

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: LEGITIMIZING THE CULTURE OF BIG
TIME SPORT: RHETORIC AND THE MYTH
OF THE STUDENT-ATHLETE

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Dissertation directed by: Dr. Michelle Murray Yang, Communication

Legitimizing the Culture of Big-Time Sport: Rhetoric and the Myth of the Student Athlete analyzes and evaluates organizational rhetoric in the context of “big-time” sport, or universities with high-profile, revenue generating [men’s] athletics. I analyze the macro organizational rhetoric of the NCAA, rhetoric at the institutional level (in my project, the University of Maryland), and rhetoric of resistance from two college athlete advocacy organizations. I engage organizational discourse ranging from handbooks, strategic plans, and mission statements to promotional materials, press releases and public addresses. My texts were acquired from archival sources, news sources, and online. I also articulate my analysis in terms of the broader cultural and ideological formations at play, such as corporatized higher education, neoliberalism, and hegemonic masculinity. My purpose is to explore discourse that legitimizes the culture of big-time sport. I argue that the myth of the student-athlete, which hinges on three axiological-ideological *topoi* – purity, welfare, and excellence

– is the primary legitimizing discourse of big-time sport culture – both the good and the bad.

This project holds both disciplinary and social significance. Whereas important research has been conducted on sports from mass media or public relations perspectives (i.e., crisis communication during scandal), this dissertation expands the scholarly view to consider the networked and interdependent rhetorical culture of sport and higher education as illuminated through competing organizational discourse. Further, this project is interdisciplinary; it aims to join scholarship in critical/cultural studies disciplines with scholarship in communication. As a result, this project contributes to both the academic and public debates surrounding big-time sport and intervenes with practical recommendations for organizations, leaders, fans, and critics of big-time sport. The issues my dissertation explores are urgent in nature given the issues big-time sport fosters, especially as they implicate the health and well-being of college athletes and the quality of higher education.

Aside from shedding light on current issues in big-time sport from a rhetorical perspective, this dissertation makes the following contributions to rhetoric and communication scholarship: First, it explains the ideological and axiological *topoi* of the myth of the student-athlete; second, it provides an extended critical framework to understand and analyze discourse of and about big-time college sport; and third, it bridges disciplinary and interdisciplinary divides in scholarship to contribute practical interventions for the problems in big-time sport.

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THE MYTH OF THE STUDENT-ATHLETE

by

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Preface

In November 2011, Penn State’s Board of Trustees took “swift and decisive action” in the wake of the Jerry Sandusky sexual abuse scandal following the announcement of its leaders' perjury in the investigation of Sandusky.¹ Firing former coach Joe Paterno, Athletics Director John Curley, and President Graham Spanier, the Board of Trustees sent a message to the community they would hold these leaders accountable for the heinous crimes that were committed against children for decades. This administrative response was met with chaos. One faction of the Penn State community (writ large: alumni, students, faculty, and fans) supported the decision, as it communicated some sort of commitment to prioritizing Sandusky’s victims over big-time football (albeit, of course, it was only scratching the surface). Another faction of the Penn State community viewed the decision as hasty; in particular, they viewed the firing of Joe Paterno as wrongful. Students stormed the streets of downtown State College protesting this act; another group of students rallied outside of Paterno’s house in support; yet another group of students gathered to guard the bronze statue of Paterno outside of Beaver Stadium, which was removed seven months later.² While some student leaders called on the student body to continue

¹ For a concise guide and timeline to the controversy dating back to its origins in the late 1990s, see Bill Chappell, “Penn State Abuse Scandal: A Guide and Timeline,” *NPR*, June 21, 2012, <http://www.npr.org/2011/11/08/142111804/penn-state-abuse-scandal-a-guide-and-timeline>.

² Don Van Natta, Jr., “Joe Paterno statue taken down,” *ESPN*, July 23, 2012, http://espn.go.com/college-football/story/_/id/8188530/joe-paterno-statue-removed-penn-state-university-beaver-stadium.

supporting the football team despite the national scrutiny on the program and university, other student activists and community members called for a boycott of football at Penn State. One student group, attempting to take a middle ground, called to “Blue Out Beaver Stadium” – a visual play on Penn State’s famous “White Out” – which was meant to symbolize both the support of Penn State Football and the support of Sandusky’s victims, since blue is the color of child abuse awareness.³ On the night before the Nebraska Blue Out game, thousands attended a candlelight vigil on Old Main lawn to honor victims of abuse.⁴ The Sandusky scandal ripped open what was the “heart” of Penn State University for generations and exposed the darkest implications of big-time football and hegemonic masculinity. To this day, the Penn State community still reels over the Sandusky scandal and the community debates the role of football at the university to no avail.

In November 2018, the University of Maryland Board of Regents advised the administration to retain head coach DJ Durkin and the athletic trainers responsible for Jordan McNair's death earlier that year following an investigation into what *ESPN* called the “toxic culture” of the Terrapin football program. The investigation wrongfully concluded, despite all of the evidence stating otherwise, that the program

³ Brittany Svoboda, “Fans Encouraged to Attend ‘Blue Out,’ Support Fight Against Child Abuse,” *Centre County Gazette*, November 20, 2014, <http://www.statecollege.com/news/centre-county-gazette/fans-encouraged-to-attend-blue-out-support-fight-against-child-abuse,1461775/>.

⁴ Chris Rosenblum, “Light Shines on Tragedy: Candlelight Vigil Honors Victims of Sexual Abuse,” *Centre Daily Times*, November 12, 2011, <https://www.centredaily.com/news/local/education/penn-state/jerry-sandusky/article42806901.html>.

was not toxic, just “dysfunctional.”⁵ Maryland administrators and football staff, along with the culture of toxic masculinity nourished by them, allowed a black boy to die on Maryland’s watch. The recommendation left Maryland’s student body divided. One faction of the student body, completely dumbfounded by the lack of empathy and, frankly, common sense, demanded #JusticeForJordan in the form of accountability and institutional changes, especially given other recent failures of the administration.⁶ Further, this group demanded a boycott of the football team. Another group of student leaders called for unity and support. “Pack the stadium,” they chanted.⁷ This group urged people to support the athletes who had been most affected by their teammate’s death and the problematic culture of Terrapin Football. At the end of the #JusticeforJordan rally – which was divided between these two competing groups – some students, in conjunction with UMD Athletics, handed out tickets for that Saturday’s game. While attendees chanted “Justice for Jordan” in unison at times during that demonstration, their particular demands and solutions to the problem, as it was at Penn State, couldn’t have been more different. Although Maryland students never felt the same identification with DJ Durkin as PSU students felt with Joe

⁵ Rick Maese and Keith L. Alexander, “Report on Maryland football culture cites problems but stops short of ‘toxic’ label,” *Washington Post*, October 25, 2018, retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2018/10/25/report-maryland-football-culture-cites-problems-stops-short-toxic-label/?utm_term=.de838b1034d3.

⁶ See Katie Brown and Sarah Eshera, “UMD’s Loh Must Go,” *Baltimore Sun*, November 7, 2018, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/oped/bs-ed-op-1108-oust-loh-20181107-story.html>.

⁷ Jillian Altesek, “At ‘Justice for Jordan’ rally, UMD student groups clash over football support,” *The Diamondback*, November 2, 2018, <http://www.dbknews.com/2018/11/02/maryland-football-justice-for-jordan-rally-protest-umd-students-dj-durkin-wallace-loh-board-of-regents/>.

Paterno – nor was Maryland ever the football powerhouse that Penn State was/is – both communities were forced to hold a mirror up to their “front porch” and face the reflection.

And it’s ugly.

As a scholar of rhetoric and sport, I am interested in these cases for several reasons. While at first I was most interested in the responses to horrible situations like at Penn State and at Maryland, from the perspectives of crisis rhetoric, I became more curious about discourses that construct the very culture of sport in what Murray Sperber calls the Big-time U.⁸ In addition to analyzing university-issued responses to these sporting crises, my dissertation examines those legitimizing discourses that stem from the NCAA, university administrators, and athletic departments. In particular, I am interested in the key legitimizing discourse: the myth of the student-athlete. I trace this myth through mission statements, strategic plans and handbooks, public addresses, and “promotional” texts – many of which can be found on the YouTube channels for these universities and their athletic departments – that are meant to maintain the culture of big-time sport and persuade potential athletes, students, and fans to keep consuming it. In addition to exploring how NCAA’s organizational rhetoric constructs the myth of the student-athlete, I am also interested in the simultaneous, interdependent yet competing discourses that respond to and attempt to make sense of the myth and the culture of big-time sport. I am interested in how university leaders and athletic departments frame the problems and solutions in college sports; I am interested in how college athletes advocate for themselves; I am

⁸ Murray Sperber, *Beer and Circus: How Big-Time College Sports is Crippling Undergraduate Education* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2000).

interested in how students, fans, and critics all debate the issues through their public communication. In total, I am interested in what this organizational rhetoric can tell us about the communication of and about big-time sport. Finally, I am interested in the local and global contexts within which these discourses emerge.

Like many other scholars, this dissertation holds personal as well as public significance. As an undergraduate at Penn State – who spent half of her years in the Pre-Sandusky era and half of her years in the Sandusky era – and then as an alumna, and now, as a graduate student at Maryland, I care/d deeply about the crises unfolding on my campuses. At Penn State, I watched my campus erupt in chaos and evolve into the discursive center for discussing the most significant problems in big-time sport. As one scandal fades a bit into memory – never fully – another one emerges. Same big-time sport, different Big-time U. As a both a member of these communities and as a rhetorical scholar, I ask myself, “how can I contribute to these conversations in a meaningful way?” As both a fan, but mostly a critic, of big-time sport, it is my duty to research and share what I have learned about these issues and about rhetoric, both in the form of this dissertation and eventual academic publication, in the classroom with my students, and in public forums. Big-time sport and its problems are not going away. Academics, critical journalists, and fans alike need to continue discussing and deliberating to improve the “state of college sports.” This dissertation provides some guidance on how to do that.

Dedication

To mom and dad.

Acknowledgements

They say that it takes a village to write a dissertation. I fully believe that to be true; more importantly, it takes a village to develop a scholar. While this dissertation marks the beginning of my scholarly activities, it is also a tangible result of the hours I have labored in graduate school to learn, to research, and to write. That labor was supported by many important people in my life. First and foremost, my mom and dad have cheered me on in all of my endeavors since before I could walk or talk. They always told me I would do great things even if they didn't know what they would be or where I would end up. My parents have supported me in every tangible and intangible way they were able to, and I am forever grateful.

My adviser Michelle, or #MMY, has helped me tremendously. Working with her for the past six years has been a joy. To say I had no idea what I was doing in the first two (let's be honest, three) years of the PhD is an understatement. She answered every question; helped me through every issue; worked through every possible comps scenario; read my work carefully; and engaged with me meaningfully every step of the way. Most importantly, Michelle reminded me, and modeled the important fact, that academics are first and foremost, human. Michelle's patience and generosity round out her sharp insights and critical feedback to make her a fantastic mentor. It has been an honor to be her first PhD advisee. Michelle has taught me how to be a scholar. She is truly a role model. I learned that kindness fosters growth.

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Beatles' song "I'm Lookin' Through You" every day in Penn State's undergraduate Rhetorical Theory course, I knew I wanted to keep learning from her forever. She helped me get into graduate school and, once I was there, she helped me succeed. From conference dinners to co-authoring an article on rhetorical education, I will always be indebted to her kindness and mentorship. I know that the best way I can repay her is to live by her example: to support my students in whatever ways I can; to push them beyond their comfort zones; to care for them; and to believe in them. To "do it for the next one."

I am grateful for the colleagues, at Maryland and at other institutions, who have listened to me verbalize many of the ideas within this dissertation. Whether it was informally over coffee; over the course of a conversation in a seminar; formally in meetings with my committee members; during weekly writing dates (that often turned into poolside writing during the summers); at NCA or IACS; or in written feedback on my work; all of these conversations have strengthened this project. I would like to thank my rhetoric cohort at NCA Doctoral Honors 2018 as well as the Fall 2018 Critical Theory colloquium students – both groups listened to me share the larger ideas and arguments of this dissertation and contributed ideas to strengthen them. In particular I would like to thank Annie Laurie Nichols, Michael Steudeman, Kyle King, and Michael Butterworth, whose rhetorical expertise and mentorship helped me concretize my ideas. I would also like to thank some colleagues outside of the field of communication, whose questions were equally as important: Katie Esmonde, Sara Berkowitz, and Sara Lynn Farwell. Finally, Stephanie Madden and Jessica Kurr – both brilliant communication scholars – were a constant source of both

scholarly and emotional support throughout the span of my doctoral degree. I am truly blessed to have this community.

I have taken advantage of several resources to promote a healthy mind and body throughout my graduate education. Jennifer, my therapist of five years, has been a wonderful listener and wise sage. Out of everyone, Jennifer has witnessed my most profound growth as a person and I am forever grateful for her support and friendship. Jennifer also facilitates the graduate group I have been a part of for five years. These colleagues are some of the warmest, most empathetic, and wildly brilliant people I have ever met, and it has been a privilege to sit with them every week throughout my graduate career to discuss our lives within and outside of academia. I also want to acknowledge others who have supported my mental and physical well-being throughout this journey: Eileen at the Health Center and ILoveKickboxing Hyattsville, which is a group of amazing and empowered women classmates and trainers who motivated me and supported my need to punch and kick things to relieve stress.

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Trevor-Parry Giles has contributed his wisdom by raising important critiques throughout the process of writing this dissertation. I believe that my project makes a meaningful contribution in part because of the scholars I drafted to my team.

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Introduction: Rhetoric and Big-Time Sport

In October 2015, two former college football players and founders of the National College Players Association (NCPA) delivered separate speeches on the “State of NCAA Sports.”¹ Speaking at the Indiana AFL-CIO convention,² Ramogi Huma expressed frustration regarding a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) national decision that validated the NCAA’s authority on the matter of whether or not student-athletes can be recognized as student-employees of their universities.³ The NLRB deferred to the NCAA, which meant that despite prior success organizing for basic protections, student-athletes cannot collectively bargain to address their labor concerns.⁴ Huma characterized the NCAA as “financially rich, but morally bankrupt” because of their willingness to “put college athletes at physical, academic, and financial risk,” while administrators at the NCAA, conference, and university levels “enjoy multimillion-dollar salaries generated from the blood, sweat, and brain damage of their athletes.” Huma illustrated a bleak picture of the “State of NCAA Sports,” when he elaborated,

How many more players will needlessly suffer serious traumatic brain injury? How many more players like Kosta Karageorge or Penn Football player Owen Thomas will commit suicide while the NLRB delays equal protections under the law? How many players will end up like Derek Sheely, a Frostburg State football player who died because he was kept in practice with brain trauma? Thousands of players must face these risks in the name of what?

All of this, according to Huma, is in the name of the “false narratives” of competitive equity and amateurism – or one of the NCAA’s three axiological *topoi* attached to its myth of the “student-athlete.” In refuting these ideas, both speakers emphasized that their shared goal is to close the “gaps in protections” so that college athletes can

thrive not just as athletes, but also as students and as human beings. Kain Colter conveyed a more optimistic message. He said that though the aforementioned decision was “disappointing” and not the ruling they hoped for, the ruling did not “close the door on this issue.”⁵ Indeed, members of the college sports community continue to debate student-athletes’ hybrid identity, particularly in the context of the “Big-time U.” “Big-time U” refers to public research universities with high-profile NCAA Division I athletics.⁶ At the heart of the debate are concerns about race, labor, and education in big-time sport culture.⁷

At stake in this debate is the health and well-being of young, mostly black, men. The examples Huma cited were horrific enough, yet they are not the most recent. Almost every year, “a few young people lose their lives on the field or as an indirect result of their actions on it.”⁸ As Huma alluded to in the above quote, the rate of traumatic and non-traumatic deaths in college football alone is at an all-time high. Patrick Hruby reported that “thirty-three NCAA football players died playing the sport between 2000 and 2016, an average of two per season,” and six of those deaths were “traumatic: the result of injuries caused by collisions.” The rest, and like the death of Maryland offensive lineman Jordan McNair, were non-traumatic: the result of intense exercise.⁹ In addition to the traumatic and non-traumatic deaths that occur before or during sports activity, thousands of former college and professional football players suffer from Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, a disease that ruins and ultimately takes the lives of these athletes.¹⁰ Since a large number of those affected are African American men and the majority of those profiting on these mental and physical sacrifices are white men, scholar Billy Hawkins has dubbed the institution of

big-time football and men's basketball – collectively referred to as “big-time sport” – a “new plantation.”¹¹ Speaking in response to the death of Maryland football player Jordan McNair, Huma warned that the “NCAA does not enforce any of its health and safety guidelines,” which leaves campuses and players vulnerable to this type of tragedy.¹² Because of these unsettling facts, former college athletes have advocated for increased health coverage and reforms in the culture of big-time sport – especially football.

The controversies surrounding big-time sport elicit several tensions that can and should be studied from a rhetorical perspective. Because big-time sport is a dynamic institutional network of interdependent discourse communities,¹³ the broad tensions among sport, education, and labor are amplified through another tension – the tension between institutional and vernacular discourse. This is not simply a debate between the NCAA and its college-athletes. Rather, the discourse communities involved in big-time sport – including the NCAA, university administrators, university athletics departments, *and* college-athletes – offer positions about these issues that both reinforce and contradict one another, which is one of the core characteristics of an organization's culture.¹⁴ This project examines the organizational culture and rhetoric of big-time sport and the conflicts that surround this culture.¹⁵ Specifically, I examine the core legitimizing discourse of big-time sport – the myth of the student-athlete – and explain the complex matrix of beliefs, attitudes, ideologies, and values attached to that myth and embedded in the internal and external debates about big-time sport culture.¹⁶

The overarching question this dissertation explores is, how do interdependent organizations within Big-Time sport express, maintain, or contest the culture of big-time sport by articulating – positively or negatively – the myth of the student-athlete? To answer this question, I analyze organizational rhetoric from three perspectives – the governing body of big-time sport (the NCAA), one representative Big-time U (The University of Maryland), and two central college athlete advocacy organizations (NCPA and CAPA). In so doing, I analyze organizational discourse ranging from handbooks, strategic plans, and mission statements to promotional materials, press releases and public addresses. My analysis explores the values, ideologies, and dominant cultural tropes that shape the myth of the student-athlete and, consequently, the culture of big-time sport. By doing so, this project helps explain the internal logics used by organizational members in Big-time U's to maintain or challenge the material and symbolic conditions of big-time sport, conditions that elicit widespread public controversy.¹⁷ In the next section, I explain the rationale for this project.

Rationale

There is a critical and theoretical need to study big-time college sports. Communication scholars have studied sport critically for several decades, yet there are gaps in scholarship.¹⁸ Michael Butterworth has argued that the realm of sport is a space where identities, ideologies, and political discussions merge.¹⁹ Working from this premise, Dan Grano has urged rhetorical and critical/cultural scholars of sport to “advance sport as a context within, through, and around which certain articulations and disarticulations of power *take unique shape*, so that gerrymandering sport from a cultural configuration where it implicitly or explicitly matters stands as an analytical

failure.”²⁰ In other words, we must discontinue our simple claims that “sports reflect reality” and instead adopt and extend the constitutive perspective of rhetoric in the context of sport.²¹ Though scholars have established the major ideas and frameworks of research in sport and political culture broadly, there is a lack of critical scholarship in the collegiate sport context, especially from an organizational rhetoric perspective.²² While scholars have analyzed college sport texts, they have usually focused on image management or crisis communication during or after scandal, mass and social media, fandom, or the commodification of college sports.²³ These studies are important, but not critical enough.²⁴ My project takes seriously the rhetorically constructed culture of big-time college sport.²⁵ Big-time sport still remains largely underexplored from the perspective of rhetoric, especially rhetoric that attends to the ideological and axiological dimensions of organizational myth.

Collegiate sport discourse warrants attention for several reasons. First, Trail and colleagues advance seven “points of attachment” (in rhetorical terms, identifications) that are unique to collegiate sport and that make it a fruitful area to study: identification with player, team, coach, university, community, sport, and level.²⁶ As such, the discourse of and about big-time sport is complex and multifaceted. Second, college sport acts as a more specific context to explore the constitutive relationship between sport and political culture. Both sport and higher education (especially at public land-grants) are, *as practices*, “democratizing;”²⁷ however, as *institutions*, both also perpetuate hegemonic ideologies. Both sport and education articulate positive social visions and values, but they also simultaneously reinforce social structures in corporatized higher education.²⁸ Thus, this study

answers a call from Physical Cultural Studies scholars David Andrews and Michael Silk for work that explicitly centers on the “critical explication of how, in various guises and often in highly localized contexts, the tentacles of neoliberalism have been manifest...and mobilized within multifarious iterations of sporting experiences, expressions, and structures.”²⁹ Finally, the organizational complexity of big-time sport warrants attention from a rhetorical perspective.³⁰ As organizational communication scholars George Cheney and Jill McMillan contend, “organizational rhetoric is a necessary subject for an organizational society.”³¹ By grappling with the full meaning of collectively presented discourse, organizational rhetoric scholars “can make an important contribution to knowledge of contemporary society.”³²

Further, this project answers the scholarly calls for a “radically contextual” study of big-time sport because it interrogates how political, social, and ideological discourses manifest in organizational myths of big-time sport.³³ It is considered “radical” because it aims to “unearth the socially and historically contingent matrix of social, economic, political, and technological articulations” of a rhetorical phenomenon.³⁴ In particular, this project explores tensions among sport, education, and labor, as well as the discursive tension between official and unofficial discourse *within* big-time sport. Big-time sport is a site through which rhetorical scholars can interrogate this discursive and inter-organizational struggle over ideas, ideologies, and values. In the next section, I trace the historical context, ideological underpinnings, and organizational nuances of big-time sport in order to establish the major grounding for this dissertation.

What is “Big-Time” Sport?

Synthesizing Body and Mind: Athletics and Education in Ancient Greece

The presence of athletic activity in educational settings extends to antiquity. For example, in Sparta, the educational system was oriented toward physical training to prepare soldiers (and public servants) for the state.³⁵ As Debra Hawhee has illustrated in *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece*, the “compounded self” or whole person was achieved through developing *both* the body *and* the mind; in fact they were one in the same. The whole person demonstrated *aretē*, which is a category of *ethos* that is often translated as “civic excellence” or “moral virtue.” *Aretē* also connoted a “respect for others, a sense of justice, moderation, self-control, ‘holiness of life’ or piety, and courage.”³⁶ Further, *aretē* encompassed glory, honor, courage, bodily strength and swiftness to succeed in battle – or sport. In that context, white, land-owning men were trained in a *paideia* or educational curriculum in the arts of gymnastics and rhetoric.³⁷ Hawhee argues that

In ancient Athens, athletic and rhetorical practices overlapped and nurtured each other in many ways: culturally, they were founded upon joint values of agonism and *aretē*, and they came together in the ancient festival to combine the visible with the articulable. Pedagogically, they shaped modes of knowledge production, an attention to timing, and an emphasis on habituation, imitation, and response...The agon was for ancient Athenians the mode of virtue production par excellence, as it provided the occasion for displays of ability (*dunamis*) and governed the distribution of glory and honor.³⁸

However, the agon was not entirely about winning or losing. Rather, the importance of the agon came from “the acts of ‘gathering’ (athletes, judges/referees, and spectators) and ‘questing’ (the specific contest that is happening on the field/in the gymnasium,”³⁹ which are two activities still prevalent in both big-time sports and politics today. *Aretē*, in that context, was *not* outcome driven; rather virtue and excellence emerged in the encounters themselves, in the act of repeating virtuous

actions in relation to others.⁴⁰ As Hawhee explains, “one must become virtuosity itself by performing and embodying virtuous actions in public.”⁴¹ *Aretē*, or the complex aggregate of bodily and conceptual attributes – honor, glory, excellence – was produced in the agon.⁴² This view of excellence as the development of mind and bodily faculties is the foundation of the both early modern higher education and early modern Olympic sport.⁴³ The leaders of the nineteenth century Olympic movement, for example, stated that Olympism should “be a school of moral nobility and purity as well as of physical endurance and energy.”⁴⁴ This mind-body training reflects the dialectical tension between education and sport and the ideological conditions that shaped both. This idea is reflected in archival university discourse about athletics. For example, in a University of Maryland pamphlet titled “Athletics at Maryland,” the author articulates the ancient argument that sports are a way to synthesize and maximize potential of the mind and body. “The main aim of all athletics,” the author writes, “should be to develop keenness of mind and strength of body. In other words, to give to the mind a strong body to enable it to carry out projects conceived.”⁴⁵

These ideas about the relationship between, mind, body, and nation through sport prevailed through the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Enlightenment. Both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were heavily influenced by Greek and Roman thought, but this was also a time where sport came into conflict with the theological beliefs of Christianity and the Reformation.⁴⁶ During these times, the most popular sporting events were war games and demonstrations of military skills.⁴⁷ Further, Renaissance ideals reflected the archetype of the “whole person” – called the “Renaissance Man,” – which included the use of the body to develop discipline and

character.⁴⁸ Physical education began during the Enlightenment, when many philosophers' ideas about the importance of gymnastics to promote health and as a result, a stronger nation, were formally adopted.⁴⁹ Then, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries brought formalized practices of competitive sport to the context of higher education in America.

Collegiate Culture in the United States: Roots of Big-Time Sport

U.S. “collegial” or “collegiate” (interchangeable) culture originated in colonial America. England, particularly Oxford and Cambridge, were models for the new society.⁵⁰ One of the most important characteristics of the British university in the seventeenth century was the dominance of the liberal arts. These institutions “were directed toward the improvement of young men’s minds, rather than the promotion of career aspirations or social status.”⁵¹ Further, residential living and extra-curriculars such as fraternal organizations and sports were “considered to be just as important as the formal curriculum of the collegiate classroom” in the American colonial college.⁵² William Bergquist notes that the “collegiate way” helped to establish the foundations for many of the nonintellectual purposes of the American college. “The collegiate way,” writes Bergquist, “would account for the fact that no American institution of higher learning can be an institution of learning alone.”⁵³ Modeled after the European collegiate amateur style, “sport” in the collegiate context was primarily defined as a “pleasant pastime; entertainment or amusement; or recreation, and diversion.”⁵⁴ In other words, participating in sport was for fun, not work. This principle of recreation, synonymous with amateurism, remains integral to the ideals and practice of intercollegiate sports today.⁵⁵ Like the Ancients,

early Americans valued the addition of sport and physical activity to the formal and informal curriculum. Throughout the century, Americans began to accept the idea that spare time could be used for recreational activities like playing and spectating. Robert A. Mechikoff and Steven Estes explain that during this time American culture was modernizing and “the roles of individuals and institutions with respect to all types of activities were viewed in radically different ways.”⁵⁶ On the whole, they argue, “America experienced a cultural revolution, and sport changed along with everything else.”⁵⁷

Although sports have a significant influence on higher education today, higher education has also had a significant influence on the shape of college sports. The Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, which established the land-grant idea, spurred state universities to take shape in the Midwest, South, and West.⁵⁸ Land-grant universities pronounce particularly democratic missions and visions of education and citizenship.⁵⁹ Historically, the notion of education and citizenship “called for a well-rounded individual who would possess both liberal and practical knowledge, as well as an appreciation of the obligation of all citizens to bear the responsibility of national defense.”⁶⁰ In addition to the traditional disciplines or “liberal arts” curriculum, these public universities embraced applied fields like agriculture, engineering, and business, which helped to “democratize” American higher education.⁶¹ Amy Sue Bix and colleagues explain that one of the purposes of the Morrill Act “embraced broader theoretical aspects related to visions of education and citizenship”; proponents of the Morrill Act called these institutions “Democracy’s Colleges.”⁶² Charles Clotfelter explains that the land-grant’s addition of service, or “extension,” to the traditional

aims of research and teaching helped appeal to and reach a broad citizenry. Folding in “public entertainment” in the form of athletics with other forms of public service seemed natural for [universities].⁶³ Indeed, Howard Bowen identified “recreational and cultural activities for persons in the surrounding community” as direct public service. His list includes “dramatic and musical performances; facilities such as gyms, playing fields, golf courses, tennis courts, libraries, and museums; radio and television stations or broadcasts; and spectator sports.”⁶⁴ The view that collegiate sports are a university “extension” or “service” to the broader community articulates the contemporary understanding that athletics are a “front porch” to a university – a visible constituent and a literal way into the community. The role of sports in higher education was solidified, and the roots of big-time collegiate culture were spreading in the land-grant.

Twentieth Century Rhetorical Developments: The “Front Porch” Metaphor

Brian Ingrassia argues that the changing nature of higher education in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries directly shape what we know of as big-time sports. Higher education, by the 1900s, featured scholars creating “esoteric knowledge in narrow disciplines and departments, while administrators used sport to make universities relevant to Americans.”⁶⁵ The expansion of academic disciplines, “along with the development of autonomous departments” represented the emergence of a fragmented, modern intellectual culture that could be unified by sports.⁶⁶ Some saw college sports as a type of “middlebrow” culture – a “popular activity intended to make highbrow intellectual culture legible, or palatable, to the public.”⁶⁷ The American version of football was seen as particularly relevant. It was seen to reflect

American values such as discipline, perseverance, and teamwork in a competitive context. It was

the perfect illustration of the ‘strong mind and strong body’ and ‘survival of the fittest’ ideals. Football challenged long held stereotypes and popular media portrayals of college students as effete and decadent, and higher education as irrelevant and impractical.⁶⁸

J. Douglas Toma adds that spectator sports humanize “institutions that are otherwise impersonal” and that tangible identity “is an essential ingredient in the goodwill required for people to support – and even revere – an organization that is frequently perceived to be inaccessible or even irrelevant.”⁶⁹ Indeed, in most cases the sports of football and [men’s] basketball are “not about those competing, but about how institutions can *use* the broad and intense interest in teams and games to further their own goals of maximizing prestige, building identification, and generating resources.”⁷⁰

By the end of the 1920s, American college football had evolved into a form that would continue into the twenty-first century. The bulk of today’s defining rules had been adopted by 1929, as were the fight songs, school colors, and mascots at major universities. Another aspect of college football that had by 1929 become an established emblem of big-time football was large crowds, made possible by big stadiums.⁷¹ The huge crowds at sporting events were another source of common interest. Writing in 1928, the Committee on Intercollegiate Football articulated,

The sight of the filled stands evokes and intensifies the consciousness of human community, and the sense of the emotional solidarity of each stand, strengthened as each stand participates vicariously in the action of the runner, or passer or tackler, is in itself a stirring thing. This sense of common interest, continuing throughout the season, tends to develop a common bond of loyalty. It affords for the entire football season a clean and interesting topic of

conversation and thought.⁷²

Sports stadia became a material embodiment of the “front porch” metaphor because the facilities are often the most visible symbol or the first to be seen on a college campus.⁷³ According to Toma, “higher education in the United States has never been just about the classroom or laboratory, but has embodied a romanticized collegiate ideal where academic endeavors coexist with the pursuit of campus community through customs and rituals, events and activities, and residence life and recreational facilities.”⁷⁴ Big-time sport at institutions like Maryland

are the basework of student activities and form a big part of university life. They help to build character and a strong body, aid in giving the student the fine conception of loyalty which makes the college man [*sic*], develop keen minds, resourcefulness and courage; they form the strongest of ties that bind the student and alumnus [*sic*] to their institution. Athletics are the greatest force for college unity and for individual accomplishment.⁷⁵

Toma adds that “although doing so is contrary to logic, people can equate success on the football field with [institutional] excellence generally,”⁷⁶ just as the state of the front porch is usually equated with the quality of the rest of the house. At most major universities in America, according to Peter French, “the elite men’s athletic programs are the most visible and widely known constituent of the institution.”⁷⁷ The reputations of these elite athletics programs are often indistinguishable from that of the university. French asserts that “a scandal in the biology department involving a professor engaged in the drug trade hardly makes a dent in the university’s public image, but poor football seasons or scandals in the men’s basketball program can tarnish the school’s image for decades.”⁷⁸ Reflecting the front porch metaphor, a study by Toma found that a “high-profile college sports program is perceived by external constituents to be something distinctive, central, and enduring about the

institution, as well as something that is viewed favorably [or unfavorably] by others.”⁷⁹ The link between football and organizational prestige and identity explains “why the game enjoys so much enthusiasm from alumni and fans, why it is able to generate substantial revenue from media and ticket sales, and why colleges and universities support even losing programs’ costs” – or programs embroiled in scandal – year after year.⁸⁰ The front porch metaphor has served as a justification for financing big-time sports in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Big-Time Sport in the Twenty-First Century: Characteristics and Controversies

In addition to the “front porch” relationship between sports and higher education, the organization of big-time sport has a hybrid identity, which implicates both higher education and college sports. That is, the Big-time U is not *either* an academic institution *or* a business organization; it is both/and.⁸¹ The dual organizational identity of these institutions creates a “chronic conflict between academic values and commercial pressures.”⁸² Charles Clotfetter argues that big-time college sports is

synonymous with commercial college sports...these athletic departments are generally characterized by sophisticated business planning, a keen awareness of marketing and media, and serious fund-raising, as well as highly paid professional coaching staffs in the two major revenue sports. Their teams are widely known, thanks to heavy attendance at games, frequent television appearances, other media coverage, and a history of competition.⁸³

The capitalistic pressures on big-time sport create a culture that reinforces neoliberalism. As David Andrews and Michael Silk argue, corporate sport, which is marked by the “institutionalization, bureaucratization, commercialization, and spectacularization of elite sport as a mass entertainment product designed to generate maximum surplus value across myriad revenue streams,” is an abstract machine of

late capitalism and “is now the accepted structural and ideological blueprint for commercial sport organizations.”⁸⁴ Indeed, they argue, “neoliberalism operates as a mechanism for constituting and disciplining economic actors: it is “not just a manner of governing states or economies but is intimately tied to the government of the individual.”⁸⁵ The commercialization of college sport and the fetishes of competition, control, individualism, and government are neoliberalism’s “most spectacular embodiment.”⁸⁶ Big-time sport at land-grant universities reflects this notion of economic *production* as a characteristic, but these universities also emphasize excellence both on and off the field in their missions.⁸⁷ I analyze the tension between profit and excellence in chapters one and three.

In addition to reinforcing neoliberal ideals such as profit and competition, big-time sport reinforces hegemonic masculinity. In the twenty-first century, “big-time sport” refers to the culture around high-profile men’s team sports like football and basketball.⁸⁸ In this way, universities financially and rhetorically prioritize elite *men’s* team athletics, which further marginalizes women, despite the advances of Title IX.⁸⁹ Though many claim that Title IX was the “great equalizer” in terms of gender equity in sport, gender equality remains elusive.⁹⁰ While sports in U.S. culture have historically marginalized non-cisgendered and heterosexual male bodies, big-time sport also reifies the norms of hegemonic masculinity by privileging violence, sexualized language and other values.⁹¹ Michael Messner argues that “organized sports have come to serve as a primary institutional means for bolstering a challenged and faltering ideology of male superiority.”⁹² Within the context of the twentieth century university, sport, as an institution, “developed a structure and a system of

values that supported the values and world view of upper-class white males.”⁹³ Big-time sport maintains gendered—often misogynist and homophobic—terms: the threat of being feminized is used to downgrade and police groups of men.⁹⁴ Claire Duncanson argues that we see this gendered policing with the “archetypal use of “woman” “girl,” “queer,” and “faggot” to put down those who are failing to complete the various physical challenges associated with manliness.”⁹⁵ I analyze and discuss the broader ideological stakes of hegemonic masculinity in chapter two and the conclusion of this dissertation.

While there is a general consensus that “playing a sport can be a valuable part of a well-rounded education,” the *organization* of big-time sport, in its totality, “challenges the fundamental principles of lawfulness, academic merit, intrinsic motivation, free expression, and honesty.”⁹⁶ Brian Ingrassia notes that “unlike the clearly pedagogical field of physical education” – which is still practiced in the K-12 setting – intercollegiate sport is a *commercial spectacle* that “primarily fulfilled cultural and institutional, not educational, roles.”⁹⁷ Toma adds that while any moral victories “associated with effort, self-improvement, and sportsmanship that may mark some small college and nonrevenue sports have little meaning within the high-stakes worlds of high-profile intercollegiate football and basketball.”⁹⁸ The commercialized nature of twenty-first century big-time sport has, in so many instances, led to serious ethical questions. Critics have argued that “big-power semiprofessional athletics are incompatible with the values associated with higher learning.”⁹⁹ Ewald Nyquist notes that the philosophy of educational institutions to “draw out a man’s [*sic*] common humanity” and to create communities “that will be tolerant, compassionate,

just, and humane,” is at odds with the “scurrilous and opprobrious behavior in the conduct of big-power intercollegiate sports.”¹⁰⁰ However, the commercialized nature of big-time sport is a symptom of the larger problems in corporatized higher education in our neoliberal context.¹⁰¹

As this literature illustrates, sports have been a vital part of the educational experience since the beginning of formal education practices, both as a practice (playing, participating, bodily exercise) and as an institution (formalized competition between universities and material/institutional symbols). However, the institution of big-time sport has provoked public and academic controversy. Nineteenth century modernist ideals rooted in class and labor ideologies have shaped the prevailing understanding of athletes. Yet, as college sports has expanded and commercialized, scholars, journalists, and fans have all started to critique the institution of big-time sport.¹⁰² Some critics argue that sport and higher education are incompatible; that sports corrupt the purity of higher education. Critics of the NCAA in particular portray the organization as an evil cartel perpetuating racial and socioeconomic injustice.¹⁰³ This dissertation accounts for the rhetorical construction and the underlying ideologies of both sport and higher education as well as the competing organizational rhetoric of big-time sport. Now that I have reviewed the definitional, historical, and ideological foundations – as well as the current controversies – of the big-time sport context, I will explain the research design of this dissertation.

Research Design

Sport is a cross-institutional cultural entity. I define the parameters of this “object” of study – this organizational assemblage¹⁰⁴ – by first situating my study in

scholarship on “sport culture” rather than simply on “sports.”¹⁰⁵ I approach this project from the perspective that sport culture is a complex arrangement of discourse communities: players, coaches, administrators, conferences or leagues, fans, and media.¹⁰⁶ Sport culture cannot “be defined independently of its existence within the discursive and ideological context.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, a study of sport culture must be “radically contextual” and consider the various relationships among other “forces of context that constitute what it is”¹⁰⁸ such as competing discourse communities, histories, and ideologies. Following the intellectual moves of radical contextualism, I assume that “the identity, significance, and effects of any practice or event...are defined only by the complex set of relations that surround, interpenetrate, and shape it.”¹⁰⁹ Further, and following Joann Keyton, this study assumes that culture is both “confining and facilitating.” It is confining because it acts as a perspective or framework, limiting what scholars see and how they interpret what they see. On the other hand, culture is facilitating as it allows scholars to make sense of what is happening.¹¹⁰

Broadly speaking, intercollegiate athletics writ large consists of a range of sub organizations and discourse communities that have some sort of interest in college sports. This includes, but is not limited to, administrators, participants (athletes), media, fans, and critics. Within intercollegiate athletics, *big-time sport* is yet another cultural entity consisting of the following sub organizations: governing bodies (NCAA, conferences like the Big Ten), individual member universities (comprised of administrators, coaches, students, and fans), and players/participants. As I explain in chapter one, the NCAA is not an independent agency; it is a “member institution.”

This means that the NCAA does not act independently from the desires of the member universities.¹¹¹ The NCAA has three major divisions that govern intercollegiate sport, both big and small-time.¹¹² Some colleges and universities remain independent of the NCAA, such as Notre Dame, and the NCAA is not the only governing body in college sports.¹¹³ Most member institutions also belong to an academic/athletic conference, such as the Big Ten (B1G), Southeastern Conference (SEC), Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Pacific-Coast Conference (Pac-12), Big 12 (XII), etc. The aforementioned conferences are known as the “Power-Five” conferences. They are the top five revenue-generating conferences in NCAA sports and are considered “big-time.”¹¹⁴ These conferences also have governing structures and hierarchies that include the athletics departments along with all other university agencies/departments. University Board of Trustees (Provosts), presidents, and all of the subunits are integral to the hierarchy of higher education. One unit, the athletics department, is comprised of all the NCAA sports and their players, coaches, staff, and academic support units (including academic advisors and student tutors).¹¹⁵

This dissertation focuses on the interdependent organizations within big-time sport. Specifically, I analyze the rhetoric of three specific organizations: The NCAA, one representative big-time U (the University of Maryland), and two college athlete advocacy organizations: the National College Players’ Association and the College Athletes Players’ Association. The NCAA is a significant organization since it governs the largest number of college and universities, and it has a rich rhetorical history. I chose the University of Maryland as a case study for several reasons. First, the tragic death of Jordan McNair – and the discourse surrounding it – illustrates key

issues and tensions at the center of this dissertation. Second, the University of Maryland is a land-grant, public university. This is significant because of the particular nature of land-grant universities, which I have already outlined. These universities are good places to explore the tensions between sport and education, the underlying ideologies and values in the debate, and the implications the discursive struggle has on the larger public culture. In my view, Maryland represents – with its own peculiarities, of course – the Big-time U. Further, access to Maryland’s institutional discourse and archival materials gives depth to the case study. Finally, the National College Players Association and the College Athlete Players’ Association are important organizations to study since they are comprised of the actual (current or former) participants of big-time sport. Further, these organizational members advocate on behalf of college athletes who face many risks in their involvement in big-time sport and for structural changes to promote the health of big-time sport as an institution.

Critical Lens: Organizational Rhetoric, Culture, and Myth

My project will specifically explore theories of organizational culture and organizational myth, which synthesizes concepts in organizational and axiological rhetoric. In the context of big-time sport, Buer argues that both athletics and the broader university [rhetorics] draw on institutional culture and organizational rhetoric, in substance and in form. For example, many of the cultural forms of universities are grounded in athletics: “symbols, language, narratives, and practices unique to a given institution, such as mascots, slogans, legends, and ceremonials.”¹¹⁶ These forms assist in identifying what is characteristic of an institution, enabling

organizational members to answer the question, “Who are we?” Thus, higher education and big-time sport are rhetorically intertwined. Further, Boyd and Warner call for stronger theoretical grounding in organizational communication, stronger theoretical grounding in order to continue toward a more critical explanation of organizational rhetoric.¹¹⁷ My critical lens – organizational culture and the synthesizing frame of organizational myth – answers this call for a more critical and nuanced explanation of organizational rhetoric. All told, the conclusions of my textual analysis and interpretation of this organizational rhetoric can also be understood as common and special *topoi* of big-time sport. *Topoi* (singular, *topos*) are categories or topics.¹¹⁸ Common topics are general argumentative commonplaces, or commonplaces applicable across cases. Special topics are the opposite; they encompass lines of argument unique to each case. This dissertation explains and analyzes the common and special *topoi* articulated through the myth of the student-athlete. To phrase it differently, my analysis will explain the internal logics that are operating within this context through the organizational discourses of each case. Organizational culture and rhetoric are both derived from a broader rhetorical perspective.

I view rhetoric as is a powerful and material force in the construction, maintenance, and change of social and political institutions and identity.¹¹⁹ Some key features of rhetoric are that it is planned, purposive, problem-based, and practical.¹²⁰ The discourse my dissertation analyzes reflects these characteristics. Most importantly, any kind of text, whether it is verbal, written, visual, material, digital, or multiply-mediated, does something. Rhetorical action can influence beliefs,

behaviors, identities, policies, and action. Rhetoric shapes and reveals reality.¹²¹ Further, my approach is a contextually-based perspective on the organizational rhetoric of big-time sport, since rhetorical “acts exist in a matrix of interrelated contexts.”¹²² In essence, my conclusions reflect rhetorical assumptions like the belief that rhetorical action has the potential to create meanings that maintain or contest cultural institutions – in this case, the institution of big-time sport. However, these assumptions are further nuanced by developing *organizational* rhetoric, culture, and myth. The remainder of this section explains those theoretical and critical constructs.

Organizational Rhetoric

An organizational rhetoric perspective is useful for this project because, as Richard Crable argues, organizations are inherently rhetorical, and, conversely, rhetoric is inherently organizational.¹²³ Chester Barnard advanced a communicative definition of an organization and argued that a formal organization can be understood as “a system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons.”¹²⁴ Cheney and McMillan extend this definition by arguing that organizations are persuasive enterprises because they (1) maintain a system of communication, (2) communicate a common purpose, and (3) secure the essential contributions of members.¹²⁵ Organizational rhetoric has five dimensions, or dialectical tensions. Discourse ranges from (1) personal to impersonal, (2) private to public, (3) internal to external, (4) formal to informal, and (5) particularistic to universal.¹²⁶ The rhetoric of a particular organization can be conceptualized “as either the totality of the efforts at symbolic influence which the organization entails or as special instances of suasive communication by, for, or within the organization.”¹²⁷ In

other words, the organization can be seen as an argument, or specific messages can be isolated and analyzed within a larger organizational “text.”¹²⁸ In line with the textual fragments perspective of rhetorical theory, Cheney and McMillan assert that “the inconspicuous, ‘everyday’ discourse and interaction within an organization are as important data sources as are official public messages in this respect.”¹²⁹

Organizational rhetoric provides an effective framework to analyze the dynamic texts in my project since it accounts for the various dimensions unique to this context. The rhetoric of a particular organization can be conceptualized “as either the totality of the efforts at symbolic influence which the organization entails or as special instances of suasive communication by, for, or within the organization.”¹³⁰

Organizational rhetoric is needed to explain the multi-dimensional, multi-directional, and multi-textual communication in my study of big-time sport. Grounded in contemporary rhetorical theory, organizational rhetoric focuses on “messages created within and/or on behalf of organizations that seek to create identifications, solicit cooperation, and/or persuade.”¹³¹ An organizational rhetoric perspective allows critics to analyze the discursive tensions among interrelated and interdependent organizations as well as organizational membership. Like the broader rhetorical perspective on communication, organizational rhetoric adopts a constitutive view of communication and asserts that “organizations are constituted and reconstituted continuously through communication between members.”¹³² The culture and identity of organizations are constituted through rhetorical discourse, discourse which also communicates values and ideologies.

Culture and the Rhetorical Construction of Organizations

Culture is constantly produced and reproduced through discourse. Building on Kenneth Burke, James Carey argues that “reality is not given, not humanly existent, independent of language and toward which language stands as a pale refraction.”¹³³ Thus, communication is what creates and recreates culture. Carey further argues that “our attempts to construct, maintain, repair, and transform reality are publicly observable activities that occur in historical time.”¹³⁴ The organization exists within a larger system of interrelated organizations and institutions, each articulating their own culture. In this case, big-time sport is a particular organization that exists within the larger system of elite sport (college, Olympic, and professional) that share aspects of organizational culture. Further, the nature of the single university in my study (University of Maryland) as land-grant institutions of higher education also shapes the culture of the organizational rhetoric I explore in this project. Organizational rhetoric shapes organizational culture.

Bronislaw Malinowski defined organizational culture as “an integral whole,” of “human ideas and crafts, beliefs, and customs...a vast apparatus, partly material, partly human, and partly spiritual.”¹³⁵ At its core, organizational culture is (1) inextricably linked to organizational members; (2) dynamic, not static; (3) composed of competing assumptions and values; (4) emotionally charged; and (5) both foreground and background for an organization’s communication.¹³⁶ Extending this, Edgar Schein explained that organizational culture

is a pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.¹³⁷

Organizational culture, then, is the sum of many parts, and it is the symbolic network that justifies its behaviors to internal and external audiences. Communication is central to the formation and maintenance of the organization itself, and its culture. Scholars have argued that the culture and ideology of an organization is often articulated through communicative artifacts such as norms, standards (rules), customs, social conventions, logos, and mission statements.¹³⁸ The constitutive perspective is already adopted in theories of organizational rhetoric.¹³⁹ From the symbolic performance perspective of organizational culture, metaphors, stories, rituals, and myths can be studied to understand and interpret organizational culture.¹⁴⁰

However, this view is limited and incomplete. Rather, all types of communication – including the mundane and everyday – are responsible for the creation, maintenance, and transformation of organizational reality.¹⁴¹ In studying organizational culture, scholars have argued that the culture and ideology of an organization is often articulated through communicative artifacts such as norms, standards (rules), customs, social conventions, logos, and mission statements.¹⁴² These texts are known in organizational communication literature as “maintenance communication,” or the “day-to-day rhetorical practices of organizations, often found in mundane organizational documents.”¹⁴³ That is why my study includes documents like handbooks, mission statements, pamphlets, organizational charts, and strategic plans. These seemingly banal texts can have potent, material implications and articulate underlying ideologies. Further, these texts communicate the values and assumptions of organizations, serving to rhetorically construct and maintain its culture and justify its actions.¹⁴⁴ Values are explicitly communicated through ideals,

beliefs, and norms of behavior manifested in practices, through stories, metaphors, rites, and rituals.¹⁴⁵ Finally, assumptions are the deeply entrenched beliefs of the organization.¹⁴⁶ Further, the maintenance or reinforcement of an organization's culture relies on an organization's "strong and effective internal communication system with built-in redundancies."¹⁴⁷ For example, organizational symbols and slogans appear consistently across a host of different platforms – letterhead, reports, jackets, hats, websites, and internal and external signage. Rites, rituals, and ceremonies are regularly promoted and practiced – especially in big-time sport. These are all examples of texts that articulate an organization's values and ideologies.

Values are central to the rhetoric of organizations, since organizations ultimately "seek to establish congruency between the social values associated with or implied by their activities and the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system of which they are a part."¹⁴⁸ Organizations rely on communicating values through their discourse in order to maintain support from their members and communicate organizational culture.¹⁴⁹ Organizations (usually as represented by managers) attempt to influence members through oral messages from management; with bulletins, handbooks and "house organs" (company periodicals); in labor negotiations; by offering an array of benefits and services; and through personnel selection, socialization, training and promotion."¹⁵⁰ Further, they communicate persuasively with parties in the 'environment' (frequently other organizations) through marketing, public relations, lobbying, testimony, image making, and issue advocacy. Thus, persuasion is inherent in the process of organizing.¹⁵¹ I unpack

organizational rhetoric and its relationship to ideology and axiological rhetoric in chapter one.

Following George Cheney and Jill McMillan, I argue that studying organizational rhetoric and culture in particular contexts such as big-time sport can make an important contribution to knowledge of contemporary society.¹⁵² Further organizational discourse can and should be analyzed through rhetorical methods, in contrast to current literature that explores organizational discourse through a management perspective.¹⁵³ My project critically analyzes the discourse of big-time sport and how competing discourses constitute its organizational culture through maintaining or contesting the legitimizing discourse of myth.

Organizational Myth as Legitimizing Discourse

Organizational myth synthesizes theories of organizational and axiological rhetoric. That is, in addition to the concepts outlined above, organizational myth also articulates key values and ideologies of an organization. Myths *organize* ideology and axiology to maintain and reinforce the status quo. In other words, myths are a form of constitutive organizational rhetoric since myths integrate ideologies and “values around which individuals or societies become organized and exist as coherent entities.”¹⁵⁴ Myths or narratives function as a form of maintenance communication because they articulate organizational identity and reinforce ideologies and values. As a form of maintenance communication, organizational myths are legitimizing discourses. This discourse answers the question, “why should we do this?” or “why should we do it this way?”¹⁵⁵ In other words, “legitimation provides the ‘explanations’ and justifications of the salient elements of the institutional

tradition.”¹⁵⁶ However, myths may also be contested. This dissertation illustrates how organizational rhetoric from the NCAA, University of Maryland, and National College Players’ Association/College Athletes Players’ Association functions to reinforce or contest ideologies like neoliberalism and late capitalism (the roots of corporatized sport) as well as reinforce or contest values like purity, welfare, and excellence. I develop my theory of organizational myth, and in particular, the myth of the student-athlete, in chapter one.

Significance and Contributions

My study makes three major contributions. First and foremost, and as the title of this dissertation suggests, this project theorizes the myth of the student-athlete from a rhetorical perspective. Believing theory and method are intertwined, I am guided by Barry Brummett’s definition of rhetorical theory as “a form, pattern, or recipe, a statement in the abstract” of how we might experience a rhetorical transaction.¹⁵⁷ My three case studies provide a form – through the *topoi* of purity, welfare, and excellence – that may be applied to other cases in big-time sport. I take a “middle-level” approach to theorizing in communication by endeavoring to “more fruitfully theorize about a smaller class of experiences defined by clusters of characteristics that are rich enough to avoid totalization yet general enough to allow theorizing.”¹⁵⁸ Further, my analysis of the myth of the student-athlete sheds light on problematic ideological and axiological foundations that contribute to the maintenance of power in big-time sport, such as neoliberalism, corporatized higher education, and hegemonic masculinity. In this way, my analysis reflects Raymie

McKerrow's conception of a practice of *critical rhetoric*, which is when scholars engage in "demystifying the conditions of domination."¹⁵⁹

Second, this project contributes an expanded theoretical framework by synthesizing a larger rhetorical perspective with concepts in organizational rhetoric to the field of rhetoric, the discipline of communication, and the sub-discipline of communication and sport. In particular, my critical lens, organizational myth, gives scholars a productive way to analyze organizational rhetoric in the context of collegiate sport and beyond. Further, a rhetorical perspective on myth contributes to the larger academic conversation on the concept of the "student-athlete" and whether or not it is an accurate descriptor of the college sports participant. Scholars in various fields outside of communication, such as Kinesiology and Higher Education studies, have explored similar questions in the past several decades. This dissertation accounts for the broader rhetorical context and underlying ideologies of both sport and education and considers the historical, ideological, and axiological foundations of big-time sport rhetoric to illustrate organizational dynamics.¹⁶⁰ This project ultimately explores how an analysis of collegiate sport discourses contributes to an explanation of the rhetorical culture of big-time college sport and furthers knowledge of organizational rhetoric.¹⁶¹

Finally, this study sheds light on current issues in big-time sport, in particular the conflict over student-athlete identity, safety, and well-being, from a rhetorical perspective. Thus, I join an interdisciplinary academic conversation unfolding in higher education, sport history, and physical cultural studies alongside the conversations in communication, rhetoric, and sport. By entering into and

contributing to both the academic and the public conversations about college sport, I ultimately offer a way forward to improve the conditions of big-time sport. Like Linda L. Putnam, I am, as the researcher, a “critic of the status quo” and a visionary “for what the social reality could become.”¹⁶² This is also a scholarly orientation held by Michael Butterworth, who, through his work, seeks to imagine and envision [sport] as the positive playing field it is so often pronounced to be.¹⁶³ Following Putnam and Butterworth, this project seeks to imagine a more just collegiate sport culture that enacts the values it claims in its organizational rhetoric. By articulating the internal textual dynamics with the cultural context, this project can also serve as a source of invention for those in collegiate sport institutions to intervene via rhetorical means.¹⁶⁴ The NCAA is, after all, a member institution, and its committees are comprised of faculty members and higher education administrators. Ultimately, this dissertation suggests ways to productively join the debate and advocate for reform in big-time sport.

Précis

This dissertation advances an interpretation of big-time sport’s myth of the student-athlete through three case studies. Chapter one analyzes the organizational rhetoric of the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) and argues that big-time sport’s myth of the student-athlete relies on three ideological-axiological *topoi*: purity, welfare, and excellence. To begin, this chapter traces the history of the NCAA and the rhetorical history of the term “student-athlete.” Then, and developing the theory of organizational myth, I analyze the most recent NCAA Strategic Plan, the 2017-2018 NCAA Division I Manual, and texts and pages from the NCAA’s website,

such as “Why play college sports?” These texts are all examples of very explicit rhetorical practices that seek to establish and maintain the values, principles, and ideologies of the institution. This chapter explores the overarching tensions between sport, education, and labor by interrogating how the NCAA defines the “student-athlete” and how ideological and axiological commonplaces shape its discourse, such as neoliberalism and corporatized higher education. Ultimately, this is the rhetorical foundation for the competing discourses I analyze in the remaining chapters. The subsequent case studies examine how the University of Maryland and college athlete advocacy organizations simultaneously support and contest the myth of the student-athlete in various ways.

Chapter two builds on the first chapter by analyzing whether and to what extent one representative Big-time U, the University of Maryland, articulates the myth of the student-athlete through the *topoi* of purity, excellence, and welfare. To begin, this case study develops the context by analyzing the rhetorical and organizational culture of Maryland Athletics. To do this, the chapter traces the slogan “The Maryland Way” through archival materials, traditions, rituals, and contemporary texts such as the Athletics Strategic Plan and Maryland Student-Athlete handbook. I argue that Maryland reinforces the myth of the student-athlete primarily by constructing its athletics activities as a source of *aretē*, or excellence. Then, this chapter juxtaposes “The Maryland Way” with official and unofficial responses to Jordan McNair’s tragic death. In particular, I analyze official and administrative responses to the McNair case, current and former players’ discourse, and op-eds in both local and national news sources to see how responses articulate the opposites of

purity, welfare, and excellence in this case: toxicity, illness, and failure. I argue that these responses are representative of the wider public debates about big-time sport culture and the stakes of one of its root problems: hegemonic masculinity. The full analysis explores how Maryland maintains or contests the organizational culture of big-time sport and the myth of the student-athlete.

Moving from the broadest organization in chapter one, the NCAA, through a representative university, Maryland, in chapter two, chapter three explores the organizational rhetoric of college athlete advocacy organizations. After detailing a history of college athlete organizing and advocacy, this chapter explores how the National College Players' Association and College Athlete Players' Association reinforce or contest the myth of the student-athlete through organizational rhetoric. In particular, I analyze the speeches delivered by Kain Colter and Ramogi Huma at the 2015 Indiana APL-CIO, as well as other official remarks made by players and organizational texts online. I argue that the NCPA and CAPA resist the myth of the student-athlete primarily by refuting the *topoi* of purity and welfare and emphasizing the *topos* of excellence. This chapter also argues that Colter and Huma's address should be considered an exemplar of deliberative public address in big-time sport. By analyzing the organizational rhetoric of college athlete advocates, this chapter illustrates the significance of public address and advocacy from actual, former big-time athletes regarding bodily, mental, and moral wellness. These voices have, thus far, been underrepresented in this debate, and their voices should be heard and studied.

The purpose of this research is to contribute a productive way to engage in the ongoing public and academic conversations about big-time sport. The final chapter concludes the dissertation by summarizing the findings of the study and the implications of the myth of the student-athlete for individual participants, organizations, and the institution of big-time sport. With an eye toward the previous chapters, the conclusion reflects on those findings implications through one final case study: Auburn University and the Cam Newton recruiting controversy. Like chapter two, I analyze Auburn Athletics' organizational rhetoric prior to and during a controversy to address the implications of the myth of the student-athlete and demonstrate how universities perpetuate the problematic ideologies attached to the myth. This case extends the findings of this dissertation regarding the *topoi* of purity, welfare, and excellence and critically interrogates the ideologies of neoliberalism and hegemonic masculinity. After the case study, I summarize the full dissertation and close by addressing rhetorical, structural, and policy-level recommendations.

Notes

¹ Kain Colter and Ramogi Huma, "State of NCAA Sports," *NCPA Releases and Advisories*, October 15, 2015, <http://www.ncpanow.org/news/releases-advisories/state-of-ncaa-sports>. The link is now broken, but I saved the transcript. This news article confirms the details of their appearance at the convention: Mark Alesia, "Should College Athletes Have Unions?" *INDYStar*, October 5, 2015, <http://www.indystar.com/story/news/2015/10/05/ncaa-indianapolis-mark-emmert-ramogi-huma-kain-colter-northwestern-union-football-players/73397540/>. See Appendix A for the transcript.

² AFL-CIO stands for the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations.

³ This was despite a March 2014 victory for the NCPA at the regional level. National Labor Relations Board, "NLRB Director for Region 13 issues Decision in Northwestern University Athletes Case," *NLRB.gov*, March 26, 2014, <https://www.nlr.gov/news-outreach/news-story/nlr-director-region-13-issues-decision-northwestern-university-athletes>.

⁴ See Ben Strauss, "N.L.R.B. Rejects Northwestern Football Players' Union Bid," *New York Times*, August 17, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/18/sports/ncaafootball/nlrb-says-northwestern-football-players-cannot-unionize.html?mcubz=0>.

⁵ Ibid. "Indeed, the board wrote that its decision applied only to the Northwestern case — there was no precedent established for graduate teaching assistants or student janitors — and left open the possibility that it could re-examine the issue if college athletes brought a similar case in the future." As recently as February 2017, the NLRB ruled that players at 17 *private* FBS universities are employees (J. Solomon, "NLRB counsel: Football players at private FBS schools are employees." *CBS Sports*, February 2, 2017, <http://www.cbssports.com/college-football/news/nlrb-counsel-football-players-at-private-fbs-schools-are-employees/>). The public conversation about this issue continues to be contentious and the issue is not settled for the type of university cultures I am studying.

⁶ "Big-time U" is a term advanced by Murray Sperber (*Beer and Circus: How Big-Time College Sports is Crippling Undergraduate Education*, New York: H. Holt, 2000) to describe the sports culture at large, public research universities in particular. Among the 262 undergraduate institutions classified by the Carnegie Foundation as research or doctoral universities, only 61 (twenty-three percent) have athletic programs that compete outside of Division I. Kyle V. Sweitzer, "Institutional Ambitions and Athletic Conference Affiliation," *New Directions for Higher Education*, no. 148 (2009): 55-63.

⁷ "Big-time sport" is broader than the Big-time U and refers to the culture of high-profile, revenue generating men's team sports at prestigious universities *in general*. They do not have to be public research universities. This definition is derived from several works on the subject. See Brian M. Ingrassia, *The Rise of the Gridiron University: Higher Education's Uneasy Alliance with Big-Time Football* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2012); Ronald A. Smith, *Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big-Time College Athletics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Ronald A. Smith, *Pay for Play: A History of Big-Time College Athletic Reform* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011); and Murray A. Sperber, *Beer and Circus*. My capitalization is consistent with scholarship on "big-time sport." Sperber specifically uses "Big-time U."

⁸ AJ Willingham, "Deaths on college and high school football fields are a rare – but reliable – tragedy," *CNN*, October 1, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/09/21/health/football-deaths-season-injuries-high-school-college-trnd/index.html>.

⁹ Patrick Hruby, "'Junction Boys Syndrome': How College Football Fatalities Have Become Normalized," *The Guardian*, August 19, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2018/aug/19/college-football-deaths-offseason-workouts>.

¹⁰ Joe Ward, Josh Williams, and Sam Manchester, "111 N.F.L. Brains," *New York Times*, July 25, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/07/25/sports/football/nfl-cte.html>.

¹¹ Patrick Hruby, "Four Years a Student-Athlete: The Racial Injustice of Big-Time College Sports," 2016; and John Oliver "Last week tonight with John Oliver: The NCAA," YouTube, March 15, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pX8BXH3SIn0>. Many define the problem as "organized theft" (Dave Zirin, "The Rot of For-Profit Amateurism," *The Nation*, October 29, 2014, <http://www.thenation.com/article/rot-profit-amateurism/>) and have labeled the NCAA a cartel (Taylor Branch, *The cartel*), college sports a "new plantation" (Billy Hawkins, *The New Plantation: The Internal Colonization of Black Student Athletes* (Winterville, GA: Sadiki Publishing, 2001)), and the NCAA as "pimps" (Isaacs, *Jock Culture U.S.A.*).

¹² "University of Maryland Football Abuse Scandal and the Rights of College Athletes," NPR, August 18, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/08/18/639911851/university-of-maryland-football-abuse-scandal-and-the-rights-of-college-athletes>. See also ESPN's expose of the "toxic culture" in UMD Football, "Inside the Toxic Culture at Maryland Football," http://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/24342005/maryland-terrapins-football-culture-toxic-coach-dj-durkin.

¹³ This is my definition. The institution of big-time sport is comprised of nested departments, sub-units, and agencies that communicate with each other and to assorted discourse communities (athletes, students, alumni) every day. I draw on these scholars' definitions of "discourse community": John M. Swales, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* (The Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series. Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and James E. Porter, "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community," *Rhetoric Review* 5, no. 1 (Fall 1986): 34–47.

¹⁴ Core characteristics of organizational culture: inextricably linked to organizational members; dynamic, not static; composed of competing assumptions and values; emotionally charged; and both foreground and background for an organization's communication (Keyton, *Communication & Organizational Culture*, 35).

¹⁵ Thomas B. Farrell, *Norms of Rhetorical Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 1. Farrell defines a rhetorical culture as "an institutional formation in which motives of competing parties are intelligible, audiences available, expressions reciprocal, norms translatable, and silences noticeable."

¹⁶ This perspective is reminiscent of Miqqi Gilbert's "coalescent argumentation," which posits that an argument is a complex "matrix of beliefs, attitudes, emotions, and insights connected to a claim" (Miqqi A. Gilbert, *Coalescent Argumentation* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997), 840. Wayne Brockriede also advanced an understanding of rhetoric as existing within a "matrix" of interrelated contexts (Wayne E. Brockriede, "Dimensions of the Concept of Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 54, no. 1 (1968): 1-12).

¹⁷ On one hand, big-time athletics is corrupt, full of cheating and abuse. On the other hand, the experiences associated with collegiate athletics can be and often are positive. As sport historian Ronald Smith argues, on a college campus, team sports meet the need of establishing community by bringing students together in dynamic, yet symbolic rituals and activities. Ronald A. Smith, *Sports and Freedom*, 22. In the "pre-intercollegiate" era, football, mass wrestling, bandy, cricket, and baseball — all team sports — contributed to community building.

¹⁸ Just a few representative publications from the last forty-three years: Michael Real, "Super Bowl: Mythic Spectacle," *Journal of Communication* 25, no. 1 (1975): 31-43; Nick Trujillo and L. R. Ekdom, "Sportswriting and American Cultural Values: The 1984 Chicago Cubs," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2 (1985): 262-281; Tom Farrell, "Media Rhetoric as Social Drama: The Winter Olympics of 1984," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 6 (1989): 158-82; Jeffrey Kassing, Andrew C. Billings et al, "Communication in the Community of Sport: The Process of Enacting, (Re)producing, Consuming, and Organizing Sport," *Communication Yearbook* 28 (2004): 373-409; Bob Krizek, "Introduction: Communication and The Community of Sport," *Western Journal of Communication* 72, no. 2 (2008): 103-6; Michael L. Butterworth, *Baseball and Rhetorics of Purity: The National Pastime and American Identity during the War on Terror* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2010); and Mike Milford, "Kenneth Burke's Punitive Priests and the Redeeming Prophets: The NCAA, the College Sports Media, and the University of Miami Scandal," *Communication Studies* 66, no. 1 (2015): 45-62.

¹⁹ Michael L. Butterworth and Stormi D. Moskal, "American Football, Flags, and 'Fun': The Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl and the Rhetorical Production of Militarism," *Communication, Culture, & Critique* 2 (2008): 411-33; Michael L. Butterworth, *Baseball and Rhetorics of Purity*. Butterworth is certainly not the first academic to advance this argument. In the field of sociology, Harry Edwards examined the political dimensions of sport as early as 1973 (Harry Edwards, *Sociology of Sport*, Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1973). Sport historians explored the ideological underpinnings of sport culture in the 1980s. See John M. Hoberman, *Sport and Political Ideology* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984).

²⁰ Daniel A. Grano, "Sport as Critical/Cultural Studies," in *Defining Sport Communication*, ed. Andrew C. Billings (New York: Routledge, 2017), 35 (emphasis mine). Grano also uses a similar phrase in *The Eternal Presence of Sport: Rethinking Sport and Religion* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2017), 199. "Articulation" is an important theoretical perspective. Kevin DeLuca argues that articulation is "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified...any practice of articulation, therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning and the partial character from the openness of the social, a result, in turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity." Kevin DeLuca, "Articulation Theory: A Discursive Grounding for Rhetorical Practice," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 32, no. 4 (1999): 335; citing Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), 105, 113.

²¹ The "constitutive turn" in rhetoric represents the shift in how scholars theorize rhetoric's effects. Edwin Black characterized the "symptomatic features of language" and explained ideology as manifest in language use (Edwin Black, "The Second Persona," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56 (1970): 110). Michael McGee and Maurice Charland would extend Black's idea of the "second persona," to argue that rhetorical action can constitute "a people" (Michael C. McGee, "In Search of 'The People': A Rhetorical Alternative," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61, no. 3 (1975): 235-49); and Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the Peuple Québécois," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987): 133-50).

²² Michael Butterworth, Jeffrey Kassing, and Lawrence Wenner, have suggested scholars move toward more complex, intra- and inter-disciplinary topics in communication and sport instead of traditional studies of sports media or sport management. Lawrence Wenner has called for the study of organizational communication/rhetoric within communication and sport scholarship, but he does not specify the collegiate context. (Michael Butterworth and Jeffrey W. Kassing, "Introduction to 'mapping the terrain': Shaping the landscape of communication and sport scholarship" *Communication and Sport* 3, no. 1 (2015): 4; and Lawrence Wenner, "Communication and Sport, Where Art Thou? Epistemological Reflections on the Moment and Field(s) of Play" *Communication and Sport* 3, no. 3 (2015): 247-60).

²³ For example, see Matthew P. McAllister, "College Bowl Sponsorship and the Increased Commercialization of Amateur Sports," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 15 (1998): 357-81; Matthew P. McAllister, "Hypercommercialism, Televisuality, and the Changing Nature of College Sports Sponsorship," *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no.10 (2010): 1476-91; Mike Milford, "Kenneth Burke's Punitive Priests and Redeeming Prophets, The NCAA, The College Sports Media, and the University of Miami Scandal," *Communication Studies* 66, no.1 (2015): 45-62; and Natalie A. Brown, Kenon A. Brown, and Andrew C. Billings, "'May No Act of Ours Bring Shame': Fan-Enacted Crisis Communication Surrounding the Penn State Sex Abuse Scandal," *Communication & Sport* 3, no. 3 (2015): 288-311.

²⁴ Lawrence Wenner described three major "dispositions" in communication and sport research: Media, Sports, and Society; Sport Communication as Profession; and Communication Studies and Sport. The first focuses on journalism and public relations practice. The second studies communication as it relates to strategic sport management. In these dispositions, "sport" comes first — and that matters. Sport is a given and is not critically examined. Finally, the disposition I identify with, Communication Studies and Sport is concerned with the social and cultural dynamics of communication and sport. A concern with language and symbols is at the fore.

²⁵ Referencing David Foster Wallace's famous "This is Water" commencement speech, communication and sport scholar Andrew Billings contends that, "for humans, sport is part and parcel of the 'water' in which we navigate our own lives" (Andrew C. Billings, *Defining Sport Communication: An Introduction to a Nuanced Field*, in *Defining Sport Communication*, ed. Andrew C. Billings (New York: Routledge, 2017), 1).

²⁶ Galen T. Trail, Matthew J. Robinson, Ronald J. Dick, and Andrew J. Gillentine, "Motives and Points of Attachment: Fans Versus Spectators in Intercollegiate Athletics," *Sport Marketing Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (2003): 217-27.

²⁷ For example, on the level of sport participation, the rules of sport were developed and inherently based upon moral concepts of justice and equality. As such, the practice of sport, Peter Arnold argues, is important in the liberal education of individuals in a democracy (Peter J. Arnold, *Sport, Ethics, and Education* (London: Cassel, 1997), 2). However, Arnold and other scholars have distinguished between the *practice* of sport and the *institution* of sport, which operates much less democratically – much like the ideals and realities of higher education. For Arnold, "whereas the practice of sport is concerned only with its own goals, conduct, and welfare for the benefit of all who participate in it, sport as an institution, which is typically a large-scale bureaucratic

organization, is as much if not more concerned with its regulation and administration as well as its promotion as a commodity to be publicized, packaged and sold to those who wish to make use of it for one reason or another.”

²⁸ Slaughter and Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy*; Michael L. Silk and David L. Andrews, eds., *Sport and Neoliberalism: Politics, Consumption, and Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012); and Ben Carrington, *Marxism, Cultural Studies and Sport* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

²⁹ Silk and Andrews, *Sport and Neoliberalism*, 10.

³⁰ However, Richard Crable argues that *all rhetoric* is organizational (Richard E. Crable, “Organizational Rhetoric’ as the Fourth Great System: Theoretical, Critical, and Pragmatic Implications,” *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 18 (1990): 115-128).

³¹ George Cheney and Jill J. McMillan, “Organizational Rhetoric and the Practice of Criticism,” *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 18, no. 2 (1990): 108.

³² *Ibid.*, 107.

³³ *Ibid.* See also David Andrews, “Coming to Terms with Cultural Studies.” Andrews echoes the need for what Grossberg termed “radical contextualism” (David L. Andrews, “Coming to Terms with Cultural Studies,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 26, no. 1 (2002): 110-17). This is also reminiscent of Stephen Pepper, *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966). Pepper discusses the ways of theorizing: formalism, mechanism, contextualism, and organicism.

³⁴ Andrews, “Coming to Terms with Cultural Studies,” 114.

³⁵ Timothy P. O’Hanlon, “School Sports as Social Training: The Case of Athletics and the Crisis of World War I,” *Journal of Sport History* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 5-29; and Eugene Glader, *Amateurism and athletics*, West Point (New York: Leisure Press, 1978), 34. “Thus, it is evident that what nineteenth and twentieth century men have referred to as the athletic ideal of Greece of the fifth and sixth centuries B.C. was an athletic emphasis strongly associated with religious beliefs, educational objectives, and military motives.”

³⁶ Both Johnstone and Hawhee note that *arête* is tautological and polysemous (Christopher L. Johnstone, “Sophistical Wisdom: Politikê Aretê and ‘Logosophia,’” *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 39, no. 4 (2006): 265-89; and Hawhee, *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2004). Hawhee explains *arête* as excellence “associated with bodily appearance, action, and performance as much as it was conceived of as an abstracted ‘guide’ for such actions” (17). *Arête* is related to the Greek word for nobility, *kalos kagathos*, roughly meaning “the beautiful and the good (19).

³⁷ Hawhee, *Bodily Arts*, 5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 6-11

³⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁴⁰ Virtuosity operated within an “economics of action.” An athlete cannot just BE virtuous. They have to perform virtuous acts.

⁴¹ Hawhee, *Bodily Arts*, 22. Hawhee calls this the ‘Olympic ethos.’ “Olympic here suggests multiple forces at work in the production of this ethos. First, there is ‘Olympic’ writ large – strong in body and large in *arete*. Next, Olympic relates to the Olympian gods, who, as evidenced in the Iliad, functioned as arbiters of kleos as well as exemplars of arete themselves. Finally, Olympic ethos invokes the Olympic Games, the primary and most widely regarded of agonal scenes in Greece, which, of course, were necessarily tied to the gods in name and tribute.”

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Elliot J. Gorn, and Warren Goldstein, *A Brief History of American Sports*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1993), 133, 19.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ University of Maryland Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, “Athletics at Maryland” in *Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Maryland* 27, no. 12 (1930). UPUB II. Hornbake Special Collections.

⁴⁶ Robert A. Mechikoff and Steven Estes, *A History and Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education: From Ancient Civilizations to the Modern World*, 2nd ed. (Boston: WCB/McGraw-Hill, 1998).

⁴⁷ Ibid., 101.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 109.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 158.

⁵⁰ The attitudes of the colonists toward sport and recreation were representative of the regions of Europe from which the settlers came, and during the first two hundred years of American colonization these attitudes were most strongly influenced by religion (Mechikoff and Estes, *A History and Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education*, 258).

⁵¹ William H. Bergquist, *The Four Cultures of the Academy: Insights and Strategies for Improving Leadership in Collegiate Organizations*. 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 18-19.

⁵² Bergquist, *The Four Cultures of the Academy*, 18-19. Citing Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (New York: Random House, 1962). See also Frederick Rudolph and John R Thelin, *The American College and University: A History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990).

⁵³ Rudolph, *The American College and University*, 108.

⁵⁴ Gorn and Goldstein, *A Brief History of American Sports*, 133. This nineteenth century principle is rooted in labor discourses and ultimately sought “to bar all but the wealthy from participation.”

⁵⁵ Eugene Glader, *Amateurism and Athletics*, West Point (New York: Leisure Press, 1978), 96. Glader explains that the word “amateur,” (French) is derived from the Latin word *amatorem*, meaning “one who loves or is fond of; one who has a taste for anything.” Eugene Glader notes these class-based differences of early sport, arguing that “the difference between an amateur and a professional athlete during the first half of the nineteenth century was primarily a social rather than a financial or skill distinction.” Historians Gorn and Goldstein contend this amateur ideal “was more of an excuse for discrimination than a philosophical commitment to the value of play” (Gorn and Goldstein, *A brief history of American sports*, 137). This purity ideal – play for fun, not for pay – rejected all commercialization, since, amateur ideologues argued, “the professional sportsman held no loyalty higher than his pocketbook, sold his services to anyone, and debauched himself with gambling and drinking.” Gorn and Goldstein explain that the subordination of play to business “threatened the amateur code by placing ends ahead of means, winning over playing well.” However, in colleges, this “gentleman’s code” justified elitist practices even though the desire to win resulted in unethical and hypocritical behavior such as “employing ringers” (137).

⁵⁶ Robert A. Mechikoff and Steven Estes, *A History and Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education: From Ancient Civilizations to the Modern World* 2nd Ed. (Boston: WCB/McGraw-Hill, 1998), 281.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Charles T. Clotfelter, *Big-Time Sports in American Universities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 46.

⁵⁹ Amy Sue Bix, Gwen Kay, Valerie Grim, Anne B. Effland, David L. Harmon, Donald Alexander Downs, Erinn McComb et al, *Service as Mandate: How American Land-Grant Universities Shaped the Modern World, 1920–2015*, Vol. 2 (University of Alabama Press, 2015), 166. “The purposes of the Morrill Act embraced two interconnected aspects: policy-oriented concerns both specific and more general in nature; and broader theoretical aspects related to visions of education and citizenship”; proponents of the Morrill Act called these institutions “Democracy’s Colleges.” In Peter French, *Ethics and College Sports*, 2004, chapter 1 “The University and Intercollegiate Athletics” presents and analyzes mission statements from six different universities: The University of Miami, the University of Michigan, Arizona State University, the University of Tennessee, the University of Texas, and the University of North Carolina. His rationale for choosing these institutions is that they are “major universities whose intercollegiate athletics program in the elite sports regularly have been among the more successful in the nation” (3). He concludes that all of the mission statements stress service to the local, state, and national communities as a dominant theme. He argues that these six examples are representative of the larger culture. There is other mission statement research as well. See Russell E. Ward, Jr., “Buried Accomplishments: Institutional Isomorphism in College Athletics Mission Statements,” *International Journal of Sport Communication* 8 (2015): 18-45. “While athletic mission statements may not be linked to a unique athletic identity or departmental outcome, they remain purposive. Institutional theory suggests

that the language of an organization delivers an important message; the organization conforms to the expectations of similar programs and services in the environment. They aren't directed inward, they are directed outward" (34).

⁶⁰ Bix et al, *Service as Mandate*, 169.

⁶¹ Ibid., 166.

⁶² Ibid. I should note that there were two divergent interpretations of the land-grant. One model stressed that "the gift of federal lands made them a national project, and that they were dedicated above all to 'natural science in its applications to human industry.'" The liberal education of industrial classes was the object of the grant. The other model was the agricultural and mechanic – A&M—schools. These schools focused on educating farmers to farm. These schools were actually quite hostile to the liberal arts (Roger L. Geiger, "From the Land-Grant Tradition to the Current Crisis in the Humanities," in *A New Deal for the Humanities: Liberal Arts and the Future of Public Higher Education*, ed. Gordon Hunter and Feisal G. Mohamed (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016), 19).

⁶³ Clotfelter, *Big-Time Sports in American Universities*, 46. See also George R. McDowell, *Land-Grant Universities and Extension into the 21st Century: Renegotiating or Abandoning a Social Contract*. 1st ed. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 2001). "The sense of societal obligation for American universities comes out of the populist political movement that gave rise to the American land-grant universities..." "It was not until the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 established a 'cooperative extension service' at each land-grant institution that the public service function of the land-grant colleges really became institutionalized" (17).

⁶⁴ Howard R. Bowen and Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, *Investment in Learning: The Individual and Social Value of American Higher Education*. 1st. ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977).

⁶⁵ Brian M. Ingrassia, *The Rise of the Gridiron University: Higher Education's Uneasy Alliance with Big-Time Football* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 29. He explains that "the modern academy consisted of disciplines – epistemic communities – that were geographically expansive, yet largely abstract to the public.

⁶⁶Ingrassia, *The Rise of the Gridiron University*, 7-8.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 4. "A cultural cornerstone of the ivory tower, big-time college football was a popular diversion that allowed America's institutions of higher education to maintain public visibility at the same time they invented an esoteric modern intellectual culture not easily consumed by the American people" (13).

⁶⁸ Ibid. 32.

⁶⁹ Toma, *Football U*, 10.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 21.

⁷¹ The 1920s was a decade of intense stadium construction (Clotfelter, *Big-Time Sports in American Universities*, 47). He explains, “these stadiums brought with them the capacity to generate large amounts of revenue. Gate receipts were virtually the only source of revenue in those days.”

⁷² Committee G, “Intercollegiate Football,” in Richard Henry Edwards, Joseph Manson Artman, Galen Merriam Fisher, Institute of Social and Religious Research, and Association of American Colleges, *Undergraduates: A Study of Morale in Twenty-Three American Colleges and Universities* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, Doran, 1928), 146.

⁷³ The “front porch” metaphor comes from Buer, “Organizational Complexity: The athletics department and the university.” “Spectator sports can amount to a front porch to an institution, making it accessible to alumni and the community, and engender ‘campus spirit,’ making a university more attractive to students” (109). The “bridge” metaphor comes from Brian Ingrassia, *The Rise of the Gridiron University*: “Football was seen as the bridge between the fragmented intellectual communities of the academic community and the public”; J. Douglas Toma, *Football U: Spectator sports in the life of the American University* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

⁷⁴ J. Douglas Toma, “The Collegiate Ideal and the Tools of External Relations: The Uses of High-Profile Intercollegiate Sports,” *New Directions for Higher Education*, no. 105 (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 82. Regarding the academic side of these institutions, Bergquist adds that the collegial culture “finds meaning primarily in the disciplines represented by the faculty in the institution; values faculty research and scholarship and the quasi-political governance processes of the faculty; holds untested assumptions about the dominance of rationality in the institution, and conceives of the institution’s enterprise as the generation, interpretation, and dissemination of knowledge and as the development of specific values and qualities of character among young men and women who are future leaders of our society” (William H. Bergquist, *The Four Cultures of the Academy: Insights and Strategies for Improving Leadership in Collegiate Organizations*. 1st Ed. ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 4-6). Collegial culture is in contrast with “Managerial Culture,” “Developmental Culture,” and “Negotiating Culture.” Sperber argues that in addition to the collegiate culture, “academic,” “vocational,” or “rebel” cultures coexist in institutions of higher education (Murray A. Sperber, *Beer and Circus: How Big-Time College Sports is Crippling Undergraduate Education* (New York: H. Holt, 2000), 5-9). He argues that, in the 21st century, collegiate culture is a world of football, fraternities and sororities, dates, drinking, and campus fun. A good deal of student life on many campuses revolves around this culture...Teachers and courses and grades are in this picture but somewhat dimly and in the background. This subculture began in the eighteenth century when the sons of the rich came to college for four years of pleasure and social contacts.

⁷⁵ University of Maryland Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, “Athletics at Maryland” in *Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Maryland* 27, no. 12 (1930). UPUB II. Hornbake Special Collections.

⁷⁶ Toma, *Football U*, 10. Toma argues that “spectator sports are at the very foundation of the American flagship university: Football U” (15).

⁷⁷ French, *Ethics and College Sports*, 3.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ J. Douglas Toma, "Representing the University: The Uses of Intercollegiate Athletics in Enhancing Institutional Identity," Conference Paper, 1998.

⁸⁰ Other aspects of twenty-first century collegiate culture include (but are not limited to): new student orientation, residence hall programming, peer mentor programs, student governance, student clubs, Greek life, career and personal counseling, on-campus work opportunities, and community service activities (Arik Lifschitz, Michael Sauder, and Mitchell L Stevens, "Football as a Status System in U.S. Higher Education," *Sociology of Education* 87, no. 3 (2014): 206).

⁸¹ As Buer notes, we need to move beyond the "either-or-conceptualization" of universities and adopt "a more nuanced and inclusive both-and perspective of athletics programs as both academic and business organizations" (Buer, "Organizational Complexity," 110).

⁸² Ibid., 148.

⁸³ Charles T. Clotfetter, *Big-Time Sports in American Universities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 16-17. Clotfetter defines "big-time sports as the highly commercialized and widely followed competition in football and basketball that is undertaken by several hundred American universities" (xiii).

⁸⁴ David L. Andrews and Michael L. Silk, "Sport and Neoliberalism: An Affective-Ideological Articulation," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 51, no. 2 (2018): 515.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 523; citing Jason Read, "A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity," *Foucault Studies* 6 (2009): 27.

⁸⁶ Toby Miller, "A Distorted Playing Field: Neoliberalism and Sport through the Lens of Economic Citizenship," in *Sport and neoliberalism: Politics, consumption, and culture*, ed. David L. Andrews and Michael L. Silk (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2012), 24.

⁸⁷ This is not to say that any other university would *not* emphasize excellence both on and off the field. However, this claim is particularly strong in the context I am studying.

⁸⁸ Sport historian Ronald Smith defines any college or university with high-profile NCAA athletics – men's sports – as "big-time" but the differences are of degree (Ronald A. Smith, *Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big-Time College Athletics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 22). Murray Sperber elaborates on this when he defines a "Big-Time U" as a public research institution where high-profile sport is present (Sperber, *Beer and Circus*). Brian Ingrassia further distinguishes big-time sport from other college sports in terms of the distance teams have traveled, the size of the cities or theaters where they "perform," and the number of tickets sold (Ingrassia, *The Rise of the Gridiron University*). Using the analogy of vaudeville shows, he continues, "Like the most famous vaudeville outfits, big-time football programs, by definition, attracted the most media attention, drew the largest number of paying spectators, and charged the highest ticket prices."

⁸⁹ Universities often are non-compliant with Title IX. Cheryl Cooky describes the practices of “roster management,” which is when universities list female students on team rosters who never compete; count one female track and field athlete as three (for indoor, outdoor, and cross-country) while not counting male track and field athletes similarly; or count as female athletes those male athletes who participate on women’s teams or male students who practice with women’s teams (Cheryl Cooky, “Women, Sports, and Activism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Women’s Social Movement Activism*, eds., Holly J. McCammon, Verta Taylor, Jo Reger, and Rachel L. Einwohner (London: Oxford University Press, 2017), 602-23).

⁹⁰ Ibid. See also Cheryl Cooky, Michael Messner, and Michela Musto, “It’s Dude Time!”: A Quarter Century of Excluding Women’s Sports in Televised News and Highlight Shows,” *Communication and Sport*, 3, no. 3 (2015): 261-87; Peter A. French, *Ethics and College Sports: Ethics, Sports, and the University* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004); and Karen L. Hartman, “ESPN’s Mythological Rhetoric of Title IX,” in *The ESPN Effect: Exploring the Worldwide Leader in Sports*, ed. John McGuire, Greg G. Armfield, and Adam Earnhardt (New York: Peter Lang, 2015).

⁹¹ See Linda K. Fuller, ed., *Sport, Rhetoric, and Gender* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Jeffrey O. Segrave, Katherine L. McDowell, and James G. King III, “Language, Gender, and Sport: A Review of the Research Literature,” in *Sport, Rhetoric, and Gender: Historical Perspectives and Media Representations*, ed., Linda K. Fuller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). Further, Messner argues that “highly aggressive sports often feel psychologically ‘safe’ to young males because they provide clear-cut boundaries around boys’ and men’s affiliations with each other” (Michael A. Messner, *Power at Play: Sports and the Problem of Masculinity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 67).

⁹² Michael A. Messner, “Sports and Male Domination: The Female Athlete as Contested Ideological Terrain,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 5 (1988): 197-211.

⁹³ Messner, *Power at Play*, page. Citing sociologist Bruce Kidd, Messner explains that “organized sport in this era was ‘characterized by rules, a bureaucratic structure, the privilege of “records” and the concepts of “fair play” – by middle- and upper-class males in the increasingly elitist institutions of the public school, the university, and the private club” (Bruce Kidd, “The Men’s Cultural Centre: Sports and the Dynamic of Women’s Oppression/Men’s Repression,” in Messner and Sabo, *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order* pp. 19-30).

⁹⁴ Claire Duncanson, “Hegemonic Masculinity and the Possibility of Change in Gender Relations,” *Men and Masculinities* 18, no. 2 (2015): 235.

⁹⁵ Ibid. Citing Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (Vol. 2). 2nd ed. (London, UK: Virago, 1997; Hugh McManners, *The Scars of War* (London, UK: Harper Collins, 1993); Rachel Woodward, “‘It’s a Man’s Life!’ Soldiers, Masculinity and the Countryside,” *Gender, Place and Culture* 5 (1998): 277–300; Paul Higate, *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003); and John Hockey, “No More Heroes: Masculinity in the Military,” in *Military Masculinities*, edited by Paul Higate (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003), 27–42.

⁹⁶ Clotfelter, *Big-Time Sports in American Universities*, 180-94.

⁹⁷ Ingrassia, *The Rise of the Gridiron University*, 13.

⁹⁸ Toma, "The Collegiate Ideal and the Tools of External Relations," 89.

⁹⁹ Ewald B. Nyquist, "The Immorality of Big-Power Intercollegiate Athletics," in *Sport and Higher Education*, ed. Donald Chu, Jeffrey O. Segrave, and Beverly J. Becker (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1985), 101.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁰¹ "Corporatized higher education" references a body of scholarship describing academic capitalism. See Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Market, State, and Higher Education* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004). See also Masao Miyoshi, "Ivory Tower in Escrow," *Boundary 27*, no. 1 (2000): 7-50. Slaughter and Rhoades argue that there has been a "shift from a public good knowledge/learning regime to an academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime," and define the "neoliberal state" as focused not on social welfare for the citizenry but on enabling individuals as economic actors (8, 20). Wendy Brown adds that neoliberal reason "is converting the distinctly [civic] character, meaning, and operation of democracy's constitutive elements [such as education] into economic ones (Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Brooklyn, New York: Zone Books, 2015), 17).

¹⁰² For example, see Dave Zirin, "The Flaws and Failures of College Sport," Interview *The Nation*, March 19, 2012, <https://www.thenation.com/article/dave-zirin-flaws-and-failures-college-sports/>; Patrick Hruby, "Four Years a Student Athlete"; John Oliver, "Last week tonight with John Oliver: The NCAA." *YouTube*, March, 15, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pX8BXH3Sjn0>. See also W. D. Holthaus, "Ed O'Bannon V. NCAA: Do Former NCAA Athletes Have a Case against the NCAA for its Use of Their Likenesses?" *Saint Louis University Law Journal* 55, no. 1 (2010): 369-94.

¹⁰³ Huma, "State of NCAA Sports," para. 20. "The NCAA is asking you to participate in a Jim Crow system where players win legal arguments but are denied justice nonetheless. This Jim Crow push isn't motivated by race. The NCAA seeks to strip both white and black players of their rights. This push to exclude players from equal protections is motivated by the color green – money."

¹⁰⁴ "The concept 'assemblage' generates enduring puzzles about 'process' and 'relationship' rather than leading to systematic understandings of these tropes of classic social theory and the common discourse that it has shaped." George E. Markus and Erkan Saka, "Assemblage," *Theory, Culture & Society* (2006): 102. John Wise, in interpreting Deleuze and Guattari's theory of assemblage, argues that "an assemblage is a becoming that brings elements together" (John Wise, "Assemblage," in *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts* (Acumen Publishing Limited, 2013), 91-102).

¹⁰⁵ Using "sport" instead of "sports" is deliberate. According to physical cultural studies scholar David Andrews, "sport" is one of the most ambiguous terms in the English language (David L. Andrews, "Kinesiology's Inconvenient Truth and the Physical Cultural Studies Imperative," *Quest* 60, no. 1 (2008): 45-62.). Like "culture," sport is a

vague and imprecise noun. Ben Carrington and David Andrews define sport as “a freely chosen competitive activity requiring physical exertion that centers the body as the main object for expression and creativity and that has some form of quantifiable goal, or external reward, as its main focus” (Ben Carrington and David L. Andrews, “Introduction: Sport as Escape, Struggle, and Art,” in *The Blackwell companion to sport*, ed. Ben Carrington and David L. Andrews (Oxford: Blackwell, 2013), 8).

¹⁰⁶ This definition is supported by scholarship that distinguishes “sports” from “sport.” See Andrew C. Billings, Michael L. Butterworth, and Paul D. Turman, *Communication and Sport: Surveying the Field*, 3rd Ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2017).

¹⁰⁷ David L. Andrews, “Coming to Terms with Cultural Studies,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 26, no. 1 (2002): 113. Andrews cites Lawrence Grossberg (*Bringing it all back home: Essays on cultural studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 255): “An event or practice...does not exist apart from the forces of the context that constitute it as what it is.”

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. “Radical contextualism” is the language specific to the cultural studies project and also involves the scholarly method of “articulation.” See Michael L. Silk and David L. Andrews, “Toward a Physical Cultural Studies,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 28 (2011): 4-35. That is, beyond tracing the history and development of my topic, I will also articulate my analysis with the broader cultural and ideological formations at play.

¹⁰⁹ Lawrence Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 20.

¹¹⁰ Joann Keyton, *Communication & Organizational Culture: A Key to Understanding Work Experiences*, 2nd Ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2011), 17.

¹¹¹ For an overview and explanation of this governing structure, see NCAA, “What is the NCAA?” retrieved from <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/media-center/ncaa-101/what-ncaa>.

¹¹² Division I, Division II, Division III. See NCAA.org.

¹¹³ For example, smaller colleges might belong to the NAIA, the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. The NAIA describes itself as “a governing body of small athletics programs that are dedicated to character-driven intercollegiate athletics” (<http://www.naia.org/>).

¹¹⁴ See Paula Lavigne, “Rich get richer in college sports as poorer schools struggle to keep up,” *ESPN*, September 6, 2016, http://www.espn.com/espn/otl/story/_/id/17447429/power-5-conference-schools-made-6-billion-last-year-gap-has-nots-grows.

¹¹⁵ See NCAA.org.

¹¹⁶ Buer, “Organizational Complexity,” 111.

¹¹⁷ Josh Boyd and Damion Warmer, "Organizational Rhetoric: A Subject of Interest(s)," *Management Communication Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (2011): 475. According to Eisenberg (1984), in every organization "there exists a tension between the individual and the aggregate, the parts and the whole...and while organizations must generate sufficient consensus to survive, it is not always desirable to promote high levels of consensus among individual attitudes and goals."

¹¹⁸ See Walter Jost, "Teaching the Topics: Character, Rhetoric, and Liberal Education." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1991): 3; Michael Leff, "Up from Theory: Or I Fought the *Topoi* and the *Topoi* Won," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (2006): 203-11.

¹¹⁹ Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric." The constitutive perspective is already adopted in theories of organizational rhetoric (Cheney with Lair, "Theorizing About Rhetoric and Organizations," 64).

¹²⁰ This is a basic, textbook definition of rhetoric's characteristics. See James A. Herrick, *The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2013).

¹²¹ This is a reference to the epistemic turn in contemporary rhetorical theory. See Robert L. Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," *Central States Speech Journal* 18 (1967): 9-17.

¹²² Brockriede, "Dimensions of the concept of rhetoric": "If a critic accepts the fundamental premise that each rhetorical act is unique, she commits herself to search for a new way to select, structure, and weigh dimensions for each act criticized."

¹²³ Crable, "'Organizational rhetoric' as the fourth great system"; Cheney with Lair, "Theorizing about rhetoric and organizations," 64. As organizational communication scholars have observed, much of contemporary communication involves organizations "speaking" –internally or externally (Cheney with Lair, "Theorizing About Rhetoric and Organizations," 76.)

¹²⁴ Chester I. Barnard, *The Functions of the Executive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 73.

¹²⁵ Cheney and McMillan extend Barnard's foundational definition of formal organization (George Cheney and Jill J. McMillan, "Organizational Rhetoric and the Practice of Criticism," *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 18, no. 2 (1990): 97-98). Forms of organizational rhetoric include directives, charters, memos, announcements, advertising, policy statements, informal exchanges, public relations, resolutions, issue advocacy, image management, treaties, lobbying efforts, declarations, performance appraisals, doctrines, surveys, annual reports, and so forth (handbooks, manuals, mission statements).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 99. "For example, a statement of 'goals' or 'mission' can be classified as *formal*, in that it is hierarchically prescribed; *impersonal*, in that it is neither attributable to nor directed toward specific individuals; *public*, in that the message is accessible to wide audiences; *external*, in that the message is directed outward to non-employees; and *universal*, in that the message purports to represent the entire organization. There are also other dimensions: expert to non-expert, time-bound to transcendent, intentional to

unconscious, elitist to populist, significant to unimportant, and open to deceptive. All together these can be used as a heuristic to categorize and assess a variety of organizational messages.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 101.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 102. "The researcher can examine specific texts or attempt a more encompassing assessment of org messages (public and private, internal and external, personal and impersonal, formal and informal...etc.)...or go even broader (institutional level, across organizations, etc.)".

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Cheney and McMillan, "Organizational Rhetoric and the Practice of Criticism," 101.

¹³¹ Rebecca J. Meisenbach, Rebecca and Jill J. McMillan, "Blurring the Boundaries: Historical Developments and Future Directions in Organizational Rhetoric," *Communication Yearbook* 30, no. 1 (2006): 102.

¹³² Jeffrey W. Kassing and Robin Matthews, "Sport and Organizational Communication" in *Defining Sport Communication*, ed. by Andrew C. Billings (New York: Routledge, 2017), 141.

¹³³ James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 20. Joann Keyton argues that the concept of culture is both confining and facilitating. It is confining because it acts as a perspective or framework, limiting what and how scholars see and interpret what they see. On the other hand, culture is facilitating as it allows us to make sense of what is happening so that we can function in that setting (Joann Keyton, *Communication & Organizational Culture: A Key to Understanding Work Experiences*, 2nd Ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2011), 17).

¹³⁴ Carey, *Communication as Culture*, 24. "We create, express, and convey our knowledge of and attitudes toward reality through the construction of a variety of symbol systems: art, science, journalism, religion, common sense, mythology."

¹³⁵ Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), 36.

¹³⁶ Keyton, *Communication & Organizational Culture*, 35.

¹³⁷ Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1985), 9.

¹³⁸ Joann Keyton, "Organizational culture: Creating meaning and influence," in *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Communication: Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods*, ed. Linda L. Putnam and Dennis K. Mumby, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), 570. Joann Keyton, *Communication and Organizational Culture: A Key to Understanding Work Experiences*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2011). Keyton defines organizational culture as the "set of artifacts, values, and assumptions that emerges from the interactions of org members."

¹³⁹ George Cheney with Daniel J. Lair, "Theorizing About Rhetoric and Organizations," in *Engaging Organizational Communication Theory & Research*, ed. Steve May and Dennis K. Mumby (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005), 64.

¹⁴⁰The lens of symbolic performance asserts "that all types of communication – including the mundane and everyday – are responsible for the creation, maintenance, and transformation of organizational reality" (Keyton, *Communication and Organizational Culture*, 83) citing E. M. Eisenberg and P. Riley, "Organizational Culture," in *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication: Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 291-332).

¹⁴¹ Keyton, *Communication & Organizational Culture*, 35; citing Eisenberg & Riley, "Organizational Culture." Rather than simply identifying artifacts, values, and assumptions as cultural displays or symbolic representations of organizational culture, the symbolic performance perspective examines the way in which organizational performances reveal cultural meaning, as well as how the performance itself is developed, maintained, and changed.

¹⁴² Joann Keyton, "Organizational culture: Creating meaning and influence," in *The sage handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods*, 3rd ed., ed. Linda L. Putnam and Dennis K. Mumby (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), 570. Joann Keyton, *Communication and Organizational Culture: A Key to Understanding Work Experiences*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2011). Keyton defines organizational culture as the "set of artifacts, values, and assumptions that emerges from the interactions of org members."

¹⁴³ Rebecca J. Meisenbach and Jill J. McMillan, "Blurring the Boundaries: Historical Developments and Future Directions in Organizational Rhetoric," 118.

¹⁴⁴ Keyton, "Organizational Culture: Creating Meaning and Influence," 550.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 570.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Keyton, *Communication & Organizational Culture*, 129.

¹⁴⁸ John Dowling and Jeffrey Pfeffer, "Organizational Legitimacy: Social Values and Organizational Behavior," *The Pacific Sociological Review* 18, no. 1 (1975): 122.

¹⁴⁹ Cheney and McMillan, "Organizational Rhetoric and the Practice of Criticism," 104. Cheney and McMillan support this thesis, arguing that organizational rhetoric centers chiefly on the questions of support and non-support (as opposed to justice, praise, advice, or revelation)

¹⁵⁰ George Cheney, "The Rhetoric of Identification and the Study of Organizational Communication," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983): 144. "As Kenneth Burke implies in offering the term 'Administrative Rhetoric.'"

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Cheney and McMillan, "Organizational Rhetoric and the Practice of Criticism," *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 18, no. 2 (1990): 100. "Because "organizational messages contribute to mystery, power, and the maintenance of order."

¹⁵³ Much scholarship in organizational communication comes from the management perspective. Publications on the topic are found in *Management Communication Quarterly* and are often tagged "business communication." However, the tide is turning toward more critical perspectives. See Timothy Kuhn, Karen Lee Ashcraft, François Cooren, "Introductory Essay: What Work Can Organizational Communication Do?" *Management Communication Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (2019): 101-11; and Silvia Gherardi, "Organizational Communication in Practice: Does it Really Work?" *Management Communication Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (2019): 112-16.

¹⁵⁴ Ben Halpern, "'Myth' and 'Ideology' in Modern Usage," *History and Theory* 1, no. 2 (1961): 129-49. doi:10.2307/2504377.

¹⁵⁵ Theo Van Leeuwen, "Legitimation in Discourse and Communication," *Discourse & Communication* 1, no. 1 (2007): 93.

¹⁵⁶ Peter L. Berger, and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 111. Theo Van Leeuwen argues that there are four major categories of legitimation: "1) Authorization, that is, legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom and law, and of persons in whom institutional authority of some kind is vested; 2) Moral evaluation, that is, legitimation by (often very oblique) reference to value systems; Rationalization, that is, legitimation by reference to the goals and uses of institutionalized social action, and to the knowledge society has constructed to endow them with cognitive validity; and 4) Mythopoesis, that is, legitimation conveyed through narratives whose outcomes reward legitimate actions and punish non-legitimate action" (Van Leeuwen, "Legitimation in Discourse and Communication," 92).

¹⁵⁷ Barry Brummett, "Rhetorical Theory as Heuristic and Moral: A Pedagogical Justification," *Communication Education* 33, no. 2 (1984): 97-107. I am also guided by Gerald Hauser, Rosa A. Eberly, Meredith A. Cargill, et al, "What does rhetorical theory do? And is that a stupid question? A research symposium," *The Review of Communication* 3, no. 3 (2003), 314. The authors characterize rhetorical theory in the following: "Rhetorical theory explains how the formal properties of language exercise influence; Rhetorical theory explains the social and cultural practices of our lives. As such it helps us to understand power; Rhetorical theory informs practice or production. Minimally, it influences politics, influences practice, and engages in language about itself or theorizes itself; It is informative of the way people think, feel, and act; Rhetorical theory investigates the conditions under which speech is action; Rhetorical theory is enabling; it provides occasion for reflection about how language is used, particularly and universally, to constitute individuals and groups; Rhetorical theory is a kind of theorizing; it is within a tradition in which uses of various kinds of language or symbol-systems are connected to social concerns; Rhetorical theory considers the question of what are legitimate rhetorical practices. As such it serves a gatekeeping function."

¹⁵⁸ Barry Brummett and Margaret Carlisle Duncan, "Theorizing without totalizing: Specularity and Televised Sports," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 227. "Totalization occurs when a category is constructed so broadly that important differences among members of the category are overlooked."

¹⁵⁹ Raymie McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communication Monographs* 56, no. (1989): 91.

¹⁶⁰ French's *Ethics and College Sports* examines a discursive dimension of college sports. From a moral/ethical perspective, he traces "the attempts at justification ...the justifications that are typically offered in defense of intercollegiate athletics that I refer to the most prominent ones as anchored in myths." The myths are: "amateur myth, character education myth, gender equity joke, funding myth, and entertainment reality" (2). Though French does some good work, his book ultimately falls short in capturing nuance, arbitrarily chooses case studies, and is cursory.

¹⁶¹ Farrell, *Norms of Rhetorical Culture*.

¹⁶² Linda L. Putnam, "The Interpretive Perspective: An Alternative to Functionalism," in *Communication and Organizations: An Interpretive Approach*, edited by Linda L. Putnam and Michael E. Pacanowsky (London: Sage, 1983), 48.

¹⁶³ Butterworth, *Baseball and Rhetorics of Purity*.

¹⁶⁴ Michael Leff, "Textual Criticism: The Legacy of G.P. Mohrmann," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72(1986): 377-389; Thomas Rosteck, "Review Essay: Cultural Studies and Rhetorical Studies," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 386-403; and Thomas Rosteck, "Form and Cultural Context in Rhetorical Criticism: Re-Reading Wrage," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 (1998): 471-91.

Chapter 1 : “We’re in the Human Development Business”: Organizational Myth and the NCAA

“We’re ultimately in the human development business. That’s what universities and colleges do, and we do sports as a part of that activity inside that context.”

NCAA President Mark Emmert, 2018

At the 2018 NCAA convention, President Mark Emmert delivered the annual “State of the Association” address during the plenary session.¹ Highlighting the “interesting time” in both college sports and the broader political context, Emmert lamented that “we’ve got higher levels of doubt and cynicism and anxiety in our society about pretty much everything.” Trust in any institution or organization – “the church, the business community, the banks, the medical community, Congress, the media, and higher education” – is at record lows,” he continued. Emmert argued that this mistrust is justified. For example, the organization cannot deny that NCAA sports are riddled with scandals and corruption. At the time (January 2018), the NCAA was only beginning their investigation into the Larry Nassar/MSU scandal;² the F.B.I. had released findings from the Louisville basketball scandal investigation and the program was sanctioned;³ and the approaching “March Madness” renewed harsh critiques of the NCAA for its exploitative practices in men’s big-time sports. Though certainly not the first time someone has lamented the state of NCAA sports, it was perhaps the first time Emmert himself established it as the exigence for the convention through the annual address. Each of these cases stem from inherent problems and ideologies of the NCAA’s organizational rhetoric. Emmert’s speech

articulates one of the primary legitimizing discourses of the NCAA: the myth of the student-athlete.

This keynote address functions much like a U.S. presidential State of the Union and adopts a common form each year. The president (Emmert, for the past seven years) highlights the past year's accomplishments, discusses opportunities to intervene in challenging issues, and calls for practical changes its members (university presidents, faculty representatives, and athletics staff, in particular) may enact in the upcoming year to continue making progress on the association's three key priorities: academics, well-being, and fairness.⁴ For example, in 2017, Emmert reflected on the past fifteen years of progress and suggested that the hard work of NCAA members "can be seen on every one of our campuses in the country." Emmert highlighted several accomplishments, such as the progress in graduation rates⁵ (specifically the legendary coach Pat Summitt's 100% graduation rate) and the 2017 Clemson v. Alabama football championship "instant classic," which featured thirty-six players who had already received bachelor's degrees (three had master's degrees).⁶ Importantly, this address affirms the beliefs, principles, and values of the organization and reminds its members to stay hopeful and trusting, yet vigilant. Though Emmert addressed the seriousness of college sports' problems throughout his remarks, he also aimed to reassure the membership that the organization is ultimately a good, moral institution. "Like the rest of higher education," Emmert praised, "we accept the challenge to provide students the best possible chance to shape their future, and by extension, we get to have an impact on the whole nation through them, through those student-athletes."⁷ Emmert's key tagline to describe the positive

ideology of NCAA sports asserts that “we’re [the NCAA] in the business of human development.”

Emmert’s rhetoric reaffirms many of the NCAA’s beliefs, values, and arguments by articulating a central myth of big-time sport: the myth of the student-athlete. I contend that an organizational myth is a set of beliefs and values communicated through an organization’s customs, norms, traditions, and discourse. As I explained in the introduction, an organization in its entirety can be seen as an argument, or specific messages can be isolated and analyzed within a larger organizational “text.”⁸ Myth *organizes* ideology and axiology and functions to *maintain* and legitimize order and the status quo in big-time sport. This chapter analyzes the NCAA’s organizational rhetoric. Specifically, Emmert’s bold claim that NCAA sports play a pivotal role in the advancement of humanity articulates the NCAA’s myth of the student-athlete, which is based in one of the most common justifications of sport participation extending to antiquity: well-roundedness. In Ancient Athens, as I have explained in the introduction, young, white men were trained to become “whole” or well-rounded through a *paideia* that developed both intellectual and physical capacities.⁹ Sports like football were maintained and reformed at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries for their capacity to train young bodies for the noble art of war –less necessary after the invention of modern weaponry¹⁰ – as well as in democratic practice through ideas like sportsmanship and teamwork. Yet, the corporate framing in Emmert’s “we’re in the human development business” assertion fundamentally conflates the democratic, liberalizing social practice of sport with the capitalistic and corporatized institution

that we know as “big-time sport.” Big-time sport leans away from the historically public and social goods view of sport (“welfare sport”) and toward the neoliberal priorities of enhancing profits and consumer culture (“achievement sport”).¹¹ Big-time sport conflates the practice of sport with the institution of sport. Emmert’s address, which is consistent with much of the NCAA’s rhetoric, relies on a key rhetorical strategy to sustain the conflation of practice and institution in order to legitimize big-time sport: invoking the myth of the student-athlete.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the NCAA’s myth of the student-athlete and its ideological and axiological components. The myth of the student-athlete is the NCAA’s primary and legitimizing rhetorical strategy.¹² I analyze the 2004 NCAA Strategic Plan, the 2017-2018 NCAA Division I Manual (Constitution and Bylaws), and online texts from the NCAA website. I argue that the NCAA’s rhetoric articulates a noble, benevolent, and trustworthy organizational identity by invoking the myth of the student-athlete. There are three major axiological threads of this myth: purity, which manifests as the doctrine of amateurism, welfare, which manifests as the priority of student-athlete well-being, and *arête*, or excellence, which encompasses successes on and off the field and is articulated in a variety of texts. Each of these values is double-edged; each may be attributed to both the *individuals* participating in college sports (athletes) and the *institutions* for which they participate (their universities). Because the student-athlete is the ideological substance of the NCAA, and the NCAA is comprised of member institutions, both the participants and their institutions are affected by the organizational myth.

Many critics of and participants in big-time sport have debunked the myth of the student-athlete using statistical and anecdotal data as well as legal interpretations of the code of amateurism. For example, Kelly Crabb argues that the NCAA's perpetuation of amateurism as a noble ideal is a "disingenuous application of the myth conceived by the nineteenth century British landed gentry to avoid having to face (and risk being beaten by) the working class on the field of play."¹³ Despite these essential critiques, I am not primarily interested in exploring myth as a "lie." I am most interested in explaining the rhetorical contours of this myth; in explaining how this myth legitimizes the culture of big-time sport; how this myth communicates and operates to persuade athletes, fans, and critics to keep watching, participating in, and consuming big-time sport despite knowing and believing that big-time sport is deeply flawed.¹⁴ After discussing the background and history of the NCAA, I develop the critical lens of organizational myth, which synthesizes organizational and axiological rhetoric. Then I proceed to analyze how each axiological *topos*, or commonplace – purity, welfare, and excellence – manifests in NCAA texts and articulates the myth of the student-athlete.

What is the NCAA?

The NCAA is a not-for-profit organization that was founded in 1906 "to keep college athletes safe."¹⁵ The six original member institutions collaborated as a result of President Theodore Roosevelt's efforts to reform safety standards in college athletics, a reform that was in response to a number of catastrophic injuries in college football at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁶ After the "bloody" 1905 season, which produced eighteen fatalities and over one hundred and fifty serious injuries, President

Theodore Roosevelt convened with representatives of several Ivy League Schools.¹⁷ Football in particular was maintained and reformed because many university professors and administrators, as well as writers and politicians, saw it as a cultural ritual that would publicize universities and “maintain prevailing ideas of the body and social order.”¹⁸ Undoubtedly, these prevailing ideas about the body and social order were not exactly progressive. Particularly in the big-time sports of football and men’s basketball, the “gladiators” on the field are usually black bodies.¹⁹ To make matters worse, the white bodies on the football field are usually in leadership positions like quarterback, while the black bodies are usually in “brute athletic” positions – due to underlying racist assumptions about white intelligence and black physicality.²⁰ Further, administrators in the NCAA or at the university level (as well as professional sports) are white men, which exacerbates the racial problems in big-time sport. These racial problems will be explored in chapters two and three, as well as in the conclusion. The NCAA does not acknowledge the racialized aspects of its organization.

The NCAA Strategic Plan defines the Association as the “corporate entity” comprised of member institutions, conferences, a governance structure (boards, cabinets, committees) and affiliated entities (such as coaches associations) as well as student-athletes, coaches, and athletics administrators.²¹ Organizational members meet annually at the NCAA convention to discuss the “state of NCAA sports,” including budgetary issues, graduation rates, corruption, success, and other issues that administrators and college-athletes are facing. Like many other associations, the

NCAA's governance structure consists of several committees, sub committees, steering committees, and so on.²²

The NCAA Board of Governors, the highest governance body in the NCAA, "is composed of institutional chief executive officers that oversee Association-wide issues" and is ultimately charged with "ensuring that each division operates consistently with the basic purposes, fundamental policies and general principles of the Association."²³ Mark Emmert became the fifth president of the NCAA in October 2010.²⁴ As the governing body of most intercollegiate athletics,²⁵ the NCAA provides academic services to student-athletes (technology, tutoring), funds ninety championships in twenty-four sports, awards athletic scholarships, promotes health and safety through the Sport Science Institute, and offers education and training/career programs to its athletic participants. The five hundred employees at the NCAA's Indianapolis headquarters interpret and support member legislation, run all championships and manage programs that benefit college-athletes. The organization makes various publications available to the public, including academic studies (for example, the NCAA-Department of Defense Grand Alliance),²⁶ division manuals, convention proceedings, rules books (for all sports), talking points for presidents and chancellors, transfer guides, eligibility brochures, and more. Today, the NCAA is comprised of university presidents, athletics directors, faculty athletics representatives, compliance officers, conference staff, health and safety personnel, sport information directors, coaches, academic support staff, and student-athletes. The NCAA positions student-athletes at the center of its organizational structure and

rhetoric; without student-athletes, there would be no NCAA. In the next section, I review the rhetorical foundations of the NCAA's myth of the student-athlete.

Rhetorical Foundations: Constructing the NCAA's "Student-Athlete"

Without college sports participants, there would be no need for the NCAA. Though seemingly a benign descriptor of a college player, "student-athlete" is a much more insidious term of art. The term "student-athlete" did not emerge because it was somehow judged to be more precise than the phrase "college-athlete" or because athletes themselves preferred the phrase. Southall and Staurowsky argue that despite the "widely held common sense belief that the term 'student-athlete' refers to the priority system that places value on students first and athletes second, the term was actually *invented by* the NCAA as a legal construction that arose out of fear that college athletes would have professional leanings."²⁷ As Taylor Branch explains,

the term student-athlete was deliberately ambiguous. College players were not students at play (which might understate their athletic obligations) nor were they just athletes in college (which might imply they were professionals). That they were high performance athletes meant they could be forgiven for not meeting the academic standards of their peers; that they were students meant that they did not have to be compensated, ever, for anything more than the cost of their studies. Student-athlete became the NCAA's signature term, repeated constantly in and out of courtrooms.²⁸

Chapter three explores the legal implications, as well as legal resistance, to this term and its underlying ideologies.

Staurowsky and Sack maintain that the term "student athlete" was consciously designed and, later "strategically placed into sport media and the vocabulary of college sport by the National Collegiate Athletic Association."²⁹ It was only after the NCAA "mandated use of the term in its publications and interaction with mass media" that the term gained wide acceptance in American culture and in the

American mind. The term's insertion into the language of sport in the United States "was an NCAA tactic in the 1950s to counter negative publicity and political pressure created by its newly instituted athletic scholarship policy."³⁰ Some scholars suggested that the term be abandoned in the context of big-time sport and replaced with "profit-athlete."³¹ Article 12.02.13 of the NCAA's working bylaws defines the "student-athlete" very simply, as "a student whose enrollment was solicited by a member of the athletics staff or other representative of athletics interests with a view toward the student's ultimate participation in the intercollegiate athletics program."³² Yet, the connotations of this term extend much deeper. The NCAA's specific policies regarding amateurism and athletics eligibility are where the values and ideologies of this myth are articulated.

Both organizational members and public audiences such as fans and critics have debated the NCAA's "student-athlete" ideology – particularly the doctrine of amateurism – since the early days of the NCAA. In July 1946, for example, NCAA and conference-level officials met to propose recommendations for "how to restore sanity in college sport" because they believed college sports were growing too professionalized. Attendees produced a document titled "Principles for the Conduct of Intercollegiate Athletics," later known as the "Sanity Code." Originally called the "Purity Code," this document outlined a strict ideal of college sports and the "student-athlete." The Purity Code included a statement on amateurism, including policies on admitting athletes on the same basis as other students as well as recruiting policies and financial aid. The Purity Code also asserted the need for institutional control of athletics and outlined that competition should occur only among those who uphold

the principles of the code.³³ Ultimately, the Purity/Sanity Code was an attempt to end the practice of full athletic scholarships and compromise between two major schools of thought: advocates, mostly in the South (the University of Maryland was one such institution) of full athletic scholarships, and their opponents, such as Yale, Harvard, and Princeton, that insisted athletes be treated no differently than other students.³⁴ It is no coincidence that northeastern schools were proponents of amateurism. While the Ivy League is known for its undergraduate population of upper-class white students, southern schools drew students from the working class. Thus, amateurism and purity became associated with whiteness, since northern schools were proponents of amateurism. Professional sports, which drew from the working class, were associated with blackness and impurity, since southern schools were in favor of compensating athletes.³⁵ The myth of the “student-athlete” is at the heart of conversations about NCAA policies and reform.

During a heated NCAA Convention in 1950, the Sanity Code died after a motion to expel seven non-compliant universities failed and full athletic scholarships prevailed.³⁶ The University of Maryland, a southern school in favor of compensating athletes, was one of them. The scholarship model was instituted as a form of “compensation” and the student-athlete came to represent the core of the NCAA’s mission to promote education and amateurism.³⁷ Sack and Staurowsky contend that after the battle over the Sanity Code ended around 1957, the NCAA’s amateur code “had been gutted of most of its substance, and the shell that remained served primarily as ideological camouflage for the newly emerging NCAA cartel.”³⁸ Since the NCAA needed to “legally constrain any movement toward compensating college

athletes—specifically worker’s compensation,” the amateur ideal was the effort to “protect the purity of college sports from the contamination of professional sports.”³⁹

However, sports scholars have suggested that amateurism “in its original and ‘pure’ nineteenth century meaning is becoming inapplicable, or even irrelevant”⁴⁰ since many of the NCAA’s actions and policies are actually *accommodations* to professionalism rather than efforts to preserve amateurism.⁴¹ Sport historian Ronald A. Smith argues that the NCAA was “given the power to enforce an amateur code, but it allowed payment of athletes through tuition and incidental fees, in direct violation of the concept of amateurism.”⁴² Despite policies prohibiting compensation, athletes are in fact compensated through their scholarships. Milford uses Burke’s concept of “cultural lag” to explain this phenomenon.⁴³ “Cultural lag” describes the ideological inconsistencies that can undermine an organization’s image in the public sphere.⁴⁴ In addition to the scholarship model defying policies on compensation, “the idealistic, educationally branded NCAA [has] trouble explaining the bulge in its nonprofit wallet.”⁴⁵ Another way to describe this phenomenon is “organizational inertia,” which is when an organization fails to make internal changes despite external changes.⁴⁶ Despite college athletes’ growing concerns about health and well-being, and despite the increasingly commercialized nature of college sports, the NCAA does not adapt or amend its policies or the rhetoric that justifies them.⁴⁷ The ideology of amateurism is much more applicable at smaller colleges and in the Ivy League, where this ideal is likely to be embodied because revenues are not a priority (or a likely reality) for their institutions’ athletics programs.⁴⁸ The history of amateurism in American college sport, then, “was one of playacting, using the name *amateur*

because it was considered a positive term that middle- and upper-class institutions were expected to use, but the result was a highly professional model emphasizing excellence and winning.”⁴⁹ I will explore historical and contemporary college athletes’ resistance to amateurism in chapter three.

The term “student-athlete” is thus both a legal and an ideological concept. As Mike Milford argues, it is *the* core symbol for the NCAA and functions as a synecdoche, or “a symbolic form that is a concentrated representative of an organization’s ideological essence.”⁵⁰ The synecdoche of the “student-athlete” is a rhetorical “master trope” for the NCAA to maintain its legitimacy – to promote a “settled ideology.”⁵¹ This chapter explores just what that “settled ideology” is by unpacking the *topoi* of purity, welfare, and excellence. Southall and Weiler argue even further that the creation and dissemination of the student-athlete term is a classic example of institutional propaganda – a linguistic “armour of coercion.”⁵² They assert that the integration of amateurism and education “created a sense of idealism in the NCAA’s student-athlete, and by virtue of the dual nature of the synecdoche, promoted the NCAA as an organization of idealized motivations.”⁵³ The rhetorical construction of the term “student-athlete” is the basis of its power as a myth. It is important to examine the “student-athlete” as an organizational myth because a rhetorical perspective allows for an analysis of both ideologies and values that underlie this primary rhetorical strategy, which adds nuance to the ongoing conversation and controversy over the big-time “student-athlete.” Further, myth is a form of legitimizing discourse. Beyond understanding that the term condenses ideologies and values, studying myth allows for scholars to trace how discourses

function to reinforce and ultimately legitimize power structures. Understanding the myth of the student-athlete can shed light on why the NCAA maintains its power over college athletics participants. The NCAA, through its various regulations and policies, controls detailed aspects of student athletes' lives while also expecting them to take personal responsibility and persevere through injuries, balance school work with sixty hours of practice, and blames the individual when s/he cannot succeed. In the next section, I develop the critical lens of organizational myth.

Theoretical Lens: Organizational Myth

As I established in this dissertation's introduction, one form of organizational rhetoric is organizational myth. Organizational myth synthesizes ideology and axiology through discourse. Roland Barthes defined myth simply as a "type of speech" or a "system of communication."⁵⁴ This system of communication becomes a "controlling image" that organizes values and experiences and is aspirational.⁵⁵ Myths provide both a verbal account of what is "known" and also provide examples or models. This is significant; not only does the myth of the student-athlete communicate a partial reality, but it also communicates an ideal. Claude Lévi-Strauss added that myth, like the rest of language, is made up of constituent units – it is not just one single story or text.⁵⁶ In this case, the NCAA establishes this control through its governing documents, division handbooks, promotional materials, and the various public addresses delivered by organizational leadership. The communicative definition of myth is essential because it "allows one to perceive that myth is a mode of signification, a form."⁵⁷ This form of communication serves an ideological function and often reinforces hegemonic power structures and, in the case of

particular organizations, it provides organizational legitimacy.⁵⁸ In this case, the student-athlete is not just the literal young person playing a sport at a university. It is a larger set of ideas and values that shape the institution of big-time sport. I define myth, in this context, as a dominant cultural or organizational narrative that serves a maintenance purpose – myths are indeed one category of “legitimizing discourse.”⁵⁹ Organizational myths function as a form of “maintenance communication” because they articulate the culture, ideals, values, assumptions, beliefs, norms of behavior and identity of an organization, legitimize its culture, and justify its actions.⁶⁰ The myth of the student-athlete is a system of opinions, beliefs, values, and ways of seeing and acting.⁶¹ The myth of the student-athlete reflects the dominant tendencies of a culture and sustains the social institution and “lifestyle” of big-time sport.⁶²

Organizational myths are communicated through narratives. Generally, narrative may be defined as a “multidimensional purposive communication from a teller to an audience.”⁶³ Narratives are a powerful form of rhetoric, since “human beings, much more often than they realize, act upon narratives that explain what they believe to be transpiring – rather than only on empirical knowledge of what may actually be happening.”⁶⁴ A narrative perspective on organizations has the potential to account for and reveal the hegemonic and legitimizing “centripetal” as well as the resistant and “centrifugal” forces existing in organizations.⁶⁵ The hegemonic or grand narratives (like the myth of the student-athlete) in organizations are stabilizing forces; grand narratives reinforce the status quo. However, such grand narratives “almost inevitably also produce deviating, heterogeneous narratives”⁶⁶ that look like “little acts of resistance to dominant narratives.”⁶⁷ The myth of the student-athlete is the

NCAA's organizational "control narrative." All other narratives and axiological threads are in service of this myth. However, with control comes resistance. Geiger and Antonacopoulou contend that, as such, the "legitimation of the (grand) narrative is constantly questioned and challenged by deviating narratives, reflecting a web of power relationships that gives order to the social world."⁶⁸ Such acts of resistance will be explored in chapter three.

As a form of legitimizing discourse, myths also are containers of ideology. I define ideology as a set of dominant ideas or ideals. Ideas are also related to "images." V. William Balthrop argued that "myth provides the unique, characteristic 'polarizing image' around which elements of a culture coalesce." As a culture (or organization, in my case) is subjected to criticism, ideology is what "emerges as an appropriate cultural form which 'justifies' that particular worldview."⁶⁹ This is true for the myth of the student-athlete; when the NCAA is critiqued for its exploitative practices regarding March Madness, for example, the organization defends its behavior by articulating the rhetoric of amateurism. Patterns of meaning, such as those patterns of meaning conveyed through myth, "are given form through a hierarchical arrangement of beliefs, and values that coalesce around and are infused by a dominating hierarchical ideal."⁷⁰ Balthrop emphasizes that myth provides a cultural image of perfection, and displays "the logic of symbolic synecdoche outlined by Burke."⁷¹ Indeed, the myth of the student-athlete communicates this ideal and symbolizes the synecdochal relationship between the college athlete and big-time sport. Ideology functions as a bridge between "specific events and the cultural myth that seeks to establish order." In doing so, ideologies are "systems of beliefs that are

elaborate, integrated, and coherent, that justify the exercise of power, explain and judge historical events, identify political right and wrong, set forth interconnections (causal or moral) between politics and other spheres of activity, and furnish guides for action.”⁷² We may read the myth of the student-athlete as this kind of discourse in the realm of big-time sport and higher education, since it asserts ideologies that justify, explain, identify right and wrong, and furnish guides for action.

Key to organizational myth and narrative, and related to ideology, is axiological rhetoric, or the rhetoric of values. The myth of the student-athlete also articulates values: purity, welfare, and excellence. Like ideologies, values shape organizations’ rhetorical efforts to create and legitimize their culture and to cultivate identification. For Ralph Eubanks and Virgil Baker, a “rhetoric of values” – or a “rhetoric of commitment” – rests ultimately upon understanding values as one of the “available means of persuasion.” In conceptualizing a value *topoi* framework, Karl Wallace explains three all-embracing classes of values: the desirable, the obligatory, and the admirable or praiseworthy, and their opposites.⁷³ Eubanks and Baker advanced Lasswell and Kaplan’s value typology, which consists of “welfare” values and “deference” values. Welfare values are described as “those whose possession to a certain degree is a necessary condition for the maintenance of the physical activity of the person.” Deference values, on the other hand, are those that “consist in being taken into consideration in the acts of others and of the self.”⁷⁴ For Eubanks and Baker, welfare values are concepts like well-being, wealth, skill, and enlightenment. Deference values, on the other hand, are things like power, respect, rectitude, and affection. Standards or criteria for members’ conduct typically appear “in general

statements called rules of conduct, regulations, laws, codes, principles, and moral maxims.”⁷⁵ An axiological perspective allows rhetoric scholars to analyze discourse in nuanced terms, to unpack an organization’s social values in order to understand how an organization justifies or legitimizes current actions or policies through myths. In this case, axiology provides nuance to the study of organizational rhetoric in big-time sport, which is, in this chapter, the NCAA’s organizational rhetoric. Before I analyze the Strategic Plan and NCAA Division I manual through the lens of organizational myth, I first describe the two texts.

Unpacking the Myth of the Student-Athlete: Common Topoi

In 2004, the NCAA commenced a strategic planning process, a process that resulted in the association’s most recent Strategic Plan document. The opening to the plan reads, “as our enterprise continues to evolve, we have a clear responsibility to maintain focus on our historic values and to ensure that our Association continues to advance in the right direction.” Recognizing this exigence, former NCAA President Myles Brand stressed the importance of developing a comprehensive strategic plan for the Association in his first State of the Association speech. On January 12, 2003, Brand told the membership that the plan would be developed through a “timely, value-driven process and that it would be shaped by fundamental principles of advocacy and reform.”⁷⁶ The Strategic Plan is a ten-page document that is divided into four “planning horizons” stemming from the organization’s core ideology: first, a vivid description of the organization’s envisioned future (ten to thirty years out); second, assumptions about the near future (five to ten years); third, goals, objectives, and strategies (three to five years); and fourth, priority setting/action planning (one to

two years). The Strategic Plan document outlines the core principles of the entire association of member institutions – both big- and small-time universities.

While the Strategic Plan provides an ideological vision and action plan for the association as a whole, the NCAA also publishes manuals for each division of the association – Division I, Division II, and Division III – annually. This is significant; while all member institutions must strive to meet the lofty values in the NCAA Strategic Plan, policies and practices differ at big- versus small-time institutions. For example, Division I has a council comprised of forty members and a procedure for “weighted voting” – Division II has no such council.⁷⁷ The Division I manual also accounts for several “areas of autonomy,” which is a “legislative provision that provides legislative flexibility to the Atlantic Coast Conference, Big Ten Conference, Big 12 Conference, Pac-12 Conference and Southeastern Conference and their member institutions”⁷⁸ – the Power-5 Conferences. The manuals are available through the NCAA’s “Publications” online resource center and contain the constitution, operating bylaws, administrative bylaws, and policies.⁷⁹ According to the NCAA,

The abridged NCAA Division I Manuals contain key provisions of Division I legislation that are most likely to be accessed by those involved in a particular sport (e.g., coaches) or in particular institutional administrative positions (i.e., chancellors and presidents, athletics directors and senior woman administrators, and faculty athletics representatives).

The constitution’s six articles cover the name and purposes, fundamental principles, membership policies, and “institutional control.” The operating bylaws include Articles 10-22. The focus of this analysis will be on Articles one and two of the constitution, “Name, Purposes, and Fundamental Policy” and “Principles for Conduct

of Intercollegiate Athletics,” and article twelve of the operating bylaws, “Amateurism and Athletics Eligibility.” I choose these selections because they most explicitly articulate the core values and axiological *topoi* that the NCAA’s myth of the student-athlete is based. Those values are purity, welfare, and excellence. As Mark Emmert articulated in his keynote address, sports are an integral *part* of the whole higher education experience. The power of the student-athlete myth is that the student-athlete becomes the actualized person – the ideal human, since, after all, the NCAA is in the “human development business.”

The Purity of the Student-Athlete

The first axiological thread of the student-athlete myth is the value and ideology of purity for both participants and institutions. Big-time sport is, allegedly, clean, pristine, and good. In NCAA organizational discourse, this purity ideal is primarily associated with the code of amateurism – the ideological substance of the myth. In justifying amateurism, the NCAA states its purpose as “to govern competition in a fair, safe, equitable and sportsmanlike manner, and to integrate intercollegiate athletics into higher education so that the educational experience of the student-athlete is paramount.” “Student-athletes” are, as the common saying goes, “students first.”⁸⁰ The NCAA articulates the importance of purity when it asserts that

student-athletes shall be amateurs in an intercollegiate sport, and their participation should be motivated primarily by education and by the physical, mental and social benefits to be derived. Student participation in intercollegiate athletics is an avocation, and student-athletes should be protected from exploitation by professional and commercial enterprises.

The student-athlete/participant's experience is allegedly placed at the center, whereas in professional sports profits take precedence.⁸¹ According to the NCAA, collegiate athletics are the purer form of sport; professional sports their antithesis.

Amateurism is crucial to the maintenance of the purity of individual participants as well as of collegiate sports in general. Because student-athletes' participation in college sports is ideally secondary to their education, maintaining the culture of amateurism is crucial for the legitimacy of big-time sport. Amateurism is so important to the purity of college sports that the NCAA calls it a "bedrock principle of college athletics and the NCAA":

Maintaining amateurism is crucial to preserving an academic environment in which acquiring a quality education is the first priority. In the collegiate model of sports, the young men and women competing on the field or court are students first, athletes second.

The NCAA membership has adopted amateurism rules to ensure the students' priority remains on obtaining a quality educational experience and that all of student-athletes are competing equitably.⁸²

The ideology of amateurism is central to the NCAA's organizational discourse.

Indeed, Daniel Grano argues that the rhetoric of amateurism is a sacred discourse.⁸³

The implications of this rhetoric will be explored in chapter three and the conclusion.

On the NCAA's webpage "The Value of College Sports," a "college education" and "academic success" are the top two reasons listed after "Why play college sports?" Implied here is the assumption that education is the key to becoming a whole and good person, and athletic participation is one avenue for a prospective student to receive that education. According to the NCAA, this contrasts with the professional athlete, who is seeking payment for his or her physical talents and nothing more; he or she does not need a degree to be a professional athlete.

Education, then, is inextricably tied to amateurism and purity. In the NCAA Strategic Plan, the first priority is “student-athletes’ academics” and the first core value of the NCAA is the “Collegiate Model of Athletics,” which is another way of articulating the amateur ideal (the collegiate model is in opposition to the professional model). Article twelve of the Bylaws expands upon this ideal with thirty pages worth of definitions, applications, principles, and rules/policies related to amateurism and athletics eligibility. It is clear that the NCAA’s emphasis on amateurism is a foundational element to maintaining the myth of the student-athlete. As Grano argues, amateurism

holds together the entire economic system of elite college athletics, and its status as a sacrosanct ideal allows – in fact *forces* – strained legal and moral arguments, such as when administrators acknowledge that college sport is big business while paternalistically guarding so-called student-athletes from the stain of commercialism.⁸⁴

The debates over the merits or setbacks of the NCAA’s policies on amateurism have stirred discussions over labor issues in general. Mark Emmert sees the issue as extremely black-and-white. In an interview, Emmert asserted students need to choose “do I want to be an employee?” – implicitly referencing professional sports – “or do I want to go to school?”⁸⁵ Emmert links education and amateurism explicitly. However, the identity of the student-athlete is more accurately a hybrid – *both* student *and* athlete. College sports participants attend classes, and, if they have the time, make friends and participate in other activities. Most of their time, however, is spent at practices, traveling, and competitions– all of which are work. The NCAA’s organizational rhetoric privileges the student identity to stay consistent with its foundational mission and principles. In defending amateurism, Emmert and the

NCAA often appeal to tradition, asserting that paying athletes (beyond their scholarships) would hurt the traditions (aka the purity) of collegiate sports.⁸⁶ On whether or not athletes could or should pursue other leagues where they would be paid, Emmert opined:

I happen to think that going to college and experiencing everything that a college has to offer and still developing your skills and abilities as an athlete is a pretty good deal. It's hard to find better coaches, better facilities, better training, better development as an athlete than in a high-quality collegiate program.⁸⁷

The NCAA's ideal of purity ultimately constructs professional sports as the antithesis of college sports – defining professional sports as a corrupt and “dirty” cultural institution where money is the only priority and the only benefit.⁸⁸ True, professional sports are plagued by scandals each and every season in virtually every sport. However, the critique of professional sports as the “dirtier” institution is ultimately a straw person argument made against the professional athlete. The NCAA's logic assumes that if an athlete is compensated for their play, that automatically precludes them from enjoying or loving their sport. NCAA logic also assumes that payment is corrupting and would therefore disrupt the purity of the student-athlete. However, as I will explain in chapter three and the conclusion, college athletes are already paid to play. Professional sports are rarely explicitly mentioned in these documents. However, given the rhetorical history of the term “student-athlete” as well as discussions of tradition and amateurism in these documents, it is clear that the NCAA is aiming to distance itself from the institution of professional sports.⁸⁹ For the NCAA, the ideal of purity functions as axiological support for their policies on

amateurism. However, the increasingly commercialized nature of big-time college sports adds pressure to the NCAA to reform.

Purity also prevents the NCAA from adjusting its policies to be equitable, in terms of compensating college athletes' labor, in the neoliberal context. That is, big-time sport is part of the cultural institution of *corporate* sport. As David Andrews and Michael Silk argue, corporate sport is marked by the "institutionalization, bureaucratization, commercialization, and spectacularization of elite sport as a mass entertainment product designed to generate maximum surplus value across myriad revenue streams" and is "an abstract machine of late capitalism."⁹⁰ Indeed, they argue, "neoliberalism operates as a mechanism for constituting and disciplining economic actors: it is 'not just a manner of governing states or economies but is intimately tied to the government of the individual.'"⁹¹ Big-time sport asserts its purity through the doctrine of amateurism, yet its policies function to discipline bodies while simultaneously generating profit from them. The critique of neoliberalism will be revisited in chapter three and in the conclusion.

The Welfare of the Student-Athlete

The second axiological thread of the student-athlete myth, and a derivative of purity, is well-being or welfare. The NCAA asserts that the student-athlete experience is paramount and part of ensuring that experience is positive is to nurture health and well-being. The NCAA's definition of "well-being" is twofold: first, in terms of student-athletes' physical and mental health, and second, the "well-being" or health of their broader educational experience. Because the NCAA is dedicated to providing student-athletes with "opportunities" to succeed on and off the field, welfare and

well-being come to encompass the mind and the body –intellectual and physical wellness in an environment of opportunity. Healthy athletes make happy and successful athletes.

Well-being is a value for both the institutions and the student-athlete participants. In the NCAA publication “Mind, Body, and Sport,” student-athletes are described as a healthy subpopulation of students, “buttressed by a discipline, commitment and attention to exercise and nutrition required to meet the demands of their sport.” As a result, universities and their athletics departments have pioneered sports medicine services that “increasingly engage a multitude of resources and expertise to address student-athletes’ injuries and illnesses to ensure they are in the best condition to compete.” However, mental health is also prioritized for the NCAA:

There’s more to being a student-athlete than just physical preparation and performance. As more media coverage, commentary and public scrutiny are devoted to what student-athletes do off the field, along with the accompanying pressures to perform (and win games) on the field, student-athletes are inundated with factors that may affect their mental health and wellness. And the “culture” of athletics may inhibit student-athletes from seeking help to address issues such as anxiety, depression, the stress associated with the expectations of their sport, and the everyday stress of dealing with relationships, academic demands, and adjusting to life away from home.

In addition to mental health resources, the NCAA outlines concussion safety protocol and specific policies regarding institutions’ Strength and Conditioning Coach, First Aid/CPR Certification, and Authority of Sports Medicine Staff. [FBS/FCS].⁹² The strength and conditioning coach conducts voluntary weight training or conditioning activities and is required to “maintain certification in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.” The NCAA also mandates that “a member of the institution’s sports medicine staff (e.g., athletic trainer, physician) must be present during all voluntary

conditioning activities (running, not lifting) conducted by the institution's strength coach." Further, this staff member "must be empowered to have the unchallengeable authority to cancel or modify the workout for health and safety reasons, as he or she deems appropriate."⁹³ I will elaborate on how these policies failed to protect Maryland football player Jordan McNair in chapter two.

Well-being is also directly connected to amateurism and the Collegiate Model of Athletics. For example, the strategic plan states that "it is the responsibility of each member institution to establish and maintain an environment in which student-athletes' activities, in all sports, are conducted to encourage academic success and individual development and as an integral part of the educational experience." The Strategic Plan states,

Intercollegiate athletics programs shall be conducted in a manner designed to enhance the well-being of student athletes who choose to participate and to prevent undue commercial or other influences that may interfere with their scholastic, athletics or related interests. The time required of student-athletes for participation in intercollegiate athletics shall be regulated to minimize interference with their academic pursuits.

It continues, "Each member institution should also provide an environment that fosters fairness, sportsmanship, safety, honesty and positive relationships between student-athletes and representatives of the institution." Well-being, then, takes on an institutional component when the NCAA asserts that the environment in which athletics take place should also be "well" – safe, honest, and fair. The NCAA's priority of well-being extends beyond the individual participants to the institution of big-time sport.

Ultimately, the NCAA's welfare argument constructs the organization as benevolent. There is some evidence to support the NCAA's claim that the

organization is dedicated to student-athlete well-being. In 2014, the NCAA and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) launched a \$30 million “landmark alliance” to study concussions.⁹⁴ Further, the NCAA “partners with leading medical organizations to promote research, education and best practices – all to make college sports as safe as they can be.”⁹⁵ Those collaborations have led to specific NCAA policy changes, such as the elimination of two-a-day contact practices in football across all three divisions. The NCAA also collaborates with medical and research organizations on cardiac health, nutrition, and mental health. In Emmert’s 2018 State of the Association Address, he explains that the Board of Governors unanimously adopted nine fundamental areas of health and safety: concussion and cardiac health, mental health, doping, and substance abuse; nutrition, sleep, and performance issues; overuse injuries; sexual assault and interpersonal violence; and athletics health care administration. As a result of these and other initiatives, the NCAA claims that former student-athletes are significantly more likely to be thriving in four out of five areas of well-being: purpose, social, community, and physical well-being compared to their non-athlete peers.⁹⁶ This evidence reinforces the myth of the student-athlete and supports the NCAA’s claim that student-athlete well-being is a priority.

The value of welfare implies that college sports participants are ultimately gaining positive experiences. This framing is important because college sports participants are also sacrificing many things, such as leisure time, potential friendships or relationships, and other opportunities that “regular” students may easily take advantage of (such as study abroad or clubs/activities beyond athletics). While sacrifice is not inherently negative – sacrifice is often considered a virtue – the

NCAA's choice to focus on what is gained rather than what is lost further bolsters the myth of the student-athlete and the legitimacy of big-time sport. The positive experiences gained outweigh whatever may be lost; the student-athlete is better off for his/her choice to be an athlete. However, the ideal of welfare is a lofty promise that cannot be guaranteed: particular coaching staffs may (and often do) choose to ignore or bend policies, which ultimately endangers instead of protects young people. The most recent example is at The University of Maryland. Football player Jordan McNair died of heat exhaustion during a practice. President Loh admitted that coaching staff did not follow proper protocol to ensure safety.⁹⁷ And it is no coincidence that the NCAA's well-being rhetoric neglects an important component of welfare: financial well-being. "Personal growth" is valued more than college athletes' ability to afford meals or have their cars repaired, for example.⁹⁸ I return to the theme of financial well-being and excellence chapters two, three, and the conclusion.

The Excellence of the Student-Athlete

Finally, the myth of the student-athlete relies on the argument that athletics cultivates *aretē*, or excellence, both on and off the field. Unsurprisingly, excellence is also connected to both amateurism and well-being. Good health and a strong body, mind, and spirit, is equated with excellence. More significant is the connection between excellence and amateurism. The NCAA implies that the amateur athlete is more excellent than the professional athlete, since the amateur is developing into a whole person, by virtue of their college education, and not just an athlete. For example, the NCAA claims that "putting academics first creates a pathway to a lifetime of opportunity."⁹⁹ The amateur athlete is well-educated and prepared to

contribute to society through their chosen path of study – not just their sport. However, it is the combination of academics and athletics that create this well-rounded person. The NCAA claims that “college sports shape the skills of participants and strengthen workplace-ready attributes such as communication, collaboration, problem-solving and critical thinking.”¹⁰⁰ As such, it is the amateur athlete who is more excellent than their counterpart, the professional athlete.

Education is key to cultivating this excellence, since the professional athlete may not have more than a high school degree. The NCAA asserts one of its three priorities is academics. The organization claims that “to truly benefit from college, student-athletes have to succeed in more places than on the field. The NCAA provides opportunities to learn, compete, and grow.”¹⁰¹ In order to achieve this, the NCAA has instituted academic standards. In Division I and Division II, “the NCAA sets academic initial-eligibility standards that take into account GPA, standardized test scores, core courses taken in high school, and the grades earned in those core courses. Division III schools hold student-athletes to the same overall standards for the institution in which they’re enrolling.”¹⁰² Further, team academic achievement is rewarded with funding; on the other hand, failing to meet academic standards, as a team, will mark that team ineligible to compete in championships. This, according to Phil DiStefano, co-chair of the Value-Based Revenue Distribution Working Group and chancellor of the University of Colorado, Boulder, “sends a clear message to external constituents that we take ‘student-athlete’ very seriously.”¹⁰³ The continued academic success is also a stated priority of the NCAA, which is tracked by grades, minimum credit hours per year, and progress toward earning a degree. The ultimate

goal, according to the NCAA, is graduation, and those graduation rates are tracked closely by the NCAA.¹⁰⁴

Beyond the conferral of degrees, the NCAA articulates an “Envisioned Future” of intercollegiate athletics as “a valued enhancement to a quality higher education experience.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, education is privileged, but athletics is meant to contribute to the students’ excellence. The Strategic Plan asserts that “student-athletes will be better prepared to achieve their potential because they have participated in intercollegiate athletics. They will regard athletic endeavors as a valued part of their undergraduate education.” These two statements both articulate the relationship between athletics and higher education and the role sports play in shaping a positive educational experience. The next two statements reinforce this goal and extend it to the public perception of intercollegiate sports as excellent:

Intercollegiate athletics will be perceived by Association members and the public as complementary to higher education. Academic success among student-athletes will enable the Association and its members to positively influence the perception of college sports.

Another aspect of student-athlete excellence is the concept of leadership and “preparation for life.” The NCAA’s webpage, “The Value of College Sports” claims that “increasingly, the business world is focusing on creating a team environment with employees. By competing in college sports, student-athletes learn important skills such as leadership, time management and how to work with others toward a common goal.”¹⁰⁶ College athletes may also serve on a SAAC (Student-Athlete Advisory Committee) at their universities to gain leadership experience. Individual universities emphasize leadership in their organizational discourse. The *topos* of excellence will be explored in depth in the next chapter.

While the NCAA emphasizes how college athletes achieve excellence and gain positive experiences through their participation in college sports, the NCAA does not acknowledge what the organization gains from these athletes. Because the student-athlete is excellent, the NCAA is profiting from them. Public audiences and critics know all too well what college athletes have to contribute to their universities. If college athletes contribute to winning records, their universities win prestige and recognition. If a college athlete goes on to play his/her sport professionally, his/her institution receives even more prestige. When college athletes receive individual recognition for academic achievements, community service, or leadership, the reputation of the team and the institution is strengthened. These are invaluable contributions. The NCAA does not acknowledge that it values the contributions of its participants. Rather, the NCAA chooses to emphasize how it, as an organization, provides opportunities for the athletes. From a strategic standpoint, this seems like an oversight on the part of the NCAA. They could likely be even more persuasive if they bolstered the identity of the student-athlete through their discourse. Instead, the relationship between the NCAA and the student-athlete is primarily paternalistic. The NCAA gives the student-athletes all that they need to thrive.

Conclusion

Along with Emmert's 2018 State of the Association Address and selected NCAA website texts, the Strategic Plan and Division I Manual reinforce the organizational legitimacy and encourage external audiences to believe the NCAA is benevolent to college athletes. These official texts have both explicit and implicit implications for the institution of big-time sport and provide insight into the NCAA's

rhetorical construction of the myth of the student athlete. Ultimately, the myth of the student-athlete organizes our understanding of college sports participants as more excellent than regular students. They are physically and mentally fit graduates who have demonstrated leadership skills and potential. A student who participates in athletics is getting the most out of their liberal education. They are growing into responsible citizens who will contribute to society – lessons learned in both their academic classrooms and on their athletic fields shape their character. Further, the institution of high-profile intercollegiate athletics is fundamentally *good*, according to the NCAA. College sports, in Mark Emmert’s words, is in the human development business because it takes place within the context of higher education. Sports are just one part of the whole of the education experience. Challenges to this argument will be explored in chapter three of this dissertation, wherein I analyze the organizational rhetoric of the National College Players’ Association and the College Athletes Players’ Association, two related organizations dedicated to advocating for college athletes.

The fact that the NCAA created a strategic plan, outlined a vision and values, developed a constitution and bylaws, and crafted handbooks for student-athletes and other athletics personnel is a testament to their organizational legitimacy, since most major national organizations engage in these forms of strategic communication.¹⁰⁷ Although these messages may be more relevant to the organizational members themselves than to external audiences,¹⁰⁸ the messages still have rhetorical force – they legitimize. As Cheney and Lair observe, “internally- and externally-focused messages are not mutually exclusive; that is, organizations are engaged in multiple

rhetorical efforts simultaneously.”¹⁰⁹ There are several potential audiences for the NCAA’s messages: current college athletes, prospective college athletes, parents, faculty, and other students or fans of the institution’s athletics teams. Because these texts can reach so many different audiences, they should be critically studied.

The myth of the student-athlete has come under scrutiny in recent decades. In response to the NCAA’s claim of student-athlete well-being as a core priority, there is mounting evidence that supports the opposite conclusion. For example, evidence shows that college athletes are over-practiced, over-scheduled, and fatigued.¹¹⁰ “Junction Boys Syndrome,” which is a reference to the culture of rigor in big-time sport, “is a double-edged sword in that it builds, but it also breaks.”¹¹¹ That is, we value the lessons of hard work and dedication that are often part and parcel of participation in college sports. However, Anderson argues that this “construct of our conditioning is killing athletes,” as the case at the University of Maryland has illustrated.¹¹² This “construct of our conditioning” is also plagued by hegemonic masculinity, an issue that will be explored in chapter two. Institutions “inadequately protect athletes from injury or abuse, provide insufficient medical treatment or insurance coverage, or act in other ways to endanger athletes’ physical or psychological health.”¹¹³ Further, the time commitments for a college athlete “may not allow the athlete to meet academic demands, access full academic choices, or take advantage of other experiences available to his or her nonathlete counterparts.”¹¹⁴ Of course, in recent years popular and academic critics alike have taken on the “farce” of amateurism.¹¹⁵ The NCAA’s annual March Madness (men’s and women’s basketball tournament) demonstrates just how much profit there is in college sports – profits that

are reaped on the blood, sweat, and too often, the bodily injuries of young men and women. In the 2013-2014 season, institutions appearing in the March Madness tournament netted \$193 million in profits, which was “distributed to the member schools.”¹¹⁶ Finally, Patrick Hruby has noted the racial implications of amateurism, arguing that amateurism wouldn’t exist “if it was siphoning hundreds of millions of dollars from predominantly white revenue-sport athletes to overwhelmingly black school administrators,” which is what it does in the reverse.¹¹⁷

The myth of the student-athlete is a unique case because, unlike many other organizational “control narratives,” it is not upheld simply by repeating the familiar story to organizational members. The NCAA is actually losing control of the narrative – the topic of chapter three – yet still maintains other types of control such as economic, educational, and disciplinary control. The NCAA controls the flow of money, academic standards for college athletes, and time/resources. The NCAA may control its college athletes’ time and resources, but it has lost control of their compliance with the NCAA’s myth of the student-athlete. Chapter three will explore how former and current college athletes have organized to resist the NCAA’s control narrative.

Because of the synecdochal relationship between the college athlete and big-time sport (as laid out by Milford), the myth of the student-athlete and its axiological-ideological *topoi* also apply to the institution/s of big-time sport. The *topos* of purity describes the idealized vision of college sports as purer than professional sports, and student-athletes as purer than professional athletes. Further, colleges and universities are more pure than professional sports franchises and organizations, since they exist

to educate and develop the “whole person.” The *topos* of welfare describes both the health of the college athlete and the health of his or her university – literally and figuratively. While financial welfare does not apply to the college athlete, according to the NCAA, financial welfare is applicable to the institutions of big-time sport, a topic explored in chapter two, since profits equal health. Like the individual bodies the NCAA governs, the NCAA’s body must be in working order. Finally, excellence applies to both college athletes and their institutions. On the field, winning represents excellence. Off the field, leadership, innovation, and service to the surrounding communities are core priorities of the Big-time U. The next chapter explores how these three *topoi* are articulated – both positively and negatively – in a case at one representative Big-time U: The University of Maryland.

Like Karen Hartman’s study of the myth of Title IX,¹¹⁸ the myth of the student-athlete distracts audiences from some of the most egregious problems in big-time sport by emphasizing the shared values of purity, excellence, and well-being. In advancing this myth, the NCAA constructs itself as a benevolent institution that cares for its members – both member institutions and athlete participants. Further, the NCAA posits that it is a humanistic institution – in the human development business – yet this claim contains its own irony. The NCAA is a corporate institution that profits. The following chapters will expand on these three main axiological threads of the student-athlete myth – purity, welfare, and excellence. These three threads are common *topoi* of the myth of the student-athlete. Chapter two, which explores the organizational culture at the University of Maryland, will analyze how UM Athletics’ organizational discourse articulated the myth of the student-athlete, particularly the

topos of excellence, both before and after Jordan McNair’s death. This chapter also analyzes major critiques of UM Athletics in the wake of McNair’s death – critiques of excellence, purity, and welfare. Further, chapter two explores how purity, welfare, and excellence are tainted by hegemonic masculinity. Chapter three will analyze the organizational rhetoric of the National College Players’ Association and the College Athletes Players’ Association through the *topoi* of purity, well-being, and excellence; this chapter presents the competing narratives of current and former college athletes and examines how the myth of the student-athlete is either maintained or contested by the participants themselves. All told, these chapters explore the fidelity and unpack the implications of Mark Emmert’s claim that NCAA sports are in the “human development business.”

Notes

¹ Brian Hendrickson, “Emmert Challenges Members to Confront Issues,” *NCAA News*, January 18, 2018, <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/media-center/news/emmert-challenges-members-confront-issues?division=d1>. For the full transcript, visit this link: http://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/2018ConvNCAA_Plenary_Session%20transcript_20180120.pdf.

² Horrifically, the NCAA cleared MSU of any violations in the Nassar case, which illustrates how few protocols there are to actually protect athletes from various forms of abuse. Dan Murphy, “Michigan State: NCAA finds no rule violations in sexual assault cases,” *ESPN*, August 30, 2018, http://www.espn.com/college-sports/story/_/id/24523562/michigan-state-says-cleared-violations-larry-nassar-scandal-ncaa.

³ Gary Bedore, “Reports: FBI Investigation Could Show Dozens of Basketball Teams Broke NCAA Rules,” *Kansas City Star*, February 15, 2018, <http://www.kansascity.com/sports/college/article200329304.html>.

⁴ In management literature, keynote addresses like Emmert’s are considered in the genre of “strategy discourses.” See Matthias Wenzel and Jochen Koch, “Strategy as Staged Performance: A Critical Discursive Perspective on Keynote Speeches as a Genre of Strategic Communication,” *Strategic Management Journal* 39 (2018): 639-63.

⁵ Graduation rates rose twelve percentage points. This is roughly 20,000 new graduates who wouldn't have graduated were it not for the NCAA's policy changes. Emmert further elaborated by discussing the breakdown by division as well as specific demographics.

⁶ AP, "Study: Graduation Rate For Bowl-Bound Football Players is Up," *USA Today* December 4, 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ncaaf/2017/12/04/study-graduation-rate-for-bowl-bound-football-players-is-up/108298402/>.

⁷ NCAA Resources, "2017 NCAA Convention: State of the Association Address," *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4OVQ3t8D1bQ&t=4s>.

⁸ George Cheney and Jill J. McMillan, "Organizational Rhetoric and the Practice of Criticism," *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 18, no. 2 (1990): 102. "The researcher can examine specific texts or attempt a more encompassing assessment of org messages (public and private, internal and external, personal and impersonal, formal and informal...etc.)...or go even broader (institutional level, across organizations, etc.)"

⁹ Jaś Elsner, "Paideia: Ancient Concept and Modern Reception," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 20 (2013): 139; and Werner Jaeger and Gilbert Highet. *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943).

¹⁰ Gregory M. Colón Semenza, "Sport, War, and Contest in Shakespeare's Henry VI," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (2001): 1251-72.

¹¹ Michael L. Silk and David L. Andrews, "Sport and the Neoliberal Conjuncture: Complicating the Consensus," in *Sport and Neoliberalism: Politics, Consumption, and Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012), 1-19. The editors contend, "While the doses vary, the basic prescription of neoliberalism is the same: Purge the system of obstacles to the functioning of free markets; celebrate the virtues of individualism (recast social problems as individual problems, such as drug use, obesity, or inadequate health insurance) and competitiveness; foster economic self-sufficiency; abolish or weaken social programs; include the marginalized (often by this shift in the role of government) or poor into the labor market, on the market's terms (such as through the workforce scheme); and criminalize the homeless and the urban poor." In the same volume, Samantha King defines neoliberalism as a "philosophy and set of economic and political policies aimed at cutting expenditures on public goods such as education, healthcare, and income assistance in the name of 'free enterprise' and in the service of enhanced corporate profit (Samantha King, "Nike U: Full-Program Athletics Contracts and the Corporate University," 76).

¹² Organizations "seek to establish congruency between the social values associated with or implied by their activities and the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system of which they are a part" (John Dowling and Jeffrey Pfeffer, "Organizational Legitimacy: Social Values and Organizational Behavior," *The Pacific Sociological Review* 18, no. 1 (1975): 122.

¹³ Kelly Charles Crabb, "The Amateurism Myth: A Case for a New Tradition," *Stanford*

Law and Policy Review 28 (2017): 181-214; and Robert A. McCormick and Amy Christian McCormick, "Myth of the Student-Athlete: The College Athlete as Employee," *Washington Law Review* 81, no. 71(2006): 158. These are just two examples from a purely legal perspective. Sack and Staurowsky argue that "by purposefully fashioning an amateur mythology to mask the reality of this employer-employee relationship, the NCAA has done a disservice to student-athletes and to higher education" (*College Athletes for Hire*).

¹⁴ Holding two conflicting beliefs at the same time is known as cognitive dissonance. Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1962). In this context, many people deeply enjoy watching college sports even as they know they are witnessing the exploitation of young (often black) bodies. This phenomenon has led some to walk away from big-time football. For example, Ed Cunningham, longtime color analyst for ESPN, recently resigned from one of the top jobs in college sports broadcasting. On why he walked away, Cunningham said that he "felt wrong to be such a close witness to the carnage, [to be] profiting from a sport" that he knows is killing some of its participants (John Branch, "ESPN Football Analyst Walks Away, Disturbed by Brain Trauma on Field," *New York Times*, August 30, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/30/sports/espn-ed-cunningham-football-concussions.html?mcubz=0>). See also Howard Megdal, "The Cognitive Dissonance of Modern Football Glory," *The Cauldron*, September 16, 2014, <https://the-cauldron.com/the-cognitive-dissonance-of-modern-football-glory-74ee7ee8d6dc>. Yet most continue watching and consuming big-time sport. Murray Sperber chose to use George Orwell's concept of "doublethink" to describe this phenomenon: "the ability to believe contradictory ideas simultaneously, for example, acknowledging the dysfunction of college sports while fervently following its teams and games" (*Beer and Circus*, 42).

¹⁵ "About," NCAA.org n.d., www.ncaa.org/about.

¹⁶ Allen L. Sack and Ellen J. Staurowsky, *College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998); and Ellen J. Staurowsky and Allen L. Sack, "Reconsidering the Use of the Term Student-Athlete in Academic Research," *Journal of Sport Management* 19 (2005): 103-16.

¹⁷ Gregory S. Sojka, "The Evolution of the Student-Athlete in America: From the Divinity to the Divine," in *Sport and Higher Education*, ed. Donald Chu, Jeffrey O. Segrave, and Beverly J. Becker (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1985), 20-1. This resulted in regulations such as the forward pass, the neutral zone between the lines, 10 yards to make a first down, and the outlawing of "hurdling" to improve "safety." Sojka cites Guy M. Lewis, "Theodore Roosevelt's role in the 1905 Football Controversy," *Research Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (1969): 717-24. 1905 was not the only "bloody" instance. Because of football's rugby origins, players in the 1890s often "spared with one another, shoved, or even slugged one another"; the notorious "flying wedge" formation "in its brief lifespan functioned as a sort of gridiron kamikaze weapon forged of human bodies" (John Sayle Watterson, *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2000), 12-13).

¹⁸ Ingrassia, *The Rise of the Gridiron University*, 3-4.

¹⁹ A 2013 study by the University of Pennsylvania’s Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education found that 57 percent of the football players and 64 percent of the men’s basketball players in the six biggest conferences were black; at the same schools, black men made up less than 3 percent of the overall student population. (In recent NFL drafts, five times as many black players were taken in the first two rounds, where the perceived best players are picked, as white players.) Athletics administrators and coaches, meanwhile, are overwhelmingly white (Donald H. Yee, “College Sports Exploits Unpaid Black Athletes. But They Could Force a Change,” *Washington Post*, January 8, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/01/08/college-sports-exploits-unpaid-black-athletes-but-they-could-force-a-change/?utm_term=.fdc8dc566ec9).

²⁰ See Billy Joe Hawkins, *The New Plantation: The Internal Colonization of Black Student-Athletes* (Winterville, GA: Sadiki Pub, 2000). Historian Taylor Branch has also explored the slavery analogy:

Slavery analogies should be used carefully. College athletes are not slaves. Yet to survey the scene—corporations and universities enriching themselves on the backs of uncompensated young men, whose status as “student-athletes” deprives them of the right to due process guaranteed by the Constitution—is to catch an unmistakable whiff of the plantation. Perhaps a more apt metaphor is colonialism: college sports, as overseen by the NCAA, is a system imposed by well-meaning paternalists and rationalized with hoary sentiments about caring for the well-being of the colonized. But it is, nonetheless, unjust. The NCAA, in its zealous defense of bogus principles, sometimes destroys the dreams of innocent young athletes.

(Taylor Branch, “The Shame of College Sports,” *The Atlantic*, October 2011, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/10/the-shame-of-college-sports/308643/>). There is also research supporting the division of football positions (in particular) along racial lines. See Luke Winslow, “Brawn, Brains, and the Dearth of Black NFL Quarterbacks,” in *Sports and Identity: New Agendas in Communication*, edited by Barry Brummett and Andrew W. Ishak (New York: Routledge, 2014), 19-43; Jason Reid and Jane McManus, “The NFL’s Racial Divide,” *The Undeclared* n.d., <https://theundeclared.com/features/the-nfls-racial-divide/>.

²¹ Definition of terms in the NCAA Strategic Plan.

²² “Our governance structure consists of legislative bodies – made up of volunteers from our member schools – that govern each division, as well as a group of committees that set association-wide policy. These committees manage topics affecting sports rules, championships, health and safety, matters impacting women in athletics and opportunities for minorities” (<http://www.ncaa.org/governance>).

²³ NCAA Strategic Plan.

²⁴ NCAA, “About,” *NCAA.org* n.d., <http://www.ncaa.org/about/who-we-are/office-president/ncaa-president-mark-emmert>.

²⁵ There are, of course, universities that do not belong to the NCAA or belong to the NAIA (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics).

²⁶ “Concussion Data and Research,” *NCAA Sport Science Institute* n.d., <http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/topics/concussion-data-and-research>.

²⁷ Richard M. Southall and Ellen J. Staurowsky, “Cheering on the Collegiate Model: Creating, Disseminating, and Imbedding the NCAA’s Redefinition of Amateurism,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 37, no. 4 (2013): 409. Former NCAA President/Executive Director Walter Byers admitted this in *Unsportsmanlike Conduct: Exploiting College Athletes* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 69.

²⁸ Taylor Branch, “How The Myth Of The NCAA ‘Student-Athlete’ Was Born,” *Deadspin*, February 20, 2014, <https://deadspin.com/how-the-myth-of-the-ncaa-student-athlete-was-born-1524282374>. This is an excerpt from Taylor Branch, *The Cartel: Inside the Rise and Imminent Fall of the NCAA* (San Francisco, California: Byliner, 2011).

²⁹ Ellen Staurowsky and Allen L. Sack, Reconsidering the Use of the Term Student-Athlete in Academic Research, *Journal of Sport Management* 19 (2005): 105.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ See Richard M. Southall, E. Woodrow Eckard, Mark S. Nagel, and Morgan H. Randall, “Athletic Success and NCAA Profit-Athletes’ Adjusted Graduation Gaps,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 32 (2015): 395-414; and Richard M. Southall and Jonathan D. Weiler, “NCAA Division-I Athletic Departments: 21st Century Athletic Company Towns,” *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics* 7 (2014): 161–86.

³² NCAA, Bylaws Article 12.02.13.

³³ Ronald A. Smith, *Pay for Play: A History of Big-Time College Athletic Reform* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 93.

³⁴ Sack and Staurowsky, *College Athletes for Hire*, 46. The leaders of the NCAA, many from the Big Ten Conference, were convinced that the NCAA’s first national legislation would bring purity to intercollegiate athletics across the nation. Unfortunately, passing legislation did not mean that it would be followed or that those who did not conform to the legislation would be disciplined (Ronald A. Smith, *Pay for Play*, 88).

³⁵ The NCAA began tracking athletes’ race and ethnicity in 1999. Data suggest that NCAA Division I football has shifted from predominantly white to predominantly black (Associated Press, “Blacks Now a Majority on Football Teams,” *ESPN*, December 9, 2010, <http://www.espn.com/college-sports/news/story?id=5901855>). The geographic divide is significant. Northern schools, such as in the Ivy League, had mostly white athletes and this is where purity discourse flourished.

³⁶ Sack and Staurowsky, *College Athletes for Hire*, 46. In 1949, the NCAA Constitutional Compliance Committee announced that twenty institutions were not in compliance with the Sanity Code and that they would face suspension if corrective actions were not taken. By July 1949, thirteen had come into compliance, leaving seven to face expulsion. The seven included Boston College, the Citadel, Villanova, Virginia Military Institute, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, the University of Maryland, and the University of Virginia.

The vote of no-confidence for the Sanity Code “threw the door open to unbridled professionalism”; Smith, *Pay for Play*, 98.

³⁷ Milford, “Giving the ol’ Misdirection.” He cites the NCAA Executive Committee (2004, 3).

³⁸ Sack and Staurowsky, *College Athletes for Hire*, 32.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Anastasios Kubarakis, David A. Pierce, Beth A. Cianfrone, and Amanda L. Paule, “Is it Still ‘In the Game’, or Has Amateurism Left the Building? NCAA Student-Athletes’ Perceptions of Commercial Activity and Sports Video Games,” *Journal of Sport Management* 26 (2012): 295.

⁴¹ Sack and Staurowsky, *College Athletes for Hire*, 32 (emphasis mine).

⁴² Smith, *Pay for Play*, 96.

⁴³ Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*. Second Revised Edition (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), 179.

⁴⁴ Milford, “Giving the ol’ Misdirection,” 179.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 283.

⁴⁶ Daniel Geiger, and Elena Antonacopoulou, “Narratives and Organizational Dynamics: Exploring Blind Spots and Organizational Inertia,” *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 45, no. 3 (2009): 430.

⁴⁷ The NCAA has consistently doubled down on its amateurism policies despite the changing nature of college sports. For example, instead of using extra profits for college athlete financial support, that money is usually funneled into coaches’ salaries or other places to maintain the principle of amateurism. See Erik Brady, Steve Berkowitz, and Christopher Shnaars, “NCAA Coaches’ Salaries: Capitalism Meets Amateurism,” *USA Today*, February 28, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ncaab/2018/02/28/ncaa-coaches-salaries-capitalism-meets-amateurism-college-basketball/381053002/>; and Mark Edelman, “College Basketball Players Get None of the NCAA Tournament Revenue: Is it Time to Unionize?” *Forbes*, n.d., <https://www.forbes.com/sites/marcedelman/2018/03/18/college-basketball-players-get-none-of-the-ncaa-tournaments-revenues-is-it-time-to-unionize/#3577398d5b47>.

⁴⁸ Smith, *Pay for Play*, 99.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Michael Milford, “Giving the Ol’ Misdirection: The NCAA and the Student-Athlete,” in *Repairing the Athlete’s Image: Studies in Sports Image Restoration*, eds., Joseph R. Blaney, Lance R. Lippert, and J. Scott Smith (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 283.

⁵¹ Ibid., 285. "Settled ideology" comes from J. Michael Sproule, "The New Managerial Rhetoric and the Old Criticism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74, no. 4 (November 1988): 469 and refers to the "managerial" or institutionalized form of rhetoric that Sproule characterizes as central in the twentieth century (war propaganda, for example). Milford continues that as long as the major trope/s are maintained, they can become "God" terms for the group as a whole (Mark P. Moore, "Constructing irreconcilable conflict: The function of synecdoche in the spotted owl controversy," *Communication Monographs* 60, no. 3 (1993): 259). Milford explains that the synecdoche is indeed ideological, and that core ideology must be protected; "however, instead of protection through redefinition or recasting the student-athlete in light of the NCAA's financial situation, the Association instead remained rigid in its characterization."

⁵² Southall and Weiler, "NCAA Division-I Athletic Departments: 21st Century Athletic Company Towns," 168. Citing Walter L. Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution: A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Southall and Staurowsky, "Cheering on the Collegiate Model."

⁵³ Milford, 286. Citing David Nakamura and J.A. Adande, "FINAL FOUR NOTEBOOK; New Revenue Could Aid Student-Athletes," *Washington Post*, March 31, 1995, retrieved September 24, 2018 from Nexis Uni database.

⁵⁴ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Seuil, 1957), 109.

⁵⁵ Mark Schorer, "The Necessity of Myth," *Daedalus* 88, no. 2 (1959): 360; Lauri Honko, "The Problem of Defining Myth," in *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Donald Chu describes myth as "a means of coping with confusion and uncertainty. Myths provide explanations for contradictions, make confusion comprehensible, and provide direction for action in ambiguous situations. Such symbolism promotes solidarity among pluralistic peoples, stability among conflicting ideas, and the sense of certainty necessary for assertive action" (Donald Chu, *The Character of American Higher Education and Intercollegiate Sport* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989), 177).

⁵⁶ Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *Journal of American Folklore* 68, no. 270 (1955): 431.

⁵⁷ Ibid. Barthes explains that myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message. "A tree is a tree. Yes, of course. But a tree as expressed by Minou Drouet is no longer quite a tree, it is a tree which is decorated, adapted to a certain type of consumption, laden with literary self-indulgence, revolt, images, in short with a type of social usage which is added to pure matter."

⁵⁸ Richard M. Southall and Ellen J. Staurowsky, "Cheering on the Collegiate Model: Creating, Disseminating, and Imbedding the NCAA's Redefinition of Amateurism," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 37, no. 4 (2013): 406.

⁵⁹ Theo Van Leeuwen, "Legitimation in Discourse and Communication," *Discourse & Communication* 1, no. 1 (2007): 91-112. Authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoeisis are the four categories of legitimation discourse.

⁶⁰ Rebecca Meisenbach and Jill McMillan define maintenance communication as the “day-to-day rhetorical practices of organizations” which are often found in mundane organizational documents (Rebecca J. Meisenbach, Rebecca and Jill J. McMillan, “Blurring the Boundaries: Historical Developments and Future Directions in Organizational Rhetoric,” *Communication Yearbook* 30, no. 1 (2006): 118). Maintenance communication may include communicative artifacts such as norms, standards (rules), customs, social conventions, logos, and mission statements (Joann Keyton, “Organizational culture: Creating meaning and influence,” in *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Communication: Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods*, 3rd Ed., eds. Linda L. Putnam and Dennis K. Mumby (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), 570). They can also include “house organs” like newsletters, strategic plans, and handbooks.

⁶¹ Richard M. Southall and Ellen J. Staurowsky, “Cheering on the Collegiate Model: Creating, Disseminating, and Imbedding the NCAA’s Redefinition of Amateurism,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 37, no. 4 (2013): 406. Southall and Staurowsky argue that this folklore is created, reinforced and maintained “through the hegemon’s control of language and common sense.”

⁶² Michael Real, “Super Bowl: Mythic Spectacle,” *Journal of Communication* 25, no. 1 (1975): 36.

⁶³ David Herman, James Phelan, Peter J. Rabinowitz, Brian Richardson, and Robyn Warhol, Eds., *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts and Critical Debates* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012), 3.

⁶⁴ Robert L. Kerr, *How Postmodernism Explains Football and Football Explains Postmodernism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 76.

⁶⁵ Geiger and Antonacopoulou, “Narratives and Organizational Dynamics,” 412. Citing Andrew D. Brown, “A Narrative Approach to Collective Identities,” *Journal of Management Studies* 43, no. 4 (2006): 740. “Inertia occurs when a web of related, self-reinforcing narratives evolves in an organization.”

⁶⁶ Robert P. Gephardt, “Succession Sensemaking and Organization Change: A Story of a Deviant College President,” *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 4 (1991): 35-44.

⁶⁷ David M. Boje, *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research* (London et al.: Sage, 2001), 12.

⁶⁸ Geiger and Antonacopoulou, “Narratives and Organizational Dynamics,” 414. Citing Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1973).

⁶⁹ V. William Balthrop, “Culture, Myth, and Ideology as Public Argument: An Interpretation of the Ascent and Demise of ‘Southern Culture,’” *Communication Monographs* 51 (December 1984): 340-52.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 341.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid. Citing Herbert McClosky, "Consensus and Ideology in American Politics," *American Political Science Review* 58, no. 2 (1964): 362.

⁷³ Honko, "The Problem of Defining Myth," 244. "The distinction between the desirable and the obligatory appears to be imbedded in our language. It is acceptable to say that playing golf is a good thing to do, but it is odd to say that playing golf is a right thing to do, or that golf playing is a matter of duty."

⁷⁴ Ralph Eubanks and Virgil Baker, "Toward an Axiology of Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 48, no. 2 (1962): 164.

⁷⁵ Karl Wallace, "The Substance of Rhetoric: Good Reasons," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 49, no. 3 (1963): 243.

⁷⁶ Auto-communication is one perspective to take on this discursive activity. Also called "meta-messages," this discourse involves "ritual expressions of identity that communicate through their very existence." Lars Thøger Christensen and George Cheney, "Self-Absorption and Self-Seduction in the Corporate Identity Game," in *The Expressive Organization: Linking Identity, Reputation, and the Corporate Brand* edited by Majken Schulz, Mary Jo Hatch, and Mogens Holten Larsen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 252.

⁷⁷ "Weighted voting" was adopted in 2014 and is defined as any "voting on matters other than football-specific issues or football-specific legislation."

⁷⁸ "The abovementioned conferences are granted autonomy in these areas to permit the use of resources to advance the legitimate educational or athletics-related needs of student-athletes and for legislative changes that will otherwise enhance student-athlete well-being. The requirements for adoption, amendment and expansion of the areas of autonomy are set forth in Constitution 5.3.2.1. A legislative provision that is an area of autonomy is identified by a capital letter A in brackets and bold font immediately after the title of the provision" (NCAA Division I manual, 2018, ix).

⁷⁹ These texts are made publicly available at ncaapublications.com.

⁸⁰ "Amateurism," *NCAA.org* n.d., <http://www.ncaa.org/amateurism>.

⁸¹ See David Davis, "The Business Of Sports: It's Not Just A Game," *UCLA Anderson: Assets Digital* n.d., <http://www.anderson.ucla.edu/assets-digital/think-in-the-next/sports-vs-community-feature>. There is also an entire field of sport economics that explores this concept.

⁸² "Amateurism," *NCAA.org* n.d., <http://www.ncaa.org/amateurism>.

⁸³ Daniel Grano, *The Eternal Presence of Sport: Rethinking Sport and Religion* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2017), 196.

⁸⁴ Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

⁸⁵ “NCAA President Mark Emmert on Sports Final: Should College Athletes Get Paid?” *CBS Boston* n.d., <http://boston.cbslocal.com/video/3834262-ncaa-president-mark-emmert-on-sports-final-should-college-athletes-get-paid/>.

⁸⁶ Sara Ganim, “Paying College Athletes Would Hurt Traditions, NCAA Chief Emmert Testifies,” *CNN*, June 19, 2014, <https://www.cnn.com/2014/06/19/us/ncaa-obannon-lawsuit-trial/index.html>.

⁸⁷ Ralph D. Russo, “NCAA to Protect Amateurism as Defined Amid Hoops Changes,” *APNews*, March 29, 2018, <https://apnews.com/d2259aefb8654614b36cf27e6de50ef1>.

⁸⁸ Lawrence Wenner, “The Unbearable Dirtiness of Being: On the Commodification of MediaSport and the Need for Ethical Criticism,” *Journal of Sports Media* 4, no. 1 (2009): 85-94.

⁸⁹ The NCAA was back in court as recently as September 2018 defending amateurism. Articulating the *topos* of purity, the NCAA’s lawyer, Donald Remy, claimed that “allowing paid professionals to replace student-athletes on college campuses would change the face of college sports as we know it.” Ralph D. Russo, “NCAA goes back to court, defending its amateurism rules,” *AP*, September 3, 2018, <https://www.apnews.com/db8398e20f8d4f959591b622160e408c>.

⁹⁰ David L. Andrews and Michael L. Silk, “Sport and Neoliberalism: An Affective-Ideological Articulation,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 51, no. 2 (2018): 515.

⁹¹ Ibid., 523, citing J. Read, “A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity,” *Foucault Studies*, 6 (2009): 27.

⁹² Division 1 Handbook, Article 17.10.6.3. The Concussion Safety Protocol Committee provides “guidance and updates concerning expectations and requirements for Concussion Safety Protocols and best practices for baseline testing, prevention, education, evaluation, and management of concussions in a manner that is consistent with the Interassociation Consensus: Diagnosis and Management of Sport-Related Concussion Best Practices.”

⁹³ Ibid., (Adopted: 4/24/03 effective 5/1/03)

⁹⁴ “Concussion and College Sports,” *NCAA.org* n.d., <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/media-center/feature/concussion-and-college-sports>. An estimated 37,000 student-athletes are estimated to participate by the study’s end in 2017. The NCAA’s emphasis on welfare and their initiatives to cultivate it may be understood as a response to public pressures or the decrease in young people participating in contact sports like football because of the risks of serious head injury and long-term effects of such injuries (Lisa Rapaport, “Fewer U.S. High School Athletes Play Football Amid Concussion Fears,” *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-kids-tackle-football/fewer-u-s-high-school-athletes-play-football-amid-concussion-fears-idUSKCN1G02LY>).

⁹⁵ "Well-Being," *NCAA.org* n.d., <http://www.ncaa.org/health-and-safety>.

⁹⁶ This is according to Gallup-Purdue Index Report that surveyed former student-athletes who received their degree between 1970 and 2014. See Brandon Busteed and Julie Ray, "Former Student-Athletes are Winners in Well-Being," *Gallup*, February 17, 2016, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/189206/former-student-athletes-winners.aspx>.

⁹⁷ There are numerous instances of this. As a result of "ignoring best practices," 19-year old offensive lineman Jordan McNair died of heatstroke during a summer football workout (Jonas Shaffer, "Maryland Offensive Lineman Jordan McNair Died of Heatstroke, According to Family's Foundation," *The Baltimore Sun*, July 16, 2018, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/sports/terps/tracking-the-terps/bs-sp-maryland-jordan-mcnair-heatstroke-20180716-story.html>); and Rick Maese, Jesse Dougherty, and Emily Giambalvo, "Maryland says football staff made mistakes treating player before his death, apologizes to family," *Washington Post*, August 14, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/terrapins-insider/wp/2018/08/14/university-of-maryland-apologizes-to-jordan-mcnair-family-for-mistakes-that-our-training-staff-made/?utm_term=.f496e2e85b49.

⁹⁸ Joseph Zucker, "Shabazz Napier Says He Goes to Bed Starving Because He Can't Afford Food," *Bleacher Report*, April 7, 2014, <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/2020901-shabazz-napier-says-he-goes-to-bed-starving-because-he-cant-afford-food>; and Patrick Hruby, "We Can't Pay College Athletes, Because They Might Fix Their Cars And Buy Food For The Homeless," *Vice Sports*, January 5, 2017, https://sports.vice.com/en_us/article/8qyy3b/we-cant-pay-college-athletes-because-they-might-fix-their-cars-and-buy-food-for-the-homeless.

⁹⁹ "Academics," *NCAA.org* n.d., <http://www.ncaa.org/opportunity/#academics>.

¹⁰⁰ "After The Game Career Center," *NCAA.org* n.d., <http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/former-student-athlete/careers>.

¹⁰¹ "Academics," *NCAA.org* n.d., <http://www.ncaa.org/about/what-we-do/academics>.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Phil DiStefano, "NCAA Value-based Revenue Distribution," *NCAA Resources* (YouTube), October 27, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=37&v=i3nXp1BSWqU; and Michelle Brutlag Hosick, "DI to distribute revenue based on academics," *NCAA.org*, October 27, 2016, <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/media-center/news/di-distribute-revenue-based-academics>.

¹⁰⁴ "Graduation Rates," *NCAA.org*, n.d., <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/graduation-rates>.

¹⁰⁵ NCAA Strategic Plan.

¹⁰⁶ "The Value of College Sports," *NCAA.org* n.d., <http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/value-college-sports>.

¹⁰⁷ Management and strategic communication literatures study these documents as “strategy texts.” See Matthias Wenzel and Jochen Koch, “Strategy as Staged Performance: A Critical-Discursive Perspective on Keynote Speeches as a Genre of Strategic Communication,” *Strategic Management Journal* 39 (2018): 639-63; Eero Vaara, Virpi Sorsa, and Pekka Pälli, “On the force potential of strategy texts: a critical discourse analysis of a strategic plan and its power effects in a city organization,” *Organization* 17, no. 6 (2010): 685-702; and E. Johanna Hartelius and Larry D. Browning, “The Application of Rhetorical Theory in Managerial Research: A Literature Review,” *Management Communication Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (2008): 13-39.

¹⁰⁸ Christensen and Cheney, “Self-Absorption and Self-Seduction in the Corporate Identity Game.” At the same time, as Christensen and Cheney observe, “the logic of auto-communication does not rule out the possibility that the messages in question *also* communicate to external audiences.”

¹⁰⁹ George Cheney, Lars Thøger Christensen, Charles Conrad and Daniel J. Lair, “Corporate Rhetoric as Organizational Discourse,” 83.

¹¹⁰ See Aaron J. Coutts, “Fatigue in Football: It’s Not a Brainless Task!” *Journal of Sports Sciences* 34, no. 14 (2016): 1296-1296; Dennis Dodd, “Pac-12 study reveals athletes ‘too exhausted to study effectively,’” *CBS Sports*, April 21, 2015, <https://www.cbssports.com/college-football/news/pac-12-study-reveals-athletes-too-exhausted-to-study-effectively/>; “Student-Athletes Not Sleeping Enough, Intervention Could Help,” *The University of Arizona Health Sciences*, January 20, 2017, <https://medicine.arizona.edu/news/2017/student-athletes-not-sleeping-enough-intervention-could-help>; and Joshua C. Watson, and Daniel B. Kissinger, “Athletic Participation and Wellness: Implications for Counseling College Student-Athletes,” *Journal of College Counseling* 10, no. 2 (2007): 153-62. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1882.2007.tb00015.x

¹¹¹ Scott A. Anderson, “The Junction Boys Syndrome,” *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* 26, no. 5 (2012): 1179-80.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 1180. There are over 100 instances of college football player deaths in the last century, even despite the NCAA’s founding in 1906 to “keep college athletes safe.”

¹¹³ Gerald Gurney, Donna Lopiano, and Andrew Zimbalist, *Unwinding Madness: What Went Wrong with College Sports – and How to Fix It* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2017), 111-12.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* A 2015 Pacific-12 Conference study revealed that typical full-time employees had more days off and more time off than athletes. The study found that, on average, athlete participants spent fifty hours per week on athletics during the regular playing season; fifty-four percent said they did not have enough time to study for tests; eighty percent reported missing classes because of athletic competitions; practices forced athletes to miss classes when practices ran late; seventy-two percent reported lack of time to sleep as the number one hindrance to academic and athletic success.

¹¹⁵ Rob Dauster, "Mark Emmert Refuses to Acknowledge NCAA's Fundamental Issue: The Sham of Amateurism," *NBC Sports*, February 23, 2018, <https://collegebasketball.nbcsports.com/2018/02/23/mark-emmert-refuses-to-acknowledge-ncaas-fundamental-issue-the-sham-of-amateurism/>.

¹¹⁶ Johnathan Berr, "March Madness: Follow the Money," *CBS News*, March 20, 2015, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/march-madness-follow-the-money/>.

¹¹⁷ Patrick Hruby, "The NCAA Says Paying Athletes Hurts Their Education. That's Laughable," *Washington Post*, September 20, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/the-ncaa-says-paying-athletes-hurts-their-education-thats-laughable/2018/09/20/147f26c0-bb80-11e8-a8aa-860695e7f3fc_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.8c35695a8e7a. Hruby argues that "the NCAA's assertion that if players are paid, then they won't study is inarguably paternalistic, arguably racist."

¹¹⁸ Karen L. Hartman, "ESPN's mythological rhetoric of Title IX," in *The ESPN Effect: Exploring the Worldwide Leader in Sports*, eds. John McGuire, Greg G. Armfield, and Adam Earnhardt (New York: Peter Lang, 2015).

Chapter 2: “The Maryland Way”? Myth and the Stakes of Hegemonic Masculinity in Big-Time Sport

On June 13, 2018, Jordan McNair, a redshirt freshman offensive lineman for Maryland Football, died after suffering a heatstroke fifteen days earlier during a summer workout. McNair collapsed after running 110-yard sprints and showed signs of extreme exhaustion and difficulty standing upright.¹ In August, Maryland President Wallace Loh accepted “legal and moral responsibility” for McNair’s death, and one investigation concluded that staff did not follow “best practices” in treating him. Indeed, staff instead chose to berate the athletes who were struggling physically, and as a result, McNair died.² McNair’s death was tragic – and completely avoidable – and the incident brought attention to a larger question of the culture of Maryland Football. *ESPN* reported a “toxic culture” at UMD, a culture of coaching based on fear and intimidation; belittling, humiliation, and embarrassment of players; extreme verbal abuse; and unhealthy eating habits.³ Strength and conditioning coach Rick Court resigned and head coach DJ Durkin was placed on administrative leave. Once the results of a separate investigation into the claims about UMD’s football culture were released,⁴ the Maryland Board of Regents’ recommendation to retain Durkin and several athletic trainers caused widespread controversy. President Loh ultimately reversed this decision after public criticism that was “instantaneous, overwhelming and unrelenting.”⁵ The campus community remains divided over their confidence in Loh and other university administrators, as this is not the first instance of a black student dying at Maryland.⁶ Nor is this an isolated incident of a college football player death.

The death of Jordan McNair raises several issues. First, this case illustrates the problem of oversight for the NCAA and its member institutions' promise and "priority" of student-athlete well-being in the Big-Time U. Indeed, the NCAA remained silent regarding the death of Jordan McNair.⁷ Traumatic and non-traumatic deaths are unfortunately commonplace in college football.⁸ Although this incident has provoked a flood of apologies and promises from UMD officials to McNair's family and the university community, a deeper dive into the organizational rhetoric prior to and after this incident can shed light on the organizational culture that predated, and, perhaps, allowed for the horrific tragedy to occur. This chapter explores the following research questions: What is the rhetorical and organizational culture of Maryland Athletics, and how, if so, does Maryland articulate the myth of the student-athlete through its organizational discourse? Further, how does the institution and its competing discourse communities' responses to McNair's tragic death maintain or contest the organizational culture of Maryland and the myth of the student-athlete?

To answer these questions, this chapter takes a careful look at the University of Maryland's organizational culture through analyzing its organizational rhetoric, or "messages created within and/or on behalf of organizations that seek to create identifications, solicit cooperation, and/or persuade."⁹ This tragedy illustrates the tension between the stated organizational values and principles and their enacted practices – both of which involve communication. Organizational rhetoric prior to and after the Jordan McNair tragedy is also representative of the wider public debates about big-time sport culture and the stakes of one of its root problems: hegemonic masculinity.¹⁰ Indeed, much of football's "public image reflects a violent, aggressive,

homo- and femiphobic aesthetic.”¹¹ This chapter analyzes official organizational rhetoric, such as the Maryland Athletics Strategic Plan and Student-Athlete Handbook, as well as unofficial rhetoric such as the coaching behaviors at Maryland, behaviors which were ascertained through former and current players’ interviews in news coverage and testimony in the two separate investigations. There is a clear disconnect between these organizational rhetorics.

Before analyzing the discourse of this case study, I develop the context by reviewing the organizational culture at the University of Maryland through analyzing discourse that articulates its defining athletics slogan “The Maryland Way.” I trace “The Maryland Way” through archival pamphlets and newsletters, the Athletics Department Strategic Plan and Student-Athlete Handbook, statements from administrators, online discourse, and news coverage. I argue that “The Maryland Way” rhetoric articulates the myth of the student-athlete primarily by constructing UM athletics as a key element in the production of *aretē*, or excellence. Specifically, UM athletics argues that, by participating in sports, student-athletes are responsible, capable athletically and academically, and prepared to be good citizens and future workers. Further, “The Maryland Way” is also a claim of broader institutional excellence, which articulates the front porch myth discussed in the introduction – as represented by UMD’s outstanding student-athletes “on and off the field.” Then, I analyze organizational rhetoric in the wake of Jordan McNair’s death. In particular, I analyze administrative responses to the McNair tragedy, current and former players’ discourse, and op-eds in both local and national news sources.

BIG Organizational Culture at Maryland: Front Porch and Beyond

After joining the Big Ten conference in 2014, the University of Maryland reinforced its status as a Big-Time U. Though the university was previously a member of a different “Power-Five” conference (the ACC), the Big Ten Conference has a national reputation for excellence and institutional prestige. The Big Ten (B1G) is “high status” because its members rank highly in either academics or athletics (or both).¹² Indeed, in 2017, all of the Big Ten schools except one ranked within the top 100 best national universities.¹³ Striking the balance between academics and athletics “is integral to the Big Ten’s identity.”¹⁴ Arik Lifschitz, Michael Sauder, and Mitchell Stevens argue that although the conference system developed to coordinate intercollegiate football, this development has also played a key role in structuring the larger status system of U.S. colleges and universities.¹⁵ They explain that “the conference system has provided a cognitive map of the organizational field, shaping how schools see themselves and each other and how the general public perceives the entire sector.”¹⁶ Further, many of the universities in the B1G are land-grant universities. As I have established in the introduction, the relationship between sports and higher education in the land-grant context is significant. Maryland, then, can be understood as a representative Big-time U whose athletics institutional culture can and should be studied critically and in depth. Further, other recent controversies on Maryland’s campus give the findings of this case study even more significance.¹⁷ Before analyzing discursive representations of “The Maryland Way” before and after Jordan McNair’s death, I begin by establishing the broader symbolic context at Maryland.

Founded in 1856, The University of Maryland is the land-grant institution for the state and enrolls roughly forty thousand undergraduate students, many of whom hail from nearby Prince George's and Montgomery counties in Maryland.¹⁸ The Maryland Board of Regents oversees the twelve institutions that make up the state university system of Maryland.¹⁹ This administrative group is largely appointed by the state's governor, and as such, the university is inextricably tied to state-level politics. The four colors of the University of Maryland – red, white, black, and gold – echo the striking Maryland state flag, which is based on the shield in the coat of arms of George Calvert, first Lord Baltimore and original colonial proprietor of what became Maryland.²⁰ Adopting the state flag as the university's colors solidifies the status of Maryland as the land-grant institution and the important relationship between the university and the state. Maryland declares its mission as follows:

The University creates and applies knowledge, providing outstanding instruction and nourishing a climate of intellectual growth in a broad range of academic disciplines and interdisciplinary fields. As a land-grant institution, the University shares its research, educational, cultural, and technological strengths with the Maryland citizenry and other constituencies. Its collaborations with State, federal, private and non-profit partners promote economic development and improve quality of life.²¹

As a land-grant institution, Maryland values its relationship with the broader community.

Maryland's athletics institutional culture, like many universities, was established in the mid-twentieth century when the "repeated expression of shared symbols, language, narratives, and practices" gave "form to the norms, values, and beliefs that define its unique culture."²² Toma argues that institutional culture can be directly observed in and around the stadium on football Saturdays (or men's home

basketball games), when “the university community displays its culture in tangible and unique forms, such as its colors, logos, and mascots (symbols); songs and slogans (language); stories, legends, and myths (narratives); and rituals and ceremonials (practices).”²³ At Maryland, as at other institutions, there are many traditions. For example, during football and basketball games, two giant pieces of the Maryland state flag are unfurled from the top of two student sections while a historical video set to the “2001: A Space Odyssey” theme song plays.²⁴ Maryland’s athletics logo (and mascot) is Testudo the Diamondback Terrapin, a symbol chosen because the Diamondback Turtle is, allegedly, incapable of walking or moving backwards. This is supposed to represent the forward progress of the university. The 1991 edition of *Top Shell*, an archival Maryland Football publication, explains the “tale of the top shell” in this way:

When Testudo had his coming out on May 23, 1933, he was thrown into a world filled with intimidating mascots – Wildcats, Tigers, Devils, Wolves, Bears, thought up over a half century of intercollegiate competition. Dr. H.C. Byrd, a football coach who later became University President, recommended the *Diamondback* as mascot in 1932 in response to the student newspaper’s search for an “official” leader. Byrd’s childhood in Cristfield, Md., apparently included skirmishes with this brand of snapping turtle, indigenous to the Bay.²⁵

All universities – save for, perhaps, web-based institutions – have symbols like these that uniquely define their culture.

As at other big-time universities, undergraduates and alumni grapple with their institutional identification. Some eagerly identify with Maryland because they feel a sense of connectedness and belonging, united by community stories, rituals, and values.²⁶ Some identify with Maryland’s rhetoric of “Fearless Ideas,” which represents “the university’s dedication to ‘entrepreneurship, innovation, research, and

leadership.”²⁷ The slogan appears on shuttle buses, flags on campus light poles, and on fundraising materials sent to alumni and donors.”²⁸ “Fearless Ideas” replaced the former slogan, which was mostly tied to athletics, “Fear the Turtle.”²⁹ Others in the community take issue with these dominant discourses and point to systemic flaws within the university that must be addressed in order for all members to feel included and welcome.³⁰

As a southern school, much of the symbolism on Maryland’s campus – athletics and otherwise – unfortunately has racist ties.³¹ For example, many campus buildings are named for Confederate heroes and are tied to slave labor.³² Most relevant to this case is the university’s football stadium, which was renamed in 2015. Maryland Stadium was previously named after Dr. H.C. Byrd, who “was a multi-sport athlete as an undergraduate, later the head football coach and later still the Maryland president.... The stadium was part of the enormous post World War II expansion of the University overseen by Byrd and Dr. Wilson Elkins.”³³ However, H.C. “Curley” Byrd was a proponent of racial segregation and specifically lobbied to bar black students from playing football.³⁴ Further, one of the marching band’s traditional songs, “Maryland, My Maryland,” is a pro-Confederate song. In the wake of the 2017 white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, North Carolina, Maryland decided to halt the performance or playing of “Maryland, My Maryland” at intercollegiate athletics events.³⁵ The relationship between the university and the southern confederacy gives the recent deaths of two young black men even more significance. With this broader rhetorical context at Maryland in mind, the next section specifically analyzes the organizational rhetoric of Maryland Athletics.

Establishing and Maintaining Athletics' Institutional Culture: "The Maryland Way"

Universities spend millions of dollars to financially sustain their sports programs through scholarships, facilities, and academic/professional resources for their student-athletes. However, university athletics departments also rhetorically legitimize the culture of big-time sport by reinforcing the myth of the student-athlete and the particular lines of argument related to that myth. In 2014, around the time of joining the Big Ten,³⁶ the University of Maryland Athletics Department announced its "Maryland Way Guarantee."³⁷ In that case, the "Maryland Way" referred to a new multi-year scholarship guarantee that was implemented in order to achieve UM Athletics' vision "to be the best intercollegiate athletic program while producing graduates who are prepared to serve as leaders in the local, state and global communities."³⁸

Emblazoned on both archival and contemporary athletics' promotional materials, the UM Athletics Department's 5-year strategic plan, and the UM student-athlete handbook, "The Maryland Way" represents more than a promise of a multi-year scholarship.³⁹ This slogan articulates the idealized organizational culture of Maryland's "front porch," or its athletics programs, and a key axiological *topos* attached to the myth of the student-athlete: excellence. However, Maryland's rhetorical emphasis on excellence, which is defined largely (like at other institutions) as "success on and off the field," unfortunately is often in direct tension with another *topos*: college-athlete well-being. "The Maryland Way" functions as a particular myth in the University of Maryland's organizational culture. This myth also articulates lines of argument connected to the myth of the student-athlete. Specifically, "The

Maryland Way” is an example of sports organizational rhetoric that characterizes student-athletes as leaders and athletics as a cultivator of future citizens who will make positive contributions to society. In so doing, “The Maryland Way” articulates the myth of the student-athlete, in particular the *topos* of excellence.

“The Maryland Way” has come to define the organizational culture of Maryland Athletics and the university writ large. “The Maryland Way” was formally adopted as an athletics motto in the 2012-2017 University of Maryland Department of Intercollegiate Athletics Strategic Plan and editions of the Student-Athlete Handbook in the 2010s. One archival text lists the following characteristics of “The Maryland Way”:

The academic diversity, the social life, and the unlimited facilities available at the nation’s third largest campus;

Winning national championships in six sports, ranking in the top ten in 10 sports, and playing in the NCAA tournament in yet another;

The business, professional, and sports positions open to a young man [sic] with a Maryland degree;

The excitement of 40,000 fans crowding Byrd [Maryland] stadium or 15,000 singing Amen in Cole Field House;

An Athletic department devoted to making the student athlete a successful citizen;

Spending four years in a suburban setting only miles from the world’s most exciting and influential city, Washington, D.C.⁴⁰

This list articulates several values, including values of higher education and collegiate life generally, winning/success/excellence on the field, the ideal of amateurism, the front porch myth, and other markers of institutional excellence, such as “making the athlete a citizen” and “spending time only miles from the most exciting and

influential city.” These six characteristics are the foundation for the Maryland Athletics Strategic Plan and Student-Athlete handbook documents, which both articulate the “Maryland Way.” In the Strategic Plan document, “The Maryland Way” slogan conveys the answers to the following questions: What does the University of Maryland stand for?; What are its key organizational values?; and, specifically mentioned in the document, “What business are we in?; and what will success look like?”⁴¹ These final two questions highlight the desired outcomes of UM Athletics. Framing the enterprise as a “business” articulates the corporate realities of big-time sport, which have been discussed in the introduction of this dissertation. It also reflects Mark Emmert’s claim that NCAA sports is “in the human development business.” Defining success is also significant, since it allows for an open interpretation of the concept of “excellence” on and off the field. Winning is important, but what else constitutes success? Who gets to decide – the administrators or the participants?

These questions direct UM Athletics to clearly articulate their mission, norms, ideals, customs, and values. UM Athletics states its core values as: “passionate,” “responsible,” “innovative,” “determined,” and “excellent.” The first letters of these five words spell “PRIDE” –itself another value of UM Athletics. The Student-Athlete Handbook also contains information about university history and traditions, the BIG Conference, information about the Academic Support and Career Development Unit – recently renamed the Gossett Center for Academic & Personal Excellence⁴² – and NCAA policies. It is fifty-three pages long and distributed to all incoming student-athletes during their orientation procedures. It is also available online.

Both the Strategic Plan and the student-athlete handbook legitimize the myth of the student-athlete by emphasizing athletics' potential for cultivating *aretē*. "The Maryland Way" is threaded through these organizational documents and reinforces the *topoi* of the myth of the student-athlete. "The Maryland Way" is a particular version of a universal trope articulating excellence in big-time college sports.⁴³ At the heart of "The Maryland Way" is the Maryland student-athlete. In this case, UM Athletics characterizes student-athlete excellence as the potential for leadership and asserts that sports participation aids in developing future model citizens who exhibit excellence both academically and athletically.

Importantly, the *topos* of excellence is shaped by hegemonic masculinity. In particular, success in sport has historically been equated with performative ideals of masculinity like dominance, competition, and aggression.⁴⁴ However, Susan Bordo notes that there are conflicting messages about masculinity in the sport of football:

Think of the instruction in raw aggression that football provides and how it encourages the player to think of his body as a fierce, unstoppable force of nature. Think of how this aggression is rewarded – with scholarships, community adulation, romantic attention, special attendance deals cut with teachers, administrative leniency when "boys will be boys." Now imagine the young quarterback at a workshop on date rape, held by the counseling center of the same high school which is encouraging him to be an animal on the football field. At that workshop, he's told he must learn that he is not an animal, that his body is not an unstoppable force of nature, that it yield, in fact, to one little word. Now, which is this young man supposed to be . . . an animal or a gentleman?⁴⁵

In the realm of sport, especially big-time sport, excellence is associated with enacting the dominant ideals of hegemonic masculinity. The "best" players are often the most aggressive and domineering; they possess traditionally masculine qualities in their appearance and performance; and they are talented. These markers of excellence in

sport – and excellence in other contexts – are shaped by traditional notions of masculinity. With this in mind, the following sections explore how the *topos* of excellence is articulated through Maryland’s organizational rhetoric. In what follows, I trace “The Maryland Way” through these documents and argue that this slogan articulates the myth of the student-athlete, in particular, the axiological *topos* of excellence and a subcategory of excellence: leadership. There are four components of this leadership: citizenship, academic and athletic success, responsibility, and potential (future) excellence.

Excellence and Citizenship

The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics (ICA) at Maryland states its vision as being “the best intercollegiate athletics program while producing graduates who are prepared to serve as leaders in the local, state, and global communities.”⁴⁶ This vision is consistent with other Big-time U’s organizational discourse that articulates the common argument that college sports cultivate *aretē*, or excellence, both on and off the field –in mind, body, and spirit. This translates to excellence in the public sphere, beyond the field. There are initiatives in Maryland Athletics (like at other big-time U’s) such as volunteer and mentorship programs to achieve this goal of developing citizens. The Strategic Plan elaborates on the value of excellence when it states, “guided by our focus on the Maryland Way, coaches, staff and faculty provide student-athletes with academic and athletic experiences which will help them develop sound leadership skills, the ability to collaborate with others, and the confidence to persevere through life’s challenges.”⁴⁷ All in all, participating in athletics translates to learning how to become a good citizen.

Participation in athletics has historically been tied to citizenship. The introduction explained the tie between higher education, citizenship, and sport – via sports in the land-grant – but sports have their own connection here: cultural citizenship.⁴⁸ Cultural citizenship is defined as “the struggle over the norms, practices, meanings, and identities through which groups and individuals are socially included and excluded in society.”⁴⁹ We see this connection through women and minorities participating in sport for the first time – following their enfranchisement in the larger political sphere – and athletes demonstrating their political views on and off the field.⁵⁰ Sports can be democratizing.⁵¹ However, the value of citizenship is tangled with the ideology of hegemonic masculinity, since ideals of citizenship are historically interconnected with traditional ideals of “manliness.”⁵² Thus, the type of “citizens” big-time sport develops are oftentimes hegemonically masculine. This is problematic for reasons that have been explored extensively in other literatures. In this context, citizenship in sport reflects “capitalist relations, thus serving to promote and ideologically legitimize competition, meritocracy, consumerism, militarism, and instrumental rationality,”⁵³ all of which are traditionally masculine characteristics. Further, as I explained in the introduction, participation in college sports has often been an integral element in preparing young [men] soldiers for war.⁵⁴ In addition to excellence and citizenship, excellence is also connected to the concrete idea of leadership through academic and athletic excellence.

Leadership Through Both Academic and Athletic Excellence

To become a “leader on and off the field,” which is a common phrase in big-time sport rhetoric, college athletes must demonstrate academic and athletic

excellence, which are both cultivated through participation in college sports. Former Athletics Director Kevin Anderson asserted the commitment of UM Athletics to “educate and develop our student-athletes” in the Maryland Athletics Strategic Plan document. Anderson’s pledge reflects Emmert’s claim that NCAA sports are in the “human development business.” The language asserting “full” and “unequivocal” commitment to student-athletes also reflects Anderson’s mission. Further, Maryland’s Athletics Department “Twenty-First century Athletics Department Matrix” provides a visual that literally places the student-athlete at the center of the organizational chart.⁵⁵ This rhetorical placement envisages Mike Milford’s argument that the “student-athlete” is the guiding ideological symbol, or central substance, of NCAA college sports.⁵⁶ In order to deliver an exceptional student-athlete experience, and in turn, develop student-athlete leaders, Anderson asserts that UM Athletics is committed to six pillars of “The Maryland Way.” These pillars are related to the organization’s core values as well as the questions posed by the Strategic Plan’s opening.

The first and second pillars, academic excellence and leadership development and competitive excellence, articulate *aretē* and the goal of developing leaders on and off the field. Chapter two of the Student-Athlete Handbook directly addresses the goal of developing leadership skills for Maryland athlete leaders. This chapter details the Gossett Center for Academic and Personal Excellence (also called the Academic Support and Career Development Unit),⁵⁷ which is a “comprehensive and innovative academic support program developed to serve student-athletes.”⁵⁸ Leadership is explicitly mentioned in the mission of the ASCDU, which is

to educate, develop, and to support Maryland student-athletes while producing graduates who are prepared to serve as leaders in the local, state, and global communities. The goal is to provide Maryland student-athletes with academic support within an enriching and supporting environment in order to ensure access to all of the resources needed to earn a university diploma.

Units like the Gossett Center are common across Big-time U's, a similarity I discuss in the conclusion. The creation of these departments "puts the University's commitment to the student-athlete front and center."⁵⁹ Maryland asserts that "it is important to the University that each student-athlete grow academically and graduate, and to that end Academic Support has as large a presence as any sport program in the athletic department."⁶⁰ The commitment to student-athlete academic excellence reflects the NCAA's rhetoric and serves as further support for the doctrine of amateurism, as it is connected to education. However, reformers point out that the support systems provided for athletes "deprive them of their opportunities for a quality education...[and] impedes their capacity to function in today's world."⁶¹ John Gerdy argues that "such a controlled, authoritative environment hinders an athlete's ability to think and act for him[*sic*]self."⁶² This brings up the question of intent versus effect. That is, the NCAA and their member institutions strive to give college athletes a superior experience, yet what they receive – and what they sacrifice to receive it – is often not a superior experience at all. Nevertheless, these support programs strive to provide the kind of experience where college athletes can succeed academically and athletically and demonstrate their leadership capabilities.

Excellence and Responsibility

Another subcategory of excellence, and related to leadership, is the subcategory of responsibility. Student-athletes should also demonstrate

“responsibility,” or duty, in their athletic and academic endeavors, since that is an important component of leadership. Responsibility is attributed to both Maryland Athletics and Maryland athletes. One of the six pillars listed in the Student-Athlete Handbook is program integrity, which articulates a goal of moral excellence and responsibility. The Strategic Plan also states “responsible” as the second core value in the acronym of values “P.R.I.D.E.”⁶³ Although one of the primary functions of the Student-Athlete Handbook is to inform, this text also communicates key values encompassed by “The Maryland Way” and also one of Karl Wallace’s three classes of values for axiological rhetoric: the obligatory.⁶⁴ Like the NCAA Division I handbook, university-level handbooks are created annually by the Athletics Department for student-athletes to ensure that they “understand the expectations of being a [Maryland] student-athlete.” The opening letter to student-athletes (from the Athletics Director) in the handbook emphasizes the importance of understanding “the significance of participating in intercollegiate athletics – it is an honor and a privilege.”⁶⁵ This statement reflects the idea that intercollegiate athletics are a large constituent of the university and the behavior – the good and the bad – of student-athletes reflects positively or negatively on the institution. Reminding students that it is “an honor and a privilege” to participate and represent Maryland emphasizes the symbolic role they have within their university. However, despite responsibility being attributed to the institution and program, the onus of responsibility is placed solely on the athletes. As the second part of this analysis will demonstrate, there is a lack of accountability and responsibility from administrators in these big-time sport contexts. The remainder of this chapter will explore how excellence and responsibility (in

addition to welfare) were questioned in the aftermath of Jordan McNair's death. Chapter three will explore the theme of responsibility and tie it to self- and other-advocacy. For example, some athletes have critiqued the rules and regulations and instead adopt the belief that their actual responsibility is to advocate for the greater good of college sports – not simply to “shut up and play.”⁶⁶

During athletes' participation, there are several markers of responsibility outlined by the Student-Athlete Handbook. The handbook outlines policies ranging from academic expectations to student conduct on and off the field as well as specific criteria of conduct for student-athletes to represent the University of Maryland in a positive light as leaders. The Maryland student-athlete code of conduct (chapter four of the handbook) reads,

The University of Maryland has established a tradition of ethical conduct at all levels of university life. In accordance with this tradition, all student-athletes involved in the intercollegiate athletics program are expected to represent the university in an honorable manner at all times.

“Honorable manner” translates to “rule abiding” in this context, although “honorable” can be interpreted as other generally desirable behaviors as well, such as demonstrating leadership on and off the field, academic excellence, or otherwise ethical or moral behaviors. Regarding the student-athlete code of conduct and rules, the handbook makes it very clear that “student-athletes are subject to all university policies” and “all student-athletes are expected to conduct themselves both on and off the field in a manner that will bring respect to their teammates, coaches, and the University.”⁶⁷ While the university will handle any infractions “in the same manner as for the general student body,” the Department of Athletics takes additional action for specific athletics policy infractions, such as criminal charges and convictions;

university code of student conduct and student-athlete code of conduct violations (including violations of the code that occur online or through the use of social media); university code of academic integrity; drug testing policies; and the conference sportsman[*sic*]ship policy.⁶⁸ A broader idea that encompasses excellence, leadership, and responsibility and its varying aspects is sportsman[*sic*]ship.

Detailing ethical conduct in sports participation and the intricacies of sportsman[*sic*]like conduct, the policy portion of the handbook articulates the obligatory and desirable values of student-athlete leaders; leaders follow the rules and act ethically.⁶⁹ In order to represent the university as positive leaders, student-athletes must remember and abide by policies. These rules govern behavior both on and off the field. On the field, being a “good sport” reflects both duty and excellence.⁷⁰ This is the sports competitor that “exhibits valued social behaviors, and is aware of the sociocultural values of fairness, civil courtesy, ethical behavior” and respect.⁷¹ However, Peter Arnold argues that being a “good sport” goes beyond willingly abiding by the rules to the interests of what is fair: “It is concerned, in addition, with the preservation and furtherance of its best traditions, customs, and conventions.”⁷² As such, a notion of “altruism” is also central to ethics and character in sports contests, which reflects Karl Wallace’s class of values related to “the desirable or the praiseworthy.”⁷³ Unfortunately, in many cases, traditions, customs, and conventions in big-time sport can be problematic, and ultimately the myth of the student-athlete maintains those problematic customs. Most Student-Athlete handbooks do not address the problematic ideologies underlying their customs and traditions, instead choosing to focus on deference values, which are those that “consist in being taken

into consideration in the acts of others and of the self” and hinge on power, respect, rectitude, and affection.⁷⁴ The Maryland Student-Athlete Handbook expresses these deference values when it states,

All student-athletes are expected to conduct themselves both on and off the field in a manner that will bring respect to their teammates, coaches, and the University. Inappropriate or unsportsmanlike conduct will be handled in accordance with the current policies of the Department of Athletics, the University, and the State of Maryland. In addition, all student-athletes are expected to adhere to the Maryland Sportsmanship Principles adopted by the President’s Commission on Sportsmanship when serving as an athlete and as student.

Those principles include attaining and celebrating excellence, respect, and integrity.

The concept of sportsmanship entangles several values of excellence, such as duty and obligation (responsibility), deference and respect, ethics, integrity, and so on.

While every institution maintains their own codes of conduct and statements on sportsmanship, most also refer to the larger NCAA or Big Ten Sportsmanship Policies. Expressing the same values, the Big Ten Sportsmanship Policy states that “actions that are offensive to the integrity of the competition, actions that offend civility, and actions of disrespect are subject to review and are punishable in accordance with the terms of this policy.” Maryland Football was reprimanded in 2014 for violating the Big Ten’s Sportsmanship Policy.⁷⁵

There is some inconsistency in the Big Ten’s sportsmanship policy (which is included in all Big Ten institutions’ Student-Athlete Handbooks). Whereas the application of the policy “is intentionally left unrestricted in order to accommodate any behavior, which may occur in any setting, deemed by the Commissioner, to offend the underlying objective this policy seeks to achieve,” it still only applies to the athletes themselves, and not the coaches, staff, or administrators involved in the

intercollegiate athletics enterprise. The policy does state that member institutions are accountable and responsible for the “actions of its employees, coaches, student-athletes, band, spirit squads, mascot(s), general student body, and any other individual or group of individuals over whom or which it maintains some level of authority.” At the same time, this policy emphasizes sportsmanlike conduct during the “contests” themselves. Summer practices apparently do not fall under the jurisdiction of this policy. Sportsmanship policies govern specific behaviors on the field, but the concept can be extended to behaviors off the field as well. Yet, sportsmanship only extends to the bodies who wear uniforms and compete, not the bodies who wear suits and govern their participation, such as coaches or administrators. The lack of accountability for coaches and administrators regarding the values of sportsmanship and responsibility can unfortunately create a situation where a young person gets hurt or dies. Along with questions on the *topos* of welfare, moral excellence and program integrity were questioned in the wake of Jordan McNair’s tragic death.

Off the field, excellence and responsibility encompasses an academic code of conduct as well as all other university policies. The academic code of conduct emphasizes, “in accepting admission to the University, student-athletes assume the responsibility of meeting not only athletic obligations, but also those obligations that come with being serious students interested in earning degrees.”⁷⁶ Indeed, the first principle in this code, which is bolded, states that all student-athletes are expected to acknowledge that earning an undergraduate degree is the primary goal of being a collegiate student-athlete, which articulates the *topos* of purity, and specifically, the ideal of amateurism. There are ten other principles outlined in this code of conduct,

all of which detail how student-athletes are to conduct themselves as students. For example, attending and being prepared for all classes, completing assignments on time, meeting with advisors, attending study table and review sessions, and so on. Regarding policies “impacting student-athlete health and welfare,” which, of course, articulates the *topos* of welfare, the handbook lists alcohol and drugs; binge drinking and high-risk alcohol consumption; use of tobacco products; sexual misconduct; discrimination and harassment; and hazing as violations.⁷⁷ Yet again, these expectations for a responsible person apply only to the athletes themselves, and not the potentially abusive behavior of coaches. There is a sport supervisor for each team, and student-athletes are encouraged to contact their respective supervisor to discuss any special issues or concerns that may arise during their time at the University of Maryland.⁷⁸ Responsibility is perhaps the most substantial subcategory of the *topos* of excellence.

Potential: Future Excellence

Related to the other aspects of excellence, the Strategic Plan and Student-Athlete Handbook also reflect the goal of preparing athletes to succeed after sport in their chosen career paths *outside of* athletics and *beyond* their college careers. Both the Strategic Plan and the student-athlete handbook detail a “life skills and career development” initiative.⁷⁹ The goal of “Student Athlete Development” is to “prepare student-athletes for productive, successful lives after Maryland” – a goal shared by virtually every academic or student affairs department on a Big-time U’s campus. Implicit here is the argument that athletics provides students with a particular set of tools to become successful, not only as citizens, but also in their personal lives and

careers. These seemingly genuine goals reflect a larger neoliberal and academic capitalistic view of higher education, which views the telos of higher education as training future economic actors.⁸⁰ The “Brand U Program” at Maryland, for example, is an initiative designed to assist “in preparing Maryland student-athletes with sound personal and leadership skills that provide a foundation for confidence through transition, persistence in everyday challenges, and preparation for life after sport.”

Brand U is one of several departmental programs geared toward Maryland athletes “that reflect a commitment to the Maryland Way.” The mission of Brand U states that a “commitment to The Maryland Way guides our efforts to help students build a foundation for successful life after participation in Intercollegiate Athletics.” These programs are part and parcel of the structure of college athletics, since most college athletes do not go on to play their sport professionally following their tenure.⁸¹ The four “foundational pillars” of Brand U are Leadership Potential, Career Aptitude, Personal Enhancement, and Financial Literacy.⁸² Using sport as a “leadership laboratory,” “Brand U promotes lifelong learning to enrich self-awareness, professional advancement and civic engagement.” The building blocks of the program are personal development, career development, leadership development, and mentorship.⁸³ The 2018-2019 edition of Maryland’s Student-Athlete Handbook includes highlights of the Brand-U program: “Terps on the Go,” which delivers a custom-designed curriculum including topics such as career development, money management, mental health resources, healthy relationships, alcohol awareness, nutrition, leadership and personal wellness; TERPS Wellness Series, which are educational seminars hosted each semester with a focus on promoting awareness,

education, and motivation for positive behavior change; business etiquette socials; and career coaches.⁸⁴ The Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), a concept I explore further in chapter three, plays an important role in the development of life skills and career development program within the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics. It consists of two representatives from each varsity sport and meets on a regular basis with representatives from the athletic administration. The SAAC mission is to enhance the total student-athlete experience by cultivating leadership skills and service initiatives, promoting student-athlete welfare and enhancing the student-athlete voice. Brand U focuses on developing the Maryland college athlete beyond both their athletic and academic excellence toward a future excellence after sport.

I have only covered a handful of the most relevant pillars, policies, and programs featured in Strategic Plan and the Student-Athlete Handbook. There are some other notable points the Student-Athlete Handbook that further nuance the *topos* of excellence. For example, the third pillar listed in the handbook, financial sustainability, introduces the subcategory of fiscal excellence in athletics and reflects the question of “business” posed earlier in this chapter as well as in chapter one. Fiscal excellence also introduces the tension between academic and financial values in big-time sport. Further, and significantly, financial excellence does not apply to college athletes. Rather, in the context of academic capitalism and corporatized higher education, financial excellence only applies to the institution. This tension will be explored in chapter three and the conclusion. Finally, the fourth pillar, “image and branding,” relates to communicating the program’s identity and excellence and also

articulates the idea that Maryland Athletics are a “front porch” to the university, a concept I explained in the introduction. This pillar is also similar to the pillar of “tradition and pride,” which expresses the ideal of community and identification with UM Athletics – a marker of excellence in big-time sports.

While the Strategic Plan communicates the values of Maryland Athletics to itself,⁸⁵ the information provided to Maryland student-athletes in the Student-Athlete handbook serves to “onboard” them to the UM Athletics and orient them to the organization’s values, which are also expressed in the Strategic Plan, and expectations for conduct.⁸⁶ These documents represent internal organizational rhetoric. They function to constitute, reinforce, legitimize, and maintain the rhetorical culture of big-time sport. This discourse serves as the foundation for the next part of my analysis, which explores how the “Maryland Way” is articulated or disarticulated by various university and community responses to the tragic death of Jordan McNair.

Purity, Welfare, and Excellence After Jordan McNair: “The Maryland Way”?

As I have explained, sports – and particularly big-time football – have historically been appreciated for their function of reinforcing dominant ideas of masculinity in the pursuit of “excellence.” Maryland is no exception. Consider the following quotes, found in a 1930’s university publication titled “Athletics at Maryland”:

Ideals encouraged and fostered in athletics form the basis of the integrity and strength which big men so much need to be successful. Athletics offer opportunities for the systematic development of a sound body, without which even the most brilliant mind is greatly handicapped. They combine with that the requisites that go to make the manly man and develop a higher form of citizenship.

Participation in athletics makes a boy a man; develops the more or less retiring youth into the aggressive individual who has the courage and resourcefulness to surmount obstacle after obstacle in the far more difficult game he must play in attaining the goal long before set for him on the great gridiron of life.⁸⁷

Although contemporary texts, such as the Maryland's Strategic Plan and Student-Athlete Handbook, do not articulate hegemonic masculinity as expressly as texts from 1930, formal practices on the field and communication to/among players still reflects this ideology.⁸⁸ For example, football players under former coach Durkin attested to engaging in "practices not even seen in the military" and were exposed to violent imagery, vulgar (and often sexualized) language to motivate players, and so on. These behaviors are not unique to Maryland football, but the tragedy at Maryland illustrates a renewed exigence for the eradication of these coaching practices.⁸⁹ But Maryland's coaching practices, and its "toxic culture," in the words of *ESPN*'s exposé, have been the subject of national attention after Jordan McNair died as a result of that culture. The case at Maryland illustrates a conflict between the ideals of the myth of the student-athlete – purity, welfare, and excellence – and the rhetoric among organizational members of big-time sport, particularly coaches and players, that attempts to achieve those ideals. The following analysis details how Maryland articulated the *topoi* of the student-athlete myth through their organizational responses to the tragedy. In contrast, I highlight critics' and other university groups' counter-discourse, which articulates the dark sides of purity, welfare, and excellence to instead illuminate the toxicity and failure of big-time sport. Importantly, these critiques illustrate the dangers of hegemonic masculinity in big-time football.

Purity and Toxicity

The axiological *topos* of purity was decidedly absent from institutional responses to Jordan McNair’s death; there was no claim to the purity of big-time sport or amateurism. However, responses did indicate that the allegations of toxicity would be taken seriously, which expresses the goal of purity, when the University System of Maryland (USM) assumed control of an investigation into what ESPN called a “toxic culture.” Wallace Loh said,

We must thoroughly investigate the death of student-athlete Jordan McNair and understand the allegations of the culture of our football program so that we can ensure the health and well-being of every one of our student-athletes... We will continue to honor Jordan’s life, and we will work with our Board of Regents to ensure that a tragedy like this never happens again.⁹⁰

Loh emphasized that “with regard to these allegations, which are very serious, they were totally inconsistent with what we stand for and our values, which is about education, preparing student athletes for life, and to be treated with respect and dignity”⁹¹ – rhetoric I did not see anywhere prior to this tragedy. Former USM Board of Regents Chair James Brady, on the topic of the investigation, claimed that their goal was “to ensure that all system universities, including [the University of Maryland College Park,] are actively working to protect the health and safety of every student and to foster a supportive culture in which everyone can flourish.”⁹² To “foster a supportive culture” articulates the goal of purity, the ideal of a positive, “clean” experience where college athletes can thrive.

Popular critics and journalists highlighted the *topos* of purity, but as its dirty opposite: filth. Taylor Branch famously highlighted “The Shame of College Sports” in 2011,⁹³ wherein he argued that the shame in college sports is not college athletes “taking money under the table,” – an issue I will explore in the conclusion – but

rather, the shame is the myth of the student-athlete, particularly the idea that college sports and their athletes are the purer form of sports, that is corrupt. Whereas the NCAA and its member institutions claim that both the student-athlete and the university they represent are the *purier*, less-corrupt version of sport, compared to professional sports, critics argued that the Jordan McNair case represents the worst of the impurity of college sports. For example:

And then there's the University of Maryland, where the sunken river of foulness running under all our institutions exploded to the surface and, in doing so, has led more than one reasonable person—like, say, me—to wonder if the country wouldn't be better off if the Maryland football program were crated up and shipped off to Alpha Centauri, if they'd have it there, which I doubt.⁹⁴

Heather Dinich, Adam Rittenberg and Tom VanHaaren, writing for *ESPN*, are most known for framing the incident at Maryland as a result of a “toxic culture” in football.⁹⁵ In August 2018, two current Maryland players, multiple people close to the football program, and former players and football staffers spoke to *ESPN* about Maryland's football culture under Durkin and strength and conditioning coach Rick Court. They reported a coaching environment based on fear and intimidation; belittling, humiliation, and embarrassment of players; extreme verbal abuse; and coach-endorsed problematic eating habits.⁹⁶ These are all outgrowths of the culture of hegemonic masculinity. *ESPN* highlighted the fact that many football programs have “hot tempered coaches” who engage in coaching practices like “grueling workouts,” and “expletive-laced rants,” but one former Maryland staffer stated that he “would never, ever, ever allow [his] child to be coached there.”⁹⁷ Maryland may be an extreme case, but it represents systemic impurities that are deeply ingrained in the institution of big-time sport.

The conclusion of the “Report on Maryland Football Culture,” which was commissioned by President Loh, cited problems and dysfunction but “stopped short of the ‘toxic’ label.”⁹⁸ The report spread around responsibility “for woes within the football program and the athletic department, citing oversight problems from top to bottom and taking issue at times with the way the football coach, athletic director and school administrators conducted themselves.”⁹⁹ This report, unsurprisingly, received a lot of criticism and members of the community voiced their disapproval of the whole process. The report states,

If the culture had been “malicious” or “harmful,” Mr. Durkin would not have earned the loyalty and respect of many of his student-athletes and coaches... Many players interviewed by the Commission felt Mr. Durkin’s and Mr. Court’s coaching tactics reflected those of a “big time” football program.¹⁰⁰

These claims are troubling. Not only do these claims imply that respect for a coach equals ethical behavior (have we learned nothing from Penn State?), they also imply that because coaching behaviors reflected those in other big-time football programs, that means they are okay. This maintains the culture of hegemonic masculinity in big-time sport. As I explained in the introduction, big-time sport reifies the norms of hegemonic masculinity by privileging violence, and sexualized language, among other practices.¹⁰¹ This communicative culture reinforces the power dynamic in big-time sport, which has implications for college athlete welfare. Comparing the case to the Ohio State University investigation examining whether or not head coach Urban Meyer enabled assistant coach Zach Smith’s domestic abuse, Lindsay Gibbs argued that “It’s a special level of cognitive dissonance that seems reserved only for the most powerful men and institutions — a way to fake accountability and transparency without actually taking any meaningful steps to fix a problem.”¹⁰² While big-time

sport and its interdependent organizations purport a pure and clean culture, horrible instances like at Maryland illustrate the deep impurities of big-time sport. Perhaps the biggest impurity is the culture of hegemonic masculinity that sports, especially big-time college sports, are constructed upon. The physical and emotional damages inflicted upon sports participants have led many critics to instead use the term “toxic masculinity,” since this kind of masculinity can literally and figuratively be deadly.¹⁰³ The stakes of this and other impurities will be explored in chapter three and the conclusion.

Welfare and Ill-Being/Abuse

Responses to the Jordan McNair tragedy most explicitly articulated the axiological *topos* welfare. Chapter one gave an overview of the policies the NCAA has in place to promote student-athlete well-being, initiatives to study student-athlete health, and resources for student-athletes’ physical and mental well-being. The present chapter highlighted the policies and initiatives at Maryland to ensure the welfare of student-athletes. However, the tragedy at Maryland illustrates the tension between these governing policies that universities take up in their own policy discourse and initiatives and member institution’s day-to-day practices and culture. In response to the tragedy, UM President Wallace Loh articulated the *topos* of well-being in his August 14, 2018 statement and also admitted the university’s failure to live up to this commitment. Loh stated,

We know that the care provided to Jordan was not consistent with best practices. Also, our trainers did not implement appropriately the emergency action plan, misdiagnosed the severity of Jordan’s initial symptoms, did not assess vital signs, and did not promptly and properly treat for exertional heat illness.¹⁰⁴

Loh promised “immediate steps to put additional safeguards in place”¹⁰⁵ for all athletic practices and training, not just football, which is interesting given that Loh rejected proposals that would have aligned UMD with the NCAA best practices in healthcare a year before McNair “because he did not want to allow medical personnel decisions to be made by another institution.”¹⁰⁶ Loh channels the NCAA’s priority of student-athlete well-being, apologizes, and commits to corrective action. Loh articulated the ideal “The Maryland Way” when he stated that the university wants “a thriving, competitive football program that reflects the University’s core values: the safety and welfare of student-athletes, and their success in the classroom, on the gridiron, and in life.” In the joint press conference with Athletic Director Damon Evans, Loh expressed a “commitment to [Jordan’s] parents...that no Maryland student-athlete will ever be in the situation where his or her life and safety and life will be at risk, especially when that risk is foreseeable.”¹⁰⁷ Damon Evans expanded on this corrective action by explaining the “immediate steps to put additional safeguards in place for all of our athletic practices and training, not just football” already taken. For example, Evans stated, “we have changed how we practice and also how we train our staff. We have specifically changed how we practice in the heat by increasing breaks and adding cooling stations.”¹⁰⁸ At the end of Loh’s portion of the press conference, he concludes,

We will do everything possible that the situation that Jordan McNair found himself in will never happen again, and if we succeed as I surely hope and expect that we will, we will always keep alive the legacy of Jordan McNair and the values of this university with regard to student athletes will always be: you are [here] for an education, we are here also to prepare you for life and we expect that all the people that you work with in the classroom and on the field comport with the values of respect and dignity and humane treatment.¹⁰⁹

“Make no mistake,” said Evans. “We will not tolerate any behavior from any employee within Maryland athletics that is detrimental to the mental or physical wellbeing of our student-athletes. There is nothing more important than our student-athletes’ safety, absolutely nothing.”¹¹⁰ While Loh and Evans addressed some of the specific problems that led to McNair’s death, their response did not account for the larger, structural elements of big-time sport that allowed for those failures to occur. Charles Pierce, writing for *Sports Illustrated*, levies a critique on the oversight of big-time sport; the notion that despite the NCAA’s (or individual universities’ athletics department’s) written policies, there is a “chamber of horrors” beneath the surface. In this case, hegemonically masculine coaching staffs are to blame:

Jordan McNair died because his humanity was secondary to the egos of the members of the Maryland coaching staff. He died because he was physically abused in the course of what was supposed to be training for the upcoming season. He was a victim of both workplace violence and of domestic abuse... Under head coach D.J. Durkin, the Maryland football program was *quite literally a sweatshop*.¹¹¹

Pierce continues his scathing critique by claiming that “it was this shield [the myth of the student-athlete] behind which Durkin and his staff built their sweatshop.”¹¹² The ideal of purity and amateurism, along with the promise of excellence and welfare, shield the problematic practices of big-time sport. Maryland Football, in their pursuit of excellence on the field (in the form of winning/producing results), worked a player to death.

To further resist the claims of welfare in big-time sport, Pierce frames the Maryland case by using an analogy to domestic violence and child abuse and critiques the hegemonic masculinity that shaped the horrific incident:

McNair was worked until he collapsed, and there seems to have been a strong immediate reaction that the real problem was that McNair was malingering or, at best, “soft.” *ESPN* reported that other players heard a Maryland trainer yell, “Drag his ass across the field,” and that this was after McNair already had collapsed.

Pierce draws out the domestic abuse comparison through a metaphor:

The Maryland football family was an abusive family, like so many others around the country. The essential dynamic is there for all to see. Jordan McNair is the kid who gets beaten to death in the third-floor walk-up after which everybody stands back and wonders how it all happened. They seemed like such a nice family.¹¹³

Newly hired Maryland head coach Mike Locksley articulated welfare in the positive, and in particular advanced a positive version of the family metaphor to contest the claims of abuse. During his December 2018 press conference, after the university announced his hiring, Locksley repeatedly called the football team a “family.”

Locksley promised to treat the players as if they were his own children: “My [number one] priority and focus will be in the health and development and safety as the head of this family.” “Just like in any family, as the leader of it,” Locksley continues, “every decision I make with these kids will be made as if they are my own child, and that's not anything I take lightly.”¹¹⁴ Locksley elaborated on this statement in February 2019, when he stated that “If you [make decisions like that], then it's tough to make a bad choice. The decisions I make will be with their best interest at heart, ensuring their safety and welfare.”¹¹⁵ Hopefully, this new patriarch will institute a culture of family that resists the hegemonically masculine nature of big-time sport.

Excellence and Failure

In response to the Jordan McNair tragedy, President Loh, Athletic Director Damon Evans, and coach Locksley articulated the *topos* excellence (and one of its

subcategories, responsibility), as well as its opposite, failure. These leaders indicated a commitment to future excellence and admission of past failure. For example, Loh assured that “the University is committed to accountability, transparency, and fairness.” This articulates the subcategory of responsibility that goes along with excellence. Evans assured, “We’re going to be a very fluid and dynamic department that will do what is necessary to make sure that the experience for our student-athletes is the one that we promised them...That is sacred to me.”¹¹⁶ Evans’ statement references the promise of the “student-athlete experience” that was articulated through “The Maryland Way” organizational rhetoric. Damon Evans ended his portion of the August 2018 press conference by connecting the theme of family to the admission of failure through an emotional appeal:

As a father there are no words to say to Jordan’s parents that are good enough. I have looked into the eyes of a grieving mother and father and there is simply nothing good enough. We will honor Jordan’s life and we will ensure that a tragedy such as this never happens on our campus again by working every single day to provide the safest environment for our student-athletes on and off the field.¹¹⁷

In his December message to the larger Terrapin community,¹¹⁸ coach Locksley emphasized his sentiment about family and connected it to excellence and a vision of a positive future: “When I met with our team yesterday, I told them that I’m not here to just build a winning football team. I’m here to build a winning football family. Our success is only possible with your encouragement and enthusiasm. We are all in this together!”¹¹⁹ He continues by praising the excellence of Maryland football players:

I am excited to lead such a tremendous group of student-athletes. I have been impressed at how they came together during a difficult season to honor their fallen teammate, Jordan McNair. Being a coach is more than just wins and losses, it’s about creating great leaders on and off the field. Football has opened so many doors for me and provided me with role models and mentors

who have looked out for me. Being a coach is my opportunity to pay it forward.

This statement reinforces the *topos* of excellence, particularly the subcategories of leadership and potential or future excellence. This statement also functions as an attempt to revise the toxic culture through discourse. It is too soon to tell how the coaching practices might change under coach Locksley, but his public discourse shows a commitment to revising the culture of UMD Football.

In addition to official UMD leaders' responses, the Maryland football players responded to the Jordan McNair tragedy in various ways. First, their rhetorical action can be considered an *enactment* of the excellence – leadership and citizenship, specifically – of the student-athlete, as well as an articulation of important critiques of failure at Maryland. Some of the players' responses were in conjunction with UMD Athletics, and others went above and beyond the institutionally sanctioned responses.¹²⁰ On the supportive side, Terrapin players participated in the various team-sanctioned remembrances of their fallen teammate. For example, in the 2018 season opener against Texas, Maryland lined up with a “missing man” formation in honor of McNair. The team left McNair's slot at right guard empty and took a delay of game penalty in his memory.¹²¹ At the same game, the team remembered McNair by wearing his number 79 on their helmets and raising a flag for their late teammate.¹²² Players also decided that McNair's number would not be worn by another player for the next three years — the time during which he would have been eligible to play.¹²³ A moment of silence was held during the Texas and Temple games, and his locker has been encased in glass.¹²⁴ Finally, McNair was to “be honored on senior day with his class and he will be honored at his senior graduation

ceremony.”¹²⁵ These symbolic gestures represented an overall support of UMD Athletics and Terrapin Football, since those are the organizations that planned these particular responses. Participating in these symbolic gestures also represents the players’ acknowledgement that *Jordan* was excellent, and his loss was felt by all. The supportive rhetorical responses, which were in conjunction with official university-sanctioned responses, function to maintain the myth of the student-athlete, particularly the *topos* of excellence.

On the critical side, football players made statements – both in word and in action – *against* their program and Maryland’s Administration, and these responses reflected the larger publicly-held concerns about purity (toxicity), welfare (ill-being), and excellence (failure). Players specifically articulated their concerns about the failure of the Maryland administration and athletics staff. In particular, after the stunning decision to retain coach DJ Durkin and his staff, several football players walked out of his first meeting back from administrative leave.¹²⁶ Loh almost immediately reversed this decision after the community’s and larger public reactions on social media.¹²⁷ Several players reacted to the turn of events on Twitter, one player saying, “Don’t let anyone tell you your voice doesn’t matter”; another saying, “Pressure busts pipes doesn’t it?”; and yet another, quoting the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., “True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it’s the presence of justice.”¹²⁸ Connecting these football players’ responses to the unfolding campus chaos and broader political culture of sport, *Washington Post* columnist Jerry Brewer remarked,

It’s very appropriate for these times in sports and society that a few Terrapins decided to test the strength of their voices. This is an era of protest in athletics,

and even though this issue isn't tied to the Black Lives Matter movement, we are talking about students who are studying and living at this historical moment. So it's no surprise that a few college football players, many of whom look at the NFL as the standard, decided to mimic their idols and push back against what they considered an injustice.¹²⁹

Brewer commented on the leadership that these players demonstrated: "They may be young and in need of molding, but during a most trying time, we also learned that their minds are fresh, their hearts are beating, and they aren't as easy to corrupt as some of the people pretending to serve them." These college athletes represent a model of advocacy I will explore in chapter three and the conclusion. Their rhetorical action is laudable and an important component of the efforts for reforming the culture of big-time sport.

Conclusion and Implications

In the wake of Jordan McNair's death, a Maryland undergraduate student, writing for *The Diamondback*, questioned the need for a football team at all. Commenting on Maryland President Wallace Loh's use of the "front porch" metaphor, junior Joey Marcellino replied, "if your front porch regularly required multi-million-dollar improvements, caused brain disease in those who sat on it and recently left someone dead, wouldn't you consider removing it?"¹³⁰ Marcellino captures the many critiques of big-time sport that were illustrated at the University of Maryland. An important addition to Marcellino's list of grievances is the important recognition that the Jordan McNair case illustrates the culture of hegemonic masculinity in big-time sport, a culture which may not be as explicitly and verbally expressed as the era before Title IX yet remains a central part of its fabric.

The University of Maryland is an important case study for several reasons. First, Maryland is a representative Big-time U. Working from the myth of the student-athlete, which I developed in chapter one, studying a particular big-time U provides more detail to how this myth unfolds rhetorically, and how particular lines of reasoning get articulated in specific cases in specific contexts. While the NCAA articulates larger, abstract principles like purity, welfare, and excellence through their organizational rhetoric (strategic plan, handbooks, and public address), individual universities expand on and nuance these values through their organizational rhetoric, which includes strategic plans, handbooks, and public addresses. Like the broader NCAA and Big Ten discourses, at Maryland the experience of the student-athlete is centered and privileged, which reinforces Milford's argument that the "student-athlete" is the central symbol of big-time NCAA sports. Big-time U's like Maryland seek to enhance the experience of the student-athlete by idealizing purity and promising excellence and welfare.

Further, this case provides nuance and examples of the three major *topoi* of the myth of the student-athlete: purity, welfare, and excellence. First, organizational rhetoric at Maryland emphasizes excellence but nuances this value by articulating the subcategories of citizenship, leadership, responsibility, and potential. Texts like the Strategic Plan and Student-Athlete Handbook institute specific policies that govern student-athlete behavior and conduct and attempt to create the ideal student-athlete. For example, the specific initiatives at the university level, like "Brand U" at Maryland, illustrate the tangible ways universities strive to meet the lofty ideals of the student-athlete myth. Further, Maryland Athletics promises to ensure the safety and

well-being of student-athletes; to develop the student-athlete's athletic and academic talents; and to develop their potential as leaders, citizens, and future workers. While the NCAA emphasizes purity, welfare, and excellence, excellence is the most salient *topos* of the Big-time U's organizational rhetoric, since these are the institutions that provide them with their education both on and off the field.

While Maryland's organizational rhetoric *outside* of the Jordan McNair tragedy focuses on athletics as a cultivator of student-athlete excellence, all three *topoi*, excellence, purity and welfare, were articulated in discourse about Maryland Athletics in the wake of Jordan McNair's tragic death. In the wake of the tragedy, these *topoi* were articulated in the negative. For example, while UMD football players displayed their excellence "on and off the field" through their multi-modal rhetorical action; they also articulated their concerns about excellence by acknowledging the failures of Maryland Football. Maryland leaders and critics alike articulated the negative aspects of purity, welfare, and excellence when highlighting the corruption, abuse, and failure that the Jordan McNair tragedy illustrated. University leaders promised corrective action to demonstrate their commitment to student-athlete well-being and excellence while also acknowledging the failures that led to the tragedy. Public discourse articulated critiques of the myth of the student-athlete by articulating the opposites of purity, welfare, and excellence, and instead highlighting the toxicity, illness, and failure of big-time sport.

The Jordan McNair case illustrates the limits of big-time sport governance, with regard to the NCAA, the Big Ten, and the University of Maryland Athletics Department. All three organizational levels have policies to ensure the student-athlete

experience – and their safety – is “paramount.” However, if that was truly the case, college athletes would not be dying at such alarming rates. Chapter one explained the history of the NCAA and its particular emphasis on student-athlete safety and well-being. Before Theodore Roosevelt intervened, deaths in college football were common. However, this dissertation has shown that 112 years have not garnered significant change in those statistics.¹³¹ In 2017 alone, there were six direct college football fatalities and two indirect fatalities.¹³² How many other universities are ignoring best practices? The University of Maryland pledged its dedication to the student-athlete experience and promised its college athletes would be provided opportunities to succeed on and off the field. However, coaches and training staffs are not following protocol, and “sportsmanship” policies only apply to athletes, not the other participants in big-time sport: coaches and training staff in particular. There are written policies that are supposed to protect the integrity of the game as well as the integrity and “human dignity” of the student-athlete. No one has critiqued this oversight. The NCAA has not commented on this case – which is, unfortunately, not unusual. The NCAA has been involved in Title IX investigations at dozens of universities but remains silent in cases of death or traumatic injury, which are unfortunately just as common. Given the NCAA’s promise of welfare, cases like at Maryland should be investigated by the NCAA to ensure the alignment of policies and best practices, or else the NCAA can no longer claim to prioritize welfare.

At the heart of the issues raised by the Maryland case is the culture of hegemonic masculinity that pervades big-time sport. Whereas the NCAA’s rhetoric is fairly benign and nongendered, especially in the post-Title IX context, archival and

contemporary discourse of and about one particular big-time football program demonstrate the culture and the stakes of hegemonic masculinity and its rhetorical influence on the myth of the student-athlete. While the policy changes at Maryland are a step in the right direction to ensure the safety and welfare of athletes, the larger culture of sport must begin to change. This is a particularly difficult problem considering how fundamental the ideology of hegemonic masculinity is to the institution of sport. Claire Duncanson argues that “for the unraveling of hegemonic masculinity, men must be encouraged not so much to change their ways as to change the way in which they negotiate their identities in relation to others.”¹³³ She continues, “rather than forge their identities through relations of opposition or domination, men and subjects in general need to construct their identities through recognition of similarity, respect, interdependence, empathy, and equality with others.”¹³⁴ However, this is fundamentally antithetical to sport. At the very least, I am hopeful that the tragedy at Maryland serves as another reminder of the toxic stakes of hegemonic masculinity, and policy makers, coaches, and fans alike work to change this culture. It will take time.

While chapter one explored the organizational discourse of big-time sport’s largest governing body, and the present chapter explored one representative big-time U, chapter three zooms in even further to analyze the myth of the student-athlete from the college athletes’ perspective. Chapter three specifically explores how current and former college athletes are resisting the organizational rhetoric of the NCAA. The advocacy organizations refute the *topoi* of purity and welfare and emphasize the *topos* of excellence. These college athlete advocates take on the NCAA and the institutions

that offer them the opportunities to play at the college level and specifically critique the lack of oversight to protect college athletes' physical, emotional, academic, and financial welfare.

Notes

¹ Heather Dinich, Adam Rittenberg and Tom VanHaaren, "The Inside Story of a Toxic Culture at Maryland Football," *ESPN*, August 10, 2018, http://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/24342005/maryland-terrapins-football-culture-toxic-coach-dj-durkin.

² Heather Dinich, "Maryland Accepts Responsibility in Death of Jordan McNair, parts with Rick Court," *ESPN*, August 14, 2018, http://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/24374654/maryland-terrapins-accept-responsibility-mistakes-made-death-jordan-mcnair; USM WALTERS REPORT 2018, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/4918260-USM-WALTERS-REPORT-2018.html>; Patrick Fort, "University Of Maryland Trainers Didn't Follow Protocol In Death Of Football Player Jordan McNair, Report Says," *W.A.M.U. Radio*, September 21, 2018, <https://wamu.org/story/18/09/21/university-maryland-culpable-death-football-player-report-says/>; and Michael Shapiro and Jenna West, "A Timeline of Jordan McNair's Death, DJ Durkin's Firing and Its Aftermath," *Sports Illustrated*, August 17, 2018, <https://www.si.com/college-football/2018/08/11/maryland-jordan-mcnair-timeline>.

³ Dinich, Rittenberg and VanHaaren, "The Inside Story of a Toxic Culture at Maryland Football."

⁴ Talia Richman, "Board of Regents to be Briefed Friday on Investigation into University of Maryland Football Culture," *Baltimore Sun*, October 17, 2018, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/sports/terps/tracking-the-terps/bs-md-toxic-culture-report-20181017-story.html>.

⁵ Christine Brennan, "Maryland Had to be Forced to fire DJ Durkin, So Board of Regents, AD Must be Next to Go," *USA Today*, October 31, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/columnist/brennan/2018/10/31/dj-durkin-fired-maryland-football-board-regents-should-go/1838984002/>.

⁶ In addition to public backlash on Twitter or in comments on the Diamondback, several sports media outlets weighed in, which added pressure to reverse the decision. See Joan Niesen, "Maryland's Decision to Keep DJ Durkin Offends Both Football and Non-Football Moral Codes," *Sports Illustrated*, October 30, 2018, <https://www.si.com/college-football/2018/10/30/dj-durkin-maryland-return-regents-news>; and Alex Kirshner, "Maryland Needed Massive Public Backlash to do the Right Thing and Fire DJ Durkin," *SB Nation*, October 31, 2018, <https://www.sbnation.com/college-football/2018/10/31/18041928/dj-durkin-fired-maryland-reaction>.

⁷ Lindsay Gibbs, "The NCAA is Too Busy Defending Amateurism in Court to Care About Literal Life-or-Death Situations," *Think Progress*, October 15, 2018, <https://thinkprogress.org/the-ncaas-silence-about-the-death-of-jordan-mcnair-is-deafening/>.

⁸ This is known as "Junction Boys Syndrome." See Patrick Hruby, "'Junction Boys Syndrome': How College Football Fatalities Became Normalized," *The Guardian*, August 19, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2018/aug/19/college-football-deaths-offseason-workouts?CMP=share_btn_tw; Scott A. Anderson, "The Junction Boys Syndrome," *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* 26, no. 5 (2012): 1179-80; and Scott A. Anderson, "NCAA Football Off-Season Training: Unanswered Prayers... A Prayer Answered," *Journal of Athletic Training* 52, no 2 (2017): 145-48.

⁹ This is a definition of organizational rhetoric. Rebecca J. Meisenbach and Jill J. McMillan, "Blurring the Boundaries: Historical Developments and Future Directions in Organizational Rhetoric," *Communication Yearbook* 30, no. 1 (2006): 102.

¹⁰ Hegemonic masculinity can be understood as "the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity)" that perpetuate men's dominance over women (R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender & Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 832); Michael A. Messner, *Power at Play: Sports and the Problem of Masculinity* (Boston: Beacon, 1992); Michael A. Messner, *Politics of Masculinities: Men in Movements* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997). Hegemonic masculinity is also a rhetorical construct. See Justin Gus Foote, Michael Butterworth, and Jimmy Sanderson, "Adrian Peterson and the 'Wussification of America': Football and Myths of Masculinity," *Communication Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (2017): 268-84; Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo, *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives* (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics Books, 1990); Michael L. Butterworth, "Coaches Gone Wild: Media, Masculinity, and Morality in Big-Time College Football," in *Fallen Sports Heroes, Media, & Celebrity Culture*, ed. Lawrence A. Wenner (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2013), 284-297; and Lawrence A. Wenner, "Sport, Communication, and the Culture of Consumption: On Language and Identity," *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no. 11 (2010): 1571-3.

¹¹ Thomas P. Oates, "The Erotic Gaze in the N.F.L. Draft," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 4, no. 1 (2007): 83.

¹² Lifschitz, Sauder, and Stevens, "Football as a Status System in U.S. Higher Education," 218, note 3. "As we show, there is a great deal of overlap among conferences at the top of the athletic and academic hierarchies, but a few conferences are at the top of one distribution but not the other (e.g., the SEC in athletics and the Ivy Group in academics)." Status can also be understood in terms of conference stability. For example, the Ivy Group and The Big Ten Conference (the oldest football conference in operation) are highly stable, marking their status (209).

¹³ Darian Somers, "Where Big Ten Schools Rank Among the 2017 U.S. News Best Colleges," *U.S. News*, September 16, 2017, <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/slideshows/where-big-ten-schools-rank-among-the-2017-us-news-best-colleges>. More of a dated statistic: The Big Ten asserts that "every Big Ten Academic

Alliance institution ranks among the top 78 universities in the nation according to the 2014 Academic Ranking of World Universities, including six in the top 25.”

¹⁴ “About the Conference,” *Bigten.org*, 2019, <https://bigten.org/sports/2018/6/6/school-bio-big10-school-bio-html.aspx>. The B1G touts seven major characteristics of the conference: Premier Academic Institutions, A History of Athletic Success, Broad-Based Programming, Passionate Following, Leaders in Innovation, Extensive Television Exposure, and Community Involvement.

¹⁵ Lifschitz, Sauder, and Stevens, “Football as a Status System in U.S. Higher Education.”

¹⁶ Ibid., citing Matthew Kraatz, “Learning by Association? Interorganizational Networks and Adaption to Environmental Change,” *Academy of Management Journal* 41, (1998): 621-23; Joseph F. Porac, Howard Thomas, Fiona Wilson, Douglas Paton, and Alaina Kanfer, “Rivalry and the Industry of Scottish Knitwear Producers.” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (1995): 203-27.

¹⁷ In particular, I am referring to the murder of Lieutenant Richard Collins III at the hands of a Maryland undergraduate.

¹⁸ 72% of Maryland Undergraduates are from Maryland (<https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/university-of-maryland-college-park/student-life/diversity/chart-geographic-diversity.html>). See also D.W. Rowlands, “Prince George’s sends fewer students to Maryland’s flagship university than other counties. Why?” *Greater Greater Washington*, October 2, 2018, and <https://ggwash.org/view/68464/prince-georges-sends-fewer-students-to-umcp-than-other-maryland-counties-why>; <https://www.usmd.edu/IRIS/>.

¹⁹ University System of Maryland, “Board of Regents,” n.d., <https://www.usmd.edu/regents/>

²⁰ University of Maryland History and Traditions, <https://www.umd.edu/history-and-mission/traditions>. “Maryland’s flag bears the arms of the Calvert and Crossland families. Calvert was the family name of the Lords Baltimore who founded Maryland, and their colors of gold and black appear in the first and fourth quarters of the flag. Crossland was the family of the mother of George Calvert, first Lord Baltimore. The red and white Crossland colors, with a Greek cross terminating in the foils, appears in the second and third quarters. The flag was first flown in its present form October 25, 1888, at Gettysburg Battlefield for ceremonies dedicating monuments to Maryland regiments of the Army of the Potomac” (*Top Shell*, 6).

²¹ University of Maryland, “Mission Statement,” January 7, 2011, https://www.provost.umd.edu/mission_statement.html.

²² Toma, *Football U*, 8.

²³ Toma, *Football U*, 9.

²⁴ University of Maryland, “History and Traditions,” <https://www.umd.edu/history-and-mission/traditions>.

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- ²⁵ Maryland Football, *Top Shell*, 1991, 1. Hornbake online archives.
- ²⁶ Rebecca A. Alt and Rosa A. Eberly "Between Campus and Planet: Toward a Posthumanist *Paideia*," *Review of Communication* 19 (forthcoming).
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ See "Fearless Ideas: University of Maryland," *Vimeo*, <https://vimeo.com/52110970>, retrieved 24 January, 2018.
- ²⁹ Jim Iovino, "Students Fear New School Slogan," *NBC Washington*, October 15, 2009, <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/sports/UMd-Students-Fear-New-School-Slogan-64397137.html>; and Nick Anderson, "Umd Marketing Evolves from Fear the Turtle to Fearless Ideas," *Washington Post*, April 7, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/u-md-marketing-evolves-from-fear-the-turtle-to-fearless-ideas/2014/04/07/ac857d36-be53-11e3-bcec-b71ee10e9bc3_story.html.
- ³⁰ For example, Maryland president Wallace Loh has been criticized for anti-international student policies (See Carrie Snurr, "President Loh: International students who don't like UMD's fees 'don't have to come,'" *The Diamondback*, April 9, 2017, <http://www.dbknews.com/2017/04/10/umd-international-student-fee-loh/>). Further, in the wake of Lieutenant Richard Collins III's death at the hands of a Maryland undergraduate in May 2017, "Fear the Turtle" became a trending Twitter hashtag – Maryland community members tweeted "personal moments of racially related fear in College Park... rather than a cheer, these tweets shifted the meaning of #FearTheTurtle by flooding timelines with anecdotes that illustrate a deeply problematic environment at Maryland" (Alt and Eberly, "Between Campus and Planet," forthcoming). The university also maintains a contract with ICE (Olivia Delaplaine, "UMD must cancel its contract with ICE," *The Diamondback*, November 9, 2018, <http://www.dbknews.com/2018/11/09/umd-ice-contract-immigration-diversity-wallace-loh-undocumented-students-housekeeping-spanish-racism-student-fees/>).
- ³¹ Maryland is not unique in this regard.
- ³² Jenn Johnson, "Students Trace University of Maryland's Slavery Ties," *The Washington Post*, October 10, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/09/AR2009100904061.html>.
- ³³ Maryland Football, *Top Shell*.
- ³⁴ Eyder Peralta, "University Of Maryland President Recommends Renaming Stadium," *NPR*, December 8, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/12/08/458907254/university-of-maryland-president-recommends-renaming-stadium>; Yvonne Wenger, "Byrd Stadium to become Maryland Stadium after regents vote," *Baltimore Sun*, December 11, 2015, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/bs-md-byrd-stadium-vote-20151211-story.html>; and Lauren Brown, "Namesake's Place in UMD History Prompted Discussion

on Diversity,” *Terp Magazine*, January 15, 2016, <http://terp.umd.edu/byrd-stadium-renamed/#.W5fVPUVKjLY>.

³⁵ Christine Condon, “After Charlottesville, UMD’s Marching Band Will Stop Playing the Pro-Confederate State Song,” *The Diamondback*, August 27, 2017, <http://www.dbknews.com-2017/08/28/umd-marching-band-stops-playing-confederate-state-song/>

³⁶ Dom Cosentino, “Maryland and Rutgers are Joining the Big Ten Because They Have To,” *Deadspin*, November 19, 2012, <https://deadspin.com/5961870/maryland-and-rutgers-are-joining-the-big-ten-because-they-have-to>.

³⁷ “Terps Announce ‘Maryland Way Guarantee,’” *Big Ten Network*, August 19, 2014, <http://btn.com/2014/08/19/maryland-announces-the-maryland-way-guarantee/>.

³⁸ Former Director of Athletics Kevin Anderson commented, “we are confident ‘The Maryland Way Guarantee’ will further demonstrate our commitment to our student-athletes’ pursuit of a college degree (‘The Maryland Way: Strategic Plan,’ *Terrapin Athletics*, September 27, 2012, <https://umterps.com/news/2012/9/27/207293496.aspx>).

³⁹ In the context of big-time sports, this promise is significant. Communication scholar Karen Hartman has argued that the lack of such a promise, otherwise known as the NCAA’s 1-year scholarship rule, is “the most evil thing in college sports” (Karen L. Hartman, “‘The Most Evil Thing About College Sports’: The 1-Year Scholarship and a Former NCAA Athlete’s Personal Narrative,” *International Journal of Sport Communication* 7, no. 4 (2014): 425-40. doi:10.1123/IJSC.2014-0049).

⁴⁰ Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, *The Maryland Way* (University of Maryland Press, n.d.), 1. UPUB II. Hornbake Special Collections.

⁴¹ Maryland Athletics Strategic Plan.

⁴² Jesse Dougherty, “Barry and Mary Gossett donate \$21.25 million to Maryland for academic programs for athletes,” *Washington Post*, April 19, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/terrapins-insider/wp/2018/04/19/barry-and-mary-gossett-donate-21-25-million-to-maryland-for-academic-programs-for-athletes/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.f856651fa83e.

⁴³ For example, Penn State Football’s slogan under Joe Paterno was (and still is) “Success with Honor,” Auburn describes its athletics program as “preeminent,” etc. I discuss the implications of these rhetorical parallels in the conclusion.

⁴⁴ See Foote, Butterworth, and Sanderson, “Adrian Peterson and the ‘Wussification of America’: Football and Myths of Masculinity.”

⁴⁵ Susan Bordo, *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and Private* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999), 234.

⁴⁶ Maryland Student-Athlete Handbook, 5.

⁴⁷ Maryland Athletics Strategic Plan, 8.

⁴⁸ Participating and spectating sports can be understood as a form of cultural citizenship (Jay Scherer and David Rowe, eds., *Sport, Public Broadcasting, and Cultural Citizenship* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013). Athletes are also framed as citizens (Michael L. Butterworth, "The Athlete as Citizen: Judgement and Rhetorical Invention in Sport," *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics* 17, no. 7 (2014): 867-83.

⁴⁹ Floris Müller and Joke Hermes, "The Performance of Cultural Citizenship: Audiences and the Politics of Multicultural Television Drama," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27, no. 2 (2010): 194. Citing A. Ong, "Cultural citizenship as subject making: Immigrant negotiate racial and cultural boundaries in the united states," in *Race, identity and citizenship: A reader*, eds. R. D. Torres, L. F. Miro' n, & J. Xavier Inda (London: Blackwell, 1999); R. Rosaldo, "Cultural citizenship, inequality and multiculturalism," in *Race, identity and citizenship: A reader*, eds. R. D. Torres, L. F. Miro' n, & J. Xavier Inda (London: Blackwell, 1999), 253-261; and N. Stevenson, "Cultural citizenship in the "cultural" society: A cosmopolitan approach," *Citizenship Studies* 7, no. 3 (2003): 311-48.

⁵⁰ Jackie Robinson, Muhammad Ali, Colin Kaepernick, Billie Jean King, Aly Raisman, etc.

⁵¹ This is the best-case-scenario. See the introduction to this dissertation, page 5, note 27. My dissertation has largely explored many of the ways that sports, particularly big-time sports, do not live up to this democratizing ideal.

⁵² Nancy C. M. Hartsock, "Masculinity, Citizenship, and the Art of War," *PS* 17, no. 2 (1984): 198; and Diana Owen and Linda M.G. Zerilli, "Gender and Citizenship," *Society* (July/August 1991): 27-34. Angela Ray argues that citizenship "was a status disconnected from biology or cultural mores-the embodied performances made meaning through gendered, racial, and class conventions" ("The Rhetorical Ritual of Citizenship: Women's Voting as Public Performance, 1868-1875," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93, no. 1 (2007): 2-3).

⁵³ Michael A. Messner, "Sports and Male Domination: The Female Athlete as Contested Ideological Terrain," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 5 (1988): 198.

⁵⁴ See Introduction, page 6 (note 35) and page 15 (note 95).

⁵⁵ Terrapin Athletics, "Maryland Athletic Department Matrix," <https://umterps.com/news/2016/3/16/210808910.aspx>.

⁵⁶ Michael Milford, "Giving the Ol' Misdirection: The NCAA and the Student-Athlete," in *Repairing the Athlete's Image: Studies in Sports Image Restoration*, eds., Joseph R. Blaney, Lance R. Lippert, and J. Scott Smith (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 283.

⁵⁷ The website also calls it "GSAC" – the Gossett Student-Athlete Center – elsewhere.

⁵⁸ 2018-2019 Maryland Student-Athlete Handbook, 66 (retrieved from https://umterps.com/documents/2018/8/31/2018_19_Maryland_Athletics_Student_Athlete_Handbook.pdf).

⁵⁹ Terrapin Athletics, "Maryland Athletic Department Matrix," <https://umterps.com/news/2016/3/16/210808910.aspx>; and "Student-Athlete Handbook," https://umterps.com/documents/2018/8/31/2018_19_Maryland_Athletics_Student_Athlete_Handbook.pdf.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Robert D. Benford, "The College Sports Reform Movement: Reframing the 'Edutainment' Industry," *The Sociological Quarterly* 48 (2007): 16.

⁶² John S. Gerdy, *Sports: The All-American Addiction* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2002), 71. Robert Lipsyte, articulating an early and sexist critique of the millennial generation, argues that "the athlete's encapsulated environment and privileged status do more than simply contribute to his 'trained incapacity' (Veblen 1914) or 'learned helplessness.' It hinders their transition to adulthood" (Robert Lipsyte, "The Emasculation of Sports," *New York Times Magazine*, April 2, 1995, 50-7).

⁶³ Passionate, Responsible, Innovative, Determined, Excellent.

⁶⁴ Karl Wallace, "The Substance of Rhetoric: Good Reasons," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 49, no. 3 (1963): 244. The desirable, the praiseworthy, and the obligatory are the three classes of values.

⁶⁵ This was Kevin Anderson's letter. New to the handbook in 2018-2019 (when Damon Evans became Athletic Director), the opening letter encourages athletes to provide feedback or report any problems through a Google Form "Terps ICA Feedback" (<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfrb9X6KsZTvOXGa0uWLtSVqWSp0HKgOeb2fggnL5VnIKAu9A/viewform>).

⁶⁶ This is a rebuke made toward college and professional athletes alike. See Jonny S, "Attention, Pro Athletes: Just Shut Up and Play," *Bleacher Report*, August 18, 2010, <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/438847-attention-pro-athletes-just-shut-up-and-play>. The aforementioned piece captures what I'm discussing here, but this phrase has been used even more polemically in the context of athlete activism and #BlackLivesMatter. These messages usually come from conservative voices (Emily Sullivan, "Laura Ingraham Told LeBron James To Shut Up And Dribble; He Went To The Hoop," *NPR*, February 19, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/02/19/587097707/laura-ingraham-told-lebron-james-to-shutup-and-dribble-he-went-to-the-hoop>).

⁶⁷ Maryland Student-Athlete Handbook, 34.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁹ In conceptualizing a value *topoi* framework, Karl Wallace explains three all-embracing classes of values: the desirable, the obligatory, and the admirable or praiseworthy – and their opposites (Karl Wallace, "The Substance of Rhetoric: Good Reasons," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 49, no. 3(1963):243-44).

⁷⁰ “Sportspersonship” comes from Peter J. Arnold, *Sport, Ethics, and Education* (London: Cassel, 1997), 55.

⁷¹ L. M. Mawson, “Sportswomanship: The cultural acceptance of sport for women versus the accommodation of cultured women in sport,” in *Sport, Rhetoric, and Gender: Historical Perspectives and Media Representations*, ed. Linda K. Fuller (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 19-30; and Craig E. Clifford and Randolph M. Feezell, *Sport and Character: Reclaiming the Principles of Sportsmanship* (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 2010).

⁷² Arnold, *Sport, Ethics, and Education*, 55.

⁷³ David L. Shields and Brenda Jo Bredemeier, *Character Development and Physical Activity* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1995).

⁷⁴ Eubanks and Baker, “Toward an Axiology of Rhetoric,” 164. Citing Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society: A Framework for Political Inquiry* (Yale University Press: New Haven, Connecticut, 1950), 55-56.

⁷⁵ “Big Ten Reprimands Maryland Football for Violating Sportsmanship Policy Before Penn State Game,” *The Morning Call*, November 3, 2014, <https://www.mcall.com/sports/mc-maryland-penn-state-reprimand-20141103-story.html>.

⁷⁶ Maryland Student-Athlete Handbook, 26.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 34-8. The “scooter policy” is also listed under this category of policies.

⁷⁸ However, the power dynamic in elite sports like college football often disincentivizes speaking out.

⁷⁹ Maryland Athletics Strategic Plan, 10; and 2017-2018 Maryland Student-Athlete Handbook, 1.

⁸⁰ Slaughter and Rhoades argue that there has been a “shift from a public good knowledge/learning regime to an academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime,” and define the “neoliberal state” as focused not on social welfare for the citizenry but on enabling individuals as economic actors (Slaughter and Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy*, 8, 20). Wendy Brown adds that neoliberal reason “is converting the distinctly [civic] character, meaning, and operation of democracy’s constitutive elements [such as education] into economic ones (Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (Brooklyn, New York: Zone Books, 2015), 17).

⁸¹ Fewer than two percent of college athletes go professional. “NCAA Recruiting Facts,” *NCAA.org*, n.d., <https://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/Recruiting%20Fact%20Sheet%20WEB.pdf>.

⁸² 2018-2019 Maryland Student-Athlete Handbook, 13.

⁸³ “Brand U Overview,” *UMTerps.com*, n.d., <https://umterps.com/sports/2018/6/19/brand-u-overview.aspx>

⁸⁴ 2018-2019 Maryland Student-Athlete Handbook, 12-13, https://umterps.com/documents/2018/8/31/2018_19_Maryland_Athletics_Student_Athlete_Handbook.pdf.

⁸⁵ Similar to my analysis of the NCAA's Strategic Plan in chapter one, we can consider these types of texts "auto communication." Also called "meta-messages," this discourse involves "ritual expressions of identity that communicate through their very existence." Lars Thøger Christensen and George Cheney, "Self-Absorption and Self-Seduction in the Corporate Identity Game," in *The Expressive Organization: Linking Identity, Reputation, and the Corporate Brand* edited by Majken Schulz, Mary Jo Hatch, and Mogens Holten Larsen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 252.

⁸⁶ Laura G. Smith, Nicole Gillespie, Victor J Callan, Terrance W Fitzsimmons, and Neil Paulsen, "Injunctive and Descriptive Logics during Newcomer Socialization: The Impact on Organizational Identification, Trustworthiness, and Self-Efficacy," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 38, no. 4 (2017): 487-511. doi:10.1002/job.2131.

⁸⁷ University of Maryland Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, "Athletics at Maryland" in *Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Maryland* 27, no. 12 (1930). UPUB II. Hornbake Special Collections.

⁸⁸ "Locker Room Talk" is a discursive phenomenon explored extensively in the Sociology of Sport discipline. See Mary Jo Kane and Lisa J. Disch, "Sexual Violence and the Reproduction of Male Power in the Locker Room: The 'Lisa Olson Incident,'" *Sociology of Sport* 10, no. 4 (December 1993): 331-52; Timothy Jon Curry, "Fraternal Bonding in the Locker Room: A Profeminist Analysis of Talk about Competition and Women," *Sociology of Sport* 8, no. 2 (June 1991): 119-35; and for a UK perspective, Ben Clayton and Barbara Humberstone, "Men's Talk: A (Pro)feminist Analysis of Male University Football Players' Discourse," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 41, no 3-4 (2006): 295-316. Coaching behaviors also contribute to hegemonic masculinity in big-time sport.

⁸⁹ Mitch Abrams, "Abusive Coaching is Not About Anger, It's About Approach," *Psychology Today*, April 3, 2013, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sports-transgressions/201304/abusive-coaching-is-not-about-anger-it-s-about-approach>. This problem also extends to the high school context. See Terri Lobdell, Jocelyn Dong and Jay Thorwaldson, "Out of Bounds? Defining 'Motivational' vs. 'Abusive' Coaching in Palo Alto's High Schools, Part 1," *Palo Alto Online*, May 14, 2010, <https://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/2010/05/14/out-of-bounds-defining-motivational-vs-abusive-coaching-in-palo-altos-high-schools-part-1>.

⁹⁰ Talia Richman, "USM Board of Regents to take over investigation into University of Maryland football player Jordan McNair's death," *The Baltimore Sun*, August 17, 2018, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/education/bs-md-university-system-meeting-20180817-story.html>.

⁹¹ Sarah Meehan, "Transcript: University of Maryland Press Conference About the Death of Football Player Jordan McNair," *Baltimore Sun*, August 14, 2018, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/sports/terps/tracking-the-terps/bs-md-umd-press-conference-transcript-20180814-story.html>.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Taylor Branch, "The Shame of College Sports," *The Atlantic*, October 2011, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/10/the-shame-of-college-sports/308643/>.

⁹⁴ Charles P. Pierce, "The Mess at Maryland is Another Grim Indictment of College Sports' Institutions," *Sports Illustrated*, August 20, 2018, <https://www.si.com/college-football/2018/08/20/maryland-jordan-mcnair-ncaa-investigation-corruption>.

⁹⁵ Dinich, Rittenberg and VanHaaren, "The Inside Story of a Toxic Culture at Maryland football."

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Rick Maese and Keith L. Alexander, "Report on Maryland Football Culture Cites Problems but Stops Short of 'Toxic' Label," *Washington Post*, October 25, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2018/10/25/report-maryland-football-culture-cites-problems-stops-short-toxic-label/?utm_term=.de838b1034d3.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ "Report To The University System Of Maryland Of An Independent Investigation Of The University Of Maryland Football Program," October 23, 2018, <https://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/documents/sports/maryland-football-program-culture-report/3280/>.

¹⁰¹ See Linda K. Fuller, ed., *Sport, Rhetoric, and Gender* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Jeffrey O. Segrave, Katherine L. McDowell, and James G. King III, "Language, Gender, and Sport: A Review of the Research Literature," in *Sport, Rhetoric, and Gender: Historical Perspectives and Media Representations*, ed., Linda K. Fuller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). Further, Messner argues that "highly aggressive sports often feel psychologically 'safe' to young males because they provide clear-cut boundaries around boys' and men's affiliations with each other" (Michael A. Messner, *Power at Play: Sports and the Problem of Masculinity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 67).

¹⁰² Lindsay Gibbs, "Devastating Report About Maryland's Toxic Football Culture Reaches the Wrong Conclusion," *Think Progress*, October 26, 2018, <https://thinkprogress.org/maryland-football-toxic-jordan-mcnair-18950f06e87d/>.

¹⁰³ "Hegemonic masculinity" is a concept much more widely researched than the relatively new neologism "toxic masculinity." The earliest known mention occurs in Michael S. Kimmel and Amy Aronson, *Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2004). However, scholars have analyzed the "toxic practices" and "toxic language" that are part and parcel of hegemonic masculinity. See Adi Adams, Eric Anderson, and Mark McCormack, "Establishing and Challenging Masculinity: The Influence of Gendered Discourses in

Organized Sport," *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 29, no. 3 (2010): 278-300; and Paul Elliot Johnson, "The Art of Masculine Victimhood: Donald Trump's Demagoguery," *Women's Studies in Communication* 40, no. 3 (2017): 229-50. More research in all fields is needed to interrogate the toxic implications of hegemonic masculinity on individuals, organizations, and society.

¹⁰⁴ Loh, "Updates on UMD football program."

¹⁰⁵ Rick Maese, "Maryland AD Says Most Reforms Recommended in Wake of Jordan McNair are In Place," *Washington Post*, March 6, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2019/03/06/maryland-ad-says-most-reforms-recommended-wake-jordan-mcnairs-death-are-place/?utm_term=.ae176274d03c.

¹⁰⁶ Maryland spokeswoman Katie Lawson said "the school already uses physicians from the medical school to help treat athletes and supervise athletic trainers. Because the trainers remained university employees, 'we retained the ability to make necessary personnel decisions,' she said, 'as we did recently in placing members of our athletic training staff on administrative leave'" (Roman Stubbs and Rick Maese, "A Year Before Jordan McNair's death, Maryland President Nixed Plan to Overhaul Athletes' Health Care," *Washington Post*, August 16, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/colleges/a-year-before-jordan-mcnairs-death-maryland-president-nixed-plan-to-overhaul-athletes-health-care/2018/08/16/47eb2888-a17c-11e8-83d2-70203b8d7b44_story.html?utm_term=.bd797d298f78).

¹⁰⁷ Sarah Meehan, "Transcript: University of Maryland press conference about the death of football player Jordan McNair," *Baltimore Sun*, August 14, 2018, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/sports/terps/tracking-the-terps/bs-md-umd-press-conference-transcript-20180814-story.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Charles P. Pierce, "The Mess at Maryland is Another Grim Indictment of College Sports' Institutions," *Sports Illustrated*, August 20, 2018, <https://www.si.com/college-football/2018/08/20/maryland-jordan-mcnair-ncaa-investigation-corruption>. Emphasis mine.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ See Big Ten Network, "Maryland Football Introduces Head Coach Mike Locksley," *YouTube*, December 6, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFnrgRGIGNE>; and Heather Dinich, "Tragedy bonds Maryland coach Mike Locksley and Marty McNair," *ESPN*, December 6, 2018, <http://www.espn.com/college->

[football/story/ /id/25470505/mike-locksley-introduced-maryland-terrapins-head-coach.](#)

¹¹⁵ AP, "Maryland Coach Locksley Stresses Safety First, Then Winning," *USA Today*, February 22, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ncaaf/2019/02/22/maryland-coach-locksley-stresses-safety-first-then-winning/39098731/>.

¹¹⁶ Liam Farrell, "'Continue to Support Our Kids': Evans Vows to Protect Player Safety, Defends the Value of College Sports," *Maryland Today*, September 5, 2018, <https://today.umd.edu/articles/continue-support-our-kids-2283e89a-424d-4c6c-9cd8-50399f9e25bf>.

¹¹⁷ Meehan, "Transcript: University of Maryland press conference about the death of football player Jordan McNair."

¹¹⁸ I received this email to my personal inbox. I'm assuming it is because I am technically already an alumna, having received my MA in 2015 from Maryland. Subject line: "I'm Coming Home."

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Players at other universities have spoken in similarly "unsanctioned ways." See Rebecca A. Alt, "To Create Our Own Legacy: Penn State Football Players' Rhetorical Response to the NCAA Sanctions During the Sandusky Scandal," in *Case Studies in Sport Communication: You Make the Call*, eds. David Burns and Terry Rentner (New York: Routledge, 2019), 65-76; and Rebecca A. Alt, "Why Minnesota's Near Boycott Matters to Fans and Critics of College Football," *Engaging Sports*, February 15, 2017, <https://thesocietypages.org/engagingsports/2017/02/15/why-minnesotas-near-boycott-matters-to-fans-and-critics-of-college-football/>. Further, chapter three of this dissertation will review the history of college-athlete organizing and advocacy.

¹²¹ Emily Caron, "Maryland Honors Jordan McNair By Taking The Field With 10 Players, Takes Delay of Game Penalty," *Sports Illustrated*, September 1, 2018, <https://www.si.com/college-football/2018/09/01/maryland-honors-jordan-mcnair-of-game-penalty-texas>.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Melissa Howell, "University of Maryland Football Honors Jordan McNair with Helmet Stickers, Scholarship in His Name," *WTOP News*, August 20, 2018, <https://wtop.com/maryland/2018/08/university-of-maryland-football-honors-jordan-mcnair-with-helmet-stickers-scholarship/slide/1/>.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid. See also David Ginsburg, "Maryland Terrapins will continue honoring Jordan McNair this season," *Orlando Sentinel*, September 4, 2018, <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/sports/college/os-sp-ap-maryland-players-continue-to-honor-jordan-mcnair-this-season-20180904-story.html>.

¹²⁶ Roman Stubbs, Emily Giambalvo, and Sarah Larimer, "DJ Durkin Returns to the Maryland Football Team, and Three Players Walk out of his First Meeting," *Washington Post*, October 30, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/colleges/dj-durkin-returns-to-the-maryland-football-team-amid-tension-and-deep-uncertainty/2018/10/30/7bb94ae0-dc5b-11e8-b732-3c72cbf131f2_story.html?utm_term=.f9447643010b.

¹²⁷ There is controversy about the way this strategic move was executed. See note 6 in this chapter.

¹²⁸ Emily Giambalvo and Sarah Larimer, "Maryland football players react to DJ Durkin's departure: 'Pressure busts pipes doesn't it?'" *Washington Post*, October 31, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2018/11/01/maryland-football-players-react-dj-durkins-departure/?utm_term=.340cbcc4fee7.

¹²⁹ Jerry Brewer, "Maryland's football players found their voice as their university floundered," *Washington Post*, November 1, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/marylands-football-players-found-their-voice-as-their-university-floundered/2018/11/01/0a407ce8-ddfb-11e8-b3f0-62607289efee_story.html?utm_term=.fb700d986ff2

¹³⁰ Joey Marcellino, "Why Does Maryland Still Have a Football Team?" *The Diamondback*, August 29, 2018, <http://www.dbknews.com/2018/08/29/umd-football-ban-jordan-mcnair-dj-durkin-cole-field-house/>.

¹³¹ Lindsay Gibbs, "The NCAA is Too Busy Defending Amateurism in Court to Care About Literal Life-Or-Death Situations," *Think Progress*, October 15, 2018, <https://thinkprogress.org/the-ncaas-silence-about-the-death-of-jordan-mcnair-is-deafening/>.

¹³² In 2017, two collegiate football athletes died from direct traumatic injuries – brain trauma and cervical spine/spinal cord injury. In the ten years from 2008-2017, there were six direct traumatic injury-related deaths in college football compared to three deaths the previous ten years from 1998-2007 – a two-fold difference between the two periods. Kristen L. Kucera, David Klossner, Bob Colgate, and Robert C. Cantu, "Annual Survey of Football Injury Research," *National Center for Catastrophic Sports Injury Research*, February 16, 2018, <https://nccsir.unc.edu/files/2013/10/Annual-Football-2017-Fatalities-FINAL.pdf>.

¹³³ Claire Duncanson, "Hegemonic Masculinity and the Possibility of Change in Gender Relations," *Men and Masculinities* 18, no. 2 (2015): 233.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Chapter 3: “It’s Not a Fairytale, It’s a Nightmare”: Resisting the Myth of the Student-Athlete

Ed Cunningham, longtime color analyst for *ESPN*, recently resigned from one of the top jobs in college sports broadcasting.¹ On why he walked away, Cunningham said that he “felt wrong to be such a close witness to the carnage, [to be] profiting from a sport” that he knows is killing some of its participants. His colleague Mike Patrick praised Cunningham, saying that “[football is] a wonderful sport. But now that I realize what it can do to people, that it can turn forty-, fifty-year-old men into walking vegetables, how do you stay silent?”² These journalists are referring to the concussion epidemic in big-time football; the dozens of former college and professional football players who have suffered from CTE, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy; people who have died or who have committed suicide because of brain damage endured while playing football.³ However, long-term brain damage is not the only risk of playing football. Because of its many dangers, *Vice Sports* contributor Patrick Hruby anticipates the eventual demise of football, much like the demise of a more distant public health issue: cigarette smoking. Hruby explains,

Smoking still has devotees. (Read: nicotine addicts). Tobacco remains a cash crop for a profitable, semi-respectable industry. But cigarettes will never again be viewed as harmless; never again be marketed as a healthy, wholesome foodstuff. The sheen is gone. Smoking is now a bad habit you try to quit, not start; a cancer-causer, a very real killer, a behavior banned from public spaces, requiring a dirty, smelly product that sports a big ugly surgeon general's warning right on the pack. No amount of well-intentioned discussion and regulation can turn tobacco cigarettes into their bubble gum doubles. They will never be safe.⁴

The voices of critical sports journalists like Cunningham, Patrick, and Hruby are welcome. However, they are not the only voices speaking on this public health issue.

Alongside policy proposals from organizational leaders, former and current big-time college athletes have been increasingly organizing to advocate on behalf of college athletes in order to push for safety reforms in big-time sport. In contrast to institutional discourse, which reinforces the myth of the student-athlete, college athletes' discourse specifically resists the myth of the student-athlete in their calls for reform. Further, college athletes' organizational discourse calls attention to the relative inaction and failure to uphold policies that already exist. Despite college athletes' success in forming coalitions with other labor organizations such as the United Steelworkers of America,⁵ the NCAA has maintained its authority over the central issue of amateurism, which, as this chapter will demonstrate, conflicts with necessary changes to ensure college athlete well-being.⁶ Further, as the Maryland case study illustrated, the NCAA has not exercised adequate oversight in the policies they do have in place to mitigate these issues, which college athletes have repeatedly called for in their advocacy.⁷

This chapter analyzes whether and to what extent former or current college athletes reinforce or contest the myth of the student-athlete through organizational rhetoric. Specifically, this chapter examines the discourse of two related college athlete advocacy organizations –The National College Players' Association (NCPA) and the College Athlete Players' Association (CAPA) – and analyzes how athletes resist the status quo in big-time sport and advocate for organizational and cultural change. I argue that the NCPA and CAPA resist the myth of the student-athlete primarily by refuting the *topoi* of purity and welfare and enacting the *topos* of excellence. In this chapter, I analyze the joint address delivered by Kain Colter and

Ramogi Huma at the 2015 Indiana APL-CIO convention, official statements made by advocates of these organizations in the media, and organizational texts acquired through the NCPA/CAPA websites. While this organizational discourse may be read by some as a futile attempt to win recognition as employees by the NCAA and their universities, I argue that these advocates not only advance a convincing case against the NCAA and the myth of the student-athlete, but they also make important contributions to the public policy discourse on traumatic and non-traumatic deaths in big-time football and the larger moral questions raised about big-time sport culture.

In addition to the practical need to address the concussion epidemic and “Junction Boys’ Syndrome,”⁸ two issues being closely studied in the fields of sports science and medicine, there is also a theoretical need to study the advocacy of current and former big-time athletes. First, the public address literature in the communication and sport field is primarily epideictic.⁹ As Michael Butterworth explains, much of the work understood as public address has been focused on instances of image repair and apologia.¹⁰ While Butterworth calls for studies of other epideictic occasions, for example retirement announcements, trophy presentations, Hall of Fame acceptance speeches, and more,¹¹ I would like to build on Butterworth’s call for more studies of public address. In addition to the epideictic or ceremonial genre of public address in sport, there is a critical need to explore more models of deliberative address in this context. Although there is scholarship on the “activist athlete,” this scholarship has primarily focused on the professional or Olympic athlete.¹² The purpose of this chapter is to explore deliberative discourse in the big-time sport context. Staurowsky, in commenting on the significance of the higher education environment, notes that,

unfortunately, “the ethical obligation to ensure that the academic freedom that should be available to all students is not met when it comes to the treatment of college athletes, most particularly those college athletes participating in the big-time, revenue-generating sports of football and men’s basketball.”¹³ This chapter engages the advocacy of athletes who inhabit our campus publics – whose brains we seek to nurture and protect and whose public advocacy skills we cultivate in our communication classrooms.

This chapter will use both the terms “activism” and “advocacy” (as well as “activist” and “advocate”). The line separating activism and advocacy is blurry. I see “activism” as a larger genre of deliberative rhetorical action where a person or group engages in a specific act, such as a protest, to provoke conversation and call for change broadly. I see advocacy as rhetorical action within that framework, wherein a person speaks on behalf of themselves and/or a particular group to raise awareness for their needs, and calling for specific changes; often advocates engage within the system and “proper channels” rather than resisting that system.¹⁴ Before analyzing the organizational rhetoric of a contemporary college athlete advocacy organization, I briefly review the history of athletic activism and advocacy, and in particular the history of collegiate athletic activism, and the legal context surrounding a central subject of this deliberative rhetoric: amateurism. Then, I describe the two organizations.

History of College Athlete Activism and Advocacy: In Brief

Twentieth Century Athletic Activism

College athletes have been rhetorically active throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In many cases, college athlete advocacy paralleled the activism of professional athletes, who engaged the political issues of racism and discrimination in sports, and athletes have also engaged the intersectional issue of labor. The “activist athlete” has been a subject of interest in the fields of communication and sport sociology. Abraham Khan traced the rhetorical history of the “activist athlete” through its evolution in the early twentieth century and the notable activism of Jesse Owens, Jackie Robinson, Muhammad Ali, John Carlos and Tommie Smith, and Curt Flood.¹⁵ Peter Kaufman and Eli A. Wolff argue that even though athletic activism is “nonnormative behavior,” there is still a long, albeit small, tradition of individuals who have used the playing field to advocate for political and social justice.¹⁶ The activist athlete is highly controversial and often endures ridicule from his or her teammates, coaches, fans, and the public at large. Kaufman argues that “those who dare voice opinions on issues such as social injustice and political oppression often face a hate-filled backlash of scorn and contempt from teammates, coaches, fans, and sponsors.¹⁷ When athletes actively protest at sporting events, organizations frequently take steps to punish such activity. Referencing 1968 Mexico City Black Power Salute (John Carlos and Tommie Smith), John Nauright states, “for their sin of raising their arms with their hands forming a black-gloved fist, they were infamously expelled from the Olympics by the IOC.”¹⁸ There is a long tradition of activism in the sphere of professional and Olympic sports.¹⁹

There is also a long tradition of athletic activism and advocacy in the realm of college sports. In the 1930s and ‘40s, while Jesse Owens was blazing the path in

Olympic sports and Jackie Robinson in Major League Baseball, college football players Willis Ward and Wally Triplett were making statements on Michigan and Penn State's campuses, respectively.²⁰ Then, some of the most effective mobilization efforts by college athletes around the country with regard to racial injustice took place in the 1960s and 1970s, a tumultuous era with regard to civil rights in the U.S., at the professional and Olympic sport levels.²¹ This was the same time period in which former college athlete and renowned sociologist of sport Harry Edwards, then a professor at San Jose State University, organized athletes for the infamous demonstration of protest at the Mexico City Olympics in 1968.²² These are only a few of the many examples of college athlete mobilization and activism regarding racial discrimination in the twentieth century. Like their professional and Olympic-level counterparts, these college athletes were raising issues about racial discrimination in the sporting world and protesting that discrimination through their public, visual presence on the field.

In addition to raising issues of racial discrimination, college athletes have been organizing and advocating around the related issue of labor, particularly the NCAA's policies around amateurism, since the 1950s. Specifically, worker's compensation cases "demonstrated that college athletes were willing to challenge the system at that time which did not characterize them as employees."²³ For example, in 1953, University of Denver (DU) player Ernest Nemeth successfully brought a claim for workers' compensation after sustaining various injuries while engaged in spring football practice.²⁴ He alleged that he was employed by the University to play football and that the injury arose out of and in the course of employment. Although DU

claimed that it was engaged solely in the field of education, that the injury did not arise out of or in the course of Nemeth's employment, and that a financial award would contravene public policy, the Court ultimately ruled in favor of Nemeth, and allowed him to recover from his injuries under workers' compensation.²⁵ However, a similar case in 1957, which involved the death of a player, was not successful. The Supreme Court of Colorado, in denying recovery to the player's widow, decided that "because there was no contract between the player and the college for his football participation, the injury was not an incident of or caused by his employment by the college."²⁶ The Court ruled that the college was "not in the football business" and the player's claim was ultimately fruitless.²⁷ This ruling underscores the NCAA's claim that participation in college sports is an avocation, not a profession – the foundation of its doctrine of amateurism, which I analyzed in chapter one.

College Athlete Activism in the Twenty-First Century

College athletes have remained active in their rhetorical efforts in the twenty-first century. For example, in 2013, Grambling State University cancelled its football game against Jackson State after players refused to show up for their bus ride to a game in protest against poor facilities and lengthy travel conditions.²⁸ The notable 2015 University of Missouri football player-organized boycott, which demonstrated solidarity with a graduate student's hunger strike, pressured the university's president to resign after mishandling a series of racist incidents on Mizzou's campus.²⁹ And at Maryland, in the wake of the Jordan McNair tragedy, football players expressed their disgust with the UMD administration for their culpability in the tragedy and their subsequent mishandling of solutions.³⁰ Advocacy in the twentieth and twenty-first

centuries has been organized around the *topoi* of college athlete welfare and excellence (failure), but college athletes have also continued to organize and advocate around and resist the overarching *topos* of purity as it relates to issues of labor and amateurism in big-time sport. While some college athlete activism has taken place on the field, on the court, or in the locker room, much of the advocacy has taken place in the courtroom or in the halls of Congress.³¹

The Ed O'Bannon lawsuit has come to symbolize the legal-rhetorical advocacy of college athletes over labor issues and amateurism in big-time sport. Former UCLA men's basketball player Ed O'Bannon, along with thousands of former Division I men's basketball and football players, filed a federal lawsuit against the NCAA, alleging "that the NCAA, its members, and its commercial partners violated federal antitrust law by unlawfully foreclosing former players from receiving any compensation related to the use of their names, images, and likenesses in television broadcasts, rebroadcasts, and videogames."³² At the conclusion of a three-week bench trial in June 2014, the Court determined that the NCAA had violated the antitrust laws and issued a permanent injunction. *Law360* dubbed the Hausfeld-led trial team "Legal Lions," in reference to the "historic victory over the NCAA."³³ However, the U.S. Supreme Court denied petitions by both O'Bannon and the NCAA to review the case in 2016.³⁴ Joe Nocera explains that whereas "the appeals court panel agreed with Judge Claudia Wilken of the Federal District Court that 'the NCAA's compensation rules were an unlawful restraint of trade,' two of the three judges also concluded that preserving amateurism was an important goal and that any compensation athletes might receive had to be related to education."³⁵ This case represents how the *topos* of

purity, and the doctrine of amateurism, create a rhetorical conflict among the different organizational assemblages in big-time sport. For the NCAA and Big-time U's, purity, and its rhetorical form of amateurism, is the ideal. This ideal determines the rules and practices of big-time sport. For athletes, however, the doctrine of amateurism is necessarily impure, because it prevents those that labor from legally earning what is fair and just; it also leaves those that labor unprotected. In other words, the doctrine of amateurism puts college athletes' physical, mental, and financial welfare at risk.

Around the same time as the Ed O'Bannon case, Northwestern University football players sought to form a union, and athletes at several universities participated in the "All Players United" campaign in solidarity of all three efforts.³⁶ The protest, called "murky" by some,³⁷ was organized by former Northwestern Quarterback Kain Colter and former UCLA Linebacker Ramogi Huma of the NCPA/CAPA, two organizations that are analyzed later in this chapter. The slogan "All Players United" (APU) appeared on Georgia Tech and Georgia players' wristbands in fall of 2013 to show their solidarity with various current and former players who were "harmed by the NCAA rules."³⁸ Staurowsky argues that the All Players United (APU) movement attempted "to affect change in the areas of compensation, health and well-being, and educational access."³⁹ In other words, the APU movement articulated the *topoi* of purity, welfare, and excellence. Staurowsky argues that the APU was a notable protest for its more-or-less quiet execution.⁴⁰ Although the "gesture amounted to barely a whisper," she argues, the protest still "provoked reactions, which reveal[ed] the degree to which college athletes' lives are

controlled by college authorities and the level of deference college athletes are expected to give to those authorities.”⁴¹ While most public reactions were supportive of the players, coaches and sports media viewed it negatively. One sportscaster called for the scholarships of those who participated to be pulled, tweeting “it would be great if Georgia GaTech/Nwestern pulled the scholllys of those that protested w the ‘APU’ signs /handed them student loan info.”⁴² Kain Colter, the leader of the Northwestern efforts and key figure in the NCPA and CAPA, endured vitriol and criticism from his coaches, teammates, and the public because of his advocacy.⁴³

Northwestern head coach

Pat Fitzgerald gave testimony that directly challenged Colter’s assertions...At times, the bickering lost all subtlety. During spring practice a couple months later, coaches and a few players openly complained about poor leadership during Northwestern’s disastrous five-win 2013 season. Colter, of course, had been a captain.⁴⁴

Colter has continued to be a leader in the efforts to resist the NCAA. And in 2018, amateurism is yet again in the courtroom in the case of Jenkins vs. the NCAA.⁴⁵ In this case, the NCAA is arguing that caps on athletic scholarships – an idea college athletes are vehemently against – promote “competition more than they harm it in the market for student-athletes’ athletic services.”⁴⁶ These examples illustrate the history of college athlete activism and advocacy that serves as the foundation for the NCPA/CAPA’s organizational rhetoric.

Finally, college athletes have also advocated within the NCAA organizational structure. SAACs, or “Student-Athlete Advisory Committees,” are committees “made up of student-athletes assembled to provide insight on the student-athlete experience and to offer input on the rules, regulations and polices that affect student-athletes’

lives on NCAA member institution campuses.”⁴⁷ Current and former college athletes have expressed their positive experiences working within the SAAC structure. For example, Division I chair Kendall Spencer expressed how beneficial it was to be “surrounded by student-athletes who not only had a passion for their sport but for the well-being of all student-athletes.”⁴⁸ In his SAAC experience, he “found athletes whom I had competed with were also in meetings and discussions on the welfare of student-athletes, and in my opinion there is nothing more inspiring. WE SERVE, WE LEAD!”⁴⁹ Unsurprisingly, given the time constraints of big-time athletes in sports like football or men’s basketball, the Division I chair, who would have the most direct impact on big-time football and men’s basketball, was a track-and-field athlete. This is not to diminish his work on or off the field, but it is difficult to ascertain how some of the biggest issues facing big-time athletes reach Mark Emmert’s desk if the Division I chair is an athlete who has no experience with the issues pertaining to those sports. There is a SAAC at the national, campus, divisional, and conference levels.⁵⁰ These different levels appear to offer multiple avenues for college athletes to propose meaningful reform in intercollegiate athletics; however, the disparate groups and yearly turnover prevent such meaningful reform from reaching the NCAA executive leadership.⁵¹ Further, because these committees exist within a hierarchy of NCAA governance, the potential for meaningful ideas to reach the desk of Mark Emmert is limited.⁵² And even if they do, the NCAA governance committee can decide whether or not they even want to consider those proposals.

As this section has demonstrated, athletic activism and advocacy has evolved from loose, disparate instances of rhetorical action into a more unified front. The

twentieth century featured instances of college, Olympic, and professional athletes making statements about both legal and moral issues. In the twenty-first century, professional athletes have continued their activism surrounding issues of racial injustice in the United States, while college athletes have called for specific policy changes in big-time sport surrounding issues of labor and welfare in the higher education context. College athlete advocates have continued to connect their particular policy proposals to the larger conversation about equity and equality in big-time sport and athletes' rights. This will be evident in the following analysis, which explores the progressive advocacy of college athlete organizing facilitated outside of the scope of the NCAA and by former college athletes. The two organizations are the National College Players' Association (NCPA) and the College Athlete Players' Association (CAPA). Calling themselves advocates, the rest of this chapter illustrates the strategies used by NCPA, CAPA, and its two leaders in their resistance to the NCAA's policies and its primary legitimizing discourse: the myth of the student-athlete.

College Athlete Advocacy Organizations: NCPA and CAPA

Before the National College Players' Association (NCPA), there was a "fragmented collection of advocates, lawyers, student representatives, and lawmakers" advocating on behalf of college athletes.⁵³ The NCPA entered the public arena in 2001 and started as the Collegiate Athletes Coalition. Initially, the United Steelworkers of America helped only with organization, but it is now the NCPA's largest financial supporter.⁵⁴ The organization is a non-profit and was co-founded by Kain Colter and Ramogi Huma.⁵⁵ Ramogi Huma, in particular, has been an advocate

for college athletes for nearly two decades.⁵⁶ Huma has testified in U.S. Congressional hearings and briefings, state legislatures, and in legal matters in support of better protections for college athletes.⁵⁷ Huma has also coauthored, with Ellen Staurowsky, an academic study on college athletes and finances and has contributed to *The Atlantic*, *NPR*, and a number of other outlets.⁵⁸ Among their organizational successes, the NCPA helped win a 2008 class-action lawsuit against the NCAA that led to a \$228 million settlement covering unmet educational expenses and helped end the “most evil thing about college sports”: the one-year scholarship.⁵⁹ In addition to these successes, the organization “won legislative victories by getting state laws passed in California and Connecticut that provided more transparency about information schools must disclose to recruits.”⁶⁰ These legislative victories are significant, as they demonstrate the importance of rhetorical advocacy in the realm of big-time sport.

This chapter will analyze discourse from both the NCPA and CAPA. As an advocacy group, the NCPA “serves as the only independent voice for college athletes across the nation.”⁶¹ CAPA, the College Athlete Players’ Association, was formed shortly after by the same leaders; this organization is primarily dedicated to achieving employment rights for college athletes, while the NCPA has larger goals in mind.⁶² As of this writing, CAPA has not updated its website since 2015, but the NCPA remains active. NCPA states its mission simply: “to protect future, current, and former college athletes.” The use of “college athlete” instead of “student-athlete” is significant; this group is deliberately resisting the NCAA’s rhetoric of amateurism by not engaging the term they invented. The following section analyzes Kain Colter and

Ramogi Huma's "State of NCAA Sports" address delivered at the 2015 Indiana AFL-CIO Convention. This ten-page speech (see Appendix A for transcript) contains the major arguments and appeals of the two advocacy groups and can be considered a cornerstone of their efforts. Further, I will incorporate text from the two organizations' websites, in particular, "Mission and Goals," and the document created by the organization titled the "CAP Guarantee," which specifically resists the current model, the NCAA's national letter of intent.⁶³ These two texts support and expand on the ideas laid out by Colter and Huma in the 2015 speech. I argue that Colter and Huma's speech, which exposes the hypocrisy of the NCAA's rhetoric of purity and welfare, refutes the NCAA's major premises and raises legitimate public policy issues. Further, Colter, Huma, and the NCPA argue that the myth of the student-athlete ultimately functions to deny the basic protections and securities necessary for both individual and institutional well-being in college sports.

Refuting Purity

We are Workers, and We Already Get Paid

As I have explained elsewhere in this dissertation, the NCAA insists that college athletes are amateurs. In refuting the NCAA's amateurism rhetoric, athlete advocates present evidence to argue that they *are* workers who *already* get paid. In telling the origin story of the idea for forming a union at Northwestern, Colter recounts the research conducted, the eventual founding of the National College Players' Association, and collaborating with Ramogi Huma. Together, their first step was to prove that they were employees of their universities: "To do this, we needed a football team to step up and sign employee cards petitioning for the labor board in

their state to rule they were indeed employees.”⁶⁴ Colter explained the process of meeting with his team, gathering the cards, and filing them with the National Labor Relations Board. “In order to make this claim,” Colter explained, “we needed to prove that football players work sufficient hours, are under control of the claimed employer, and are compensated for their performed service.” Through these efforts, the organization “was able to show that football players work an upwards of sixty hours [per] week during training camp and forty to fifty hours [per] week during football season.”⁶⁵ Further, they demonstrated “that football players had to abide by rules and regulations imposed by the athletic department and that violations of these rules could result in the termination of their scholarship,” much like that of an employee in any other organization.⁶⁶ Following this proof, Colter explains that a full athletic scholarship (room, tuition, and board) “was indeed a form of compensation for an athletic service.” In short, Colter explains, “we proved that athletes are already paid to play.”⁶⁷ Emphasizing this point in his portion of the joint address, Huma frames “athletic scholarships” as a “cleverly disguised” pay-for-play arrangement.⁶⁸ Indeed, Staurowsky notes that the NCAA’s bylaws are ambiguous enough to imply that the NCAA is against “any form of pay” that *they are not controlling*.⁶⁹ This point is important, since the NCAA touts values like “integrity” along with their amateurism rhetoric. Yet, as Colter and Huma argue, amateurism is ultimately an “illusion” – or, like I argued in chapter one, a “controlling image” that justifies the organization’s policies.

The two speakers also refute the NCAA’s purity rhetoric by counter-arguing the NCAA’s goal of competitive equity in college sports. The NCAA asserts that

“competitive equity” is a major foundation of the amateur ideal and a reason against compensating student-athletes or allowing them to collectively bargain or unionize.⁷⁰

The NCAA believes that paying players beyond their scholarships, or allowing them to collectively bargain, or allowing them to pursue representation through an agent, would eradicate competitive equity. However, Colter argues that the current system “does not produce competitive equity.” Providing some statistics, he explains,

Between 2002-2011, 99.3% of the top 100 football recruits in the nation chose teams in the Power[-five] conferences. Historically, over ninety percent of football teams that finish in the top twenty-five rankings and over ninety percent of the basketball teams that make it to the Final Four are from the Power[-five] conferences. Currently, the wealthiest schools hire the best coaches, have the best facilities, benefit from the biggest recruiting budgets, and sign the best recruits. Where is the competitive equity in this?⁷¹

Huma punctuates the point in his portion of the address when he asserts that “competitive equity doesn’t exist. Ohio University is not winning recruiting battles with Ohio State and Idaho isn’t winning recruiting battles with USC.”⁷² Borrowing words from former Southeastern Conference Commissioner Mike Slive – which is a significant testimonial – Huma calls competitive equity an “illusion” and a “mirage.” Yet, it is this fiction that has become the basis for the NCAA’s legal victories and a crucial ingredient of their amateurism rhetoric.

Ultimately, both speakers refute the *topos* of purity and particularly the doctrine of amateurism by calling the NCAA’s claim that athletes are students, not employees, a “false choice.”⁷³ For the NCAA, college sports are “pure” because their participants are playing for fun and they are receiving an education. Using an analogy, Colter argues that many students throughout college campuses are both students and employees. Students who work in the university book stores and

libraries are no less students because they receive a paycheck as an employee.”⁷⁴ The reality is, Colter argues, that “college athletes are students *and* employees.”⁷⁵ In addition to refuting the doctrine of amateurism, the advocates argue that big-time sport is impure because it functions to deny players fundamental rights and “equal protection” under the law.

Big-Time Sport is Impure, Immoral, and Unjust (and Illegal)

As I explained in chapter one, the NCAA articulates the *topos* of purity when it asserts that college sports are purer than professional sports because professional sports are corrupted by money and college sports are presumably not. However, the two speakers, and the organizational rhetoric of the NCPA/CAPA, present a strong case for the impurity of college sports. In particular, their rhetoric makes a case supporting college sports’ impurity through appeals to hypocrisy, legal injustices, and moral failure. These appeals echo the broader athletic activism of the past. Further, these critiques echo larger political conversations. Finally, these rhetorical appeals are useful because they create a clear binary: the NCAA asserts purity; the NCPA asserts impurity. The NCAA claims to be moral; the NCPA claims the NCAA is immoral. The NCAA claims to be good; the NCPA claims the NCAA is evil. The NCAA claims to be just and benevolent; and the NCPA claims that the NCAA and big-time sport is unjust and malevolent.

To highlight impurity and hypocrisy, both speakers support the argument that amateurism is an “illusion” by addressing the corporatization of big-time sport, which is an issue I explored in the introduction and chapter one. For example, both speakers reference the NCAA’s eleven-billion-dollar TV deal with CBS, the multibillion-dollar

TV deals throughout NCAA conferences, and the multimillion-dollar salaries “lavished upon coaches, commissioners, and the NCAA.”⁷⁶ Colter explains that “The NCAA’s eleven-billion-dollar TV deal with CBS, multimillion-dollar salaries, and stadiums that dwarf those in the NFL clearly demonstrate [the myth of amateurism]⁷⁷ and the myth that college sports are about participating for the love of the game. Colter gives particulars when he cites Duke men’s basketball coach Mike Krzyewski (“Coach K”)’s yearly salary of \$9.6 million and Alabama football coach Nick Saban’s yearly salary of \$6.9 million.⁷⁸ Further, Colter explains that “college football coaches’ salaries have gone up 59% since 2007 vs. just 25% in the NFL”⁷⁹ and that “87% of the BCS [bowl championship series] schools’ media coverage comes from its sports teams.”⁸⁰ These statistics clearly illustrate the profit motive in college sports. The NCAA argues it is not motivated by profits like professional sports, yet these statistics tell another story. To counter the claim that college sports is somehow uncorrupted by money, Colter juxtaposes these facts and statistics referencing the NCAA head coaches’ salaries and media coverage statistics with stories of athletes whose scholarships were revoked and replaced by medical bills due to career-ending injuries.

To further emphasize the NCAA’s desire for profit, both speakers also refute the NCAA’s alleged “academics first” purity discourse by citing the problem of graduation rates in big-time sport. For example, Colter accurately claims that “only half of Division I basketball players and FBS football players will graduate with a degree.”⁸¹ Indeed, the graduation rates among football and men’s basketball players are around fifty percent.⁸² “In college sports,” Colter states, “the money is first;” and

the “NCAA refuses to use some of its billions of dollars for degree completion.”⁸³ Colter attacks corporatized sport and one of the NCAA’s underlying ideologies, neoliberalism, since some of neoliberalism’s most notable components are commercialism and holding individuals responsible for their own misfortunes. In the context of neoliberalism, “personal responsibility” is paramount.⁸⁴ Thus, it is not the NCAA’s fault or responsibility if a college football player does not graduate or gets hurt. This is an interesting tension, given, as I argued in chapter one, that the NCAA has constructed itself as benevolent and in a paternalistic role for college athletes. This particular tension is explored by the NCPA and CAPA in their organizational rhetoric, as well as by former college athletes who were interviewed in the documentary *The Business of Amateurs*, which I will highlight in the conclusion.

Huma also creates several juxtapositions to highlight the immorality and hypocrisy of the NCAA, specifically emphasizing the relationship between money and well-being, including financial, mental, and physical well-being. First, he cites his experience as a football player at UCLA in the 1990s and his memory of a teammate, Donnie Edwards, speaking on a radio show about not being able to afford groceries. Huma states, “he went home after the show and groceries had been left anonymously on his doorstep, which Donnie ended up eating. Somehow the NCAA found out. And when they found out, they suspended him.”⁸⁵ “Meanwhile,” Huma continues, “they were selling Donnie’s jersey in stores across the nation.”⁸⁶ A few years later, Huma learned “that the NCAA capped every full athletic scholarship in the nation below the price tag of the school, leaving unsuspecting players with about \$3000-\$5000 in out-of-pocket expenses each year.”⁸⁷ Since then, “the NCAA admits

that a "full scholarship" does not cover the basic necessities for a college athlete, and many colleges do not provide stipends to cover the \$3000-\$5000 annual shortfall."⁸⁸ The various loopholes in the NCAA's rules, such as not paying for sports-related medical expenses during summer workouts, left Huma and his teammates "frustrated" by the "gaps in protections" and lack of voice in those issues. Huma is very explicit in his targeting of the exploitation of college athletes in this passage, and he again critiques the corporatization of big-time sport. In particular, Huma highlights how the NCAA profits from the labor of college athletes yet does not provide essentials like medical coverage to those athletes. This is exploitative.

Both Colter and Huma critique the legal and political moves being made by the NCAA and in state legislatures, in particular the context around the Northwestern case. The relationship between the NCAA and state governments is troubling. The NCAA is the governing body for (most) college sports, yet federal and state-level governments have also intervened in these issues and in some case created laws that uphold the myth of the student-athlete. For example, in March 2014, when an NLRB regional director issued a decision ruling that the Northwestern football players were employees of the University with the right to collectively bargain, "the NCAA and Northwestern combatted [the] case by introducing many different false narratives to sway the board from upholding the regional ruling."⁸⁹ The "false narratives" Colter is referring to include the NCAA's rhetorical appeals surrounding amateurism and competitive equity. Following resistance from the NCAA, and

After Northwestern football players were deemed to be employees by the NLRB Regional Director, lawmakers in Ohio and Michigan passed laws excluding college athletes from state protections under state labor laws. Their actions are proof that college athletes would have otherwise been deemed

employees in their states. Otherwise, why go out of their way to pass the law? In effect, they targeted a group of their citizens and stripped them of their rights.

Huma concludes that “Ohio and Michigan lawmakers’ actions were unjust and show a disregard for the serious gaps in protections college athletes in their states face.”⁹⁰

This example serves as further proof that the conflict among organizations in big-time sport is particularly heated on the issue of amateurism.

Colter and Huma both express disappointment in the NLRB’s eventual decision not to exert jurisdiction on the matter, which therefore overruled the previous decision.⁹¹ Huma critiques the NLRB for “refusing” to apply equal protections under the law for college athletes. He continues,

In August, the NLRB refused to answer the question of whether or not college athletes are employees because it was worried about disrupting the notion of competitive equity in NCAA sports. It said it was concerned that Northwestern football players could get a competitive advantage in the Big Ten Conference if it was the only unionized team. This analysis is wrong. Nothing would have stopped other colleges from giving the same protections as Northwestern even if their teams weren’t unionized. The argument holds no water but was used to deny players justice.

Huma argues that even though the NLRB “did not close the door on unionization,” its actions “put off justice until sometime in the future,” and “in the meantime, the NLRB made certain that scores of college athletes will be denied the leverage they need to protect themselves.”⁹² For Colter and Huma, the NLRB, and related legislative actions in a few states, exacerbated the problem of injustice in big-time sport.

To further emphasize the injustice, Huma called attention to an unequal application of the law. Referencing the ruling of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, where the NCAA was found guilty of violating players’ rights under antitrust laws in

the O'Bannon v. NCAA lawsuit, Huma asserts the "serious negative consequence" for college athletes. He lists the negative consequences of the NCAA's "price-fixing scheme," which

robs players of what would otherwise be the most valuable years of their lives and forces more than 80% of them to live below the federal poverty line. The illegal price-fixing scheme prohibits reforms such as a degree completion fund that would improve graduation rates. It even prohibits concerned people from providing food to players like my former teammate Donnie Edwards in 1995 or the 2014 NCAA MVP Shabazz Napier who acknowledged appending [*sic*] too many hungry nights because of NCAA rules... The Ninth Circuit correctly ruled that the NCAA is guilty of violating anti-trust laws. However, it signaled that the false notion of amateurism could let the NCAA resume corporate practices that would be illegal anywhere else. This unequal application of the law is wrong.⁹³

The "false" or "imaginary" principle of amateurism, according to the Huma, is "not a fairytale," like some believe, but rather, it is "a nightmare."⁹⁴ The nightmare of amateurism, and its rhetorical form "student-athlete," denies college athletes "equal rights." Huma, citing former NCAA Executive Director Walter Byers, connects the moral issue of amateurism to an issue of "economic camouflage for monopoly practice."⁹⁵

Huma's portion of the address intensified even further with appeals to ethics, morality, and social justice. For example, in referencing the earlier anecdote about Donnie Edwards, Huma asserted, "Any scheme that declares giving food to a hungry person "is immoral on its surface, and in this case, illegal."⁹⁶ Huma continues with an analogy to civil rights and greater historical causes for social justice in the United States when he says that "denying the rights of a targeted group of American citizens should never pass as progress in this country." He argues that "it defies logic to require college athletes to forfeit their rights as a condition of playing for institutions

of higher education.”⁹⁷ Before these young men and women are athletes, Huma asserts, “they are human beings and should not be treated as second-class citizens. The rights of American citizens are inherently more sacred than [sic] NCAA preferences.”⁹⁸ This comparison functions as an analogical warrant to Huma’s argument. Huma, in drawing the comparison, aligns the cause for student athletes beyond just labor rights, but to civil rights, which had/has larger principles guiding it. Further, articulating the fundamental principle of equality (a deductive warrant), Huma appeals to a sense of duty and calls for members of the NLRB, members of the United States Supreme Court, state lawmakers, members of Congress, and – implicitly – the NCAA and its member institutions, to “ensure that Americans have equal protection under the law.”⁹⁹ “To deny college athletes rights afforded to other Americans,” Huma asserts, “is discriminatory.”¹⁰⁰ Appealing to broader American values, Huma reminds his audience that “equal protection under the law is the legal and moral compass that must be followed, not indefensible notions of competitive equity and amateurism.”¹⁰¹ Most poignantly, Huma analogizes,

The NCAA is asking you to participate in a Jim Crow system where players win legal arguments but are denied justice nonetheless. This Jim Crow push isn’t motivated by race. The NCAA seeks to strip both white and black players of their rights. This push to exclude players from equal protections is motivated by the color green – money. America cannot afford those of you tasked with ensuring equal protection under the law to become complicit in inflicting unjust and illegal practices on its citizens.¹⁰²

The analogy to Jim Crow Laws functions to support the organization’s claim that college athletes are treated differently (and unfairly) in comparison to all other people. In effect, Huma claims, “the NCAA wants the power to be above the law by eliminating players’ rights that are guaranteed to other Americans.”¹⁰³ Huma

concludes that the NCAA is “financially rich, but morally bankrupt.” This pointed statement functions as a critical transition in Huma’s speech from the grounds of his argument to broader moral and ethical warrants that support the speakers’ argument that NCAA sports are impure. What is particularly noteworthy is the way Huma rhetorically constructs college athletes as bodies at risk for the sake of someone else’s profit. Without directly referencing slavery – which many critics have done in recent decades – Huma implicitly articulates Billy Hawkins’ argument that big-time sport and particularly football and men’s basketball – is a new plantation.¹⁰⁴ The slavery metaphor may not have been as explicit as the economic metaphor (financially rich, morally bankrupt) or the explicit Jim Crow analogy, but the audience/reader is led to that conclusion enthymematically.

Both Colter and Huma, throughout their “State of NCAA Sports” Address, refute the myth of the student-athlete and, in particular, the *topos* of purity. The speakers use statistics, examples, stories, testimony, and analogies to support their key claims. First, they claimed, and provided evidence to support the claim, that big-time college athletes *are* workers who already get paid (through scholarships, which are a creative pay-for-play scheme). Second, the speakers claimed that big-time sport is corrupted by money, and its corruption has led to structural injustices and inequalities for young, mostly black, men. The two players draw on legal precedents to support their appeals to justice and morality and frame the NCAA as anything but benevolent. Whereas the NCAA constructs its organizational identity as benevolent, the NCPA and CAPA, through Colter and Huma’s address, construct the NCAA as

malevolent. The next section analyzes how the speakers refute the myth of the student-athlete through contesting the *topos* of welfare.

Refuting Welfare: Mental and Physical Danger

In addition to raising claims of hypocrisy, immorality, and injustice to refute purity, both speakers frame the stakes of the myth of the student-athlete as particularly dangerous for college sports participants. That is, the problems in big-time sport represent a public health issue. Both speakers critique the NCAA's lack of concussion reform and highlight instances of former college and NFL players committing suicide who "were later found to be suffering from CTE, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy."¹⁰⁵ Colter reminds the audience that college athletes face serious risks on a daily basis, asserting that "the wear and tear that the player's body endures throughout the year is seen as a badge of honor. The concussions, surgeries, and broken bones become just a part of the game."¹⁰⁶ The NCPA website supports its first goal of establishing mandatory health and safety standards by stating that if an "athlete dies in a hazardous workout, the NCAA looks the other way. The NCPA has sponsored legislation to establish a commission to do what the NCAA refuses to do – adopt and enforce critical safety mandates."¹⁰⁷ This is perhaps the most troubling claim raised by these advocates. Indeed, the NCAA has still said nothing about Jordan McNair's death at the University of Maryland.

Huma refutes the NCAA's rhetoric of well-being and extends the theme of hypocrisy. The NCAA, an organization "that was founded to protect football players by adopting rules to make the game safer stated that it has no legal duty to protect student athletes."¹⁰⁸ The NCAA admitted to a neoliberal logic of personal

responsibility for an athlete's welfare. Citing internal emails from the NCAA head of Enforcement, Huma quotes,

The NCAA would not punish a coach who knowingly forced a player to play with a concussion. Yet, if a player receives a few dollars for signing an autograph, the NCAA would investigate and punish that athlete. If the same athlete dies in a hazardous workout, the NCAA looks the other way.¹⁰⁹

Huma extends the critique of player safety by arguing that “this is the same NCAA enforcement division that moved heaven and earth to investigate frivolous issues like whether or not Ohio State football players received free tattoos by signing autographs.”¹¹⁰ He continues, “It’s the same office that dropped everything to investigate whether or not Johnny Manziel received a few bucks for signing autographs. But when it comes to protecting players’ brains, the NCAA refuses to enforce safety rules.”¹¹¹ Huma concludes that “the NCAA puts college athletes at physical, academic, and financial risk” and emphasizes that “administrators on the NCAA, conference, and university levels enjoy multimillion-dollar salaries generated from the blood, sweat, and brain damage of their athletes.”¹¹² These administrators enjoy “historic revenues while simultaneously lobbying elements of the government to deny players equal protections.”¹¹³ Profits are, again, at the heart of this critique. In this passage, Huma connects the larger theme of welfare to the specific concept of financial well-being for players, since, if players are responsible for their own healthcare, they often cannot afford it (because scholarships only cover tuition, room, and board). Financial well-being was discussed in chapter two as it related to the financial well-being of Big-time U’s, not athletes. Athlete advocates acknowledge this discrepancy.

Whereas the NCAA and universities are enjoying profits, big-time athletes are suffering mentally, physically, and financially. Colter closes his part of the address with a vivid emotional appeal and call to action:

When millions of Americans gather around to watch college football this Saturday, the players who are wearing their school's uniforms will walk onto the field without guaranteed full medical coverage. The former player who is dealing with cognitive issues and physical issues will not receive financial assistance to address their ailment that was suffered while making their school money...It is time for players to stand up and demand for their voices to be heard... It is our responsibility as Americans and as human beings to try and right things that are not only wrong but also jeopardize the health and well-being of our fellow brothers and sisters.¹¹⁴

Huma extends this critique by referencing the states that passed laws regarding employment rights. Huma states,

In their rush to pass those laws, the lawmakers didn't bother to think of whether or not such protections could have allowed players to secure changes that would have saved Michigan quarterback Shane Morris from long-term health risks associated with being kept in a game with a concussion. Or whether or not reforms could have prevented Ohio State football player Kosta Karageorge from committing suicide after sending desperate text messages to his mother about how concussions were affecting his mind. Instead, players in those states are left without leverage needed to avoid debilitating and deadly brain trauma.¹¹⁵

This passage connects both the critique of purity, in particular the speakers' legal appeals, to the critique of welfare.

Building on the foundational critiques of purity, both speakers highlight the lack of protections to ensure college athlete welfare, which is a foundational "priority" of the NCAA. Using examples to highlight the hypocrisy of the NCAA's claims, such as a lack of accountability for coaches who do not follow protocol in keeping athletes safe, or their silence in cases of college player death (like at Maryland), the speakers draw forth their conclusion that big-time sport is in a state of

health crisis – both individual participants and the institution. Not only are players endangered, but the quality of the institution of big-time sport is unwell. In the final portion of this analysis, I explore how the two speakers emphasize and enact the *topos* of excellence in their address to further support their arguments refuting the myth of the student-athlete.

Articulating Excellence: The College Athlete as Citizen with Voice

While Colter, Huma, and the NCPA/CAPA specifically resist the NCAA's discourse of purity and welfare, they do reinforce one *topos* of the myth of the student-athlete: excellence. However, this organizational rhetoric adopts a different interpretation of leadership. Rather than reinforcing the idea that the college athlete demonstrates leadership on the field and in the classroom (and possibly through community service) for the benefit of their university, like I explored in chapter two, both Colter and Huma articulate and enact the excellence of leadership through their personal social justice advocacy. In order to demonstrate this, both speakers demonstrate what Paulo Freire calls conscientization.¹¹⁶ That is, both speakers have learned, through experience, research, and collaboration, what it truly means to be a college athlete in the context of big-time sport. In the process, they have come to understand that it is their duty to speak truth to power. In Colter's opening anecdote, where he reflects on his experience growing up in a "football family," he emphasizes his early love for football and the importance it had in his life. He said, "I remember sitting down and talking with my parents about my goals for football and where I thought it could take me in life. My number one goal was to play at the Division I level in college and then to play in the National Football League."¹¹⁷ But as a young

child, Colter continues, he never realized what went on “behind the curtain.” As a player, he began to realize that “the real blood, sweat, and tears that the players shed are often unnoticed by the fans and spectators. The five AM workouts and conditioning sessions aren’t televised. Neither are the late-night film sessions.”¹¹⁸ He goes on to say that “the difficulty of balancing a full-time job with a full course schedule is not glamorized.” Colter is right. Fans of big-time sport often tune in for the big games on Saturdays, but they are less tuned in to how players are expected to prepare for those games while balancing their other obligations. To shed light on “what goes on behind the curtain” is one of the purposes of the NCPA’s and CAPA’s organizational rhetoric.

Colter’s personal anecdote is connected to his central claim. He explained that through experiencing the daily life of a college athlete, Colter had begun to realize the “ugly truth of NCAA sports” – that “college athletes are left with a huge lack of protections.” The tone shifts from a story of a happy, excited young boy to a conscientized adult. Those “sacred Saturdays,” he said, “did not seem as sacred anymore.”¹¹⁹ Colter began to see and understand the “mirage” of purity, which connects to the “illusion” of college athlete welfare. Further, a course he enrolled in at Northwestern called “The History of the Modern Worker” prompted his interest in the effort: “As I did more and more research it became clear to me that what college athletes needed was a union.” Through his experience, he became aware of the troubling aspects of Big-time sport—particularly football. Colter continues, “I then began to look into organizations that already advocated for the rights of college athletes and I came across the National College Players’ Association that was

founded and run by Ramogi Huma, a former UCLA linebacker. I reached out to Ramogi and expressed my thoughts, ideas, and interest in helping him bring about NCAA reform. From that moment forward we have been pushing for reform and trying to get college athletes the rights and protections all Americans deserve.” The process of Colter’s conscientization is inspiring and reinforces Mark Emmert’s claim that education is paramount for college athletes. Colter is an example of a big-time athlete who did, in fact, go to class; who studied and thought critically about ideas; and who ultimately learned of his own oppression and decided to do something about it.

Huma’s personal story is similar. Yet, beyond lessons learned in the classroom, Huma also sought to create coalitions with other groups who advocate around similar issues. After starting a group “with the intention of giving college athletes across the nation [a] voice and the means to change NCAA rules,” he

reached out to the United Steelworkers for help and fortunately for college athletes, they agreed to join our fight... Together, we’ve been able to make progress over the years through various forms of pressure. We’ve shamed NCAA sports in headlines throughout the country, empowered players to sign petitions and participate in televised protests by writing ‘APU’ for ‘All Players United’ on their uniforms, and we have helped arrange lawsuits and successfully advocated for some state laws. All of our actions have been in the pursuit of securing basic protections for college athletes, but NCAA sports fought our efforts at every turn.”¹²⁰

Whereas universities articulate the *topos* of excellence as it relates to fostering general leadership capabilities for college athletes “on and off the field” – and for the benefit of their university’s reputation – Colter and Huma’s stories frame college athletes as citizens in the larger political context with a broader social responsibility. College athletes have a duty to advocate. And, as the players argue, they are

deserving of “basic rights” that they are currently denied. The players, through their refutation of purity and welfare, assert that they are currently not “free” citizens, but rather are under the surveillance and control of a malevolent NCAA. However, they *are* excellent – a characteristic the NCAA often claims responsibility for. These athletes are excellent because they enact the values of citizenship and advocate on behalf of those who lack protections for academic, physical, or financial welfare. The final section explores the solutions the NCPA and CAPA have been advocating for.

Articulating Solutions, Articulating Hope

The NCPA has ten goals, all of which are articulated to some degree in the AFL-CIO “State of NCAA Sports” address. These goals are as follows: (1) establishing mandatory health and safety standards to minimize college athletes’ risk of serious injury and death from brain trauma, heat illness, and other serious conditions; (2) increasing scholarship money to cover all costs; (3) preventing players from being stuck paying sports-related medical expenses; (4) increasing graduation rates with an educational trust fund; (5) protecting educational opportunities for college athletes in good standing; (6) prohibiting universities from using a permanent injury suffered during athletics as a reason to reduce/eliminate a scholarship; (7) eliminating restrictions on legitimate employment and players’ ability to directly benefit from commercial opportunities; (8) prohibiting the punishment of college athletes that have not committed a violation; (9) guaranteeing that college athletes are granted an athletic release from their university if they wish to transfer schools: and (10) allowing college athletes of all sports the ability to transfer schools one time without punishment.¹²¹ These ten goals offer solutions to the problems outlined by

Colter and Huma. Huma, in presenting policy proposals, suggests that the NCAA simply should become a system that guarantees these rights and protections.

These advocates, through their organizational rhetoric, ask for the NCAA to prioritize safety, financial security, legal protection, academic success, and the ability to participate in their own governance. Although both Colter's and Huma's speeches are fairly scathing critiques of the NCAA (calling the organization "financially rich, but morally bankrupt," for example), both speakers ultimately articulate hope for reform in the future. For example, when reflecting on the "disappointing" NLRB ruling, Colter assures that "it does not close the door on this issue."¹²² "Other players," he says, "can bring forth this issue again and in the future we hope these athletes will obtain a ruling and not an outcome that amounts to the passing of a hot potato."¹²³ Colter emphasizes that the group is "hopeful that the next time this issue is in front of the NLRB, this government body will act swiftly and issue a definitive decision." Colter remains optimistic that continued advocacy within the system will result in a different outcome in the future. Further, he notes that while the desired outcome has not yet been reached, the process resulted in some hopeful and positive changes because of "a group of players standing up and making their voices heard."¹²⁴ The changes that were made had to do with four-year scholarships—a change from the one-year scholarship rule —stipend checks, and better concussion protocol, but notes that "while these changes are steps in the right directions, it is important to remember that these new policies are not legally binding and can be rolled back; which the NCAA has done in the past."¹²⁵ Here, Colter is re-establishing the urgency of this problem and the need for the audience to support this message and

continue to pressure the NCAA. Huma closes the joint address with policy proposals and a call to action. He lays out simple protections that would ensure the well-being of student athletes.¹²⁶

Both Colter and Huma articulate praise for the work that has been done on behalf of players standing up and “making their voices heard.” For example, the Power-Five conferences have now adopted four-year scholarships; players now receive a stipend check to cover the full cost of attendance; and many conferences are adopting and implementing better concussion protocols. Huma praises these efforts and gives credit to the current and former college athletes “like Kain Colter, Northwestern football players, Adrian Arrington, Ed O’Bannon, and Martin Jenkins,” who stood up for justice. Huma credits these and other past players for this sense of “hope.” He concludes,

Every major improvement in this country began with this hope. It’s the same hope that led to the founding of our great nation. It is the same hope that freed the slaves and demanded civil rights for all Americans. This hope trumps hollow excuses meant to derail justice...History has shown that as people stand up, injustice falls down. Please stand with us.

With this broad appeal to American values (and analogy to slavery), Huma closed the joint address at the Indiana AFL-CIO.

Conclusion

Taken at face value, Colter and Huma’s address at the AFL-CIO, and related organizational rhetoric, could be understood simply as a counterargument to the NCAA’s rhetoric of amateurism. However, when analyzing these speeches through the theoretical lens I have outlined in this dissertation – the myth of the student-athlete – the speeches can be interpreted with further nuance. Whereas the two

speakers contest the rhetoric of amateurism by demonstrating that big-time athletes are workers who already get paid, Colter and Huma also refute the larger discourses of *purity*. The advocates transcend the issue of amateurism to frame the state of college sports as impure, immoral, unjust, and the NCAA as malevolent, not benevolent. Further, the speakers refute the *topos* of *welfare* by framing college sports “state” as a public health crisis that warrants player protections that can only be guaranteed by employee rights. Finally, the advocates demonstrate their *excellence*, not by reinforcing claims made by the NCAA and its member institutions through their handbooks and policies, but through their conscientization and their subsequent rhetorical action and advocacy efforts. The NCPA and CAPA, led by Colter and Huma, illustrate that the myth of the student-athlete is more than just a sports issue. The speakers demonstrate the exigence of the myth of the student-athlete by articulating its implications as a public health crisis and a larger social justice issue.

Further, this chapter has demonstrated that there is a long history of college athlete activism, and that Colter and Huma’s discourse stands as an exemplar of larger “activist athlete” rhetoric in the context of big-time collegiate sport. As I explained in the introduction to this chapter, public address scholarship in the context of sports tends toward the epideictic genre. Colter’s and Huma’s speeches at the AFL-CIO, however, are an example of deliberative public address in sport. The two speakers, and the rhetorical action of their organizations, contribute important arguments and policy proposals to the ongoing conversation about economic, physical, and academic well-being in big-time sport. I have shown that there is a historical precedent for the advocacy of current college athletes like Kain Colter,

Ramogi Huma, and the NCPA and CAPA. These organizations advocate around the central issue of labor, which relates to previous advocacy efforts around labor and race in sports. In particular, these organizations raise questions about equity and equality in big-time sport, much like past and contemporary activist efforts that call attention to racism and discrimination in sports. Contemporary athletic activism and advocacy reflects historical themes.

Though Colter's and Huma's speeches did not result in the desired outcome, which for many, was the designation of college athletes as university employees, the organizational rhetoric of the NCPA and CAPA is not a rhetorical failure. This discourse may have not had an immediate instrumental effect on the NCAA's policies or state/federal laws,¹²⁷ yet continued resistance has the potential to create institutional and cultural change around these issues. As recently as February 2017, the NLRB ruled that players at private, FBS schools are employees.¹²⁸ Additionally, the AFL-CIO convention did pass a resolution in support of "equal rights under labor/antitrust laws for all college players," after Colter and Huma spoke, and the organization continues to advocate for current and former college athletes. Further, this resistance promotes public deliberation around the "ideological camouflage," or as I have argued, the myth of the student-athlete. I remain hopeful that the continuation of this kind of advocacy will promote meaningful change and continued deliberation. Resistance to the NCAA is not futile. I will discuss other ideas for big-time sport reform rhetorically, structurally, and at the policy level, in the conclusion.

Notes

¹ John Branch, "ESPN Football Analyst Walks Away, Disturbed by Brain Trauma on Field," *New York Times*, August 30, 2017,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/30/sports/espn-ed-cunningham-football-concussions.html?mcubz=0>.

² Ibid.

³ This issue has also been explored in a recent documentary titled *The Business of Amateurs*, which I will highlight in the conclusion of this dissertation. Directed by Bob DeMars, a former USC football player, the film “focuses on student-athlete rights and the key players at the center of the topic, and systematically points out the hypocrisy and injustices that, in some cases, are life or death issues.”

(<http://www.thebusinessofamateurs.com/>). The major motion picture *Concussion* also explores the concussion epidemic as it pertains to the NFL.

⁴ Patrick Hruby, “Future Shock: The Death of Football,” *ESPN*, October 22, 2010, <http://www.espn.com/espn/commentary/news/story?page=hruby/101022>.

⁵ See Christopher Davis, “United Steelworkers Lend a Helping Hand to Frustrated NCAA Athletes,” *Pittsburgh Business Times*, January 28, 2002, <https://www.bizjournals.com/pittsburgh/stories/2002/01/28/story8.html>.

⁶ This is clear from the recent ruling. Ben Strauss and Steve Eder, “College Players Granted Right to Form a Union,” *New York Times*, March 26, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/27/sports/ncaafotball/national-labor-relations-board-rules-northwestern-players-are-employees-and-can-unionize.html? r=0&version=meter+at+null&module=meter-Links&pgtype=article&contentId=&mediaId=&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F&priority=true&action=click&contentCollection=meter-links-click>; Ben Strauss, “N.L.R.B. Rejects Northwestern Football Players’ Union Bid,” *New York Times*, August 17, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/18/sports/ncaafotball/nlrbsays-northwestern-football-players-cannot-unionize.html? r=0>; and Nocera & Strauss, *Indentured*.

⁷ Jon Solomon, “Internal Documents Reveal Lack of Oversight on Concussions,” *AL.com*, July 21, 2013, https://www.al.com/sports/index.ssf/2013/07/internal_ncaa_documents_could.html.

⁸ See Introduction, note 9; and Chapter 1, note 11.

⁹ Epideictic public address is traditionally known as the Aristotelian genre of discourse that “praises” or “blames” and is ceremonial in occasion. Aristotle. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. Translated by George A Kennedy. 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Jackson Harrell and Wil. A. Linkugel, “On Rhetorical Genre: An Organizing Perspective,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 11, no. 4 (Fall 1978): 262-81; and Carolyn R. Miller, “Genre and Social Action,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 151-67.

¹⁰ Michael L. Butterworth, “Sport as Rhetorical Artifact,” in *Defining Sport Communication*, ed. Andrew C. Billings (New York: Routledge, 2017), 14; and Kenon A. Brown and Thomas E. Isaacson, “Sport and Public Relations,” in *Defining Sport Communication*, ed. Andrew C. Billings (New York: Routledge, 2017), 330. The vast

majority of research devoted to image repair and crisis communication in sport has been discussed through the lens of Benoit's image repair theory (IRT). William Benoit, *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies: A Theory of Image Restoration Strategies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995).

¹¹ Michael L. Butterworth, "Sport as Rhetorical Artifact," in *Defining Sport Communication*, ed. Andrew C. Billings (New York: Routledge, 2017), 21.

¹² Abraham Iqbal Khan, *Curt Flood in the Media: Baseball, Race, and the Demise of the Activist-Athlete* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012); Douglas Hartmann, *Race, Culture, and the Revolt of the Black Athlete: The 1968 Olympic Protests and Their Aftermath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Harry Edwards, *The Revolt of the Black Athlete*. 50th Anniversary ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017); Peter Kaufman, "Boos, Bans, and Other Backlash: The Consequences of Being an Activist Athlete," *Humanity & Society* 32, no. 3 (2008): 215-37. doi:10.1177/016059760803200302; and Peter Kaufman and Eli A. Wolff, "Playing and Protesting: Sport as a Vehicle for Social Change," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 34, no. 2 (2010): 154-75. John A. Fortunato, Ralph A. Gigliotti, and Brent D. Ruben explored incidents surrounding the University of Missouri's football players' protest in 2015, but it is from the framework of crisis management in higher education ("Analysing the Dynamics of Crisis Leadership in Higher Education: A Study of Racial Incidents at the University of Missouri," *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 26, no. 4 (2018): 510-18. doi:10.1111/1468-5973.12220). I have also written about college athlete discourse elsewhere (Rebecca A. Alt, "To Create Our Own Legacy: Penn State Football Players' Rhetorical Response to the NCAA Sanctions During the Sandusky Scandal," in *Case Studies in Sport Communication: You Make the Call*, eds. David Burns and Terry Rentner (New York: Routledge, 2019), 65-76; and Rebecca A. Alt, "Why Minnesota's Near Boycott Matters to Fans and Critics of College Football," *Engaging Sports*, February 15, 2017, <https://thesocietypages.org/engagingsports/2017/02/15/why-minnesotas-near-boycott-matters-to-fans-and-critics-of-college-football/>).

¹³ Staurowsky, "College Athletes' Rights in the Age of the Super Conference," 11. "In the midst of athletic directors invoking an amateur ideal as essential to the college sport experience, decrying the prospect of paying athletes, and pledging to offer a 'quality education,' the most fundamental principle at the core of higher education in America was being publicly violated by coaches without repercussion and with evidence that college sport officials agreed with them" (18).

¹⁴ An advocate can also be involved in controversial activities or issues, but because they are speaking on behalf of a group, they tend to be more likely to follow the paths of lobbying and legislation. To see the distinction in a popular source, see Jenn T. Grace, "The Difference Between an Advocate and an Activist," *JennTGrace.com*, 2015, <http://jenntgrace.com/advocate-versus-activist/>. The distinction between "advocate" and "activist" is not well traversed in the scholarly literature in communication. In communication and sport, "athlete activism" is the preferred terminology. However, the NCPA and CAPA refer to themselves as "advocacy organizations." The AFL-CIO uses the term "advocacy" and ties it specifically to legislative priorities (<https://aflcio.org/what-unions-do/social-economic-justice/advocacy>). Elsewhere, "advocacy" and "activism" are used interchangeably. Maria Löblich, "Dissent and Political Participation: The Many

Faces of Communication Policy Advocacy and Activism," *Communication, Culture, and Critique* 9 (2016): 395-416. doi:10.1111/cccr.12113.

¹⁵ Khan, *Curt Flood in the Media*, 4.

¹⁶ Peter Kaufman and Eli A. Wolff, "Playing and Protesting: Sport as a Vehicle for Social Change," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 34, no. 2 (2010):154-175. Most of the literature is on male athletic activism; however, there is an important history of women's athletic activism as well.

¹⁷ Peter Kaufman, "Boos, Bans, and Other Backlash: The Consequences of Being an Activist Athlete," *Humanity and Society* 32 (2008): 216.

¹⁸ John Nauright, "Sport and the Neo-Liberal World Order," *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies* 6, no. 2 (2014): 283.

¹⁹ This section has detailed the activism of professional and Olympic athletes in the twentieth century. There are also many notable instances of professional and Olympic athletic protest in the twenty-first century. From Colin Kaepernick to LeBron James, Kareem Abdul-Jabar, Aly Raisman and other USA Olympic Gymnasts, athletic activism has become a significant component of the sports world. Jerry Bremby, "The Year of Athletes and Activism," *The Undeclared*, December 29, 2017, <https://theundefeated.com/features/2017-the-year-of-athletes-and-activism/>; Mina Kimes, "Aly Raisman Takes the Floor," *ESPN*, July 18, 2018, <http://www.espn.com/espnw/feature/24078028/olympian-aly-raisman-change-way-our-society-views-women>; and Rebecca A. Alt, "Aly Raisman and Rhetorical Activism: Complicating the 'Sports Illustrated Conundrum,'" *Engaging Sports*, <https://thesocietypages.org/engagingsports/2018/03/21/aly-raisman-and-rhetorical-activism-complicating-the-sports-illustrated-swimsuit-conundrum/>.

²⁰ These athletes were among the first black players on these college campuses. They are known for "breaking the color barrier." Josh Moyer, "Penn State Football Player, Trailblazer, Wall Triplet Dies at 92," *Centre Daily Times*, November 8, 2018, <https://www.centredaily.com/sports/college/penn-state-university/psu-football/article221358805.html>; and Stephen J. Nesbitt, "The Forgotten Man: Remembering Michigan trailblazer Willis Ward," *The Michigan Daily*, October 18, 2012, <https://www.michigandaily.com/sports/forgotten-man-remembering-michigan-trailblazer-willis-ward-day>.

²¹ Adam Epstein and Kathryn Kisska-Schulze, "Northwestern University, The University of Missouri, and the 'Student-Athlete': Mobilization Efforts and the Future," *Journal of Legal Aspects of Sport* 26 (2016): 82. For example, The Howard University Food Boycott, The University of Wyoming "Black 14"; and "Armbands in Solidarity."

²² See Douglas Hartmann, "The Politics of Race and Sport: Resistance and Domination in the 1968 African American Olympic Protest Movement," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19, no. 3 (1996): 548-66; and Edwards, *The Revolt of the Black Athlete*.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Univ. of Denver v. Nemeth*, 257 P.2d Colo. 423 (1953).

²⁵ This decision would have an immediate and significant impact on the perception of student-athletes and their relationship to their schools. Epstein and Kisska-Schulze, "Northwestern University, The University of Missouri, and the 'Student-Athlete,'" 78.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ See Patrick Hruby, "Unionize College Athletics," *SportsOnEarth.com*, Apr. 8, 2013, www.sportsonearth.com/article/44209014/ (offering, too, that in 1940, the Stanford football team demanded and received \$50 per player to compete in the Rose Bowl). In 1985 former Duke University basketball player Dick DeVenzio wrote the book, "Rip-Off U: The Annual Theft and Exploitation of Major College Revenue Producing Student Athletes," criticizing the NCAA and its amateurism model that prevented student-athletes from being paid.

²⁸ Sean Isabella and Daniel Uthman, "After Grambling Player Revolt, Game at Jackson State Canceled," *USA Today*, October 19, 2013, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ncaaf/swac/2013/10/18/grambling-tigers-bus-jackson-state-game-boycott/3010079>. Players claimed that unsanitary locker room conditions, including mildew and mold on the ceilings, led to widespread staph infections.

²⁹ Scott Gleeson, "Missouri Football Players to Boycott Until President Tim Wolfe Resigns," *USA Today*, November 7, 2015, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ncaaf/2015/11/07/missouri-tigers-football-players-boycott-tim-wolfe-president-resigns/75399504/>.

³⁰ Sean Gregory, "Maryland's Firing of Football Coach DJ Durkin Marks a Watershed Moment for Athlete Activism," *Time*, November 1, 2018, <http://time.com/5441237/maryland-football-coach-firing-athlete-activism/?fbclid=IwAR34F58iS7gy7bmf6acZ7p3isvXhmcAOiMrj7-binsAxaQ2yQneU0q80g68>. Offensive lineman Ellis McKennie criticized Maryland when he tweeted, "Every Saturday my teammates and I have to kneel before the memorial of our fallen teammate," McKennie wrote. "Yet a group of people do not have the courage to hold anyone accountable for his death. If only they could have the courage that Jordan had. It's never the wrong time to do what's right."

³¹ Rohan A. Nadkarni, "Northwestern Football Union Leaders Take their Case to Capitol Hill," *Washington Post*, April 3, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/colleges/northwestern-football-union-leaders-come-to-capitol-seeking-to-set-the-record-straight/2014/04/03/7e8c2c12-bb52-11e3-96ae-f2c36d2b1245_story.html?utm_term=.d646224abfaf.

³² United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, Edward C. O'BANNON, Jr., On Behalf of Himself and All Others Similarly Situated, Plaintiff–Appellee, v. NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, aka The NCAA, Defendant–Appellant, Nos. 14–16601, 14–17068 (Decided: September 30, 2015), <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-9th-circuit/1714344.html>.

³³ Hausefeld, et al., “O’Bannon v. NCAA,” https://www.hausfeld.com/case-studies/ncaa?lang_id=1; Jon Solomon, “Timeline: Ed O’Bannon vs. NCAA,” *CBS Sports*, June 6, 2014, <https://www.cbssports.com/college-basketball/news/timeline-ed-obannon-vs-ncaa/>. In September 2013, the plaintiffs announced a \$40 million settlement agreement with defendant Electronic Arts, Inc. Two months later, Chief District Judge Claudia Wilken certified an injunctive class of current and former men’s Division I football and basketball players whose names, images, and likenesses have been, or may have been, included in game footage or in videogames.

³⁴ Michael McCann, “In Denying O’Bannon Case, Supreme Court Leaves Future of Amateurism in Limbo,” *Sports Illustrated*, October 3, 2016, <https://www.si.com/college-basketball/2016/10/03/ed-obannon-ncaa-lawsuit-supreme-court>.

³⁵ Joe Nocera, “O’Bannon Ruling Stands, but N.C.A.A.’s Status Quo May Yet Collapse,” *New York Times*, October 3, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/04/sports/ncaa-obannon-case-ruling-supreme-court.html>.

³⁶ Joe Nocera and Ben Strauss, “Fate of the Union: How Northwestern Football Union Nearly Came to Be,” *Sports Illustrated*, February 24, 2016, <https://www.si.com/college-football/2016/02/24/northwestern-union-case-book-indentured>.

³⁷ Dan Wolken, “College Players’ Protest More Murky Than Meaningful,” *USA Today*, September 22, 2013, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ncaaf/2013/09/22/analysis-all-players-united-protest-wristbands-national-college-players-association/2849529/>.

³⁸ Chip Patterson, “All Players United Campaign Launched With ‘APU’ on Wrist Tape,” *CBS Sports*, September 21, 2013, <https://www.cbssports.com/college-football/news/all-players-united-campaign-launched-with-apu-on-wrist-tape/>.

³⁹ Ellen J. Staurowsky, “College Athletes’ Rights in the Age of the Super Conference: The Case of the All Players United Campaign,” *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport* 7 (2014): 11

⁴⁰ Colin Kaepernick has/had also engaged in a “quiet” form of protest. ESPN.com news services, “Colin Kaepernick Protests Anthem Over Treatment of Minorities,” *The Undeclared*, August 27, 2016, <http://theundeclared.com/features/colin-kaepernick-protests-anthem-over-treatment-of-minorities/>.

⁴¹ Staurowsky, “College Athletes’ Rights in the Age of the Super Conference,” 13.

⁴² Pete Volk, “College Football Players Protest the NCAA During Games, and the Reaction is Mostly Positive,” *SB Nation*, September 23, 2013, <https://www.sbnation.com/college-football/2013/9/23/4761480/apu-college-football-player-protest>.

⁴³ Rohan Nadkarni, “Kain Colter’s Union Battle Cost Him More Than He Ever Expected,” *Deadspin*, August 18, 2015, <http://deadspin.com/kain-colters-union-battle-cost-him-more-than-he-ever-ex-1724831203>; and Nocera and Strauss, *Indentured*.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ “NCAA Amateurism to Go Back Under Courtroom Spotlight in Jenkins Trial,” *Sports Illustrated*, April 2, 2018, <https://www.si.com/college-football/2018/04/02/ncaa-amateurism-trial-judge-wilken-martin-jenkins-scholarships>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ SAAC manual, http://grfx.cstv.com/photos/schools/buck/genrel/auto_pdf/2005-06SAACManual.pdf; See also NCAA, “NCAA Student-Athlete Advisory Committees (SAACs),” <http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/ncaa-student-athlete-advisory-committees-saacs>.

⁴⁸ Kayci Mikrut, “DI Chair Kendall Spencer sees Student-Athletes’ Voice Impacting Issues,” *NCAA News*, February 4, 2014, <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/media-center/news/di-chair-kendall-spencer-sees-student-athletes%E2%80%99-voice-impacting>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ NCAA, “NCAA Student-Athlete Advisory Committees (SAACs).”

⁵¹ The national and divisional SAACs have the greatest opportunity to influence change. At the September 2018 Division I committee meeting, the group discussed the NCAA-wide strategic planning process with representatives of the association. See https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/committees/d1/saac/Sep2018DISAAC_Report.pdf.

⁵² The NCAA claims that SAAC’s “continue to speak on legislative issues” within the NCAA. However, one of the only tangible SAAC initiatives to be found is at the Division II level, where the national SAAC sponsored a cardiac health initiative. NCAA, “Division II National SAAC-Sponsored Cardiac Health Initiative,” *NCAA.org*, n.d., <http://www.ncaa.org/health-and-safety/division-ii-national-saac-sponsored-cardiac-health-initiative>. The most recent Division I national SAAC committee report is from September 2018. Retrieved from https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/committees/d1/saac/Sep2018DISAAC_Report.pdf.

⁵³ Jon Solomon, “College Athletes’ Rights: Who Fights for the College Athlete?” *AL.com*, April 3, 2011, https://www.al.com/sports/index.ssf/2011/04/college_athletes_rights_who_fi.html.

⁵⁴ Jon Solomon, “NCAA protest: How the NCPA became college football players’ leading voice,” *AL.com*, September 24, 2013, https://www.al.com/sports/index.ssf/2013/09/how_the_national_college_playe.html.

⁵⁵ “The Latest,” *NCPAnow.org*, n.d., <https://www.ncpanow.org/>.

⁵⁶ Ivan Solotaroff, “The Athlete Advocate,” *SB Nation*, April 23, 2014, <https://www.sbnation.com/longform/2014/4/23/5640402/the-athlete-advocate-ramogi-huma>.

⁵⁷ See House of Representatives, One Hundred Seventh Congress, Second Session (Congress of the U.S., Washington, Dc. House Committee on Energy and Commerce),

“Challenges Facing Amateur Athletics,” Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, February 13, 2002.

⁵⁸ Ramogi Huma and Ellen J. Staurowsky, “The \$6 billion heist: Robbing college athletes under the guise of amateurism,” A report collaboratively produced by the National College Players Association and Drexel University Sport Management.

⁵⁹ Karen L. Hartman, ““The Most Evil Thing About College Sports”: The 1-Year Scholarship and a Former NCAA Athlete’s Personal Narrative,” *International Journal of Sport Communication* 7, no. 4 (2014): 425-40. doi:10.1123/IJSC.2014-0049.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ “The Latest.”

⁶² “College Athletes Players’ Association,” n.d., <https://www.collegeathletespa.org/>.

⁶³ “National Letter of Intent,” n.d., <http://www.nationalletter.org/documentLibrary/nli-guide.pdf>

⁶⁴ Kain Colter, “State of NCAA Sports” (Indianapolis, IN, 2015), para 27.

⁶⁵ Ibid., para. 28.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., para 29.

⁶⁸ I will explore the controversy over “pay for play” in the conclusion of this dissertation.

⁶⁹ Staurowsky, “College Athletes’ Rights in the Age of the Super Conference.”

⁷⁰ Colter, para 31. Since 2013, the NCAA has shifted away from the competitive equity model toward a “fair competition” model, which allows “schools to use the natural advantages of geography, a talented student-athlete or deeper pockets.” I would consider this a result of resistance to the NCAA’s amateurism policies and practices. For more on competitive equity and the collegiate model of sports, see Richard M. Southall and Richard T. Karcher, “Distributive Injustice: An Ethical Analysis of the NCAA’s ‘Collegiate Model of Athletics’ and its Jurisprudence,” *The International Sports Law Journal* (2015): 1-19. DOI: 10.1007/s40318-015-0084-6; and Richard M. Southall and Ellen J. Staurowsky, “Cheering on the Collegiate Model: Creating, Disseminating, and Imbedding the NCAA’s Redefinition of Amateurism,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 37, no. 4 (2013): 403–29.

⁷¹ See David Ridpath, “Does Competitive Equity Exist in Major College Athletics?” *Forbes*, September 10, 2015, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bdavidridpath/2015/09/10/does-competitive-equity-exist-in-major-college-athletics/#7ce9b05094fb>.

⁷² Ramogi Huma, “State of NCAA Sports” (Indianapolis, IN, 2015), para. 13.

⁷³ Colter, "State of NCAA Sports," para. 11.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁶ Huma, "State of NCAA Sports," para. 16.

⁷⁷ Colter, para. 32.

⁷⁸ Ibid., paras. 14-15.

⁷⁹ Ibid., para. 15.

⁸⁰ Ibid., para. 17.

⁸¹ Ibid., para. 39.

⁸² There are certainly programs with higher (and lower) GSR scores. This is the average. To see how a recent "Top 25" football program ranks Graduate Rate-wise, see Martin Sonderman, College Football Schools with the Best and Worst Graduation Rates," *Bleacher Report*, September 4, 2013, <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/1731218-college-football-schools-with-the-best-and-worst-graduation-rates#slide0>.

⁸³ Colter, para. 20.

⁸⁴ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 65–6; Cedric Johnson, *The Neoliberal Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, Late Capitalism, and the Remaking of New Orleans* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Bradley Jones and Roopali Mukherjee, "From California to Michigan: Race, Rationality, and Neoliberal Governmentality," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7, no. 4 (December 2010): 408; Michael L. Silk and David L. Andrews, "Sport and the Neoliberal Conjuncture: Complicating the Consensus," in *Sport and Neoliberalism : Politics, Consumption, and Culture*, eds. Michael L. Silk and David L. Andrews (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012). Christine Harold, *OurSpace: Resisting the Corporate Control of Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 2–3; Kenneth S. Baer, *Reinventing Democrats: The Politics of Liberalism from Reagan to Clinton* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 204; and Martín Carcasson, "Ending Welfare as We Know It: President Clinton and the Rhetorical Transformation of the Anti-Welfare Culture," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 4 (2006): 656, 668. The neoliberal rhetoric of personal responsibility has been explored in public health literatures, specifically scholarship on obesity and personal responsibility. In essence, the neoliberal state does not value programs for the social good, as it simultaneously holds individuals responsible for their misfortunes. Julie Guthman, "Neoliberalism and the Constitution of Contemporary Bodies," in *The Fat Studies Reader*, eds. Esther D. Rothblum and Sondra Solovay (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

⁸⁵ Huma, para. 3.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., para. 4.

⁸⁸ "NCPA Mission," *NCPAnow.org*, n.d., <https://www.ncpanow.org/mission-and-goals>.

⁸⁹ Colter, para. 30

⁹⁰ Huma, para. 11.

⁹¹ Colter, para. 35.

⁹² Huma, para. 13.

⁹³ Ibid, para. 15.

⁹⁴ Ibid., para. 16.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., para. 18.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., para. 20.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., para. 17.

¹⁰⁴ Billy Hawkins, *The New Plantation: The Internal Colonization of Black Student Athletes* (Winterville, GA: Sadiki Publishing.2001).

¹⁰⁵ Colter, para. 21.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., para. 8.

¹⁰⁷ "Mission and Goals," *NCPAnow.org*, n.d., <https://www.ncpanow.org/mission-and-goals>.

¹⁰⁸ Huma, para. 8.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., 10.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Colter, para. 40-41.

¹¹⁵ Huma, para. 12.

¹¹⁶ Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000); and Paulo Freire, "Cultural Action and Conscientization," *Harvard Educational Review* 40, no. 3 (1970): 452-77.

¹¹⁷ Colter, para. 5.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., para. 8.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., para. 10.

¹²⁰ Huma, para. 7.

¹²¹ "NCPA Mission," 2017, <https://www.ncpanow.org/mission-and-goals>. The specific goals of the NCPA have been compared to the early MLB efforts to unionize. "The push for a 'full cost of attendance' scholarship echoes baseball's push for a higher minimum salary. Making sure that players aren't forced to pay for medical expenses related to their play and can remain in school if they can no longer play their chosen sport mirror the demand for better pensions... And the two points -- guaranteeing a player's release if he or she wishes to transfer and allowing a one-time transfer without punishment -- is a push against the collegiate sports version of the reserve clause, the National Letter of Intent" (Patrick Vint, "All Players United: How college football players are following baseball's model," *SB Nation*, October 5, 2013, <https://www.sbnation.com/college-football/2013/10/5/4772140/apu-college-football-players-ncaa>).

¹²² Colter, para. 36.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., para. 37.

¹²⁵ Ibid., para. 38.

¹²⁶ In the speech, Huma makes the following proposals: the NCAA should (1) enforce rules to minimize the risk of traumatic brain injury in contact sports (2) protect current and former players from out-of-pocket-sports-related medical expenses (3) guarantee players' due process rights (4) improve graduation rates by establishing a degree completion fund to help players that need an extra semester or two to graduate; (5) provide four-year scholarships for players in good standing – even if they are permanently injured, and (6) ensure athletes have a real seat at the table on issues concerning physical, academic, and financial protections (Huma. para 21).

¹²⁷ Rhetorical critics have theorized the various kinds of “effects” speech can have on audiences and society. One distinction is between “instrumental” and “constitutive” effects. Some scholars look at [rhetoric] as having significance only so long as it can be demonstrated that a specific speech act had a decisive and measurable effect on public opinion – as measured by the polls – on a particular issue (George C. Edwards III, *On Deaf Ears* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); and Samuel Kernell, *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1997)). I follow Mary Stuckey’s definition of the instrumental possibilities of public address, which can “be more long rather than short term; they might involve reinforcement rather than changes in opinion; they might involve determining which issues get on the national agenda; or they might concern how those issues are defined, understood, and debated. Mary E. Stuckey, “Jimmy Carter, Human Rights, and Instrumental Effects of Presidential Rhetoric,” in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, eds. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan (West Sussex, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 294. Rhetoric’s “constitutive” effects primarily revolve around rhetoric’s role in the constitution of various identities. See Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the Peuple Québécois,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 73 (1987): 133- 50; and James Jasinski and Jennifer R. Merciecia, “Analyzing Constitutive Rhetorics: The Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions and the “Principles of ’98,”” in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, 313-41.

¹²⁸ Jon Soloman, “NLRB counsel: Football players at private FBS schools are employees,” *CBS Sports*. February 2, 2017, <http://www.cbssports.com/college-football/news/nlrbcounsel-football-players-at-private-fbs-schools-are-employees/>.

Conclusion : “Money in the Water” and the Pursuit of Equity in Big-Time Sport

In the opening scene to the 2016 documentary *The Business of Amateurs*, the audience views a gray factory and smoke billowing from a stack.¹ Inside the factory, small cloth football player dolls travel along a conveyer belt before they are packaged. Then, the dolls are shipped to consumers, who proceed to “play” with the dolls by using them to violently destroy one another. Once torn and beaten, the dolls are finally discarded onto a heap of used dolls presumably to rot. In addition to the obvious visual representation of the physical damage endured by current and former college football players, statistics about injuries in football and NCAA practices regarding medical coverage overlay the scene. In the background, “Money in the Water,” a song written especially for the documentary, plays.² To punctuate the central point of the documentary, which is to raise “important questions about how colleges treat the college-athletes who generate millions of dollars for their sports programs but too often wind up struggling with physical injuries, brain trauma and financial problems long after they leave school,”³ the singer sadly croons, “and when the price is cheap for a piece of meat, won’t you pay for more? If I crack my knee, there’s no guarantee I won’t be thrown out the door.”

Featuring interviews from former college athletes, family members, and medical professionals, *The Business of Amateurs* critiques the myth of the student-athlete by contesting the *topoi* of purity, welfare, and excellence. Most prominently, the film raises questions about the *topos* of welfare. For example, Kyle Hardrick, former Oklahoma University basketball player, shared his story of the university

denying medical coverage and revoking his scholarship after he suffered a knee injury during practice.⁴ However, the central example of the documentary highlights the problem of brain injuries in football and shares the story of former USC football player Scott Ross, who suffered brain damage and subsequent physical and mental health issues. Ross explains that the game of football is “head first.” He continues, “It’s brute force and brutality. It’s legalized beating the crap out of your fellow player. You’re trying to hurt him.”

Unfortunately, by the end of the documentary, which took a year to produce, Ross passed away from an overdose – an alternative but equally as devastating ending to the violent story of American football.⁵ While Ross’s story is tragic, death – instant or lingering – is not the only concern for college athlete well-being. As the documentary highlights, many athletes – regardless of sport – are left “without basic protections,” a common phrase used by student-athlete advocates as I highlighted in chapter three, should they sustain injuries serious enough to halt their participation. Further, many athletes suffer life-altering injuries several years after their college careers have ended and are left to foot the bill. Co-opting the already familiar corporate metaphor, the documentary, as its title suggests, defines big-time sport as a business. However, unlike Mark Emmert’s claim that the NCAA is in the “human development business,” *The Business of Amateurs* argues that the NCAA is in the human deterioration business. This forceful claim illustrates some of the cultural and structural issues of big-time sport. And though on the surface this appears to be merely a “sports issue,” it is much, much more. The implications of the myth of the

student-athlete constitute a public health issue, a political issue, and an education issue.

During one of Ramogi Huma's interviews in *The Business of Amateurs*, he expressed the need for criticism of that which we love. Huma said, "Of course I am grateful. UCLA made me; it is why I am doing this. At the end of the day, I want it to be better." Like Ramogi Huma, I have critiqued the institution of big-time sport with the ultimate goal of improving the culture and structure of collegiate sport. In doing so, my dissertation has made three major contributions. First, I theorized the myth of the student-athlete from a rhetorical perspective and explained how the myth articulates three *topoi*: purity, welfare, and excellence. Through analyzing the organizational rhetoric of the NCAA, the University of Maryland, and the NCPA and CAPA, my analysis demonstrated how myth functions to legitimize many problematic ideological and axiological foundations of big-time sport, such as neoliberalism and hegemonic masculinity, and how the myth maintains a power dynamic that keeps college athletes in their place and disciplines them. Further, this dissertation has illustrated that where there is power, there is resistance.⁶ For example, public pressure in the Maryland case and the advocacy of college athlete organizations showed this. The case studies also illustrated how the myth gets articulated through different organizational entities and levels within big-time sport and the nuances that particular contexts provide. In sum, this dissertation provides a deeper understanding of the myth of the student-athlete, which can be applied to other cases.

To synthesize these contributions and implications, this conclusion analyzes one more case. In particular, I analyze how the myth of the student-athlete is articulated in another Big-time U: Auburn University. Like chapter two, I analyze Auburn Athletics' organizational rhetoric prior to and during a controversy to address the implications of the myth of the student-athlete and demonstrate how universities perpetuate the problematic ideologies attached to the myth. This case extends the findings of this dissertation regarding the *topoi* of purity, welfare, and excellence and critically interrogates the ideologies of neoliberalism and hegemonic masculinity. I do this with an eye toward the previous case study chapters. Throughout the mini case study, I will explain how this analysis parallels the analyses from the previous chapters. I chose Auburn for two reasons: it is a Big-time U representative of the larger culture of big-time sport in the South and the Cam Newton controversy involves a football program and individual player. In this case, someone close to Newton attempted to "solicit payment from Mississippi State in return for [Newton's] commitment to the Bulldogs."⁷ Although much different from the University of Maryland controversy, the case retains a similar context. Further, the case illustrates an issue with the *topos* of purity and particularly the rhetoric of amateurism. Before discussing the Cam Newton controversy, I review the context of the SEC conference, Auburn University, and how Auburn articulates the myth of the student-athlete through its organizational rhetoric.

The SEC, Auburn, and the Myth of the Student-Athlete

In 1933, thirteen universities west and south of the Appalachian Mountains formed the Southeastern Conference (SEC).⁸ Like the Big Ten's identity, described in

chapter two, the SEC envisions itself as a “pioneer in the integration of higher education and athletic competition,”⁹ and many of the conference’s universities are also land-grant institutions. However, unlike the Big Ten, whose universities all ranked within the top 100 best National Universities, just five of the SEC’s fourteen rank within the top 100.¹⁰ This has led many to consider the SEC dominant in athletics, as SEC programs have participated in 444 FBS bowl games,¹¹ but inferior to the BIG when it comes to academic excellence. Indeed, Christopher Walsh has gone as far to argue that in the SEC, “football is king.”¹² Yet, the SEC, like other conferences, maintains its dedication to academic excellence. The SEC sponsors SECU, the “academic initiative of the SEC,” which features programs like SEC Education Abroad and the SEC Academic Leadership Development program.¹³ As such, the SEC also reinforces the relationship between sports and education, which was described in the introduction. Auburn University has been a part of the SEC conference since its formation in 1933.¹⁴

Founded in 1856 as East Alabama Male College, Auburn became the first land-grant college in the South under the Morrill Act.¹⁵ The University articulates its vision as “historic commitment of service to all Alabamians as the State becomes a part of a global society with all of its challenges and opportunities.”¹⁶ In particular, Auburn prioritizes service to State “through its instructional, research and outreach programs” and prepares “[Alabamians] to respond successfully to the challenges of a global economy.”¹⁷ As I explained in the introduction, universities like Maryland and Auburn, which view college sports as an extension or service to the broader community, articulate the commonplace understanding that sports, especially in the

Big-time U, are a “front porch” to the university. In the following section, I analyze if and to what extent Auburn University articulates the myth of the student-athlete through its organizational rhetoric. In particular, the first part of the analysis explores how the *topos* excellence is articulated through organizational texts, while the second part of the analysis explores how the *topos* purity is articulated through official and unofficial responses to the Cam Newton recruiting controversy.

Establishing and Maintaining Athletics’ Institutional Culture: “Preeminence”

Like Maryland, Auburn Athletics emphasizes the *topos* of excellence through its Student-Athlete Handbook,¹⁸ Athletics Strategic Plan, and Student-Athlete Support Services’ (comparable to Maryland’s Gossett Center) website texts.¹⁹ Both the Student-Athlete Handbook and Auburn Student-Athlete Support Services state that the goal of Auburn Athletics is

to develop graduates from Auburn University who have contributed in the arenas of athletic competition during their tenures of education, who are articulate, confident, poised, positive, cooperative, and mature decision-makers, and who are outstanding examples of Auburn University's commitment to the development of the whole individual.²⁰

The “whole person” ideal is also articulated in the Code of Conduct portion of the handbook. Specifically, the Code of Conduct stipulates expectations for behavior on and off the field. The first principle is “Auburn University Student-Athletes believe in work, hard work...” “Hard work” is explicitly defined as maintaining “an appropriate level of physical conditioning necessary to perform well in my sport” and “good faith while competing.” One might read this juxtaposition of text as equating participation in sport with work. Next, and immediately following the assertion that “Auburn University Student-Athletes believe in sport and its ability to develop a sound mind

and body...” the code demands that athletes “comply with treatment deemed necessary by medical professionals to maintain or develop this sound mind and body,” so they are “able to perform at one hundred percent.” Further, they will also “not engage in any activities which could cause unnecessary bodily harm and therefore hinder [their] athletic performance.”²¹ Although the handbook stipulates expectations for academic excellence, they are not directly connected to the claim about “sound mind and body.” Academic expectations are explained as they relate to particular university, SEC, and NCAA-level policies, and academic “excellence” mainly refers to maintaining eligibility with a minimum G.P.A. and attending classes and study hall.²² Ultimately, the Auburn Athletics Code of Conduct articulates the necessary requirements for both athletic and academic excellence at Auburn, but it is decidedly focused on the development and excellence of the body.

Auburn’s Student-Athlete Handbook, titled “Family” (with the “a” depicted as the AU logo), also articulates themes of excellence that were explored in the Maryland case study that reflect most big-time sport programs’ handbooks. For example, one of the first points made in the Athletic Director’s letter to student-athletes (on the first page of the handbook) articulates the *topoi* of excellence and responsibility:

Being a student-athlete here is a privilege. That privilege brings with it responsibility. You are expected to treat your academic career like a job. It is important to be on time to class, be respectful and be responsible. Do your work in a timely manner and to the best of your ability. Keep your appointments, and seek help when you need it through our academic staff, counselors, tutors and mentors.²³

Whereas the Code of Conduct expresses particular values that athletes are expected to adhere to, Jay Jacobs’ letter to athletes also illustrates “the desirable” values of

college athletes, such as being respectful and responsible. Jacobs also emphasizes academic responsibility in this passage, which expands on the expectations within the Code of Conduct. To further emphasize the *topoi* of excellence and responsibility, Jacobs continues,

Never forget that you are an ambassador for Auburn University as well as Auburn Athletics. You are held to a higher standard of personal conduct. Your actions on the court, on the field or in the pool, as well as in the classroom and in the community, reflect on your coaches and teammates.²⁴

College athletes as “ambassadors” to the university reflects the idea that they are leaders who should follow the rules. Like Maryland’s handbook, Auburn’s handbook dedicates several pages to SEC and NCAA eligibility rules and compliance policies and features a sportsmanship statement along with the code of conduct. Another organizational text, Auburn’s Athletics Department Strategic Plan, reinforces many of the ideas within the student-athlete handbook, and also mimics other programs’ strategic plans in form and content. At Maryland, the title of the Strategic Plan is “The Maryland Way”; at Auburn, its title is “Preeminence.”

What exactly does “preeminence” or “superiority” mean for Auburn Athletics? In the opening to the Strategic Plan, “competing for championships” is stated as the first goal of AU Athletics. However, the central priorities in the Strategic Plan place academic excellence ahead of athletic success.²⁵ This illustrates the blurriness of excellence as a value. To elaborate on athletic excellence, the Strategic Plan asserts that “we have hired coaches who will help us compete for championships, we have invested in facilities, and we have improved internal operations to position ourselves for success in the rapidly changing landscape of intercollegiate athletics.”²⁶ The second goal is compliance with NCAA and SEC

rules, with a focus on violations. The Athletic Director (Jay Jacobs) emphasizes a “steadfast commitment to the Auburn family” that “centers on winning, graduating our student-athletes, managing our fiscal affairs, abiding by the rules, and providing an outstanding gameday experience.” This statement expresses several ideas that were explored in the Maryland case study, such as prioritizing fiscal affairs and maintaining compliance with NCAA rules.

The parallels between Maryland and Auburn are rhetorically significant for a few reasons. First, the use of “family” is noteworthy in the context of big-time sport. Used in both Auburn’s Student-Athlete Handbook and Strategic Plan, as well as in Maryland’s organizational rhetoric, “family” connotes a paternalistic relationship between the institution and its college athletes. Chapter one of this dissertation argued that the NCAA’s rhetoric, specifically the *topos* of welfare, constructs the NCAA as benevolent. Maryland Athletics also referred to its organizational culture as a “family,” which implies the same relationship between administrators and athletes. New Maryland head coach Locksley repeatedly appealed to this sense of family in his promises to revise the culture at Maryland. The family metaphor is very common in sporting contexts.

Next, the *topos* of excellence, which encompasses winning (on the field) and succeeding in the classroom, along with the subcategories of responsibility and leadership, is emphasized at both Maryland and Auburn. Both Student-Athlete handbooks reflect the sense of responsibility and duty that come with “abiding by the rules,” policies, and expectations for conduct. Student-Athlete Handbooks and Strategic Plans at Big-time U’s like Maryland and Auburn ultimately articulate the

myth of the student-athlete by expressing the ideal that participation in college sports contributes to the development of the whole person. As I explained in chapter one, the NCAA sees itself in the “human development business.” Further, both Maryland and Auburn articulate a sense of excellence that refers to big-time sport as a “front porch” to the university. Auburn’s goal of “providing an outstanding gameday experience” mimics “The Maryland Way”’s claim of “the excitement of 40,000 fans crowding Maryland stadium.” These references to big-time sport of the front porch remind college athletes that their participation in sports like football or men’s basketball is a significant means by which the university and community connect.

Both Maryland’s and Auburn’s Athletics Department organizational rhetoric is fairly standard, which could reflect a sense of “institutional isomorphism.”²⁷ This “sameness” earns the institution “social legitimacy” in the context of big-time sport.²⁸ Many other Big-time U’s provide athletes with a handbook, and, aside from minor differences, they resemble the one I analyzed in chapter two and this conclusion. Athletics Departments articulate values and goals through mission statements and through handbooks and strategic plans. For example, at Oklahoma State, in addition to prioritizing excellence, Mike Holder emphasizes his

responsibility to ensure that our athletics programs are conducted in a manner designed to protect and enhance the physical and educational well-being of our student athletes per the NCAA principles of Student-Athlete Well-Being. This includes important points of emphasis such as your overall educational experience, cultural diversity, gender equity, health and safety, positive relationships with your coaches, fairness, openness and honesty.²⁹

This kind of statement was absent from the organizational rhetoric at Maryland prior to the tragic death of Jordan McNair.

Washington State’s handbook was perhaps the most thorough, at 139 pages in length. For example, this organization includes a student-athlete well-being program, which is meant “to assist student-athletes in developing the skills to live a lifestyle oriented toward optimal health and wellbeing.” Similar to “Brand U” at Maryland, WSU’s wellbeing program targets four life areas: social, emotional, intellectual, and physical, but includes programs and resources for “substance abuse, violence prevention, conflict management, coping skills, anger management, stress management, sexual orientation, and crisis management.”³⁰ Other handbooks provide policies for compliance with these issues/college athlete conduct, but there are no resources listed for college athletes. The quality of such programs has yet to be ascertained, but future research in a variety of academic fields can explore whether and how these universities are meeting their missions and helping college athletes. While excellence is the overarching *topos* at the university level, like at Maryland and Auburn, purity and welfare are also significant, as they are articulated throughout the documents I explored in chapter two and this conclusion. While at Maryland, welfare was questioned, at Auburn, purity came under scrutiny when Cam Newton was investigated for allegations of violating Bylaw 12.3.3 of the NCAA Division I handbook. The following section analyzes how the controversy at Auburn raised questions about the *topoi* of purity and excellence in big-time sport.

Purity, Excellence, and the Cam Newton Controversy

Current Carolina Panthers quarterback Cam Newton was the first-round draft pick in 2011 following his collegiate career at Auburn University. Prior to playing for Auburn, Newton spent two years at the University of Florida and one season playing

for Blinn Junior College.³¹ Following his outstanding collegiate career, Newton has become a celebrity in the NFL.³² Newton had a spectacular career at Auburn but when rumors about his father acting as an agent for Newton circulated in college football news, Newton and Auburn University were swept up in an NCAA investigation and controversy over whether or not Newton violated NCAA policies regarding amateurism, specifically the use of an agent and solicitation of money for play.

Following a thirteen-month investigation, the NCAA determined that Newton's father, "along with former Mississippi State player Kenny Rogers, sought money in exchange for Cam Newton's commitment to Mississippi State."³³ There are two things at play in this case. First, known as "pay to play" (or sometimes "pay for play") scandals, these controversies refer to "the growing number of players who have accepted money to play what's supposed to be an amateur sport."³⁴ In the case of Newton, people close to him sought a monetary incentive to commit to one university over another. This is a violation of NCAA policies on amateurism, specifically the commitment to amateurism and the Division I Collegiate Model.³⁵ Second, and under Bylaw 12, "an individual shall be ineligible for participation in an intercollegiate sport if he or she ever has agreed (orally or in writing) to be represented by an agent for the purpose of marketing his or her athletics ability or reputation in that sport."³⁶ Use of an agent is part of the professional, not collegiate or amateur, model of sports, and is therefore a violation of NCAA policies. In this case, people close to Newton were acting as agents on his behalf to secure more money in exchange for his

commitment. The level of Newton's prior knowledge of those behaviors has been contested.

These scandals are common. Pay-to play controversies impact both college football and men's basketball, professional sports, and even high school sports.³⁷ For example, in addition to Cam Newton and Auburn University are Ohio State and the championship ring controversy; University of Southern California and Reggie Bush's returned Heisman trophy; former sports agent Josh Luchs' illegal payments to college players, a story that was highlighted in *The Business of Amateurs*; and football players at the University of North Carolina accepting money from agents – the same season the basketball team was investigated for academic misconduct.³⁸

Newton and Auburn were cleared of any violations following the investigation. According to *ESPN*, the NCAA “agreed with Auburn's self-report from Nov[ember] 30, 2010, that Cecil Newton and the owner of a scouting service, Kenny Rogers, shopped Cam Newton's services to Mississippi State out of junior college, but that there was no evidence the player or Auburn knew about it.”³⁹ Although there were ultimately no sanctions, the allegations and story itself raise several questions about purity and excellence. The case also highlights some points made by current and former college athletes on how to reform the culture of big-time sport.

First, in the context of corporatized higher education, the NCAA's policies regarding amateurism almost guarantee violations. The opening scene and music of the *Business of Amateurs* critiques the “money in the water” that pollutes the institution of big-time sport. The ideal of purity is simply unattainable because big-time sport is always already impure, corrupted by profit. The NCAA's cites

“competitive equity,” as the principle that justifies policies on amateurism, recruiting, and the use of agents. Yet Kain Colter, Ramogi Huma, and other former college athlete advocates have countered that the current system does not produce competitive equity. Kain Colter explained that the Power-Five conferences land 99.3% of the top 100 football recruits; over ninety percent of football teams finishing in the top twenty-five are from the Power-Five conferences; and, most importantly, “the wealthiest schools hire the best coaches, have the best facilities, benefit from the biggest recruiting budgets, and sign the best recruits.” Kolter asks, “where is the competitive equity in this?”⁴⁰ Pay-for-play scandals may exacerbate the “money in the water” of big-time sport, but they are not the cause of competitive equity’s demise. If the current system were equitable at all for big-time athletes, these scandals would subside.

Second, while there are certainly players who pursue pay-for-play because they believe their talents are simply worth compensation beyond a scholarship, in many cases the players who pursue extra money are trying to ensure their financial and physical well-being. Consider that, as this dissertation highlighted, traumatic or non-traumatic deaths and injuries prevent players from receiving medical coverage, and it makes sense that some players would pursue financial security. Or consider former player Donnie Edwards, who accepted groceries from someone after explaining his hardships, and was punished by the NCAA for violating amateurism policies.

Third, cases like Cam Newton at Auburn illustrate that purity and excellence are inextricably intertwined. The only motive equally as prominent as the profit

motive in big-time sport is the desire to win. Universities who have been found responsible for violating recruiting policies have knowingly committed violations in their pursuit of winning. When found in violation, these universities “may have to hand back trophies, take down some banners and delete a few pages from the media guide. But if you hooked up the athletic directors at those schools to lie detectors — and for even more fun, the presidents who enable them — all of them would swear it was worth it. So would their fans.”⁴¹ Ultimately, big-time sport and its interdependent organizations articulate the myth of the student-athlete in their pursuit of institutional prestige.

Dissertation Summary

This dissertation has contributed a rhetorical understanding to the study of big-time sport culture, in particular it has offered a theory of big-time sport’s legitimizing discourse, the myth of the student-athlete. Further, this dissertation was “radically contextual.” That is, in order to fully analyze the contemporary organizational rhetoric of the NCAA, Maryland, and the NCPA/CAPA, rhetorical histories and ideological and axiological discourses were articulated with the analysis. After establishing the history of big-time sport in U.S. culture in the introduction, chapter one argued that myth is a form of organizational rhetoric; that myth organizes ideology and axiology and functions to maintain and legitimize. I argued that the NCAA’s organizational rhetoric articulates a noble, benevolent, and trustworthy organizational identity by invoking the myth of the student-athlete. Through its organizational rhetoric, the NCAA’s myth of the student-athlete relies on three axiological *topoi*: purity, welfare, and excellence. Each value is also intertwined with

ideologies, such as neoliberalism and hegemonic masculinity. At the NCAA level, purity is the overarching *topos*. This myth has been co-constructed, reinforced, and contested by the NCAA, its member institutions, and its athlete members.

After exploring organizational rhetoric at the level of the NCAA, this dissertation closely studied one representative Big-time U, the University of Maryland. As a representative university in big-time sport culture – and an illustrative case of the stakes of hegemonic masculinity, in particular – Maryland’s organizational rhetoric articulated the three *topoi* of the myth of the student-athlete through its university-level and athletics department-level discourse, both archival and contemporary. I traced elements of the myth of the student-athlete through Maryland’s defining slogan “The Maryland Way,” present in both archival texts and contemporary materials such as the Athletics Strategic Plan and Student-Athlete Handbook and argued that Maryland’s organizational rhetoric constructs UM athletics as a key element in the production of *aretē*, or excellence. Then I complicated “The Maryland Way” by analyzing how Maryland organizational members and stakeholders maintained or contested the *topoi* of purity, welfare, and excellence in the wake of Jordan McNair’s death. Many other universities in the Power-Five conferences have been tainted by controversy. For example, former Washington State assistant athletics director and former quarterback at WSU resigned amid sexual assault allegations;⁴² Oklahoma State made news with a “hostess” controversy;⁴³ Auburn was investigated as part of the Cam Newton recruiting controversy; and Clemson football players were suspended after failing a drug test.⁴⁴ These scandals illustrate larger issues of corruption in big-time sport and challenge

claims of purity and excellence attached to the myth of the student-athlete, just as the Jordan McNair case challenged the *topos* of welfare. These scandals also suggest larger ideological issues such as neoliberalism and hegemonic masculinity.

Through an analysis of the Newton controversy at Auburn, this chapter has shown that at the university level, excellence is the dominant value *topos*. This is true in other Big-time U's organizational rhetoric at the institutional and athletics department levels. For example, Clemson Athletics (ACC) also articulates this vision of excellence: "With an emphasis on academic, athletic, personal, professional, and social development and excellence, the Athletic Department will provide the support, environment and infrastructure to promote the mission of Clemson University."⁴⁵

Washington State University (PAC-12) articulates a simple commitment "to helping student-athletes identify and meet academic, leadership and career goals leading to graduation and personal development."⁴⁶ Finally, Oklahoma State University (Big 12) wishes

to provide student-athletes with excellent opportunities to compete and win at the highest levels of college sports; to prepare student-athletes for lifelong contributions to society; to embrace equality, educational opportunity and diversity; to operate with fiscal integrity and compliance with NCAA, Big 12 Conference, and university guidelines; and to be a positive influence on the reputation and purposes of Oklahoma State University.⁴⁷

These are only a few examples. Auburn (SEC), Clemson (ACC), Washington State (Pac-12), and Oklahoma State (Big 12) are all representative of their athletic conferences, land-grant universities, and big-time sport culture writ large. Future research should take a deep dive into these organizational cultures through archival and contemporary university and athletics department texts, as well as stakeholder discourse, like I exhibited in chapter two of this dissertation.

Following the Maryland case study, chapter three built on the first two chapters by analyzing whether and to what extent another particular organization within the institution of big-time sport – college athlete advocates – reinforce or contest the myth of the student-athlete and its *topoi*. To extend the radically contextual nature of the dissertation, I began the chapter by tracing a brief history of college athlete advocacy, which is situated in a larger context of athletic activism outside of the university setting. Then, I analyzed the organizational rhetoric of the National College Players' Association (NCPA) and the College Athlete Players' Association (CAPA), which are two related advocacy organizations made up of current or former big-time college athletes. In particular, I analyzed the 2015 "State of NCAA Sports" address delivered by Kain Colter and Ramogi Huma at the Indiana AFL-CIO and argued that college athlete advocates primarily refute the *topoi* of purity and welfare and emphasize the *topos* of excellence. At the college athlete participant level, welfare is the dominant *topos*. That is, college athlete advocates emphasize the lack of "protections" to ensure welfare and suggest ways for the NCAA and its member universities to do better to take care of their athletes.

The three case studies in this dissertation provide a picture of how organizations within big-time sport legitimize the status quo through the myth of the student-athlete. Building on Mike Milford's argument that the student-athlete functions as a synecdoche or "ideological substance" of NCAA sports, the case studies explore that ideological substance further and explain ideologies and values other than but in addition to amateurism which shape the understanding of the "student-athlete," such as purity, excellence, and welfare, and the ideologies of

hegemonic masculinity and neoliberalism. Further, conceptualizing the “student-athlete” as myth increases the force of the term. Not only is the term “inaccurate,” but it also shapes and legitimizes the culture of big-time sport, which, as a result, maintains the current power dynamic in the Big-time U. This framework can be explored – not necessarily applied – in other case studies.⁴⁸

The Myth of the Student-Athlete: Implications for Individuals and Institutions

In theorizing the myth of the student-athlete, I have argued that myth organizes ideology and axiology to legitimize or maintain the status quo. As a form of organizational rhetoric, myth keeps things the way they are. Not only is myth a type of “fiction,” but it is a “controlling image.” The myth of the “student-athlete” is the controlling image for big-time sport culture. This dissertation has shown how that myth is articulated at three organizational levels: the NCAA, the University of Maryland, and college athlete organizations. Further, critics of big-time sport have critiqued the myth of the student-athlete, both for its truthfulness and fidelity and its discursive/ideological reasoning. All three case studies illustrate how the *topoi* of the student-athlete myth – purity, welfare, and excellence – both apply to the individual college athlete participants and the institution of big-time sport. That is, the myth of the student-athlete explains the organization of big-time sport in both macro and micro contexts. Further, as this dissertation has illustrated, the three *topoi* are not mutually exclusive; there are moments of overlap. When thinking about these *topoi*, critics should explore the relationship among them and how they complement or contradict one another.

Purity

The purity ideal is attached to athletes, their universities, and the institution of big-time sport. For example, the NCAA articulates purity with their code of amateurism, which asserts the moral superiority of college sports to their antithesis, professional sports. This describes the purity of the institution. Amateurism also describes the purity of the participants themselves. Because college athletes are “students first” and do not receive pay for their play, beyond their scholarships, of course, both they and the institution of big-time sport are “clean” and, allegedly, free from corruption. However, as Daniel Grano argues, the purity of the “student-athlete” “becomes profaned when inserted into the highly professionalized and commercialized context of contemporary elite college sports.”⁴⁹ Amateurism is also explicitly connected to education. There is a purity of higher education that cannot be attained in a professional setting. The “whole person” ethos is explicitly connected to higher education. However, as I have demonstrated through my analysis, the world of higher education – and big-time sport – is not as pristine as these claims suggest. Both the Maryland and Auburn cases raise questions about the *topos* of purity, in particular as organizational rhetoric promoted and reinforced the “student first” mantra associated with the amateur ideal. The “purity” of big-time sport came under scrutiny at Maryland, where critics highlighted the dirtiness and immorality of big-time football. The National College Players’ Association specifically refuted purity when Kain Colter and Ramogi Huma constructed college athletes as both students and workers who already get paid – through their scholarships. The advocates also critiqued the so-called purity of big-time sport when they alleged “NCAA sports is financially rich, but morally bankrupt.” Further, in the Cam Newton controversy,

violations of NCAA policies regarding recruiting and pay-for-play illustrated that there are constantly issues with compliance and oversight in big-time sport. The Cam Newton controversy also illustrates the inevitability of policy violations – the inevitability of impurity.

Welfare

The *topos* of welfare also applies to both athletes and the institution of big-time sport. Regarding chapter two and chapter three of this dissertation, welfare has been the most significant *topos* of controversy. Whereas the NCAA claims to prioritize physical and mental well-being, policy enforcement and institutional oversight tell a different story about the status quo of college athlete health and well-being. The NCAA dedicates resources to studying concussions yet does not enforce safety protocol to prevent them or have consequences for coaching staff who do not follow best practices. As the Maryland case study, NCPA case study, and opening to this conclusion illustrated, many current and former big-time athletes are in poor physical and mental health, which is a direct result of a lack of policies and lack of oversight for existing policies at the NCAA and university levels. The concept of “welfare” connotes both physical and mental health, or well-being, but college athlete advocates have also pointed to the gaps that create issues of with these as well as financial wellness. The Cam Newton controversy arose out of a perceived need for more financial resources to ensure the athlete’s welfare. Ironically, financial or “fiscal” wellness was expressed as a key priority for the institution of big-time sport. Both Maryland’s and Auburn’s organizational rhetoric, particularly their Strategic Plans, articulated the need for financial welfare, which is also related to the *topos* of

excellence. Further, and related to both excellence and purity, the NCAA also asserts that the educational experience afforded to college athletes is of high quality – in good health. Yet, case after case illustrates that the educational experiences of college athletes are sub-par. Maryland, Auburn, and other universities outline a commitment to college athlete physical, mental, and educational well-being. However, as many controversies in college sports illustrate,⁵⁰ big time sport is unwell.

Excellence

The NCAA, Maryland, and NCPA/CAPA all consistently articulated the *topos* of excellence in their organizational discourse. The NCAA and Maryland both assert that their principles and practices align with the highest values of excellence: academic excellence, personal excellence and leadership, and excellence on the field in the form of winning, which unfortunately corresponds to demonstrating key ideals of hegemonic masculinity. This claim asserts that college athletes are excellent, and so is big-time sport. Maryland and other universities nuance the *topos* of excellence by claiming that, by virtue of participating in athletics, college athletes develop into good, academically and athletically skilled, and responsible citizens who are prepared to be successful in their careers. The Maryland case also illustrates the stakes of pursuing excellence on the field. In the pursuit of winning, Maryland coaching staff engaged in questionable coaching practices that ultimately constituted a toxic culture. College athlete advocates have reinforced the notion that they are excellent; however, the institution of big-time sport is not excellent or well, and the NCAA has failed its athletes. Further, these advocates do not claim to be superior to their peers. Rather than reinforcing the NCAA and university-level organizational rhetoric of excellence,

athletes argue that first and foremost, they are humans who deserve the same “basic rights” as others. At this time, college athletes lack protections on and off the field to ensure their human welfare.

Although this dissertation has studied three axiological *topoi* attached to the myth of the student-athlete, each individual *topos* can function as an overarching or umbrella *topos* in different cases. I suggest that, when studying the organizational rhetoric of big-time sport, scholars consider which *topos* is emphasized more so than others, as well as the relationship among the *topoi*, as I have done in this project. In this project, I have explained the relationship among purity, welfare, and excellence in three different cases. The *topos* of welfare has organized purity and excellence in this dissertation’s arguments and its implications since both chapters two and three highlighted the poor state of college athletes and the institution of big-time sport. When examining the culture of big-time sport, I believe it is essential to study this rhetoric of well-being from all organizational members ranging from NCAA and university administrators to the college athletes themselves. Many of the arguments in favor of compensating athletes beyond their scholarships stem from this premise – that college athletes are overworked and lack the basic protections they need to remain physically and mentally well. Further, how can college athletes be truly excellent on and off the field if they are suffering physical and emotional damage through their sport? And is the NCAA’s ideal of purity – reflected in the rhetoric of amateurism – worth causing bodily harm to young, mostly black bodies? Or, is purity even attainable in these conditions? Following other scholars,⁵¹ I believe that purity was once attainable, but in the context of corporatized higher education it is not.

Readjusting the ideal of purity is necessary to ensure a more equitable and just big-time sport.

Now What?

This dissertation has explored both problems and attempted solutions in big-time sport. Each chapter featured a case study of an organization advancing their interpretation of an ideal college sports culture through articulating the myth of the student-athlete. Even though there is a general consensus that big-time sport is highly problematic, universities, college sports fans, athletes, and the media continue to reinforce the myth of the student-athlete. This problem has wider implications not only for the student athletes at the center of the controversy, but for higher education and political culture at large. In what follows I advance some recommendations for reforming big-time sport in terms of rhetoric, structure of organizations, and specific policies. My recommendations are based on my own research and expertise, that of my predecessors, and also on what current and former college athletes have been advocating for throughout two decades.

Rhetoric

First – and most simply – institutions and individuals must address the outdated rhetoric of amateurism. There are a few possibilities here. One is to retire the term “student-athlete” from big-time sport. This is a particular proposal that is heavily supported in academic and sports reformer circles alike. In place of “student-athlete,” simply use the term “college athlete.” More progressive advocates call for replacing “student-athlete” with “profit-athlete,” or “revenue-athlete” to describe the participants in big-time sport while maintaining “student-athlete” for those who

participate in non-revenue sports or in Division II or Division III NCAA sports. Individuals, if choosing to continue using “student-athlete” out of tradition, should acknowledge both its rhetorical history and its hybridity. These young people *are* students, but they are *also* working, just like other college students of who have part- or full-time jobs. As communication scholars, we know words are powerful. It is crucial that we do not purposefully or accidentally perpetuate the NCAA’s rhetoric of amateurism. We need to acknowledge that college athletes, like other students who have part or full-time jobs on or off campus, may be struggling as a result of their schedules, constraints, and in their particular case, the NCAA’s policies or lack thereof. If we know this, we can be more helpful. At the very least, we can exercise empathy.

As scholars, we should keep participating in academic and public conversations. This dissertation has demonstrated that the academic conversations about big-time sport are lively in multiple disciplines, and so are the stakes of those conversations. Scholars should research – from all perspectives – college-athlete well-being and big-time sport. Further, we should share our research in disciplinary, multidisciplinary, and public forums, whenever possible. As a communication scholar, I know and believe that communication can bridge these academic conversations. Bringing together these views, and especially highlighting the contributions that communication and rhetorical theory can make, open up opportunities for knowledge creation and dissemination.

There are several actions we can take in our role as faculty. First, we should be engaged scholars. As scholars, it is increasingly important to enter public debates

in meaningful ways. In addition to publishing work in scholarly journals, faculty can share their expertise in public forums, such as *The Atlantic*, *Engaging Sports*, or *Citizen Critics*,⁵² or participate in events on college campuses such as the McGarr Symposium on Sports and Society or the Black Student-Athlete Summit.⁵³ I see potential to collaborate with university administrators, campus centers, media outlets, policy makers, and even the NCAA to revise the status quo into one that is more just. Scholars can be powerful agents in the quest for social change, but we must reach out to the agencies and folks we study and hope to help. Truthfully, the people we want to impact the most probably do not know we are doing the work we are doing.

We can also engage these issues in the classroom. We can challenge students who claim their athlete peers are privileged. In some of my classes, students have claimed that “college athletes get free swag, special facilities, and tutors. Why should they complain?” As John Oliver put it, receiving sneakers and backpacks does not translate to currency for groceries or to help pay the bills.⁵⁴ Like any group of people, we can engage the concepts of privilege and oppression and complicate these narratives.⁵⁵ Further, as communication teachers, we can teach our college athletes – like we teach all of our students – how to use their voices. Whether it is in a public speaking classroom, communication, culture, and sport, communication and gender, or rhetorical criticism, we can do what we are meant to do and teach. Let us teach them how sports communicate and how systems of power work. Following the example of Kain Colter and Ramogi Huma, and those who came before, we can help all students achieve what Freire advocates for: conscientization, or “critical consciousness”⁵⁶ through teaching courses in communication and sport, or the

equivalent in Kinesiology (Physical Cultural Studies, Sociology of Sport), History, and so on. It is critical that a university education provide the tools for students to critique and question. In communication courses, these tools can also be provided as well as specific tools for student advocacy through public address and organizing. We should encourage our students to use their voices to stand up for themselves and for others. Scholars, popular figures, and the public should not condemn college athlete advocates; instead they should be encouraged and praised for forging a path forward toward a more just society and higher education culture.

As empathetic humans, we can also make a difference. Sport is one of the most accessible conversations to enter. Ask your uncle why he feels the allowance of dreadlocks in college sports is “so problematic”⁵⁷ or why he describes that black running back as “so athletic” and the white quarterback as “so smart.”⁵⁸ Ask your colleague why they believe college athletes are not workers who deserve basic healthcare and access to resources, or why they insist that student-athletes are lazy and just have their tutors do their work for them. And if that stereotype has any kernel of truth, engage in a conversation about why that might be the case: why a college athlete may be struggling to find time to go to class, or to sleep, or why a college athlete doesn’t deserve their patience. Small acts of empathy can help shape larger structural and policy-level changes.

Structure of Big-Time Sport and Organizations

On a broader level, this dissertation has illustrated the need to de-capitalize higher education. For example, if university administrators wish to adhere to the outdated amateurism model, then the structure of higher education and big-time sport

must be radically changed to actually meet that ideal. In other words, we need to reject or reform the professional model of big-time sport. Allen Sack refers to this school of thought as “intellectual elitism.”⁵⁹ Intellectual elites simply reject the current model of big-time sport, instead of advocating for a model of higher education that creates well-educated citizens whose education is *enhanced* by competitive sports – an ideal that reflects some of the NCAA’s rhetoric of excellence and purity. For some intellectual elitists, (e.g., Dowling, 2007)⁶⁰ the ideal university would be a community of scholars and students insulated from the rampant commercialism that, in their opinion, is swamping many universities.⁶¹ Among the reforms that are consistent with the intellectual elitist model are the following: replacing one-year-renewable athletic scholarships with need-based aid, or athletic scholarships whose renewal is not dependent on athletic performance; requiring athletes to fit the same academic profile as other students; restoring freshman ineligibility, especially for “special admits;” ensuring that athletes can pursue the major of their choice, and that athletic contests do not conflict with class attendance; making the location and control of academic support services for athletes the same as for all students; requiring that athletes maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0 each semester to be eligible for sports; fully disclosing aggregate data on the majors, advisors, GPA, courses taken, and names of instructors for all athletes; and closely monitoring the growth rate of operating expenditures in sports.⁶² Replacing scholarships with need-based aid is supported in the smaller college sports community:

In his letter in support of need-based financial aid, President John William Ward of Amherst College argued that athletic scholarships are at the very core of all that is wrong with collegiate sport. ‘Contracted grants-in-aid at many schools,’ wrote Ward, ‘force athletes to remain on a team in order to continue

their education. Athletic programs which depend on huge media-oriented audiences compel college athletes to perform like professionals without anything near commensurate compensation. In the marketplace such practices run counter to standard labor ethics; in an educational context they affront common sense.⁶³

Advocates for need-based aid and intellectual elites would support a bona fide model of amateur sport across all NCAA divisions. Critics worry that a totally need-based model “may tempt alumni and boosters to pick up the cost of education not covered by financial aid.” However, cheating of this sort “seems to be quite common, even at scholarship-granting institutions.”⁶⁴

The alternative is to fully adopt the commercial mode of corporate sport. Former NCAA president Myles Brand, the same president who invented the term “student-athlete,” argues that college sport depends on commercialism as much as higher education does.⁶⁵ From his perspective, commercialism is a good thing as long as commercial activities are perfectly in tune with the values, mission, and goals of higher education. Proponents of commercialism assert that sports revenue provides young men and women in non-revenue sports with a chance to participate. Further, the inherently educational nature of sport participation does makes big-time college sport consistent with a university’s academic mission, not its ability to generate revenue.⁶⁶ Proponents argue that this corporate model should emphasize career preparation so that college athletes may become productive contributors of capital. Indeed, some of the nation’s largest athletics programs have more than doubled their spending in academic and career development support for athletes during the past ten years.⁶⁷ The increased emphasis on providing academic support for athletes through state-of-the-art counseling centers is consistent with the academic capitalist belief that

such efforts can maintain big-time college athletes as an integral part of the student body.

Compromising these two positions, Sack and Staurowsky believe there is a fairly straightforward and workable approach to creating a nonexploitative model of professional college sport: to follow the contours of what exists now.⁶⁸ They explain,

The NCAA's Division IA would be set aside for schools that currently run one or more sports as unrelated businesses. What would be different is that sports in this category would have to be totally self-supporting. Money for administrative expenses, stadium upkeep, and other items that are often taken from the university's general fund would now come from sports revenues. Of course, line items such as coaches' salaries, player compensation, and travel and recruiting expenses would also be the total responsibility of each college sport franchise.⁶⁹

This openly professional model could enable athletes, in their newly recognized status as university employees, to decide to form unions or bargain collectively for a larger share of revenues.⁷⁰ This meshes well with the athletes' rights model of big-time sport reform.

The athletes' rights model of college sports rests on the assumption that athletic scholarships are employment contracts and that big-time college sport is a business. The goal of most athletes' rights advocates is to provide what they consider to be fair compensation for the athletes who labor in the multibillion-dollar college sports industry. Their tactics have included legislative initiatives in state government to secure worker's compensation rights for college athletes, organizing college athletes and forming alliances with organized labor, challenging the NCAA on antitrust grounds to raise the athletic scholarship cap, and filing law suits against the NCAA to allow athletes to accept sponsorship money to prepare for the Olympics.⁷¹ Athletes' rights advocates argue that the NCAA supports free enterprise for everyone

but the athletes: celebrity coaches “endorse products and engage in a variety of entrepreneurial activities to supplement their salaries,” but athletes are not “allowed to benefit financially from the academic capitalism so common in the rest of the university[.]” They argue that Myles Brand’s statement about “amateurism defining the participants, not the enterprise” sounds “like a formula for exploitation.”⁷²

Chapter three provided a closer look at the organizational rhetoric of college athlete advocates. With regard to the mission of higher education, the athlete’s rights advocates argue that scholarship athletes are students and workers. As students they deserve the same educational opportunities as other students; as workers, they deserve the same rights as other employees.⁷³ Adopting the athletes’ rights model of reform complements the importance of addressing the rhetoric of amateurism in big-time sport.

Policies

As chapter one of this dissertation explained, the very formation of the NCAA was an effort to make college sports safer in 1906.⁷⁴ As such, it is fitting that, in part, my suggestions for big-time sport reform revolve around specific policies regarding athlete safety. Just like in the 1940s and 1950s, when debates about the “sanity” of college sports and specifically concerns over commercialization took over the college sports reform world, our contemporary debates over the “sanity” of college sports should revolve around adopting policies that ensure a more radical version of “sanity.” Rather than “sanity” equating amateurism, “sanity” must promise the physical, mental, and financial well-being of big-time sport’s participants. Whereas in the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, “faculty associations, official

intercollegiate sports organizations, and private foundations have established commissions to attempt to address problems with college sports,”⁷⁵ as members of the academy we can support such associations or even initiate new ones to address policy issues in addition to welfare such as “integrity, athletes' rights, anti-athlete violence, gender equity, racial and ethnic diversity rights, steroid use/abuse prevention, youth sports reform, antigambling, ethics in sports, and Olympic reform movements.”⁷⁶

Similarly, and following the athletes' rights model discussed above, scholar Allen Sack formed an organization

that would advocate for the rights of college athletes and not the needs of the institutions. After setting up an athlete advocacy group on his New Haven campus, he moved to a national level with what eventually became known in 1981 as the Center for Athletes' Rights and Education (CARE).⁷⁷

Sack was met with resistance, as “the thought of unions and bargaining collectively raised the ire of athletic officials, leaders of the NCAA, and specifically government officials when President Ronald Reagan's antiunion administration was elected that fall.”⁷⁸

Sack was one of several engaged scholars who advocated for specific reforms. The 1999 gathering at Drake University included scholars Allen Sack, Andrew Zimbalist, Murray Sperber, and Ellen Staurowsky before they became “big names” in academia. They were advocating for reform.⁷⁹ From the Knight Commission in Intercollegiate Athletics,⁸⁰ to the Drake Group (TDG) and the Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA),⁸¹ there are plenty of precedents to follow in the pursuit of a more just college sports culture. When possible, we can take up the opportunity to join athletics committees at our universities and work to create or revise policies to account for the changing nature of higher education. The NCAA is,

after all, a “member institution.” The policies have all been created by university representatives, faculty, presidents, and athletics administration. If not us, we can encourage our colleagues to get involved. In this capacity, we can advocate for some specific, tangible policy changes. Beyond involvement in committees or advocacy groups, we can support athletes’ rights in a few other ways. One way is to support state-level legislation, such as Maryland Delegate Brooke E. Lierman’s proposed bill “that would upend the college athletics model across the state and give athletes the right to unionize and collectively bargain over issues related to health and safety, as well as compensation.”⁸² Bills like these emphasize athletes’ guaranteed health coverage in the event of catastrophic injury.

We can also support university program-level policy changes regarding practices, such as the reforms Maryland instituted after Jordan McNair’s death. For example, the Senate Executive Committee (SEC, not to be confused with the other SEC discussed in this conclusion) instituted regular reporting to the Athletics Council; an ongoing schedule of trainings on the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) with associated documentation and periodic internal and external reviews of safety protocols; support for the “Medical Model” for athletic trainers; and, perhaps most importantly, reporting mechanisms for student-athletes and staff to express concerns that are reviewed by the leadership of Athletics and separate University division and the establishment of a student-athlete ombudsperson.⁸³ The SEC also emphasized that the “University Senate will be integral to the successful implementation of necessary reforms.”⁸⁴ The senators also discussed “the importance of academics and whether athletics should be allowed to take precedence over academics at a premier research

institution” and approved a resolution “condemning the acts of the Board of Regents.”⁸⁵ Perhaps the strongest resolution was “to improve the shared governance and athletics in the University System of Maryland,” which resolved that

Maryland state legislation that would require a significant portion of the Board of Regents be chosen by statewide elections when vacancies open;

Demands that seats on University of Maryland, College Park presidential search committees be awarded in the same proportion as the University Senate, with regards to faculty, staff, and student constituencies; and

Advises that President Loh should honor his previous statement to retire in June of 2019.⁸⁶

Although Maryland is still dealing with the root causes of its football program’s toxic culture, these acts by members of the university community are positive developments.

Big-time sport has been through cycles of reform efforts and, like most movements for social reform, must contend with a complex, “multiorganizational field.”⁸⁷ In other words, reform must take into account the various overlapping organizational assemblages of big-time sport culture, which I outlined in the introduction: colleges and universities, including their athletic departments, administrative units, governing boards, and booster clubs; athletic conferences, the NCAA, sports media organizations, medicine, sports merchandising companies, professional associations, and reform movement organizations.⁸⁸ In order to effect change, members of this complex organization, along with scholars and outside activists, must consider the various relationships within. Further, the rhetorical implications of the myth of the student-athlete must also be considered. As this

dissertation has shown, discourse shapes reality. It also exercises power. But as a rhetorician, I believe that through discourse we may change that reality.

Notes

¹ The film, written by former University of Southern California football player Bob DeMars and directed by athlete advocates Ed O'Bannon and Ramogi Huma, was dubbed the first major critique, in documentary form, of the NCAA from the perspective of former college athletes (*The Business of Amateurs*. Screenplay by Bob DeMars. Produced by Ben Edwards, (Producer), and Toby Wilson. Directed by Ed O'Bannon, Ramogi Huma, Ramona Shelburne, Steven Christian, Christian Staehely, Sonderful Entertainment (Firm), Gravitas Ventures (Firm), and Kino Lorber, Inc. Kino Lorber, 2017. DVD). I accessed it on Amazon Prime. The film chronicles the story of DeMars' former teammate Scott Ross – and countless other examples – and interviews Ross and current and former college athletes and advocates for college athlete rights.

² Sonderful Entertainment, "'Money in the Water' official video for documentary 'The Business of Amateurs,'" *YouTube*, August 24, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYmKZA5YQDg>.

³ Michael O'Keeffe, "'The Business of Amateurs' takes a critical look at college sports," *New York Daily News*, April 11, 2016, <http://www.nydailynews.com/blogs/iteam/ncaa-called-business-amateurs-blog-entry-1.2596964>; <https://sports.good.is/articles/ncaa-documentary-business-of-amateurs>.

⁴ Ben Strauss, "A Fight to Keep College Athletes from the Pain of Injury Costs," *New York Times*, April 24, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/25/sports/a-fight-to-keep-college-athletes-from-the-pain-of-injury-costs.html>.

⁵ Mark Whicker, "Football Killed Ex-USC LB Scott Ross; His Family Wants NFL to do more About Concussions," *Daily News*, August 15, 2015, <https://www.dailynews.com/2015/08/15/football-killed-ex-usc-lb-scott-ross-his-family-wants-nfl-to-do-more-about-concussions/>.

⁶ Raymie E. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communication Monographs*, 56 (1989): 91-111.

⁷ Dmitriy Ioselevich, "Cam Newton Controversy: Is Auburn QB's NCAA Violation Actually Justified?" *Bleacher Report*, November 22, 2010, <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/522685-cam-newton-controversy-is-auburn-qbs-ncaa-violation-actually-justified>; and Pat Forde, Chris Low, and Mark Schlabach, "Cash Sought for Cam Newton," *ESPN*, November 5, 2010, <http://www.espn.com/college-football/news/story?id=5765214>.

⁸ "About the Southeastern Conference," *SEC Sports.com*, 2018, <http://www.secsports.com/article/11067695/about-southeastern-conference>.

⁹ "About the Southeastern Conference."

¹⁰ Darian Somers, "Where SEC Schools Rank Among the 2017 U.S. News Best Colleges," *U.S. News*, September 23, 2016, <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/slideshows/where-sec-schools-rank-among-the-2017-us-news-best-colleges>.

¹¹ "Southeastern Conference Bowl Games," *Sports Reference LLC*, 2019, <https://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/conferences/sec/bowls.html>. After Clemson beat Alabama for the Tigers' second national championship in three years, the ACC tied the SEC with six wins in 2019. That's the most of any conference, though the SEC and ACC did lead the way with 12 and 11 representatives each.

¹² Christopher J. Walsh, *Where Football Is King: A History of the SEC* (First Taylor Trade Publishing ed. Lanham, Maryland: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2006).

¹³ "SEC Academic Conference," *SECU.com*, 2019, <https://www.theseecu.com/programs/sec-academic-conference/>. Faculty at SEC universities can participate in programs too, such as the SEC symposium.

¹⁴ "SEC History," *SECSports.com*, n.d., <http://www.secsports.com/article/12628010/sec-history>.

¹⁵ It was then renamed the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama. In 1899 the name again was changed, to the Alabama Polytechnic Institute. Finally, in 1960 the name of the school was changed to Auburn University, a title more in keeping with its location, and expressing the varied academic programs and larger curriculum of a major university ("Quick Facts," *Auburn.edu*, December 5, 2017, <http://www.auburn.edu/main/welcome/factsandfigures.php>).

¹⁶ "Our Vision," *Auburn.edu*, February 22, 2019, <http://www.auburn.edu/main/welcome/visionandmission.php>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The handbook I located is from 2015-2016, which is a bit dated. It did take me some digging to find one at all.

¹⁹ Auburn Athletics' website has a "Student-Athlete Support Services" page, which contains information about the services and resources available to their athletes.

²⁰ Auburn Student-Athlete Handbook, 4; "About SASS," *auburntigers.com*, n.d., <https://auburntigers.com/sports/2018/6/11/academics-index-html.aspx>.

²¹ Auburn Student-Athlete Handbook, 24.

²² Ibid., 17. The minimum G.P.A. for a graduating senior is a 2.0.

²³ Ibid., 1.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Auburn Athletics Strategic Plan, 5.

²⁶ Ibid., 1.

²⁷ Russell E. Ward, Jr., "Buried Accomplishments: Institutional Isomorphism in College Athletics Mission Statements," *International Journal of Sport Communication* 8 (2015): 18-45.

²⁸ Ibid., 19.

²⁹ Oklahoma State University Student-Athlete Handbook, 1.

³⁰ Ibid., 122-3.

³¹ Cam Newton Biography, n.d., <https://www.panthers.com/team/players-roster/cam-newton/>.

³² His net worth is estimated at forty-five million dollars. Aramide Tinubu, "Cam Newton: The NFL Star's Net Worth, and Why He's Done For The Season," *Entertainment Cheat Sheet*, December 20, 2018, <https://www.cheatsheet.com/entertainment/cam-newton-the-nfl-stars-net-worth-and-why-hes-done-for-the-season.html/>.

³³ Brandon Marcello, "Cecil Newton says he 'willfully fell on the sword' during Cam Newton investigation," *AL.com*, November 4, 2014, <https://www.al.com/auburnfootball/2014/11/cecil-newton-says-he-willfully.html>.

³⁴ "Top 5 'Pay to Play' Scandals Rocking College Football," *The Week*, January 6, 2011, <https://theweek.com/articles/488252/5-pay-play-scandals-rocking-college-football>.

³⁵ NCAA Division I Handbook.

³⁶ NCAA Division I Handbook, 71.

³⁷ Bob Cook, "Will 'Pay to Play' Become A Permanent Part of School Sports?" *Forbes*, August 22, 2012, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bobcook/2012/08/22/will-pay-to-play-become-a-permanent-part-of-school-sports/#528c47e0218b>.

³⁸ "Top 5 'Pay to Play' Scandals Rocking College Football."

³⁹ Associated Press, "NCAA: No Major Violations for Auburn," *ESPN*, October 13, 2011, http://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/7093495/ncaa-finds-no-major-violations-auburn-regarding-cam-newton.

⁴⁰ Colter, 2015, para 31.

⁴¹ "Report: Cam Newton and Father Admit to 'Pay for Play' Scandal," *NewsOne*, November 10, 2010, <https://newsone.com/852395/report-cam-newton-and-father-admit-to-pay-for-play-scandal/>.

⁴² Jason Gesser, "Former WSU Quarterback Jason Gesser Resigns Amid Sexual-Misconduct Allegations," *The Seattle Times*, September 18, 2018,

<https://www.seattletimes.com/sports/wsu-cougar-football/former-wsu-qb-jason-gesser-resigns-amidst-sexual-misconduct-allegations/>.

⁴³ Chip Patterson, "Oklahoma State's Hostess Program, 'Orange Pride,' Under Fire in SI Report," *CBS Sports*, September 13, 2013, <https://www.cbssports.com/college-football/news/oklahoma-states-hostess-program-orange-pride-under-fire-in-si-report/>.

⁴⁴ Grace Raynor, "Clemson's Investigation, Appeal to NCAA Continues in Wake of Ostarine Scandal," *The Post and Courier*, January 15, 2019, https://www.postandcourier.com/sports/clemson-s-investigation-appeal-to-ncaa-continues-in-wake-of/article_af1a27b0-18e7-11e9-acdc-23c29904c446.html.

⁴⁵ Clemson Student-Athlete Handbook, http://data.clemsontigers.com/pdf/performance/student-athlete_handbook_18-19.pdf.

⁴⁶ Washington State University Student-Athlete Handbook, https://wsucougars.com/documents/2017/3/9/17_AaSA_Handbook.pdf.

⁴⁷ Oklahoma State University Student-Athlete Handbook.

⁴⁸ I do not believe that theories or frameworks can just be simply "applied" like a cookie cutter. Rather, I and other scholars can explore other case studies to see in what ways the framework "fits" or does not fit. The differences will be just as significant as the similarities, as that will be what moves the theory forward.

⁴⁹ Grano, *The Eternal Presence of Sport*, 199, citing Heather L. Reid, "Sport and Moral Education in Plato's Republic," *Journal of the Sociology of Sport* 34, no. 2 (2007): 160-75; Debra Hawhee, "Emergent Flesh: Phusio-Poiesis and the Ancient Arts of Training," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 25, no. 2 (2001): 141-57; and Debra Hawhee, *Bodily Arts*.

⁵⁰ This dissertation did not explore in depth the notion of academic welfare or excellence. The most significant recent case to illustrate the problem here was at the University of North Carolina. See Sara Ganim and Devon Sayers, "UNC Report Finds 18 Years of Academic Fraud to Keep Athletes Playing," *CNN*, October 23, 2014, <https://www.cnn.com/2014/10/22/us/unc-report-academic-fraud/index.html>. There are many other cases of academic sanctions as well.

⁵¹ Branch, *The Cartel: Inside the Rise and Imminent Fall of the NCAA*; Nocera and Strauss, *Indentured*; Sack, and Staurowsky, *College Athletes for Hire*; Sack, *Counterfeit Amateurs*; Southall and Weiler, "NCAA Division-I Athletic Departments: 21st Century Athletic Company Towns"; Southall and Staurowsky, "Cheering on the Collegiate Model: Creating, Disseminating, and Imbedding the NCAA's Redefinition of Amateurism," Southall, Eckard, Nagel, and Randall, "Athletic Success and NCAA Profit-Athletes' Adjusted Graduation Gaps"; Staurowsky, "College Athletes' Rights in the Age of the Super Conference"; and Staurowsky, and Sack, "Reconsidering the Use of the Term Student-Athlete in Academic Research."

⁵² See Taylor Branch, "The Shame of College Sports," *The Atlantic*, October 2011, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/10/the-shame-of-college-sports/308643/>; and "Critics Chat: Indigenous Identity and the 2018 Midterms," *Citizen Critics*, October 29, 2018, <https://citizencritics.org/2018/10/critics-chat-indigenous-identity-and-the-2018-midterms/>. Michael Butterworth has also been a guest on the Edge of Sports podcast, and so on.

⁵³ Both of these are at the University of Texas. See <https://moody.utexas.edu/centers/sports-communication-media/head-trauma-and-future-football/>; <http://diversity.utexas.edu/blackstudentathletesummit/>.

⁵⁴ John Oliver, "Last week tonight with John Oliver: The NCAA," March 15, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pX8BXH3SIn0>.

⁵⁵ For example, the out-group (non-college athletes) witness the special treatment of athletes on campus, especially in big-time sports. Priority scheduling, private resources, special advisors, and so on. However, the in-group (college athletes) have expressed the many ways they are disadvantaged, many of which I highlighted in this dissertation. Anecdotally, I have also heard big-time college athletes express their concern over being fully integrated into the campus community. For example, they are not able to join clubs or socialize in the same way as "regular" students. This would also affect students who work full-or part time jobs.

⁵⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; and Freire, "Cultural Action and Conscientization."

⁵⁷ Under coach Joe Paterno at Penn State, there were strict hair and facial hair regulations, to maintain the "professionalism" of the players (read: whiteness). Bill O'Brien lifted those restrictions when he took over in 2012 (Michael Sedor, Your comments: Penn State's relaxation of hair, beard length rules worries some," *Penn Live*, February 20, 2012, http://blog.pennlive.com/pasports/2012/02/beard_hair_penn_states_relaxation_of_hair_beard_length_rules_worries_some.html). And yes, this was my uncle who said this. There is also a conversation about dreadlocks in the NFL context; however, this conversation revolves around hair pulling and tackling. See Laura Ruhala, Richard Ruhala, Emerald, and Alexis, E. Scott Martin, "Analyzing Hair Pulling in Athletics," *The Sport Journal* 20, n.d., <http://thesportjournal.org/article/analyzing-hair-pulling-in-athletics/>.

⁵⁸ Anthony Schmidt and Kevin Coe, "Old and New Forms of Racial Bias in Mediated Sports Commentary: The Case of the National Football League Draft," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 58, no. 4 (2014): 655-70.

⁵⁹ Allen L. Sack, "Clashing Models of Commercial Sport in Higher Education: Implications for Reform and Scholarly Research," *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics* 2 (2009): 76-92.

⁶⁰ William C. Dowling, *Confessions of a Spoil Sport: My Life and Hard Times Fighting Sports Corruption at an Old Eastern University* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State Press, 2007).

⁶¹ Sack, "Clashing Models of Commercial Sport in Higher Education," 78.

⁶² Ibid.; Allen L. Sack and Ellen J. Staurowsky, *College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998); and Ronald A. Smith, *Pay for Play: A History of Big-Time College Athletic Reform* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011),

⁶³ John William Ward, letter to Walter Byers, 26 July 1972, Walter Byers Papers, Financial Aid, Special Committee Folder, 1971, NCAA Headquarters, Overland Park, Kansas. Cited in Sack and Staurowsky, *College Athletes for Hire*, 132.

⁶⁴ Sack and Staurowsky, *College Athletes for Hire*, 140.

⁶⁵ Myles Brand, "Commercialism Controlled When Activity Aligns with Mission," *NCAA News*, April 24, 2006, 3.

⁶⁶ Myles Brand, Interview by Allen Sack, May 23, 2006 (cited in Sack, "Clashing Models of Commercial Sport in Higher Education").

⁶⁷ Brad Wolverton, "Rise in Fancy Academic Centers for Athletes Raises Questions of Fairness," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 5, 2008, [*content only available to Chronicle Subscribers*], cited in Sack, "Clashing Models of Commercial Sport in Higher Education: Implications for Reform and Scholarly Research," 82. On the average, institutions spent more than one million dollars in academic support in 2007-08.

⁶⁸ Sack and Staurowsky, *College Athletes for Hire*, 142.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 142. The sources of revenues would be much the same as they are today, including gate receipts, the sale of broadcast rights, corporate sponsorships, the sale of licensed merchandise, and money from alumni and boosters. Because these teams would continue to act as minor leagues for other professional sport organizations, such leagues as the NFL and the NBA would be expected to provide financial support. In Olympic sports such as gymnastics and swimming, the National Olympic Committee could be expected to expand the kinds of financial support they already provide.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 144.

⁷¹ Sack, *Counterfeit Amateurs*.

⁷² Ramogi Huma, Interview by Allen L. Sack, June 8, 2006; and Allen L. Sack, *Counterfeit Amateurs: An Athlete's Journey Through the Sixties to the Age of Academic Capitalism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008).

⁷³ Robert A. McCormick and Amy Christian McCormick, "The Myth of the Student-Athlete: The College Athlete as Employee," *Washington Law Review* 81 (2006): 71-157.

⁷⁴ Ronald Smith argues that the reform agenda was kept alive in the 1920s by a number of faculty members. Smith explains that by the end of the 1920s, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, upon the recommendation of the NCAA, concluded a three-year study of college athletics and produced a 350-page document

condemning the professionalized and commercialized athletics found across the country. The 1929 Carnegie Report on *American College Athletics* is often considered the most significant historical reform document in intercollegiate athletics. Smith points to three histories that cover the Carnegie Report: Schmidt, *Shaping College Football*; Thelin, *Games Colleges Play*; and Watterson, *College Football* (Smith, *Pay for Play*, 60). A few individual college presidents instituted successful reforms in the 1930s, such as at the University of Pennsylvania, University of Chicago, and the University of Pittsburgh (Smith, *Pay for Play*, 71-81).

⁷⁵ Robert D. Benford, "The College Sports Reform Movement: Reframing the 'Edutainment' Industry," *The Sociological Quarterly* 48 (2007): 6. "One of the earliest such documents was issued by the Carnegie Foundation. The authors of the report articulated their concerns for college sports' commercialization and professionalization, an indictment that resonates among present-day reformers: [College football] is not a student's game as it once was. It is a commercial enterprise. The athletes who take part in it have training; they are commanded by professional coaches; little if any nary play is left to the player. The great matches are highly profitable enterprises (Howard J. Savage, *American College Athletics* (New York: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching), ix). Benford provides a table of Intercollegiate Athletics Reform Reports from 1883-2005 on page 7, and an appendix of college sports reform organizations on pages 27-28. See also Ronald A. Smith, *Pay for Play*, 59-70.

⁷⁶ Benford, "The College Sports Reform Movement," 8.

⁷⁷ Smith, *Pay for Play*, 190.

⁷⁸ Ibid. Funding was soon withdrawn by the Department of Education and within a short time CARE became past tense. Opposition by the Reagan administration was probably more than the new organization could handle. Founder Sack, with resignation, commented that CARE took 'its place in the graveyard of failed attempts at collegiate athletic reform.'" Citing Sack, *Counterfeit Amateurs*.

⁷⁹ Smith, *Pay for Play* 191. At their first meeting, there was no consensus or shared vision on what college sport should be or could be. But there was some basic agreement that counseling for athletes should be removed from the athletic department and placed under university counseling and that scholarships should be taken away from teams whose athletes failed academically.

⁸⁰ Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, "About the Knight Commission," n.d., <https://www.knightcommission.org/about-knight-commission/>

⁸¹ TDG and COIA are both reform groups but have different goals and suggestions for how to reach them. UT Business Professor and COIA member Michael Granof noted that "The Drake Group basically is for far more radical change. Whereas [COIA] sort of accepts the existence of athletics, as where The Drake Group is willing to take more of a protest approach, we've been working with the establishment." Indeed, Ronald Smith explains that the Drake Group chose to provoke, rather than work with, the NCAA. He continues, "the picketing of the 2004 NCAA Final Four basketball tournament did not endear the group to the leaders of athletics, nor was it intended to" (Smith, *Pay for Play*, 192). NCAA President Myles Brand called the Drake Group "self-appointed radical

reformers and incorrigible cynics...consisting of a small number of faculty members with an eye for publicity” (Myles Brand, “In Athletics, Level Field Must Begin in Classroom,” *New York Times*, May 9, 2004, SP10 (cited in Smith, *Pay for Play*, 192). COIA, or the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics was founded in 2002 as a coalition of big-time university faculty senates that “desired to work with faculty, presidents, governing boards, and the NCAA to promote “academics first.” Within the first year of existence, COIA joined with NCAA President Myles Brand, the Association of Governing Boards, and the American Association of University Professors for an AAUP-sponsored conference in Indianapolis, Indiana, home of the NCAA.

⁸² Rick Maese, “Proposed Legislation Would Give Maryland College Athletes the Right to Unionize,” *Washington Post*, February 8, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/colleges/proposed-legislation-would-give-maryland-college-athletes-the-right-to-unionize/2019/02/07/d3f80368-2b0c-11e9-984d-9b8fba003e81_story.html?utm_term=.909b71353363. This was in response to Jordan McNair’s tragic death.

⁸³ University of Maryland University Senate, “Senate Summary,” November 2, 2018.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., and University of Maryland University Senate, “University Senate Resolution Condemning The Actions of the Board of Regents,” November 2, 2018, https://senate.umd.edu/system/files/resources/Resolutions/Resolution_Condemning_Actions_of_BOR.pdf.

⁸⁶ University of Maryland University Senate, “University Senate Resolution to Improve the Shared Governance and Athletics in the University System of Maryland,” November 7, 2018, https://senate.umd.edu/system/files/resources/MeetingMaterials/11072018/Resolution_to_Improve_Status_Shared_Gov_Athletics_USM_18-19-17.pdf.

⁸⁷ Benford, “The College Sports Reform Movement: Reframing the ‘Edutainment’ Industry,” 7, citing Russell L. Curtis and Louis A. Zurcher, Jr., “Stable Resources of Protest Multi-Organizational Field,” *Social Forces* 52 (1973): 53-61.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Appendix A

Transcript
2015 Indiana AFL-CIO Convention in Indianapolis, IN
October 2015

KAIN COLTER:

(1) Good Morning.

(2) I would like to begin today by extending a huge, “Thank you,” to the AFL-CIO for giving us the opportunity to speak today. It is a great privilege.

(3) My name is Kain Colter. I am the Co-Founder of the College Athletes [Players’] Association (CAPA), which is the first labor organization seeking to represent college athletes. I would like to briefly overview our organization, the progress we have made over the past couple of years, and to talk about the current state of collegiate sports. It is my hope that when you leave today, you will leave with a greater understanding of our organization and why this fight is so important.

(4) I was born into a football family. When I say this, I mean that football was not just a fun weekend activity it was a way of life for multiple generations of my relatives. My Grandfather Colter is still discussed today as someone who set football records that have never been broken in over four decades of Arizona high school football. My dad played for the University of Colorado on the only National Champion football team that the university has ever had. My uncle was one of the most highly recruited football players in the history of Arizona and he went on to be an All American at the University of Southern California. It’s probably easy to understand why these men were role models to me as a kid. Whatever Colter house you visited, whether my parents or my grandparents, the house was filled with trophies, framed newspaper articles and photographs of these great men performing incredible athletic feats. All I remember wanting to do from a young age was to play football and follow in their footsteps.

(5) As soon as I was old enough, I enrolled in pee-wee football and I remember that I instantly fell in love with the sport. From the age of 7 until now, football has been an important love of my life, I remember sitting down and talking with my parents about my goals for football and where I thought it could take me in life. My number one goal was to play at the Division I level in college and then to play in the National Football League.

(6) While I was growing up, I used to love going to watch my dad’s alma mater play on Saturdays. Thousands of people tailgating hours before the game with the beer flowing and the barbeque emitting smells that make the strictest of vegetarians salivate. Fans come decked out in the jersey of their favorite player while

merchandise flies off the rack in the campus bookstores. Tens of thousands of people begin piling into the stadium to watch their favorite teams and players, while millions more watch through the television. The excitement surrounding those heralded days was, and is, exhilarating.

(7) Then, as the games begin, and everyone sits down the true starts of the event, the players, make their way onto the field. I envied these players when I was young. They looked like rock stars and I thought to myself that this must be what living the good life looks like. But as a naïve middle school kid, I was unaware of the incredible amount of dedication, perseverance, and sacrifice it would require to reach, and stay, at that level of sports.

(8) The real blood, sweat, and tears that the players shed are often unnoticed by the fans and spectators. The 5:00 a.m. workouts and conditioning sessions aren't televised. The late-night film sessions are not seen by anyone outside of the team. The difficulty of balancing a full-time job with a full course schedule is not glamorized. The wear and tear that the player's body endures throughout the year is seen as a badge of honor. The concussions, surgeries, and broken bones become just a part of the game.

(9) Luckily for me, I had the guidance of people who had played at these high levels and they kept me on the right path towards my goals. After finishing up my high school career I was blessed to receive a full-ride scholarship to Northwestern University where I played quarterback for four years and made some of my greatest, most meaningful memories of my life. I developed genuine relationships that will last a lifetime. I have always been, and will always be, truly grateful for my scholarship to Northwester; I graduated from an amazing university, was coached by a great coaching staff, and was afforded opportunities I would have had without my scholarship.

(10) Unfortunately, as I went through my four years of playing Division I football I was also exposed to the ugly truth of NCAA sports. The truth is that college athletes are left with a huge lack of protections. As I began to learn and research this truth for myself, those sacred Saturdays from my childhood didn't seem as sacred anymore.

(11) Here are just a few of the stories and facts that made me look at the NCAA in a different manner:

(12) The NCAA makes over \$11 billion in revenue from their TV contracts alone

(13) Mike Krzyewski's, the coach of the Duke University men's basketball team, yearly salary is \$9.6 million.

(14) Nick Saban's (coach of the Alabama football team) yearly salary is \$6.9 million

(15) College football coaches' salaries have gone up 59% since 2007 vs. just 25% in the NFL.

(16) Notre Dame, Texas, Alabama, Michigan, Florida, Georgia, Auburn, and LSU had more football and basketball revenue in 2012-2013 than the average NHL team

(17) 87% of the BCS schools' media coverage comes from its sports teams.

(18) Colleges are not required to pay for any sports-related medical expenses. Not one penny. You can ask former Oklahoma basketball player Kyle Hardrick about that. He was left to pay thousands of dollars in medical expenses from a knee surgery that he needed after being injured in practice.

(19) Universities are free to revoke scholarships of players in good standing for any reason, even injury. Former Rice football player Joe Agnew is among many athletes whose scholarship wasn't honored after sustaining an injury.

(20) We've all heard the NCAA's rhetoric about academics being first, but in college sports, the money is first. That's why graduation rates for football and basketball players continue to hover around 50% and the NCAA refuses to use some of its billions of dollars for degree completion.

(21) Perhaps most shameful is the NCAA's refusal to implement concussion reform despite the mounting evidence of severe short- and long-term health risks. There have been numerous tragedies where former NFL players committed suicide and were later found to be suffering from CTE, chronic traumatic encephalopathy. It's a degenerative brain condition linked to contact sports. College athletes face the same risks. Proof of this was found after Penn football player Owen Thomas committed suicide at the age of 21. He was found to have CTE.

(22) As I became aware of the lack of protections and lack of rights of college athletes, I became determined to try and change the system. I began doing some research and simultaneously enrolled in a class at Northwestern called "The History of the Modern Worker."

(23) This class explored the social and political history of work in the United States. During my participation in the course we touched on the history of unions in the United States, briefly reviewing the existence of unions in major sporting leagues. This immediately got me thinking about the possibility of unionizing college athletes. As I did more and more research it became clear to me that what college athletes needed was a union. We needed to join together with the purpose of protecting and advancing our interests and improving our sports for future generations that might include our own sons and daughters.

(24) You might be saying how did you jump to the idea of a union? Just as industries of the past where unions were formed and improved the lives of American workers,

college athletes had many of the same attributes. There is no denying that the NCAA is a multi-billion-dollar sporting industry. If you examine how players in other multi-billion-dollar sporting industries (such as the NFL, NBA, MLB, etc.) gained better rights and protections, it was through the formation of a union. The presence of a union in these industries not only aided the players but the entire league benefitted and felt increasing revenue and an overall increase in fan bases.

(25) I then began to look into organizations that already advocated for the rights of college athletes and I came across the National College Players' Association that was founded and run by Ramogi Huma, a former UCLA linebacker. I reached out to Ramogi and expressed my thoughts, ideas, and interest in helping him bring about NCAA reform. From that moment forward, we have been pushing for reform and trying to get college athletes the rights and protections all Americans deserve.

(26) Ramogi has been working with the United Steelworkers movement since the inception of the NCPA. The steelworkers have long supported the rights of college athletes and without their guidance and resources, many of the newfound positive changes in the NCAA would not have occurred. It was with the invaluable help of the steelworkers, Ramogi and I put forth a plan to start the first union in collegiate sports.

(27) The first step in this plan was to prove that college athletes are employees of their university. To do this, we needed a football team to step up and sign employee cards petitioning for the labor board in their state to rule they were indeed employees. Since I was a current member of the Northwestern football team it made sense for me to discuss this issue with my team. After my senior season concluded, I set up a meeting with the team to discuss the issues, propose a plan and see if they wanted to proceed. After carefully outlining issues, detailing the plan and then answering many, well thought out questions from my teammates, players had an individual decision to sign the petition cards and an overwhelming majority of the players chose to sign the cards. We gathered the cards and filed them with the National Labor Relations Board. A trial date was set, and our next task was to prove in court that college athletes are indeed employees under the National Labor Relations Act.

(28) In order to make this claim we needed to prove that football players work sufficient hours, are under control of the claimed employer, and are compensated for their performed service. On a cold winter day in Chicago I testified about the day in the life of a Northwestern football player. We were able to show that football players work an upwards of 60 hours a week during training camp and 40-50 hours a week during football season. We were able to show that football players had to abide by rules and regulations imposed by the athletic department and that violations of these rules could result in the termination of their scholarship.

(29) Finally, we were able to show that the full athletic scholarship (room, tuition, and board) was indeed a form of compensation for an athletic service. In short, we proved that athletes are already paid to play. These findings are not exclusive of

Northwestern; the same working conditions are standard for college football teams across the country.

(30) In March of 2014, a few months after the testimony, the NLRB regional director issued a decision ruling that the Northwestern football players were employees of the University with the right to collectively bargain. Following this ruling Northwestern University was granted a request for review from the full board in Washington D.C. The NCAA and Northwestern combatted our case by introducing many different false narratives to sway the board from upholding the regional ruling. Their arguments highlighted three myths that were brought into the light by the media. The said ruling that college athletes were employees would disrupt competitive equality among college teams. The ruling that college athletes are employees would disrupt the concept of “amateur” athletics. They argued that ruling that college athletes are employees would create an issue of income tax.

(31) In actuality, the current system does not produce competitive equity. Between 2002-2011, 99.2% of the top 100 football recruits in the nation chose teams in the power conferences. Historically, over 90% of football teams that finish in the top 25 rankings and over 90% of the basketball teams that make it to the Final Four are from the power conferences. Currently, the wealthiest schools hire the best coaches, have the best facilities, benefit from the biggest recruiting budgets, and sign the best recruits. Where is the competitive equity in this?

(32) The myth regarding the NCAA’s definition of “amateurism” is easily dispelled. The NCAA’s \$11 billion TV deal with CBS, multimillion-dollar salaries, and stadiums that dwarf those in the NFL clearly demonstrate this. And again, we proved that athletes are already paid to play.

(33) There’s another myth that if college athletes had a union that nonrevenue sports would be cut. The truth is that there is over \$1 billion in NEW TV revenue being generated every year, which is more than enough to increase protections without harming any other sports.

(34) Finally, the continued myth of income tax issues was squashed when the IRS issued a letter that college athletes WILL NOT have to pay additional income taxes on their scholarship if ruled employees.

(35) Despite easily addressing the NCAA’s myths, the full board finally released their decision deciding not to exert jurisdiction in this matter, therefore overruling the previous decision.

(36) While the ruling was disappointing, and not the ruling we were hoping for, it does not close the door on this issue. Other players can bring forth this issue again and, in the future, we hope these athletes will obtain a ruling and not an outcome that amounts to the passing of a hot potato. We are hopeful that the next time this issue is

in front of the NLRB, this government body will act swiftly and issue a definitive decision.

(37) While the desired outcome has not been reached yet, there were many positive changes that came from a group of players standing up and making their voices heard. The power five conferences have not adopted 4-years scholarships. Players are now receiving a stipend check to cover the full cost of attendance. Many conferences are adopting and implementing better concussion protocol.

(38) While these changes are steps in the right direction, it is important to remember that these new policies are not legally binding and can be rolled back; which the NCAA has done in the past.

(39) When millions of Americans gather around to watch college football this Saturday, the players who are wearing their school's uniforms will walk onto the field without guaranteed full medical coverage. The former player who is dealing with cognitive issues and physical issues such as needing knee replacement, will not receive financial assistance to address their ailment that was suffered while making their school money. Worst of all, only half of Division I basketball players and FBS football players will graduate with a degree. It is time for players to stand up and demand for their voices to be heard.

(40) I want to thank those fighting for workers' rights here in this room and throughout the country. We hope that our mission motivates and inspires others to stand up when they see something is wrong where they work. There is no shame in wanting to improve the industries in this great country. It is our responsibility as Americans and as human beings to try and right things that are not only wrong but also jeopardize the health and well-being of our fellow brothers and sisters.

(41) I would not like to introduce the President of the College Athletes Players' Association, Ramogi Huma.

RAMOGI HUMA:

(1) Thank you, Kain.

(2) First, I'd like to thank Indiana State AFL-CIO President Brett Voorhies for inviting us to speak to you today. I've known Brett for several years now and not only is Brett a friend, but he's been a supporter of the NCPA and college athletes' rights long before it became popular. He provided valuable guidance, logistical support, facilitated meetings with Indiana state lawmakers, and even participated in meetings with college athletes. I would also like to thank the United Steelworkers for its unwavering support of college athletes' rights since 2000. Without the Steelworkers' support, this movement would have fizzled out long ago.

(3) There are a lot of people who think that our union effort at Northwestern was the first step taken to protect college athletes. But the reality is that we've fought for college athletes' rights for almost two decades. In 1995, I was a freshman football player at UCLA. During my first season, my all-American teammate Donnie Edwards was on a radio show talking about what it was like to be a college athlete. Donnie said that he was grateful for his scholarship but for some reason, the scholarship check didn't cover basic necessities. In fact, he didn't have any food in his refrigerator. He went home after the show and groceries had been left anonymously on his doorstep, which Donnie ended up eating. Somehow the NCAA found out. And when they found out, they suspended him.

(4) Meanwhile they were selling Donnie's jersey in stores across the nation. I found a few years later that the NCAA capped every full athletic scholarship in the nation below the price tag of the school, leaving unsuspecting players with about \$3,000-\$5,000 in out-of-pocket expenses each year.

(5) Later that year, I was informed that NCAA rules prohibited UCLA and all other colleges from paying for sports-related medical expenses during summer workouts. My teammates and I were grateful for our scholarships and opportunities but were frustrated by NCAA rules that left us with gaps in protections and without a voice.

(6) During my second year, I started a student group with the intention of giving college athletes across the nation that voice and the means to change NCAA rules. I soon realized, however, that I needed expertise on how to go about reaching this goal. I reached out to the United Steelworkers for help and fortunately for college athletes, they agreed to join our fight.

(7) The Steelworkers provided vital assistance in strategic planning, communications, fundraising, and more. Together, we've been able to make progress over the years through various forms of pressure. We've shamed NCAA sports in headlines throughout the country, empowered players to sign petitions and participate in televised protests by writing "APU" for "All Players United" on their uniforms, we have helped arrange lawsuits and successfully advocate for some state laws. All of our actions have been in the pursuit of securing basic protections for college athletes, but NCAA sports fought our efforts at every turn.

(8) The need for college athletes to assert all of their leverage was underscored by the NCAA's position on reducing the risk of concussions. In response to legal pressure intended to force concussion reform in college sports, the NCAA stated, and this is a quote, "The NCAA denies it has a legal duty to protect student-athletes." This is an organization that was founded to protect football players by adopting rules to make the game safer. Its position was further revealed by internal emails from the NCAA head of Enforcement stating that the NCAA would not punish a coach who knowingly forced a player to play with a concussion. This is the same NCAA enforcement division that moved heaven and earth to investigate frivolous issues like whether or not Ohio State football players received free tattoos by signing

autographs. It's the same office that dropped everything to investigate whether or not Johnny Manziel received a few bucks for signing autographs. But when it comes to protecting players' brains, the NCAA refuses to enforce safety rules.

(9) After years of advocating for college athletes' rights and the NCAA's inaction on concussions, it's become clear that public pressure is not enough to bring the comprehensive reform that college athletes desperately need. While there are those who would prefer reform to come without college athlete unionization and lawsuits, it is precisely these forms of leverage that have been the catalyst for significant changes that the NCAA has resisted.

(10) NCAA sports puts college athletes at physical, academic, and financial risk. Administrators on the NCAA, conference, and university levels enjoy multimillion-dollar salaries generated from the blood, sweat, and brain damage of their athletes. They are enjoying historic revenues while simultaneously lobbying elements of the government to deny players equal protections. In short, NCAA sports is financially rich, but morally bankrupt.

(11) After Northwestern football players were deemed to be employees by the NLRB Regional Director, lawmakers in Ohio and Michigan passed laws excluding college athletes from protections under state labor laws. Their actions are proof that college athletes would have otherwise been deemed employees in their states. Otherwise, why go out of their way to pass the law? In effect, they targeted a group of their citizens and stripped them of their rights. They attempted to justify their actions on the argument that college athletes are students not employees. However, this is a false choice. Many students are also employees throughout college campuses. Students that work in the university book stores and libraries are no less students because they receive a paycheck as an employee. The reality is that college athletes are students and employees. Ohio and Michigan lawmakers' actions were unjust and show a disregard for the serious gaps in protections college athletes in their states face.

(12) In their rush to pass those laws, the lawmakers didn't bother to think of whether or not such protections could have allowed players to secure changes that would have saved Michigan quarterback Shane Morris from long-term health risks associated with being kept in a game with a concussion. Or whether or not reforms could have prevented Ohio State football player Kosta Karageorge from committing suicide after sending desperate text messages to his mother about how concussions were affecting his mind. Instead, players in those states are left without the leverage needed to avoid debilitating and deadly brain trauma.

(13) While the NLRB did not close the door on unionization, it moved to put off justice until sometime in the future. In the meantime, the NLRB made certain that scores of college athletes will be denied the leverage they need to protect themselves. It begs the questions: "How many more players will needlessly suffer serious traumatic brain injury? How many more players like Kosta Karageorge or Penn football player Owen Thomas will commit suicide while the NLRB delays equal

protections under the law? How many players will end up like Derek Sheely, a Frostburg State football player who died because he was kept in practice with brain trauma? And thousands of players must face these risks in the name of what? False notions of competitive equity? Competitive equity doesn't exist. Ohio University is not winning recruiting battles with Ohio State and Idaho isn't winning recruiting battles with USC. Big 12 Conference Commissioner Bob Bolwysby says competitive equity "is largely a mirage." Former Southeastern Conference Commissioner Mike Slive said competitive equity is an "illusion." Yet this "mirage," this "illusion" is the basis for why the NLRB is delaying justice for vulnerable college athletes.

(15) Recently, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals found the NCAA guilty of violating players' rights under antitrust laws in the O'Bannon v. NCAA lawsuit. The NCAA's illegal price-fixing scheme has serious negative consequences for college athletes, 98% of whom never make it to the NFL or NBA. The price-fixing scheme robs players of what would otherwise be the most valuable years of their lives and forces more than 80% of them to live below the federal poverty line. The illegal price-fixing scheme prohibits reforms such as a degree completion fund that would improve graduation rates. It even prohibits concerned people from providing food to players like my former teammate Donnie Edwards in 1995 or the 2014 NCAA MVP Shabazz Napier who acknowledged appending too many hungry nights because of NCAA rules. Any scheme that declares giving food to a hungry person is immoral on its surface, and in this case, illegal. The 9th Circuit correctly ruled that the NCAA is guilty of violating anti-trust laws. However, it signaled that the false notion of amateurism could let the NCAA resume corporate practices that would be illegal anywhere else. This unequal application of the law is wrong.

(16) Like competitive equity, amateurism is a "mirage," an "illusion." This is made clear by the NCAA's \$11 billion TV deal with CBS, by the multibillion dollar TV deals throughout NCAA conferences, by the multimillion dollar salaries lavished upon coaches, commissioners, and the NCAA president, by the lucrative shoe company deals that require players to serve as human billboards during games, by the pay for play arrangement each college has with its players cleverly disguised as "athletic scholarships." The NCAA's imaginary principle of "amateurism" is not a fairytale, it's a nightmare. It's a term used as a weapon to deny college athletes' equal rights. As former NCAA Executive Director Walter Byers put it, "Amateurism is not a moral issue, it is an economic camouflage for monopoly practice." "Amateurism," this "mirage," this "illusion" is the basis for why the 9th Circuit denied players equal protection under the law.

(17) The NCAA admits lobbying members of Congress about blessing [?] these illegal NCAA activities by stripping players of their rights under antitrust laws. It wants an antitrust exemption so that its illegal activities are green-lighted. In effect, the NCAA wants the power to be above the law by eliminating players' rights that are guaranteed to other Americans.

(18) Denying the rights of a targeted group of American citizens should never pass as progress in this country. And it defies logic to require college athletes to forfeit their

rights as a condition of playing for institutions of higher education. Before these young men and women are athletes, they are human beings and should not be treated as second-class citizens. The rights of American citizens are inherently more sacred than [sic] NCAA preferences.

(19) We have a very clear message to the members of the NLRB, the federal justices throughout the country – especially in the 9th and 3rd Circuit Courts of Appeal, the United States Supreme Court, state lawmakers, and members of Congress:

(20) “It is your duty to ensure that Americans have equal protection under the law. To deny college athletes rights afforded to other Americans is discriminatory. Equal protection under the law is the legal and moral compass that must be followed, not indefensible notions of competitive equity and amateurism. The NCAA is asking you to participate in a Jim Crow system where players win legal arguments but are denied justice nonetheless. This Jim Crow push isn’t motivated by race. The NCAA seeks to strip both white and black players of their rights. This push to exclude players from equal protections is motivated by the color green – money. America cannot afford those of you tasked with ensuring equal protection under the law to become complicit in inflicting unjust and illegal practices on its citizens.”

(21) So, where is this movement headed? We’re helping college athletes assert their legal protections with a clear vision of what NCAA sports should become. It should become a system that

1. Enforces rules to minimize the risk of traumatic brain injury in contact sports
2. Protects current and former players from out-of-pocket sports-related medical expenses
3. Guarantees players due process rights
4. Improves graduation rates by establishing a degree completion fund to help players that need an extra semester or two to graduate
5. Provides four-year scholarships for players in good standing – even if they are permanently injured
6. Ensures athletes have a real seat at the table on issues concerning physical, academic, and financial protections

(22) These reasonable reforms would be legally binding and easily paid for by new TV revenue. However, the NCAA will stop at nothing to deny players basic protections. The only way this vision will be achieved is if college athletes are treated equally under the law.

(23) In summary, NCAA sports is financially rich, but morally bankrupt. It’s using substantial resources generated off the backs of players to deny those players equal rights. But there is much hope because current and former college athletes like Kain Colter, Northwestern football players, Adrian Arrington, Ed O’Bannon, and Martin Jenkins are standing up for justice. Every major improvement in this country began with this hope. It’s the same hope that led to the founding of our great nation. It’s the

same hope that freed the slaves and demanded civil rights for all Americans. This hope trumps hollow excuses meant to derail justice.

(24) Much of this hope wouldn't have been possible without the efforts of the people right here in this room and throughout organized labor, who defend workers' rights day in and day out. Without you, those who oppose workers' rights would've won long ago and Northwestern football players would've had nowhere to turn for justice. We know that for every news story about our fight, there are countless dedicated activists that are making our movement possible and protecting our rights. So please accept our utmost gratitude for defending for workers' rights and for giving us hope. And today, I would like to ask members of the Indiana State AFL-CIO to stand in solidarity with college athletes in their pursuit of equal protections. History has shown that as people stand up, injustice falls down. Please stand with us. Thank you.

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