



Athletic ability, performance, and character: A hierarchical examination of prospective college athlete evaluation and the function of recruiting as institutional work

Drew Swinney, Chris Corr, Sarah Stokowski, Mike Godfrey

Clemson University

Intercollegiate athletics recruiting is depicted by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) as the “lifeflood” of college sport. Given the correlation between recruiting success and winning in college football specifically, and the relationship between winning and revenue generation, NCAA member institutions place the utmost significance on football recruiting. Within the context of football recruiting as strategic institutional work, college football coaches promulgate institutionalized logics through the indoctrination of prospective college athletes. To further conceptualize institutional work and logics in the recruitment of prospective college athletes, the present study sought to examine the evaluative factors college football coaches prioritize when recruiting prospective college athletes. Semi-structured interviews with 10 football coaches at Football Bowl Subdivision member institutions during the 2023 college football season reveal the strategic emphasis placed on football ability and football character in the recruitment of prospective college athletes.

Keywords: intercollegiate athletics, NCAA, institutional logics, coaching

Successful recruitment of prospective athletes is vital to sustaining the economic growth of college athletic departments across the United States. Indicative of the importance of recruiting success, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which operates as the largest and most renowned aggregation of college athletic departments in the United States, depicts recruiting as the “lifeflood” of college athletics (NCAA, 2022). Considering the direct correlation between recruiting success and winning in college athletics (Caro, 2012), and the additional established relationship between winning and athletics revenue generation (Elmasry, 2017; Kercheval, 2016; Mankin et al., 2019), recruiting serves as a fundamental component



in the economic growth of athletic departments as well as the greater institutional setting of college athletics.

Directly regulated by NCAA rules and policy, college athletic coaches place immense importance on recruiting prospective athletes due to the impact of recruiting success on winning athletic competitions. As recruiting is a necessitated work function among college athletic department organizational members (i.e., coaches, athletic personnel) that is directly regulated by the NCAA (NCAA, 2023), the operational practice of athletics recruiting exists as a function of institutionalized work. Performed by institutional members, college athletics recruiting is bound to the guidelines set forth by the NCAA. Given that NCAA rules and regulations are formulated and enforced in correspondence with the comprehensive logics institutionalized within the setting of NCAA athletics (Macaulay et al., 2022; Macaulay & Woulfin, 2023), recruiting exists as a byproduct of the distinct operating institutional logics of NCAA athletics. Accordingly, college athletic coaches conduct institutional work that is structurally guided by, and formulated from, the dominant institutional logics pervasive within the institutional setting of NCAA athletics.

Within the paradigm of college athletics recruiting as a form of institutional work, college athletic coaches communicate predominant institutional logics to prospective recruits. As institutional work is inherently reflective of the pervading logic(s) within a given institutional settings (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006), the process of college athletics recruiting exists as a mechanism in which existent institutional members (i.e., coaches) communicate the distinct operating institutional logics pervasive within the NCAA to incoming institutional members (i.e., prospective recruits). Given that college athletics recruiting occurs within a hyper-competitive environment in which recruits engage with a multitude of coaches, athletic personnel, and university campuses across a longitudinal timeline (Magnusen et al., 2014, 2017), institutional logics unique to the NCAA are routinely communicated and reinforced to prospective recruits through these varying exposures to institutional members and settings.

As existent institutional members seek to communicate and create behavioral expectations for prospective institutional members (Ocasio et al., 2015; Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010), college athletics recruiting also provides current institutional members (i.e., coaches) the opportunity to determine the fit of prospective recruits within both the organizational and greater institutional setting. Accordingly, college athletic coaches engage in an extensive evaluation process to determine the fit of prospective recruits within their respective athletic departments, entities that exist as institutional members of the NCAA and are bound to the dominant logics pervading the entirety of the institutional setting (Cooper et al., 2011; Magnusen et al., 2014).

While the recruitment of prospective college athletes receives significant coverage from mass multimedia outlets in the United States, the evaluated factors sought and valued by college athletic coaches during the athletics recruiting process are relatively unknown. As such evaluation factors are prioritized by existent institutional members (i.e., coaches) as determinants of incoming institutional members (i.e., prospective recruits) organizational and institutional fit, the further examination of these evaluation factors provides an opportunity to conceptualize the perpetuation

of institutional logics within and through the recruitment of prospective college athletes. Accordingly, the present study analyzed current college football coaches at NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) member institutions to uncover the evaluation factors most valued and sought after by FBS football coaches.

Literature Review

Institutional Work

Institutional work actualizes institutional actors' individual and collective efforts for the purposes of engaging in work affecting an institutional setting(s) (Lawrence et al., 2011). The process of engaging in institutional work is intentional and requires the combination of cognitive processing and physical exertion for the purposes of creating, maintaining, or disrupting an institutional setting (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Accordingly, the fundamental components of institutional work often manifest in fostering stability within an institutional setting as institutional members continuously perform work in pursuit of strategic institutionalized objectives. In addition to informing the cognitive processes and tangible actions of individuals within a given institutional setting, institutional work is indicative of the manner in which institutional actors' beliefs and actions continuously, and simultaneously, inform one another. Such relationship lends itself to the conceptualization of embedded agency within unique institutional settings (Seo & Creed, 2002). As agency fundamentally concerns intentional actions to produce desirable outcomes and institutional work is fundamentally shaped by the institution itself (Lawrence et al., 2011), institutional members may perform institutional work for the purpose of achieving strategic institutionalized objectives.

Institutional Logics

An inherent element of institutional work, institutional maintenance occurs over time through the promulgation of a dominant institutional logic. An institutional logic exists as an amalgamation of principles, ideals, and ideological beliefs that inform the central tenants guiding the short- and long-term operational components within an institutional setting. Such logic becomes dominant as it is institutionalized within day-to-day processes and the creation of strategic initiatives (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Institutional work designed to maintain a dominant institutional logic is conducted by institutional members who, in turn, communicate the dominant institutional logic to new institutional members (Ocasio et al., 2015; Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010). Accordingly, institutional logics are learned by new institutional members through a communicated process that involves conducting institutional work.

Within a given institutional setting, institutional actors perform work functions directly resultant from the pervading logics dictating operational outcomes, ideologies, and expectations for behavior. Work that coincides, maintains, or perpetuates an operating institutional logic(s) is, accordingly, an institutionalized process. In the context of FBS intercollegiate athletics in the United States, the dominant logics pervading the operation of the NCAA centers around the generation of athletics-specific revenue and the maintenance of amateurism (Corr et al., 2022a; Nite, 2017; Nite &

Edwards, 2021; Nite et al., 2019; Southall & Staurowsky, 2013). Such dominant logics dictate the day-to-day operation and long-term objectives of the NCAA and are reinforced by institutional members employed in NCAA member institution athletic departments.

For logic(s) to perpetuate within a given institutional setting, existent members must perform work functions that directly support and maintain the operating logic itself. In this sense, existent institutional members promulgate the logic(s) through their work and communicate logic(s) to new institutional members. Within the NCAA, intercollegiate athletics coaches communicate dominant logic(s) to new institutional members through the process of athletics recruiting. Given the copious NCAA rules and regulations governing the process of athletics recruiting, intercollegiate athletics coaches' engagement in athletics recruiting exists as a function of institutionalized work. As the NCAA itself depicts athletics recruiting as the "life-blood" of intercollegiate athletics, the role of athletics recruiting in indoctrinating future institutional members (i.e., prospective college athletes) is of strategic value in the maintenance of the NCAA and, correspondingly, the dominant institutional logics pervasive in NCAA athletics.

Institutional work is inherently performed for the objective of affecting the structural and operational formation of an institution. In the context of intercollegiate athletics, coaches conduct institutional work in the form of athletics recruitment that fosters prospective college athletes' engulment in an athletic role. Prospective college athletes recruiting visits, planned and carried out by institutional members (i.e., coaches, athletic personnel), present the college experience in a manner that glorifies athletic and social components (Adler & Adler, 1991; Corr et al., 2022b; Huml et al., 2019; Kidd et al., 2018). Such representation marginalizes academics and educational attainment and, in tandem with the glorification of athletic and social components, cultivates athletic role engulment among prospective college athletes. Such athletic role engulment is the result of strategic institutional work designed to communicate the prioritization of athletics specific outcomes at the sake of all other individual objectives. This prioritization lends itself to the perpetuation of the hyper-commercialized institutional logic pervasive within, specifically, FBS intercollegiate athletics as athletes engulfed in their athletic role are likely to develop exponentially as an athlete. Given the positive relationship between athletics success and revenue generation in FBS athletics, athletics recruiting serves as strategic institutional work that results in the perpetuation of dominant institutional logics through the cultivation of athletic role engulment.

As name, image, and likeness (NIL) opportunities now pervade the athletics recruiting process, the NCAA's stated position lobbying for federal intervention and regulations on prospective college athletes' NIL earning are indicative of the NCAA's attempts to maintain and bolster dominant institutional logics. The regulatory authority the organization enforces over recruiting and the manner in which athletics recruiting is actualized is indicative of strategic institutional work meant to indoctrinate incoming members (i.e., prospective college athletes) into the entrenched logics pervasive to the entire institutional setting. As indicated here though

and in the recommended readings to follow, such utilization of athletics recruiting as a means of strategic institutional work for the maintenance and promulgation of the NCAA itself holds adverse effects for numerous stakeholders and participants. While the NCAA and its member institutions continue to experience tremendous economic growth, these stakeholder and participants are inequitably rewarded for their efforts and often inadequately prepared to function as contributing members of society upon the conclusion of their athletic careers.

Considering institutional work is bound and formulated by the institutional logics distinct to a given institutional setting, the function of athletics recruiting as institutional work inherently occurs within the dominant operating logics of NCAA athletics. To examine the integral function of football recruiting and further explore the impact of institutional logics within the institutionalized work of athletics recruiting, the present study utilized primary stakeholders (i.e., football coaches) working at FBS member institutions during the 2023 season, performing recruiting specific institutional work. Considering the college athletics recruiting process as a function of institutionalized work, researchers formulated the following research questions to contextualize participating coaches' responses as byproducts of distinctive and strategic NCAA institutional logics:

1. Which tangible and/or intangible factors are most valued by FBS football coaches in the recruitment of prospective college athletes?
2. How is the importance of these factors communicated to prospective college athletes and their families?

Methods

The present study utilized a qualitative interview structure to better understand the recruiting evaluation process as conducted by current FBS football coaches. Accordingly, semi-structured interviews were completed with 10 football coaches working at FBS member institutions during the 2023 season. Semi-structured interview protocol allowed the researchers to follow a basic thematic outline but permitted the exploration of novel thematic areas as they were discussed.

Participants

Ten football coaches working at FBS member institutions during the 2023 season participated in this study. Participants were solicited through the combination of convenience and, subsequently, snowball sampling. Considering the insular nature of collegiate athletics, and even more specifically FBS football, convenience sampling was appropriate for the researchers to gain access to this difficult to study population (Adams et al., 2014; Brown, 2012; Gutierrez & McLaren, 2012; Kihl, 2018; LoMonte, 2020; Southall & Weiler, 2014). As a result, researchers utilized their combined networks to identify three participants. Upon agreeing to participate in the study, each participant was asked if they were willing to provide the contact information of other current FBS football coaches potentially willing to participate in this study.

The resultant 10 participating coaches is the function of snowball sampling upon the initial utilization of a convenience sampling methodological approach.

All 10 of the participating coaches are men and the average age of participants was 40-years-old. Seven of the participants coached at FBS Autonomy Conference member institutions at the time of the study. The Autonomy Conferences represent the most renowned and financially lucrative collegiate athletic departments participating in NCAA athletics. The Autonomy Conferences comprise the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big Ten Conference (Big Ten), Big XII Conference (Big XII), and Southeastern Conference (SEC). Combined, the Autonomy Conferences generated more the \$3 billion dollars of athletics specific revenue in the 2023 fiscal year, with college football accounting for most athletics specific revenue generated (Berkowitz, 2024). Four of the participating coaches are Black and six are White. Both two Black coaches and two White coaches stated they played Division I college football prior to becoming a coach. None of the other participating coaches playing competitive football beyond the high school level. A more complete summary of participant demographics can be found in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographics of Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Race	Played Division I Football	Conference	Position
Bill	61	White	Yes (FCS)	Big Ten	Quarterbacks
Chad	50	White	No	SEC	Quarterbacks
Chandler	35	Black	Yes (FBS)	Independent	Wide Receivers
Colt	44	Black	No	Pac-12	Wide Receivers
Jacob	31	White	No	Big XII	Linebackers
John	56	Black	No	SEC	Defensive Line
Jordan	27	White	No	Sun Belt	Tight Ends
Justin	29	White	No	ACC	Quarterbacks
Randy	33	Black	Yes (FBS)	C-USA	Running Backs
William	34	White	Yes (FBS)	ACC	Wide Receivers

**Code of conference acronyms and abbreviations: Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big Ten Conference (Big Ten), Big XII Conference (Big XII), Conference USA (C-USA), FBS-Conference Independent (Independent), Pacific-12 Conference (Pac-12), Southeastern Conference (SEC), Sun Belt Conference (Sun Belt).*

Interview Protocol & Coding Process

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the lead author of the research team during the month of October in the year 2023. Interviews lasted between 20-25 minutes in length and were recorded for the purposes of transcription following the conclusion of each interview. Upon the solicitation of demographic questions (e.g., age, gender, race), participants were asked probing questions regarding the evaluation and recruiting process they relied upon to recruit prospective athletes. More specifically, the interviewer asked participants to describe both the tangible and intangible factors they desired when determining their willingness to recruit a prospective athlete. Participants were then asked probing questions concerning how these desirable factors were communicated to recruits and their families. The semi-structured design of the research allowed for the interviewer to explore topics based on participants language.

Transcription was performed by each of the researchers, during which all identifiable demographic information was removed from the data. Accordingly, and consistent with the informed consent provided and agreed upon by participants, the findings of this study are completely anonymous. Member checking was utilized upon transcription to provide participants an opportunity to amend or further clarify any statements they desired (Birt et al., 2016; Motulsky, 2021).

The multistage coding process involved each member of the research team as transcripts were coded into thematic areas consistent with the research questions. In the first stage upon transcription, each researcher completed a coding matrix for the transcribed interviews. Upon conclusion of the individual coding process, the members of the research team met for the second stage of coding to compare notes and establish consensus among coded items (Cascio et al., 2019). An in-vivo coding schema was utilized to ensure the accurate representation of participants' responses in the reported findings (Creswell et al., 2007). Considering the researchers aimed to examine the recruiting process of prospective college football players, thematic areas pertaining to coaches' identified evaluation factors were established based off the identified codes (Williams & Moser, 2019). Somewhat accordingly, the three primary themes that emerged from the data during the third stage of coding were coaches' prioritization of innate athletic ability, coaches' prioritization of football performance, and coaches' prioritization of competitive character during the evaluation process of prospective college athletes. Consistent with research question two, coaches also elaborated on how these sought after evaluation factors were communicated to prospective college athletes and their families. In each instance, verbatim participant language was utilized to group similar codes into these emergent thematic areas (Campbell et al., 2013).

The coding process was conducted even after data saturation was reached, which occurred at the conclusion of coding the fifth participating coach's interview transcript. Consistent with Fusch and Ness's (2015) operationalization of data saturation, at the conclusion of the fifth interview further coding of interviews was not achievable given the purpose of the study and, somewhat correspondingly, participants' responses provided numerous opportunities to attain additional data on nov-

el topics outside the stated parameters of the study. For instance, in discussing the most salient evaluation factors prioritized and the manner in which such factors were communicated to prospective recruits and their families, coaches began discussing the specific demographic and psychographic factors pertaining to each individual recruit. While such findings are indeed noteworthy, such context falls outside the research questions posed in this study and serves as an opportunity for additional information to be collected in future research.

Limitations

Interviews were conducted with participating coaches once individually over the course of 20-25 minutes during the 2023 college football season. Considering the immense time demands and pressures placed on FBS football coaches during in-season competition, interviews took place in a drastically abbreviated time frame. Given the difficulty of securing participants from the population of FBS football coaches, the researchers operated largely within the parameters set by the 10 coaches willing to partake in the study. While the reported findings of this study provide context to the experiences and evaluation factors of 10 FBS football coaches, the researchers readily acknowledge the brevity of interviews reported in this study as a stated limitation.

Also of note is the NCAA regulated recruiting calendar that permits college football coaches to leave campus to evaluate prospective college athletes during evaluation periods that disproportionately occur in the Spring months. While coaches engage in recruiting on a year-round continuum, the evaluation process of prospective college athletes typically occurs during the Spring evaluation period. Accordingly, the timing of the study and conducted interviews may affect the manner in which coaches perceived and processed the most sought after evaluation factors during the recruitment of prospective college athletes. While the researchers acknowledge the potential for these stated limitations, we believe that the reported findings adequately convey FBS football coaches' perceptions of the evaluation process of prospective college athletes and identify a tangible hierarchy of sought after traits and intangibles prioritized by coaches in determining the institutional fit of recruits.

Researcher Positionality

When conducting research, it is important for researchers to acknowledge their positionality to more adequately ensure the impartiality of findings. One of the researchers played college football and is, at present, tangentially involved with the football coaching staff at an Autonomy Conference member institution. In addition, two of the researchers have extensive professional experience working in college football and are active scholars in the field of athlete development. The researchers current and previous professional experiences working with collegiate football coaches provided the ability to identify a convenience sample and secure the 10 participating coaches in this study. While previous relationships with the three coaches utilized out of convenience have the ability to affect the validity of interview data, we readily acknowledge our proximity to the research and have taken the necessary

steps to ensure the reliability and validity of the data presented in this study. Accordingly, the coding process consisted of numerous measures to avoid confirmation bias such as the triangulation of coded themes by each member of the research team and the routine comparison of notes from the onset of coding to ensure consistency and reliability throughout (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

Each researcher initially coded interview transcripts separately and then met to establish a consensus among the identified thematic codes (Thompson et al., 1989). By establishing a consensus among the researchers within the first round of thematic coding, the authors were able to strengthen the reliability of the coded themes in subsequent rounds of coding (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Member checking was utilized upon conclusion of transcribing interviews and in-vivo coding was strategically implemented to avoid any assumptions or structural alterations to participants' language. While no participant initially provided feedback upon being sent the transcribed interview data, the process of engaging in member checking was deemed as important to researchers to ensure the trustworthiness of data acquired in this study (Birt et al., 2016; Motulsky, 2021). Subsequent attempts at communicating with participants resulted in four of the 10 participants responding with their approval of transcribed responses; indicating transcribed responses accurately represented their viewpoints and opinions. While we acknowledge our proximity to the initial three coaches interviewed in the initial convenience sample, the majority of participants were solicited through subsequent snowball sampling and possessed little to no relationship with members of the research team.

Findings

Considering the research questions centered around an examination of FBS football coaches' hierarchy of evaluation factors in the recruitment of prospective college football players, findings were organized according to the hierarchy of participants' responses. While each categorized area pertained to football specific evaluation factors, a hierarchy presented itself regarding the most sought after tangible and intangible factors impacting the evaluation of prospective college athletes: (1) athletic ability, (2) football performance, and (3) competitive character. The findings section is arranged according to these primary factors identified by every participant as of utmost importance in the evaluation process of prospective college football players.

Game Film and Football Performance

While FBS football coaches consider a multitude of factors when evaluating and recruiting a prospective athlete, each participant in this study consistently emphasized the utmost importance placed on tangible athletic production. Game film, or "tape," was routinely noted as the primary component contributing to the likelihood of a prospective college football player being recruited. Randy, a running backs coach in Conference-USA (C-USA), stated succinctly, "if you don't got the film, then you got no shot." Inherent to producing game film, prospective recruits need to

actively play in games for their respective high school. While the importance and emphasis of game film was stressed among participants, each added the notation that prospective recruits needed to serve as a significant contributor on their respective team. Coach-speak terms such as “dude” and “guy” were utilized by participants to characterize and operationalize significant athletic contribution and performance. Jacob, a linebackers coach in the Big XII, emphasized the importance of football performance and ability to receiving recruiting interest from FBS programs stating, “you got to be a dude first and foremost.” Such sentiment was shared among each participant and indicative of the innate athletic ability and tangible performance necessary to be recruited to play college football at the FBS level.

The athletic ability and tangible performance of prospective recruits was classified by numerous participants in the context of a transactional business exchange. In the setting of FBS football recruitment, athletic ability and performance were characterized by coaches as the most valuable factors contributing to a prospective college football player receiving genuine recruiting interest from FBS programs. Bill, a quarterbacks coach in the Big Ten, contextualized the recruiting transaction between high school players and FBS football programs:

Athletes try to sell themselves to colleges. Then once the colleges buy them, the colleges sell themselves to the athlete. Now the athlete gets to buy the college of choice. If you want to get to the buying phase, you must have a great product to sell.

In this sense, athletic ability is the premium commodity sought by FBS football programs. The commodification of athletic ability and the contextualization of FBS football recruitment as “business” are indicative of the value of athletic recruitment within the institutional setting of collegiate athletics. In a setting where college football programs engage in intense competition for the athletic services of prospective college athletes, the emphasis and importance of athletic ability and tangible football performance is perhaps intuitive. William, a wide receivers coach in the ACC, summated this importance stating, “I would tell a PSA [prospective student athlete] to control what they can control. Take care of your business...your number one business is your performance.”

Corresponding in tandem with the necessitation of game film, participants in this study codified athletic ability and football performance were the most important factors in determining the recruitment of a prospective college athlete. Accordingly, high school football players not meeting the threshold requirements for athletic ability as determined by college coaches are unlikely to receive significant recruiting interest. In addition, high school football players not contributing at a significant level at the interscholastic level are unlikely to produce the game film requisite to receive recruiting interest from FBS football programs. Both of these factors, athletic ability and football performance, exist somewhat independently from one another but are mandated by FBS football coaches and recruiters in the evaluation and recruitment of prospective college athletes. While such qualities are indeed important in determining the viability for a prospective college athlete to contribute and experience athletic success at the collegiate level, both athletic ability and football performance serve solely as athletic-related factors.

Character Evaluation and Academic Achievement

While the importance of requisite athletic ability and football performance to be deemed eligible to play and contribute to an FBS football program was stated as the most important factor contributing to the recruitment of a prospective college football player, participating coaches in this study also indicated the importance of personal character and competitive mindset. Given the professionalized setting of collegiate athletics, coaches indicated they valued recruits that aligned with the pervading culture of their respective organization. Participating FBS football coaches in this study most closely defined character as *who you are when nobody is watching* and discussed the manner in which FBS football personnel value recruits' character. Chandler, a wide receivers coach at an FBS-Independent football program, codified the importance of character in the recruiting process stating, "Character is what we look for. We want guys not only with football character, but with the integrity, morals, and values that we value as a program as well." Denoting the requisites of athletic ability and football performance, Justin, a quarterbacks coach in the ACC, also indicated the importance of a recruits' character:

If a player does not have the necessary body type or athleticism to play ACC football, then he quickly eliminates himself from consideration. Once narrowing our pool down athletically, we narrow it down even further to find the ones who love football, are stellar in the classroom, and are good men of character.

For prospective college athletes seeking opportunities to play FBS football, football specific factors (i.e., athleticism, performance) exist primarily as a filter for FBS programs. Upon filtering prospective recruits, the relational process and development between coaches and recruits begins as FBS football coaches seek to uncover the character of recruits to further narrow down and identify their most sought-after players. Accordingly, and importantly, the sole reliance on football specific factors is not enough of a determinant in the recruitment of prospective college football players.

Character, in the context of participants' responses, consisted of an amalgamation of numerous components. Colt, a wide receivers coach in the Pac-12, described character as "humility, effort, accountability, respect, toughness," organized into the acronym H.E.A.R.T. Colt continued, "how you do anything is how you do everything. It all matters. I believe your off-the-field character carries over to your pay on the field." Interestingly considering this response, the valuation of character was defined with regards to football specific performance. While character was stated by participants' to be of distinct value in determining the recruitment of a prospective college football player, the evaluation process and determination of character is seemingly linked to the evaluation of transferable factors specific to football performance.

The most commonly linked factor in the evaluation of a recruit's character was academic achievement. Specifically, earned grades in academic coursework were characterized as a measurement tool for a recruit's character. Bill discussed the perceived link between character and academic achievement:

Character and grades. I put them together. Odds are, if you have bad character, you'll have bad grades as well. I don't care how good you are. If you don't have grades, we can't take you.

Such sentiment regarding the importance of academic grades was shared by several participants and speaks to minimum academic requirements mandated by the NCAA to be deemed eligible to participate in collegiate athletics.

Although a coaches' age has been identified as a non-determinant in the successful recruitment of prospective college football players, the perceived importance of youth in recruiting prospective athletes pervades the industry (Corr et al., 2023c). Accordingly, it is somewhat worth mentioning that Bill is the oldest aged participant in the study at 61-years-old and the only coach to explicitly state that poor grades equated to bad character. While other participating FBS football coaches did link academic achievement to character, the overarching sentiment was the importance of academics with regards to meeting minimum standards for eligibility under NCAA regulations. While academic achievement was routinely discussed as a metric in determining character, most coaches clarified that academics were not the only mechanism in which to determine a recruit's overall character. Jacob provided a more comprehensive list of questions he considered when determining the character of a prospective college football players:

Attitude, grades, effort on tape, ability to speak to coaches and other staff members. When on campus, do they care about every detail of the program when others are speaking or is just 'ball and the photoshoots? ...what do their teachers say about them? Do their teammates look at the recruit as a leader on the team? Any off the field issues?

While inclusive of academic achievement (i.e., grades), this response was most common among participants in determining the character of a recruit. Rather than single out academics as the only factor contributing to character, most participants indicated it was merely a component of a character evaluation, an evaluation consistent of numerous components.

Role of Parents/Guardians in the Recruiting Process

When discussing the factors contributing to the recruitment of prospective college football players, coaches also organically emphasized the integral role of parents and guardians in the recruiting process. The FBS football coaches that participated in this study stressed the importance of taking unofficial recruiting visits and enrolling in summer prospect camps. In contextualizing the significance of visiting campus, coaches alluded to the limitations of traditional off-campus athletic recruitment (i.e., spring and fall evaluation periods) in which NCAA regulations prohibit coaches from conversating with prospective college athletes. Accordingly, unofficial recruiting visits and summer prospect camp participation were discussed as exposure opportunities for high school football players. Correspondingly, William encouraged recruits to "visit as many colleges as possible. Get in front of coaches and show your interest." The stated importance of exposure was commonplace throughout participant responses and indicative of the importance of taking an imitative in the recruit-

ing process. Colt emphasized the role parents and guardians occupy in generating exposure to FBS football programs by facilitating campus recruiting visits as well as athletic development opportunities for their child stating, “Invest in summer camps so coaches can watch your son in person. Identify local trainers that have a good reputation and can help develop your son, as well as use their contacts to provide exposure.”

Summer prospect camps were commonly referenced as an invaluable investment for prospective college football players seeking genuine recruiting interest from FBS football programs. Chad, a quarterbacks coach in the SEC, crystalized the value of competing at a program’s summer prospect camp:

I offer guys every year at our [summer] football camp. Coaches want to see guys perform in front of their own eyes, not just on film. A lot of guys who I offer at camp, I never knew of them or had seen their film.

Exposure to coaches through unofficial recruiting visits or summer prospect camp participation was ubiquitously noted as a mechanism in which to generate genuine recruiting interest. Considering that participants indicated that FBS football coaches often rely on the evaluation of other programs when it comes to recruiting a prospective college football player, earning a verbal scholarship “offer” at a summer prospect camp may generate significant recruiting interest elsewhere as well. Jordan, a tight ends coach in the Sun Belt, stated as much saying, “many times, all it takes is one offer. Normally when one offer comes, many more start rolling in.” Considering the routine manner in which coaches migrate teams inter-conference (Levine, 2015) and the consistency in which athletic departments and distinct sport programs mimic the behavior and processes of their competitors (Atwater et al., 2022; Stokowski et al., 2023a), prospective college athletes stand to benefit from attending summer prospect camps and accumulating verbal offers.

While the role of parents and guardians in facilitating the recruitment of their child was discussed in predominantly positive terms, a few participants indicated that parents and guardians tended to convolute the recruiting process. John, a defensive line coach in the SEC, discussed the prevalence of parents and guardians occupying distinct motives or objectives than those of their child stating, “parents are a problem a lot of the time. Pushing their son one way or the other because of money or what they want, not considering what is best for the child.” Economic factors, mainly NIL, were discussed by various participants as the primary factor that caused parents and guardians to disrupt the recruiting process in a detrimental manner. Justin codified as much:

The biggest issues with parents have been related to NIL. There is so much misinformation out there when it comes to what players are receiving... parents who are not well-educated on the subject of NIL may think that their child deserves X when, in reality, their earning potential is nowhere close to that. Ultimately, what we have noticed is if NIL is the driving force behind a decision, they are likely not a fit here.

Given the novelty of NIL and the lack of transparency surrounding the NIL marketplace (Corr et al., 2023d), many athletes and their parents or guardians possess

little knowledge pertaining to the value of a prospective college athlete. Accordingly, and as indicated by participants in this study, such limited knowledge and the prioritization of monetary compensation through NIL can disproportionately affect a prospective player's recruitment in a negative way. For parents and guardians that focus on monetizing the recruitment process, participating coaches emphasized both the negative effects on a prospective player's recruitment and college experience upon enrollment. Randy clarified this sentiment stating, "if money is the main part of recruiting, make sure you know what you are getting into because the moment you are bought, you will be just a number." Considering the impact and pervasiveness of NIL in the collegiate athletics marketplace, an indication that the prioritization of NIL in the recruiting process disproportionately affects a prospective player's recruitment in a negative manner is timely and noteworthy.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that FBS football coaches prioritize athletic ability and performance above all else in the evaluation of prospective high school football recruits. While components like personal character were discussed as an important factor in the evaluation of a prospective college athlete, the contextualization of the type of character FBS football coaches sought was overtly related to football-centric factors. In instances where character was described outside of football specific factors, numerous coaches equated academic success and dedication as measurable determinants of a recruit's character. As the FBS recruiting process for prospective athletes in all sports marginalizes academic achievement and educational attainment (Corr et al., 2020, 2022b), such stated emphasis on utilizing academic success within the high school setting as a meaningful determinant of a recruit's character is noteworthy. While academic clustering of college athletes (Fountain & Finley, 2011; Watkins et al., 2022) and the structural emphasis on maintaining athletic eligibility by sustaining minimum academic standards (Covell & Barr, 2001; Stokowski et al., 2017) are commonly implemented practices among athletic department organizational members (i.e., coaches, staff), FBS football coaches indicating the importance of academics in the evaluation of a recruit's character is seemingly contradictory to the value placed on athletes' academic achievement upon enrollment and matriculation to the university setting.

The primary manner in which any evaluation of character was discussed by participants centered around football specific factors. Terms such as "football character" and "competitiveness" were routinely described as contributing to the character evaluation of prospective high school football players. Accordingly, a coaches' perception of character is formed by an evaluation of factors that disproportionately impact and emphasize football specific factors. As athletic ability and football performance were stated as the primary factors determining the recruitment of a prospective high school football player, intangible factors are nearly as important as tangible factors in the evaluation process of recruits.

As the recruitment of prospective college athletes occurs as a primary example of institutional work within the institutional setting of NCAA athletics, the evaluation factors sought after by FBS football coaches and communicated to prospective college athletes during the recruiting process are shaped and formed by the pervading institutional logics permeating collegiate athletics. The evaluation factors most sought after by FBS football coaches participating in this study reflect a prioritization of football-centric factors in the evaluation of prospective college athletes as the primary determinants of institutional fit. Accordingly, to fit within the institutional setting of FBS college football, prospective college football players must embody innate football ability in addition to football specific intangibles. The prioritization of such factors above all others is indicative of the dominant logics pervading the institutional setting of FBS athletics as well as informative of numerous psychological distresses routinely experienced by collegiate athletes - namely athletic role engulfment. Given the abandonment of an academic role holds dramatic consequences relative academic failure and perpetuates harmful stereotypes of athletes (Adler & Adler, 1991; Corr et al., 2022b; Huml et al., 2019; Kidd et al., 2018), FBS football coaches, in conducting institutional work via the recruiting process, foster such athletic role engulfment for the expressed benefit to programmatic outcomes. However, the numerous roles abandoned in sake of an athletic role affect athletes' social development, often manifest with distressful outcomes, and disproportionately affect athletes from marginalized populations (Southall et al., 2023).

As recruiting is a function of institutionalized work and operates within the guidelines of the institutional logics of college athletics pervading NCAA member organizations, college athletic coaches perpetuate institutional logics through the process of athletics recruiting. In this sense, existent institutional members (i.e., coaches, athletic personnel) communicate the distinct operating logics of the NCAA to future institutional members (i.e., recruits). Given that institutional logics are communicated by current institutional members and learned by incoming institutional members (Ocasio et al., 2015; Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010), athletics recruiting exists as an institutionalized process to indoctrinate new institutional members into the preexistent institutional setting. As college coaches communicate with prospective recruits and prospective recruits matriculate through the process of college athletics recruitment, institutional normalities, expectations for behavior, and ideological beliefs are communicated to recruits in both an overt and subconscious manner. Institutionalized functions such as campus recruiting visits, for instance, serve as a mechanism in which to expose prospective college athletes to the institutional setting of college athletics and communicate behavioral expectations prior to enrollment (Corr et al., 2020).

Such logic places a premium on revenue generation and the maintenance of amateurism as outlined by the NCAA's copious rules and regulations. This maintenance leads to the commodification of collegiate athletes within the lucrative athletics marketplace (Corr et al., 2023b). Although the commodification of athletes' bodies is not new conceptually within scholarly research, the professionalized setting in

which commodified college athletes compete provides an opportunity for institutional researchers and social scientists to examine the institutional work conducted by athletic department organizational members (i.e., administrators, coaches, staff). Given dominant institutional logics pervade the way institutional work is conducted, often dictating institutional processes and scripting distinct action and behavior, the function of athletics recruiting as a form of institutionalized work is indicative of the dominant institutional logics in collegiate athletics.

Seeking entry to this setting are prospective college athletes. As college coaches and recruiters are tasked with securing the commitment and subsequent enrollment of the most talented prospective college athletes available to their respective programs, coaches and recruiters conduct institutional work in the manner in which they evaluate and prioritize certain tangible and intangible factors in the recruiting process. Given the hyper-emphasis and institutional reliance on programmatic success in the sport of football, the importance of successful recruiting in college football cannot be understated. Extant associations between successful recruiting and winning games have been established by scholars seeking to examine the impact of recruiting on athletic team performance (Caro, 2012). As sustained programmatic success in athletics relies on winning athletic competitions, the vitality of football recruiting to the maintenance of the overall institutional setting of college athletics is perhaps unquantifiable. Indicative of such importance, athletic departments direct substantive amounts of economic support in the pursuit of prospective college football players (Bradbury & Pitts, 2018; Greenwell et al., 2007). College coaches with a disproportionate ability to successfully recruit prospective college athletes are often at a premium and highly sought after by top athletic departments across the NCAA membership (Corr et al., 2023a). Given the importance placed on football recruiting, coaches with an uncanny ability to successfully recruit the top high school players on an annual basis are of distinct value in the institutional setting of college athletics.

Interesting to note is the manner in which participants in this study discuss NIL. Candidly, participants perceived a prospective college athlete's prioritization of NIL as a negative factor in the evaluation process. A commonly held sentiment was that the prioritization of NIL denoted a selfish tendency. Considering the stated importance on football character and commitment to team, such perceived individualism in the pursuit of NIL was deemed detrimental to prospective college athletes. Such sentiment stands in stark contrast to professional sport settings. While in a professional sport setting the prioritization of salaried contracts and personal protections are standardized practices and accepted behaviors, FBS football coaches in this study were hesitant to accept a prospective college athletes' pursuit of monetary gain – a pursuit normalized in nearly every professionalized business setting in the United States. In addition, the premium placed on athletic ability and football performance in the evaluation process of prospective college football players also lends credence to the professionalized setting in which FBS football takes place (Corr et al., 2023b) and the importance and value of FBS football to campus communities (Hutchinson & Berg, 2014).

Conclusion & Future Research

In the sense that football recruiting has a transformative relationship to revenue generation, FBS college football recruiting exists as a function of the dominant institutional logic distinct to intercollegiate athletics in the United States. Given that the NCAA regulates the recruitment process entirety, FBS football recruiting exists as a function of institutionalized work. Extant research indicates that such process is overtly detrimental to numerous stakeholders but effective in achieving NCAA objectives. These requisite evaluation factors are a byproduct of the emphasis placed on success in intercollegiate athletics and serve as determinants for FBS football coaches to ascertain the institutional fit of prospective college athletes within their respective football programs. The findings of this study indicate that FBS football coaches engage in an evaluation process when recruiting prospective college athletes that is shaped by the hyper-emphasis on winning and success within the institutional setting of collegiate athletics. Considering the institutionalized nature of athletics recruiting (Corr et al., 2020), FBS football coaches engage in institutional work when evaluating prospective college athletes. Given the overt prioritization of football-specific factors in the evaluation of prospective college football players, such institutional work inherently maintains the dominant operating logic permeating the institutional setting of NCAA athletics.

As collegiate athletic coaches espouse principles of holistic athlete development and assume paternal and maternal roles for many athletes (Corr et al., 2023e; Stokowski et al., 2023b), the evaluation factors prioritized by FBS football coaches in this study allude to the hyper-emphasis on football performance factors. Within such a framework, college athletes develop personal value systems that emphasize athletic specific areas. From the standpoint of identity formation, college football players disproportionately project themselves in a hyper-masculine way (Li et al., 2017). Future research seeking to explore the potential link between coaches' evaluation factors and the communication of such factors to the impact of structural identity formation and projection would be valuable in further contextualizing the impact of pervading institutional logics on individual college athletes within the setting of NCAA athletics. In addition, while college football playing experience nor level of competition (e.g., FBS, FCS) was indicative of specific responses from participants in this study, perhaps differentiations in the experiences of former NCAA athletes inform the manner in which they perform their job functions as a coach and, by extension, a recruiter. Future research examining the experiential characteristics of NCAA athletic coaches with regards to the manner in which they perceive and carry out their job functions may be, accordingly, informative.

Also of note, institutional fit is unique among institutions and, therefore, the creation of universal evaluation factors is implausible considering the differentiation intra-NCAA membership. However, while some institutions might emphasize ancillary components such as spirituality or educational attainment more than others, the primary factors determining the recruitment of prospective college athletes are football-specific factors. While extant literature has examined the juxtaposition be-

tween institutional logics operating within unique NCAA athletics settings (Macaulay & Woulfin, 2023; Nite et al., 2013), future examinations of distinct logics within unique institutional segments based off inalienable characteristics (e.g., geography, divisional affiliation, secular charter) would be interesting to determine the variability of dominant logics, and corresponding work, within unique NCAA sub-settings.

References

- Adams, I., Carine, J., & Emmerson, D. (2014) Doping in sport: Lance Armstrong, a case study. In Palmer, C. (Ed.). (pp. 169-190). *The sports monograph: Critical perspectives on socio-cultural sport, coaching and physical education*. SSTO Publications.
- Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1991). *Backboards & blackboards: College athletes and role engulfment*. Columbia University Press.
- Atwater, C., Corr, C., Whelan, C. (2022). Organizational replication and spending patterns among FBS football and Division I basketball programs. *The International Journal of Sport and Society*, 14(1), 105-125. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2152-7857/CGP/v14i01/105-125>
- Berkowitz, S. (2024, May 23). Big 12 paid former commissioner Bob Bowlsby \$17.2 million in his final year. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/college/2024/05/23/bob-bowlsby-big-12-pay-conference-revenue/73811171007/>
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1802–1811. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870>
- Bradbury, J. C., & Pitts, J. D. (2018). Full cost-of-attendance scholarships and college choice: Evidence from NCAA football. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 19(7), 977-989. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527002517696958>
- Brown, Z. (2012). What's said in this locker room, stays in this locker room: Restricting the social media use of collegiate athletes and the implications for their institutions. *Journal on Telecommunication and High Technology Law*, 10, 421–443.
- Campbell, J. L., Quincy, C., Osserman, J., & Pedersen, O. K. (2013). Coding in-depth semistructured interviews: Problems of unitization and intercoder reliability and agreement. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 42(3), 294-320. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124113500475>
- Caro, C. A. (2012). College football success: The relationship between recruiting and winning. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 7(1), 139-152. <https://doi.org/10.1260/1747-9541.7.1.139>
- Cascio, M. A., Lee, E., Vaudrin, N., & Freedman, D. A. (2019). A team-based approach to open coding: Considerations for creating intercoder consensus. *Field Methods*, 31(2), 116-130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X19838237>
- Cooper, C. G., Huffman, L., & Weight, E. (2011). Choice factors and best fit principles encouraging “best fit” principles: Investigating college choice factors of student-athletes in NCAA Division I, II, and III Men’s wrestling. *Theories & Applications the International Edition*, 1(1), 92-106.

- Corr, C., Atwater, C., & Hall, P. (2022b). Athlete first, student second: The thematic emphasis of Power-5 official visits and fostered athletic role engulfment. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 15, 714-733.
- Corr, C., Atwater, C., & Stokowski, S. (2023c). Ageism in recruiting: Examining the relationship between coaches' age and recruiting ability in Power-5 football. *Applied Research in Coaching and Athletics Annual*, 38, 95-109.
- Corr, C., Bopp, T., Atwater, C., & Nite, C. (2023a). Chasing stars: Racial tasking of recruiting responsibilities among Power-5 football coaches. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 16(3), 263-278. <https://doi.org/10.17161/jis.v16i3.18977>
- Corr, C., Southall, C., Hawkins, B., & Southall, R. M. (2023e). College football "kids": Infantilizing language in Football Bowl Subdivision bowl game broadcasts. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 41(2), 172-179. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.2022-0185>
- Corr, C., Southall, R. M., & Nagel, M. S. (2020). Southeastern Conference recruiting official visits and the maintenance of the institution of Power-5 college sport. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 13, 252-272.
- Corr, C., Southall, C., & Southall, R. M. (2022a). The ESPNification of FBS college football: The adoption of an integrated marketing communication televisuality in FBS bowl game broadcasts. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 15(2), 139-147. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.2021-0124>
- Corr, C., Southall, R. M., Southall, C., & Hart, R. J. (2023b). Hyper-professionalized and commodified: A case study examination of FBS bowl games and the utilization of football players as programmatic promotional material. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 16(2), 228-238. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.2022-0200>
- Corr, C., Weiner, J., & Stokowski, S. (2023d). "We do everything on our own": FBS athletes' perceptions of NIL value and support. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 16, 334-351.
- Covell, D., & Barr, C. A. (2001). The ties that bind: Presidential involvement with the development of NCAA division I initial eligibility legislation. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 72(4), 414-452. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2001.11777107>
- Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Clark Plano, V. L., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs: Selection and implementation. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 35(2), 236-264. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000006287390>
- Elmasry, T. (2017). History shows national titles without elite recruiting over 4 years is rare. *Saturday Down South*. <https://www.saturdaydownsouth.com/sec-football/history-shows-national-titles-require-great-not-just-good-recruiting-over-4-years/>
- Fountain, J. J., & Finley, P. S. (2011). Academic clustering: A longitudinal analysis of a Division I football program. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 4, 24-41.
- Greenwell, T. C., Mahony, D. F., & Andrew, D. P. (2007). An examination of marketing resource allocation in NCAA Division I athletics. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 16(2), 82-92.

- Gutierrez, A. B., & McLaren, P. (2012). To be or not to be a snitch or a whistle-blower: Years of silence at Penn State. *Cultural Studies – Critical Methodologies*, 12(4), 309-316. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1532708612446429>
- Huml, M. R., Bergman, M. J., Newell, E. M., & Hancock, M. G. (2019). From the playing field to the classroom: The academic challenges for NCAA Division I athletes. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*, 13(2), 97-115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19357397.2019.1578609>
- Hutchinson, M., & Berg, B. K. (2014). Institutions of higher commitment: A case study of deescalation and American football's decisive role in intercollegiate athletics. *Sport Management Review*, 18(3), 464-480. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2014.09.002>
- Kercheval, B. (2016, February 2). Do top 10 recruiting classes really equal championships? *Bleacher Report*. <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/2613145-do-top-10-recruiting-classes-really-equal-championships>
- Kidd, V. D., Southall, R. M., Nagel, M. S., Reynolds II, J. F., Scheyett, A. M., & Anderson, C.K. (2018). Profit-athletes' athletic role set and post-athletic transitions. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 11(1), 115-141.
- Kihl, L. A. (2018). The future of sport corruption scholarship and practice. In L.A. Kihl (Ed.), *Corruption in sport: Causes, consequences, and reform* (201–214). Routledge.
- Lawrence, T. B., & Suddaby, R. (2006). Institutions and institutional work. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy, T. B. Lawrence, & W. R. Nord (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Organization Studies* (2nd ed., pp. 215–254). Sage Publications.
- Lawrence, T., Suddaby, R., & Leca, B. (2011). Institutional work: Refocusing institutional studies of organization. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 20(1), 52-58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492610387222>
- Levine, E. (2015). One coach, two schools: Double duty in the SEC since 2000. *Saturday Down South*. <https://www.saturdaydownsouth.com/sec-football/one-coach-two-schools-double-duty-sec-since-2000/>
- Li, B., Stokowski, S., Dittmore, S. W., Malmo, J. R., & Rolfe, D. T. (2017). A case study of self-representation on Twitter: A gender analysis of how student-athletes portray themselves. *Global Sport Business Journal*, 5(1), 61-75.
- LoMonte, F. (2020, September 23). Universities continue to block athletes from talking to the media. That's got to stop. *Poynter*. <https://www.poynter.org/educators-students/2020/universities-continue-to-block-athletes-from-talking-to-the-media-thats-got-to-stop/>
- Macaulay, C. D., Burton, L. J., & Woulfin, S. (2022). Making sense of competing logics in the collegiate athletic field: The sensemaking processes of college athletes. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 15, 94-124.
- Macaulay, C. D., & Woulfin, S. (2023). Institutional plurality and a fractured organizational self. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 13(6), 727-751. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SBM-10-2022-0096>
- Magnusen, M. J., Kim, Y., Perrewé, P. L., & Ferris, G. R. (2014). A critical review and synthesis of student-athlete college choice factors: Recruiting effectiveness

- in NCAA sports. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 9(6), 1265-1286. <https://doi.org/10.1260/1747-9541.9.6.1265>
- Magnusen, M. J., McAllister, C. P., Kim, J. W., Perrewé, P. L., & Ferris, G. R. (2017). The reputation playbook: Exploring how reputation can be leveraged to improve recruiting effectiveness in NCAA men's basketball. *Journal of Applied Sport Management*, 9(2), 11-24. <https://doi.org/10.18666/JASM-2017-V9-I2-8016>
- Mankin, J., Rivas, J., & Jewell, J. (2021). The effectiveness of college football recruiting ratings in predicting team success: A longitudinal study. *Research in Business and Economics Journal*, 14, 4-22.
- Motulsky, S. L. (2021). Is member checking the gold standard of quality in qualitative research? *Qualitative Psychology*, 8(3), 389-406. <https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000215>
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2022, August 1). Athletics personnel -- Conduct -- Institutionally issued devices and disclosure of information. *NCAA*. <https://web3.ncaa.org/lsdbi/search/proposalView?id=104161>
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2023, August 5). Division I 2023-24 manual. *NCAA*. <https://www.ncaapublications.com/productdownloads/D124.pdf>
- Nite, C. (2017). Message framing as institutional maintenance: The National Collegiate Athletic Association's institutional work of addressing legitimate threats. *Sport Management Review*, 20(4), 338-351. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2016.10.005>
- Nite, C., & Edwards, J. (2021). From isomorphism to institutional work: Advancing institutional theory in sport management research. *Sport Management Review*, 24(5), 815-838. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14413523.2021.1896845>
- Nite, C., Ige, A., & Washington, M. (2019). The evolving institutional work of the National Collegiate Athletic Association to maintain dominance in a fragmented field. *Sport Management Review*, 22(3), 379-394. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2018.05.002>
- Nite, C., Singer, J. N., & Cunningham, G. B. (2013). Addressing competing logics between the mission of a religious university and the demands of intercollegiate athletics. *Sport Management Review*, 16(4), 465-476. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2013.03.002>
- O'Connor, C., & Joffe, H. (2020). Intercoder reliability in qualitative research: Debates and practical guidelines. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919899220>
- Ocasio, W., Loewenstein, J., & Nigam, A. (2015). How streams of communication reproduce and change institutional logics: The role of categories. *Academy of Management Review*, 40(1), 28-48. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2013.0274>
- Schultz, F., & Wehmeier, S. (2010). Institutionalization of corporate social responsibility within corporate communications: Combining institutional, sensemaking and communication perspectives. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 15(1), 9-29. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13563281011016813>
- Seo, M. G., & Creed, W. E. D. (2002). Institutional contradictions, praxis, and institutional change: A dialectical perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 27(2), 222-247. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2002.6588004>

- Southall, R. M., Nagel, M. S., Staurowsky, E. J., Karcher, R. T., & Maxcy, J. G. (2023). *The NCAA and the exploitation of college profit-athletes: An amateurism that never was*. University of South Carolina Press.
- Southall, R. M., & Staurowsky, E. J. (2013). Cheering on the collegiate model: Creating, disseminating, and imbedding the NCAA's redefinition of amateurism. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 37*(4), 403-429. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723513498606>
- Southall, R. M., & Weiler, J. D. (2014). NCAA Division-I athletic departments: 21st century athletic company towns. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics, 7*, 161-186.
- Stokowski, S., Dittmore, S. W., Stine, G., & Li, B. (2017). Resource decisions in academic services: Which factors predict positive APR scores at NCAA Division I institutions? *Journal of Contemporary Athletics, 11*(3), 173-188.
- Stokowski, S., Rudd, A., Corr, C., Jolly, K., & Fridley, A. (2023a). Replicating inclusivity: The relationship between Directors' Cup rankings and LGBTQI+ inclusive NCAA athletic departments. *Journal of Education and Recreation Partners, 4*(1), 75-86. <https://doi.org/10.53016/jerp.v4i1.95>
- Stokowski, S., Smith, A., Fridley, A., Corr, C., & Paule-Koba, A. L. (2023b). "The most important shot you will ever take": The burgeoning role of social media activism in challenging embedded NCAA patriarchy. *International Journal of Sport Communication, 16*(4), 482-492. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.2023-0159>
- Thompson, C. J., Locander, W. B., & Pollio, H. R. (1989). Putting consumer experience back into consumer research: The philosophy and method of existential phenomenology. *Journal of Consumer Research, 16*(2), 133-146. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209203>
- Thornton, P. H., & Ocasio, W. (2008). Institutional logics. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, K. Sahlin, & R. Suddaby (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of organizational institutionalism* (pp. 99–129). Sage Publications.
- Watkins, J., Slater, K., & Chang, L. (2022). The relationship between academic clustering and athletic academic support center reporting lines in NCAA FBS programs. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport, 15*(1), 125-142. <https://doi.org/10.17161/jis.v15i1.15226>
- Williams, M., & Moser, T. (2019). The art of coding and thematic exploration in qualitative research. *International Management Review, 15*(1), 45-55.