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The culture of intercollegiate athletes: Pawns for university economic success and academic fraud

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The culture of intercollegiate athletes: Pawns for university economic success and academic fraud

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THE CULTURE OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETES: PAWNS FOR
UNIVERSITY ECONOMIC SUCCESS AND ACADEMIC FRAUD

By

Derek Wagner

A Senior Thesis Submitted to the
Eastern Michigan University
Honors College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation
With Honors in Criminal Justice/Criminology

The Culture of Intercollegiate Athletes:

Pawns for University Economic
Success and Academic Fraud

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"If winning isn't everything, why do they keep the score?"

- Vince Lombardi

Introduction

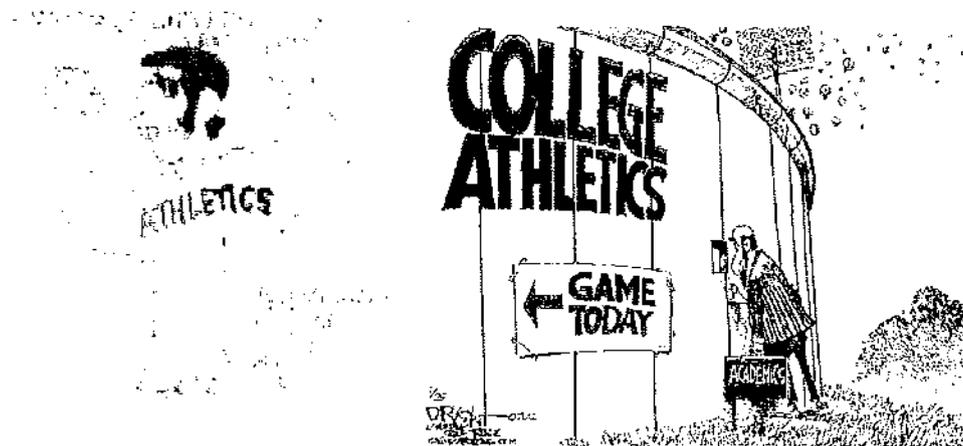
In 1852, the first intercollegiate athletic contest took place, a rowing competition between Harvard and Yale University. The competition, like other events that followed for years to come were administered and organized by the student body. When college athletics first started, the competitions mission was to have fun and consist nothing more than an extracurricular activity among university students. During the early development of intercollegiate sports, revenue and commercialization did not yet play a role in the athletic events, but little did the student organized programs know that the commercialization of collegiate athletic programs was right around the corner.

By 1883 university administrations took total control over collegiate sport programs and the concerns of commercialization, professionalization and corruption ignited around the country. In 1929, the Carnegie Foundation issued the earliest known report addressing the issues of commercialization in collegiate athletic programs. It stated, "{Collegiate sports} is not a students game as it once was. It is a highly organized commercial enterprise. The athletes who take part in it have come up through years of training; they are commanded by pro coaches; little if any initiative of ordinary play is left to the player. The great matches are highly profitable enterprises" (Benford, 2007). Dating back to the late 1800's when

university administrations took athletic programs by its grasp a myriad of reform movements have taken place in order to maintain and control the commercialized "beasts" that these programs were quickly becoming. In 1906, in response to corruption that became entangled in intercollegiate athletics, Theodore Roosevelt created the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Roosevelt initially established the association in order to protect young athletes from the dangerous and exploitive athletic practices that started to erupt through collegiate sports at the time. Since Roosevelt established the NCAA in 1906, the association has become the delegating body of collegiate athletics, and has continuously implemented new policies and provisions in order to protect the welfare of student athletes. The policies that were enforced by the NCAA covered a wide array of aspects, from provisions on recruiting potential student athletes to provisions protecting and enforcing the academic aspects of current student athletes.

As commercialization of collegiate athletics expanded, issues such as academic fraud and dishonesty began to proliferate. Students became so intertwined in sports and academics; it became tough to distinguish the two aspects of the student athlete. In 1983, the National Collegiate Athletic Association erected its first reform movement addressing the academics of college athletes; establishing new provisions and policies for universities to abide by (i.e. eligibility, and academic dishonesty rules). Since the movement in the early 1980's, the sanctions implemented by the NCAA on universities who disobeyed the academic policies that were once established by the 1983 movement, seemed to be nothing but a 'flick on the wrist' to university athletic programs. With the penalties for violating NCAA

academic policies not functioning as the deterrent the NCAA was originally planning for, the violations of academic fraud in collegiate athletics seemed to expand nationwide. A culture that was ill-concerned with the academics of student athletes and that found the athletic aspect of the student athlete to be of more importance cultivated nationwide, not only among college students, but also among youths. According to a former Harvard University President, Charles Elliot, "Colleges are presenting themselves to the public, educated, and uneducated alike, as places of mere physical sport and not as educational training institutions" (Benford, 2007). This is what higher education has become - athletics becoming more important than academics in higher educational institutions. Over the last thirty years, the term 'edutainment' was developed to describe modern intercollegiate athletic programs.



Nearly all-collegiate athletic programs (Div. 1) are becoming multi-million dollar businesses that, like real world companies, are striving to dismantle competitors by becoming the so-called, 'powerhouse'. Somewhere in the life span of collegiate sports, the ideal of using students as commodities in order to win games and in turn

receive the ultimate goal of revenue has erupted from the depths of our social and economical culture. With blatant disregard for a number of potential and current athletes academic careers, universities are finding every corner to cut in order to maximize the opportunities for their athletic teams to improve. Though fiscal success became a goal for many universities in the early 1900's, in the late 1980's it became increasingly more evident that the ambition for money was a major source of corruption in collegiate sports. Since the 1980's, our society has affixed a culture that favors entertainment over education – the more physical and destructive the better; competition over collaboration, and a worshipful stance toward iconic sport heroes over thoughtful engagement with academic leaders, who should inspire virtue of their intellectual prowess and moral courage (Benford, 2007). By transforming into an institution practicing a 'corporate model' towards athletics (profit driven), universities have become more focused on winning the 'arms race' in order to maximize profits for their schools. With the focus being on winning, students lack the necessary focus to succeed academically and the issue of 'Academic Fraud' erupts.

Academic Fraud

According to the NCAA compliance context, Bylaw 10.1-(b) governs academic fraud in collegiate institutions. An official interpretation of the bylaw established that an institution "is required to report" a violation of this bylaw to the NCAA in either of the two situations:

- 1) "...Any time an institutional staff member (e.g., coach, professor, tutor, teaching assistant) is knowingly involved in arranging fraudulent academic credit or transcripts for a prospective student athlete or student-athlete, regardless whether the staff member acted alone or in concert with the prospect or student-athlete"
- 2) "...Any time a student athlete, acting alone or in concert with others knowingly becomes involved in arranging fraudulent academic credit or false transcripts regardless of whether such conduct results in an erroneous declaration of eligibility"

- Also, an institution "is not required to report" a violation if "a student athlete commits an academic offense (e.g., cheating on a test, plagiarism on a term paper) with no involvement of an institutional staff member [...] unless the academic offense results in an erroneous declaration of eligibility and the student subsequently competes for the institution."

(McCaw, 2012)

The NCAA expects an institution to abide by all policies it establishes and to consistently apply these policies upon their student athletes. If an institution were found not reporting violations to the NCAA, further repercussions would follow on top of the initial violations that were found. In the past decade, a total of twenty-five institutions have committed major NCAA violations involving academic fraud – anything from university employee's writing papers to taking tests for athletes to pass courses without actually having gone to class. Academic fraud cases tend to be overlooked by many people, but the violation of this policy can be incredibly detrimental to the image and mission of higher education. As the commercialization of collegiate athletics continues to grow, the care for the academic life of students by universities continue to dwindle. Every year, student athletes are being deprived the chance not only to enhance their academic background, but higher institutions are ripping potential occupational success out of their students hands.

One of the largest cases of academic fraud in the history of collegiate athletics took place at the University of Minnesota. In 1999, the Minnesota basketball program under the coaching of Clem Haskins came under great scrutiny because of academic fraud that had taken place in the program for a number of years. Jan Gangelhoff, an office manager and part time tutor of the University of Minnesota men's basketball team blew the whistle on the collegiate program. Gangelhoff stated that she wrote over 400 term papers for at least 18 different student athletes between the years of 1993 and 1998. While the NCAA started to conduct an investigation of the issue, it came out that Clem Haskins (coach) made cash payments to players in order to mislead attorneys. Once this story was released, it became incredibly detrimental to the image of the program and to college athletics as a whole. According to Armen Keteyian, who participated in the investigation of this particular case, stated, "We're talking about a system that systematically corrupts the very essence of what public education is all about in this country (Wells & Carozza, 2000)." Keteyian is right; the idea of being a student athlete is being undermined by the goal of becoming a national athletic powerhouse program that's mission is to earn maximum profit for their particular institution.

More recently, Mary Willingham, a current University of North Carolina employee claimed that academic fraud helped keep many of the Tar Heel athletes academically eligible for their sports. Willingham claimed that players would take part of what were called 'paper classes', which required a twenty-page paper to pass the class (no classes, just the paper). These papers generally were written by other people or were full of plagiarism. On top of these so called 'paper classes', she stated

that many of the football and men's basketball student athletes were diagnosed with severe learning disabilities and weren't academically qualified to complete college level work, yet somehow were still admitted to the university as 'special cases'. According to Willingham, players told her that they never read a book or even written a paragraph in their previous schooling. Willingham states, "there are serious literacy deficits and they cannot do the course work here, and if you cannot do the course work here, how do you stay eligible? You stay eligible by some department, some professor, somebody who gives you a break. That's everywhere across the country. Here it happened with paper classes. There's no question" (Kane, 2012).

If the comparisons of intercollegiate athletic programs and the corporate model continue, should the violations by universities of policies implemented by the NCAA be considered criminal? What makes violations of policies implemented by the NCAA different from our federal governments policies? Corporations in our business world are producing a good for sale and have to abide by certain policies implemented and enforced by our federal government, just like intercollegiate athletic programs whom produce a good (entertainment) and have to abide by policies implemented and enforced by the NCAA. Is there a difference between the two scenarios? Universities all over the country aren't abiding by the policies of academic standards for collegiate athletes. Here is a small list of cases that have occurred during the short time span of commercialization of college athletics:

- At Florida State University, a tutor was found to be involved in giving students answers to online exams and typed material for 23 student athletes.
- At the University of Kansas, a former graduate assistant football coach, was involved in supplying answers for exams for two prospective athletes in order to allow them to be academically eligible.
- Most known for his success as a coach on the court, John Calipari (current head basketball coach at University of Kentucky) was involved in SAT frauds at the University of Memphis, in order to allow prospective student athletes to meet the minimum requirements to be accepted into the university.
- A former University of Purdue women's basketball assistant coach was found to have partially researched and composed a sociology paper for a player then lied to university officials looking into the allegations.
- A case at Auburn University involving a professor of Sociology created specialized classes in accordance to student athletes that required very little work.

It's nationwide, and proliferating around the country. Academic fraud undermines the sole purpose of higher education and has a diminishing effect on universities mission for academics, as well as the student athletes mission to be an academic student. With the increasing time requirement for student athletes to focus on their athletics first, it has created an unintended controversy between athletics and academics.

Student-Athlete Experience

In today's culture, what's the primary focus for student athletes? Athletics or Academics? Our culture has created higher education for the purpose of allowing potential students to follow a path of continuing their education, so ideally most people would hope for academics, but in all reality, athletics have become the main priority for student athletes. With the rising pressure from universities upon

student athletes to focus on athletics and training, many student athletes are struggling to handle the image of being an athlete and a student. Collegiate athletes are being demanded to practice and train roughly 30+ hours a week during season and even off-season, creating a constant clash between academics and athletics. Practically working a full time job practicing and playing sports, athletes are having a hard time contributing enough time to stay academically eligible for their sports. Resulting in instances of academic dishonesty and fraud in completing their work.

According to Allen Sack, a professor of Sociology for the University of New Haven, "all college athletes experience some conflict between demands of their sport and the classroom" (Sack, 1987). If athletes, especially at big time college athletic institutions, don't conform to the athletic expectations of the institution, many of them would risk losing financial benefits to attend the school; most of which would lose the opportunity to finish their college degree. In a 1983 and 1985 study conducted by the Center for Athlete's Rights and Education examined the attitudes and perceptions of college athletes regarding their athletic and academic experiences. The survey focused on a sample of male and female basketball players at division I, II, and III level schools. The survey was not random, but did include 644 athletes representing 47 schools and 35 conferences throughout the United States. One of the questions included on the survey was, "Do you feel pressure to be the athlete 1st and student 2nd?" According to the results, division I scholarship athletes resulted in 45% saying, 'yes', compared to 25% yes, from non-scholarship athletes. Another important question to take away from this study was, "Do your coaches make demands on your time and energy that prevent you from being a top

student?" According to the study, 55% of division I male athletes responded; yes. Also the study found division I athletes to be more likely than others to feel that being athletes forced them to: take fewer courses during the semester, cut class, miss taking courses they wanted to take, take a less demanding major, miss exams, hustle professors for grades, have others write papers and cheat on work (Sack, 1987). Results in these surveys clearly show that at big time commercialized institutions where athletics consume most of the time in student-athletes college lives, students struggle with the controversies of being an athlete and an academic student.

According to an American Council of Education report, "It's generally admitted that in the big-time, scholar-athletes on the average have lower school records, test scores and academic predictions than other students at the time of admission" (Sack, 1987). A study conducted at Michigan State University, reported that 50% of scholarship athletes are admitted regularly to MSU with 'special considerations', i.e. have high school GPA's below 2.9 and/or poor test scores. In terms of Graduation Rates, the rates of graduation tend to be the lowest in the athletic programs that are the most commercialized and professionalized; more and likely due to the pressure to succeed athletically before academically. Like low graduation rates, low grades and poor preparation for college seem to be more prevalent in athletic programs, which produce large amounts of revenue and grant athletic scholarships (Sack, 1987). When universities pressure students to commit more time to athletics, a student must take fewer classes in order to allow the time for their athletic practices and games. In short term, resulting in fewer credit hours

per semester, but more importantly in the long term, resulting in not having enough hours to graduate in the commonly offered 4-year scholarship. With many of the current athletes in today's athletic world originating from low income areas, that more and likely aren't able to provide proper academic schooling for their youths, results in a plethora of current athletes not being able to graduate in the 4-years that the university expects them too. Whether it was in terms of not being able to graduate because of their Grade Point Average, or if it's because they are unable to afford the extra few years of schooling after their 4-year scholarship runs out. In terms of maintaining their GPA and graduating, athletes that are enrolled in programs that approximate the corporate model are found to be much more likely than other athletes in other programs to have difficulty in reconciling the relationship between the student and athlete roles.

Reality of Commercialization

In the last few decades there has been growing emphasis on winning intercollegiate contests and increasing media market shares, which has fed motivation to a spending escalation in collegiate athletic programs. The belief that devoting more money to college athletic programs in order to achieve greater athletic success resulting in greater revenues has been grounded into the culture of collegiate athletics. College sports, primarily men's football and basketball programs, have become an orbit of shoe contracts, deals with television networks all in order to obtain the ultimate goal, revenue. Though the image of college athletic programs reaping major benefits from the commercialism of sports has proliferated,

in reality only a tiny number of college athletic programs actually collect the financial rewards that come from selling high priced tickets and winning championships. According to a 2011 USA Today analysis, just seven athletic programs in the country generated enough revenue to 'finish in the black' (to have positive revenue/not in debt) in each of the past five years (Knight & Knight, 2012).

If the commercialization of college sports doesn't seem to be major issue to you now, examining the numbers behind the spending spree will certainly open your eyes to the issue. In 2010, the median athletics spending per athletes at institutions in each major athletics conference – Division 1– ranges from 4 to nearly 11 times more than the median spending on education-related activities per student. According to the Knights commission financial data in 2010, the median spending per *student* for Football Bowl Subdivision schools (Div. 1) was \$13,628. Meanwhile, spending per *athlete* was \$91,935 (Knight & Knight, 2012).

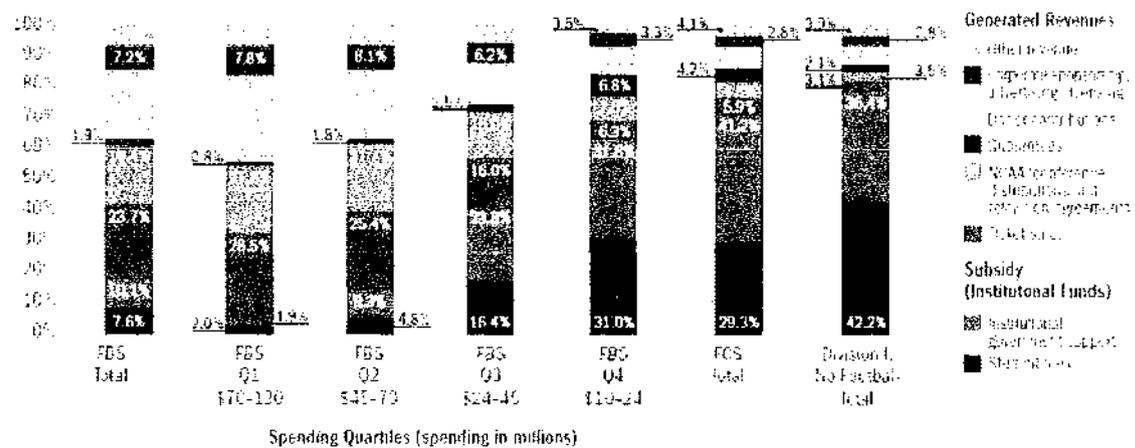
Figure #1:

Division I Subdivisions and FBS Conferences	Median academic spending per student, 2010	Median athletics spending per athlete, 2010
Southeastern (SEC)	\$13,390	\$163,931
Big 12	\$13,988	\$131,286
Pac 10	\$14,217	\$102,121
Atlantic Coast (ACC)	\$15,360	\$103,384
Big Ten	\$19,225	\$116,667
Big East	\$17,620	\$102,032
FBS Median	\$13,628	\$91,936

unacceptable financial pressures for everyone involved in the university. To meet the enormous budgets that these programs are building, universities require institutional funds to pay for their spending for athletics. In 2010, roughly \$19,318 of athletic spending per athlete was funded by institutional athletic subsidies; meanwhile generated revenues funded \$70,000 of athletic spending per athlete. Yes, a large chunk of spending is funded by generated revenue, but the other chunk that is getting removed from institutional subsidies is essentially removing new opportunities for academic students. Rather than spending that money on student academic facilities, it's instead being used for new grass at the football practice field, or a new locker room.

Figure #2:

Figure 3. Where the Money Comes From: Source of Athletic Budget Revenues for Division I Colleges, by Subdivision, 2010



Note: Total revenue reported in this chart is based on the 2010 survey of Division I colleges. Total revenue includes all revenue reported by colleges, including institutional subsidies, corporate sponsorships, and other non-department revenue.

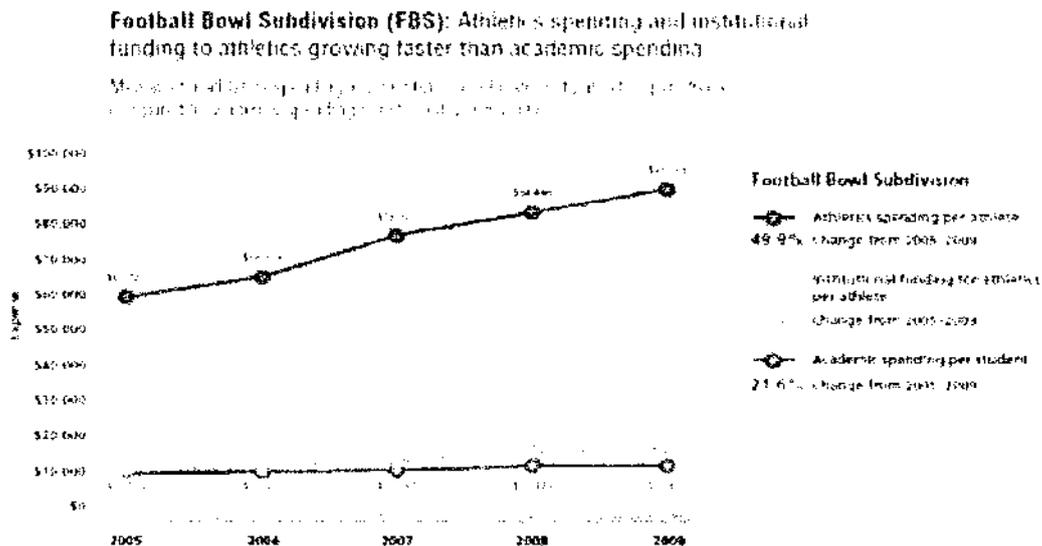
Data Source: NCAA's Division I Athletic Survey, 2010.

Prepared by Knight & Knight, Inc. on behalf of the NCAA, 2012.

(Knight & Knight, 2012)

Sadly, the trend of spending isn't projected to stop; many organizations such as the Knights Commission have estimated the trend to get tremendously worse. The average budget for the top ten spending institutions in all of Division 1 athletics in 2009 was \$98 million. In 2015, it is projected to be approximately \$165 million and \$245 million in 2020 (Knight & Knight, 2012). Between the fiscal years 2005 and 2010, on average, there has been a 39% increase in athletic spending per athlete, compared to only an 11% increase in academic spending per student. Even though it's been a couple years since this data has been collected, there has been no evidence that these behaviors are going to slow. Every year, schools are spending millions of dollars on new facilities for their athletic programs, and it's becoming a competition between schools to out buy each other in facilities in order to attract future athletes.

Figure #3:



(Knight & Knight, 2012)

Over the years, more institutions have engaged in a number of interlocking relationships with private sector companies. Deals that generate a college program an immense amount of revenue, such as media contracts, video games, and internet programming. Universities are earning profits from merchandizing sporting goods, signing advertisement contracts, and selling endless commodities at stadiums, stores and tailgates. In order to obtain the goal of monetary success, recruitment of top tier athletes is necessary. Scandals involving university boosters, local sporting good stores and others that have supplied benefits to college athletes has had an enormous impact on potential athletes in choosing schools. Acts of aiding and especially benefiting future and current athletes at universities violate numerous NCAA policies. Over the past few decades, the NCAA has discovered a number of scandals where current or future athletes reaped benefits from an outside source, and here is a list of just a few cases that have gained media attention around the country:

- In 2000, the University of Wisconsin's football program was forced to suspend 26 players that received free shoes from a local sporting goods store.
- In the hype of the 'Fab Five', the University of Michigan basketball program was heavily sanctioned because multiple players were found to receive improper loans from a university booster.
- Former University of Southern California running back, and Heisman Trophy winner Reggie Bush, was found to receive improper benefits from the university for his time playing for the institution.
- In the scandal known as "Free Shoe University", the University of Florida State was found to have given \$6,000 worth of free shoes to their student athletes.
- In 2005, Gary Barnett, the former Head football coach at the University of Colorado was found to regularly use sex, drugs, and alcohol as recruiting tools for potential athletes.

- In reference to illegal recruiting of collegiate sport programs, the case of what is known as “Pony Exce\$\$” must be mentioned.
- During the 1980’s, Southern Methodist University boosters were found to give thousands of dollars to potential football athletes at the university. Even when the NCAA declared an investigation on the program, money continued to flow through the program and the worst part of it is, is that the entire collegiate program was fully aware of the funding and former governor and SMU chairman at the time played an important role in the transactions.

Not only are the universities feeding off the revenue they generate from ticket sales and merchandise, but media contracts are also having an enormous impact on the direction of university athletic programs go in terms of achieving fiscal success. According to the Knights Commission financial data, of the top five conferences in the BCS (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac 12, SEC) the total annual guaranteed revenue in media contracts is \$1,098,000,000. Each conference specifically can be extracted as so:

Figure #4:

FBS Division I Conferences	Average annual revenue as a Conference	Annual revenue per school
Atlantic Coast (ACC)	\$155,000,000	\$12,916,667
Big Ten	\$232,000,000	\$19,333,332
Big 12	\$150,000,000	\$15,000,000
Pac 12	\$250,000,000	\$20,833,333
Southeastern (SEC)	\$205,000,000	\$17,083,333

(Knight & Knight, 2012)

Sociological Analysis of College Athletics

In analyzing commercialism of intercollegiate athletic programs in terms of a sociological context, two major theoretical approaches in particular are commonly used by sociological theorists, the Marxist Theory and Conflict Theory. The *Marxist Theory*, created by Karl Marx, is known primarily for its theoretical impact during the industrial era. The theory examines various groups' relationships relative to the means of production, and states that as the forces of production improve, the gap between the upper class and the working class expands, creating a class conflict. According to the Marxist theory, the people who own the means of production are referred to as the *bourgeoisie* – the wealthy, upper crust of society. The production is then handled by the workers, or as Marx terms them, the *proletariat* – the working class and the poor and are considered the labor power of the bourgeoisie.

Applying the Marxist theory towards intercollegiate athletics, Marx would view the whole college athletic industry as one class conflict. Theorists would portray universities, athletic directors and corporate sponsors as the owners of the means of production, the *bourgeoisie*. The student athletes would be referred to as the working class and the poor, or the labor power of the bourgeoisie, known as the *proletariat*. The primary salable good, though intangible, is the entertainment value gained by fans watching the games both in person and on television. In general, Marxist theorists would argue the proletarian – student athletes – are being exploited in the same way that factory workers were exploited in factories and large corporations, especially during the industrial era. Specifically, student athlete's

welfare is being totally disregarded by university athletic directors and sponsors, whom primarily focus on what they receive for the end product – revenue. In the context of the Marxist theory, sociologists approach the issue of intercollegiate athletics with a dual perspective, by incorporating a structural approach as well as a cultural approach. According to Marxist theorists, there are two major dimensions of college athletics. The first dimension is the '*political economy of sports*', which is concerned with the ways in which the mode of production of sports is organized to socialize the costs of production whereas the profits are privatized. Profits from financing, construction, and auxiliary services from the sports all rebound to the private owner (university) whereas the costs of production are transferred to the taxpayer, workers, and fans through player training programs in schools, public stadium building, low wages and benefits for non-athletes and ticket and television revenue. The second dimension refers to the '*ideological meaning for socialization as well as for the legitimacy within a strife-ridden nation*' aka '*Cultural Marxism*'. This specific dimension is focused on the monopoly capitalism that has formed within the intercollegiate programs. It's argued that the entire sports ensemble becomes a product that is sold to major corporations that need to dispose of surplus production in order to realize its true profit (entertainment).

A similar perspective that's also commonly used in the sociological analysis of intercollegiate athletics is the *Conflict Theory*. Conflict theorists focus on the role of institutions in legitimizing the status quo, how individuals are dominated through the shaping of their consciousnesses and worldviews, the connection between the person troubles of individuals and the structure of society, or the efforts by the

advantaged to retain power over the disadvantaged. In their analysis, conflict theorists identify three major deviances in college athletics. The *first* is that the deviance in college sports is rooted in the political economy of society, again, like Marxism, refers to the ways in which the mode of production of sports is organized to socialize the costs of production whereas the profits are privatized. The *second* deviancy is that the monopoly capitalism in athletic programs is rooted by two structural conditions. The first condition being 'massification', which refers to the transformed social relations in society resulting in a more specialized division of labor, and having a large scale commodity production and consumption of labor workers – student athletes. The second condition is referred to as 'commodification'. Commodification refers to the social, psychological, and cultural uses of social structures for the commercial needs of monopoly capital. In other words, it describes college athletes as objects that are manipulated in their role as a commodity, and are marketed, packaged and sold. The *third* deviancy conflict theorists identify is what they refer to as 'Manipulation of Human Robots'. Theorists state that the manufacturing of champions is no longer a craft, but an industry. Young, hopeful athletes are spotted young, and the less talented are weeded out and those that remain are then systematically oriented according to their potential...manipulating and controlling youths, like 'robots'. Along with the deviance that has taken place in college sports, conflict theorists also focused on the organizational deviances of universities as a whole. They refer to specific instances of organizational deviances such as, 'buying athletes' to win games, which in turn will make the entertainment they provide to be more appealing to fans by bringing

in big-time athletes. On top of 'buying athletes', conflict theorists claim that universities are ignorant towards the academics of their athletes and focus primarily on winning, undermining the concept of being student-athletes (students first, athletes second), creating a conflict between the mission of higher education and the role as an academic student.

In response to the deviancy in college athletics conflict theorists present three principles that must be established by universities in order to reduce the growing conflict in sports. The *first* principle presented is that athletes must always be considered ends and not means, the outcome – education – for the participants – student athletes – is infinitely more important than the outcome of the contests. The *second* principle is that must be established is that competition must be fair; rules implemented by universities in terms of academics must be applied impartially to all parties – meaning athletes and non-athletes. The *third* and last principle that needs to be implanted by universities is that participation, leadership, resources, and rewards awarded to students, whether athletes or non-athletes, must be based on achievement rather than ascribed characteristics.

Need for Change

With the spending of collegiate athletic programs continuously increasing, many presidents of universities that practice the corporate model clearly recognize the need for change in the allocation of their spending and funding. In a 2009 Knight Commission Survey given to a large majority of athletic programs around the country, found that a large majority of these programs believe that the spending

trends by universities towards athletics isn't sustainable for the programs and universities as a whole. Much of the concerns originated from the concerns of where the funding was coming from; university subsidies. According to the Knights Commission, "with the spotlight already on intercollegiate athletics, more effective disclosure of finances – and of financial priorities – will enhance the long term prospects of college athletics by ensuring that they remain part of, not apart from, the central mission of colleges and universities" (Knight & Knight, 2012).

The Knights Commission has had a large voice in the movement to change the current trends in intercollegiate athletic spending and commercialization, and have even developed their own recommendations and solutions to the issue. The commission states there are two broad principles that ground the foundation of their recommendations for solving the problem of spending, *Academics first* and *Responsible Spending*. Though the Knights Commission has formed a few solutions to the issue of commercialization of collegiate athletics, one solution in particular has been heavily advocated for. This particular solution heavily relies upon the transparency of institution athletic spending, including a more comprehensible measure to compare athletic and academic spending. The commission's primary objective for this solution is for NCAA financial reports of institutional spending, long-term debts, and capital spending of all university athletic programs to be available for public viewing. This simple and subtle solution to slow the spending of university spending has only one, hopefully effective ambition. The hope that permitting the reports to go public will allow the public to visualize the reality of

athletic spending compared to academic spending during the era of commercialization of collegiate sports.

Conclusion

Somewhere throughout the life span of intercollegiate athletics, the concerns of monetary success in athletic programs arose from the depths of our social and economic culture. The concern of the 'student' portion in the commonly used term 'student-athlete' has nearly diminished. The use of athletes as a commodity in order to win games and gain university revenue has become far too common in our culture of sports. Too many people in our modern society have little to no knowledge of the effects of commercialization has on not only our culture of collegiate sports, but more importantly the impacts it has on our student athletes. The increasing demands of time universities are requiring student athletes to commit too are creating unintended consequences that are in turn undermining the mission of higher education. Students are unable to focus on the academic portion of being a student athlete, and have created issues of academic fraud and dishonesty in order to meet the requirements implemented by the NCAA.

Maybe an explanation to the issue of commercialization of collegiate athletics is that times are changing along with our culture towards sports, and with changing times, must come change in policies and views towards collegiate athletes. The era and attitude towards sports now is much different than it originally was. Student athletes now are gaining as much fame as professionals, but aren't reaping any of the financial benefits that professionals are. If there is a proper solution out there to

solve the discrepancy between college athletes and academics, so be it, and I'm sure that many people would love to hear it. But as of now, the continuing trend in collegiate athletic spending and commercialization is having a harmful affect on athletes and non-athletes. When funding for athletics is getting pulled from the funding of academic spending, you know there is a huge issue that needs proper attention. With current financial reports being released of institutional spending and funding for athletic programs now being released, hopefully more of our general public can become aware of what our culture has developed in our higher educational systems. With projections estimating the issue of spending to get much worse over the next few years, the attention that is required to resolve the issue of commercialization and spending among university athletic programs is only getting greater. The conflict between academic and athletic spending and commercialization in our collegiate athletic culture needs to be resolved. Now.

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