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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

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The Graduate School

SCANDALS IN COLLEGE ATHLETICS: A CASE STUDY EXPLORING
THE IMPACT OF A COLLEGE BASKETBALL SCANDAL ON
THE ADMISSIONS/ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT
PROCESS OF A UNIVERSITY

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Leadership, Policy, and Development: Higher Education and P-12 Education
Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership

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has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in School of Leadership, Policy, and Development: Higher Education and P-12 Education, Program of Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership

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ABSTRACT

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“Scandal is a phenomenon associated with sports both professional and collegiate. Virtually no sports are immune to scandal” (Prior et al., 2013, p. 189). Scandals in college athletics have become a topic of interest for the higher education community, arising over the last decade. High profile institutions are being publicly implicated and found guilty of transgressions that alter the way these universities are viewed. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is the governing body of college athletic departments. This body regulates the actions of its members institutions by establishing specific regulations around recruiting, player interaction and many other facets of the experience. This research seeks to understand the impact had on the university when a scandal is discovered and made public. This interpretivist case study is designed to approach the topic of athletic department scandals from an enrollment management/admissions perspective to gain understanding on how the institutional brand, reputation and overall image is impacted. Nine university staff members were interviewed, and their responses were analyzed to develop an understanding of the topic. The findings from this study include lack of impact from the scandal as well as various implications for the university including transparency and consistent communication from administrative positions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

College athletic departments fulfill a unique role on campuses around the country. These departments are connected to other university structures in a way that becomes useful when attempting to study the impact their actions can have on the broader institution (Henck, 2011). Because of this potential impact, it is important to understand an aspect of these departments not widely discussed in recent literature; that of college athletic departmental scandals. Scandals are transgressions often viewed as sexy and timely events that have an impact on the reputation and day to day interactions of an athletic department (Adut, 2005). Because of the nature and presence of these departments, their scandals can ultimately have an impact on the admissions/enrollment management process of the institution.

Significance of the Study

The organizational culture within higher education is nuanced, complex, and intricate when it comes to values and competing agendas (Henck, 2011). Within cultures and organizations, there are established sets of beliefs, values, and actions that members of the culture adopt and expect to see concerning the organization itself (Ramseyer, 2017). A college athletic culture can be compatible with the culture of a broader institution if the athletic department and its leadership understand the institution (Schroeder & Paredes Scribner, 2006). Competing values can be caused by many different influences, emerging from both inside and outside the athletic department.

These differences can potentially impact the perception associated with the university (Henck, 2011; Hughes & Shank, 2005). A campus incorporates all the individuals, departments and entities that are associated with the larger structure; meaning one department can influence another (Ramseyer, 2017). This research can work to better understand the impact of a scandal on the admissions/enrollment management process.

Universities are shaped by their history, mission, setting, norms, traditions and overall image. The culture created through these concepts helps guide the behavior of individuals and groups associated with the institution (Kuh, 2001). Culture establishes a framework for how society should be run and perceived (Kuh, 2001). The growing power and notoriety of athletic departments have influenced the way students perceive institutions of higher education. Their actions and perceived impact have created an avenue for students, and anyone associated with the university to use them as a benchmark for the quality of the institution (Bass et al., 2015).

For fans and community members not directly associated with an institution, athletics has become the metaphorical front porch for a university (Bass et al., 2015). Athletic departments are one of the most visible facets of the modern university and the notion that college athletics is about physical fitness, fun, and friendly competition among institutions is a thing of the past (Harper & Donnor, 2017). Altering academic expectations, questionable recruiting tactics, and other scandalous behavior have characterized intercollegiate athletics from its inception (R. Smith, 1990). As Harper and Donnor (2017) suggested in their research, there may be more scandals every year in college athletics than there are recognized championships. As a result, analyzing the role of college athletic departments allows researchers to better understand how athletics can

impact the other facets of the university system, namely the admissions/enrollment management process.

This research seeks to increase the understanding of the impact an athletic scandal may have on the admissions/enrollment management aspect of the university. The study offers a new perspective on the topic as small, regional, Division I institutions are rarely mentioned in current scholarship. Therefore, because of its timeliness, I chose the Rocky Mountain University (RMU) Men's Basketball scandal as the topic for this research. This scandal will be described later in this chapter.

Statement of Problem

“Scandal is a phenomenon associated with major sporting competitions around the globe. Virtually no sports are immune to scandal” (Prior et al., 2013, p. 189). Athletic departments are often positioned as visual and accessible entry points into the university as a whole; especially regarding the public (Eggers et al., 2020). Members of the public can view the successes and failures of the athletic department as an overall understanding of the quality of the institution (Eggers et al., 2020). As an example, research from the Harvard Business School has demonstrated that scandals on college campuses, including athletic departments, lead to a drop-in application number (Gerdeman, 2016). While the actual reason students decide to enroll elsewhere was not directly investigated, there is a demonstrated correlation between the occurrence of a scandal and overall application numbers (Gerdeman, 2016). There is a need to study how scandals in college athletics are discovered, dealt with and perceived concerning the admissions process (Bass & Newman, 2013). With growing notoriety and reputations, athletic departments have become intricately involved with the student experience (Bass et al., 2015).

Scandal and the University

When universities have highly publicized athletic successes, such as a bowl or tournament appearance, they can maximize their marketing around these accomplishments (Romero, 2018a). This branding effort becomes increasingly critical to institutions with declining enrollments, acting as the essential “front porch” of these institutions (Romero, 2018b). Twitchell (2004) wrote that athletic departments are often seen as a university’s “window to the world” (p. 116). Twitchell outlined how, during his time as a professor at the University of Florida, the athletic department quickly became the brand for the entire university. Twitchell stated most Floridians either love or hate the Gators and the athletic department was an “easy identification” for fans (Twitchell, 2004, p. 115). Twitchell (2004) also referred to the impact and lasting impression mascots can leave on the fans of a university, providing another example of the way the brand of the university is displayed through the athletic department (Lail & Lahman, 2017; Twitchell, 2004).

University scandals do not typically occur as one-time events, but rather ongoing experiences taking place over time, and come to light when an aspect of the scandal becomes public (Downes, 2017). A transgression of this nature is usually only damaging to the reputation of the school when the public learns of the details involved in the scandal (Downes, 2017). Bromley (1993) characterized the relationship between a university and its reputation as one that is difficult to establish and even harder to repair. A scandal is understood as a transgression or act that damages society in some way (Adut, 2005). This damage comes from a society’s knowledge of how an event should be viewed rather than the event itself (Downes, 2017). As society changes, so do the rules,

and expectations sometimes make practices that were once considered scandalous acceptable and vice versa (Thelin, 1994). Public sanctioning that occurs after a scandal is discovered can harm an athletic department and university for years because of the damage to its reputation (D. R. Smith, 2015). Prospective students are likely unaware that a school is being penalized for a transgression, but it is not the penalties that damage the reputation; but the perception of the institution (D. R. Smith, 2015). This research attempted to understand if this described impact occurred at RMU.

Connection to Students

The perceived value associated with an athletic department adds to the student experience as there is a connection between a university's athletic program and the overall relationship a student has with the school (Clopton, 2009). The overall perception of the institution works to encourage a student's relationship with the university (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007). The athletic department actively controls its image in the hopes of building a loyal following of fans (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007). The team and organization represent more than a sports team; they represent a community that is included in the larger university structure and associated with how it is seen by the general public and potential new students.

Jacob et al. (2018) conducted a study to understand how students are impacted by the services and overall product the university is offering, including support services and a level of academic reputation. This study attempted to understand what students find appealing about a specific institution. The study suggested students place a high value on consumption amenities, such as sports, student activities, and dormitories. Consumption amenities are considered enticements or reasons for students to connect themselves to a

specific institution. These auxiliary services influence the perceived quality of life on the campus (Jacob et al., 2018). Universities use these amenities to draw students onto campus (Jacob et al., 2018). The percentage of undergraduate students living on campus and the number of intercollegiate sports offered at the institution are both significantly related to amenity spending inside the university (Jacob et al., 2018). Financial considerations and competition among universities have focused primarily on academics; now it is essential to consider the other aspect of the university experience on the student population, including athletic departments.

Through choosing a current scandal and creating a plan to study its impact, this research created a basis for increasing the knowledge of higher education professionals. The public image and reputation of an institution are impacted by the presence and actions of an athletic department. Today, media influences and social expectations have created an atmosphere where transgressions and scandals can become public conversations. In the past two years, there have been multiple notable scandals in college athletics. The recruiting scandals at the University of Louisville and the sexual assault case at Pennsylvania State University both represent the timeliness of this research (Pratt, 2013; Rapaport, 2018; Tracy, 2018). Athletic departments have an impact on the student body, the campus community and the overall image of the university (Parsley, 2016). As we explore this impact the timeliness of the study helps to justify this research. “If the mission of higher education is first and foremost to serve its students, it is imperative to explore how this group’s outlook, attitude, and perspective on their athletic departments” (Parsley, 2016, p. 2). The topic is important as universities are constantly competing for resources and students; scandal impact should be understood in order to work to mitigate

any negative outcomes that would be associated to the university if something like this were to occur. This research focused on the men's basketball team at Rocky Mountain University. The scandal is contemporary, meaning it had been uncovered in the last five years. Below is a detailed account of the scandal being used in this research.

Rocky Mountain University Men's Basketball

When discussing scandals in college athletics, the media often focuses on the large, historical, Power Five institutions. The term Power Five institutions refer to the universities connected to one of the major five athletic conferences (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and SEC). The notoriety of Pennsylvania State University and the University of Louisville has brought them into the spotlight regarding the various National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) violations (Pratt, 2013; Rapaport, 2018; Tracy, 2018). Research in higher education and student affairs leadership literature often overlooks the small institutions that lack national notoriety. This researcher chose to use Rocky Mountain University (RMU) as a pseudonym for the university studied. RMU is a Division I Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) institution that recently underwent an athletic scandal and represents a university from this under-represented population.

The RMU men's basketball program was found guilty of multiple NCAA recruiting violations. These violations included completing coursework for prospects, paying for classes the prospects needed to become academically eligible and arranging off-campus practice sessions with an academically ineligible student-athlete (Osburn, 2017). The RMU head coach and two of his assistant coaches paid or arranged payment reaching \$5,000 in tuition. This tuition was used to cover various courses that players needed to remain eligible to play (Osburn, 2017). The head coach also authorized

practices for ineligible student-athletes (Osburn, 2017). Nine members of the RMU men's basketball coaching staff, including the head coach, were implicated in these violations occurring between the 2010 and 2014 academic years (Fredrickson, 2017). The head coach's tenure at RMU started in 2010 when these actions were occurring. The NCAA said the coach recruited ineligible players and willfully broke the rules to get them on the court (Associated Press, 2017).

The NCAA ruling against RMU, its head coach, and his assistants included both academic fraud and recruiting violations (Associated Press, 2017). The head coach has been the only coach to lead RMU to the NCAA Championship Tournament; an appearance that was vacated by the NCAA in response to the violations that occurred during this time (Mustari, 2017). The NCAA report did not list the names of the student-athletes involved in this scandal; however, multiple ineligible athletes entered the RMU competitions throughout the season (Mustari, 2017). The head coach was fired the previous year when the NCAA began its investigation into these violations (Associated Press, 2017). The head coach recorded a record of 86-98, including two postseason tournament appearances in his six seasons with RMU (Associated Press, 2017).

RMU decided to fire their head coach and undergo a self-imposed postseason ban for the 2016-17 season; which the NCAA accepted (Fredrickson, 2017). The coach admitted failing his responsibilities as a head coach and was unable to promote an atmosphere of compliance within his staff (Associated Press, 2017; Osburn, 2017). Two assistant coaches violated the ethical code of conduct rules by providing false information. A third coach refused to cooperate with the investigation (Osburn, 2017). Once the NCAA concluded their investigation; in addition to the self-imposed ban and

the firing of the coach, the NCAA issued multiple other sanctions against RMU. The sanctions include three years of probation for the RMU men's basketball program, ending Dec. 14, 2020, scholarship and recruiting reductions during this time, a financial penalty totaling \$167,000, the vacating of records, including the RMU 2011 Conference title and its trip to the NCAA postseason tournament, as well as a six-year show of cause period for the RMU head coach and six RMU assistants (Fredrickson, 2017; Mustari, 2017).

The NCAA issued a public statement commending RMU and the administration for handling the scandal effectively. The NCAA supported the university for its "exemplary cooperation" (Associated Press, 2017). The NCAA stated in its decision, that RMU, under the strong leadership of its president, set an example for all member institutions in its handling of this case (Mustari, 2017; Osburn, 2017). It is important for this research that there is an overall understanding concerning the details of the scandal. This understanding allowed me to create research questions, designed to gain a better understanding of the impact these actions, and the resulting NCAA sanctions had on the university. The following research questions were used the guide this research. The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of an athletic department scandal on the admissions/enrollment management facet of the university by gathering information from professional staff members working directly in the field.

Research Questions

The following research questions were designed to understand the implications surrounding the RMU men's basketball scandal and the impact had on the admissions/enrollment management process of RMU. These questions are directed toward the impact the scandal had on the campus community, prestige, reputation and

overall experience associated with the institution. This research was guided by the following questions:

- Q1 What impact did the RMU basketball scandal have on the recruitment practices and admissions process of the university?
 - SQ1 From an admissions perspective did this scandal impact the recruitment of students to the university?
 - SQ2 From an employee's perspective, how did this scandal impact the reputation and prestige of the institution? This question defines the institution as all the structures that are associated with the RMU image and name.
 - SQ3 Did this scandal have an impact on the professional's work or experience here at the university?
 - SQ4 How does an athletic department scandal impact the overall brand of the university?

This study utilized a case study methodology to gain more information about a scandal occurring at a single institution with specifically limited boundaries on inquiry. The research consisted of semi-structured interviews of admissions/enrollment management employees who were present during the 2016-2017 year when the scandal became public.

Why Study a Small School?

It has become apparent that small size, regional institutions are not discussed at length in connection to athletic scandals. Current academic research tends to focus on prestigious and well-established universities; because of the name recognition and financial significance of these schools becoming involved in an athletic scandal. Regardless, there is a need in this body of literature to study the small, regional institutions; how they deal with athletic scandals and the impacts these scandals can have on the institution.

College athletics comes in two sizes; Power Five conference members of well-established reputation, and small regional schools that do not gain national attention consistently (Hanford, 1979). Small institutions are overshadowed by the big-time college athletic programs as ethical misconduct of highly visible athletic programs is seen as a “plague” of college sports (Hanford, 1979, p. 66). Since the formation of intercollegiate athletics, the concern and interest in the “mayhem” have led to its popularity and attempt at professionalism as a way of mitigating some of the more serious outcomes of college athletics (Hanford, 1979, p. 67). The more highly powered the division, the Power Five (ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and SEC), the more regulations there are that can be broken or misinterpreted (Hanford, 1979). Historically, small colleges did not want to be regulated by policies designed to regulate the larger universities. This research defines small universities as ones that are not associated with the Power 5 conferences and are members of the FCS division. RMU was chosen because of its athletic department divisional classification, not the overall enrollment of the institution. Programs, big and small, have always attempted to find ways around the on and off-field NCAA regulations (Hanford, 1979). The larger institutions garner the most media and national attention, therefore, making them larger targets (Hanford, 1979). These actions do not mean the small schools are not guilty of the same transgressions. While Hanford’s research was published in 1979, I believe the discussion of how the size of the university, athletic department and historical significance of the institution holds in today’s modern society.

It makes sense for universities and colleges to want to compete and be measured against other institutions that share their similar features and athletic level. Therefore,

small universities are compensated for playing larger schools in a higher division. At the start of the 2016 college football season, some of the most well-established programs in the nation paid “big sums to destroy lower-echelon teams” (Kirshner, 2016, p. 1). To illustrate the financial difference between the larger and small schools four examples come to mind. The University of Louisville paid Charlotte \$600,000, the University Iowa paid Miami of Ohio \$1 million, the University of Florida paid UMass \$1.25 million and the University of Alabama paid Western Kentucky \$1.3 million just for the smaller teams to come and play their season openers at the larger schools (Kirshner, 2016).

There is are both visual and financial benefits associated with these agreements, allowing for the smaller schools to receive a high level of media attention normally attached to the more well-established institution (Sweitzer, 2009). Several institutions have sought to “move up,” becoming Division I to realize the benefits associated with spectator sports, one of which is demonstrated above based on how much financial gain can be accrued for their on-field performances (Sweitzer, 2009). Football and men’s basketball at the largest institutions, attract considerable public attention. These institutions work to balance the financial risk with the benefits that can come with increased exposure (Sweitzer, 2009).

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduces the concept of athletic department scandals while demonstrating their connection to the overall university. The research establishes the definition and rationale for choosing to study small universities as opposed to Power Five institutions. Chapter one also describes the scandal that occurred at RMU and includes

the timeline and overall details of the event. The chapter closes with the research questions that were used to guide the study.

The structure of this manuscript is as follows: the literature review will consist of relevant scholarship related to this topic including a discussion of college athletics and the NCAA, the understanding of the scandal topic, relevant contemporary examples, the brand and reputational impacts of the event and the connection to the university itself. Once this base of knowledge is established, I explain my researcher epistemology, methodology, methods, and data analysis; including sample size and characteristics of the participants. Discussion of the findings from the interviews as well as the implications of what was discovered complete this research. The impact of an athletic department scandal will be discussed to add to the scholarship of this field.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this research was to understand how the scandals occurring in college athletic departments impact the admissions/enrollment management process of a university. To frame the conversation, we need to understand the structure of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the history and background of college athletics, the basics of the NCAA regulations governing its member institutions, and the contemporary conversation revolving around the idea of athletic scandals. The discussion will then explore the various impacts on the university. The following literature review provides an overview of these topics to understand the concept of athletic scandals and their association with the university.

History of College Athletics

The history of the NCAA, mixed with the development of amateur sports, has created an atmosphere that seeks to promote competition among its universities, in part, to gain national and public recognition (Enforcement Process: Penalties, 2017; Pope & Pope, 2009). Some view this entity as purely a revenue generator for the institution, while others focus on the indirect benefits these visual components provide for the university system (Pope & Pope, 2009). The indirect benefits include an increase in public attention to the institution, an increase in overall notoriety because of athletic success, as well as a greater sense of association with the university brand (Pope & Pope, 2009). Discussing

the formation of athletic competitions can provide a better understanding of how they relate to the contemporary university experience.

The NCAA was created as a response to a changing mentality of sports in the 1800s. Collegiate athletics emerged because of the growing popularity of student-organized and supervised athletic events (Hums & MacLean, 2004). These inner university spectacles emerged as a contemporary approach to competition at the collegiate level. As the popularity of these events increased overtime, the NCAA expanded to include competition among different universities. The first recorded intercollegiate sporting event occurred in 1852 and consisted of a rowing competition between Yale and Harvard (Cady, 1978; Hums & MacLean, 2004; Weight & Zullo, 2014). The race occurred on Lake Winnepesaukee on August 3, 1852, between the two universities and represented the first formalized collegiate athletic event, incidentally, created by the students of the institutions (Cady, 1978). This race was significant to the history of college athletics for two reasons. It represented the first time two universities met in a formalized, competitive atmosphere. Before this race, college athletic competitions occurred between teams inside the same university (Hums & MacLean, 2004). Additionally, it marked the first known sponsorship associated with an athletic event. The Boston, Concord and Montreal Railroad company funded the entire endeavor as a grass-roots marketing tool (Hums & MacLean, 2004). For the first time, the sponsorship from the railroad company demonstrated, there was a financial gain to be found in the world of college athletics. College athletics in U.S. higher education arose because of unique social circumstances which made universities highly influenced and connected to external entities (Beyer & Hannah, 2000).

As the latter half of the 1800s progressed, baseball and football emerged as notable additions to the sports lineup (Hums & MacLean, 2004). As the influence and popularity of these sports grew, university administrators noticed how these competitions were beginning to impact the academics of the institution as well as having an impact on the overall prestige of the university itself. The conversation began to revolve around two concepts: the implications the sports began to have on the student academic experience, as well as the financial and institutional branding implications that could be tied to these endeavors (Hums & MacLean, 2004). This opportunistic thinking worked to establish the current environment of college athletics.

The popularity of college sports was highly questioned during its formation; as this conversation went as high as the President of the United States. President Theodore Roosevelt held a meeting with university administrators from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton to discuss the safety issues beginning to emerge from intercollegiate football. These competitions lacked the general safety equipment, rules and regulations that now exist in the modern-day version of the sport (Duderstadt, 2009; Wiggins, 1995). While these national conversations were occurring the popularity of college athletics, particularly football, increased, drawing more crowds and generating more public attention (Duderstadt, 2009). The 1920s became a time when institutions began to feel pressure from alumni and fans to continue to grow intercollegiate athletics (Wiggins, 1995). As a result, the history of college athletics demonstrates how quickly intercollegiate athletics became prominent in the higher education system of this country.

The background demonstrated that institutions began to derive some benefits from these competitions. These unintended consequences came in the form of an increased

level of scrutiny and oversight. In 1929, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, an organization dedicated to the improvement of educational processes, published *American College Athletics* (Thelin, 1994). This seminal report provided an in-depth snapshot of the influence and place of intercollegiate athletics in the American higher education system. The report described some of the first recorded recruiting and academic violations, such as offering extra benefits for players to choose a specific school or outside monetary contributions that were made to incoming athletes (Thelin, 1994). The report was covered by the *New York Times*, widely disseminating these recruiting infractions and increasing the conversation surrounding scandals in college athletics.

In efforts to add legitimacy to the NCAA structure, in 1951, Walter Byers was hired as the first executive director (Byers & Hammer, 1995; Hums & MacLean, 2004). The NCAA then occupied a more formalized office and employed more full-time NCAA personnel, increasing the organization's ability to monitor and incorporate effective change on intercollegiate structures (Byers & Hammer, 1995). In 1973, to further increase the organization's structure, the NCAA divided its member institutions into Divisions I, II, and III. The top revenue-producing institutions were classified as Division I, where athletes could receive full athletic scholarships that covered tuition and housing (Bass et al., 2015). Divisions II and III lacked these financial resources; a choice intended to support the larger programs of the time. Bok (2003) calls college athletics "the oldest form of commercialization in American higher education" (p. 35). From its beginning, the financial capacity of the athletic program dictated their overall standing in the

university hierarchy, as most offices on campus did not gain direct revenue from their activities.

The history of college athletics sets the stage for the contemporary discussions revolving around these topics. To fully understand the nature of college athletics and its connection to the university system, this research discusses the governing body for these departments. The next section will describe the organization and regulations that currently govern college athletics.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association

To guide the research of an athletic scandal, it is important to understand the modern-day governing body of college athletics. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is the organization that regulates all intercollegiate athletics around the nation. This organization is a member-led (meaning with input from member universities) national organization dedicated to the well-being and lifelong success of college athletes and athletic departments (Enforcement Process: Penalties, 2017). The NCAA promotes itself as being dedicated to the student experience which includes balancing academics, social lives, and athletics of its students through a culture of integrity and sportsmanship (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2013). The organization promotes an inclusive culture that is dedicated to the respect and development of the student-athlete, as well as the rest of the university population. Through the integration of these ideals, the NCAA works to become a pivotal member of the current national higher education system (Enforcement Process: Penalties, 2017). The NCAA is the governing body that must regulate, maintain, and respond to any violations occurring inside its programs, situations that can become more serious athletic scandals.

The NCAA is the organization that formally defines what behavior will be considered justified or acceptable in the realm of college athletics (Pratt, 2013).

According to Pratt (2013), the behavior of college coaches, players, and alumni are under the purview of both the NCAA as well as the institution itself. The established structure is one that allows for specific rules and regulations to be determined to maintain the most stable and productive atmosphere possible (Pratt, 2013). This also includes the ability of the two entities, NCAA and university, to attempt to recover and understand what happens when a scandal occurs (Pratt, 2013).

The governance structure of the NCAA is dedicated to maintaining the rules and regulations that cover all member schools of the organization. These legislative structures are made up of volunteers from the various institutions under the NCAA umbrella (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2013). The NCAA has very specific rules that each university must follow to remain in good standing. The rules cover the recruitment of student-athletes, treatment during their tenure at the institutions, as well as the financial aspect of the student-athlete scholarships (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2013). College athletics is a highly competitive atmosphere, where universities are all seeking to obtain the best possible talent; this fundamental aspect of the environment can lead to transgressions that can be deemed illegal by the NCAA. To fully understand the concept of athletic scandal, it is relevant to discuss the approach and regulations that the NCAA has decided universities must follow to remain in good standing with the organization.

The NCAA promotes a fair recruiting environment to limit the intrusion of athletic departments into the lives of potential student-athletes (National Collegiate

Athletic Association, 2013). By using pre-approved recruiting methods (face to face, electronic communication, etc.), eliminating any type of financial compensation outside of approved scholarships and following a standardized time frame when recruiting can take place, the NCAA monitors this progress to ensure all member institutions are engaging in fair and equitable practices (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2013). The NCAA also maintains specific rules around the treatment of players once they are admitted to the university. These rules include the number of hours student-athletes can spend on their respective sport, the grade point average that a student-athlete must maintain, and other regulations to ensure they are eligible to participate in college athletics (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2013). There are currently 179,200 student-athletes attending 351 Division I institutions in the NCAA (Recruiting Facts Sheet, 2018).

Through our understanding of the NCAA structure and its connection to the university, we can begin to understand how a scandal can impact the structures involved. Next, this research will establish a background understanding of the scandal term and how it is defined in this research. Scandal is a psychological concept that will be related to the actions of an athletic department.

Scandal Defined

Scandal refers to the psychological term that relates directly to any “negative information” which is directly related to a specific entity, organization, or individual (Hughes & Shank, 2005, p. 210). When attempting to understand the core values of scandal, Adut (2005) provides an extension to the overall knowledge by defining scandal as disruptive publicity of transgression, meaning an action that has caused some type of

public reaction. This, mixed with the concept of negative information, allows us a base of working knowledge to understand the scope of this concept. The understanding of scandal severity (single occurrence or repeated behavior) is important to consider when establishing a working definition of the athletic scandal (Kelly et al., 2018)

While the concept of scandal is something that can be used in any facet of society; this research seeks to understand it from the perspective of college athletics. Thompson (2000) defined scandal as “actions or events involving certain kinds of transgressions which become known to others and are sufficiently serious to elicit a public response” (p. 13). One of the major reasons people are drawn to sport is that it represents a simplified world of rules, regulations and moral conduct. This regulatory aspect is something that adds to the overall influence of a scandal occurring in this field. A sports scandal is an action, event, or transgression that threatens the regulatory aspect of the sporting field. Organizations and institutions are held to a certain standard in the public eye as they are the ones responsible for upholding the moral conduct of their teams and players. With the increased influence of the media and heightened popularity of college athletics, scandals are now being seen and discussed by a wider audience than ever before (Thompson, 2000). The understanding of how this is being perceived starts with an understanding of the general definition of scandal in contemporary society.

Thompson (2000) breaks down a scandal into four distinct phases: (a) the pre-scandal phase, (b) the phase of scandal proper, (c) the phase of culmination, and (d) the aftermath. The pre-scandal phase deals directly with the organization’s culture established by the institution. The proper phase is when the public is exposed to what has happened with the scandal. Thirdly, the culmination phase is when outside pressures or

influences encourage the scandal, and parties involved, to come to some type of conclusion (Thompson, 2000). Finally, the aftermath is when the reputation management of the institution becomes important (Adut, 2005). The interaction between these various stages is important when understanding how a scandal develops, emerges and is ultimately resolved (Thompson, 2000).

In a study conducted by Hughes and Shank (2005), the researchers attempted to understand how individuals defined the idea of scandal. The goal is to understand how the term was being used after a negative event occurred at the university. The participants of the study identified four consistent characteristics that help categorize if an event would be considered a scandal. These characteristics included an action that was either deemed illegal or unethical; an occurrence involving multiple parties; the act occurring over a sustained period; or something whose impact affected the integrity of the sport or organization with which they were associated (Hughes & Shank, 2005). When the term scandal is used in this discussion, it can be understood using characteristics described by Hughes and Shank (2005). These four characteristics provide a base of understanding that will be applied to each of the scandals discussed in this research.

Research by Prior et al. (2013) also offered four parameters that can be used when attempting to understand the overall impact of an athletic scandal. The four proposed parameters are addressing the scandal's breadth, depth, gravity, and overall duration. In this context, breadth is described as "the number of entities that are complicit in the scandal" (p. 203). The depth of a scandal is understood as the "extent of scandalous behavior" (p. 203). If a scandal continues to receive media attention over a prolonged period this can add to the depth of the transgression (Prior et al., 2013). This parameter

also can be connected to the severity of the scandal; usually in connection to an illegal activity (Prior et al., 2013). Gravity refers to the “relative impact of the act or acts. In other words, this dimension relates to the seriousness of the scandal” (p. 204). This parameter is where individuals make a personal decision as to whether they will support the scandal or back of the organization, depending on the social norms of the community (Prior et al., 2013). Finally, duration refers to the “length of time the scandal draws public attention” (p. 204).

This research provides a base of understanding regarding the concept of scandal. The working definition discussed above was used throughout this study. The following section will discuss various scandals that have been brought into the national conversation within the last five years, working to demonstrate the timeliness of this research as well as providing a sense of how institutions can be impacted.

Contemporary Scandal Examples

To frame the understanding of athletic departmental scandal this research discusses multiple contemporary examples. These examples were chosen specifically because they help to illustrate the connection to higher education. The cases include Pennsylvania State University, the University of Louisville; and the University of Southern California. The information gathered for these two cases consists of news articles and nationally syndicated publications. Reviewing these cases helps to paint a picture of how athletic scandals can impact the university and works to justify why smaller institutions should be included in this conversation.

Pennsylvania State University

In November of 2011, Jerry Sandusky, the assistant coach for the Penn State football team was accused of over 50 counts of child molestation (Nichols & Cunningham, 2017). The violations perpetrated by Sandusky lasted over 15 years and included multiple young males, most of which were associated with a non-profit, founded by Sandusky, known as The Second Mile. This organization was created as a foster home for troubled boys (Penn State Scandal Fast Facts, 2018). Most of the abuses were in the Penn State locker rooms. The first person to speak out about these assaults was graduate assistant Michael McQueary (Downes, 2017; Ganim, 2011; Van Natta, 2012). Through the multi-year process, 26 victims came forward accusing Sandusky of sexual assault. Sandusky was eventually charged for 45 of the 50 counts of child sexual abuse ultimately leading to his being sentenced to over 30 years in prison as a registered sex offender (Nichols & Cunningham, 2017). Penn State was also found guilty of knowingly covering up the assaults. Originally the NCAA announced sanctions of a \$60 million fine, a loss of 20 football scholarships and a vacation of over 100 wins spanning between the 1998-2011 seasons (Penn State Scandal Fast Facts, 2018; Penn State filed a lawsuit in January 2015 successfully petitioning to reverse the sanctions. The NCAA removed the postseason ban, returned the football scholarships and restored the 111 wins that occurred during the time in question (Penn State Scandal Fast Facts, 2018; The Sandusky case spanned over two decades and was linked to high profile individuals of the university including members of the university leadership as well as head coach Joe Paterno (Downes, 2017; Ganim, 2011; Van Natta, 2012). The individuals associated with this case were accused of knowingly covering up the information about the sexual assaults.

These findings resulted in members of the university administration either resigning or being removed from their position.

University of Louisville

In February of 2018, the NCAA revoked the 2013 National Championship from the University of Louisville Cardinals Men's basketball team (Rapaport, 2018; Tracy, 2018). The decision was the culmination of a two-year investigation into the university following the release of Katina Powell's book, "Breaking Cardinal Rules: Basketball and the Escort Queen" (Greer, 2018). The university was found guilty of providing recruits with parties that involved strippers and the performance of sexual acts (Boone, 2018; Rapaport, 2018; Tracy, 2017). These parties were used as recruiting tools to entice players to commit to the institution. While the university argued over specifics of the allegations, it did not dispute the overall findings of the investigation. Ultimately the national championship was removed because of participation from ineligible players; the players that were involved in the parties located in the basketball residence hall (Boone, 2018). The sanctions set forth by the NCAA were nothing less than historical because it marked the first time that the governing body (NCAA) had stripped a national championship from its winner (Boone, 2018; Tracy, 2018).

University of Southern California

University of Southern California (USC) is currently undergoing an admissions scandal that has garnered national attention over the last few months. It was reported that Laura Janke, former assistant women's soccer coach was involved in creating several false sport profiles for high school students in association with William Singer, a man who allegedly has been offering wealthy families a "side door" into prestigious

universities (Ormseth, 2019). The most popular and attention-drawing individual being, Olivia Jade Giannulli, daughter of actress Lori Loughlin and husband Mossimo Giannulli. Singer allegedly told the couple he would present their daughter as a crew coxswain for the L.A. Marina Club team and requested they send an “action picture.” The couple sent him a photo of Olivia Jade rowing on a machine, according to the affidavit (Ormseth, 2019, p. 1). Janke said she later did the same for Loughlin’s other daughter, Isabella Rose (Romo & Carapezza, 2019). The alleged bribes were funneled through Singer’s charity, whose stated mission was to help “underprivileged students.” This allowed some of the parents to write off the bribes as donations on their taxes, authorities said (Ormseth, 2019). Loughlin and her husband deny they paid \$500,000 to get their daughters recruited to the USC crew team (Kircher, 2019; Romo & Carapezza, 2019). Discovery of this scandal and multiple others involving the same type of bribery became known as Operation Varsity Blues (Kircher, 2019). These scandals included more than 50 individuals spanning multiple universities. Other schools involved in the scandal include prestigious universities such as Stanford, Harvard, and Yale (Valbrun, 2019). The university responded by firing two employees, placing numerous faculty members on leave and publicly supporting an open investigation into the allegations (USC News, 2019). In light of the scandal, USC has been recently discussed at length in the news and various forms of publications. According to Valbrun (2019), USC’s reputation has “taken a beating” in the aftermath of this recruiting scandal. The university was the focal point of a large, multi-campus and university cheating scheme. According to E-Poll Market research, the USC brand suffered “a significant negative impact” and its dislike score jumped from 26 in 2016 to 40 just three weeks after revelations about the

scandal. This helps demonstrate how the publicized scandal impacted USC's overall image (p. 1).

In response to the various admissions scandals occurring around the country; multiple universities began enacting various safeguards outside of public view to decrease their risk of a violation (Pennington, 2019). The recruitment of student athletes has impacted more than just athletic departments. In some of these cases, students were being portrayed as student-athletes even though they did not play the sport outlined in their applications. Because of this, they were granted preferential treatment in admissions because of the current practice of allocating a certain number of admissions spots to athletes who, without this help, would not be able to enroll in the institution (Pennington, 2019). These current trends indicate that there is a connection between the athletic department recruiting methods and the implications of the larger university. These activities are not confined to Division I institutions as even Division III universities have begun evaluating their admissions processes (Pennington, 2019, p. 2). These results are indicative of how the public can react to the discovery of scandalous behavior in the higher education system. As USC is a prominent and well-known university these facts demonstrate an overall impact on the institution. Transgressions of athletes or employees can potentially influence how people perceive individuals and organizations that are connected to the scandal, even if the transgression has no direct connection to the sport or on-field performance of a team (Kelly et al., 2018).

The information gathered for these cases consists of news articles and nationally syndicated publications, as this is what would be driving the information to the general public concerning the scandal. There are very few academic publications regarding

specific scandal examples, especially in connection with smaller institutions that are outside of the Power Five. By reviewing these cases this research is attempting to paint a picture of how athletic scandals can impact the university in which they are located. These examples of athletic scandals provide a background on how institutions attempt to interpret or circumvent NCAA rules and regulations. By understanding some of the more serious scandals in contemporary college athletics, this discussion can begin to understand how the outcomes can impact a specific department on a college campus. Implications of a scandal, once uncovered, can influence the institution as well as the organizations with which it is attached (Bass & Newman, 2013).

The following discussion will address four factors associated with the impact of an athletic department scandal. These factors include the connection to the student experience, the branding and reputation management of the athletic department, the connection to the university and theories that can be applied to this research. These concepts will be explored in-depth and will illustrate the impact a scandal can have on an institution.

Connection to Student Experience

The relationship between an athletic department scandal and the university is one that can be understood using various approaches. College athletics is part of the student experience, as the athletic department and its conduct is directly tied to the university (Bass et al., 2015). This association influences the undergraduate population because of the perception it creates for the university, the commonalities among the overall campus experience, and the discussions occurring among the students (Bass et al., 2015). Students show an increase in connectedness with a university when they are engaged

with the athletic department and conversations that arise from its activity (Sung et al., 2015).

Sense of Community

Sarason's (1974) research defined a sense of community as an environmental or community characteristic that leads to individuals feeling a sense of belonging and social support at the group level. Sense of community, as a concept, is important to modern social life because of its association with numerous life quality-enhancing benefits (Warner et al., 2013). Inside higher education sense of community can be a method for increasing student retention (Kuh, 2001). The relationship between an athletic scandal and its impact on the overall community that has been created can include many factors.

Sense of community in a university setting is something that not only increases the experience associated with the campus but also the external appeal of the university (Warner et al., 2011). The student body and the campus community of a university have the potential to be impacted by this established community (Warner et al., 2011). The student's connection to the community of a university is seen as a purposeful activity and shapes a student's social identity (Eastman & Riggs, 1994). This identity is displayed in many forms, including material identification which is defined as wearing the team's apparel or actively supporting them on social media, being a fan (someone who identifies with an organization) is an activity that requires a conscious effort to maintain (Eastman & Riggs, 1994). All these factors contribute to the overall sense of community established by the student.

Identification

Identification with a university and the experience found in its athletic department emerges from the concept of social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Sports teams allow students to connect to something greater than themselves that can be used to form connections and relationships with other individuals and organizations; as the student demonstrates a need to affiliate with a pre-set identity (Pons et al., 2006; Theodorakis et al., 2012).

Identification is externally motivated. It is created from the outside influences that interact with the individual (Bee & Kahle, 2006). The relationship the individual develops, based on these influences, relates directly to the attractiveness of the external factors and the emotional connection the student feels with the department (Wann, 2006). These emotional responses are tied to the amount of connection an individual has with the team and subsequently the social group (Wann, 2006). Interaction with a social group, especially when it revolves around a common interest such as a sports team/department, provides a venue for discussion of common interests associated with the group (Fink et al., 2002). Athletic events can act as catalysts for integration and binding individuals to a larger social structure (Trice & Beyer, 1993). The binding of experiences to an athletic department further demonstrates the impact of an athletic scandal on the overall population.

One aspect of the student experience is the concept of vicarious achievement. Vicarious achievement is a term used to describe the interaction and how an individual links his or her identification with the success/failure of the group and organization (Fink et al., 2002). In connection with social identity theory, vicarious achievement seeks to

understand an individual's tendency to preserve a positive self-concept or image through the success of another entity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wu et al., 2012). Students demonstrate this idea when they are emotionally connected to the activities and production of an athletic department (Fink et al., 2002). Socially based vicarious achievement is directly related to the amount of trust the student associates with the athletic department (Fink et al., 2002; Wu et al., 2012). When a scandal occurs, this trust is brought into question and can impact the experience the student then associates with the department.

Two processes, termed basking-in reflected-glory (BIRGing) and cutting-off-reflected failure (CORFing) respectively, assist in the maintenance of self-esteem and identification (Wann & Branscombe, 1990). BIRGing, by practice, acts as a coping mechanism for students to counteract a negative occurrence associated with an athletic department, especially if this process is cultivated by the department (End et al., 2002; Wann & Grieve, 2005). The students can use their previous, positive experiences with the institution to maintain their identification (Wann & Branscombe, 1990). As BIRGing relies on the interaction among members; the more an individual interacts with an organization and the groups associated with it, the better the likelihood of identification with that organization will increase (Delia, 2015; Gau et al., 2010; Wann & Branscombe, 1990). By connecting the vicarious achievement and BIRGing of the students at a university undergoing a scandal, it is possible to increase our knowledge of how the events can influence their overall experience.

Student Relationship

When it comes to the association between the local community and the university, the relationship emerges when the two are congruent with their overall goals and approach to the organization. Overall congruency is also true when looking at a student's association with a specific institution (Pritchard et al., 2010). Universities need to be the ones to cultivate this relationship and actively work with the community to create this congruent message (Pritchard et al., 2010). In 2010, Northwestern University started its "Chicago's Big Ten Team" campaign, a targeted program designed to increase the visibility of the school's athletic department (Ecker, 2012). Two years after launching the campaign the department has tripled its corporate sponsorships while seeing close to a 50% jump in overall fan base (Ecker, 2012). This example demonstrates the effectiveness of a department actively cultivating its relationship with its potential and current students.

There is a connection between identifying as a fan of a university's athletic program and the overall connectedness and relationship one has with the school (Clopton, 2009). Gladden et al. (1998) address the factors associated with a student becoming attached to a certain athletic program. The factors impacting the athletic department can include everything from players and personnel to the way the organization interacts with the community (Gladden et al., 1998). The authors postulate that reputation and tradition, conference and schedule, as well as entertainment package/product delivery, all play a role in the impact the department will have on the campus community (Gladden et al., 1998). Connections to the community bring with it a sense of belonging in its students and an attachment that is susceptible to the impacts of scandal. Students begin to feel like

a member of the team or university they support (Phua, 2010). Because of this, students are an integral part of the overall sports organization (Van Leeuwen et al., 2002).

If an athletic department can work to create a relationship with its students, they will support it regardless of the on-field/court production of the teams. The impact is more profound than just team performance; it is the intergroup dynamics that help to foster a student's identification with a team or organization (Phua, 2010). Social identity is dependent on the acceptance and congruity with the social group; therefore, if a team wins the members' bond based on a de-individualization that occurs as being part of a crowd and if the team loses, the members will come together to attempt to counter the identity threat that came from the loss (Phua, 2010). Either way, the members increase their connection with the organization.

Athletic departments should be considered as a portion of the university which has a direct impact on the student experience and overall perception of the university (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007). This connection can be understood through the factors that work to create a sense of community among students (Warner et al., 2013). Warner et al., (2012) research established seven themes that can be used to track an individual's (student's) connection to an organization or entity. Sports can be a catalyst for other types of intangible benefits (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003). The university brand and image play a role in the overall experience of the student, prospective students, and the overall campus community. Individuals develop a personal connection to the overall image and reputation that is connected to a university. This connection impacts the way they interact and perceive the institution (McAlexander et al., 2006). The seven factors include; administrative consideration, common interest, competition, equity of administrative

decisions, leadership opportunities, social spaces, and voluntary action (Warner et al., 2012).

While this list is comprehensive, three components which relate directly to how students are impacted by athletic scandals: administrative consideration, common interest, and social spaces. Administrative consideration has a direct impact on students because of the decisions made in response to the scandal. The University of Louisville fired both their head basketball coach and athletic director in response to the 2017 allegations of recruiting violations (Tracy, 2017). These decisions will directly impact the product the university can cultivate for its students and, as established, the vicarious achievement the student will derive from the relationship (Wu et al., 2012). Common interest attests to the student's overall connection to the university, thus allowing for an impact to result from the scandal. And finally, social spaces are an established way that students and community members feel connected with the university (Warner et al., 2012). The university's response, given the understanding of its campus community, can be used to benefit from a negative event such a scandal (Zavyalova et al., 2016). The higher the identification an individual demonstrates, the more likely he or she will be to support the department following a scandal. As established, it is important for higher education professionals to understand the motivation behind an individual's experience to help maintain this connection considering events that can have a negative impact.

The student experience is one aspect of this research. But a university is more than just the connection established with its enrolled students. The following section will discuss the external implications that can stem from an athletic scandal. The brand of an institution and how it is understood by the public influence the way the university is

perceived (Downes, 2017). This section will discuss the various nuances of this external view.

Branding and Reputation Management

University athletic departments are a subset of a larger organization (one that already has a name, logo, reputation, region, and student demographics), and they must connect their teams and programs to this pre-existing image. “Universities spend a lot of money and resources and time to build their reputations, only to see those reputations damaged due to the negligence or indiscretions of a select few” (Downes, 2017, p. 1). Reputation is defined as “the public recognition and perceived social approval of an organization that, at high levels, can serve as a key intangible resource” (Zavyalova et al.’s, 2016, p. 255). Within the university setting, institutions are becoming more and more concerned with their image as their reputations have become the basis of their existence as the competition among universities has increased (Beneke, 2010). The more widely known the athletic department is, the stronger the impact will be on their overall reputation; there is even evidence to support that students relate directly to the university logo, mascot, and colors (Adut, 2005; Watkins & Gonzenbach, 2013). As it exists today, having a high reputation as defined here can be a benefit to an organization that has been connected to a negative transgression (Adut, 2005; Zavyalova et al., 2016). This establishment of a reputation is considered by some to be built on the resources of the university as well as the overall strengths of their programs and departments. The way these aspects are conveyed to the public can be considered crucial when attempting to create a unique and lasting brand of a university (Downes, 2017; Lee et al., 2015). The

public relations department of a university, as well as their media management, is seen as an important aspect of this process (Lee et al., 2015).

Prestige

University prestige is an avenue for institutions to convey non-financial or numerical information to students and individuals (Brewer et al., 2004). The concept of prestige allows individuals to make judgments and evaluations of the university. Prestige is built from historical references, notable accomplishments and other comparative factors that a university can use to stand out (Brewer et al., 2004). Brewer et al., (2004) research discussed the analogy of a customer attempting to purchase a shirt. The customer can decide if the purchase is worth the investment based on defining characteristics. The characteristics are things that he noticed when research is done on the item. The prestige of a university is one of the items that is used by individuals when evaluating a school (Brewer et al., 2004). Prestige and reputation are often linked in this conversation. Prestige includes factors that are built over time; just like that of developing a reputation. Reputation speaks directly to the university's ability to meet and connect with the specific expectations of its students, staff, and community (Brewer et al., 2004).

Reputation

The reputation of a university and athletic department can be cultivated through many different avenues. From word of mouth to lived experience the reputation of an institution is something that is constantly changing. This research addresses the issue of reputation management and how that is a conscious effort by both an institution and department (Downes, 2017; Lee et al., 2015). Individuals develop a sense of what the best types of services and behavior should be for a university. This expectation informs

the way the reputation of the institution is viewed. If the institution is meeting the perceived best behaviors the reputation will be positive; if there is a transgression that breaks away from these perceived best behaviors then the reputation of the institution will be lowered (Brewer et al., 2004). Therefore, athletic scandals can have an impact on the reputation of an institution; because the event has broken away from what is perceived as best practices inside the eyes of the community.

Prestige and reputation are assets for a university (Brewer et al., 2004). As they are not absolute concepts and are open for continuous interpretation, constant management is needed as these two traits can be investments in the overall profile of the university (Brewer et al., 2004). They inform and build off each other as the time it takes for each to develop is different. A reputation of a university can happen quickly and can be based, potentially, on a single event (Brewer et al., 2004). This would be the case of an athletic scandal. Prestige is something that is accrued over time and captures the long-term reputation of the institution and all its subsets (Brewer et al., 2004). Prestige is an idea that connects directly to the rivalry, or comparisons, between two or more institutions (Brewer et al., 2004). An institution's prestige increases at the expense of another university. This can be illustrated when looking at enrollment numbers and how students attempt to choose one institution over another. Reputation, on the other hand, can be complementary to that of other universities (Brewer et al., 2004). An example of this would include the athletic success of a specific conference. If multiple basketball teams in the same conference are ranked in the nation's top 25 then the reputation of the conference will increase. As quickly as a reputation can be increased, it can also diminish rapidly (Brewer et al., 2004). This dynamic change is one that can be impacted by

anything controversial or in opposition of what the expected norm of the institution should be; meaning it is based on the interpretation of the community and individuals who have invested themselves in the institution and various departments (Brewer et al., 2004).

Universities can actively invest themselves in developing a better reputation as well as adding to their overall prestige (Brewer et al., 2004). Effectively meeting the demands of the student population is noted as one of the main ways a university can work to achieve these goals (Brewer et al., 2004). However, this does open the university up to scrutiny if actions by a member of the institution break away from these expectations. This is what occurs when an athletic scandal is uncovered; the expectations and demands of the university populations have been violated (Brewer et al., 2004). When scandals occur in the NCAA, the response is that of sanctions and public action (Enforcement Process: Penalties, 2017). Public actions and consequences work to inform the idea of how an institution is perceived.

Public sanctions or statements from third parties, such as the NCAA, serve to continue the public conversation revolving around the scandal (Walker et al., 2018). Punishment in the form of fines, suspensions, and loss of rights has been seen by some as symbolic gestures by the NCAA. Questions have arisen concerning the validity of the organization's ability to govern its institutions (D. R. Smith, 2015). This debate should be housed separate from this conversation as the actions taken by the NCAA, however seemingly symbolic continues to bring attention to the scandal that has occurred (Smith, 2015). The general public sees these actions as responses to the transgression that has occurred (Adut, 2005; D. R. Smith, 2015). "Proactive governance can include rules and

regulations, policies and procedures, incentive programs, and board diligence, as ways to maintain established reputation and protect university image” (Downes, 2017, p. 2). The NCAA requires mandatory training for its member institutions, including those for termination and lawsuits occurring outside of the NCAA sanctioning process (Epstein, 2018). Efforts such as these can help maintain the perception of the university, but the fallout from a scandal and the continued consequences will remain in the public eye.

Universities have increasingly recognized that knowledgeable, prospective students are more likely to process their college choice based on the brand of the institution (Judson et al., 2006). Because of the recognition that brand matters, universities have begun to dedicate themselves to creating sustainable and lasting strategies that will help set them apart from other institutions (Jevons, 2006; Pinar et al., 2014). These strategic brands are designed to communicate the strengths of the university and work to create a distinction in the eyes of their stakeholders; in this case being the students of the university (Lee et al., 2015). Athletic programs are an important part of an institution’s brand. Concepts such as mascots, fight songs, and high-quality facilities demonstrate specific messages about the university (Schroeder, 2010).

Brand Management/Consumer Culture

Consumer culture can be related to the concept of college athletics and scandals. “The concept ‘consumer culture’ refers to the dominant mode of consumption that is structured by the collective actions of firms in their marketing activities” (Holt, 2002, p. 74). Keller (2003) states that brand management, or branding, are terms used to describe marketing efforts made by organizations to develop and manage their external influences and marketing strategies. Branding is utilized to establish a strong position in its market

and to create an advantage over its competitors (Keller, 2003). Branding of a university is used to not only generate revenue/notoriety for the athletic department but also to aid in the development of the overall identity of the institution itself, impacting the experience of the student body (Judson et al., 2008). These authors' research suggests that by establishing a connection to the university, the consumer can be understood as the student. An effective consumer brand helps attract customers, thus a strong university brand may influence its ability to compete for students, to increase alumni association membership, and to attain monetary donations (Judson et al., 2008). Researching the established brand, its competitors, and its positive attributes, mixed with the idea of a clear vision, allows an institution to manage its overall public perception. There is a need to understand and attempt to manage this perception of the athletic department as various factors work to cultivate an institution's brand (Chapleo, 2010). One of these factors is vision. Vision is created through considering the relationships the institution wants to cultivate, who their target audience is, their current network of supporters, and the product that they are attempting to promote (Balakrishnan, 2009). This approach emerges through discussions held inside the university administration as well as the athletic departments itself, increasing the importance of this research. The process is one that acts as a strategic decision to create connections to the university while developing the overall identity of the institution (Aula et al., 2015). Through enacting a strategic approach to branding, the process relies on discussions revolving around perception and the overall selling points of the athletic department and an agreement in the vision being displayed.

Marketing Techniques

Athletic departments offer a unique challenge when it comes to marketing and brand management. According to Iqbal et al.'s (2012) research,

Brand image has nothing to do with the product or service features, product or service technology or the product or service in actual, it is developed through knowledge provided to customer about the product or service. In the case of higher education sector, the image of the institute is important especially for the external customers like parents, friends, industry, etc. who have influence on the choice decision of the students. (p. 173)

The unique challenges, products, and audiences make branding efforts important. Judson et al.'s (2006) research discussed a mix of external and internal branding efforts and how that can play a role in the identity of the university. The authors addressed the difference in internal branding for public and private institutions and how the department can begin to create the process, acknowledging that each university must create its unique approach. Developing the brand from the inside out is particularly important for universities because they are working with a “product” that can be considered intangible and complex (Judson et al., 2006, p. 99). Branding is used to bring a sense of logic and managerialism to the university (Drori, 2015). Athletic departments must find a way to market the idea of both education and on-field performance. Gilchrist (2005) commented on this phenomenon by explaining the concept of an athlete brand and how it has developed into a multi-functional and multi-platform commodity. Gilchrist believed athletes are considered not only as vehicles for advertisements or product endorsement but also as cultural products that can be sold as “brands” (p. 117). As athletic departments establish their athletes and teams as part of an overall brand, the impacts from a scandal will result in a change of perception of that brand.

The external image of a university is one that is continuously crafted and adjusted (Downes, 2017). The impact of an athletic department scandal can have some influence on how the university is perceived as well as how it manages the information. The following section will address the third portion of this research in how the university establishes and manages its connection with the athletic department.

Connection to the University

The connection established between the athletic department and the university structure can be understood through multiple concepts. University influence, commercialization, the impact of media, effect on enrollment, perception, and organizational culture are all aspects of this research that will be explored in this section. These concepts will further increase the understanding of the impact that can be seen because of an athletic scandal.

University Influence

Athletic departments and university structures are operating in tandem toward a common goal. “A successful athletic program is generally believed to serve as a unique tool to enhance a college or university’s image” (Judson et al., 2006, p. 101). When researching academic institutions, students will review multiple options, types, and overall potential experiences. Therefore, “in a market where students are recognized as customers, universities have to implement strategies to maintain and enhance their competitiveness” (Waeraas & Solbakk, 2009, p. 452). The connection between the athletic department and the overall university can be a great help in the development of the overall brand. Clark et al.’s (2009) research elaborates on this concept, discussing how athletic programs provide excellent opportunities to enrich students’ on-campus

experience by providing a platform for students to connect with their school. “Positive on-campus tenure, one enhanced by their experience with the school’s athletic program, could lead students to develop lifelong favorable associations and loyalty toward their alma mater” (Clark et al., 2009, p. 60). This is what makes collegiate athletics a special product when it comes to marketing approaches. The athletic department is not only producing an on-field spectacle but also the ability for individuals to obtain a college degree and experience what it is like to be in the college atmosphere.

Cooper’s (2015) research illustrated the unique nature of an athletic program and the way they must approach their brand. He discussed that it is a priority to recognize the key areas where students and communities interact with the college sport product. It is critical to examine the elements that help to create interest among students leading up to events and the on-field experience. According to Cooper (2015), this list includes, “in-game experience, promotions social media presence and website presence” (p. 80). Consumers of college athletics gain a sense of empowerment and an overall increase in their self-esteem when associating themselves with an athletic department and university (Robinson et al., 2005). This emotional connection is something departments should be capitalized on when it comes to the branding efforts of the department.

Commercialization

The commercialization of college sports has been prevalent since the first meeting between Harvard and Yale in 1852 (Weight & Zullo, 2014). Seminal works, such as *College Sports Inc.* (Sperber, 1990), discussed the commercialized nature of college athletics as one of the main causes of its overall popularity. The focus of college athletic programs is to produce both a winning and exciting spectacle for fans and students to

consume, as Sperber described college sports as commercial entertainment (Sperber, 1990). College athletics has become one of the more visual aspects of the university image thanks to media influences such as Empire and Sports Programming Network (ESPN; Pappano, 2012). The way departments are displayed on syndicates such as this can influence enrollment and the overall reputation of the school (Pappano, 2012). This popularity directly relates to the reputation conversations that revolve around athletic scandals.

College athletic programs do not produce revenue for their university, as most operate in the red (Goff, 2000; Sperber, 1990). A common argument involves the idea that the financial return, as well as the intangible benefits of college athletic programs, should be used to influence the academic mission of the institution (Pope & Pope, 2009). The indirect benefits are where institutions begin to see the connection to the undergraduate population and the overall experience students begin to associate with the university. These benefits can include greater student interaction, an increase in alumni donations, and an impact on application numbers (Pope & Pope, 2009). Commercialization comes in many forms and can include the impact of the overall reputation and brand of the institution (Choi et al., 2009). For this research, it is important to understand how the image of the university is cultivated and maintained.

Impact of Media

The impact of the media on the creation and momentum of an athletic scandal can be noticeable. Without the media and the overall accessibility of information, there would be no major scandals in modern society (Jacobsson & Löfmarck, 2008). Transgressions, at the collegiate level, would not become known to a large enough or national audience

without the influence of media outlets (Jacobsson & Löfmarck, 2008). Media scandal coverage must appeal to a certain audience for it to gain national exposure, and successful news entities know which transgressions have this potential (Jacobsson & Löfmarck, 2008). The potential comes from the idea that regardless of the truth behind the details of the scandal if distributed correctly, the scandal can gain attention and public interest (Adut, 2005). As college athletics continues to grow, scandals are often discussed more frequently in contemporary media outlets and platforms (Thompson, 2000). The reach of modern media has allowed scandals to reach more people at a faster rate than ever before (Thompson, 2000).

Social media sites such as Instagram and SnapChat are becoming more prevalent in the sports world and are now factors and avenues for increased connectedness with a university and its athletic department (Lukach, 2012). While the media is one of the major catalysts for public athletic scandals, traditionally there has been no formal attempt to mitigate what is being distributed (Hughes & Shank, 2005). Media outlets frame a story by organizing the coverage and information based on the values of the organization and current society (Shah et al., 1999). This concept is known as framing (Shah et al., 1999). Framing can be connected to college athletics because the media often plays a dual role in influencing the general public's perception of what constitutes a scandal or transgression (Adut, 2005; Shah et al., 1999). The media is often responsible for exposing the details surrounding a sports scandal and for helping craft the public perception of the event in question (Hughes & Shank, 2005). The gradual dissemination of information regarding athletic scandals is one that can help tie the perception of the event to the way it is portrayed in the media (Knittel & Stango, 2013). While scandals can harm the

university; they can also be a way for media outlets to gain viewership and attention. This tension creates an avenue for scandals to become more widely distributed.

Proactive and Reactive Consequences

Reactions to athletic scandals, both by individuals and the university, can help us understand how the scandal is going to impact the population of the school. The institutional response has recently become more important as schools are attempting to remain competitive on and off the field (Marshall, 2014). “The rise of mass media can lead to an extremely public and potentially devastating fall from grace if violations are committed and uncovered (Marshall, 2014, p.7). With the increased amount of social media, smartphones with video cameras and audio recording devices the level of transparency today are something that has not been seen before, this directly relates to the action of individuals involved in college athletic departments (Epstein, 2018). The idea that information can become public instantaneously has made an impact on how scandals are perceived; and how quickly the information can be obtained by the media and community (Epstein, 2018). This has increased the need for understanding and caution on the part of athletic departments and universities alike (Epstein, 2018). These internal decisions and attempts at understanding the nature of athletic scandals lead us to how universities handle the fallout associated with these actions. According to Downes’ (2017) research, the most common reaction to an athletic scandal is for the university to attempt to repair their image by distancing themselves from the parties involved using various media outlets. However, decisions such as firing specific individuals are only a partial correction as communication and management approaches are often what can have the most impact (Prior et al., 2013). Often it is what occurs after these decisions that

continue the conversation about the scandal. Violators that are punished through the criminal system continue to keep the scandal in the media and the minds of individuals at the university (Downes, 2017; Lee et al., 2015). This continuous impact even stems from the NCAA and how it deals with scandals inside college athletics.

Management of Scandal

Although scandals are frequent events in contemporary societies, they remain ill-defined by social scientists, most of whom consider them to be controversies centered around wrongdoings by well-known figures (Baile & Rayner, 2016). Athletic scandals should not be understood common when we consider how many athletic programs are involved in the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2013). The motive for these scandals stems from the competitive environment that has been created in college athletics (Harper & Donnor, 2017). The management of information is essential in response to athletic scandals as individuals connect their overall experience to their interactions with all entities associated with the university (Koo & Hardin, 2008). An understanding of the key stakeholders will work to ensure the university is crafting the most effective message in response to the event (Weight & Zullo, 2014). The stakeholders in this process include students, student-athletes, fans, donors, accrediting bodies, and the local community (Weight & Zullo, 2014). An understanding of these populations will increase the university's ability to communicate its response effectively.

Effect on Enrollment

The concept of athletic branding is one that establishes a connection between business marketing approaches, athletic performance, and image as well as the concept of consumerism. While institutions of higher education should not be considered a

commodity, the idea of communicating and selling the university departments is a practice that cannot be avoided. Image and reputation in connection with college athletics can influence the undergraduate enrollment of the institution.

Flutie Effect

It is useful to point out what is commonly referred to as the Flutie Effect. Doug Flutie, a quarterback for Boston College in 1984, threw a Hail Mary pass to win a game against the University of Miami. The play won the game and subsequently drew national attention to the university. The result was an increase in enrollment that had been unprecedented for Boston College (Hansen, 2011). The throw became an iconic play that is still discussed in the world of college football today and became known as the Flutie Effect. The moniker has been used to characterize an increase in enrollment for a university that has drawn attention based on their sports success. Athletic notoriety, or even presence, can influence the other services the university provides (Cooper, 2015). The Flutie Effect increased enrollment, which in turn increased the need for housing spaces, support services, and even increased class sizes (Hansen, 2011). The athletic department and the university are not separate; the experience an individual has with one will influence the other. While the Flutie Effect is less important than the way administrators and universities capitalize on the success of a specific team or player, the fundamental culture that can be created is something that is used to sell athletic departments and universities alike (Bass & Newman, 2013). It is often understood that doing what's best for an athletic department is also doing what is best for the university and the larger entity (Bass & Newman, 2013).

Impact on Applications

Pope and Pope's (2009) research found that football and basketball success increase the number of applications to a school after that school achieves sports success, with estimates ranging from 2% to 8% for the top 20 football schools and the top 16 basketball schools each year. Universities with athletic success may receive more applications, thereby allowing the schools to be more selective in the quality of students they admit (Woo, 2017). This represents a rise in overall attention received by the school, connected to their athletic success. Students often choose a college or university based on limited information about the reputation and perception of the athletic department (Siegfried & Getz, 2006; Woo, 2017). Building on this idea, universities with highly ranked athletic programs often see a correlation between that and their academic rankings, one directly relating to the other. These more athletically competitive and academically reputable institutions naturally attracted applicants of a higher caliber (Cigliano, 2006). While these studies demonstrate an overall impact of successful athletic programs, there is no evidence to support the idea that institutions can become more selective. Ultimately, the impact on overall applications is that of an increase in number, not necessarily quality (Woo, 2017).

Perception

“When a scandal rocks higher education, it is damaging on several levels” (Downes, 2017, p. 2). The general public tends to place blame for a scandal on a key individual; one that is seen as the transgressor who has violated a specific social value or expectation (Adut, 2005; Thompson, 2000). Because sports performance is already so individualized and media-oriented, it is very easy for the public to identify an individual

to connect to the transgression (Adut, 2005; Thompson, 2000). In December of 2011, Colorado State University President Tony Frank gave a speech addressing the role of athletics in the university setting. What he perceived were the benefits college athletics departments provide to the university (T. Frank, personal communication, 2011). These included entertainment, alumni connections, and an impact on student life. From a university administrator's perspective, Frank encouraged people to consider what role athletics plays in the reputation of the university (Bass & Newman, 2013). The discussion of what is scandalous can be attributed to a wide range of factors; knowledge of the context, setting, and background of the transgression is important when understanding the perception, it has created (Hughes & Shank, 2005). The perception of what constitutes a scandal or transgression may be based on "information relates to a person's on-the-field vs. off the field exploits, their level of play, their gender, their role within the sports team itself, and finally, the attention, interest, and framing of the event by the media" (Hughes & Shank, 2005, p. 211).

Athletics has also been referred to as a microcosm of society, thus creating an inability to separate transgressions from the general perceptions of society (Leonard, 1984). Institutional image and reputation are communicated to internal and external communities through their perception that has been formed around the university (Tierney, 1988). There are implicit assumptions that organizations have regarding their brands in connection to a scandal; that they are "likely to face declining consumption of their brands due to this negative exposure or, at the least, they put their equity and reputations at risk" (Prior et al., 2013, p. 189). Regarding the NCAA, the organization continues to be ingrained into the conversation because its actions and enforcement

measures are done as the organization is accountable for selling the product of college athletics to the general public (Walker et al., 2018). Major violations by Division I programs receive the most attention from the media and produce the most detailed documents from the NCAA (Brown & Billings, 2013). The university then becomes focused on maintaining, or even repairing, the image of the school (Marshall, 2014). This process is made more challenging when the NCAA becomes involved and starts its investigation (Marshall, 2014). When colleges advertise their athletic successes, they tie them to student amenities such as recreational facilities, student extracurricular activities, and fancy dormitories (Romero, 2018a).

According to research conducted by Berkowitz (2004), there are two types of social norms; injunctive and descriptive. Injunctive norms refer to “attitudes or what people feel is right based on morals or beliefs. Descriptive norms are concerned with behavior, i.e. what people actually do” (Berkowitz, 2004, p. 12). Sports scandals can be connected to the established norms of the society or community in which they occur; as there is a set of assumptions that relate to the expected behavior of organizations and departments (Hughes & Shank, 2005; Prior et al., 2013). “These reflect a broader set of beliefs about the acceptable norms and standards at the community level. When the sports entity engages in activities that conflict with these norms, this has the potential to create a scandal” (Prior et al., 2013, p. 191). Organizations create their norms and standards; but when an act threatens this pre-established understanding scandal is created.

Organizational Culture

“When examining the factors that contribute to sport scandals, it is important to take organizational culture into account” (Marshall, 2014, p. 16). Organizational culture

is important to discuss when attempting to understand how scandal impacts various populations inside an institution. University athletics is “influenced by, and reflective of, the culture of the surrounding society” (Beyer & Hannah, 2000, p. 106). Organizational culture is the starting point for understanding an athletic department’s culture because it establishes the perceived parameters (Schroeder, 2010). Characteristics of strong, organizational cultures include valuing and incorporating diversity, good internal communication, group maintenance and governance, shared leadership, development of the young, links to the outside world, and shared culture (Gardner, 1989). The university’s mission, academic program, and admissions standards all impact its values and assumptions about intercollegiate athletics (Schroeder, 2010). Yet culture is an incredibly difficult concept to define and assess because culture results from several social processes among an organization’s members (Geertz, 2000; Martin, 2002). This collective process involves negotiation and interaction over what actions, ideas, and items mean within an organization or group (Schroeder, 2010).

The long-term success of athletic departments is connected to that of a strong organizational culture at the university (Schroeder, 2010). College athletic departments and programs create a connection linked to strong emotions from students, fans, alumni, and boosters. The connections established here influences, entangles, and connect populations to an overall shared culture of a department or institution (Schroeder, 2010). The organizational culture of an organization is linked to the shared assumptions of individuals associated with the larger entity (Tierney, 1988). The foundation of this phenomenon is the understanding of how and to what extent the organizational culture of a campus impacts the day to day experience (González, 2002). Organizational culture can

provide a subconscious guide for how members should react to things in that environment (Ott, 1989; Schein, 2004). Ultimately, these understandings provide members with the mental maps that guide their perceptions, feelings, and actions within the culture (Hatch, 2000; Schein, 2004). Culture is multifaceted and cultural forces influence individuals and their connection to the campus (Kuh, 2001). A perceived failure or transgression of an athletic department would have wide-reaching consequences for the university as the culture has created a sense of shared goals inside the organization (Bass & Newman, 2013; Tierney, 1988).

Research of organizational culture began in the corporate sector, but universities and colleges do not operate in a profit-based model (Schroeder, 2010). In this research, the athletic success of a university has the potential to lead to profits for private corporations through postseason tournaments and bowl games, sponsorship agreements, broadcast rights, and commercial advertising (Bass & Newman, 2013). Organizational culture sets the school apart from others, including the institution's history, former leaders and overall reputation. Organizational culture is also something impacted by both student and institutional performance; influenced by the decisions, perception, and management of the university image (Adut, 2005; Kuh, 2001). University athletic departments and events have been linked to the ideologies of beliefs, norms, and culture of the society with which they are located; both inside and outside the university (Trice & Beyer, 1993). The ideologies here are understood as "shared, relatively coherently interrelated sets of emotionally charged beliefs, values, and norms that bind some people together and help them to make sense of their worlds" (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 33).

Organizational Misconduct

Organizational misconduct can be classified into two categories: normal and abnormal (Palmer, 2012). Normal organizational misconduct is the result of wrongdoing considered to be a by-product of normal business practices, or those that are considered acceptable (Palmer, 2012). Normal organizational misconduct is isolated and provides little to no competitive advantage to the organization over its peers (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2013; Walker et al., 2018). Abnormal organizational misconduct is considered behavior that is a clear and distinct departure from the norm of the organization (Palmer, 2012). This misconduct is also connected to the idea of organizations deviating from expected norms to obtain a gain at the expense of other parties (Palmer & Yenkey, 2015). The consequences that emerge from this deviation are harmful in some way and undermine any pre-established social arrangements. These types of violations and consequences seriously impact the integrity and reputation of the institution and college athletics (Adut, 2005; National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2013; Walker et al., 2018). Incidents of organizational misconduct, in contemporary society, are shaped and even influenced by the interpretation presented in the media (Pollock et al., 2016). The media can frame behavior as being consistent with or contradictory to societal and organizational norms depending on how the organization and events are interpreted (Pollock et al., 2016). Some universities allow their athletic departments to operate with autonomy. This decision ultimately provides departments with the ability to develop independent values (Schroeder, 2010). But often, the actions of the department are guided by the branding and reputational management goals of the university, to produce a solidified front (Bass & Newman, 2013).

Influences

Institutions are impacted by both internal and external influences (Schroeder, 2010; Tierney, 1988). Demographics, financial obligations, and political conditions are a few overarching external influences connected to a university and athletic department. The external environment is a critical element for understanding organizational culture because it can influence the operations and actions of the department (Schroeder, 2010). Organizations are also influenced by actions and information that comes from within their structures (Tierney, 1988). This internal influence comes from the organizational culture that has been created over time and includes the “values, processes, and goals held by those most intimately involved in the organization’s workings. An organization’s culture is reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it” (Tierney, 1988, p. 3). In some ways, university athletics carries cultural meaning to the wider society. “Athletics also has cultural significance for groups and individuals within and outside universities” (Beyer & Hannah, 2000, p. 106).

The various influences on organizational culture come from an awareness of the codes, symbols, images and understood conventions of the society (Tierney, 1988). Scandals, or transgressions, break these conventions and conflict with the understood culture that has been established. The connection between the university and the athletic department is one that needs constant attention. As illustrated above the institutional culture can be impacted by the actions of a single department. The athletic department holds a visual presence inside the university system, therefore justifying the need to research the relationship. The final section of this research will address three theories that can be applied to the concept of athletic scandal.

Related Theories

In this section, I provide an overview of three theories that can be directly applied to the study of athletic departmental scandals. The theories were used to guide the various questions asked to the participants of this study and provided a framework for the overall analysis. The three theories discussed concerning athletic scandals will be Role Identity Theory, Social Identity Theory and Image Repair Theory.

Role Identity Theory

This research considers the concept of role identity theory. This theory states that an individual's identity with another social group is more salient if it is shaped by that individual's perception of how they should behave in that role (Callero, 1985). This links to the way an individual will identify with, or not identify with, an athletic department scandal because of the pre-established expectations of that individual about how they should associate themselves with the team or organization. Individuals will base their actions and how they like to see themselves and subsequently how they like to be seen by others (McCall & Simmons, 1966). This role and identification can be shaped by how the individual perceives the other members of the group and how they act, especially in a social context (Callero, 1985; Fink et al., 2002).

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity theory emerged from the research done by Tajfel and Turner in 1979. There are two social behaviors presumed through this research, interpersonal and intergroup. Interpersonal relationships are classified as relationships that are fully determined by interpersonal relationships and individual characteristics. This study focuses on the latter; the concept of intergroup. Tajfel and Turner (1979) described

intergroup interaction as “interactions between two or more individuals (or groups of individuals) which are fully determined by their respective membership in various social groups or categories, and not all affected by the interindividual personal relationships between the people involved” (p. 34). Tajfel and Turner (1979) established the foundation for further research involving the dynamic between an individual and a group with which they identify. Shared common characteristics and values create a base for what individuals perceive as normal behavior (Lock & Heere, 2017). The characteristics and relationships between individuals can influence the way they perceive an event or, in this case, scandal (Adut, 2005; Lock & Heere, 2017). According to research conducted by Katz et al., (2004), these boundaries can be based on physical location or common interests among the individuals of the group, both of which allow for separation of other social groups, thus increasing the overall individual identification. The groups or social structures that have been established through relationships regarding an athletic department favor the perceptions of the larger group (Lock & Heere, 2017). Perception has the potential to impact individuals and their understanding and reaction to a scandal. Social Identity theory provides the basis for understanding how individuals connect themselves to larger entities and where they strive to make meaning from those experiences.

Image Repair Theory

William Benoit (1997) created a theory designed to help organizations handle crises. An understanding of the offense or transgression created is the first step in this theory (Adut, 2005; Benoit, 1997). According to Benoit’s Image Repair Theory, a

transgression has two components: “The accused is held responsible for an action; and the act is considered offensive” (Benoit, 1997, p. 178).

Responsibility of a transgression can appear in many forms such as acts that were performed, condoned, facilitated, ignored or even overlooked (Adut, 2005; Benoit, 1997). A critical aspect of this theory is the concept of an audience. Today this includes media interactions as well as public perception of an event as these audiences must disapprove of the transgression that took place (Benoit, 1997). According to Benoit (1997), “perceptions are more important than reality” (p. 178). The way society views an event will ultimately dictate their reaction; potentially leading to the perception of scandal. To repair an organization’s image after a transgression, or in this case a scandal, the organization must prioritize what population will be most impacted (Benoit, 1997). The theory lists the various ways in which the organization can react to a transgression; these methods include denial, evasion of responsibility, reduce offensiveness, corrective action and mortification (Benoit, 1997).

This research is aided by a theoretical perspective on the issue of college athletic scandal. The understanding established in this section demonstrates this connection. I chose these theories specifically because they work to create a better sense of how scandals can be studied in a higher education context.

Chapter Summary

An understanding of the relevant literature connected to college athletic scandals was used as a basis for this research. The factors discussed in this chapter are related to the admissions/enrollment management of a university. By discussing examples of contemporary scandals, the student experience associated with these actions, overall

brand and reputation, and the connection to the university structure I have provided the background needed to explore the topic of college athletic department scandal.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter will discuss the methodology associated with the impact of athletic departmental scandals on the admissions/enrollment management process. This section addresses my epistemological approach, methodology, data collection methods and overall analysis of the information. This study works to gain a better understanding of the overall impact of an athletic department scandal on the admissions/enrollment management occurring in a regional Division I, FCS institution.

Overview

As established, image and reputation management of a university has an impact on the experience associated with a university (Harper & Donnor, 2017). The athletic scandal studied in this research is that of the RMU men's basketball team. Through a qualitative lens, this research gathered information from individuals working in the admissions/enrollment management office on the campus. I chose the qualitative approach because of the deep understanding that can be drawn from one on one interactions with the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this chapter, I offer an overview of the research process.

Epistemology: Interpretivism

To complete a successful research study, researchers must be open to identifying the paradigm best designed to explore the topic at hand. According to Frisby (2005), decisions during the process must revolve around the tenets of that epistemology and how

it should be represented in the research process. The choice of research methodology, methods, and analysis should be based on the needs of the paradigm and research agenda. Understanding this process is how researchers can effectively answer the research questions of their study (Frisby, 2005).

Interpretivists believe in attempting to understand the world in which they live and work through a socially constructed context (Creswell, 2013). The findings inside this paradigm are interpreted in a specific social situation but can be considered transferable into other similar contexts (Allen, 2017). From an interpretivist standpoint, researchers want to understand how participants view a specific experience or event in the context with which it occurred (Allen, 2017; Creswell, 2013; Guido et al., 2010). Using an interpretive paradigm provides a lens to understand the impact on a university that has undergone some type of athletic scandal, as it is centered on a specific occurrence. This paradigmatic approach allowed me to focus on a large and complex issue rather than focusing on a specific hypothesis or idea, which allows for interpretation of the event in question (Creswell, 2013). I chose the interpretivist paradigm specifically because it relies heavily on the way individuals interact with the world around them and the event in question. This everyday connection is meant to work directly with the way individuals associated with this scandal produce and reproduce meanings associated with events (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). The contextualized meaning of a participant's lived experiences allows for an interpretivist researcher to understand and believe in multiple meanings of the event (Mathison, 2005). The ontology associated with this paradigm is the assumption that reality can be witnessed by multiple people and each of these individuals can interpret what they see in different ways, ultimately leading to multiple

perspectives on the same event (Mack, 2010). Interpretivists use the data they gather, their perceptions of the event, and their emotional connection to the topic to provide an understanding of the participants' experience (Mathison, 2005).

The interpretivist paradigm was effective when researching athletic scandals because it allowed me to gather data and information from the individuals who are directly involved in the enrollment management process for the institution. The findings from this research will work toward providing both an academic and practitioner understanding of athletic scandal impact on the admissions/enrollment management process of a university. The impact can be felt in multiple ways, and the professional staff members of the university both inside and outside of the athletic department can benefit from a case study of a small regional Division I institution.

Methodology

The methodology utilized in this study is that of the case study. A case study is more appropriate for contemporary events than historical ones, meaning the event being studied must be recent enough that individuals are actively able to articulate their responses to the questions being asked. (Yin, 2003). The case study methodology is appropriate for the study of the RMU men's basketball scandal as the event occurred within the last 4 years.

Yin (2003) provided an overview of when the case study approach is appropriate. First, the study needs to define the type of research questions being asked which should include the concepts of what, how, or why questions (Yin, 2003). Secondly, the level of perceived control over the event being studied should be taken into consideration. The less control the researcher has toward the topic, the more appropriate the case study

design becomes (Yin, 2003). This means studying a specific, bounded event, that has already occurred is an aspect of the case study research. The RMU scandal is one that occurred between 2010-2014 and concluded with an NCAA ruling (Osburn, 2017). This bounded event was out of my control as a researcher, allowing this research to meet the second criteria. Thirdly, the research should focus on contemporary, timely and relevant events as opposed to historical occurrences. The case study designed is used, in this research, to study a specific phenomenon that has contemporary implications (Yin, 2003). The scandal at RMU is one that fits these criteria as it represents a timely concept that can add to the overall scholarly discussion. The case study methodology is one that is appropriate when studying a contemporary athletic department scandal.

I utilized the case study methodology to bind the research to a specific event. It is my methodological attempt of making sense of the world and how we, as participants and researchers, interact with it (Frey, 2018). I chose case study because one of the characteristics of interpretivist methodology includes the overall belief that knowledge is situationally based (Mills, 2014). This paradigm relies heavily on the individual's interaction with the data and how the information is gathered in a social context. Because of the nature of this paradigm and the research conducted, case study provides us with the best understanding of the information.

Institutional Context

The setting for this study took place at Rocky Mountain University. I chose this setting specifically because of the men's basketball scandal that came to light in 2016. RMU is a regional, Division I. FCS institution. RMU joined its current conference on July 1, 2006 (Name withheld for confidentiality, 2019). On March 9, 2011, the team won

the conference tournament championship in men's basketball, clinching a trip to the 2011 NCAA Men's Division I Basketball Tournament, the first in the school's history (Name withheld for confidentiality, 2019).

Unit of Analysis

Determining the unit of analysis is essential when conducting case study research. The characteristics of the study are what drives this understanding and decision, not the overall topic (Merriam, 2009). The unit of analysis is created after the researcher has established their research questions (Yin, 2003). The unit of analysis, in this case, stems from my interest and curiosity concerning how athletic department scandals can impact the various departments inside a university. The units of analysis for this research include the interpretations and understanding gained from conversations with the admissions/enrollment management professionals of the university.

Participants

The participants were gathered using purposeful sampling, directed toward professional staff members inside the university. To create a better understanding of this scandal I chose to interview individuals who work, or have worked, in the Admission office of the institution. This office was chosen specifically because of its work with the reputation and brand management of the institution, the implications on recruitment and the idea that these individuals actively promote the institution. The Admission staff was chosen in order to keep the case study narrow in scope as all members of the team were contacted for interviews. The population included individuals above the age of 18 and IRB approval (see Appendix A) was obtained before beginning the research.

I recruited the participants of this study through emails sent from my email account (see Appendix B). I retrieved the contact information from the university website and emailed each participant individually. As the participants responded via email communication, I attempted to schedule an hour-long meeting with each. This process was completed over the month of June as this study includes nine participants. The process took three weeks to speak with all the participants of the study. The interviews took place on the RMU campus either in neutral meeting rooms or in one of the admissions office conference rooms. One session included two participants conducting a joint interview. Each participant was interviewed once, and all agreed to have their interviews recorded and saved. They communicated this by signing the consent form created for the research study (see Appendix C). The recorded interviews were then sent to a third party for transcription.

The nine participants were or are employed with the university's admissions department and focus on recruiting new students. The participants include employees with a range of professional experience and academic credentials. Six of the individuals completed their undergraduate degree at RMU, two are current master students, and several have worked at RMU in other capacities. This population includes the majority of the admissions staff at the university. All the participants were employed in the admissions/enrollment management department through multiple enrollment management cycles when the scandal became public.

Why Admissions?

The participants of this study were chosen specifically because of their roles on campus. All the participants of this study are or were members of the admissions

department at RMU. They were chosen because of their direct connection to incoming students, that they work with the reputation and brand of the university, and that they are members of the university that are trained to answer any questions that could come from potential students. The participants span multiple levels of the department ranging from counselors to upper-level administrative titles. I believe this population is one that provided the best perspective on the reputation influence, impact on the brand, and the way this specific office was impacted by what happened with the scandal.

As the enrollment numbers for the university reflect (see Table 1), there was no considerable change in the overall enrollment for RMU around the time when the scandal was made public. Thompson's (2000) four distinct phases: (a) the pre-scandal phase, (b) the phase of scandal proper, (c) the phase of culmination, and (d) the aftermath was included to represent the consistent format of the RMU scandal. The scandal was uncovered in the 2015-2016 academic year when RMU's fall total student population was 12,216. The self-imposed and NCAA sanctions were enacted during the 2016-2017 academic year (Fredrickson, 2017). In the years that followed the overall enrollment numbers changed slightly but not enough to notice a correlation. Based on these enrollment statistics, RMU saw an increase in overall student enrollment during the time of the NCAA sanctions supporting participant feedback that there was no considerable impact derived from the scandal. I decided to include the enrollment numbers of the university as a visual representation of the lack of impact created from this event. The participants believed that enrollment was being impacted by other variables and that a scandal inside a siloed department of the university did not create much of an impact. This information was used to supplement the understanding from the participants that the

enrollment was not impacted by the scandal. The slight increase during the culmination phase shows us that the perception of the university was not negatively impacted by the scandal. By looking at the numbers from when the scandal was discovered, to when the sanctions ended, this research illustrates the little impact on the admissions/enrollment management process of the university and works to attribute any changes to other factors.

Table 1

Enrollment Totals

Scandal Phase	*Academic Year	Total Enrollment	Change
Pre-Scandal	2010-2011	12,358	----
Pre-Scandal	2011-2012	12,599	Increase
Pre-Scandal	2012-2013	12,497	Decrease
Scandal Proper	2013-2014	12,084	Decrease
Scandal Proper	2014-2015	11,784	Decrease
Culmination	2015-2016	12,216	Increase
Culmination	2016-2017	13,087	Increase
Aftermath	2017-2018	13,399	Increase
Aftermath	2018-2019	13,437	Increase
Aftermath	2019-2020	12,930	Decrease

Note. Based on enrollment statistics from each fall semester final headcount. Scandal phase as described in (Thompson, 2000).

“Nationally, higher education institutions of all types are facing increasing challenges with reaching enrollment benchmarks” (Harvey-Smith, 2019, p. 1). There are currently many barriers contributing to the lack of enrollment numbers, but most can be grouped into three major categories: affordability, academic preparation, and information

(Long, 2017). Affordability is an aspect of higher education that consistently impacts the competitive nature of a specific institution: with an overall decrease in state and federal funding, the price for four-year institutions is deterring students from enrolling (Long, 2017). Academic preparation starts inside the K-12 system and eventually can lead to drop out rates or students not meeting entrance requirements (Long, 2017). Because of this, higher education has seen an increase in competition for academically talented students. When a smaller portion of students are meeting entrance requirements, the pool of students to fill enrollment numbers decreases (Hu, 2017). With a decline in high school graduates and a projection that there will be less traditional-age college students over the next few years because of diminished birth rates during the recession, there are many contributing factors to lack of enrollment (Harvey-Smith, 2019). These larger-scale factors have more of an influence on enrollment numbers than an athletic scandal. The national decline in enrollment is currently being seen at RMU. The factors discussed here illustrate the impact on enrollment management; and that a scandal located inside a single department does not have as much of an impact. Exploring these aspects of higher education was important when attempting to view the overall impact of the scandal on the admissions/enrollment management process of an institution as national enrollment trends were discussed by the participants of this research.

Data Collection Methods

Semi-Structured Interviews

For this research, I used semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured is the approach used when the researcher has an idea of what he or she would like to gain from interaction with the participants; they are utilized to maintain a structure but still allow

for flexibility (Merriam, 2009). Interviews are “more than simply asking questions;” this data collection method is used to facilitate a direct relationship between the researcher and participant and to create an atmosphere of dialogue instead of the researcher taking the lead (Jones et al., 2014, p. 132). I scheduled hour-long interview sessions with each participant. During each interview, I kept a researcher’s journal with my thoughts and perceptions of what was said in the conversation. I also revisited this journal before and after the interviews for personal reflection and thought. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Recordings and transcriptions are being stored by the researcher and can be produced if required. I developed the interview questions before the first interview and remained consistent with all nine interactions (see Appendix D). During each participant’s interview, I briefly shared my researcher’s perspective to provide context as to why I was completing this research. This was done at the beginning of the interview before I began to ask the interview questions. I used this part of the conversation to aid in building a relationship with each participant. I recorded each interview and took notes in my journal to ensure all the responses are accurately recorded. The interview questions were finalized before the first interview to maintain a level of consistency among the participants.

I considered multiple factors when recruiting the participants for a study including; how to encourage reliable and accurate feedback, actively using the information provided to connect with what is discovered in the interview portion of this research and allowing them space to effectively display their knowledge/understanding and opinions of the scandal (Shah et al., 2017). By incorporating these approaches into the research, I attempted to understand the outcomes and impact the scandal had on the

admissions/enrollment management process. Institutions look for evidence-based decision-making abilities by using trends and data to understand what is happening inside the institution (Shah et al., 2017). This research works to facilitate this understanding.

Researcher Journal

One aspect of this process that I found helpful was keeping a journal as I conducted my interviews. The journal was present in each interaction and allowed me to, at the moment, write down my initial thoughts and reactions to what was being discussed. Borg (2001) refers to researcher journals as a “form of reflective writing which researchers engage in during a project and through which they document their personal experience of the research process” (p. 2). Maxwell (1996) suggested that these types of journals create a space for reflection where ideas from the research can be explored, developed and accurately recorded. Borg (2001) acknowledges that the researcher must enter the process with an intentional purpose for the journal as if it is to be used as a reflatory tool after the research is concluded. I entered this research knowing I would use this as a tool for over synthesis of information and overall validity. I used this journal when creating chapters four and five of this study. The journal included my thoughts and interpretations of the data, specific sections to which I wanted to return, as well as anything that stood out in the conversations. I was able to return to this journal multiple times during the coding process to make sure the established themes remained accurate. I also utilized the journal when reflecting on my research process. For example, the journal was used to understand how often a participant referred to any distrust associated with the administration, one of the major themes of this research. It was also used to identify

aspects of each conversation that needed to be revisited for further analysis and coding. The researcher journal is held by me and can be produced upon request to aid in validity.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the information gathered in this study was based on the paradigm and methodology of the research agenda. The study made every effort to establish the trustworthiness of the information and to accurately represent what was said in the participant interviews. I completed the analysis of the data in two phases.

Trustworthiness

The main tenets of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Lewis-Beck et al. (2004), trustworthiness criteria are important when conducting the research described in this agenda, as it fits directly with the case study methodology. Credibility in a study is concerned with the lived experiences of the participants and if the information provided is accurate; while transferability addresses the study's ability to be applied to other settings (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). According to Frey (2018), to ensure both tenets are supported participant validation can be utilized as a way of searching for outliers in the gathered data. As participant validation can occur at any point in the process it was important to account for any information that does not coincide with the emergent themes of the research (Frey, 2018).

Participant Validation

I utilized participant validation to ensure these two tenets were achieved in this study. I allowed each participant the opportunity to review the overall findings to ensure I interpreted the information correctly. I attempted to achieve transferability through

accurate documentation of the research process, including keeping a detailed researcher journal with pertinent information about the interviews. Dependability and confirmability are other aspects of trustworthiness in qualitative research. I met these two tenets by accurately reporting how my data were gathered and analyzed.

Analysis

The analysis and interpretation of interpretivist research rely on the researcher. Once interviews and data collection were complete, I had the recordings transcribed to visually see what was said inside each interview. Once that process was complete, I coded the data by reviewing each transcript. Coding is understood as “reducing the data into meaningful segments” (Creswell, 2013, p. 180). This coding occurred in two stages: open and axial coding (Merriam, 2009). I initially utilized open coding to identify relevant and common themes associated with the research questions (Creswell, 2013). Once this was complete, I utilized axial coding to find the relationships between the themes and the other pieces of information I received from the participants (Merriam, 2009). Once I established my overarching themes, I based the axial coding on terms that I drew from the relevant literature as well as knowledge of the topic.

Coding Process

The coding process is based on the study, participants, and researcher (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Coding is designed to support the researcher’s interpretation of the data so other researchers can understand why the information was analyzed in that specific way (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). I chose to evaluate my data by grouping the information into various themes. Themes are “implicit topics that organize a group of repeating ideas” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 38). I organized the information based

on commonalities and trends among the participant responses to the interview questions. The larger concepts were representative of consistencies found among the various interviews (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). The consistencies utilized researcher understanding from the literature, the overall topic and the understanding of what concepts were being explored in the study itself. I established the themes of this study by coding the data based on the various aspect of the literature review and theoretical approaches discussed in the literature review of the research. I used Benoit's theory to inform various research questions as well as my understanding of participant responses (Benoit, 1997). I also used various key words, established in the literature, to create a system of understanding for the various themes in this study.

For a better understanding of the coding process, I have developed a visual aid to illustrate how each theme was created for the research. As you will see, the specific examples emerged from the transcripts as I utilized direct quotes from the participants to help craft a larger understanding of the theme (see Appendix E). Before creating the themes for this study, I returned to my research questions and overall literature review. This allowed me to narrow the findings to a more manageable amount as attempting to include everything that is said in nine interviews can be problematic (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). According to Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), "if you include everything, the amount of data will become unwieldy" (p. 44). To remain organized, I reviewed each transcript individually and searched for my pre-established keywords/concepts. I created the list of keywords using common languages found in the literature associated with each theme. In the scholarly articles that I reviewed for this study, these phrases were used in the various publication keywords and were commonly

found as ways to describe each larger theme. The keywords for each theme are as follows: (a) University Reputation and Brand (keywords: reputation, image, perception, brand); (b) Leadership and Communication (keywords: community, conversation, discussion, transparency); and (c) National College Culture (keywords: media, enrollment, scope, influence, accountability). I established the three overarching themes by combining participant responses as well as their perceived understanding of the overall concepts discussed in the research. I remained consistent with my coding process through each interview, allowing for these commonalities to emerge. The themes were solidified after all transcripts were reviewed and relevant quotes/concepts established.

I took multiple steps to establish reliability and validity in this study. I kept a researcher journal of the process, I coded each interview separately to pull any apparent themes before combining them, and I actively revisited the data throughout the process. These steps will increase other researchers' understanding of my process (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). University reputation emerged through the combination of information concerning how the participants view the external view of the institution. Common answers revolved around the brand that had been cultivated from the academic programs and references to the lack of athletic department image. The leadership and communication theme emerged from the questions and conversations associated with the lack of transparent messaging from upper-level administration at the time. The theme was established because of the consistent feedback from all nine participants that their office was not be provided with details about what had occurred or what was being done. Finally, the national college culture coding emerged from questions regarding the impact on admissions and enrollment. The consistent answers from participants targeted toward

other enrollment management factors established this an overall theme of the research. The research was coded based on the consistency of answers across all nine individuals and the themes were established by grouping like responses into an umbrella term.

Saturation

The saturation of the data tells the researcher that the repetitive patterns are ones that are consistent in the parameters of the study (Braun et al., 2018). Saturation can be considered achieved when the researcher begins to hear the same sort of information from participants (Jones et al., 2014). Fitting with the interpretivist paradigm, gathering data from different perspectives and using the collective understanding to provide an outlook on the impact of the scandal was the goal of this research. A researcher is justified in stopping the sampling process once themes or categories have been saturated (Jones et al., 2014). I was able to achieve saturation with the consistency of the information discussed by all nine participants. This cannot be achieved through the number of participants alone (Jones et al., 2014). However, I contacted the entire admissions team to recruit as many participants as possible. I scheduled meetings with all that replied to provide myself the best chance to reach saturation of the data. My effective recruiting of participants added to the dependability of the study's overall findings.

Researcher Positionality

To best understand this research, it is important to discuss my positionality with the topic, paradigm and overall approach to the research. Through reflection and self-evaluation, the paradigm with which I identify most is interpretivism. I believe knowledge and understanding come from interaction with real-world environments and

situations. As an interpretivist researcher, I am ultimately concerned with how the participants understand a specific experience and what that means in a larger context.

In the case of this research, I wanted to interact with and understand how an athletic scandal impacted the admissions/enrollment management aspect of a university. The decision to utilize a case study approach came from my desire to study a specific experience and then use the information gathered to understand the idea of an athletic scandal on a broader scope (Frey, 2018). I established a clear sampling method as well as strict case boundaries to ensure the research was done correctly (Frey, 2018). Through my connection, prior experience and existing access to the RMU, I was in the position of a researcher to create a successful study. I used the relationships I have cultivated since my time at the university to gain access to my desired population. I came into this research with prior knowledge of the RMU. Because of this, I recognized that I needed to understand and address any bias I might have toward this research. I came into this study with pre-existing, personal predictions of what I would find. But by utilizing an interpretivist approach, I was able to mitigate these biases by using my own experiences to add to the meaning of the findings. I established a specific plan for the research including set research questions based on the literature and focused my attention on a specific aspect of the university system with which I have little professional interaction.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the use of the interpretivist paradigm to study the concept of athletic departmental scandals. As appropriate in this paradigm, I utilized the case study methodology and bounded it to a specific institution. The RMU men's basketball scandal is a contemporary example that will help add to the overall body of

literature revolving around this topic. I used semi-structured interviews to gather participant perspectives on this scandal. Once the data were gathered, the researcher analyzed the information to produce the common themes of this research. These themes will be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the research findings organized by three themes: (a) the reputation and brand of the institution, (b) leadership and communication, and (c) accountability in today's national college culture. These themes emerged from the participant interviews to explore the study's overall research questions. I interpreted the data with the main research questions and informed by the literature. I first provide a general overview of the participants of this study and then transition into the content of the nine, in-person interviews. I will then discuss the common understanding of the scandal concept and lastly the themes that emerged during this study.

Participants

The participants of this study included staff members of the University community directly tied to the admissions/enrollment management process for the institution. An overview of the participants was provided in the previous chapter to offer perspective on their views and of the impact of the RMU men's basketball scandal. I created the following pseudonyms for the participants of this research: Martha, Tyler, Kevin, Nick, Stefan, Katie, Lauren, Jeff, and Beemal. These pseudonyms were chosen at random and do not represent any tie to the participant they represent.

Participant Definition of Scandal

The participants of this study were asked to describe how they define a college athletic scandal. Stefan understood the concept simply by stating that scandal occurred

“when something bad happens and negatively affects the University.” Kevin discussed how a scandal is akin to breaking the law, explaining that it is a phenomenon that is not supposed to happen and was meant to be covered up. Kevin, Jeff, and Lauren agreed by adding the organization knowingly violated pre-set rules set for by the governing body and that it was released to the public. Katie and Beemal took another route with the definition, stating that an athletic scandal is anything involving an athletic department that is unethical or questionable. Their understanding brought the concepts of morality and ethics into the conversation--something reiterated by multiple other participants. All the participants were able to offer a specific understanding of what defines a college athletic department scandal.

Based on the participant definitions, the commonalities emerged as: (a) the breaking of pre-set laws (established by the governing body, the NCAA); (b) something considered unethical or immoral, and (c) an act that is ultimately discovered by the public. The participants’ understanding of a scandal is consistent with Hughes and Shank (2005). The study established four characteristics of a scandal including--an action that is illegal or unethical, an event involving multiple parties, an act occurring over a set time, and an action that impacts the integrity of the organization (Hughes & Shank, 2005). While the definition of a scandal was not included in the research questions, I believe it was important to establish a common understanding of the topic in the eyes of the participants. This understanding helps to improve the validity of the study as it demonstrates that everyone was discussing the correct concept concerning the specific events and circumstances involving the men’s basketball team transgression.

The Reputation and Brand of the Institution

College athletic departments have an impact on the reputation of the institution (Bromley, 1993). This section addresses the following questions, as well as others that were incorporated into the discussion; Does this impact the RMU brand? What, in your opinion, was the fallout from the scandal for the university? How would you characterize the impact of this scandal? Tyler believed that “it’s [college athletics] entertainment [*sic*]. It’s something that you can participate in. I think being on a college campus with college sports can bring pride and affiliation. Many athletic programs bring a lot of attention and brand awareness.” These are all aspects associated with a University’s overall reputation. Martha stated,

I definitely think it can ruin or impact the reputation of a University and that reputation is huge for enrollment numbers, for new students coming in, new students and their parents, how they perceive the University, it may make staff and current students question whether they even want to be at the University.

Martha openly discussed the impact a scandal can have on the staff of the institution. She believed that there are many staff and faculty that do not want to be affiliated with something as negative as a scandal. She went on to say, “We have staff and faculty leaving because of the reputation of the institution. Both inside and outside of the athletic department reputation plays a role in the day to day operations of the university.” The other participants focused on the way people perceived the institution and how it impacted the way students choose to attend the University. When asked the same question Jeff responded with,

Reputation is everything. That's why the great schools are great, because of their reputation, because students want to go there. I want to say they went there for that experience. That has implications for donors, scholarship money and giving to that institution.

Lauren addressed the idea of individuals paying attention to the University's reputation, specifically that of RMU. She described that the placement inside the state provides students with the opportunity to compare five different universities, all within proximity, meaning reputation plays a role in the decision-making process. This perspective illustrates how the small school has gained a reputation in the state. Beemal adds,

I think definitely from [*sic*] the recruitment side of things it impacts the brand and the image of University. Especially being a small University, a small Division I University, it greatly impacts who we are. Our brand, our image, what people think of us. So not just the recruitment process, but what happens in the overall University community.

The participants felt that the scandal does impact the reputation of a University. The reputation can be impacted in connection to how deeply a person cares about the athletic department for the University in general.

The brand of a University is directly tied to the reputation and prestige of the school as well as how the school acts in the marketplace. Martha and Jeff spoke briefly about this saying how all institutions, especially when something negative happens, attempt to "protect the brand". Jeff spoke to this in light of the scandal saying, "I definitely think it affects the brand, I definitely think it affects the reputation both positively and negatively. Even like at Michigan State now, it still kind of has that dark cloud over it and will for a long time." When a scandal is attached to an image of a University, it is difficult for the university to recover from any negative impact on their brand. The participants took a different view on RMU, as the scope of the scandal pales in comparison to the sexual assault case associated with Michigan State. Jeff spoke to the

comparison by stating, “I definitely think it affected the brand at that time, but I don’t think anybody’s talking about it now. So, it was definitely [*sic*] a short-lived thing.” The scandal was not a long-standing event for the University, and, from the admissions/enrollment management perspective, the participants believed that people do not associate the RMU brand with the scandal. Tyler spoke to the brand of the University by saying,

I also think it depends on the national brand of the University, for instance even some of the larger and more recent scandals; those are national brands. I think it could have a negative impact on the overall brand of the University [in reference to Michigan State and USC]. I think for many schools of our size it doesn’t even faze most people.

RMU recently underwent a rebranding effort which included changing the university logo, mascot image, and marketing materials. The participants believed the timing of the change was interesting, as it happened simultaneously with the discovery of the scandal. Kevin and Beemal spoke to this by eluding to how quickly the University changed their images and brand, postulating that any impact of the scandal was probably contained to the old image and logo. Martha did question if the rebranding efforts had anything to do with the scandal. But ultimately it was decided that RMU did not have a large enough brand awareness outside of the state to justify a change because of what had occurred. The multiple participants stated they must work very hard to make sure RMU was being recognized both inside and outside of the state, creating the general understanding that people learn of the institution based on interactions with admission staff, not based on media stories or athletic ability.

Kevin discussed the overall impact of the scandal on RMU’s reputation and brand. He, along with other participants agreed that “in a grand scheme, I think it was a

small investigation [that had] a small impact if any.” The 2019-2020 academic year marks the end of the NCAA sanctions. Participants agreed that, combined with the constant four to five-year turnover in the undergraduate student body, from a reputational standpoint this scandal seems to have become a non-issue because of how removed the University is from the occurrence and overall lack of sport influence on the campus. Every participant agreed that a small scandal such as this has a temporary, if any, impact on the admissions/enrollment management process of the university.

Emotional Connection to the School

University pride was an unanticipated pattern that emerged from these conversations. According to multiple participants, RMU struggles with pride. Beemal stated that compared to other institutions in the area RMU does not see a sense of overall campus, especially athletic pride. There is pride in the local community for the athletic department, but RMU does not have the athletic following and support of a larger school. The participants spoke to how an athletic department can elicit pride in its students, staff, and community. Katie characterized the scandal and results as “incredibly deflating” for the institution. The main point of contention from the participants was the removal, by the NCAA, of the Conference Championship. Martha stated, “it was really disheartening that they stripped us of that. I can’t imagine what the athletic department went through and all the emotions behind it.” Multiple participants attributed the impact on pride with being disappointed with the athletic department for letting something like this happen and a sense of embarrassment with the discovery of the scandal. From an admissions standpoint, the participants shared that their job is to always be positive about the University and the direction it is moving. Based on their experiences, the participants felt

that this was a challenge for them when discussing the athletic department with prospective students and parents.

Athletic support is something the participants would get questions about and, in his interview, Jeff was honest in saying that he told students the University did not have the visual support you would see at a larger school. Beemal spoke to his interactions with prospective students during campus tours, about the scandal, saying,

I can't really mention that our men's basketball team won a Conference Championship and they went to the NCAA tournament. Because of the scandal and the sanctions, we don't have that anymore. And as a University employee, that hurts as a point of pride.

Beemal, Kevin, and Nick all stated that the scandal and the removal of the Conference Championship was now part of RMU history and does not have an influence on current admissions practices.

When I first contacted potential participants from the admissions team, I received several responses from members of the office indicating they had no working knowledge of college athletics or the RMU scandal. This lack of knowledge illustrates the lack of a sports atmosphere at the University. The participants believe students are not attending the institution because of the athletic department's success. When asked about this concept Kevin answered,

I don't think in terms of fan engagement and following we have a large fan base. I think there's development happening with men's and women's basketball, but in terms of like every other sport, football, baseball, soccer, I don't think there's necessarily an athletic culture here.

The University is not what people expect to see in a "college" sports environment. This lack of support was attributed to various factors; one being the location of the school.

RMU is in a state dominated by professional sports teams where college athletics is not

the priority. Kevin described, “I think that’s just the nature of our University and the culture of athletics at the moment,” as college athletics is not as popular here as it is in other areas of the country, especially compared to smaller college towns where college teams do not have to compete with professional sports teams.

Unsure of the Brand

The participants discussed that RMU is seemingly unsure of their brand. All commented that the University seemed to be searching for its identity as an institution of higher education. Nick described the idea that, as an admissions counselor, the participants consistently must tell students what specific letters are associated with the university website. Otherwise, students would be taken to another, more recognized university with the same acronym. The conversations around this misunderstanding helped the participants frame how the school is viewed when it comes to athletics. Beemal described the brand of RMU as how we are trying to be everything to everyone and that is not a feasible strategy in today’s higher education market. He stated his opinion that “we need to be really good at what we are good at,” referring to the successful academic programs of the school. Katie supported this finding by stating, “I think I’ve heard this more on-campus recently in a negative connotation that RMU kind of tries to be everything to everybody.” In the interview with Katie, she recognized that any type of scandal is not good for a University, regardless of the level of impact. She stated that in the world of enrollment management and admissions there is always a concern for anything that could negatively impact the reputation of the school. It becomes a topic of conversation and that is not good for the University as it is struggling to find its identity.

Positive Aspects of the Rocky Mountain University Reputation

Each interview included aspects of RMU that the participants felt were positive, potentially inside and outside of the athletic department. The participants widely agreed that this institution is not known for its athletics. Participants felt that the athletic department had, at times and about specific sports, injured the way it could be used as a marketing tool because of limited on-field success. According to the participants, academic programs are the main attraction for most prospective students. Tyler stated that students “choose us for a specific academic program or as a pathway to graduate school or to whatever career they want to be in. I don’t think students choose us because they heard that we’re a Division I athletics program.” The participants thought that, in comparison with other schools in the state, RMU seemingly attracts more students based on academic characteristics.

The participants believe that students attended RMU for academic experience. The University was founded as a teacher’s college and has maintained a positive academic reputation in the fields of education, business, and performing and visual arts. The participants felt the positive academic reputation mixed with the lower cost of attendance represented the motivation for students to attend the University. According to Nick, RMU’s affordability is a big sell for students as the cost is a bit more realistic for a lot of students.

Lauren was able to offer some insight into how current and prospective students view RMU, through the understanding that the institution supports many students from low socio-economic backgrounds and first-generation students. She described that when

students visit campus RMU feels like a place where they can find a connection. Multiple participants acknowledged that these connections seem to happen outside of athletic events and that the athletic department does not seem to aid in the positive aspects of the University seen by prospective students.

Leadership and Communication

Multiple participants in this study openly discussed that the communication from University administration concerning the scandal was not well received. This section addresses the following questions while including responses from other aspects of the interview questions; What are the administrative implications to a scandal occurring inside a university? Does this impact the equity of decision making by university administrators? Did the scandal affect your work at all? Overall, the employees felt they were uninformed about what had happened. There was little communication as to the scandal itself and the steps that were being taken to alleviate the aftermath. This section explores the participants' viewpoints on this aspect of the admissions/enrollment management process.

University Response

I decided to study the admissions team because of the nature of the position to answer incoming questions from students and parents. Interaction with admissions professionals came with the assumption of institutional knowledge and pre-established information that they could portray to potential students and families. Martha, among others, stated that no one worked with the staff on how to respond to incoming questions concerning the scandal. Other participants discussed the lack of information from the administration. Many also discussed how this did not impact their job. Kevin stated, "I

don't think anybody's even brought it up. Well, I think this is the first time I've talked about this scandal since that happened." The scandal was never included or discussed in their professional roles.

Beemal expressed some frustration when discussing that his office and the professional staff received very little information until the NCAA report and findings were released. This release came well after the scandal had occurred. The participants felt the University failed to maintain any communication as the process unfolded. Katie discussed that institutional information comes from two different sources: formal communication and the rumor mill. Regarding this scandal, most of what was being said was based on rumors because the staff did not have concrete information about what had occurred or how the university responded. The athletic department was not allowed to openly discuss the scandal, and this caused people to speculate. Katie stated, "I think they were trying to be transparent, but folks are also wondering, okay, what's not being said? What are we not being told? Because it's part of the community and this was obviously a [public relations] nightmare."

Transparency between the administration and the campus community was mentioned multiple times throughout these interviews--it was generally understood that the University was not transparent about its process and actions. Each of the nine participants discussed "The Email" as the initial way they found out about what was going on inside the athletic department. According to the participants, the email was the only formal release of information to the general public and only briefly described what had occurred. The participants felt the email created more rumors about the scandal than provided tangible information of the University response; considering it to be a typical

representation in how the President conveyed information--seemingly not telling the community the whole story. It was also mentioned multiple times throughout this process that the President was not well received by the campus community. This relationship potential led to the negative view of how the scandal was handled.

Rumors revolving around the scandal briefly made staff question the administration and its overall attempt at honest communication. The participants attributed the resulting negative relationship to the lack of information. Beemal stated that he believed that RMU accepted self-imposed sanctions to “cover their backs” rather than to mitigate the situation as the ultimate NCAA sanctions were worse than the self-imposed ones. The reasoning behind this was never communicated to the campus. Most of the participants expressed the lack of information and transparency in this situation made people question what was happening.

Once the investigation had ended, the University released a final statement of what had transpired well after the scandal had come and gone from the University focus. The NCAA commended the University for how open and helpful it was when dealing with this situation. Cooperation between the University and NCAA could have been an attempt to elicit a level of trust post-scandal. The participants felt that earlier communication would have worked to relieve the frustrations held by the staff. Various participants believed that conversations were happening behind closed doors and that it was not necessarily in the University’s best interest to respond the way it did.

Accountability in Today’s National College Atmosphere

There is currently a larger conversation revolving around the value of higher education. This section following questions, among others associated with this research;

What, in your opinion, was the fallout from the scandal for the university? What is your opinion on the contemporary discussion revolving around athletic department scandals? Do you think scandals are something of common interest today? Martha spoke to the current national college culture stating that, “contemporary higher education is very competitive; schools are expanding their recruiting territories and attempting to draw students from all over the nation. A public scandal can impact this process.” The participants recognized that the expansion of recruiting territories is a phenomenon recognized in multiple states as this is a region with rising high school graduation rates.

The participants discussed that society is beginning to question if higher education is worth the investment. It was discussed that public scandals can have an impact on the parents of incoming students as negative transgressions can influence the way families to view the value of a specific University or higher education in general. Katie discussed that scandals in college athletics are akin to the current scandals occurring in college admissions. The conversations involving the University of Southern California admissions scandal demonstrate that higher education is something being actively criticized in current society.

Sense of Normalcy with Scandals

According to the participants, college athletic scandals are prevalent today. Nick spoke to this by saying, “Yeah, it happened here. I mean it’s probably safe to say it’s happening everywhere.” He discussed how seemingly easy it is for universities and departments to break current NCAA regulations. From the Division II schools with no scholarship ability to the Power Five institutions that garner a lot of attention, departments are getting away with things all over the nation. Kevin spoke to the same

idea by saying, “I think it’s happening to everyone. I didn’t think it could happen here at the small Rocky Mountain University, but it’s definitely going to happen to these bigger schools where there’s more money on the line.” The participants discussed that a recruiting/academic scandal may have less of an impact than another type of scandal that is seen by society as reprehensible (e.g., sex, drugs, hazing, etc.). The perception of normalization with scandals in society today helps illustrate this perspective. Tyler provided insight into this statement that what occurred at RMU could be perceived as a “traditional college scandal, meaning it was something that would not be viewed by the public as egregious or offensive.”

The participants acknowledged there is a sense of normalization about the topic of scandal that it is almost expected in society today. The participants of this study did not focus on the act of breaking an NCAA regulation it was the specific rules that were violated. About the basketball scandal at RMU, Tyler stated, “it was a cheating scandal. Ok, I get it. I don’t want to minimize it but there it is” creating the understanding that the level of the scandal did not reach that of recent, more serious actions from other universities. The participants believed that there is a general expectation that universities are breaking NCAA regulations.

The perception that scandals occur easily and all over the nation is one that provides some insight into the potential impact. Katie spoke to an aspect of this by addressing the type of scandal that occurs. Using Penn State, and the Jerry Sandusky sexual assault case as an example, she explained that people felt personally impacted by the news. Penn State was a social hot topic that “on most people’s moral and ethical compass was not okay.” This compared to the RMU scandal indicates that the employees

in this study have more ability to dismiss cheating, academically driven scandal than something more serious. While these are more frequent, media outlets and society tend to forget about them faster than something that is considered morally offensive. The moral expectations of the campus community help dictate the impact.

At some point during their interviews, all the participants' touched on the idea that when a scandal occurs, it causes the community to take a closer look at the departments and programs involved. Jeff explained that when scandals emerge, it brings awareness to additional questions that need to be asked such as: "What else? What else are people doing? Where else is this happening?" He believed we have started to see the desensitization of scandalous acts as it is something expected in current society.

Impact of the Media

Today, the media plays a large role in how people perceive contemporary scandals. The media controls what is understood by the public, and in the case of RMU, even the understanding of the staff at the time of the scandal. None of the participants were provided with more insight than the normal public who gained the information through local media outlets. The impact of the media was discussed in these conversations because of how the information was portrayed.

Rocky Mountain University (RMU) is not an institution that is going to get the media hype or TV attention needed to create a large following. Tyler described this in the context of the current society. He stated, "my understanding is nationally attendance figures are down; you're seeing greater access through smartphones and paid TV channels and all those other ways to follow your sports team without physically being there." Kevin continued the thought by stating,

I think it's just because we're a smaller school. I think it kind of gets swept under the rug. It's not like Nike's [sic] or a superstar athlete was involved. We're not a nationally televised school. I think even at the time when that happened like we weren't a great basketball team. So, it's like (the media) really doesn't necessarily impact us.

The media controls what the public absorbs, helping to dictate impact. The general understanding of the participants was that RMU was not an athletically talented enough school to garner much attention.

There was slight contention among the participants as multiple parties remembered this scandal receiving ESPN attention, for a short time, while others could not describe any nationally syndicated media attention. Awareness of national attention was likely determined by the individual participant's overall viewing habits and knowledge of sport media outlets. Kevin stated, "I do remember that it was being publicized quite a bit, but then again, it is because the NCAA stepped in and the media took it and ran with it...we were just a small school." The small school reputation and perception kept this scandal from becoming more prevalent in the media. Katie believed the impact of the media ties back to the discussion of how the community perceives the behavior. If the community sees the act as ethically or morally offensive, then the media will continue to discuss the event. An academic scandal with little outside impact did not merit this response.

Scope of the Scandal

In multiple interviews, the participants discussed the NCAA and how they would have viewed the size of this scandal. Kevin believed that from the NCAA's perspective this was a relatively small, almost routine investigation. The NCAA commended the University in how helpful the administration was during the process; it was believed by

multiple participants that this positive response was because the NCAA knew the impact would be minimal. Jeff spoke to this by describing that the scandal affected more prestigious schools more than it did at the RMU because Power 5 institutions are more prevalent, more known and elicit with much more notoriety. His comparison highlights how the participants of this study viewed the scope of the men's basketball scandal. The more egregious the act, the more public it becomes, leading to a larger impact on the community. The participants of this study did not see a recruiting scandal at a small school as something that was worth ongoing media attention.

Chapter Summary

The participants of this study seemed to have a common understanding of the scandal and the lack of impact it had on the University. In summation, the three major themes discussed here were the most relevant pieces of information gained in the interviews. According to these participants, the admissions work of the University was not impacted by the scandal. Enrollment numbers declined during this time but none of the staff members attributed this to what happened with the basketball team. The size, scope, and severity of the scandal did not merit this type of impact. Beemal provides insight into the potential intangible impacts of the scandal. He stated, "I think the scandal really opened some eyes to people that, oh my gosh, this can happen here." Scandals can and do happen at small institutions that have little to no athletic reputation. However, the immediate and long-term impacts of a scandal on the campus community, specifically staff members outside of athletics, appears to be quite minimal.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter discusses the established themes of this study, implications for practice and theory, recommendations for future practice and research, and the acknowledged limitations. I close this chapter with my researcher's perspective on the topic of athletic scandal. This research was guided by the following questions:

- Q1 What impact did the RMU basketball scandal have on the recruitment practices and admissions process of the university?
- SQ1 From an admissions perspective did this scandal impact the recruitment of students to the university?
- SQ2 From an employee's perspective, how did this scandal impact the reputation and prestige of the institution? This question defines the institution as all the structures that are associated with the RMU image and name.
- SQ3 Did this scandal have an impact on the professional's work or experience here at the university?
- SQ4 How does an athletic department scandal impact the overall brand of the university?

Discussion

Sport is an aspect of our society that offers entertainment, community and has the potential to impact the reputation of the organization (Henck, 2011). According to this research, this connection can have an impact on the university. Scandals today are an intriguing and attractive topic, both inside and outside higher education. In my dissertation study, the participants describe how others thrive on scandals and that we

tend to put athletes, coaches, and teams on a societal pedestal. To provide a depth of understating, I chose a specific sample of higher education professionals affiliated with the Rocky Mountain University (RMU) to gain insight into how a recent basketball scandal can impact the reputation and recruitment practices of an institution. Based on the participants' views, the minimal impact of this scandal can be largely attributed to the established lack of sports following at Rocky Mountain University (RMU).

In this research, I discuss multiple college-related scandals that have occurred within the last decade across the United States. These examples were chosen because of how much attention they drew in the national media, the scope of what occurred, and the impact they had on the respective universities. While larger, more athletically oriented schools such as Penn State, Michigan State or the University of Southern California would be expected to be more impacted, there is a gap in the current literature dedicated to small non-Power Five institutions. The RMU basketball scandal was not viewed by the participants of this study as immoral or egregious, but it did cause the NCAA to investigate, ultimately leading to a series of sanctions. Consequently, based on participants' interviews gathered during my study, beyond such sanctions, I found little impact from the event.

University Reputation and Brand

According to the study participants, the impact of a scandal depends on the athletic reputation associated with the school. Reputation is cultivated and established based on various factors discussed in this research. Several participants described that the department has begun to create awareness of athletic events and games. But, attendance from students and staff is lower than what would expect from a Division I institution.

Addressing this topic from a social identity standpoint increases the understanding of why the scandal did not have much of an impact (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Games, public events, and conversations about an athletic department or team allow for interaction to take place among members of the community. This interaction is the external motivation that draws people to a larger social group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Trice & Beyer, 1993). When these processes are not effectively cultivated it is possible to see a lower level of investment from students, staff, and administrators inside the community.

Universities spend plenty of resources on cultivating and maintaining their reputation in the higher education marketplace. As seen in this study, higher education is a competitive atmosphere where universities are constantly competing for resources and students. According to the participants, reputation is vital to the external appeal of the university and reputation needs to be protected. Universities spend time and financial resources ensuring something does not detract from their overall perception, and a scandal that is made public can damage these goals (Downes, 2017). Findings from the interviews conducted show the reputation of the school was minimally impacted, if at all, because of the scandal. Based on the interviews conducted, my research shows that Rocky Mountain University is not perceived as an athletically talented school as most students choose RMU for its academics. The lack of athletic focus has created an atmosphere where a scandal, such as this, does not impact the enrollment numbers and recruiting practices of the institution.

Reputation is created and broken quickly, while prestige is a concept that is developed over time. Reputation is built from historical context, institutional achievements, and other factors a university uses to stand out amongst schools of similar

placement in the market (Brewer et al., 2004). RMU is not a prestigious institution when it comes to its athletic department. Having been a Division I school for just over a decade, athletic teams have not experienced much success. Therefore, my research found that the University's image has not been cultivated using its athletic department. The participants spoke to the image by saying that they did not have much to brag about when it came to athletics, as the most notable recent accomplishment was removed by the NCAA sanctions. The participants spoke extensively about the lack of an athletic atmosphere on campus. Outside of some recent basketball success, the teams are not very well supported by the community or student body. The games have minimal attendance and the department does not market itself like a successful Power Five institution. From an admissions perspective, athletics is always something that could be sold to potential students because of the positive connections it can create. However, this ability is arguably missing from RMU.

With not being perceived as an athletically popular school and most students choosing RMU because of academics, it was not surprising that the impact was going to be less compared to, say, a Power Five school with sports notoriety. Based on the participant's understanding of the university's programs, the Business School and College of Education are two of the top academic units at RMU. This research found that these two units are a major part of RMU's perceived institutional reputation. A public scandal occurring in one of these units could potentially create more impact on the admissions/enrollment management of the institution than that of the athletic departmental scandal discussed in this research.

At RMU, the disconnect between the administration of the university and the athletic department could have led to the actions of the head men's basketball coach and his staff, as there was less perceived oversight and communication that occurred, according to the participants. The culture of a specific department is established based on larger organizational perceived parameters--what is accepted and not accepted at the institution (Schroeder, 2010). As established in the literature, a strong organizational culture includes valuing and incorporating diversity, good internal communication, group maintenance and governance, shared leadership, development of the young, links to the outside world, and shared culture (Gardner, 1989). An athletic department is no exception in working to facilitate these characteristics. This research found that, based on the perspective of the participants, these examples of positive organizational culture were not being communicated to the rest of the institution. The disconnect between the athletic department and overall administration resulted in this department not being used to drive any admissions or recruitment areas for the institution. This lack of connection works to illustrate why the scandal occurring in this department resulted in little impact on the admissions/enrollment management team.

National College Culture

Universities have a vision for what they would like to be known for and what kind of student they would like to target (Balakrishnan, 2009). This focus influences the reputation of the school because of the deliberate decisions made by the administration. Participants shared they did not view athletics and/or the athletic department as part of the vision designed to attract prospective students to RMU. The athletic department here, based on the participants' perceptions, is siloed from the rest of the institution. This

siloeing means the University brand and vision are not being tied to the sports teams of the school. This further helps us understand why the scandal did not have much of an impact on the admissions/enrollment management process of the school.

RMU's regional identity and academic programs, along with its small-town community, are factors that attract local and regional students. According to the participants, an identity like this is helpful to an institution as it allows the school to remain competitive in these targeted marketplaces. One of the underlying findings from this research is that RMU could invest in the areas for which it is already known, instead of investing, financially and externally, in a department that has not shown enough success to be used as an effective marketing and recruiting tool. The examples from the participants remain consistent as they believe investing in recruiting efforts for the Business School and College of Education would yield positive results.

When choosing a college, prospective students and families are looking at the cost and benefits of their choice. Participants feel students interested in RMU desire academic programs that will allow them to enter the workforce without accumulating a large amount of debt. This research indicates, according to the majority of the participants, that prospective RMU students do not see the athletic department as one of the highlights of RMU or a reason for them to invest in the university.

***National Collegiate Athletic
Association (NCAA)
Impact***

As established, the NCAA is the governing body for its member institutions. However, based on responses from multiple participants, it seems to act as a big brother when monitoring the actions of the schools. Informants expressed the NCAA impact is

significant because it demonstrates that the matter could not be handled in-house, opening questions of administrative oversight. Since the NCAA is a national organization, its involvement does increase the intensity and public awareness of an event. According to Judson et al., (2006), students make judgments on the quality of the university and their own ability to enroll based on the brand that has been created and demonstrated in the media and how they perceive the institutional brand. The administrative implications of this scandal were associated with the response to the NCAA and how it was handled externally by the administration. This research indicates that the university failed to reestablish a positive community reputation in response to this scandal. It also can be argued that the only resulting impact from this scandal was the NCAA involvement and the sanctions set forth.

Impact of the Media

Based on participant understanding of the concept, scandals, in general, make people look at the department and school differently. The media shapes incidents of organizational misconduct such as scandals by the way it understands and displays the event (Pollock et al., 2016). In particular, the RMU scandal is not one of the national media deemed worthy of ongoing attention. This could be because the scandal lacked ethical severity, was regional instead of national, or because it was not an event that would gather attention for an extended period. Regardless, this speaks to one of the parameters set forth by Prior et al. (2013). Depth is added to the scandal when it receives attention for an extended period. The length of time is relevant to the situation, location, and severity--characterizing one of the aspects that creates an impactful scandal. The

participants of this study did not perceive the events as impactful because it did not gain the depth of exposure that it needed to increase its impact.

In my study, two participants discussed the idea of an “asterisk” on the university. My research shows the asterisk concept is established when an act crosses a socially defined moral boundary. In interviews, both participants’ discussions began with Penn State, Michigan State and the University of North Carolina because those schools were known as schools where an athletics scandal occurred. According to the participants, the University of North Carolina’s scandal involved cheating and took over a decade to uncover, while the Penn State and Michigan State scandals were especially disturbing and widespread sex scandals. On the other hand, the RMU scandal took far less time and did not consist of any alarming actions. This study has discovered that the media did not play a large role in the RMU basketball scandal, as the reputation of the university did not merit national attention. It also did not justify the scandal remaining in the media for, according to Nick, “more than a week” and the media exposure did not influence the enrollment management process of the university.

The impact of this scandal was contained inside the athletic department and impacted the department’s staffing changes. To reiterate, the only people directly impacted by this scandal were the ones that were actively engaged with the sports teams and athletic department. The scandal was not prevalent in the media, so incoming students were not asking the counselors about what had happened. Nick stated that the community “simply forgot about it.” RMU has not created an atmosphere where actions of the athletic department would establish any long-lasting impact.

Implications on Practice and Theory

Based on the participants, a scandal can have a ripple effect on the various aspect of the university. This study addressed this issue of scandal through the admissions/enrollment management lens working to understand any impact had on this process inside the university. This section will discuss the implications for practice and theory as well as recommendations for future practice and research.

Athletic Department Considerations

It is understood in college athletics, especially at the Division I level, money is equated to the program's ability to attract talent. Essentially, the more revenue a school generates, the better the prospect a university becomes for athletic recruits and external resources. The NCAA's \$200,000 fine of the RMU athletic department was significant because the University was operating from a budget deficit at the time. In Chapter Two, I discussed the concept of the front porch. The front porch concept applies because the sanctions directly impacted the department's operating budget (Bass et al., 2015). The participants of this study support the idea that the athletic department of an institution is usually tied to the school's public image. But athletic departments provide more for a university than just an access point--their actions and reputations are connected to the larger university and how it is perceived (Bass et al., 2015). According to the participants, with less money for infrastructure, the athletic department becomes less competitive; theoretically resulting in a lack of influence on the admissions process. This is supported by the findings of this study as the professional enrollment management staff did not see any impact from the actions of the athletic department.

It is perceived that individuals inside RMU care more about the financial aspect of this scandal than they do the reputational impact. Other institutions with better sports reputations--the universities that are known for college athletics--may be more concerned with their image than RMU. Additional resources are typically needed to fix the negative public opinion of their teams as this negativity would likely hurt them in the long run. One of the implications of this research is that universities must understand the influence had by each of their departments; to mitigate any potential harm done when a negative transgression is uncovered. At RMU, the lack of connection between the athletic department and the overall university helped to prevent any impact on the overall admissions of the university.

Administrative Positional Power

I have discussed throughout this dissertation that the athletic department was siloed inside the larger university structure. The participants felt that the athletic department did not present itself as part of the University; therefore, it was perceived to go unchecked by the university administration at the time. This independence is believed to have influenced the scandal's occurrence. The Athletic Director's oversight was questioned by multiple participants as they felt he was being unchecked by the administration. One implication is that the lack of connection inside the University created an environment where the scandal had little impact and that the administration was unaware of events occurring.

Based on the participants, there was a large amount of distrust with the President of the University at the time. The email from the President and lack of communication thereafter did not help this matter. Supposedly, the community did not know very much

about the scandal, as the University only released one internal email in response. Lack of proactive communication added to the distrust and negative feelings toward the administration, according to study participants. This impact helps understand one of our main facets to this research as lack of transparency created more internal issues than external. While all nine participants discussed this lack of communication, the findings show that the actions of the athletic department, ultimately, did not impact the admissions/enrollment management process. This was perceived as lucky because if the scope of the scandal had been different, and the admissions team had little information about how to respond, this action could have created a larger impact. The implication here is that the admissions staff of the university must be intentionally informed about any large-scale transgressions that could impact enrollment, image, etc. to effectively mitigate any questions received from applicants. The little effort made to educate and inform the students and staff of the university characterizes another implication. Findings show the university's response is crucial in the overall relationship with the administration during a scandal, regardless of institutional size or brand.

Implications for Theory

One major implication of this research is the continuation of timely research on this topic. While institutions do not want to continue to fuel open conversations about their scandal, they are limiting any growth or understanding that could come from it. "While there is ample documentation on scandal, reputation and governance in corporations, research on university scandal has been scarce" (Downes, 2017, p. 2). In the case of RMU, the athletic department at the institution denied my request to speak with anyone employed by the department, which is not atypical of normal business practices.

The Athletic Director at the time communicated, through the compliance office, that no one at the institution would be willing to discuss what happened. From a scholarly perspective, it would be possible to study the event without causing any extra harm to the reputation of the department or school.

In preparation for this study, I reviewed the relevant literature associated with athletic department scandals. I found that this research was limited in scope as the scandals discussed in scholarly work were limited to a small number of scandals. Outside of the specific timelines and events of each scandal, little is known about the actual impact on other offices around campus. I chose to approach this event from an admissions/enrollment management lens to gain a better perspective on how this influenced overall recruiting practices and enrollment. The lack of scholarly work on impact is an area that can be expanded if researchers are given access to the information needed to address these questions. If universities would allow, even after a set period, researchers to investigate the results of a scandal, it is possible to provide better evaluations and recommendations for future practice concerning other areas of higher education including admissions/enrollment management.

Benoit's Theory

The participants of this study openly discussed that the administration decided to self-impose various sanctions. While the justification was questioned, this calculated attempt at repairing the university image be one of corrective action. Through the lens of Benoit's (1997) theory, the actions of the administration and athletic department did not effectively repair their image. The lack of communication by the university to the public was also an attempt to reduce the offensiveness of the scandal. Multiple participants

mentioned they believe the lack of information was a way for the administration to avoid any ongoing media attention. This lack of transparency did not follow the theoretical application proposed by Benoit. Implications from this aspect of my research enlighten us to the idea that administrations need to be forward-thinking in their actions when a negative transgression occurs. Institutions can and should create systematic plans on how to responsibly disseminate pertinent information to employees, potential students, and community members.

Recommendations for Practice and Research

Based on my dissertation research, I describe various recommendations for future university practice when working with scandals occurring at the institution. The recommendations stemming from this research include open communication and understanding of university identity. Based on participant information, I was able to provide practical recommendations for future understanding of impact scandals can have on the admissions/enrollment management process of the university.

Open Communication

One of the noted impacts of this scandal was the lack of communication attributed to the administration. Based on the findings from this research, to create a sense of trust and unification inside a campus community, there needs to be established open lines of communication. If the administration at RMU had been more vocal about what had occurred, what the potential impact could be, and how they were addressing the issue, participants in this study would have a better outlook on the overall response. Open communication throughout the entirety of the process would increase transparency. RMU demonstrates that, if no communication is coming from the administration of the

university; that a pre-identified informational plan would have alleviated the concerns of the admission staff members. The creation of talking points and typical university responses is something that could work to aid professional staff members as they worked to mitigate any negative outcomes stemming from a scandal inside another department.

Transparency

At the time of the scandal, there was a perceived overall dislike for the members of the administration, mainly the President. This negative view encouraged people to actively criticize the decisions made surrounding the athletic department, their actions, and the larger university administration. According to the participants, when individuals or community members begin to question the leadership of an administration, it can lead to a distrust of the university. Transparency in the timeline of the scandal unfolding would work to inform the campus community and mitigate rumors that could stem from administrative silence. For an athletic department that had enjoyed recent basketball success, a basketball scandal was deflating. The scandal was not discussed by the admissions team at the time, raising concerns as to what the university administration was not saying about what had occurred. As athletic departments are often used to speak with potential students a pre-developed response from the admissions staff would be helpful moving forward.

Image Repair Plan

When discussing how this scandal could have an impact on the university, one participant referred to it as a “PR nightmare” because universities always need to be concerned with the impact of actions that happen under their name and logo. The external perception of the university is something a university can actively influence. To repair an

organization's image after a transgression, the organization must prioritize what populations will be most impacted (Benoit, 1997). Through an assessment of the populations on campus most impacted (including students, staff and community members), universities can create a plan to mitigate these outcomes. In my study, the populations most impacted were inside the athletic department. Benoit's theory lists the various ways in which the organization can react to a transgression. These methods include denial, evasion of responsibility, reduce offensiveness, corrective action and mortification (Benoit, 1997). When members of this study began to distrust the administration, it cultivated the negative image understood by the participants. RMU did not take active steps to repair its image which was concerning for the admissions staff. A recommendation moving forward would be for the admissions/enrollment management team to proactively assess how a scandal is impacting their work. This assessment would then allow the staff members to have some control over their approach to working with students and for them to feel as if they were actively working to manage the university image.

Financial Impact

Another recommendation would be to gain some understanding of the peripheral impact of the scandal financially. Meaning, researching the financial impact beyond that of the NCAA sanctions. Financial implications were discussed by various participants regarding the perceived ripple effect from the financial sanctioning of one department. While possible the siloing effect of the athletic department kept the financial burden contained, peripheral impacts could have included donations to the university through the alumni office. By working to understand any unanticipated financial outcomes, the

university can attempt to gain a broader understanding of scandal impact to other offices tied professionally to the athletic department. The recommendation stemming from this aspect of my research points to admissions/enrollment management staff actively evaluating their processes and approaches to student recruitment after a scandal is uncovered. From a financial aspect, an understanding of change, if any, on their specific department would be necessary when attempting to understand the overall impact of the scandal on the admission process.

Understanding University Identity

A university needs to establish its own identity, which can then be used to supplement its brand. RMU has struggled with establishing a specific identity. According to the participants, many schools can use their athletic department's reputation and name recognition as a tool to recruit students to their universities. RMU is a regional school that has not established a national brand for sports. One recommendation would be for the university to assess the benefits of marketing their athletic department during the admissions process. As a Division I school, athletics should be included, however, RMU has many other positive facets to advertise. These areas include academic programs, affordable education, and a small-town community. An understanding of the key stakeholders associated with the department will work to ensure the university is crafting the most effective message in response to the event (Weight & Zullo, 2014). The findings indicate that the RMU athletic department should not be used as a recruiting tool as the university competes with other institutions.

An area of continued research could aid in the understanding of how a university begins to rebuild when there is something scandalous in its history. Some participants say

the re-branding effort located at RMU was enough. Others attributed it to the passing of time. The recommendation would be to create an internal assessment of the admissions/enrollment management department; based on the timeline of the scandal to understand if any of their processes changed. This information could then be used to plan against any future scandals that could emerge from inside the university. Therefore, it can be understood that a scandal of this size and scope, located at a small institution, does not have an impact on the recruitment or day to day operations of the admissions staff members of the university.

Limitations

This study was limited by three main factors. First, the small participant population size offers a narrow perspective on the larger concept of scandal impact. The interviews encompassed individuals from the same office which means the questions were answered from a similar professional approach; potentially allowing the information to be consistent across all nine participants. Second, the information was all self-reported and relied heavily on the perspective of the individuals. This case study chose to only include participants from a single office and for the research to be conducted through an interview format because of epistemological considerations. This methodological decision meant that the information gathered was open to interpretation by me as a researcher. This is consistent with an interpretivist approach to research (Mathison, 2005). The research was conducted using an interpretivist epistemology and all information was interpreted by a single researcher. Validity was managed utilizing a researcher journal and participant validation to alleviate this limitation. Finally, this research was limited in scope because it was crafted from an admissions/enrollment

management perspective. A larger study could allow for insight into other facets of the university structure. This research intended to gain an understanding of the impact had on one specific office. For this research, I chose to focus my data collection of a specific subset of the institution, allowing for findings to occur inside an enrollment management perspective.

Researcher Closing Perspective

In closing, it is essential to think about the next steps regarding the topic of athletic department scandals. For the matter of scandal, it is something ingrained in our society. People love scandals. People also react to what they hear in the media and make judgments based on said information. Moving forward, institutions need to better understand their community, student population, and overall approach to education. When the time comes to respond to a transgression, a university can effectively articulate the response. This research has shed some light on an overlooked portion of the higher education system and can be used to guide further research on the process. This study concludes with my closing perspective. It is important to reflect on how this research impacted the way I perceive the concept of scandal, how my interpretations emerged, and how I was able to synthesize what I heard and learned.

The best research topic is something you enjoy thinking about, writing about, and critiquing. Through the exploration of my interests, skill sets, and experiences, I found a topic that allowed me to explore a situation untouched by others. I came into this research with a working knowledge of college athletics as well as a base in practitioner work at a university.

Scandals draw us in--they are sensational aspects of society. I believe the competitive nature of college athletics helps players, coaches, and administrators justify the risk associated with breaking NCAA rules. I conducted this research wanting to gain a better understanding of the impact; based on the assumption that scandals are never going to be absent from society. There will always be people who want to further their career or performance regardless of the rules set forth by the NCAA. I wanted to study this phenomenon--to know more about a topic that will always be part of the college athletic conversations. RMU and the small nature of the event allowed me the opportunity to do that. I started this research with the idea of studying the University of Louisville or Michigan State, arguably two of the most notable scandals in the last decade. But unfortunately, because of the nature of higher education today, these universities are inaccessible to those attempting to do academic work. Access to real information, regarding either of those schools, was impossible to gain.

As a researcher and scholar, I believe we are placed in a unique position inside higher education. I am a full-time employee that works to uphold the standards associated with my department and institution. I am also an academic who explores contemporary issues. Lack of access to direct athletic department sources encouraged me to change the way I explored this topic. I feel as if the population I chose and the interactions I had with my participants allowed me to gain the insight I hoped to achieve.

Chapter Summary

This research was conducted to gain an understanding of the potential impact an athletic scandal can have on the admissions/enrollment management process of an institution. This research explored a new perspective of this topic as small, regional,

Division I institutions are rarely mentioned in the scholarship. The perspectives gained through this research can be used to increase the understanding of university reputation, leadership implications as well as understanding inside a societal context. While little impact was found at RMU, the information and feedback from the participants inform the overall scholarship of this topic.

The RMU men's basketball scandal was one that needed to be studied, in the perspective of the contemporary collegiate scandal conversation. The idea that "this can happen here" can impact the way people view the university and organization moving forward. There would have been much more of an impact, regarding the same transgressions, if the school had been larger and contained more athletic notoriety as many things can go unnoticed at a small school. This scandal did not impact the RMU admissions/enrollment management the way it could a larger school. It did, however, have some internal implications, while questioning the relationship between the administration and the other departments. This research discovered minimal and contained impact from the RMU men's basketball scandal on the chosen department. Further exploration of this topic is recommended to gain a greater understanding of college athletic department scandals.

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APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Institutional Review Board

DATE: May 22, 2019

TO: Drew Lail, MaED

FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1431762-2] Scandals in College Athletics: What impact can a scandal have on the institution?

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: May 22, 2019

EXPIRATION DATE: May 22, 2023

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

Hi Drew, Based on the information you provided in your email, please also add the following statement to your consent form, right after the revision you made to indicate that names and job titles will not be mentioned in publications. The university will only be referred to by a generic pseudonym. Once you have made this update, you are free to begin your research. Best of luck!

Nicole Morse

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years. If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Morse at 970-351-1910 or nicole.morse@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records

APPENDIX B
RECRUITMENT LETTER

RECRUITMENT LETTER

Hello XXXXX,

I am a doctoral student here at RMU attempting to complete my dissertation research. I am in the Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership department here and am focusing my research on college athletics. Over the past few years, college athletics has seen a large amount of athletic scandals occurring around the nation. They range from recruiting violations to sexual assault, with varying levels of intensity. My research seeks to understand the impact these scandals can have on the campus where they occur.

Recent media and scholarship discuss the Power 5, well-known institutions (Michigan State, Ohio State, The University of Louisville, etc.) but there are the smaller regional schools in this conversation? UNC recently underwent an NCAA investigation into our men's basketball program. This scandal is one that made national news but was not discussed at length. I would like to explore its impact.

I would love to find some time to speak with you about the Men's Basketball program here at RMU and how it impacted the university/your conversations with potential students. The interview would last between 45 min to an hour. Because of your unique position I think you would be able to offer an excellent perspective on this case. I can ensure anonymity as I understand a scandal inside a university is a sensitive issue.

I am happy to make this work at your convenience and look forward to speaking with you.

Thanks!

APPENDIX C
CONSENT FORM



UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN
COLORADO

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

Scandals in College Athletics: What impact can a scandal have on the institution?

Researcher: Drew Lail, 970-351-3337, drew.lail@unco.edu

Advisor: Dr. Amy Li, amy.li@unco.edu

This research study is designed to gain more insight into the Rocky Mountain Universities Men's Basketball scandal. The questions I will ask will revolve around how this scandal impacted you, the campus and the overall UNC community. Your names and job title will not be used in the final manuscript or any publications. The purpose is to gain a better understanding of how an athletic department scandal can impact the overall university.

As the participant of this study you will be asked to discuss your knowledge and understanding of the RMU men's basketball scandal. This can and will include your own opinions and information concerning this topic. I will conduct an interview that will last approximately 30-45 minutes and will include a set of questions. Any information you provide in the interview (personal accounts, documents, etc.) can be used in my analysis of this methodology. An example of the questions being asked are as follows:

1. What, in your opinion, was the fallout from the scandal for the university?
2. Did this affect the way the athletic department was run?
3. What are the administrative implications to a scandal occurring inside a university? Does this impact the equity of decision making by university administrators?
4. From your perspective, how did the students understand this scandal? Does the scandal have any impact on the social aspect of college athletic departments?

There are no risks associated with this research and the interview can be stopped at any time if you begin to feel uncomfortable about what is being discussed. All information will remain confidential as I will use pseudonyms when discussing what is said in the interviews.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, 25 Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

Researcher's Signature

Date

Participant's Signature

Date

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographic Questions

1. Please tell me what your current role is and how long you have been in the position.
2. What do your job duties entail?
3. What does a normal day look like in your job?

Individual Perspective Questions

1. What is your definition of a college athletic scandal?
2. Do you think an athletic departmental scandal impacts the rest of the university?
3. What is your opinion on the contemporary discussion revolving around athletic department scandals? (use examples cited in this research if needed)
4. Do you think scandals are something of common interest today?

Rocky Mountain University (RMU) Scandal Specific Questions

1. Can you tell me about the RMU Men's Basketball scandal?
 - a. Did this scandal affect your work at all?
 - b. If so, what was your role in conjunction with this scandal?
2. What was the impact inside the Athletic Department?
 - a. What other populations on campus do you think were most impacted?
 - b. How did this scandal transfer or carry over into the university as a whole?
3. How would you characterize the impact of this scandal?
 - a. On the university? On the students? On the Athletic Department?

4. Does the NCAA involvement make this more serious?
 - a. If so, how? If not, does it have an impact at all?

University Impact Questions

1. What, in your opinion, was the fallout from the scandal for the university?
2. Did this affect the way the athletic department was run?
3. What are the administrative implications to a scandal occurring inside a university? Does this impact the equity of decision making by university administrators?
4. From your perspective, how did the students understand this scandal? Does the scandal have any impact on the social aspect of college athletic departments?
5. Based on Benoit's Theory (describe theory briefly), was the university's response effective in managing the impact on its overall image?
6. Does this impact the RMU brand? Can the impact be mitigated through different marketing techniques? If so, what would those be?

APPENDIX E
CODING CHART

CODING CHART

Theme	Keywords	Examples	Interpretation
Reputation and Brand of the University	Reputation, image, perception and brand	<p>“Yeah so I definitely think it can ruin or impact the reputation of a university and that reputation is huge for enrollment numbers, for new students coming in, new students and their parents, how they perceive the university.”</p> <p>“There may not have been a big brand awareness for our new brand when this came out, so it maybe didn’t damage our current branding.”</p>	The concept helps to establish the connection between the scandal and the perceived impact from these participants.
Leadership and Communication	Community, communication and transparency	<p>“So essentially we just forgot about it. And I think we’re at that point where the community has kind of forgotten about it. The university kind of forgotten about it.”</p> <p>“But then I’m like, what was the intentionality behind that? (the communication plan). I don’t think it was transparency.”</p>	The participants establish that the lack of communication from the administration led to a minimal, if nonexistent, impact.

Theme	Keywords	Examples	Interpretation
Accountability in Today's College Atmosphere	Media, enrollment, scope and accountability	<p>“Those next one or two years were years that we gained in enrollment. And so, I just don't feel like it had any negative impact on our on our enrollment at that time based on again the severity of a cheating scandal.”</p> <p>“The media didn't latch on to it and didn't really affect anything.”</p>	The enrollment of the university was not impacted because of the scope and perceiving lack of media exposure.