique not only to institutions that have athletic programs, but also to the individual operations in the support staff units on a daily basis. Some staff positions were created specifically by the NCAA and its dedicated funding, or by necessity based on legislation passed for its member institutions. Staff members in athletics support units, as the administrative and financial responsibilities increased, then relied not only on upper administration for legitimacy and direction, but then had to develop allegiances both to the external organization and to the internal athletics department with often conflicting results. The perception of the SASP roles and corresponding individual responsibilities was often created based upon individual goals, who then had the difficult position of learning how to translate and communicate their personal responsibilities to the larger university athletic setting. The individual's sense of belonging to a larger institutional identity was then called into question, due to their role in the unit and the ability to become part of the larger campus community. When analyzing data there was found a constant evidentiary stream of staff members in the unit replicating advising responsibilities held by traditional academic advisors on BFU's campus in order to remain compliant with NCAA regulations, as well as being part of their own interpretation of their job duties. Advocating for student athletes became to staff a vital component of daily responsibilities while working with other campus partners, but this presented a myriad of challenges in regards to student academic performance, student athlete privacy concerns, and a constant engagement of staff to determine what level of responsibility for student athletes was appropriate to both the NCAA and BFU. The codes for information leading to found themes in the Identity

Changes construct included DUAL (dual job responsibilities with departments and others working within the SASP), OUTP (out of unit perceptions of efficacy and appropriateness of the unit's operations), MLCM (communications between all levels of staff and campus constituents), TUCH (identifying any role conflict and unit redesign), CFJB (identifying any role conflict that led to confusion), and IPCM (communications about expectations of the unit including all presentations of changes in a hierarchical setting).

Leadership and Role Conflict Construct and Findings:

While the macro upper administration influence was vital to the continued success of the SASP in terms of larger campus management and athletics programming, the consistent flexible and knowledgeable leadership within the support unit itself led to staff members feeling more effective in navigating the pressures of their positions. Data collection and subsequent analysis revealed findings that demonstrated leadership's influence impacted daily functioning as the relationship between University goals and NCAA goals for student athletes became strained and zealously maintained through an abundance of regulations. The construct of Leadership and Role Conflict appeared through numerous supported findings such as that staff members felt like a necessity to the campus due to the need to communicate changes from the NCAA that impacted internal and external machinations, and felt that it was necessary to work with coaches for student athlete development with encouragement from SASP leadership. It was also found that leadership created an athletics culture that led to an extreme sense of loyalty to the BFU experience and encouraged risk adverse individuals to work together, emphasizing BFU loyalty and goals, even when enacted or disseminating NCAA

regulations. The codes for information leading to found themes in the Leadership and Role Conflict construct included INCV (informal communications about the changes in the unit), CFJB (identifying any role conflict that led to confusion), MIIN (individually assigned expectations of success and design of unit), and DUAL (dual job responsibilities with departments and others working within the SASP).

Discussion of Theoretical Implications

The data collected has the ability to contribute data furthering research in the fields of Social Identity Theory (SIT), Organizational Identity Theory (OIT), and constructivist epistemology in higher education research.

Organizational Identity Theory (OIT) posits that the sense of belonging to an organization provides safety, affiliation, and self-actualization in professional environments (He & Brown, 2013), and creates a variety of positively reaffirming methods that ensure individuals are behaving in ways that are increasingly compliant with larger institutional goals (Mills, 2005). Through analyzed data, it was noted that no participant spoke of NCAA legislation and the University as blockades that could not be handled effectively for goal achievement, and consistently spoke as though representing the University itself when describing successes, as evidenced by the finding that there was a very strong commitment to the BFU identity overriding NCAA influence. As similarly illustrated in the results of Baxter and Lambert's landmark 1990 study, this study demonstrated the larger institutional machinations at BFU were enforced through the combination of individual experiences reinforcing the administrative actions taken and collectively promulgated by those associated with the support unit. Comeaux and Harrison (2011) wrote of numerous developmental theories being used to support student

athletes with unsurprisingly variable results, pressing for more calibration from staff members, essentially creating the need for a more cohesive identity. At BFU, in both findings of the strength of identity as related to individual belonging as well as the importance of upper administration validation in daily operations (Construct 4, Finding 2, and Construct 1, Finding 1) this calibration was seen when staff members were encouraged to work with other groups on campus to fulfill institutional goals, to branch out nationally in support staff conferences and networking events, and develop programs and information sessions with coaches and other departments. In OIT literature, Mintzberg (1979) described the phenomenon of a unit being pigeon holed as functionally autonomous within an organization, a characteristic attributed to athletics departments. Within BFU, evidence was found that demonstrated that the isolation expected and experienced by other programs was not evident, and that any isolation experienced was more physical and resource-based than job responsibility based. The study is in agreement with Ridpath's 2010 study that academic support units will continue to be a necessary services for student athletes, and staff will be tasked with making strategic decisions for academic success taking into account their stressors and responsibilities to their sport.

In Social Identity Theory (SIT), Ashforth and Mael's (1989) conflict resolution process, as hypothesized, was a process that staff members engaged in at the SASP. In SIT, the social and cultural identity of the SASP staff members was molded by the environment and its corresponding changes, and that the BFU identity and NCAA legislative pressures affected job responsibilities. As discussed in Chapter Four Construct Two of found identity changes within the SASP, SIT was apparent as the duplication of

services and ensuing conflicts were resolved, as an abundance of outside responsibilities from the normal job description were absorbed into daily functioning, and as the role of becoming a spokesperson to convey information to the campus regarding NCAA policy became standard. In Step One, the most evident characteristic for participants was being a higher education professional, an athletics employee, or similar community members. In Step Two, individuals worked to begin to accept more fully the cultural implications of working in a D1 high pressure environment and adjusted by seeking out recommendations for staff roles, responsibilities, and other examples of an athletic community member identity. In Step Three, conflicts that were found with the large work load or the lack of transparency on campus were remediated with additional staff support help, committee engagement on campus, and speaking with other colleagues associated with the unit for problem solving. In the final step, all of the participants spoke to their coping strategies used to successfully navigate BFU expectations and NCAA legislation, and no one participating left BFU under divisive circumstances, to leave a difficult supervisor, or with negative feelings towards the university. At the end of the resolution process, the identity changes faced by individuals were molded to group expectations, and group common features relayed from hierarchical positions intertwined individual and organizational actors. This was also demonstrated in data that the support of higher administration at BFU lent success and direction to the SASP while enacting NCAA legislation.

Findings regarding the participants' lack of regarding the NCAA as the overriding identity or as an external force for oversight also is supported by previously conducted research focusing on theoretical model development for organizational identity

management as similar organizations will eventually begin to mimic one another to remain viable. Conducted by Cunningham and Ashley (2001), the previous study analyzed NCAA athletics directors' perceptions of the importance of managerial duties. Using surveys from a variety of Division One, Two, and Three athletic directors, the main finding of the study concluded that

> consequently, the environment of intercollegiate athletics in the United States does not appear to be as deterministic as once thought. In other words, the findings demonstrate that forces once thought to highly influence the structure and processes of athletic departments (i.e., competition for available resources, pressures from outside sources such as alumni or the NCAA, and/or the professionalisation of top managers) do not affect these departments as much as the choices made by key personnel within the organization (Cunningham & Ashley, 2001, p. 58).

The results of the study are dramatically similar to those found in this study in the second construct regarding the NCAA not having a perceived demonstrable effect on individual decision making or job efficacy. This supports the theoretical implications of Organizational Identity Theory tenets in that the external influences on identity change might not be as strong as once thought, leading to a potential gap in the theoretical base. If the differences between athletics support units are not as demonstrable or evident as believed, this leads to the potential collaboration and greater chances for transmission of successful coping strategies for athletic academic support units across institutions. This could also lead to a potential growth in the theoretical applications in future research as morphing into those that are more specific to the dynamism between higher education institutions and the NCAA.

Recommendations for Research and Practice

The focus of the study on one institution's administrative choices was a pragmatic choice by the researcher to be able to understand how other schools can adjust their own support services if they are faced with similar scenarios.

In case study methodology, the data found are not intended for exact replication (Merriam, 2009) but more generalizable results. As discussed in the previous section, the theoretical implications and results are more powerful when used to discover paths in other heavily funded, high pressure athletics programs. This study was an effective demonstration of the flexibility afforded by case study research of when the research plan adjusts, and how document retrieval and analysis can provide a more supportive bridge for future athletics research when faced with administrative changes.

This study demonstrated both the difficulties and rewards of choosing athletics-based topics in supporting a lesser used methodology effectively, contributions to the subject matter, and the difficulty in securing active participants in athletics research. For example, during this study's data collection, individuals contacted were able to view the interview protocol prior to speaking with the researcher, and were shown proof of the IRB approval ensuring sound research and confidentiality measures. One individual informed the researcher that a non-disclosure agreement had been signed upon her leaving BFU, so she was unable to speak with the researcher. No other individual, including those of higher respective responsibilities and those who were elected to speak, ever made mention of a restriction to engage in scholarly work due to such an agreement. No researcher ever assumes that there will be entirely positive reactions and enthusiasm when cultivating subjects for a study. But the extreme lack of transparency regarding

speaking of daily operations from a past position in athletics, was, as one individual who declined to participate fully, aptly described it “the nature of the beast” (personal communication, Dec. 5, 2014).

This adherence to loyalty to the athletic department from those in all roles, levels of athletics, and past and current employees, is by far the most frustrating and illuminating pieces of data to come from the study. Research in the athletics sphere and more importantly – assessment of athletics programs – will always suffer and inspire negative questions of what is prompting the avoidance of discussion. The meaning and importance that the members gave themselves for their work provides a strong organizational identity for those internally involved only. OIT posits that those within will fulfill the needs of safety and acceptance by remaining adherent to the organization. Evidently those bonds are so strong it applies even to those who left BFU many years prior.

There are some recommendations for future research in athletics that should be encouraged. For example, this study was endangered by a fear of participants of angering and upsetting their athletics identity, which was ironic since the data found presented the unit in a favorable light. Future researchers with an OIT focus will need to be cognizant of the ways to encroach carefully for data extraction without upsetting the participants’ identity. As the closed community of athletics can frustrate any researcher and create limited data sets, those conducting studies should not ignore the staff experience, although it might be more difficult to obtain. It is important to remember that support staff members in an athletics unit are faced with an unusual level of oversight that administrators used to the shared governance model favored in higher education

environments would not recognize. As the support staff members are responsible for communicating and enacting NCAA regulations without being offered a chance for interjection, interpretation, or refusal, their more similarly corporate model of operating will continue to promote division to their traditional higher education counterparts.

The subject matter contributions from this study can also provide a framework of recommendations. Less research has been paid to the relationship of athletic academic support staff members and institutional operations as compared to the more popular research of focusing only on student athletes experiences, with staff members in a peripheral role and focus. For example, Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, and Jensen (2007) found the negative relationship between student athletes and faculty when the stigma of "dumb jock" phenomenon is experienced. This was supplanted by the experiences of staff and faculty as a main source of evidence, but focused solely on the student athlete experience as one needing cohesive program assessment and change. This conclusion was also supported by the earlier work of Harrison, Comeaux and Plecha (2006). This study contributes to the opposite perspective of using staff experiences to better the student athlete experience. For example in the finding that Construct 1 Finding 2, undue negative attention was a motivator for higher level administration to remain involved in continuing NCAA legislation enforcement and compliance, paying attention to athletics issues could be a repetitive pressure that will inspire future athletic directors to involve support staff members in decision making and enforcement of NCAA legislation.

Based upon the results of this study, it is more important to showcase data, even limited, that focused on staff movements and motivations to contribute to OIT development as it specifically pertains to athletics units, as a new avenue for higher

education research. If this study could be completed again with additional funding and time, it would benefit from a more in depth access from the years of 2006-2014. The study presented more data from 1991 to 2004. This could be attributed to two main factors – the lack of readily accessible public information, and the openness of leadership affecting who felt comfortable enough to speak with the researcher. The data is somewhat limiting in that it is not exhaustive, but will undoubtedly contribute to the larger issues in scope when blended with other studies' findings.

And lastly this study highlights the need for more athletics research to improve practice within the field of support services for student athletes, and professional development for the associated staff members. This study points to recommendations that other athletic academic support units can bring to their operations if facing challenges, such as the duplication of services found in finding Construct 3, Finding 1. The practice of transplanting the findings as suggestions to other academic support units as they themselves expand will gain importance, and as assessment becomes more important, transparency will only increase. The research question looked specifically to practice impacted by the NCAA, and creation of the bureaucratic structures that supported it. Policy creation, expansion issues, and administrative development were all affected, and are undoubtedly affected at other institutions as well.

Those in charge of increasing graduation rates and educational attainment will be seeking knowledge of successful student athletic academic support programs. As Comeaux (2013) described, innovation is desperately needed. As evidenced in Construct 3 Finding 3, transparency and encouragement to work with other departments within the university to achieve NCAA goals was an important step for staff members to take to

enact legislation successfully. Found in Construct 1 Finding 3, the physical resources dedicated to the unit positively benefitted the interactions and productivity of the staff members in the unit. While this may not be a feasible option for all support units, staff members could be responsible for creating innovative methods for cost cutting, grants appropriation, and physical space reallocation for their own programs.

In practice, it is important that leadership conveys to the staff in support units that NCAA legislation is impactful on a daily basis to ensure compliance. Resources need to be increased, but this does not necessarily mean creating a new athletic academic building. This could take the form of something as simple as dedicating study space to the program, or dedicating more staff members from outside units for oversight to certain aspects of NCAA compliance and programming.

The significance of this study is its ability to provide primary data to other athletics administrators facing challenges to their staff support and comfort in their own roles. The importance of the structure of the unit was demonstrated throughout the time frame of the study's perspective. Dudley, Johnson, and Johnson (1997) were first to seek if programming was an effective tool in their landmark study. This study's evidence shows that the programming has been a positive benefit to students, demonstrated by NCAA dedication to funding to schools, but the hyper focus of staff management is critical since athletics programs are not disappearing or waning in influence and financial rigor. This study looked specifically at one example of a higher education institution that enacted the regulations of the NCAA to comply with not only the new legislation regarding academic support, but to actively create a new administrative structure in response. Student athletes, especially minority students, when lacking proper support,

tend to perform at lower standards (Melendez, 2008; Potuto and O'Hanlon, 2007). Found in Construct 3 Finding 1, effective daily roles were supplemented by leadership inside and outside of the unit in order to ensure student athlete achievement through staff cohesiveness.

The study itself would have benefitted from additional information being added to the archives, although that decision is ultimately up to the universities and legal precedents for inclusion of documents, especially those regarding salary information and sensitive campus issues. It is recommended that a data sharing program needs to be created and curated by the NCAA to share documents, reviews, self-study items, not just infraction documents as inspiration for other schools. Or more dissertations like this one need to be conducted to strengthen the field's data.

The strong commitment to the Big Football University culture and identity hindered transparency and participation. As pressure intensifies on schools to prove that their athletics programs are free of corruption and truly academically focused, it will be a natural tendency to control the flow of information out of the institution that could potentially negatively affect the perception of the nature of collegiate athletics. Researchers or those pondering pursuing an investigation of student athlete centric topics should feel heartened by the plethora of available data in that arena, but also not be stymied by the lack of research focusing on staff, because it is such a closed group, as either focus can provide evidence to understand the climate more fully in the future.

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Appendix A: Study Information Form

An Exploration of the Administrative Impact of NCAA Regulation:
A Case Study of the Changes in the
Big Football University Athletic Academic Support Unit from 1991-2014
{IRB # }
Principal Investigator: Rick Jakeman, Ed.D.,

You are invited to participate in a research study under the direction of Dr. Rick Jakeman of the Department of Educational Leadership in the Graduate School of Education and Human Development at George Washington University (GWU). Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary.

The purpose of this study is to examine the academic support unit at the Big Football University, specifically looking at what happened between the years of 1991 to 1995 when tutoring was mandated for Division One athletes.

If you choose to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in one interview lasting 60 minutes regarding your participation in BIG FOOTBALL UNIVERSITY's academic support services for student athletes in the early 1990's. Then you will be asked to verify the transcript of the interview, provided by the researcher, for accuracy. This is an optional step that can be completed by mail or email communication, and will take approximately thirty minutes to one hour. The total amount of time you will spend in connection with this study is approximately 90 minutes.

Possible risks or discomforts you could experience during this study include: minimal discomfort revealing details of job performance and anecdotal evidence of your professional experiences. You may refuse to answer any of the questions and you may stop your participation in this study at any time.

You will not benefit directly from your participation in the study. The benefit to science and humankind that might result from this study is the contribution to knowledge about organizational structures that change with external organizational directives; how a university responds to an external organization calling for a restructuring of internal processes; and how a rule can change the culture of the students and the staff involved.

Every effort will be made to keep your information confidential, however, this can not be guaranteed. The interviews will be transcribed by the researcher, not a third party. The researcher will be the only person collecting and analyzing the raw data for this study. Coding and keys will be used for privacy to hide specific identities. An Excel workbook with contact information will be kept on a personal computer in a locked office. The coding key will be destroyed as soon as the data is collected. Participants in the study will be identified with letters, and general references to staff level will be included in the analysis. Identifying measures will be removed immediately after the interview is conducted.

Your records for the study may be reviewed by departments of the University responsible for overseeing research safety and compliance. If results of this research study are reported in journals or at scientific meetings, the people who participated in this study will not be named or identified.

The Office of Human Research of George Washington University, at telephone number (202) 994-2715, can provide further information about your rights as a research participant. Further information regarding this study may be obtained by contacting Laura Butterworth, Higher Education Administration doctoral student conducting data collection.

To ensure anonymity your signature is not required, unless you prefer to sign it. Your willingness to participate in this research study is implied if you proceed.

*Please keep a copy of this document in case you want to read it again.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

1. What is your age and educational background?
    a. What positions have you had at the Big Football University? Please describe your basic functions.
    b. What positions have you had in athletics in either a collegiate or professional setting? Please describe your basic functions.
2. When did you work in the Academic Support Unit and what was your title?
3. What were the major responsibilities in that role?
    a. If I were to be in your role for a day, please describe what the experience would be like.
4. Please describe the working environment.
    a. What was your knowledge of the Big Football University athletic culture before you began your position? After?
5. What was your knowledge of the 1991 NCAA mandate ensuring that all Division One student athletes be given academic tutoring?
    a. Please describe when you were first knowledgeable of the approved legislation.
6. Were there any changes in the support unit based on the NCAA mandate? If so, what did they entail? Additional Resources, staffing, funding, etc…
7. What, if any, changes did you encounter administratively? Please describe them.
    a. How did your role change? Was it a positive or negative change? Why?
    b. How did the office machinations change?

c. What were the measures taken to inform the student athlete community of the changes? How were these changes received by the student athletes?

d. What activities or facilities were affected?

8. What were your reactions and impressions, if any, to the changes that occurred in the unit? What were the reactions of the student athletes as well as your colleagues to the changes?

9. What, if any, reactions did the larger campus community have? Were there any negative reactions or perceptions of preferred treatment for student athletes from the general student body?

10. What, if any challenges arose? Improvements?

11. Please add an example of how the environment differed after the NCAA mandate.

12. Is there anything you would like to speak with me about today that we haven't covered?

Appendix C

Specific Document Categories for Analysis

Type of Document	Number of Items Used in Analysis
Survey of Student Athletes	1
Meeting notes	11
Self study draft item with notes	3
Letters to either outside organizations or outside of the athletic unit	3
Reports from other BFU internal groups	6
Operations Manuals	2
Student Athlete handbooks	4