A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF REVENUE PRODUCING SPORT STUDENT-ATHLETES’ PERCEPTIONS OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION (NCAA)

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

An examination of the NCAA’s history reveals that the association was formed primarily to protect the health, safety, and welfare of student-athletes. However, aside from the initial reforms to the game of football, many critics of the Association contend that the NCAA has focused more on commercial gains than the needs of their student-athletes (Byers, 1995; DeVenzio, 1986; Knight Foundation Commission, 2001; Sperber, 1990). Both Cedric Dempsey and Myles Brand have expressed the need for the NCAA to become more aware of the conditions student-athletes face both on and off the field. Therefore, this study utilized face-to-face individual interviewing method, to investigate varsity student-athletes in revenue producing sports (a) general perceptions of the NCAA and (b) whether these perceptions match the NCAA’s stated purposes and goals. Taken as a whole, the study sought to render qualitative data to better understand what factors played a role in student-athletes’ perceptions, what experiences have had the greatest influence on these perceptions, and what are the greatest concerns of student-athletes in revenue producing sports.

In this study, the researcher discusses how the identified themes help answer the research questions and relate to or expand upon the literature. The researcher also
discusses the emergence of a new theory that is grounded in the data. Lastly, the author offers several recommendations based on the study’s findings and discusses future research on this topic.
Dedicated to my family and
the memory of my grandparents;
Joanne Pelosi, Louis Pelosi,
and Martin J. Brett Sr.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The connection between sport and society can be traced back to ancient times. History has shown that the Greeks, Romans, and Native Americans all participated in sport for one reason or another. As colleges and universities began to take shape in America, students were encouraged to participate in athletic competitions. At the time, educators believed that athletic extracurricular activities were an important part in the holistic development of the student (Duderstadt, 2000). College students never needed to be forced into athletic competitions. In fact, many students formed their own extracurricular sport teams as a way to break free from the rigid university structure. It did not take students long to seek out their sport playing counterparts at neighboring institutions and throughout much of the 19th century athletics were organized, managed, and operated by the students themselves (Smith, 1988). Intercollegiate athletic competitions quickly grew in popularity among students, alumni, and community members.

As the desire to win began to supersede the desire for competition, the issues of eligibility and violence began to concern college and university officials (Davenport, 1985). The landscape of intercollegiate sport began to change in the late 1890s when the Intercollegiate Conference of Faculty Representatives was formed. This organization
was most concerned with athlete eligibility and the number of competitions (Hardy & Berryman, 1982). By the time President Roosevelt called for the reform of college football on October 9th, 1905, most college teams were directed by university officials (Hawes, 1999).

On March 31st, 1906, the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) was officially formed when the Association’s constitution and bylaws were written and ratified. Four years later, the 67 member IAAUS changed their name to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in order to better reflect their national representation (Hawes, 1999). Over time the association has grown from a loosely organized group of institutions with a solitary goal, to a complex association of 1025 active member institutions, 360,000 student-athletes spread across three divisions (NCAA, 2004a), and annual revenues of just more than 452,000,000 dollars (NCAA, 2004b).

Over the past almost 100 years, the NCAA has faced considerable criticism. Among the critics are economists, sociologists, former university presidents, former student-athletes, a former NCAA executive director, and many other concerned members of the higher education community (Byers, 1995; DeVenzio, 1986; Duderstadt, 2000; Fleisher et al., 1992; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998; Sperber, 1990). After reviewing the thoughts and opinions of many of these critics, it appears that the voice of one major group, the student-athlete, is missing. Therefore, this study sought to engage a group of current student-athletes in a discussion about their experiences as a student-athlete within the NCAA. Specifically, this study utilized face-to-face individual interviews to
investigate varsity student-athletes’ (a) general perceptions of the NCAA and (b) an understanding of whether or not these perceptions match the NCAA’s stated purposes and goals. Taken as a whole, the study sought to render qualitative data to better understand what factors play a role in student-athletes’ perceptions of the NCAA and what experiences had the greatest influence on those perceptions. Therefore, it is the intention of this chapter to provide an introduction to the issues related to “collegiate athletics” and “student-athletes.”

Statement of the Problem

After years of students dying from injuries related to the game of football, the NCAA was founded in 1906 with the charge of reducing violence in football and standardizing the rules that governed the game. Although football was largely responsible for the formation of the Association the founding members did not plan to only focus on football, but on all collegiate sport (Hawes, 1999). The original bylaws of the NCAA state the organizations main objective to be the regulation and supervision of intercollegiate sport within the United States. In the process of regulating and supervising intercollegiate sport, the organization hopes to assist all member institutions in maintaining fairness and equality in the classic tradition of higher education (Hardy & Berryman, 1982).

Almost 100 years later, Article 1.3.1 of the 2004-05 NCAA Division I Manual explains the basic purpose of the Association to include integrating competitive athletic programs as an essential part of the educational system “...and the athlete as an integral part of the student body and, by so doing, retain a clear line of demarcation between
intercollegiate athletics and professional sports” (p. 1). Despite the 500 plus pages that follow this statement, now, more than ever, the line between professional and intercollegiate sport is blurred by athletic department budgets in excess of $80 million; new or refurbished stadiums and arenas complete with luxury suites and club seats; player uniforms adorned with corporate logos; and an 11 year $6.2 billion broadcast contract (Clarke & Seltzer, 2003; Horrow, 2002; Schneider, 2000; Stetson, 2004). In addition, during research projects conducted between 1999 and 2002 by firms hired by the NCAA, respondents in focus groups and on-line surveys considered the NCAA “…big business intent on making money for the NCAA…” (Dempsey, 2002, p.24). Furthermore, the respondents indicated that making money should be a lower priority for the NCAA, but felt that generating revenue was what the Association focused on the most (Dempsey, 2002). The findings of these research projects also mention several times that student-athletes or issues related to their welfare should be the top priority of the NCAA, but are not. Dempsey (2002) himself discusses the “trust gap” that has developed on campuses across the country between student-athletes their coaches and administrators. He explains:

They [student-athletes] talk about the intrusion of athletics on their time, especially personal time….about their inability to integrate into the rest of the student body because of demands and the isolation imposed upon them by coaches….the socialization and “culturalization” failure they feel because their world is rarely allowed to expand beyond the width of the field or court…the reality of expectations that turn them into athlete-students far more often than student-athletes (p. 8).

During an interview conducted in January of 2004, when asked about his position on
intercollegiate athletics, current NCAA President Myles Brand stated: “Student-athletes are first. The NCAA has to be focused on student-athletes, focused on the conditions under which they play, but also on education” (Suggs, 2004).

Student-athletes had no official voice within the governance structure of the NCAA until 1989 when the convention voted to approve the formation of Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC). The student-athletes on this committee work within their institution and at the national level to provide a voice for all student-athletes on NCAA activities and legislation that impact their welfare. While SAAC members at all three division levels have the opportunity to express their thoughts and concerns to the members of the NCAA Management Councils, only Division II and Division III student-athletes are able to speak about legislative issues on the convention floor. Furthermore, only Division III has granted voting powers to the two student-athlete representatives on their Management Council (NCAA Student-Athlete Advisory Committees, n.d.).

Although this is a positive step for student-athletes, more work needs to be done. For example, what makes America great is our ability to freely express our ideas and the ability to bring about change through the electoral process. Currently student-athletes have a forum through which they can express themselves but must rely on others to bring about change. It is hard to imagine a situation more frustrating. However, before judging the NCAA, a deeper understanding of student-athletes’ perceptions of the Association is needed.
Rationale and Justification

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is directly comprised of many different groups (i.e., institutions of higher education, athletic conferences, coaches, and student-athletes). Aside from these primary groups, many ancillary groups (i.e., media, spectators, and sponsors) influence the NCAA. Today, more than 361,000 student-athletes, of which 42% are female, represent more than 1020 schools in NCAA competition each year (Bray, 2004; NCAA, 2004a). One could argue that with the exception of the student-athlete, none of the other groups are necessary for the association to exist. In fact, if students had not been so successful at organizing sport in the late 19th Century, sport would not have become so important to college and universities. When the NCAA was formed in 1906, the founding members were intent on reforming football for the welfare of the student-athletes. However, student-athletes had no official voice within the governance structure of the NCAA until 1989 when the convention voted to approve the formation of SAAC. Therefore, in order to better understand student-athletes general perceptions of the NCAA, and whether these perceptions match the NCAA’s purposes and goals current varsity student-athletes were identified as the primary data source for the proposed study.

In his 2005 State of the Association Address, NCAA President Myles Brand talked about debunking the myth that college athletics were about money, not education (NCAA, 2005). However, as recently as 2002, research conducted on behalf of the NCAA indicated that internal and external constituents (none of which were identified as student-athletes) of the Association did not feel that there was a strong link between
education and the NCAA’s image. Instead, they reported that big business and money were directly linked to the Association’s image (Dempsey, 2002). This further demonstrates the need to examine student-athletes perceptions of the NCAA.

This study focused specifically on the perceptions of varsity student-athletes competing in the “major” sports of basketball and football. According to Fulks (2002), the only two sports that consistently generate revenue for their college or university are men’s basketball and football. This said women’s basketball has steadily grown in popularity and wealth.

For example, in 2002-2003, attendance figures for Division I women’s basketball topped 7 million for the first time. Also, in 2002-2003, the members of the Big 12 Conference drew 970,764 spectators, while the Big Ten and Southeastern Conference were setting attendance records with 716,019 and 670,023 spectators respectively (Campbell, n.d.). In 2003-04, total attendance exceeded 7 million for the second straight year and second time in the history of the sport (Campbell, 2004).

In 2002, Fulks reported that revenues for women’s basketball continue to increase. However, expenses continue to outpace revenues. The largest reported revenue of $4,392,000 was up substantially from the previous reports largest reported revenue of $2,846,000. Also, average revenues increased from $280,000 in 1999 to $360,000 in 2001.

Although the number of women’s basketball programs that generate revenue and the amount generated do not compare to men’s basketball and football, the atmosphere
within which these athletes compete most closely resembles men’s basketball and football. Although the perceptions of all student-athletes are important, the issues surrounding these teams generate the most media attention and scrutiny.

**Purpose of the Study**

An examination of the NCAA’s history reveals that the association was formed primarily to protect the health, safety, and welfare of student-athletes. However, aside from the initial reforms to the game of football, many critics of the Association contend that the NCAA has focused more on commercial gains than the needs of their student-athletes (Byers, 1995; DeVenzio, 1986; Knight Foundation Commission, 2001; Sperber, 1990). Both Cedric Dempsey and Myles Brand have expressed the need for the NCAA to become more aware of the conditions student-athletes face both on and off the field. Therefore, the proposed study utilized face-to-face individual interviewing method, to investigate varsity student-athletes in revenue producing sports (a) general perceptions of the NCAA and (b) whether these perceptions match the NCAA’s stated purposes and goals. Taken as a whole, the study sought to render qualitative data to better understand what factors played a role in student-athletes’ perceptions, what experiences have had the greatest influence on these perceptions, and what are the greatest concerns of student-athletes in revenue producing sports.

**Research Questions**

1. What are student-athletes’ general perceptions of the NCAA?
2. Do student-athletes’ perceptions of the NCAA match the organization’s stated purposes and goals?
Significance of Study

This proposed research project has implications for a number of constituents, such as athletic administrators, athletic directors, coaches, the NCAA, student-athletes, and university presidents. More specifically, this study has the ability to provide a clear and complete understanding of student-athletes concerns about the NCAA and their role in the organization. In addition, it has the ability provide in-depth insight about the responsibilities, roles, and functions of the NCAA that are most important or cause the most concern for student-athletes. To expand their understanding of student-athletes in revenue producing sports perceptions, attitudes, and experiences at today’s colleges and universities, athletic administrators and NCAA policy makers need current and timely information that integrates the findings from related studies and evaluates the meaning of those findings while simultaneously collecting and analyzing data. This research sought to address these issues. Furthermore, the findings can be used to assist athletic department personnel, NCAA policy makers, and other educational professionals (e.g., administrators) in effectively responding to student athletes’ perceptions, experiences, and concerns.

Limitations

The design of this research renders several limitations and shortcomings (Glesne, 1998). First, although member checking was utilized to allow the participants the opportunity to confirm or adjust their responses, the design of this study leaves the door open for these factors to influence the data. Next, all of the participants in this study did so voluntarily. Therefore, it is possible that some opinions or perspectives of those that
did not participate in the study differ from those that did voluntarily participate. Finally, because the subject matter deals with the NCAA some student-athletes may feel less comfortable talking about certain issues and may give responses that are not completely forthright.

**Delimitations**

There are also several delimitations to this study that relate to the generalizability of the findings. In this study, all of the student-athletes interviewed came from the same NCAA Division I university. The NCAA is comprised of over 1020 schools with over 300 alone in Division I. Therefore, it is not feasible to say that one would receive the same responses at all other Division I universities. The researcher understands that each school is unique, that the students-athletes participate in different competitive environments and have different expectations for their programs. Also, the scope of this study was limited even further to only those varsity student-athletes competing on revenue producing teams. Therefore, the researcher accepts that the findings of this study may only be generalizable to the sample, but encourages others to read the thick description provided and make that determination for themselves.

**Definition of Terms**

The following is an explanation of how specific terms were interpreted and utilized throughout this study. They are provided to the reader so that he/she will understand the context in which these terms were applied.

*Division I-A.* The NCAA has divided its members into three major divisions for the purpose of competition and the awarding of championships. Division I institutions
are required to offer a minimum of 14 sports (i.e., 7 for men and 7 for women or 6 for men and 8 for women) of which 2 must be team sports for each gender. Also, Division I institutions must meet scheduling criteria and meet minimum financial aid awards that have been established by the NCAA. For example, all Division I schools must play 100 percent of their minimum required contests against other Division I institutions. However, men’s and women’s basketball must play all but two of their games against Division I schools. More specifically, Division I is divided into I-A, I-AA, and I-AAA. Institutions competing at the I-A level have football as one of their 14 minimum sports and meet specific scheduling, attendance, and/or facility requirements in that sport. Division I-A institutions must play 60 percent of their regular season games against other I-A schools. Also, football needs to average 17,000 fans per home contest or 20,000 fans for all games during the previous four years. Another possibility is for an institution to average 17,000 spectators per game in a stadium with permanent seating for at least 30,000 people. Although I-AA institutions offer football, they do not face minimum attendance requirements in that sport. However, they are required to play 50 percent of their regular season football games against I-A or I-AA opponents. Division I institutions that do not compete in football are classified as I-AAA. All of the student-athletes interviewed for this study compete for a Division I-A institution.

Revenue Sport. According to the most recent NCAA financial report, the only two sports that consistently generate revenue for their college or university are men’s basketball and football. Women’s basketball has steadily grown in popularity and
wealth. Although it is not a consistent money maker within the NCAA, its atmosphere most closely resembles those surrounding men’s basketball and football.

*Student-Athlete.* This term refers to those students that participate in intercollegiate athletics for a sanctioned college or university. These students are often solicited by coaches or other athletic department officials with an interest in their participation on their athletic team. Also, this term includes those students that became members of a college or university team after arriving on-campus and completing a successful try-out. These students compete as amateurs in their given sport and meet all such standards in accordance with NCAA by-laws.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

On March 31st, 1906 the IAAUS was officially formed when the Association’s constitution and bylaws were written and ratified. Four years later, the 67 member IAAUS changed their name to the NCAA in order to better reflect their national representation (Hawes, 1999). Over time the association has grown from a loosely organized group of institutions with a solitary goal, to a complex association of 1025 active member institutions, 360,000 student-athletes spread across three divisions (NCAA, 2004a), and annual revenues of just more than $452 million (NCAA, 2004b). In this chapter, the author begins with a review of the NCAA’s history including its original purpose and mission. This is followed by a discussion of the association’s growth, current state, and indication of how collegiate sport has become big business. Next, the author reviews critiques of the NCAA and discuss past and present reform attempts/measures. Lastly, the author discusses the grounded theory.

History of the NCAA

*Intercollegiate Athletics before the NCAA*

The connection between sport and society can be traced back to ancient times. History has shown that the Greeks, Romans, and Native Americans all participated in sport for one reason or another. As colleges and universities began to take shape in
America, students were encouraged to participate in athletic competitions. At the time, educators believed that athletic extracurricular activities were an important part in the holistic development of the student (Duderstadt, 2000). However, in *The Character of American Higher Education and Intercollegiate Sport*, Chu (1989) argued that although American institutions of higher education resembled their European forefathers in many respects, they lacked the prestige, financial support, and student enrollment. Therefore, the early American Universities were largely dependent upon the revenues generated by a fluctuating student enrollment. The bottom line was that students enjoyed participating in athletics on-campus and schools were not in a position to do anything that may harm their ability to attract students (Chu, 1989). Soon athletic competitions would begin to draw large numbers of spectators from the campus and the surrounding community. Sport competitions quickly became more than just competitions. They were a way to bring the ever growing campus community together. Each victory brought honor, prestige, and publicity to colleges and universities that was unmatched. Add to that mixture the fact that people loved to watch (Smith, 1988) and you have a recipe for success or disaster? Over a century later the debate still rages on and even then it might depend on who you ask.

College students never needed to be forced into athletic competitions. In fact, many students formed their own extracurricular sport teams as a way to break free from the rigid university structure. It did not take students long to seek out their sport playing counterparts at neighboring institutions (Smith, 1988). In the summer of 1852 the first intercollegiate competition was held in 1852 on Lake Winnipesaukee in New Hampshire.
after student rowers from Yale challenged the members of the Harvard crew team to a race (Hardy & Berryman, 1982; Smith, 1988). This race was won by Harvard and by the time the two schools would rematch in 1855, issues began to arise. At the rematch, Yale challenged the eligibility of one of Harvard’s members because he had already graduated. Several years later, students from Harvard, Brown, Trinity, and Yale would come together to form The College Union Regatta. Although this organization only lasted several years it was the first intercollegiate organization and paved the way for other such organizations by establishing rules for competition, eligibility, and a championship (Hardy & Berryman, 1982).

In 1859, the first intercollegiate baseball game was played between Williams College and Amherst College. Ten years later, on November 6th, 1869, the first intercollegiate football game was played between Princeton and Rutgers (Davenport, 1985; Shulman & Bowen, 2001). Almost immediately, football takes off in popularity and becomes wildly attractive on campuses. Not long after students began engaging in these intercollegiate competitions were they able to display an excellence that was only seldom matched in the classroom (Smith, 1988). For example, in 1871, a school that had only been in existence for four years, Massachusetts Agricultural College, won the crew championship. Winning this competition brought the school both local and national recognition that far exceeded the publicity given to any of their academic achievements (Hardy & Berryman, 1982). However, intercollegiate athletics quickly spiraled out of
control with pro players playing on college teams or players only attending school during their sport’s season. Also, violence was often common after close games between fans and players (Davenport, 1985).

*Early Role of the Student-Athlete*

Prior to the 20th century, intercollegiate athletics were organized and operated by students. Teams formed student associations and collected dues from fellow students who wanted to support the team. Also, each team had a student that managed the team’s off-field issues. For example, the manager would schedule contests, look after finances, and check on student eligibility (Smith, 1988). Following the lead of The College Union Regatta more students formed intercollegiate associations within their sport between other schools. These associations were responsible for the rules (playing and eligibility) and established championships. However, by the late 1890s the students were being pushed out and school administrators or graduate managers began taking control of college sport. Essentially, the success of these student run sport programs was the downfall of student control (Hardy & Berryman, 1982).

*How and why the NCAA was founded*

Prior to the formation of the NCAA, collegiate athletics were primarily managed and organized by the students themselves. In fact, institutions of higher education never planned for athletics to be a part of their schools (Davenport, 1985) but they allowed them because they feared that banning them would have a negative impact on campus life (Nelson, 1982). The landscape of intercollegiate sport began to change in the late 1890s when the Intercollegiate Conference of Faculty Representatives (The Big Ten) was
formed. This organization and others like it were most concerned with athlete eligibility and the number of competitions (Hardy & Berryman, 1982). By the time President Roosevelt would call for the reform of college football on October 9th, 1905, most college teams were directed by university officials (Hawes, 1999).

Somewhere between extracurricular activity and intercollegiate competition, football became a very violent and sometimes deadly sport. In fact, during the 1905 football season, 18 deaths and 149 serious injuries were attributed to the sport. As the injuries and deaths began to mount, some colleges and universities banned football questioning the value of the game on their campuses and state legislatures began to discuss making the sport illegal. If not for the efforts of President Theodore Roosevelt, who competed in collegiate sport at Harvard, football may have been abolished that year. In early October of that bloody season, Roosevelt met with representatives from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton to discuss his concern and the future of the sport. At that meeting Roosevelt made it clear that football needed to be fixed or the game might be outlawed. The rules committee decided to make several changes, however the committee still had no ability to enforce these changes and lacked a national governing body capable of fully reforming the sport. This began to change, in early December of 1905, when Henry M. MacCracken, chancellor of New York University, invited all of the institutions competing in football to a meeting (Hawes, 1999). Thirteen schools were represented at this meeting and when they met again later that month, with the goal of reforming the game, sixty-two schools were in attendance (Hawes, 1999; Tow, 1982). The outcome of this meeting was an agreement to create a formal association that would be known as the
IAAUS. In conjunction with the previous rules committee, the IAAUS formed a new football rules committee and immediately instituted several new rules that saved the game of football. Among the rules introduced that year were the forward pass, ten yards for a first down, and the elimination of the dangerous mass momentum and hurdling plays (Hawes, 1999).

Purpose and Mission

On March 31st, 1906, the IAAUS became an official organization when it issued its formal constitution and bylaws (Tow, 1982). In order to reflect the national breadth of the association, in 1910 the IAAUS became the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The formation of the NCAA had two primary focuses both related to football: reducing violence and standardizing play (Fleisher, Goff, & Tollison, 1992). In short, “Without the sport of football there would be no NCAA…football was the initial reason for the Association” (Hawes, 1999, p.1). The association did not conduct its first official championship (Track) until 1921. In fact, prior to the end of World War II, the NCAA’s role was as a discussion group, rules formation, adoption, or adjustment, and championships (Davenport, 1985; Tow, 1982).

The original bylaws of the NCAA state the organizations main objective to be the regulation and supervision of intercollegiate sport within the United States. In the process of regulating and supervising intercollegiate sport, the organization hopes to assist all member institutions maintain fairness and equality in the tradition of higher education (Hardy & Berryman, 1982). Due to the fact that the association was made up of such a diverse group of schools spread throughout the country, one of the other
founding principles of the association was a commitment from each school to police themselves. According to article eight, all NCAA member institutions agree to supervise and take responsibility for their intercollegiate programs and the student-athletes that participate for them. They are also expected to take all necessary steps to uphold the standards established by the Association (i.e., benefits, eligibility, and sportsmanship) (Hawes, 1999 p.3).

Growth and Current State of the NCAA

Many saw the formation of a national organizing body in 1906 as a positive step for college sport and the student-athletes that competed within its framework. The NCAA promoted the idea that the head of athletics should be a faculty member because they would have an education first attitude. Although most athletic directors were also a faculty member, this attitude did not last. The prestige and attention generated by winning simply could not be matched elsewhere in the university. Conferences formed leagues with championships and regional championships to capitalize on the popularity (Hardy & Berryman, 1982).

By 1919, the NCAA was comprised of 170 schools and oversaw 11 sports (Hawes, 1999). World War II slowed the growth of college athletics and saw eligibility requirements relaxed for freshmen and transfer students. However, when the war ended, college sports had a renewed energy that helped to grow sport and propelled basketball at some institutions to football status (Davenport, 1985). By the time the 1929 Carnegie
Foundation Report on American College Athletics called for a return to recreational athletics run by student for the purpose of fun and enjoyment, it was too late (Sodjka, 1985). Sport had taken control of higher education.

Over time, the NCAA realized they needed a method of enforcement and could not solely rely on having rules. Therefore, in 1922 a 10-point code was developed which focused on who was and who was not eligible for participation. It also stressed that faculty had complete control of intercollegiate sport programs (Fleisher et al., 1992).

During the mid-1930s, the issue of subsidization begins to be discussed within the NCAA and its members. The members looked to the NCAA for clear-cut list of can and can not’s, while the NCAA looked to the members to determine for themselves what the guidelines would be. The NCAA stressed to their members that they could only express ideals and that the creation of policy was in their hands (Davenport, 1985). The association stressed the formation of conferences and emphasized that the conferences and schools themselves were responsible for enforcement (Fleisher et al., 1992).

Institutional control was (and still is) a major part of the NCAA. Institutions were expected to abide by the rules of the NCAA and their conference. To ensure that this was the case, faculty or administrators were required to make-up the voting majority of the school’s athletic board (Tow, 1982). By the end of the decade, one of the Association’s biggest problems was the amateur status of players on collegiate teams (Brown, 1999).

In 1948, the “sanity code” was adopted by the member institutions in an attempt to standardize several aspects of recruiting. The code required student-athletes to meet the same admission standards as other students and prevented coaches from offering
financial assistance based on athletic ability (Depken & Wilson, 2004). Along with the sanity code a three member Compliance Committee was formed and given the power to investigate violations. However, the only sanction they could issue was expulsion from the association, which then needed two-thirds of the members vote at the convention. In 1950, seven schools were found to be in violation of the code (e.g., Boston College, University of Maryland, The Citadel, Villanova University, University of Virginia, Virginia Military Institute, and Virginia Tech). The members voted 111 to 93 in favor of expulsion, but this was far short of the two-thirds majority necessary for action to be taken. The following year the members voted to eliminate the section in the code that put restrictions on financial aid. This, in essence, ended the code (Fleisher et al., 1992). The repeal of the sanity code led to the hiring of a full-time executive director and the granting of power to levy sanctions against noncompliant members (Davenport, 1985) forever changing the role of the NCAA (Tow, 1982).

In 1949, a year after the adoption of the sanity code, the NCAA had 278 active member institutions. The next year this number jumped to 362 active member institutions (Tow, 1982). Then, in 1951, Walter Byers was named the first full-time executive director of the NCAA (Byers, 1995; Tow, 1982). Later that year, in an effort to assist college and universities repair the negative public perception of college sport, the NCAA published a 12-point plan (Fleisher et al., 1992). The Compliance Committee was disbanded and replaced by the Membership Committee in 1952. The Membership Committee was then supported by the Subcommittee on Infractions. The Membership Committee was responsible for enforcing NCAA academic and amateur standards, while
the subcommittee was responsible for investigations. The Membership Committee then made recommendations to the NCAA Council who then presented the penalties to the members at convention. In 1953, the Council was given the power to hand out penalties between conventions. They had the power to level any sanction except expulsion. This still required a two-thirds majority vote by the members. The following year, in an attempt to streamline the process, the Committee on Infractions was formed and given full investigative authority (Fleisher et al., 1992). By the late 1950s early 1960s athletics began to separate from physical education, and coaches were no longer faculty members (Davenport, 1985). During the course of the next twenty years, the NCAA would struggle with supervision and control of its rapidly growing organization (Brown, 1999). In fact, between 1952 and 1977 the NCAA considered 993 possible infractions of NCAA rules with disciplinary action being taken in 548 (Nelson, 1982).

Role of Women in the Growth of the NCAA

During the 1920’s women were used in sport advertisements, not as competitors, but rather as supporters accompanying men and watching men. Motivated by a desire to create competitions for all and to avoid the problems that plagued men’s sports, female physical educators took the lead in the development of women’s sports (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985). Therefore, women took an intramural approach to athletics and sport was about play and participation (Sojka, 1985). There were two types of early competitions for women: playday and sportsday. On a playday, teams were picked randomly from all schools that were in attendance. One member from each school was represented on each team. In contrast, on a sportsday the women competed for their own
institutions against each other in a round robin format (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985). Competition for women continued in this form until the mid 1960’s when the Commission of Intercollegiate Sports for Women (CISW) began to encourage intercollegiate competition and national championships (Sojka, 1985).

Prior to 1971, there had been several organizations, including the CISW, which looked after the affairs of women’s athletics, but as popularity increased the need for a single organizational structure became clear (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985). The Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) was founded in 1971 under the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (Sojka, 1985) and marked the beginning of competitive intercollegiate athletics for women (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985). Three major principles were at the philosophical forefront of this organization: 1) programs should be educationally sound; 2) financially prudent; and 3) the welfare and enrichment of the student-athlete were a priority. Student rights were as important as institutional rights, if not more important. Unlike the NCAA, student-athletes were given a say in the organization through the power to propose and vote on legislation (Slatton, 1982). The AIAW felt that it was important for students to be involved in policy making and hoped that it would help prevent student-athlete abuses. It was “…the belief of those in the AIAW that if the exploitation of student-athletes is to be avoided, adequate voice and power must be assured to those who are governed” (Slatton, 1982, p. 148). Policies and procedures were voted on by entire membership, not by divisions. This was done to prevent the few from creating policies that were not in the interest of all student-athletes. Furthermore, student-athletes and institutions were given
due process whenever possible, an appeals system was established, and both student-
athletes and universities were viewed as innocent until proven guilty (Slatton, 1982).

Women’s athletics were tightly controlled from the beginning because they never
had student organizations and were always monitored by a female faculty member.
Limitation on travel, gate receipts, championships, and recruiting which lasted well into
the 1970’s created some initial obstacles that were difficult to overcome (Hardy &
Berryman, 1982). For example, college coaches were not allowed to recruit students
from off-campus. Also, they could not go out and talk to students, their parents, or their
coaches (Slatton, 1982).

Women’s sports experienced tremendous growth during the 1970’s. Acosta and
Carpenter (1985) argue that we may never know whether this was due to the passage of
Title IX and schools attempting to conform or society’s greater acceptance of female
athletics. Regardless, growth that had never been experienced before took place. For
example, during the nine year period between academic years 1971-72 and 1979-80,
AIAW membership grew from 278 members to 973 members for an average of 77 new
members per year (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985).

The NCAA had primarily been about men’s sports because women’s athletics did
not become popular nationally until the late 1960’s early 1970’s (Tow, 1982). Women’s
athletics were not immediately embraced by the NCAA. The passage of Title IX brought
law suits from the NCAA, congressional legislation, and individual suits. For example,
after the passage of Title IX in 1972, “…the NCAA sued to have athletics exempt from
this law” (Davenport, 1985, p.13). When this failed, they sued to have revenue sports
exempt. As the AIAW hoped for a resolution to the disagreements between themselves and the NCAA, the NCAA was preparing to begin offering competitive athletics for women. In 1980, the NCAA (at its convention) voted to begin offering ten championships across two divisions for women and then changed their logo to include both a man and a woman (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985; Davenport, 1985). This marked the beginning of the end for the AIAW as schools began an exodus from the AIAW to the NCAA. The decision by the NCAA to begin sponsoring championships for women meant a loss of championships, members, sponsorship, television exposure, and of course income for the AIAW. In February 1983, the final chapter for the AIAW was written “… when the AIAW lost its anti-trust suit against the NCAA. Without the ability to realistically compete in the offering of championships in women’s athletics, the AIAW has no membership and thus no reason to exist” (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985, p.319).

Current State

During the 1980-81 academic year 740 institutions of higher education were NCAA members (Tow, 1982). When women’s sports were officially welcomed into the association the following year, a total of 231,445 student-athletes competed under the NCAA umbrella. That year, 28 percent of the student-athletes were female. Over the 20 year period from 1981-82 to 2002-02, the NCAA has experienced a decrease in the number of male participants seven times or on average once every three years. Also, during this same period of time, female participation rates increased in all but four years
and at one point increased for 11 years straight (Bray, 2004). Today, more than 361,000 student-athletes, of which 153,601 or 42% are female, represent more than 1020 schools in NCAA competition each year (Bray, 2004; NCAA, 2004a).

**Collegiate Sport as Big Business**

Perhaps one of the earliest signs of the power that football and winning could generate was demonstrated following the 1890 football season. After a successful season by the Franklin and Marshall College team, the residents of Lancaster, PA engaged in a fundraising campaign that allowed them to build a gymnasium (Sojka, 1985). It appears that almost from the beginning institutions of higher education have been taking advantage of the opportunities athletic success has generated. By looking at athletic departments, facility construction, and the relationship of media and sponsorship in collegiate athletics a clear picture of college athletics as big business develops.

**Athletic Departments**

The typical big-time athletic department budget in the early 1970’s was $1 million (Padilla & Baumer, 1994). In 1973, the Ohio State University athletic budget was $4 million a year (Nelson, 1982). By 1994, the typical big-time athletic department was spending between $15 million and $20 million a year (Padilla & Baumer, 1994). In 2002-03, the University of Kansas athletic budget was $25.7 million or eighth highest in the 12 team conference. That same year, the University of Texas had the conference’s largest budget at $49.4 million (Rombeck, 2003). Not to be out done, Ohio State University’s athletic department had an operating budget over $87.7 million for the 2002-03 fiscal year (Stetson, 2004).
Facility Construction

Most teams started playing football in stadiums similar to or smaller than current Division III schools. This changed in the 1920’s as the sport’s popularity grew. During the twenty year period between 1920 and 1940, over forty new stadiums were constructed at current Division I-A schools (Fleisher et al., 1992). For example, on October 18th, 1924 Harold “Red” Grange of Illinois helped christen their new 70,000 seat stadium by running for five touchdowns and throwing for a sixth in the stadium’s inaugural game (Sojka, G.S., 1985). As football’s popularity increased over the next ten years more stadiums would be built or the old ones were expanded (Fleisher et al., 1992).

The late 1990’s seem to have brought a second building boom. Between 1997 and 2002, at least 55 collegiate facilities have been constructed or renovated (Horrow, 2002). For example, The Ohio State University built the $105 million Schottenstein Center for their men’s ice hockey and basketball teams. The University of Michigan spent $7.4 million dollars on renovations to Michigan stadium while the University of Tennessee added 110 luxury boxes (Schneider, 2000). At the University of Texas, the school spent $55 million dollars to increase their seating capacity to 82,000 and add 66 new luxury suites. School officials project that the luxury boxes would generate about $3 million a year in additional revenues (McGraw, Rock, & Dillon, 1997).

Media

In 1949 the NCAA began to study the impact of television on attendance (Fleisher et al., 1992). During the 1950’ and 1960’s the NCAA was hesitant about broadcasting football games, but by 1972-73 they had a $12 million television contract and a $29
million contract by 1980-81. Television revenue became very important to schools and they would often rearrange their schedules to meet the needs of the media. Perhaps former Alabama Coach Paul “Bear” Bryant summed things up best when he said, “I’ll play at midnight if that’s what TV wants” (Michener, 1976 p. 238 as cited by Sojka, 1985, p.25). In fact since 1991, ESPN has been broadcasting college football games on Thursday nights (Horrow, 2002).

In particular, football and men’s basketball are leading the charge for college sports. A total of $77.8 million will be paid by ABC and NBC for the rights to broadcast the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) and Notre Dame’s six home games (Clarke & Seltzer, 2003). Meanwhile, individual conference television deals generate between $55 million and $80 million dollars a year for the six largest conferences (Horrow, 2002). Last year, the men’s basketball tournament generated over $26.5 million dollars for the NCAA (NCAA, 2004b). However, the real impact of men’s basketball is realized by the 11 year $6.2 billion dollar broadcasting rights contract agreed upon by CBS and the NCAA in 2002 (Clarke & Seltzer, 2003). In fact, on average, since 1988 the NCAA has received over $150 million a year for the rights to broadcast the men’s basketball tournament and other events (Byers, 1995).

Sponsorship

As of 2002, Nike had sponsorship deals with over 210 colleges and universities around the country. Their agreements range from a two-year uniform and sneaker deal with the University of Indiana that will save the school about $500,000 a year to a seven-year $28 million agreement with the University of Michigan (Horrow, 2002).
The NCAA itself is heavily involved with sponsorship. Coca-Cola, an NCAA corporate champion, agreed to become the official soft drink of the NCAA for the next 11 years in the summer of 2002 when it agreed to a $500 million deal (Horrow, 2002). Other corporate champions include Cingular Wireless and Pontiac Motors. Kraft Foods, Monster, and The Hartford are corporate partners. The NCAA also maintains 56 trademarks and 39 registered licensee’s. According to the NCAA, “The major reason for the success of college athletics is the NCAA’s partnership with some of America’s elite companies” (ncaa.org).

Problems and Reforms

Problems

As the popularity of college sport grew over time among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the public the question became whether or not college athletics was compatible with the mission of higher education. According to Scott (1982), the role of higher education is based on two major principles: a) educate the youth of society; and b) better provide for the community as a whole. The author questions the role athletics plays in meeting these two basic principles. Although he acknowledges that athletics can be educational for some students, it must meet this requirement for all students (Scott, 1982).

Hardy and Berryman (1982) argue that the problems in intercollegiate athletics are due to the fact that the goals of athletics do not match the goals of higher education. The authors believe that this fundamental rift is the primary reason that the numerous attempts to reform college athletics in the past have failed. Upon reflecting on his 36
years as executive director of the NCAA, Byers (1995) echoed Hardy and Berryman’s premise of competing interests.

I was charged with the dual mission of keeping intercollegiate sports clean while generating millions of dollars each year as income for the colleges. These were compelling and competing tasks, and, in my enthusiasm for sports, I believed it possible to achieve both. We proved barely adequate in the first instance, but enormously successful in our second (p. 5).

When faculty became involved, they took a “thou-shall-not philosophy of control” (Scott, 1982, p. 31). Meaning that they always focused on what could not be done rather than looking for ways to actually solve problems. Although the formation of conferences and the NCAA has been good for organizational purposes and the promotion of sport, they have not solved the problems. Faculty members who have been a part of school committees that have allowed for lower standards for athletes or the development of curriculum tailor made for athletics have not solved the problems either (Scott, 1982).

Reform Attempts/Measures

In 1929, the Carnegie Foundation Report on American College Athletics published findings of a three year study conducted in the area of intercollegiate athletics. The report found professionalism, illegal recruiting, academically weak students, and corruption throughout most of the schools in their study. The report recommended that college presidents and the faculty regain control of college athletics (Savage, 1929) calling “…for a return to student-controlled programs conducted for recreation and enjoyment” (Sodjka, 1985, p.23). However, most school administrators dismissed the report and claimed that the abuses cited in it were not occurring at their school (Davenport, 1985).
The scandal filled 1980s prompted the trustees of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to investigate college athletics in the hopes of finding a remedy for the abuses that threatened higher education. After conducting their investigation, the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics (1991) found many of the problems reported by the Carnegie Foundation over 60 years ago were still plaguing intercollegiate athletics. Among the most notable were academic neglect, professionalization of the student-athlete, corrupt recruiting, and commercialism. As a result of these findings the commission proposed a “one-plus three” model for reforming college athletics. The model called for presidents to be the “one” and to lead their university toward the “three” goals of academic integrity, financial integrity, and independent certification. Specifically, the commission recommended the adoption of specific academic standards the student-athletes would be required meet. The goal of these standards was not to penalize student-athletes, but to help them stay on track for graduation. Two of the recommendations related to fiscal integrity were to find ways to reduce the cost of fielding teams and the creation of a financial oversight committee for the athletic department and booster clubs. One of the other major recommendations of the commission involved the reorganization of the NCAA governance structure (Knight Foundation Commission, 1991). The proposed structure called for increased leadership from university presidents and less from athletic administrators. In total, the NCAA adopted nearly two-thirds of the commission’s major recommendations with perhaps the greatest coming in 1997 when the association reorganized its governance structure creating a presidents’ board of directors (Suggs, 2000).
Although the Knight Foundation did experience some success having their recommendations implemented during the 1990s, the ever growing commercial presence caused them to reevaluate the state college sports in 2000-2001. When discussing the impetus for reconvening the commission, both Hodding Carter III, the current Knight Foundation president, and William Friday, the co-chair of the 1991 commission, cited the increasing intrusion of commercialism and money in college athletics (Suggs, 2000).

The 2001 report titled, *A call to action: Reconnecting college sports and higher education*, acknowledges that progress was made during the 10 years between reports, but also cautioned that the dangers had increased rather than diminished. The three major problems threatening college sports outlined in the report were: academic transgressions; a financial arms race; and commercialization. The commission further advised that “If the current trends continue, more and more campus programs will increasingly mirror the world of professional, market-driven athletics” (Knight Foundation Commission, 2001).

In order to reform college athletics and prevent this impending demise, the commission recommended a new “one-plus-three” model. The new model called for a coalition of presidents (one) to direct collegiate sport toward “academic reform, de-escalation of the athletics arms race, and de-emphasis of the commercialization of intercollegiate athletics [three]” (Knight Foundation Commission, 2001). Several of the specific recommendations made in the Knight Commission’s 2001 report included: requiring teams to have a graduation rate of at least 50 percent in order to compete in conference or other postseason play; distributing television revenues based on a criteria other than team
record; banning all corporate logos or marks from all uniforms and equipment; and the creation of an institute that would continue to monitor and advocate change where necessary in college sports.

While it may take several years to fully understand if all of these measures have been implemented and are working, college and university presidents have started to address the “academic transgressions” discussed in the report. For example, in October of 2002, the NCAA announced that it was increasing, from 13 to 14, the number of core courses that must be successfully completed in high school to become initially eligible to compete. The new initiative will also require freshmen to complete 24 course hours with a minimum grade point average of 1.8. The standard also requires student-athletes to complete 40 percent of their degree requirements by the end of year two, 60 percent by the end of year three, and 80 percent after the forth to remain eligible (NCAA, n.d.). This number will increase to by two to 16 beginning with the 2008-2009 school year (Suggs, 2003). The NCAA is also in the process of developing a new method of measuring academic success. The Academic Progress Rate (APR) would allow the NCAA to better account for transfer students and establish level of success that all school must meet or face sanctions (NCAA, n.d.).

Criticism of the NCAA

The NCAA has many critics. Among them are economists, sociologists, former university presidents, former student-athletes, a former NCAA executive director, and many other concerned members of the higher education community.
Hanford (1982) argued that presidents needed to pay more attention to athletics at their school. He believed that presidents need to know what was going on in the athletic department just as much as they need to know what is going on in the academic parts of their institution. Like college deans, the athletic director works for the president and reflects the policy that they make. Hanford urged presidents to make sure that they were setting the right policy and leading by example.

Others argue that the NCAA is a cartel because they are able to control prices (i.e., television, tournament ticket prices, student-athlete grants in aid), control output, create and transfer rent, and place limitations on competition (Fleisher et al., 1992; Koch & Leonard, 1978).

One of the harshest criticisms of the NCAA comes from a former student-athlete who feels that the exploitation has gone on too long. He writes,

The NCAA is perpetrating a daily theft of athletes’ rightful earnings, and its exploiting athletes’ bodies. With a smooth self-righteousness, the NCAA makes studied claims of innocence, preaching the virtues of amateurism and academic priorities, and lines its pockets with gold. (DeVenzio, 1986 p.57)

DeVenzio argues that the NCAA dictates to the student-athlete without supplying them with a means of providing feedback on how the policies are affecting them. Although, a line of communication has been opened with the introduction of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), this has only been in recent years. The student-athletes may now have a means of communicating with their governing body, but within the current structure they still do not have the ability to vote.

Although their approaches may be diverse, most criticisms of the NCAA continue to focus on the issues of amateurism and commercialism in college sport (Byers, 1995;
Duderstadt, 2000; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998; Sperber, 1990). For example, the NCAA has an annual operating budget of over 452 million dollars (NCAA, 2004b). According to the NCAA, $400 million or just over 88 percent of their revenue for 2003-2004 was expected to come from television contracts (NCAA, 2004b). Add to that sum $26.5 million in anticipated revenue from the Division I men’s basketball tournament (the Final Four) and these two sources alone are expected to account for over 94 percent of the $452 million in revenue generated by the organization. In contrast, the NCAA planned to spend $20.1 million, or less than 4.5 percent of its budget, on student-athlete welfare programs during that same period of time (NCAA, 2004b). A quick glance at these figures and one can quickly understand why the NCAA has faced considerable scrutiny in recent years.

Grounded Theory

The conceptual framework for this research study was based on the grounded theory approach. Grounded theory was introduced as technique for doing qualitative research by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and has been further developed and expanded upon by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). Simply stated, “Grounded theory is a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 273). This technique allows the researcher to simultaneously collect and analyze data for the purpose of discovering emergent themes or developing theoretical explanations that can be used to explain the participants’ position. In other words, “One does not begin with theory, then
prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.23).

The process for grounded theory, as explained by Glaser and Strauss (1967), “involves four stages: (1) comparing the data applicable to each conceptual theory; (2) integrating the categories and their properties; (3) delimiting the emergent theory; and (4) writing up the theory” (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 113). The researcher followed this procedure until saturation occurred. Saturation is said to occur when “(a) no new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category, (b) the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation, and (c) the relationships among categories are well established and validated” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 212). The researcher utilized transcript-based analysis to analyze the data. Transcript-based analysis requires the researcher to transcribe audio tapes before analyzing the text. Researchers may also incorporate data from field notes and debriefing discussions in this analysis (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1998).

*Individual Interviews*

The objective of interviewing is to gain knowledge and insight into the experiences of others (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Patton (1980) explains that “We interview people to find out from them those things that we cannot directly observe….We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions….The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allows us to enter into the other person’s perspective” (p. 196). Interviews may also be used when the researcher is interested in collecting data about past events from those who
experienced it. In this way, interviews may involve intensive in-depth interviews with one person or engage a large diverse group of people in an effort to form a broader perspective (Merriam, 1988).

Conducting qualitative research, specifically individual interview, has several advantages or strengths. In doing interviews, the researcher develops a “…thick description of the context, participants, and the dynamic processes that occur between and among them” (Gerdes & Conn, 2001, p. 186). This detailed account of the study allows the reader to determine for themselves the relevance of the study in question. Said another way, rather than making statements about to whom the results can be generalized, the study stands on its own merits and allows the reader to decide for themselves (Frankel & Devers, 2000; Gerdes & Conn, 2001). Also, interviewing is a relatively inexpensive method for gathering information about attitudes, experiences, and perceptions. Furthermore, given the proper environment, they have the ability to be administered to large groups (Frankel & Devers, 2000).

Constant Comparative Analysis

The most common form of data analysis is referred to as constant comparative. This method of analysis requires that the data is reviewed and analyzed throughout the study by the researcher until the research questions can be answered. Through this rigorous process the data was analyzed and coded. By coding the data the researcher was able to look for emerging themes or patterns in the data. These patterns and themes were then analyzed to develop an understanding of how or why they emerged. Also, these themes were then explore across other data and considered as new data was collected.
Specifically, this process required: comparing incidents applicable to each category, identifying common themes in the data, and the comparison of themes across categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This method was utilized to analyze data from a variety of sources including interviews, field notes, and observations (Gerdes & Conn, 2001).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Given the nature, scope, and complexity of this research study, a qualitative research design was deemed necessary and advantageous to this research endeavor. Janesick (2000) explains that “the qualitative researcher focuses on description and explanation….and prefers to capture the lived experience of participants in order to understand their meaning perspectives, case by case” (p. 395). Specifically, a qualitative study allowed the researcher to collect in-depth data reflective of student-athletes’ perceptions of the NCAA. Face-to-face interviews were selected because “…interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 645).

Study’s Design

The framework for this research study was based on the grounded theory approach. It was introduced as a technique for doing qualitative research by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and has been further developed and expanded upon by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). Simply stated, “grounded theory is a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 273). This technique allows the researcher to simultaneously collect and analyze data for the purpose of discovering emergent themes.
or developing theoretical explanations that can be used to explain the participants’ position. In other words, “one does not begin with theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 23).

The process for grounded theory, as explained by Glaser and Strauss (1967), “involves four stages: (a) comparing the data applicable to each conceptual theory; (b) integrating the categories and their properties; (c) delimiting the emergent theory; and (d) writing up the theory” (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 113). The researcher follows this procedure until saturation occurs. Saturation occurs, when “(a) no new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category, (b) the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation, and (c) the relationships among categories are well established and validated” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 212). For this study, the researcher utilized transcript-based analysis to analyze the data. This type of analysis requires the researcher to transcribe audio tapes before analyzing the text. Using this approach, researchers may also incorporate data from field notes and debriefing discussions in this analysis (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1998).

Individual Interviews

Interviewing is a basic method of collecting information or data through a series of structured questions or informal conversation. Individual interviewing, where the researcher and participant engage in face-to-face dialogue, is the most common form of interviewing. The objective of interviewing is to gain knowledge and insight into the experiences of others (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Patton (1980) explains: “we interview
people to find out from them those things that we cannot directly observe….We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions….The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allows us to enter into the other person’s perspective” (p. 196). Interviews may also be used when the researcher is interested in collecting data about past events from those who experienced it. In this way, interviews may involve intensive in-depth interviews with one person or engage a large diverse group of people in an effort to form a broader perspective (Merriam, 1988).

Conducting qualitative research, specifically individual interviewing, has several advantages or strengths. In doing interviews, the researcher develops a “…thick description of the context, participants, and the dynamic processes that occur between and among them” (Gerdes & Conn, 2001, p. 186). This detailed account of the study allows the reader to determine for themselves the relevance of the study in question. Said another way, rather than making statements about to whom the results can be generalized, the study stands on its own merits and allows the reader to decide for themselves (Frankel & Devers, 2000; Gerdes & Conn, 2001). Also, interviewing is a relatively inexpensive method for gathering information about attitudes, experiences, and perceptions. Furthermore, given the proper environment, they have the ability to be administered to large groups (Frankel & Devers, 2000).

Semistructured interviews are utilized by researchers; when the same general information is wanted. In these situations, interviewers utilize pre-determined questions to guide their conversation with participants. However, unlike the rigid format of structured interviews, semistructured interviews allow the researcher the flexibility to
seek clarification, explore thoughts thoroughly, and pursue deeper meaning (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Merriam, 1988).

The interviews conducted for this study followed the semistructured format. The researcher selected this format for several reasons. First, the nature of the research called for the collection of data specifically related to student-athletes perceptions of the NCAA and the experiences that shaped those perceptions. Therefore, prior to the interviews, a list of questions was developed by the researcher to guide the conversations with participants. Next, the semistructured interview format allowed the researcher the flexibility to listen to the participant(s) and ask follow-up questions. These questions were used to seek clarification, explore thoughts thoroughly, and pursue deeper meaning when necessary.

Interview Techniques

In order to receive quality data, the interviewer must be skilled in several areas. Good questions are those that use language that is familiar and comfortable to the participant and thoroughly address the topic under investigation. The interviewer should begin the interview process by asking general questions first. As the interview progresses and the interviewee becomes more comfortable with the question and answer process, more specific questions are asked (Dilley, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Merriam (1988) explains that a skilled interviewer is able to take “…a stance that is nonjudgmental, sensitive, and respectful of the respondent…” (p. 76). Fontana and Frey (2000) also emphasize the importance of the interviewer communicating a neutral position both verbally and nonverbally to the responses provided by their participants.
This is important because it may lead to bias responses from the interviewee. For example, a participant in a structured interview may give a certain response in an effort to please the interviewer. A simple change in the tone or inflection used by the interviewer may cause the participant to perceive something that is not there. “Good interviewers recognize this fact and are sensitive to how interaction can influence responses” (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Dilley (2000) argues that the most important aspect of collecting good data is listening. He recommends that the interviewer spend 80 percent of the time listening and 20 percent of the time talking. Dilley also stresses that “listening requires more than one’s ears; it necessitates eye contact, understanding body language, and active mental considerations of both the content (words) and context (emotions) of what is being said, and not being said” (2000, p. 135).

Aside from avoiding language that is unfamiliar to the participant and asking leading questions, the researcher should avoid asking multiple questions at one time. After each question is asked by the interviewer, the participant should be given the opportunity to respond. If a question has multiple parts, it should simply be asked in that manner. The participant should not have to consider multiple questions at one time. Again, the type of question asked should be guided by the information the researcher is seeking (Merriam, 1988). In the process of conducting this study, the researcher was conscious of these techniques and utilized them to the best of his ability.


*Recording the Data*

Three basic methods for recording data from individual interviews are audio recording, note taking, and post-interview note taking. Audio recording of interviews is the most desirable method for several reasons. First, it allows the researcher to focus on and really listen for verbal and nonverbal communication from the interviewee (Dilley, 2000; Merriam, 1988). Next, this method allows for the audio tapes to be transcribed or listened to again at a later date. Although this method is ideal, Merriam (1988) reminds the researcher to be prepared for equipment malfunctions. Another method sometimes used by researchers involves taking notes, during the interview. This method requires the researcher to make notes about what is being said, what they are observing, and what the relationship of this information may be to information previously collected. Due to the multiple tasks required of this method, it should be used only when audio taping is not an option.

Lastly, post-interview note taking is also a method that may be utilized on occasion. In this method, the researcher will write down as much information as can be remembered immediately following the interview. These notes usually contain information about themes, topics discussed, nonverbal cues, thoughts on behavior, and the environment in which the interview was conducted (Merriam, 1988).

All three of these methods were utilized by the researcher to record the data. The primary source utilized by the researcher was audio recording. The interviews were audio recorded so that they could later be transcribed, analyzed, and shared with the participant. Audio recording the interviews also allowed the researcher to really focus on
what the participant was saying. This also allowed the researcher the opportunity to observe and note any nonverbal communication and ask follow-up questions when necessary. At the conclusion of each interview, the researcher made notes about the session. Specifically, the researcher noted information about themes, nonverbal cues, interruptions or disturbances, and the environment in which the interview was conducted.

Selection of Participants and Setting

The participants in this study were student-athletes competing on varsity teams at a Large Public Midwestern University (LPMU). They were obtained by the researcher, utilizing a purposeful and convenient sampling technique. Patton (1980) explains: “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in the selecting information-rich cases for study in depth….from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 169). Convenient sampling was utilized by the researcher because it provided the greatest opportunity for the researcher to gain access to the participants. As the study evolved, the researcher also utilized snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is particularly useful because it allows the researcher to utilize current participants in an effort to recruit other prospective participants from within a unique population (Vogt, 1999). Therefore, participants were asked to volunteer the names of teammates they felt would have an interest in participating in the study. This allowed the researcher to gain access to student-athletes with similar experiences and backgrounds. Snowball sampling was particularly useful in obtaining student-athletes from the men’s and women’s basketball teams.
This study focused specifically on the perceptions of varsity student-athletes competing in the revenue producing sports of basketball and football. Therefore, the participants in this study were members of the men’s basketball, women’s basketball, and football team. The decision to examine only revenue producing sport student-athletes was based on several reasons. First, the revenue sports are the ones that receive the greatest media, public, and administrative scrutiny. It was believed that this heightened level of attention may have resulted in experiences that were quite different than those student-athletes competing in non-revenue sports. Second, although it is not yet a consistent money maker within the NCAA, women’s basketball has steadily grown in popularity and wealth (Fulks, 2002). Therefore the atmosphere surrounding women’s basketball most closely resembles those surrounding men’s basketball and football. Also, their inclusion in the study provided the researcher with data from both female and male student-athletes. Lastly, this study was conducted as part of the requirements for completion of a Ph.D. in Sport and Exercise Management. Thus, the limited resources (i.e., financial and time) of the researcher were taken into consideration. For example, financial restraints limited the researcher’s ability to travel to and collect data from student-athletes at other Division I-A institutions. In addition, due to time restraints the researcher was unable to collect data from student-athletes outside of the sports of basketball and football.
Data Collection Techniques

Data Collection

Prior to collecting data, permission to conduct the study was obtained by the researcher from the Human Subjects Review Board of LPMU as well as the LPMU’s student-athlete human subjects review board. Next, the researcher utilized purposeful and convenient sampling techniques that included three women’s basketball, four men’s basketball, and five football student-athletes competing on varsity teams at LPMU. Prospective participants were initially contacted by the researcher through electronic mail. The letter sent to each student-athlete explained the purpose of the study and the commitment required from them (see Appendix A).

Data were collected from these participants utilizing a face-to-face interview process. More specifically, this face-to-face interview process included the administration of a brief demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B) and the participation in a face-to-face, individual interview, based on a pre-established, semi-structured individual interview schedule (see Appendix C). Each interview was audio taped and lasted between 1 hour and 1 ½ hours and was conducted in a location that was convenient for the student-athlete, during a time period proposed by the student-athlete. At the completion of each interview, the researcher transcribed the audio tapes.

Demographic background questionnaire. After the study was introduced and explained, the demographic questionnaire was administered by the researcher. While completing the questionnaire the participant was given the opportunity to ask the researcher questions about the questionnaire or study in general.
Individual Interviews. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher secured written consent from the participants (see Appendix D). Also, the participants were reminded that they were free to withdraw their consent to participate or discontinue their participation in the study at any time without consequence. More specifically, the researcher engaged the student-athlete in a conversation, based on the pre-established, semi-structured interview schedule.

Development of the Instrument

Development of Interview Questions

Asking good questions is essential in qualitative research. Therefore, it is important to carefully develop and refine these questions. In this study, after the initial questions were developed by the researcher they were presented to a panel of experts and a pilot study was conducted.

Interview Questions. The interview questions for this study were developed based on information from a variety of sources. The two primary sources included the NCAA’s stated purposes and goals and the Will to Act document written by former NCAA President Cedric Dempsey. The researcher decided to develop questions, based on the organization’s purposes and goals in an effort to determine whether or not, based on the experiences of student-athletes, the NCAA was achieving them. Eight of the twenty-four questions asked were based on this material. A total of six questions were developed, based on the Will to Act document. The purpose of these questions was to determine whether the information reported in this document was also true for student-athletes. More specifically, these questions focused on the NCAA’s image and
relationship with the student-athlete. The remaining questions were asked in an effort to develop a better understanding of the student-athletes general knowledge and perception of the NCAA’s roles, responsibility, and functions.

In summary, the questions asked, during the interviews, were designed to do several things. First, the researcher sought an understanding of how the student-athlete perceives that NCAA. In particular the researcher explored whether or not the NCAA was functioning, in accordance with their stated purposes and goals. Then, based on the experiences of the student-athletes, the collected data was used to support or reject these statements.

Panel of Experts. The panel of experts was comprised of five (5) former Division I student-athletes and three (3) professors with knowledge and expertise in the areas of college athletics and qualitative research. After reviewing the questions, each member was given the opportunity to provide feedback. This panel of experts assisted the researcher in refining the questions, sequence, and the content. Through this process the research protocol was examined to ensure that the questions being asked were applicable to the study’s research questions. Also, the panel felt that a question needed to be asked in an effort to address the amount of time a student-athlete spent on unofficial football activities. The panel also recommended moving a question about rules violations further down the list. This was recommended in an effort to allow the participants more time to become comfortable with the interview.
**Pilot Study.** The pilot study involved interviewing five former Division I student-athletes. This process did several important things. First, it allowed the researcher to test the interview questions. In particular, it allowed the researcher to eliminate redundant questions as well as rephrase questions for clarity. Specifically, this process led to the elimination of one interview question and the addition of one new interview question. After reviewing the data, the researcher identified questions that were unclear to the participants and/or required additional explanation. These questions were either reworded or rewritten for optimal clarity. The question that was added asks the student-athlete about the time they spend doing things for the athletic department or program (i.e., speaking to booster groups). Next, the pilot study provided the researcher an opportunity to practice and refine his skills as an interviewer. Lastly, the researcher was able to practice the research procedures and form an idea of the time required to complete each interview.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

*Data Analysis*

The most common form of data analysis is referred to as constant comparative. This method of analysis requires that the data is reviewed and analyzed throughout the study by the researcher until the research questions can be answered. Through this rigorous process the data was analyzed and coded. By coding the data, the researcher was able to look for emerging themes or patterns in the data. These patterns and themes were then analyzed to develop an understanding of how or why they emerged. Also, these themes were then explore across other data and considered as new data was
collected. Specifically, this process required: (a) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (b) identifying common themes in the data, and (c) the comparison of themes across categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This method was utilized to analyze data from a variety of sources including interviews, field notes, and observations (Gerdes & Conn, 2001).

*Demographic background questionnaire.* The demographic questionnaire was used by the researcher to identify patterns and relationships among the participants, after the interviews were coded. For example, the questionnaire provided the opportunity to compare the experiences of female and male student-athletes, starters and reserves, and student-athletes of various academic ranks. Once patterns and themes were identified, the researcher used direct excerpts from the transcripts to present and illustrate the themes and sub-themes.

*Individual Interviews.* All individual interviews were audio taped and conducted by the researcher. After each individual interview, the audiotape was transcribed, coded, and analyzed by the researcher, utilizing grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The data was reviewed and analyzed throughout the study by the researcher until the research questions were answered. During this process, the researcher also analyzed and coded any patterns or themes that emerged from the data. These patterns and themes were then analyzed to develop an understanding of how or why they emerged. This constant comparative analysis continued “…until theoretical saturation [was] reached…. In this way, the resulting theory is considered conceptually dense and grounded in the data” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 61).
Trustworthiness of Data

The issues of reliability (i.e., transferability) and validity (i.e., dependability) are just as important in qualitative research as they are in quantitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1984). To increase the dependability of qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that the researcher spend sufficient time with the study’s participants. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation are the two methods that account for time being spent with the participants. The purpose of prolonged engagement is to develop an understanding of your participant’s culture, check for misinformation and discrepancies, and gain the trust of your participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain: “the purpose of persistent observation is to identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail” (p. 304).

Although the researcher is a former NCAA student-athlete, his experience was not at a Division I-A institution in a major revenue producing sport. Therefore, prolonged engagement was accomplished by interviewing each student-athlete for 1 to 1 ½ hours. Also, the researcher reviewed literature on student-athletes to better familiarize himself with the environment within which they compete. Lastly, secondary data sources (i.e., media guides and athletic department website) were used to obtain some general background information on each participant. This information was used by the researcher in two ways. First, this information was utilized prior to the interview by the researcher to obtain background information on the participants. This information was then used at the start of the interview as a way of starting the conversation and allowing
the participant and researcher to get to know each other. These sources were also used to confirm the self-reported demographic information or other personal information disclosed during the interview (i.e., hometown, high school, family).

Member checking and peer debriefing are two other techniques that are recommended to enhance the dependability of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking requires the researcher to share the collected data with the group from which it was collected. This allows participants the opportunity to react to, confirm, or disconfirm the accuracy of the researcher’s “analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314).

At the completion of each interview, the participants were reminded that the researcher would provide them with a transcript of their conversation. This information was sent by either standard or electronic mail. After receiving and reading through the transcript, the participants were given the opportunity to clarify, expand upon, or confirm their original thoughts. In doing this, the researcher was better able to accurately analyze and represent the attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of the studies participants.

Peer debriefing “…is a procedure whereby the fieldworker confides in trusted and knowledgeable colleagues and uses them as a sounding board for one or more purposes” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 113). This technique serves several purposes for the researcher. First, it forces the researcher into an open dialogue which allows for “…biases to be probed, meanings explored, and the basis of interpretations clarified” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Second, debriefing provides the researcher with an opportunity to discuss emerging themes. If the researcher is not able to support attacks on these themes, they
may need to revisit their analysis. Third, the researcher can discuss the future direction of the study and receive suggestions for consideration. Lastly, this technique provides the researcher with an opportunity to clear “…the mind of emotions and feelings that may be clouding good judgment or preventing emergence of sensible next steps” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Essentially, this issue is about the transferability of qualitative research.

At the center of qualitative research is the analysis and interpretation of the data. In this study, the data were analyzed by the researcher and two peer debriefers. The researcher in this study was a Caucasian male with experiences in higher education administration and college coaching. He competed for three years as a student-athlete at a NCAA Division III institution. At the time of this study, he was a third-year Ph.D. student in Sport and Exercise Management at a LPMU. Peer debriefer #1 was a Caucasian female with three years experience as a university professor and qualitative researcher. She was a four-year dual-sport student-athlete at a NCAA Division III institution. Peer debriefer #2 was a Caucasian male with four years of experience as an administrator at two Division I-A institutions. He competed as a student-athlete for four years at a large public Division I-A institution. Like the researcher, at the time of this study, he was a third-year Ph.D. student in Sport and Exercise Management at a LPMU. Both peer debriefers understood that the transcriptions they would read were confidential and signed a pledge of confidentiality (see Appendix E).
By seeking outside opinions the researcher was able to minimize bias or emotional interpretations of the data. The debriefers also assisted in the identification of emerging themes and their refinement. Lastly, the debriefers challenged the researcher to provide sound support for all themes.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation is a technique that is recommended to increase the validity (i.e., dependability) of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1984). Simply stated, “Triangulation is a means of checking the integrity of the inferences one draws” (Schwandt, 1997, p.163). This technique requires the researcher to utilize several different methods (i.e., interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, observation) or sources (student-athletes, coaches, administrators) of data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This data are then compared against each other, or triangulated, to check for “…corroborative, contrasting, and causally linked information” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 235). In their closing remarks on the process of triangulation, Miles and Huberman (1984) state:

If you *self-consciously* set out to collect and double-check findings, using multiple sources and modes of evidence, the verification process will largely be built into the data-gathering process, and little more need to be done than to report on one’s procedures (p. 235).

In this study, the researcher utilized multiple sources (i.e., multiple student-athletes within a sport, student-athletes from three different teams, member checking, secondary data sources) to triangulate the data. First, within each sport, multiple student-athletes were interviewed and their responses analyzed. Next, by utilizing member checking the researcher was able to seek clarification and allowed the participants the
opportunity to double-check the accuracy of the information they shared during their interview. Lastly, multiple secondary data sources were utilized. These data sources included documents published by the NCAA, various forms of print media (i.e., magazines, newspapers, internet), and previous scholarly research involving student-athletes.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the method in which the themes and sub-themes discussed here in emerged from the vast quantities of qualitative data collected from the twelve (12) research participants. The researcher also explains the steps taken to ensure that the findings are qualitatively dependable and valid. All of the participants gave freely of their time and were compensated with a sincere thank you from the researcher and the hope that the information they have shared will be the beginning of a better, stronger relationship with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

The twelve participants in this study are a part of one of the largest athletic departments in the country. Their teams compete in a major athletic conference where they consistently challenge for conference titles and qualify for NCAA championships or other post-season events. More specifically, the student-athletes that participated in this study represented the sports of basketball (men’s and women’s) and football. All of the participants in this study have been assigned pseudonyms. The pseudonyms and their corresponding demographic information have been provided for the reader in table 4.1 at the end of this chapter (page 78).
During the data analysis process, the following themes and sub-themes emerged: college athletics is a business; participation in college athletics is a job; a desire for financial equity; the value of education; academic support provided by the university; college athletics teach life skills; participation in college athletics is time consuming; the NCAA as an absentee parent; equality is the goal of the NCAA; and student-athletes feel disconnected from the NCAA.

These themes were identified by the researcher and confirmed by two peer debriefers who read the transcripts independent of each other. Although the major themes were all agreed upon, through discussion several sub-themes were added and the title of one of the themes was changed. Once the themes were agreed upon, the researcher reread the data and coded the themes. The transcripts were then read by a peer debriefer who confirmed, denied, or offered alternative coding for the data. All disputed codes were discussed by the researcher and debriefer before being assigned to a specific theme. The peer debriefer also examined the coded transcripts for areas that were not coded, but could possibly. These areas were also discussed by the researcher and peer debriefer before being coded or left uncoded.

**Theme One: College Athletics is a Business**

For the student-athletes involved in this study, the NCAA is a business. Some simply describe the NCAA as “…the executive board of a business” (Andrew, Interview, Winter 2005). A few student-athletes were a little more specific in their description of the NCAA referring to it as “…a money making business” (Ethan, Interview, Spring 2005). Still others were even more specific in comparing the NCAA to familiar professional
leagues like the National Basketball Association (NBA) (Ethan, Interview, Spring 2005) and National Football League (NFL) (Shannon, Interview, Spring 2005). Based on these interviews, it is clear that the student-athletes were cognizant of the complex situation that they were in as amateurs in a big business environment. Chris, a senior on the men’s basketball team, explained:

People think it is amateurism. It is amateurism compared to when it comes to us, but it is professionalism when it comes to the organization of the university, the money of the arenas, the people coming to the games. All that feels like a professional team; other than the people that are on the court. (Interview, Winter 2005)

The student-athletes also realize that a lot is at stake and that they are in school for more than just recreation. For example Ethan commented, “we play cause we love, you know, we play cause we have fun, but if we were just out to have fun and not really care about winning games, I think it’d be a big problem” (Interview, Spring 2005). John succinctly stated: “You’re on a full athletic scholarship, they brought you here to win” (Interview, Winter 2005). They know that their competitions are about more than just wins and losses. Specifically, they know that due to the business environment that they are in, bad or losing teams will often result in a coach losing his or her job.Aligned with this notion, Chris replied:

…just say your team is not that good or you are losing. Obviously coach is getting fired. Obviously there can be a lot of pressure on your university to get something new because that is not working and you are losing money from it. (Interview, Winter 2005)

Therefore, one of the first themes to emerge was that college athletics is a business.
Theme One, Sub-theme A: Participation in College Athletics is a Job

These student-athletes take their sport very seriously often referring to the time they spend with their sport as work or a job. Charles stated: “We’re here for 5 hours a day during the season. So, that’s 20 hours a week which is a part-time job” (Interview, Winter 2005). Calvin views his sport as a business and his participation in it as an opportunity for professional advancement. He further explained: “In my own mind, I look at it as a job. That the harder I work the more I can advance after college and hopefully make some money at this game” (Calvin, Interview Spring 2005). Some student-athletes even view themselves as entertainers “…there for the enjoyment of the public” (Andrew, Interview, Winter 2005). Thus, within the theme of college athletics is a business, the sub-theme of participation in college athletics is a job emerged.

Theme One, Sub-theme B: A Desire for Financial Equity

The second sub-theme to emerge from the theme of college athletics is a business, was a desire for financial equity. Student-athletes are aware that they are a major part of the NCAA. In fact Andrew believes that they are more than just a major part, but the essential part. He said, “They [NCAA] realize that we’re the gold mine. Without student-athletes there wouldn’t be an NCAA” (Andrew, Interview, Winter 2005). Despite feeling this position of value, many of the student-athletes felt that the NCAA did not fairly recognize their contribution to the organizations wealth.

Intermingled with the work mentality is the realization that they bring something very special to their university and the NCAA, money; lots and lots of money. In particular, student-athletes in football and men’s basketball referenced the revenue they
generate for their university’s athletic department. Calvin spoke of the $9 or $10 million
dollars that the basketball team generated last year (Interview, Spring 2005), while
Andrew simply said, “At LPMU we [the football team] make at least a couple million
every Saturday” (Interview, Winter 2005). John explained in more detail:

Here at LPMU, I think the stadium holds 106,000 and if the average ticket could
be $35 for a regular seat. $35, 106,000, you do the math. That’s millions and
millions of dollars, not counting concession stands and TV time, and
commercialson, and then endorsements with teams and coaches. (Interview, Winter
2005)

The student-athletes also know that a successful season will not only result in the
opportunity to compete for championships, but it also means more money for the athletic
department. In the case of football, that money comes from bowl payouts. For example,
“We went to a [major bowl] game two years in a row. That’s $14.5 million to the
[Platinum Conference] which is split up among 11 schools, but still $1.5 million to each
school” (Andrew, Interview, Winter 2005).

The participants in this study were never directly asked if they thought that
student-athletes should be paid. However, they would often bring it up themselves or
address the issue when asked open ended questions about how the NCAA could improve
their experience. The student-athletes in this study do not believe that they should be
paid, but they also agree that a little more money would not hurt (Ethan, Interview,
Spring 2005; Michael, Interview, Winter 2005; Vicki, Interview, Spring 2005). Although
the student-athletes in this study do not feel that they should be paid as professionals for
their athletic abilities, they do feel that the NCAA could “…try and bridge the gap a little
more between the things that we bring to the university…and the amount of money we
receive from the NCAA” (Chris, Interview, Winter 2005). Chris equated the student-athlete/NCAA relationship to the food pyramid. For example,

We are the lowest level. If you look at like a triangle, like the food triangle where your fats are more at the top, just say that is the NCAA. Then it filters down through the universities, the AD, the coaches, the chain at the bottom is us. We are the ones who are at the bottom, who are basically the base of it all. That is where it starts with us. We go through all the hard work, all the physical labor, all the trying to prepare for NCAA games. We are the ones who people come to watch to make the money. Where all the money then gets transferred up through the ranks of how they get paid, how the university makes money. Where does the money go to? (Chris, Interview, Winter 2005)

Vicki agreed explaining that “…the athletes are the people that are bringing the money in in the first place. I’m not saying big changes of thousands of dollars, but they could divide it up, you know, 40 or 50 dollars extra a month” (Vicki, Interview, Spring 2005).

Theme Two: The Value of an Education

The student-athletes in this study understood that they were given a great opportunity to attend college for free, obtain a high quality education, and play the sport that they enjoyed. Andrew, who is from the southeastern part of the United States, mentioned that he was grateful to be on full grant-in-aid and get an education that otherwise might not have been available to him (Interview, Winter 2005). Michael, one of several children from a middle class family, talked about it being hard to pay for college. He said, “I know a lot of just single students that are like, yeah I got a job, my parents are helping me, I got a student loan” (Michael, Interview, Winter 2005). He also said that he was grateful for the opportunity to get a degree while playing football. Chris stated that being on a full scholarship allowed him to “…get a great education for free” (Interview, Winter 2005), while Andrew mentioned the need to take advantage of the
opportunity they have been given and get an education (Interview, Winter 2005). Lastly, Vicki discussed how the combination of a free education and the opportunity to perform at such a high-level was an experience unlikely to be matched anywhere else within the university setting (Interview, Spring 2005). Therefore, the value of an education was the second major theme to emerge from the data.

**Theme Two, Sub-theme A: Academic Support Provided by the University**

Within the theme of education, the participants also spoke about the academic support provided by the university (sub-theme A). The participants felt that the university realizes that the road to academic success, just as with the road to athletic success, may be difficult at times, due to the rigors of being a student-athlete at such a high level. “Obviously you got to be on point when it comes to the academics so that you do not fall too far behind that you can’t catch up” (Chris, Interview, Winter 2005). In turn, the participants acknowledged that the university provides them with a variety of support to assist them with their academics so that they could be successful.

At LPMU, the university makes a variety academic support services available to student-athletes through the Success Center. The clear favorite of these services was priority scheduling. Sean stated: “The thing that I love is priority scheduling. That’s awesome” (Interview, Winter 2005). What makes priority scheduling so awesome is that “…you can schedule before students so that you do not have to worry about trying to get in to a class” (Chris, Interview, Winter 2005). Charles further explained that priority scheduling helps them “…get classes so we can graduate in four years” (Interview, Winter 2005).
Through the Success Center and their athletic academic counselors, student-athletes also are given free tutoring, writing assistance, and computer labs with free printing. Aligned with this statement, John stated: “I think they provide all the resources that we need to be successful with academics” (Interview, Winter 2005). The student-athletes in this study were well aware that they have access to a number of resources that are designed to assist them with their studies. Michael was a little critical of those student-athletes that were not making the grade. He explained: “If you don’t pass or you don’t maintain a certain gpa, you’re almost a moron to not use all your resources” (Michael, Interview, Winter 2005). Vicki also talked about utilizing these resources and not having success in the classroom.

I think that if you’re an athlete, I don’t know at every university, but at LPMU you really have to try to fail a class. Not because they give you the grades, but because there’s so many resources that you can use. Maybe not fail a class, but become ineligible because of grades. Cause I mean failing a class can happen, if you bomb a final or some thing. But to become ineligible, you just really have to try. (Vicki, Interview, Spring 2005)

**Theme Two, Sub-theme B: College Athletics Teach Life Skills**

The participants also talked about the education they received outside of the classroom. They explained that being a student-athlete has taught them skills that will carry with them beyond athletics and college. They felt that these life skills (sub-theme B) were preparing them for challenges that they will face in life. Toward that end, the participants spoke at length and very favorably about the education they were receiving outside of the classroom. They talked about sport being the teacher of skills that they will carry forward in to life. For example, the student-athletes talked about how playing sport has taught them time management, leadership, teamwork, discipline, and work ethic.
However, beyond these skills, the student-athletes talked about sport teaching them accountability, decision making, group dynamics, multi-tasking, and problem solving.

John explained: “Being a part of athletics helps with different types of skills that also will help you in the work world or anywhere after college” (Interview, Winter 2005).

Specifically, they talked about athletics helping them to develop skills that they will be able to utilize in their professional careers outside of sport. Ethan talked about organization and structure being keys for the future (Interview, Spring 2005), while Chris talked about understanding group dynamics (Interview, Winter 2005), and Shannon accountability. She said: “Learning how to be accountable for yourself at this age where a lot of other people maybe not experience that until they have a job” (Interview, Spring 2005). Not only did the participants feel that this education would help prepare them for the future, they felt that it gave them an advantage over traditional students when competing for jobs after their playing days. Calvin felt that student-athletes, specifically in basketball and football, have an advantage “…because we’re use to taking orders, we don’t talk back, we’re punctual, we’re on-time….I think it’s a great stepping stone for the business world” (Interview, Winter 2005). Charles felt that the exposure to persistent competition would give them an advantage over other students (Interview, Winter 2005). Michael explained, “…it’s not cockiness, but a certain kind of confidence you have going into it” (Interview, Winter 2005). Pam, a graduating senior, explained the role that athletics has played in her education this way:

Everything will always be a part of me and that can never be taken away. I think that I’ll base decisions that I’ll make in my life based off of what I’ve learned in college through my teammates and through coaches. That’s just amazing what athletics can really do for you. (Interview, Winter 2005)
Theme Three: Participation in College Athletics is Time Consuming

Participation in college athletics is time consuming was the third major theme that emerged during the analysis of the data. Primarily the participants talked about how being a student-athlete consumed their time. Louis said, “You don’t have as much free time as you like. Your life is your sport” (Louis, Interview, Spring 2005). Those things that occupied the majority of the student-athletes’ time include community service, conditioning, competition, film sessions, practice, and travel. More specifically the participants talked about how playing a sport often impacted their academics and limited their personal time.

The participants all seemed to be aware of NCAA Bylaw 17.1.5.1 which states: “A student-athlete’s participation in countable athletically related activities (see Bylaw 17.02.1) shall be limited to a maximum of four hours per day and 20 hours per week” (2004-2005 NCAA Manual, p236). The student-athletes explained that while they were confident that their coaches utilized all of that time, it was their own desire to be successful that had them spending extra time. Andrew figured that during the season he spent an additional hour or two of his personal time each day and “…at least 30 hours a week, maybe 40 hours a week” on his sport (Interview, Winter 2005). Michael acknowledged that at times during the season he felt overwhelmed with football, but he was not complaining about it consuming his time. He said,

That kind of comes with the territory I guess. How do you expect to win games if you’re not studying and playing football….A lot of us around here talk, there’s high expectations of trying to win a national championship here. So you think we’re just going to stop at the 20 hour rule and say nope. I think a lot more than
the 20 hour rule. I wouldn’t say how many. Some weeks less than others, but we spend a lot of time here. (Michael, Interview, Winter 2005)

Several of the participants commented that they knew this is what they were getting into. Ethan said, “…this is what you sign-up for. You know what you’re going to get, a lot of work, a lot of hard practices” (Interview, Spring 2005). Charles added: “I’m over here [training facility] more than I’m in my apartment, more than I’m in school, class…. Obviously, we signed up for this, so were not held here out of our control” (Interview, Winter 2005).

The participants also discussed how their academic life was impacted by their participation in collegiate athletics. “Obviously your time is taken up; a lot of your time that you need to do studying. Or the traveling that you have to do, miss classes that you wouldn’t ordinarily miss” (Chris, Interview, Winter 2005). Vicki explained that team travel was the primary reason for missing classes, but also talked about the cumulative wear of the season on a student-athlete. She said,

You can’t change that you’re leaving. You’re flying out of town and you have a class tomorrow. I mean, you can’t change that. But then I think a lot of the other time it’s just that you are so busy and you just want to be able to sit down and relax. And just when you want to do that, that’s when you have class and a lot of people just make the choice either to go or not to go. (Vicki, Interview, Spring 2005)

Pam agreed that the schedule was rigorous. “You’re missing classes; you’re constantly traveling especially [during] the season. My season is pretty much from November to April, like a huge chunk of the school year” (Pam, Interview, Winter 2005). Ethan articulated that, in the past, team travel has accounted for him missing the same class 5 or 6 times (Interview, Spring 2005). Louis explained that the academic support was always
available to the student-athletes, “…but if you gotta play, if you’re on the road somewhere you still have to make up your work” (Interview, Spring 2005).

Several student-athletes talked about how being a student-athlete did not allow them the time to be involved with activities that other students might. Ethan explained that they simply did not have enough time to be involved in the organizations that a lot of students enjoy. Vicki talked about her sister, a non student-athlete at another school, being able to get involved with more school activities than she is able to as a student-athlete (Interview, Spring 2005). Shannon talked about not being close to home and seldom having an opportunity to go home throughout the year. She explained that they miss the Thanksgiving break because of games and practice. They usually received a few days around the Christmas holiday, but then hoped to miss spring break because that would mean they were playing in the NCAA Tournament. “Then they expect you here during the summer to work on your game because that’s when you get better during the summer. So it’s year round, no breaks” (Shannon, Interview, Spring 2005). Another student-athlete talked about how this constant cycle of sport has taken a toll on her.

For me I’m getting to the point where now I’m looking at being a senior next year and it’s been non-stop. I mean our program we go to summer school. So since high school, we’ve never had a break and I’m starting to get burnt out, like I just wanna, not do it anymore. (Vicki, Interview, Spring 2005)

Theme Four: The NCAA as an Absentee Parent

In general, the participants in this study believed that the NCAA attempts to protect student-athletes. In fact, many of the participants felt that the primary mission of the NCAA was to create a fair and level playing field for all member institutions and student-athletes. For example Calvin stated: “I feel that they create an even playing field
and keep it fair for all teams” (Interview, Winter 2005). The participants also explained that the NCAA creates equality through the construction and enforcement of their many rules and regulations. Pam stated: “They make it a very fair experience for all athletes” (Interview, Winter 2005). However, the student-athletes also explained that although they had to live by these rules they did not have any meaningful input on their creation. In addition, several of the student-athletes felt that some of the rules actually hampered them or their institution instead of helping. The student-athletes remarked that although they had no direct contact with the NCAA, they knew that they were always watching them. Sean explained it this way:

It is kind of like a big brother because you never really see them, but you know they are always there. You know what I mean. They have their hands in everything. Whatever you do it’s got to abide by their rules. They are always around, but you never really see them, but you got to do what they say. (Interview, Winter 2005)

The student-athletes explained that although the NCAA made the rules and always had the final say in enforcement of them; it was their institution that was responsible for their enforcement. Ultimately the combination of the NCAA’s parental nature in the creation of rules to promote equality and to protect the student-athletes, while monitoring them from afar led to the emergence of the fourth theme: the NCAA as an absentee parent.

Theme Four, Sub-theme A: Equality is the Goal of the NCAA

The student-athletes believed that the NCAA is very interested in creating and maintaining equality both on and off the field. Although the student-athletes do not agree with all of the rules and regulations that the NCAA uses to manufacture equality, they feel it is the goal. Chris said: “They [NCAA] do try and keep it as fair as possible even
though there are a lot of rules that are just ridiculous. But that is the main focus, to try and keep the playing field even and fair for everyone” (Interview, Winter 2005). Despite describing some of the rules as outrageous and totally absurd, Calvin felt that the rules were “…pretty fair to student-athletes” (Interview, Spring 2005). In regards to fairness on the field, the student-athletes talked about sportsmanship (Andrew, Interview, Winter 2005; Charles, Interview, Winter 2005; Ethan, Interview, Spring 2005). Away from the field Andrew explained that “the NCAA mandates that the money [from bowl games] is shared within the conference” (Interview, Winter 2005). Both Louis and Shannon shared a story about traveling by bus rather than by plane to an away game in an effort to diminish some of the economic advantage they have over other schools. Louis said: “They [NCAA] make it so that we cannot fly everywhere. So we had to drive to two places… They create rules that give people their advantages to them” (Interview, Spring 2005). Shannon explained that some of the other schools in the conference have smaller budgets and could not afford to fly everywhere all of the time. She said: “…you’re all trying to compete so you got to try to level the playing field as much as possible” (Interview, Spring 2005). Additionally, several student-athletes believed that the NCAA’s effort to create rules that treat everyone fairly, actually harm some. For example Sean stated:

My perspective is, their [NCAA] goal is to make things fair for everybody and to do that it is going to be unfair for some….So they try to improve it, in doing so, I think they hurt the group a lot of times. (Interview, Winter 2005)

Although Sean did not have a specific example, both Andrew and Vicki used the Academic Progress Rate (APR) as an example. Vicki, a double-major, talked about the
how she was not going to be able to take two classes towards her major over the summer because it would have left her short the required hours towards her degree, during the year. Failure to meet this requirement would have made her ineligible. Andrew, who is on schedule to graduate in three years, said the new rule “…discourage the student-athlete from advancing.” He explained: “It helps the people who fall behind and don’t do work, but it also hurts the people who do. It’s kind of like bell curve” (Andrew, Interview, Winter 2005). The point that Andrew was making was that the NCAA is interested in grouping everyone in the middle. Therefore, they focus their policies on this group. Those student-athletes that under-achieve or over-achieve, in this case academically, are encouraged by the rules to conform to the rules and in the process pulling them towards the middle. For the under-achieving student-athlete this is a positive step forward, while the over-achieving student-athlete is being forced to take a step backward.

Theme Four, Sub-theme B: Student-athletes Feel Disconnected from the NCAA

In an effort to create equality for all institutions and participants, the NCAA seems also to have distanced itself both physically and psychologically from the student-athletes. As was previously discussed, the student-athletes know that the NCAA is in charge. Andrew described it this way, “we play, the NCAA’s basically our boss. The NCAA basically sets the rules and regulations that we have to follow and we follow them” (Interview, Winter 2005). However, contact between the NCAA and the student-athlete is very limited. Instead, the university serves as a liaison for the two groups. Charles explained that, “contact with the NCAA limited. Everything we go through here
is through our institution” (Interview, Winter 2005). When Sean was asked whether or not he though the NCAA was friendly to student-athletes he replied, “I don’t see how they can be friendly if they’re not around. So, I do not see how friendly you could be with someone if you don’t talk to them” (Interview, Winter 2005). In response to the same question, Ethan stated:

I can’t comment. I haven’t dealt with the NCAA so I don’t know how friendly they can be or not. I haven’t been on any organization who’s talked to the NCAA. I haven’t been on any board, so to speak, to have talked to the NCAA. So, I’m not really sure. From the outside looking in, I would say no. But then again that’s just from the outside looking in. I haven’t been really involved hands-on with them. (Interview, Spring 2005)

Sean said that the interview had made him realize that the student-athletes do not have much contact with the NCAA, unless they violate a rule. He asked, “What exactly is the NCAA? Maybe if they sat down [pause], They are kind of like set up on a hill and we don’t really know I guess what they are all about” (Interview, Winter 2005).

Overall, the participants in this study did not feel that they were necessarily at the core of NCAA decision making nor did they have much if any input on the legislation that governed them. Ethan asserted: “We’re probably in the top five of what they’re [NCAA] thinking, but I don’t think we’re their number one choice, number one priority” (Interview, Spring 2005). Although Shannon did not have any personal examples, she did not feel that the NCAA always has the student-athletes best interest in mind. She explained that her opinion was based on things she had heard through the media or friends at other NCAA schools (Interview, Spring 2005). Charles said that he would like to think that student-athletes were at the core of NCAA decision making, “…but obviously a lot of things are financial in this world…. I believe, I mean I would like to
say yes that we are, but I don’t know if there is any real way to figure that out”

(Interview, Winter 2005). John said he hoped that the majority of the NCAA’s decisions were made with the student-athlete in mind. He explained why he hoped this was so:

Because I think it’s kind of like a totem pole. I know that they’re at the top, but I think that everything, in a sense, starts with the student-athlete. We’re out there and we’re representing collegiate sports. Every week we’re on TV, we’re out there playing and bringing in revenue and all that. So I would think that when they make decisions that they think of us first and then everyone else after that. (John, Interview, Winter 2005)

In general, the participants were aware that they had a voice in the NCAA through the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC). More specifically, they knew that they were represented within their university on the Student-Athlete Advisory Board (SAAB) by one or two team members. Vicki explained that through this system she did not feel like she had any direct input on legislation but that indirectly through SAAB student-athletes were able to have a little impact (Interview, Spring 2005). The student-athletes talked about having voice, but they felt that it was not heard or ultimately did not matter. More specifically, Chris felt that he did not have any input on legislation. He further explained added: “I’m not complaining, but if I was I don’t feel like anyone would be listening though” (Interview, Winter 2005). Similarly Louis stated, “I think that the head people of the NCAA are going to decide what they want to decide regardless of what the student-athletes think” (Interview, Spring 2005). Andrew echoed this sentiment: “Obviously, if the NCAA wants a rule to pass no matter what the student says, obviously it’s going to get passed” (Interview, Winter 2005). Sean also expressed his reservations in regard to student-athletes influencing the NCAA. He said: “I just don’t see how even if the whole team backs an idea, [pause] I really don’t see how we’re going to influence the
NCAA to make a change” (Sean, Winter 2005). Chris hoped that in the future this relationship could be improved. The following excerpt captures this point of view.

…Maybe there could less of a gap between us [the student-athletes and the NCAA] where it feels like we are the ones that are just getting ruled. Our say has nothing to do with what is going on because they are the ones who just filter everything down. (Interview, Winter 2005)

Essentially, the student-athletes expressed a feeling of being disconnected from the NCAA. They felt that at the highest level all final decisions, regarding them, were simply made for them with little or no input.

Research Question One – General Perceptions

What are student-athletes’ general perceptions of the NCAA?

Findings

Based on the findings of this study, the general perceptions of the NCAA by the participants in this study can be summarized in three points. First, the student-athletes perceive the NCAA to be a governing body intent on making rules and enforcing them. Second, the participants perceive that the NCAA creates and enforces rules that promote fairness and equality in an effort to protect them. However, they also felt that, in the effort to create fairness and equality, some of the rules actually hurt them. Third, the student-athletes felt disconnected from the NCAA. In other words, they did not feel that they had much input, involvement, or role in the governance of the NCAA.

To further explain the student-athletes general perceptions of the NCAA, the researcher has used the phrase the NCAA as an absentee parent to describe the relationship that emerged between the two groups. For the purposes of this discussion, the NCAA will be the parent, the university will be the babysitter, and the student-athlete
the child. Just as a parent would, the NCAA provides the structure under which student-athletes must conduct themselves leaving the university or babysitter with an opportunity to enhance these rules, but never to lessen them. Therefore, while the parent is not around the babysitter is left in charge of the children or student-athletes. If a child breaks a rule while the parent is out the babysitter has a responsibility to enforce the rule and sanction the child in an appropriate manner. In addition, when the parent returns home, the babysitter has the responsibility to report on the child’s behavior. Upon explaining what rule the child broke and how they were sanctioned for it by the babysitter, the parent will decide whether or not further punishment is warranted. However, if the parent returns home and the babysitter should decide not to tell the parent of the rule violation or if the parent finds out that rules were not followed while they were away (and eventually they always do) and that nothing was done, the babysitter will face consequences. For example, perhaps their services will not be utilized for a period of time or never again. The other issue is that because the parent is away so much, the lion share of the nurturing is left to the babysitter. They are the one that helps with homework, school projects, prepares meals, takes them to extracurricular activities, etc. This lack of nurturing also leads to an emotional or psychological distance between the parent and child. The other issue is that the parent only really asserts their relationship with the child when rules are involved relaying the message of authority figure, but leaving out the love that is essential to a strong and lasting relationship.
Research Question Two – Purposes and Goals

Do student-athletes’ perceptions of the NCAA match the organization’s stated purposes and goals?

Findings

To best answer this question, the researcher utilized the themes of college athletics as a business, education, and time to compare student-athlete perceptions of the NCAA to the NCAA’s stated purposes and goals.

Athletics as Recreation. In athletic departments across the country, the student-athletes are surrounded by professionalism and commercialism. This is particularly true for student-athletes participating in the sports of basketball and football. For example, the men’s and women’s basketball teams practice in and play their home basketball in a recently constructed building with a corporately sponsored arena. The arena and stadium, within which they participate, include suites, club seats, and display advertisements for various companies. Their warm-ups, uniforms, shoes, and equipment are all adorned with the corporate logo of the exclusive athletic department supplier. In addition, their games are broadcast locally, regionally, or nationally.

Also, earlier in this chapter, the student-athletes explained that they viewed their participation in collegiate sport as a job or work and not an avocation. Therefore, to them athletics was more than just an avocation or recreation. A few student-athletes even considered themselves an entertainer.
Athletics are a Fundamental Part of Education and Student-athletes are a Fundamental part of the Student Body. Based on the findings of this study, it appears that at the current time, athletics is not being maintained as a fundamental part of education. Rather, it is education that is being maintained as a vital part of athletics. The manner in which these student-athletes are educated is different from their peers in the student body. For example, not only do they have an academic advisor, just as any other student would, but they also have an athletics academic advisor. It is the athletic advisor that helps student-athletes select their classes or arranges for extra help. It appears that the student-athlete education is designed around their athletics schedule, rather than the athletic schedule being designed to fit their academic schedules.

Participating in collegiate sport consumes the time of the student-athlete. As with other rules and regulations discussed in this study, the student-athletes were very aware of the rules and regulations that govern the amount of team time can spend on athletics daily and weekly. However, due to their inner drive and personal pursuit of athletics excellence, student-athletes generally exceed these limits. While missing class, due to travel was not an issue raised by the football players in this study, the basketball players did view it as an issue. They discussed the challenges of maintaining their academics during the season while on the road and competing frequently. Making things more difficult is the fact that their season stretches across two academic periods generally running from November through March. In addition to that some student-athletes discussed the “actual” meaning of the term voluntary.
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Table 4.1: Participant demographic information.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine student-athletes’ general perceptions of the NCAA and how those perceptions align with the Association’s stated purposes and goals. To study these perceptions and develop a better sense of the student-athlete’s voice, individual interviews were executed. The interviews provided each participant with an opportunity to speak openly and candidly about how their experiences as a student-athlete have shaped their perceptions of the NCAA. In Chapter 4, the researcher used the student-athletes’ own words to demonstrate the themes and sub-themes that emerged, during data analysis. In this chapter, the researcher discusses how these themes and sub-themes help answer the research questions, relate to or expand upon the literature, and the study’s implications for various groups. The researcher also discusses the emergence of a new theory that is grounded in the data. Lastly, this chapter offers recommendations for future research on this topic.

Research Question One – General Perceptions

What are student-athletes’ general perceptions of the NCAA?

Discussion of Findings

Based on the findings of this study, the general perceptions of the NCAA by the participants in this study can be summarized in three points. First, the student-athletes
perceive the NCAA to be a governing body and is responsible for all it entails. Second, the participants believe that the NCAA creates and enforces rules that promote fairness and equality in an effort to protect them. Third, the student-athletes perceive the NCAA to be distant and cold. Therefore, the emergent theme of the NCAA as an absentee parent was utilized to answer this question. With this understanding it is not the student-athletes’ perceptions that deserve further discussion, but how these perceptions are formed.

*Student-athletes’ perceptions of the NCAA are formed on the basis of their knowledge of the rules with which they must conform to and how they are impacted by those rules.* The following excerpts are typical examples of the student-athletes general perceptions of the NCAA.

It is like the law that governs all of the athletics in college. It is kind of like…a big brother because you never really see them, but you know they are always there. You know what I mean. They have their hands in everything. Whatever you do it’s got to abide by their rules. They are always around, but you never really see them, but you got to do what they say. (Sean, Interview, Winter 2005)

They handle things…they keep us in line. Rules and regulations, what we can and can’t do, what we can and can’t accept. What is acceptable and what is not acceptable as a Division I student-athlete. You can have a big overview or go into great detail, but all in all they just want your college experience to be the best it could be. (Pam, Interview, Winter 2005)

It’s an organization that [pause] I mean, it has a lot of guidelines, but I think that for the most part it does what it’s suppose to do. Because if there wasn’t a whole bunch of guidelines and rules then athletes probably wouldn’t be doing their job and probably wouldn’t be doing all the things that their suppose to do. But I think that most of the time they take good care of you. I think that there’s rules out there that are kind of bogus, but for the most part, I think it does what it’s suppose to do. (Vicki, Interview, Spring 2005)
These excerpts demonstrate the student-athletes’ perception of the NCAA as a governing body that is responsible for rules creation in an effort to create a level playing field for all participants.

If student-athletes are forming their perceptions of the NCAA on the basis of their knowledge of the rules, the next logical question is, how do student-athletes learn the rules? The participants, in this study, explained that before the start of their season they would meet as a team with a member of the compliance office who would make a presentation on the rules. For those student-athletes that compete in a fall sport, like football, this meeting may occur before they even have their first practice. The student-athletes explained that they did not cover all of the rules, but instead focused on the major ones and any changes that occurred in the past year. Ethan explained that they received a copy of the NCAA manual, but were not required to read it. He also said that the presentation did not cover the whole book. He referred to the presentation as “…the Cliff notes on what’s in the book because the book’s really thick” (Interview, Spring 2005). In general, the participants agreed that the meeting was helpful to everyone, but most important to the first and second year players. Despite the meetings’ repetitive nature, the more veteran student-athletes said that it was helpful to hear about the revisions.

The participants made it very clear that developing knowledge of the rules was important to their success as a student-athlete. They know that if they violate a rule they will be sanctioned. Pam explained:

Basically it’s made my experience…kept me in line. Not accepting things I shouldn’t be accepting, not putting myself in a situation where I’m uncomfortable as a student-athlete. The rules they have are pretty much what you see is what you get. You break the rule and then there is a consequence. I think that as a SA you
know that, whether you have broken a rule or not. You know there’s going to be a consequence so I feel like they just kind of made my experience go smooth. (Interview, Winter 2005)

The participants also felt that their school did a good job of educating them and that they knew right from wrong. However, what seems to be missing from their education is an understanding of the rules. It seems that it is not important for the student-athlete to know why something is wrong, only that it is wrong. In other words, there does not appear to be any value in explaining why something is wrong.

John, a freshman, who called the meeting extremely valuable because it helped the student-athletes from hurting themselves by violating a rule, also touched on another important reason for knowing the rules. Also stated: “So they’re trying to protect you, but they’re trying to protect themselves too so that you don’t give them a bad name” (Interview, Winter 2005). John’s comments relate to the information presented in 2002 by outgoing NCAA President Cedric Dempsey. Dempsey explained that between 1999 and 2002, the NCAA enlisted the services of three firms to conduct research on the public perception of college sports in general and the NCAA. What the NCAA found was that they were not perceived in a manner that matched their mission. For example, respondents in focus groups and on-line surveys considered the NCAA “…big business intent on making money for the NCAA…” (Dempsey, 2002, p.24). Furthermore, the respondents indicated that making money should be a lower priority for the NCAA but felt that generating revenue was what the NCAA focused on the most (Dempsey, 2002). The findings of these research projects also mention several times that student-athletes or
issues related to their welfare should be the top priority of the NCAA but are not. As a result of this research the NCAA developed “…a multi-year public affairs plan aimed at reputation management and engaging new media and corporate partners in ways that enhance the attributes of intercollegiate athletics and higher education” (Dempsey, 2002, p.22).

Student-athletes' contact with the NCAA is very limited or nonexistent, which has forced them to form their perceptions of the NCAA on the information available to them. The participants readily expressed feeling disconnected from the NCAA. For example, Calvin stated: “I don’t know that I have much of a relationship with the NCAA. I think it’s pretty distant. Besides me playing for a team in the NCAA I don’t have much communication with the NCAA or anything like that” (Interview, Spring 2005). Charles agreed, “Contact with the NCAA’s limited. Everything we go through here is through our institution” (Interview, Winter 2005). Ethan explained that his information came from coaches and other sources. He said:

I have no idea what goes on at the NCAA. The only thing I know is what coaches come back from meetings and tell us. We go through them as to what the NCAA wants and what’s going on with the NCAA. Then stuff you hear on the news, the internet, and stuff like that. We don’t have any hands-on with the NCAA or anything. (Interview, 2005)

When asked if she had any final thoughts on topics just discussed Shannon summed up student-athletes’ opinions best. She said:

I think it’s hard to judge the NCAA because a lot of times what you hear about is such an individual case that they’re normally trying to rule on something; this team, this person. It’s just hard to say overall that it’s good or it’s bad. That’s probably my most honest opinion about them. It’s just hard to say whether it’s really, really good or really, really bad. It changes so often (Interview, Spring 2005).
Research Question Two

Do student-athletes’ perceptions of the NCAA match the organization’s stated purposes and goals?

Discussion of Findings

To best answer this question the researcher examined the following three NCAA principles: (a) the principle of amateurism; (b) the principle of sound academic standards; and (c) the principle governing playing and practice seasons. These three principles were utilized because they most closely related to the themes that emerged from the data: college athletics as a business, education, and time.

The principle of amateurism. The NCAA states that student-athletes should be driven to compete in collegiate sport by the educational, mental, physical, and social benefits they will receive as a part of their participation. Therefore their “…participation in collegiate athletics is an avocation, and student-athletes should be protected from exploitation by professional and commercial enterprises” (NCAA manual, 2004, p. 5).

In athletic departments across the country, student-athletes are surrounded by commercialism. Now more than ever, the line between professional and intercollegiate sport is blurred by athletic department budgets in excess of $80 million; new or refurbished stadiums and arenas complete with luxury suites and club seats; player uniforms adorned with corporate logos; and an 11 year $6.2 billion broadcast contract (Clarke & Seltzer, 2003; Horrow, 2002; Schneider, 2000; Stetson, 2004). This is particularly true for student-athletes participating in the sports of basketball and football.
The NCAA itself maintains 56 trademarks and 39 registered licensee’s to go along with their three corporate champions (i.e., Coca Cola, Cingular Wireless, and Pontiac Motors) and three corporate partners (Kraft Foods, Monster, and The Hartford)(ncaa.org).

Also, in the previous chapter, the student-athletes explained that they viewed their participation in collegiate sport as a job or work and not an avocation. Therefore, to student-athletes, athletics was more than just an avocation or recreation. A few student-athletes even considered themselves entertainers. All of this aligns with findings of the 2001 Knight Foundation Commission report that outlined commercialism and the financial arms race as to major problems threatening college athletics (Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2001). In addition, the findings demonstrated that several student-athletes felt that they were not being treated equitably by the NCAA. They felt that the NCAA was exploiting them; profiting from their hard work and effort.

The bottom line is that the student-athletes are aware that college athletics, specifically the sports of basketball and football, generate large amounts of money each year. They can see the money coming in to the university through ticket sales, apparel sales, sponsorship agreements, and suites/luxury boxes (Horrow, 2002; Pickle, 2002). They know that their coach is being paid large sums of money and that the more they win the more the coach receives (Fish, 2003; Sylwester & Witosky, 2004). However, what the student-athletes do not see is how that money is returned to them. The student-athletes in this study expressed that the NCAA may help fund schools that are struggling but would not assist their school because it is not struggling. In fact, only about nine percent of a Division I-A school’s revenues come from money distributed through the NCAA or
conference offices. Rather, the majority of the revenue is being generated by ticket sales (26%) and cash contributions (18%) from alumni and others (Pickle, 2002). What the student-athletes do see is everyone else reaping the benefits of their hard work. For example, Ethan explained that he felt the NCAA’s number one goal was to make money. When asked if he had an experience that had helped form this perception he said, “…these big TV contracts that they get and how they actually use athletes to make money. I don’t know who’s actually making the money at the NCAA. Whoever it is, somebody’s making money off what we do as athletes” (Interview, Spring 2005).

The principle of sound academic standards. Principle 2.5 of the NCAA constitution states that athletics should be sustained as a fundamental part of the student-athletes education and that the student-athlete should be connected to the rest of the student body. Lastly, the principle conveys that the academic standards for student-athletes should mirror those of the general student body (NCAA manual, 2004).

In essence, the NCAA is saying that student-athletes should be treated the same as traditional students academically and socially. As an ideal this sounds great. But, in reality, it is not happening. The manner in which student-athletes are educated is different from their peers in the student body. For example, Andrew explained that student-athletes are required to meet academic standards set by the NCAA that the normal student doesn’t have to meet (Interview, Winter 2005). Also, in this study, the student-athletes consistently discussed the resources that are made available to them through student-athlete support services. However, the fact that student-athletes have an athletic academic counselor and do receive some academic perks (i.e., free tutoring, a computer lab, priority
scheduling) should not be viewed as a negative. Rather, research has shown that student-athletes need this extra counseling because of the multiple challenges they face trying to meet the demands of being both a student and an athlete (Lanning & Toye, 1993; Parham, 1993; Watt & Moore, 2001). Lanning and Toye (1993) explain that from a counseling perspective, student-athletes should not be treated the same as traditional students. The authors also state that student-athletes face all of the same challenges as traditional students plus they are playing a sport. Aside from an additional counselor, the services available to student-athletes are also available to traditional students. However, the difference is that these services are free and all in one location for the student-athlete.

After discussing the resources available to student athletes, John said: “I think they provide all the resources that we need to be successful with academics” (Interview, Winter 2005).

Fletcher, Benshoff, and Richburg (2003) caution that despite providing student-athletes with the resources to achieve academic success, they are often being sent a mixed message about academics by the university and coach. For example, twice this past year Division I-A football teams competed in regular season games on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday nights (Murphy, 2004). In addition coaches’ salaries are laced with big incentives for winning (Fish, 2003) and priority scheduling is used to accommodate demands of sport more often than the demands of academics (Andrew, Interview, Winter 2005). Therefore, it appears that the student-athlete education is designed around their athletics schedule, rather than the athletic schedule being designed to fit their academic schedules.
The principle governing playing and practice seasons. This principle illustrates the amount of time a student-athlete is required to spend on athletics being regulated by the NCAA. The primary reason for this regulation is to lessen the conflict between sport and academics and afford student-athletes with the same educational opportunities as other students at their university.

As with other rules and regulations discussed in this study, the student-athletes were very aware of the NCAA’s four hour a day and 20 hours a week regulations. However, this did not stop them from spending extra hours on their own in the pursuit of athletics excellence. Also, the student-athletes competing in basketball often talked about missing class due to travel and the challenges of maintaining their academics during the season. Making things more difficult is the fact that their season stretches across two academic periods generally running from November through March. In addition to that some student-athletes discussed the “actual” meaning of the term voluntary.

I think that the one thing that’s kind of funny to me is that all these things are suppose to be optional, but they’re really not optional. No mater what they say, how there’s not gonna be a severe, a consequence for you not doing it. Well that’s a lie. And that’s just not our program or LPMU, that’s every program. If it’s optional in the Spring to go workout to lift four days a week, to play open gym twice a week, do individuals three days a week. that’s really not optional. (Vicki, Interview, Spring 2005)

Again there appears to be a disparity between the ideal that the NCAA has established in their principles and the reality that student-athletes are experiencing. Dempsey (2002) himself discussed the “trust gap” that had developed on campuses across the country between student-athletes their coaches and administrators. He explained:

They [student-athletes] talk about the intrusion of athletics on their time, especially personal time….about their inability to integrate into the rest of the
student body because of demands and the isolation imposed upon them by coaches….the socialization and “culturalization” failure they feel because their world is rarely allowed to expand beyond the width of the field or court…the reality of expectations that turn them into athlete-students far more often than student-athletes (p. 8).

Also, in late 2004 and early 2005, the NCAA seemed to be sending mixed signals about the length of playing seasons and number of competitions. At the end of 2004, several proposals were made that if passed would have limited the number of competitions a team could compete in over the course of a year (“Athletes take issue”, 2004). Then, in April of 2005, the Division I board of directors voted to allow the permanent addition of a 12th football game beginning in 2006. NCAA President Myles Brand explained that the additional game will not extend the calendar length of the season because the additional game will simply replace a bye week (Pennington, 2005). Although there is no evidence at the current time that a permanent 12th game will negatively impact student-athletes academic performance, the findings of this study indicate that the student-athletes will spend a considerable amount of time preparing for that competition.

Conclusions

Within all of the findings of this study, there seems to be one common thread. This thread is that the NCAA’s ideal as stated in their purposes and goals and the student-athlete’s reality do not match. In other words, there are gaps between the NCAA and the student-athletes they represent. The researcher believes that these gaps can be labeled in two ways. First, there appears to be a gap in the understanding between the student-athletes and the NCAA. Primarily, this understanding gap revolves around the rules and the financing of college athletics. For example, Ethan shared a story about serving as one
of several judges for a read-a-thon at a local school and not being allowed to accept a t-shirt in appreciation for his time. He explained that, according to the NCAA, this was an extra benefit, although the other three judges were also receiving the t-shirt (Interview, Spring 2005). Chris also gave the example of attending a picnic with a group of people and eating at the picnic like everyone else. He said shortly after such an event he would be contacted by compliance about paying the people responsible for the food that he ate while in attendance. Although he did nothing different than the other guests, this would be seen as an extra benefit (Interview, Winter 2005). It is situations like these that often leave student-athletes asking why certain rules are in place. The student-athletes do not understand how they are being protected when they acting in the same manner as everyone else.

The findings demonstrated that the student-athletes know that they generate millions of dollars for their university and college sports in general through broadcast fees (i.e., 11 year $6.2 billion contract with CBS), marketing rights (i.e., NCAA’s corporate champions and corporate partners), and championship events. However, they do not understand how their institution utilizes the revenues that they generate or how the NCAA returns revenues to their institutions through the conference office.

The second gap is in communication. The student-athletes explained that they do not read the 500 plus page NCAA manual, but instead follow the rules communicated to them by the compliance office and their coaches. Many of them also talked about the student-athlete advisory board (SAAB) at their university as a form of communication. The problem is that SAAB and the national student-athlete advisory committee (SAAC)
works like a more advanced version of the telephone game we played when we were children. For example, the national SAAC comprised of one representative from each of the 31 Division I conferences sends two representatives to the management council to serve as the voice of the student-athlete. These two members then report to the remaining 29 national SAAC members who report back to their respective conference representatives. These representative then report to their institution’s student-athlete advisory board who then disseminate the information to their teammates. It is not hard to imagine that the message at the end is not quite the same as at the start. In addition to this, the SAAC brochure boasts that student-athlete participation on national committees has increased from 28 to 80 across all three divisions (NCAA, n.d.). Although the increase is a positive, it is still embarrassingly low. For example, the NCAA is comprised of over 360,000 student-athletes. They are represented by 80 people or .0002 percent.

Through the use of grounded theory, the researcher has developed the GAP theory. What is great about GAP theory is that it not only illustrates the problem (i.e., communication gap; understanding gap), but it also serves as an acronym for the proposed method for addressing the problem; Greater Athlete Participation. This theory calls an increase in the number of student-athletes participating in the Association and their member institutions, but also calls for greater depth in participation. For example, according information available on the NCAA’s website (ncaa.org), there are 14 committees for Division I. Among these 14 committees is the student-athlete advisory committee (SAAC), which is comprised of one student-athlete from each of the 31 conferences. These 31 members are selected by the members of the Division I
Management Council from a pool of candidates in each conference (NCAA, n.d.). In addition to their position on the SAAC, eight student-athletes also serve on four of the remaining 13 Division I committees. These committees include the management council (2), men’s basketball issues (2), women’s basketball issues (2), and football issues (1 each from I-A and I-AA). Among these four, only the two basketball committees state that the student-athletes have a voting power. Some of the committees that student-athletes are not represented on include academic performance, infractions, infractions appeals, legislative review and interpretation, and student-athlete reinstatement. Also, Division I student-athletes do not hold standing positions on either the Academics/Eligibility/Compliance Cabinet or the Championships/Competition Cabinet.

GAP theory calls for student-athletes to be represented as full committee members on all of their current committees and to be granted a seat as full members on the other committees. If only the current SAAC members were utilized, two student-athletes could serve on each committee. Simply adding student-athletes to these committees gives them a greater voice, but granting them full membership provides them with the voting power to turn that voice into action. In addition to committee membership, Division I student-athletes should be granted the right to speak about legislation on the convention floor as Division II and Division III student-athletes do (NCAA, n.d.). Also, GAP theory calls for the student-athletes within each conference to select the individuals that will represent them on the national SAAC instead of the Management Council.
GAP theory is not just about change at the national level, but at the conference and institutional level as well. Student-athletes should be a part of every committee that is making decisions that impact them. Again, not only does this provide the student-athletes with a greater voice, but it also helps them form a better understanding of how the organization works and why certain actions are taken. For example, student-athletes should be a part of budgeting or finance committees. This will help them understand where the revenues they generate are utilized and in what forms they are returned to the athletes.

The student-athletes in this study have made it clear that their time is limited due to their participation in sport. Therefore, the GAP theory does not call for increased participation from only those student-athletes serving on their institution, conference, or national SAAC, but from all student athletes that are willing to take an active role in the governance of collegiate athletics. For example, at the institutional level, perhaps three student-athletes (one from each season) would serve simultaneously on a committee therefore increasing the likelihood of student-athlete representation.

Once student-athletes are more fully participating in the governance of college athletics, they will need a way to share their information. Due to the geographic diversity within the NCAA the use of websites and electronic mail offer good avenues for the dissemination of information at the national and conference level. However, at the local level each team or university could simply have a central location where information was posted (i.e., bulletin board).
It should be noted that this study focused entirely on the perceptions of varsity student-athletes competing in the “major” sports of basketball and football at a Large Public Midwestern University. As a result, the researcher accepts that the findings of this study and the conclusions drawn from them may not be generalizable past the sample, but encourages others to read the thick description provided and make that determination for themselves.

Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, several suggestions were offered for the NCAA, athletic directors, university presidents, and student-athletes. These recommendations are also based on suggestions made by the twelve participants who freely gave of their time to be a part of this study. If implemented, these recommendations have the ability to lessen if not close the gap between the student-athlete, their institution, and the Association. Lastly, the researcher made several recommendations for future research.

Researcher’s Recommendations

1. The student-athletes appear to have some general knowledge of the NCAA, but lack an understanding of how they, the university, and NCAA interact. Therefore, the author recommends the implementation of a class for credit that student-athletes would be required to take and pass. The class could provide historical information about the NCAA along with information about the services the NCAA provides to student-athletes, how the organization is financed, how legislation is created, how the student-athletes can become involved in the
organization, and other current topics related to the Association (i.e., payment of
student-athletes, and Title IX). The author recommends that the class be taken
during the student-athlete’s first year in order to maximize their opportunity to
apply their understanding through involvement in NCAA.

2. Knowledge of the rules which student-athletes must abide by is essential to the
success of every student-athlete. The majority of student-athletes in this study
indicated that the presentation was most helpful to underclassmen and became
redundant to upperclassmen. Although the rules presentation was the primary way
in which the student-athletes indicated learning the rules, they also talked about
learning the rules through situations that occurred at their institution or throughout
the NCAA. The student-athletes explained that they would have mini-meetings
with compliance to discuss a specific issue that had arose and what steps they
could take in the future to avoid being in that situation. These real like examples
were also very beneficial as a way of learning NCAA rules. Therefore, the
researcher recommends involving upperclassmen in the creation of the yearly
rules presentation. The goal is to create a group of student-athletes that understand
the rules and are able to utilize their own experiences to relay the importance of
the numerous rules and regulations of the association. In addition, the researcher
recommends that the NCAA consider testing student-athletes on the rules as they
do coaches. The test would not need to be as extensive, but instead focus on a few
major areas (i.e., accepting gifts or money, drugs, and gambling). The test could
be set up to be accessed through the internet in an effort to make the test more
convenient for the student-athlete. Utilizing an on-line testing system allows for
greater flexibility in when the test is offered/taken and eliminates the need for an
external grader. Upon successful completion of the test, the student-athlete would
be asked to print a form indicating this and turn it in to the compliance office
where it would be kept on file.

3. The 2001 Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics
recommended that college and university presidents assume greater responsibility
for the direction of college athletics. Since then, presidents have solidified their
role as the decision makers for college athletics at the highest level. Therefore,
presidents should meet with representatives from their institution’s student-athlete
advisory board at least three times a year (once during or at the conclusion of each
season) to discuss issues, concerns, and major NCAA proposals. This will allow
the presidents to better understand the conditions and situations that student-
athletes are consistently dealing with. The presidents will then be able to draw
upon these conversations as a resource when they are preparing to make a
decision at the national level.

Future Research

1. This study focused on Division IA student-athletes only in the “major” sports of
football and basketball. Therefore, future research should explore the perceptions
of student-athletes competing in “non-major” sports. Also, because of the diverse
population of institutions that compete in Division I, student-athletes from schools
in a variety of conferences should be examined.
2. The perceptions of student-athletes competing at the Division II and Division III levels should also be explored and compared against each other to determine if there are any similarities or differences among the three divisions.

3. In order to make the results generalizable to a larger population, a quantitative instrument should be developed and administered to student-athletes at multiple institutions within each division.
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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF SOLICITATION
February 4, 2005

Dear Prospective Research Participant:

I invite you to participate in my research project entitled, “Student-Athlete Perceptions of the NCAA.” You are one of a group of your fellow student-athletes who are being asked to share their perceptions, attitudes, and experiences about the NCAA.

Participating in the study will take between 1 hour to 1.5 hours of your time. This research has implications for a number of constituents, such as coaches, athletic directors, athletic administrators, student-athletes, university presidents, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and policy makers. More specifically, the findings of this study have the ability to provide a clear and complete understanding of student-athletes’ concerns about the NCAA and their role in the organization. In addition, it has the ability to provide in depth insight about the responsibilities, roles, and functions of the NCAA that are most important or cause the most concern for student-athletes. I am requesting that you complete a short demographic questionnaire and participate in one face-to-face individual interview. The face-to-face interview will be audio taped and transcribed verbatim.

Your participation in this research project is strictly voluntary. Therefore, you may discontinue your participation in this research project, at any time, without penalty. Please also note that all information generated will be treated confidentially. All information obtained from your participation in the study will be stored in a locked file cabinet on-campus.

If you are interested in participating, please review the attached informed consent form. If you do not have any reservations about participating in this research project, please sign your name on the informed consent form. In addition, please feel free to contact me via telephone (614-886-xxxx) or email (brett.12@osu.edu), if you need any additional information.

I look forward to hearing back from you!

Respectfully,

Martin J. Brett III
Doctoral Student, Sport & Exercise Management
The Ohio State University
APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE
Student-Athlete Perceptions of the NCAA: Demographic Questionnaire

1. Gender
   a. _____ Female
   b. _____ Male
   c. _____ Other (Please specify: ____________________)

2. Age: _____

3. Race
   a. _____ Caucasian
   b. _____ African American
   c. _____ Hispanic American
   d. _____ Asian American
   e. _____ Native American
   f. _____ Other (Please specify: ____________________)

4. Academic Rank
   a. _____ Freshman
   b. _____ Sophomore
   c. _____ Junior
   d. _____ Senior
   e. _____ Graduate

5. Year in school, in terms of athletic eligibility (freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior, 5th year):

6. What varsity intercollegiate sport(s) do you currently participate in for your institution?

7. Number of years (including this academic year) played varsity intercollegiate sports (all sports) at this institution:

8. Would you currently classify yourself as a (check the most applicable answer)
   a. _____ Starter (on average, you start the game)
   b. _____ Key Reserve (make an appearance in over 50% of your team’s games)
   c. _____ Reserve (appear in less than 50% of your team’s games)
   d. _____ Other (Please specify: ____________________)

9. Which of the following would best describe your current status as an athletic grant-in-aid recipient? (Check one):
   a. _____ Full athletic grant-in-aid
   b. _____ Partial athletic grant-in-aid
   c. _____ Other (Please specify: ____________________)

10. Were you recruited to play for your current institution? (recruited meaning an act initiated by a coach or athletics representative from the institution). (please check one):
    a. _____ Yes
    b. _____ No
    c. _____ Unsure

11. Do you aspire or hope to compete in your sport, as a professional, beyond college (e.g., MLB, MLS, NBA, NFL, NHL, WNBA) _____ Yes _____ No
APPENDIX C

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
Student-Athlete Perceptions of the NCAA: Individual Interview Schedule

1. Before I get into specific questions, I would like to get a general sense of your experience as a student-athlete. How’s it going?

2. How would you describe the NCAA – it’s role and relationship to you – to someone who doesn’t know it?

3. What do you believe is the primary mission of the NCAA?
   a. Why do you think that?
   b. What experiences have you had that have led you to this opinion?

4. How has the NCAA impacted you as a student-athlete?

5. When was your first encounter with the NCAA? (e.g. NCAA Clearinghouse, HS Coach, HS Counselor, other)

6. What do you believe your role is within the NCAA?

7. When you hear “NCAA,” what do you think of?

8. Do you have any input on NCAA legislation that impacts you as a student-athlete?
   a. If yes, please explain.
   b. If no, given the opportunity, what suggestion (legislation) would you make to the NCAA?

9. Do you feel that there is any NCAA legislation that is unnecessary? If yes or no, please explain.

10. Do you believe that the NCAA, as a governing body, is friendly to student-athletes? If yes or no, please explain.

11. Do you believe that student-athletes are at the core of NCAA decision-making? If yes or no, please explain.

12. Do you believe the NCAA creates athletic programs for you and your fellow student-athletes? Do you believe the NCAA provides athletic programs for you and your fellow student-athletes? Do you believe the NCAA improves athletic programs for you and your fellow student-athletes?
13. The NCAA, in their mission, state that the organization promotes and/or develops
   a. physical fitness.
   b. athletics excellence.
   c. athletics as a recreational pursuit.
   Could you discuss an example from your experience as a student-athlete?

14. Do you believe that the NCAA works to help collegiate athletic programs survive
    and remain viable financially?

15. Do you believe that the NCAA provides colleges and universities with the power
    and the ability to be responsible for the actions of their student-athletes?

16. Do you believe that the NCAA protects student-athletes through standards of
    fairness and integrity?

17. Do you believe that the NCAA promotes student-athletes and college sports
    through public awareness?

18. How often are you asked to do something, on behalf of the athletic department or
    your team? (e.g. sign balls, jerseys speak to boosters).

19. Do you feel that the helps prepare you for a lifetime of leadership?

20. What are the advantages of being a student-athlete rather than a traditional
    student? (e.g. academically, athletically, socially)

21. What are the disadvantages of being a student-athlete rather than a traditional
    student?

22. Do you feel that your experience as a student-athlete is an integral part of your
    overall educational experience? If yes or no, please explain.

23. As a student-athlete, do you think that you are segregated from the rest of the
    student body? If yes or no, please explain.

24. Can you think of any reason why a student-athlete at your institution might break
    an NCAA rule? If yes or no, please explain.
       a. Why do you think they broke that rule?

25. How often during the season are you exposed to the NCAA rule book?
       a. Is it helpful?
       b. What specifically about it is helpful?
26. a. What could the NCAA do to improve your experience as a student-athlete?
   b. What could athletic administrators do to improve your experience as a student-athlete?
   c. What could your coaches do to improve your experience as a student-athlete?

27. Is there anything else about your experience as a student-athlete that you would like to share?
APPENDIX D

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

I consent to participating in research entitled:

STUDENT-ATHLETE PERCEPTIONS OF THE NCAA: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS.

Dr. Janet Fink or her authorized representative Martin Brett has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my participation. Possible benefits and risks of the study, if any, have been explained, and I understand what they are.

I consent to participate in one face-to-face interview, which includes the completion of a short demographic form, and understand that the interview will be audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. I understand how the data will be used for this study. I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. If I have any additional questions, I can contact the Dr. Janet Fink via telephone (614-292-xxxx) or email (fink.26@osu.edu) or her research assistant via telephone (614-886-xxxx) or email (brett.12@osu.edu). Also, if I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I can call the Office of Research Risks Protection at (614) 688-4792. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date:
______________________________

Signed:
______________________________

(Participant)

Signed:
______________________________

(Dr. Janet Fink or Martin Brett)

Signed:
______________________________

(Person authorized to consent for participant, if required)
APPENDIX E

PLEDGE OF CONFIDENTIALITY
Pledge of Confidentiality

As a member of this research team, I understand that I will be reading transcriptions of confidential interviews. The information in these transcriptions has been revealed by research participants in this project who agreed in good faith that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement. I hereby agree not to share any information in these transcriptions with anyone except the primary researcher of this project, Martin Brett, or other members of this research team. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

Research Team Member________________________________________

Signature____________________ Date______________________

Research Team Member________________________________________

Signature____________________ Date______________________

Research Team Member________________________________________

Signature____________________ Date______________________