



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## Edinburgh Research Explorer

### A method to march madness?

**Citation for published version:**

Southall, RM, Nagel, MS, Amis, JM & Southall, C 2008, 'A method to march madness? institutional logics and the 2006 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I men's basketball tournament', *Journal of Sport Management*, vol. 22, no. 6, pp. 677-700.

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

Journal of Sport Management

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

© Southall, R. M., Nagel, M. S., Amis, J. M., & Southall, C. (2008). A method to march madness?: institutional logics and the 2006 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I men's basketball tournament. *Journal of Sport Management*, 22(6), 677-700.

**General rights**

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

**Take down policy**

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact [openaccess@ed.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@ed.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Running head: METHOD TO MARCH MADNESS

A METHOD TO MARCH MADNESS?  
INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS AND THE 2006 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC  
ASSOCIATION DIVISION I MEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Richard M. Southall

The University of Memphis

Mark S. Nagel

University of South Carolina

John M. Amis

The University of Memphis

Crystal Southall

University of Northern Colorado

Date of Submission: July 30, 2007

## A METHOD TO MARCH MADNESS?

INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS AND THE 2006 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC  
ASSOCIATION DIVISION I MEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

## Abstract

As the United States' largest intercollegiate athletic event, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I men's basketball tournament consistently generates high television ratings and attracts higher levels of advertising spending than the Super Bowl or the World Series. Given the limited analysis of the organizational conditions that frame these broadcasts' production, this study examines the impact of influential actors on the representation process. Using a mixed-method approach, this paper investigates production conditions and processes involved in producing a sample ( $n = 31$ ) of NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament broadcasts, examines the extent to which these broadcasts are consistent with the NCAA's educational mission, and considers the dominant institutional logic that underpins their reproduction. In so doing, this analysis provides a critical examination of the 2006 NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament broadcasts, and how such broadcasts constitute, and are constituted by, choices in television production structures and practices.

## A METHOD TO MARCH MADNESS?

INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS AND THE 2006 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC  
ASSOCIATION DIVISION I MEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

“Our mission is to ensure that intercollegiate athletics participation is an integral part of the higher-education experience...Using ‘business’ and ‘college sports’ in the same sentence is not the same as labeling college sports *as* a business. It is not. College sports exhibits business aspects *only* when it comes to revenues – the enterprise is nonprofit on the expenditure side....[W]e will be inflexible in our devotion to principles and in our commitment to higher education” – *NCAA President Myles Brand's Presidential Message, September 11, 2006* (Brand, 2006, para. 2, 10, 16, emphasis in original).

“How does playing major college football or men's basketball in a highly commercialized, profit-seeking, entertainment environment further the educational purpose of your member institutions?” – Representative Bill Thomas, Chairman, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means October 2, 2006 letter to NCAA President Myles Brand (Thomas, 2006, p. 2).

Coming less than a month after National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) President Myles Brand's presidential message, U. S. Representative Bill Thomas' eight-page letter, excerpted above, questioned whether the NCAA, with its \$6 billion men's basketball television contract, fulfills an educational mandate and thus deserves its tax-exempt status. Such congressional scrutiny into the NCAA's educational legitimacy was unprecedented. Clearly Thomas' letter questioned whether there is an educational purpose to the current manifestation of major collegiate sport, and the extent to which the NCAA in fact achieves its stated purpose of retaining “a clear line of demarcation between intercollegiate athletics and professional sports” (p. 2). Not surprisingly, an NCAA spokesperson, Erik Christianson, challenged the letter's fundamental assertion that big-time college sport is a business, unrelated to higher education, saying, “We educate student athletes; they are students first” (Associated Press News Service, 2006, para. 4).

While NCAA Division I athletic departments, often the largest or second largest operational units on a college campus, have increasingly been labeled separate corporate entities, they are still, ostensibly, university departments under the direction and control of university presidents (Padilla & Baumer, 1994). Within this structure, university administrators contend that athletic contests, as representative events, reflect and convey messages consistent with their universities' overall institutional mission (Gerdy, 2006).

Without question, many Division I university administrators view their men's basketball programs as not only revenue-generating sub-units but also as excellent advertising and public relations platforms through which educational messages can be conveyed (Brown, 2002; Washington, 2004). As the United States' largest intercollegiate athletic event, the 2006 NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament drew 670,254 on-site customers (an average of just over 19,150 per session), generated consistently high television ratings, and attracted higher levels of advertising spending than the Super Bowl or the World Series (Bosman, 2006; National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2006a). Despite, or perhaps because of, this commercial popularity, the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Committee officially recognizes its mandate of "...exemplify[ing] the educational mission of intercollegiate athletics" and explicitly acknowledges the need to "...balance the principle of student-athlete welfare with its attempt to maximize exposure and revenues from the championship" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2006b, p. 7).

While the "student-athlete welfare" component is undoubtedly viewed as highly important by many university and NCAA administrators, today's high-profile college sporting events are more than just visible components of collegiate life. They are advertising and public-relations vehicles through which television networks garner audience share and promote their

programming, advertisers reach potential consumers, and universities directly (e.g., from rights fees) and indirectly (e.g., from future student fees and alumni donations) generate income. Thus, the final product that is consumed by, in particular, television audiences is heavily mediated and the result of apparently contested institutional pressures and negotiated arrangements among stakeholders (Riffe, Lacey, & Fico, 1998; Silk & Amis, 2000). However, despite the vast amounts of money involved, and the significant amount of academic and popular press research devoted to intercollegiate athletics in general and men's Division I basketball in particular, scholarly inquiry into the construction and delivery of televised NCAA events remains lacking.

Thus, using both content and semiotic analyses this paper explores the ways in which competing institutional logics – belief systems that essentially work to constitute appropriate and acceptable courses of action (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Scott, Ruef, Mendel & Caronna, 2000) - shape the (re)presentation of the NCAA men's Division I basketball tournament, popularly referred to as 'March Madness.'<sup>1</sup> In particular, we identify two perceived institutional logics, 'educational' and 'commercial', and assess the consequences of the dominant position held by the commercial logic. In so doing, we provide a critical examination of the institutional mechanisms that constitute, and are constituted by, choices in television production structures and practices.

### Theoretical Background

The NCAA men's basketball tournament broadcasts are heavily mediated events resulting from choices made by influential actors involved in their production. As Riffe et al. (1998) noted, "Communication content may be viewed as an end product, the assumed consequence or evidence of antecedent individual, organizational, social, and other contexts" (p. 8). Such organizational or institutional contexts affect decisions regarding a televised game's

representation. Silk and Amis (2000) have argued that a broadcast organization's actions stem not only from choices based on internal arrangements and pre-determined objectives, but also "...from a comparatively narrow range of options that have been deemed legitimate by influential actors within the firm's organizational field" (p. 269).

As such, decisions pertaining to the construction of sport broadcasts are dependent upon extant institutional logics. As Friedland and Alford (1991) pointed out, institutions "...have a central logic - a set of material practices and symbolic construction - which constitutes its organizing principles and which is available to organizations and individuals to elaborate" (p. 248). The institutional logics in a field determine what are considered acceptable or unacceptable operational means, guide the evaluation and implementation of strategies, establish routines, and create precedent for further innovation (Duncan & Brummett, 1991; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Nelson & Winter, 1982; Washington & Ventresca, 2004). These logics become manifest in a particular field as shared typifications or generalized expectations that allow individuals to engage in coherent, well understood, and acceptable activities. In this sense, then, institutions become "encoded in actors' stocks of practical knowledge [that] influence how people communicate, enact power, and determine what behaviors to sanction and reward" (Barley & Tolbert, 1997, p. 98). Eventually, these institutional logics become reified as unquestioned, taken-for-granted "facts" reflected in particular courses of action.

Over time, contestation among different institutional logics usually results in the emergence of a dominant logic. This works to establish local-meaning frameworks that guide strategy and structure by focusing the attention of decision-makers towards those issues that are most consistent with the logic and away from those issues that are not (Thornton, 2002). O'Brien and Slack (2003, 2004), for example, demonstrated ways in which a shift in the dominant logic

that governs professional rugby, from amateurism and voluntarism to professionalism and commercialization, substantially altered what were considered to be acceptable activities at the individual, organization, and field levels. Similarly, Cousens and Slack (2005) highlighted how the cable broadcasting industry's deregulation in 1977 resulted in an industry-wide shift from a "sport-specific" logic to "...a logic that emphasized the entertainment aspects of sport and its value to corporate and broadcast buyers" (p.39).

Understanding the dominant logics that underpin 'March Madness' broadcasts involves examining game broadcasts as culminations of many negotiated decisions and actions among prominent stakeholders or actors (e.g. the sanctioning body [NCAA], the broadcast entity [Columbia Broadcasting System - CBS], and corporate sponsors and advertisers). It is apparent that influential actors in other settings have been able to exert pressures that constrain the broadcast representation of a given sport event (Duncan & Brummett, 1991; Silk & Amis, 2000). These pressures may be exerted explicitly in formal or legal regulations, or may be taken-for-granted assumptions usually ensconced in institutionally-prescribed codes and values (Silk & Amis). It should also be noted that such institutional pressures exerted on a broadcast organization involved in televising college athletics may come not only from the sponsors/advertisers specifically doing business with the network, but also from the sanctioning body (NCAA) and its members, as well as sponsors and/or licensees aligned with it.

Bourdieu (1996) has held that free-market competition has created a variety of mechanisms that have resulted in television-production homogeneity. He suggested that this outcome is a result of pressures exerted at the macro- and micro-levels. These pressures combine to create the institutional logics that define legitimate activities by key decision-makers. Silk and Amis (2000) demonstrated how macro-pressures are exerted at the field level through coercive,

mimetic and normative mechanisms (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Coercive pressures can be exerted formally (e.g., through established rules) or informally (e.g., by cultural expectations). Silk and Amis noted the ways in which established broadcast entities Channel 9 (Australia) and the BBC (Great Britain) used their commercial power - allied with the threat of legal action - to ensure the host broadcaster of the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur delivered a product that conformed to expected industry norms. In the same study, mimetic processes were observed when the host broadcaster attempted to overtly copy established overseas broadcasters' on-air techniques. Finally, normative mechanisms became apparent when western-educated and trained television personnel - including producers, camera operators and other personnel - were utilized to train a local-television workforce capable of producing broadcasts that complied with established industry broadcast production methods and standards.

While field-level forces are important, it is also necessary to consider the cognitive, or micro-level, processes that emanate from the ways in which individuals interpret accepted rules to make sense of the world around them (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Scott, 2001). In this respect, activities become institutionalized through a process of "reciprocal typification of habitualized action" (Berger & Luckman, p.54). This leads to the creation of routines: repetitive, recognizable patterns of interdependent actions involving multiple actors (Feldman, 2000; Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Nelson & Winter, 1982). As routines become established, they become conduits through which acceptable courses of action are spread. These routines result in a shared belief structure that in turn leads to the appropriateness of established courses of action being unquestioned and taken-for-granted (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Jepperson, 1991; Nelson & Winter; Seo & Creed, 2002; Zucker, 1983). Silk and Amis (2000, p. 288) provided evidence of the outcomes of micro-level processes in the ways in which television broadcast personnel, "in the

chaotic and frenzied environment of live televised sport production relied on a subconscious naturalized code” to guide courses of action.

Altheide and Snow (1979) identified a media logic involving chosen forms or patterns, habits of thinking and processing that “...has become so taken for granted by both communicator and receiver that it has been overlooked as an important factor in understanding media” (p. 10). Duncan and Brummett (1991) further elaborated the central elements of this media logic as including type of content, grammar, time-structure, tempo, organization, special techniques, camera angles, or graphics. Consequently, since televised spectator-sport broadcasts have been heavily mediated by institutional logics, the broadcasts should always be studied in connection with the institutions to which they are heavily linked. Such an analysis may reveal how the organization has resolved organizational-level ambiguity and adopted a dominant logic (Duncan & Brummett).

The macro and micro-pressures outlined above work to facilitate and constrain the array of options perceived as available to decision-makers and act to shape a particular broadcast. This process of re-packaging and/or re-presenting a mediated event involves not only the decision to broadcast some sports and not others, but also the decision to accentuate particular aspects of the sporting event for listeners and viewers (Sage, 1998, Silk & Amis, 2000). Because the producers of such a mediated event have consciously or sub-consciously selected the information viewers receive, the viewers’ experiences of any such event are restricted and consist of mediated event highlights portrayed in the broadcast. Editors and/or journalists decree which event aspects viewers will experience. Producers, directors, and sanctioning organizations often telescope events, magnifying or minimizing certain elements of the occasion or personalities to fit into the parameters established by the network, sponsors, and/or the sport’s sanctioning body or league.

Little surprise, then, that Gruneau, Whitson and Cantelon (1988) contended that sport-media representation occludes the social and historical “character” of modern sport, with economic pressures and informational possibilities combining “to produce conventions about what constitutes ‘good television’” (Gruneau et al., p. 266). By definition, all televised (or mediated) sport broadcasts are representations of a reality not directly witnessed by television viewers. Television-sport producers intentionally compose, light, write, frame, crop, caption, brand, target and/or censor each broadcast’s content to satisfy various stakeholders’ needs, wants or desires. Each broadcast thus becomes little more than a simulacrum (Harvey, 1990) of the actual event.

According to Hall (1980) a sport-broadcast analysis should focus on how an audience or individual viewer may operate inside the dominant code, apply a negotiable code, or substitute an oppositional code to a represented broadcast. A broadcast is not passively accepted by an audience; readers/viewers interpret the broadcast’s meanings based on their individual cultural background and life experiences. As a result, each represented event comes to have many meanings, depending on how it has been constructed by the major stakeholders, represented by the broadcasters, and interpreted by viewers through their cultural lens (Sage, 1998). The variation in viewers’ backgrounds explains why some viewers accept a certain representation of an event text while others reject it. It follows from this that producers’ representations may be designed to satisfy certain constituencies, but that any specific viewer’s reception of that meaning is contextually based. However, any individual interpretation or decision made by a viewer or broadcast decision-maker is, as Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) point out, still made within a particular institutional context. Thus, the actions of key decision-makers – event organizers, directors, producers, graphic designers, commentators, script writers, and so on – will inevitably constrain the range of available interpretations of those consuming the broadcast.

Further, and perhaps more importantly from the purview of this paper, the decisions made by these ‘cultural intermediaries’ (Bourdieu, 1984; du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997) will themselves contour, and be contoured by, the dominant institutional logic. Guided by this theoretical background, the next section details the data-collection methods utilized.

### Methods

To uncover possible links between, and outcomes of, the macro- and micro-pressures discussed above, a mixed-methods approach including content and semiotic analyses, which allowed both quantitative and qualitative data collection, was utilized. The 2006 edition of *March Madness* - CBS’s exclusive coverage of the 2006 NCAA Men’s Division I Basketball Championship ( $N = 63$  games<sup>ii</sup>) – began on Thursday, March 16, 2006 and culminated with the national-championship game between the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and the University of Florida. In order to ensure our conclusions were not based on single broadcast idiosyncrasies, while still allowing for manageable data collection and analysis, the study’s sample consisted of ( $n = 31$ ; 49.2%) randomly selected 2006 tournament game broadcasts. In addition, to contextualize the sampling unit and gain insights into the labor production of NCAA broadcasts, primary and secondary sources were analyzed. Primary sources included documents (e.g. *2004-2005 NCAA Broadcast Manual Championship Guidelines* and *2006 Division I Men's Basketball Championship Handbook*) outlining contractual-based advertising and promotional standards, and/or broadcast policies and procedures. Secondary sources consisted of periodicals such as *NCAA NewsOnline*, newspapers, sports magazines, and sport-business trade publications.

The study’s sample included games from all four tournament regions (Atlanta, Oakland, Washington, D.C., and Minneapolis) obtained from local CBS and ‘DirecTV Mega March Madness’ telecasts of the 2006 NCAA Division I men’s basketball tournament. The 31 sampled

broadcasts included 20 randomly selected first-round games, five randomly selected second-round games, four randomly selected third-round games, both national-semifinal games, and the national-championship game.

### *Content Analysis*

Neuendorf (2002) identified four threats to content-analysis reliability. These include a) utilizing a poorly executed coding scheme; b) failing to adequately train coders; c) not allowing for coder fatigue; and d) not detecting the presence of a rogue coder. In order to begin to address these threats a pilot study of 2005 Division I men's basketball tournament games ( $n = 19$ ) was conducted. This study's coding schema, utilizing seven game-broadcast analysis units, was based upon that pilot-study process (Riffe et al., 1998). These developed units allowed for the broadcasts' manifest content (physically present data or surface structures physically present and countable) to be identified, categorized and then statistically analyzed (Neuendorf). The broadcast-analysis units developed comprised the following nonprogram categories: a) standard commercial advertisements (ADV), b) NCAA public service announcement (NCAA), c) corporate-sponsor public service announcements (CORP), d) non-standard sponsorship graphics without verbal commentary (GR), e) non-standard sponsorship graphics with verbal commentary (GR/VER), f) academically-related player-information graphics (GR/ACA), and g) positive or negative educational commentary (ED).

This study's content-analysis coding schema was consistent with a protocol outlined by Madden and Grube (1994) and involved analysis of nonprogram broadcast content from pre-game, in-game and post-game segments. Nonprogram content included traditional commercial advertisements (including network commercial time, local advertising spots, promotions, and public service announcements [PSAs]), as well as "nonstandard" in-game advertisements,

graphics, promotional announcements and game-announcer commentary (Gough, 2006). Nonprogram messages were also categorized as commercial or educational in nature.

In this study, educational messages were not limited to those detailing a university's academic mission; they included any discussions of an athlete's major or course of study, classroom performance or grade point average (GPA). In addition, identified educational messages were categorized as either "positive" or "negative" in nature (e.g. a negative educational message detailed a previous academic "scandal" or a player having been academically ineligible, while a positive educational message involved any "non-negative" message, for example a player's major being designated, or "positive" discussions, such as a player being described as an "Academic All-American").

Since multiple coders were utilized to conduct the quantitative content analysis, a coder-training program was developed utilizing standardized coding matrices. Discussions of developed broadcast-analysis units took place prior to coders viewing game broadcasts. While broadcast format standardization reduced coder-training requirements, it did raise concerns about potential coder fatigue (e.g., boredom). Since all games were recorded, coders were not asked to work to the point of fatigue. In addition, coders were able to review a broadcast tape more than once before submitting a final completed coding matrix.

In order to establish intercoder reliability and provide basic validation of the coding schema, a number of reliability tests have been proposed, including Scott's pi ( $\pi$ ) and Cohen's kappa ( $\kappa$ ) (Riffe et al., 1998; Neuendorf, 2001, 2002). In adherence to accepted protocol, five randomly selected broadcast analyses (15.6% of study sample) were tested for reliability (Neuendorf, 2002; Wimmer & Dominick, 1997). The resulting Scott's pi (.83) and Cohen's kappa (.83) established acceptable levels of intercoder reliability (Neuendorf, 2002).

*Semiotic Televisual Analysis*

In addition to the quantitative content analysis, the study also utilized qualitative methods to uncover possible mythic messages not only represented during NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament game broadcasts, but also promoted in organizational documents, operational handbooks, and public statements (Bignell, 1997; Creswell, 1998; Neuendorf, 2002; Patton, 2002). Such an analysis allowed the data to be critically examined for both linguistic and visual signs to determine “. . . what [was] portrayed and symbolized . . . and what [was] absent or silenced” (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 146). In examining the data in this fashion, various levels of analysis were established. These levels ranged from individual words and images to overall concepts - words and visual images grouped in concept clusters – contained in the broadcasts and documents (Bignell; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

During this analysis, represented broadcast content was examined for consistency with stated NCAA goals, rules, policies and guidelines, as well as organizational parameters outlined in primary and secondary sources, including official NCAA documents found on the NCAA.org website. This analysis allowed the broadcasts' visual and audio techniques to speak to the evaluators (Patton, 2002). In addition to game-specific content and standard advertisements, non-standard advertising and non-basketball specific in-game messages were evaluated (Bignell, 1997; Madden & Grube, 1994).

*The Research Setting: The National Collegiate Athletic Association*

In order to contextualize the analysis of 2006 Division I NCAA men's basketball tournament television broadcasts, it is necessary to briefly examine the NCAA and college sport in the United States. As Bailey and Littleton (1991) noted, college sport is a significant cultural component in the United States, often represented by campus stadiums and coliseums “that

consecrate the identity and remembrance of past athletic triumphs in ways that classrooms and laboratories cannot hope to duplicate” (p. 14).

In addition to college sport’s cultural significance, Division I men’s basketball has inherent value to broadcasters, from niche collegiate sport cable stations to major networks. March Madness is a lucrative sports property the value of which extends to various stakeholders, including the host broadcaster CBS, the NCAA, participating universities, and corporate sponsors and advertisers (North, 2004). Somewhat inevitably, given the resource-limited environment in which the NCAA and its member institutions operate, the pursuit and maximization of revenue-generation opportunities are largely unchallenged. In fact, the NCAA’s revenue-maximization efforts are frequently proclaimed as consistent with the organization’s educational mission (Brown, 2002; Brand, 2006).

While recognizing possible conflicts and identity dissonance (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996) within the field, NCAA administrators are still comfortable with “the juxtaposition of the NCAA’s educational mission with a commercial entity” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2002, para. 5). Bob Lawless, NCAA Executive Committee Chair, articulated the NCAA’s position, “There’s a realization that when you receive a certain amount of revenue from a network that they’re going to generate revenue in order to meet the agreement of the contract” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, para. 6). According to *The NCAA News*, college presidents are unperturbed with “...a corporate partner essentially ‘sponsor[ing]’ the NCAA’s educational mission,” as long as it is “...done well and tastefully” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, para. 2, 6).

In his 2006 presidential message, Myles Brand, NCAA President, responding to external events (academic scandals, low graduate rates, etc.) and media criticisms of the NCAA’s

excessive commercialization, utilized impression management (see Elsbach & Kramer, 1996) to selectively self-categorize the NCAA as an educational organization while discussing the business of college sport. In his speech Brand dismissed any apparent identity dissonance (Elsbach & Kramer) arising from such commercialization, contending that NCAA members can remain true to the organization's identity, while pursuing additional revenue opportunities associated with the NCAA's most valuable commodity – the Division I men's basketball tournament :

Our mission is to ensure that intercollegiate athletics participation is an integral part of the higher-education experience. . . . That message seems pragmatic enough, but one piece might be perceived as anomalous. While we profess the integration of athletics within the educational mission and the moderation of athletics spending locally, the Association nonetheless must conduct the business of college sports well. That means the Association must pursue additional revenue options, as long as it is done within the mission and values of higher education (Brand, para. 2, 9).

Interestingly, these “values of higher education” remain vaguely defined, usually being referred to in an abstract, nebulous manner. Nevertheless, the NCAA mission statement does seek to reify the non-commercial mandate of the organization:

The overriding purpose of the NCAA is to govern competition in a fair, safe, equitable and sportsmanlike (sic) manner, and to integrate intercollegiate athletics into higher education so that the educational experience of the student-athlete is paramount. Among the core values elucidated by the NCAA are a belief in and a commitment to: (a) the collegiate model of athletics in which students participate as an avocation, balancing their academic, social and athletics experiences, (b) the highest levels of integrity and

sportsmanship, (c) The pursuit of excellence in both academics and athletics, and (d) the supporting role that intercollegiate athletics plays in the higher education mission and in enhancing the sense of community and strengthening the identity of member institutions (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2005d).

What is also apparent is that NCAA spokespeople and decision-makers do seek to imbue the NCAA brand with nostalgic ideals of amateurism and sportsmanship that play on the NCAA's brand attributes: "Learning. Balance. Spirit. Community. Fair play. Character" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2005f). According to the NCAA's advertising policies, "The NCAA strives to be associated with entities and messages that ... champion the STUDENT-athlete reflecting the integration and balance that student-athletes achieve every day between academics and athletics" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2005e, emphasis in original).

As with any corporate entity, the NCAA utilizes all legal means, including securing trademark protection, to protect its brand (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2005a). As of 2006, the NCAA listed 64 trademarks on its website (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2005c). This trademark total represents a 40% increase over a one year period (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2005c). In addition, the official licensee list catalogs 52 corporations selling products, including concession cups, t-shirts, jackets, hats, mugs, key chains, and video games (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2005c). In summary, the NCAA continually provides a rhetoric that promotes amateurism and emphasizes the importance of balancing athletics and academics, plays hard upon the 'student' component of 'student-athlete,' and attempts to police its members' activities in order to avoid any dilution of its brand position. However, there is also a clear recognition of the NCAA brand's commercial value

reflected by aggressive attempts to maximize financial returns. These principles establish a context in which the data can be interpreted.

### Results

A critical component of CBS's NCAA men's basketball tournament broadcasts is nonprogram commercial advertisement content. Consistent with broadcast-industry practices, the commercial format of NCAA men's basketball games is painstakingly designated by the NCAA in its *NCAA Championship – Basketball Commercial Format* (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2005b, 2006b). According to guidelines listed in *Appendix S* of that document:

The television commercial format during the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship allows a maximum of 27 minutes of commercial time per game. In addition to that time, the network [CBS] may also air commercials during 60-second team-called timeouts in each overtime period (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2006b, p. 107).

Within this 27-minute block (1620 seconds) "ten 'full television timeouts' shall be permitted per game" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2006b, p. 107). The NCAA specifies that "each 'full television timeout' shall last two minutes, 15 seconds from the time the teams arrive at their benches to the 'second horn'" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2006b, p. 107). Interestingly, between October 17, 2005 and March 13, 2006, NCAA documents reflect an increase in the prescribed length of standard commercial advertisements (ADV) or "breaks" from 90 to 135 seconds (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2005b, 2006b). In addition, the prescribed 'full television timeout' length is relaxed during "...the regionals and the Final Four, [when] the network may extend any two timeouts by 10 seconds" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2006b, p. 107). However, these extensions explicitly must not

be used for commercial or promotional purposes (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2006b). It should be noted that in the sampled broadcasts the average over-the-air standard commercial advertisement (ADV) “full television timeout” was nearly 2 minutes and 30 seconds, in excess of either prescribed “full television timeout” lengths in NCAA documents.

While the handbook clearly designates the maximum commercial time per game as 27 minutes, it also contains several inconsistencies, including a detailed “permissible commercial format” in which the length of a full television timeout is decreased to “two minutes of commercials” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2006b, p. 107). In addition, the handbook presents an exemplar detailing the permissible commercial content in an NCAA Division I men’s basketball broadcast that exceeds the 27 minute “maximum” commercial time limit. Utilizing the various NCAA definitions and guidelines, Table 1 summarizes the range of possible standard commercial nonprogram totals.

(Insert Table 1 about here)

Drawing on the nonprogram content categories established earlier, in the sampled broadcasts there was a total of 74,157 seconds of standard commercial advertisements (ADV), or an average of 39 minutes and 52 seconds of commercial advertisements per broadcast (Table 2), strikingly longer than the NCAA-prescribed 27 minutes. The lowest ADV total was 29 minutes and 20 seconds (1760 seconds) in the UCLA v. Belmont game, while the highest ADV total was 59 minutes and 30 seconds (3570 seconds) in the Ohio State v. Davidson game.

(Insert Table 2 about here)

It should be noted that the NCAA’s maximum allowable commercial time per game did not specifically exclude public service announcements from the total allowable nonprogram commercial time. However, this study separated commercial advertisements (ADV) from public

service announcements (NCAA and CORP). As a result, the ADV cumulative total and per game averages detailed above do not include PSAs or other in-game nonprogram content such as promotional or sponsor graphics, or verbal comments. Adding PSA totals to the ADV figures for the sampled broadcasts results in a cumulative total of 76,733 seconds or a per-game average of 41 minutes and 15 seconds of traditional nonprogram advertisements.

As marketers are well aware, technological advances such as digital television recorders (e.g. *Tivo*) allow television viewers the option of “fast-forwarding” through standard commercial breaks. This has had the dual effect of increasing the propensity of advertisers to look to sport properties because of their ability to draw ‘live’ rather than ‘delayed’ viewers, and to increasing the use of within-game graphics and verbal references to decrease the likelihood of audiences being able to skip standard commercial advertisements and PSAs. In the sampled basketball broadcasts such graphics and verbal messages comprised a substantial amount of nonprogram content: GR total (6584 seconds cumulative total/per-game average: three minutes and 31 seconds), GR/VER total (4773 seconds cumulative total/per-game average: two minutes and 32 seconds). However, such content was not included in NCAA guidelines regarding maximum allowable commercial time (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2006b).

The educational message categories developed included: academically-related player information graphics (GR/ACA), and educational commentary by game announcers (ED). In the 31 sampled broadcasts, there was an aggregate of 58 seconds (per-game average: 1.8 seconds) of academically-related player-information graphics ( $n = 11$  player academic-major graphics), and 197 seconds (per-game average: 6.36 seconds) of educational commentary. In addition, it should be noted that of the 197 seconds of educational commentary, 42 seconds (21%) was categorized

by the research team as “negative” in nature, detailing player ineligibility as a result of poor grades or other negative academic issues.

### Discussion

Friedland and Alford (1991) argued that all of contemporary Western society’s major institutions, such as Christianity, capitalism, the family, democracy, and the bureaucratic state, have logics that guide action. While Friedland and Alford focused their attention at the societal level, others have drawn attention to the ways in which logics act at the industry or field level. Lounsbury’s (2002) work on the financial services field, Thornton’s (2002) on publishing, Cousens and Slack (2005) on professional US sport and O’Brien and Slack (2004) on English rugby union are all notable examples. Central to these discussions, and very much in keeping with Friedland and Alford’s theorizing, has been the existence of competing institutional logics and the prominence of different dominant logics at various historical epochs.

Our study differs from those cited above in that, although we can point to the apparent existence of two different institutional logics in the field of NCAA division I men’s basketball, termed here ‘educational’ and ‘commercial,’ there is evidence to suggest that the commercial logic has been dominant for almost as long as the NCAA has been in existence. Indeed, Washington and Ventresca (2004) suggested that US universities and colleges developed sport programs to enhance resources and increase visibility. This is exemplified by the aggressive pursuit of television rights fees by the NCAA and its members since the early 1950s, and the organization’s willingness to strategically position competitions to maximize its commercial revenue (see Washington, 2004). As others have found in different contexts (publishing, financial services, etc.), the existence of a dominant logic has pronounced implications for the

direction of strategic decision-making (e.g., Thornton, 2002). We further elucidate the bases for our suppositions, and their implications, in the remainder of the paper.

A primary justification for university sponsorship of athletics at the highly visible NCAA Division I level relates to an athletic contest's potential to tell the institution's educational story to the public (Gerdy, 2006). For many college athletic departments, television has become a prominent vehicle through which this "educational" purpose has been pursued. That being the case, it would follow that the content of televised athletics events – the images portrayed and messages conveyed – during the course of such telecasts, would reflect intercollegiate athletics' stated values and communicate the expressed purposes of higher education. Therefore, a major factor in determining the return on educational institutions' investment in NCAA Division I athletics should be the extent to which televised athletic events, such as the NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament, are representative of educational values and purposes.

Based on this study's results, the 2006 NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament provided little evidence that an educational logic was influencing strategic decision-making. While the primary messages conveyed during an athletic contest are, of course, going to be related to the athletic contest itself, there are also significant nonprogram messages conveyed during a broadcast. In 2006 NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament broadcasts, which were typically two and a half to three hours in length, educational messages were rare. On average, there were 8.16 seconds of educational messages per game. Within the broadcasts, discussions of higher education, academics or broader university missions of teaching, research or service did not occur. While CBS placed an average of nearly two NCAA PSAs per broadcast, there were no instances of university-specific public service announcements in the sample. This lack of advertising by universities participating in the NCAA tournament may be the result of the

high cost of a 30-second spot (e.g. in 2005, a 30-second Final-Four spot sold for \$650,000, while a 30-second spot during the national-championship game cost \$1m – Vasquez, 2005).

In addition to having no standard advertising presence within broadcasts, very rarely were universities specifically mentioned. Instead, athletic monikers, nicknames and quasi-franchise or “program” references were the norm. The effect of this is to reinforce what have to all intents and purposes become sporting brands (e.g., Gators, Bruins, etc.) within a sport media complex that is replete with them. In fact, during post-game comments, neither coach of the teams involved in the 2006 national-championship game mentioned their university by name, but instead referred to “their program and their fans” when thanking their constituencies. In addition, neither coach referred to his players as “student-athletes.” The only time university titles “University of California at Los Angeles” or “University of Florida” were mentioned during the game broadcast was during Craig Littlepage’s (Director of Athletics, University of Virginia) awards-ceremony remarks.

In 2001, college athletic administrators recognized that “...television networks are trying to do everything they can to add value and increase advertising sales to be able to pay the ever-increasing rights fees we ask for... We are the ones driving their needs to do these types of things” (Weiberg, 2001, para. 3). Contrary to then-NCAA president, Cedric Dempsey’s claim that “In actuality what we’ve done is provide more money without increasing ad time during events,” (Brown, 2002, para. 44) this study reveals the NCAA has actually increased the length of “full television timeouts” in its television commercial format. The political maneuvering that led to this is unclear, but it is a course of action entirely consistent with the dominant logic of the field. If an educational logic was affecting decision making, one would expect that educational messages, both during the in-game broadcast and during commercial breaks, would total more

than the mere seconds that are currently offered. In fact, with CBS's rights fees escalating over the contract's term, from \$420 million in 2005 to \$453 million in 2006 and \$764 million by 2013 (Brown), it would not be surprising if broadcast strategies were further modified in a manner consistent with the dominant commercial logic.

Discussions of the NCAA's 11-year, \$6 billion television rights and marketing agreement with CBS, also offer evidence of the NCAA's dominant commercial logic. The association "...wanted to be 'fairly compensated' for its wares...the NCAA didn't go looking for \$6 billion – that was the market value of the package when it was put out to bid" (Brown, 2002, p. 2). However, at the same time NCAA spokespeople consistently insist that its championship broadcasts serve to advance the organization's educational mission. "...the NCAA isn't yet guilty of having sold its soul...the very act of selling that event [Division I men's basketball tournament] doesn't render the NCAA a commercial opportunist" (pp. 1-2). In addition, in 2002, NCAA Senior Vice-President Tom Jernstedt stressed the importance of "telling the truth – over and over again – through promotional platforms gained in the agreement... [about] the partnership between intercollegiate athletics and higher education" (Brown, p. 3)

This study's results demonstrate that the 2006 NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament broadcasts do indeed offer evidence of such a "partnership" existing, but contrary to the rhetoric espoused by Jernstedt and many other NCAA officials, this is a partnership built on commercial, not educational, values. While David Goldfield (faculty athletic representative at the University of North Carolina) may have been hypothetically correct when he said, "there's nothing wrong with money and making it, especially if you can use it to further your mission" (Brown, 2002, p. 4), he also presciently warned, "It's easy for the NCAA's credibility to be compromised when the public is bombarded with mixed messages" (Brown, p. 4). This study

offers evidence that Goldfield's concern regarding the NCAA's lack of academic credibility – at least in reference to the educational value of men's basketball broadcasts - is accurate: “The problem comes when the money diverts you from what you're supposed to be doing” (Brown, p.4). In this study's sample, NCAA men's basketball broadcasts do not bombard the public with “mixed messages.” Overwhelmingly the messages are not mixed, but commercial, with greater than 99% of the sampled broadcasts' nonprogram messages being commercial in nature. While the NCAA may promote its “brand,” education was rarely, if ever, represented during 2006 NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament broadcasts. The ‘collegiate’ label has effectively become no more than a point of differentiation to separate NCAA sanctioned games and teams from other televised sport leagues and events.

The uncovering of a distinct dominant logic of commercialization that guides decisions related to NCAA ‘March Madness’ is useful because it highlights the key influence that shapes routines that comprise the activities of those involved in the day-to-day broadcast operations (see, for example, Feldman & Pentland, 2003), as well as “...the relatively constant dispositions and strategic heuristics that shape the approach of a firm to the nonroutine problems it faces” (Nelson & Winter, 1982, p. 15). It is also important that the dominant logic be uncovered because it is unlikely that there will be any revision to the existing mode of operating while actors operate unconsciously, guided by entrenched, unquestioned codes (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005).

Further, this study brings to the fore ways in which a dominant logic can become established despite the publicly-espoused rhetoric of institutional leaders. This is a salient finding because most of the work that has been carried out on the effects of institutional logics has examined change in the context of broadly accepted and widely espoused dominant institutional

logics. While O'Brien and Slack (2003, 2004) documented some disagreement among participant stakeholders as to how change should occur with respect to the shift from amateurism to professionalism in rugby union, such disagreement was very quickly confined to the margins of any discussions. By contrast, in NCAA Division I men's basketball broadcasts, there is strong evidence of a dominant logic apparently inconsistent with the rhetoric espoused by institutional leaders of stakeholder institutions. Given the recent interest in the role of rhetoric in institutional transformation, and our nascent understanding regarding how change in institutional logics occurs (e.g., Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) this constitutes an important finding in the context of broader theorizing about institutional change.

This also leads to an interesting contradiction present in NCAA men's basketball broadcasts. Lower levels of variation in routine actions normally indicate a greater level of institutionalization; lower levels of rhetoric also tend to indicate greater levels of institutionalization (Green, 2004). NCAA Division I men's basketball broadcasts do indeed exhibit low levels of variation in routines. However, there is not a correspondingly low level of contradictory rhetoric. While the broadcasts reflect the dominant commercial logic, NCAA administrators consistently espouse non-commercial educational messages.

In addition, there is evidence of coercive, mimetic, and normative mechanisms at work (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Coercively, there is the ever-present future threat of non-renewal, or significant reduction, of the television rights fees agreement. The desire to retain this revenue stream, particularly in the context of ever-decreasing university funding from state and federal sources and concomitant pressures to secure funding from external sources, is apparent.

From a mimetic standpoint there is clear evidence of alignment between CBS's March Madness broadcasts and its National Football League (NFL) broadcasts (Southall, Nagel, &

Gerdy, 2006). The use of in-game non-program graphics and verbal commentary to advertise CBS programs and sponsors, as well as describe in-game content was consistent in the telecasts of both sports properties. This increased commercialization and integration of a network's entertainment properties into a sport's broadcasts is consistent with the melding of sports and entertainment. Similar to its NFL broadcasts, CBS's NCAA broadcasts have consistent commercial breaks at designated times within a game. These designated commercial breaks allow the network to guarantee a sponsor or advertiser a designated number of impressions per broadcast, and offer the ability for sport broadcasts to seamlessly integrate themselves into other entertainment broadcasts. This is consistent with the statement of a National Basketball Association (NBA) Senior Vice President, who noted, "We don't consider ourselves a sport league. We consider ourselves an entertainment company. So we try to be aware of what is happening all over the entertainment industry" (quoted in Cousens & Slack, 2005, p. 35). It seems apparent that all stakeholders involved in March Madness do not classify their product as a 'sport,' but instead actively borrow from established television production practices that comply with the desired commercial logic and emphasize entertainment.

Finally, there are normative pressures at work. As Silk and Amis (2000) noted, there is little time to reflect in the often chaotic environment of 'live' televised sport. Thus, operators at all levels rely on established norms and values to make rapid decisions. Given that many of those involved in producing March Madness have learned their trade in "professional" sport broadcasting, it is not surprising that such professionalized codes or media logics apparent in this milieu so readily transfer to NCAA basketball production. For example, a cursory examination of two principals involved in the production of CBS Sports' March Madness telecasts offers

evidence of how transference of professionalized codes to an ostensibly “amateur” sports property can occur. Tony Petitti (Executive Vice President and Executive Producer CBS Sports)

...oversees all day-to-day operations of CBS Sports...is responsible for the staffing of all production and talent personnel [as well as all]...editorial content for all sports programming including the National Football League and Super Bowl XXXVIII, the NCAA Men's Basketball Championship, the PGA TOUR, including the Masters and the PGA Championship, college football and the U.S. Open Tennis Championships” (SportsLine.com, Inc., 2006b, para. 1).

Similarly, Bob Dekas, coordinating producer of CBS Sports' college basketball coverage since 1985, also serves as producer for the CBS Television Network's coverage of the NFL (SportsLine.com, Inc., 2006a). Faced with continuing media consolidation - as evidenced by CBS's 2006 acquisition of CSTV Network, Inc. (College Sports Television Networks, 2005) – unless the NCAA insists its media partners' implement and evaluate broadcast strategies designed to increase adherence to the NCAA's educational mission, the continual transference of professionalized media logics among sports properties will likely continue to increase.

This intermingling of prominent broadcast decision-makers and the sports properties whose representation they oversee is significant because as such actors make sense of their enacted environment (Weick, 1995) they also transmit their understanding to others (Zucker, 1977). In such situations, in which producers and directors are involved in the production of numerous professionalized sports, routines become seen as social ‘facts’ (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; see also Greenwood & Hinings, 2006). Nelson and Winter (1982) contended that “routinization of activity [is] the ‘locus’ of operational knowledge in an organization... [and] that the knowledge an organization possesses is reducible to the knowledge of its individual

members” (p. 104). This is because, as Seo and Creed (2002) suggest, without alternative courses of acting being apparent, it is highly unlikely that there will be any change to the status quo.

Such challenges to institutional homeostasis, through actors envisioning and realizing alternative courses of action, are determined by their levels of embeddedness within the institutional setting (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006; Holm, 1995; Seo & Creed, 2002). However, it should be noted that an actor’s embeddedness is not easily overcome. The ability to do so is a function of having an awareness of alternatives, being open to those alternatives, and then having a motivation to change (Greenwood & Suddaby).

Of course, with an expenditure of \$6 billion, it would take an incredibly naive Panglossian view to expect CBS executives to do anything other than attempt to maximize their return on investment. What is interesting is the response from those involved with the NCAA and other educational institutions. Despite espousing an educational mission, with a focus on student well-being and development, there is overwhelming evidence in the present study that such messages are delivered with the sole intent of establishing the NCAA’s legitimacy as a bastion of amateur ideals, protector of character-building opportunities for young people, and champion of its members’ educational mandates – which, by extension, possibly justify its tax exempt status. In fact, by quietly increasing the time permitted for nonprogram commercial advertisements during ‘March Madness’ broadcasts, not enforcing its own rules regarding the nature and content of educational messages, and allowing for the transmission of few – if any – educational messages, the NCAA is essentially exhibiting a “ceremonial conformity” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 341) to its stated commitment of ensuring “...that intercollegiate athletics participation is an integral part of the higher-education experience” (Brand, 2006, para. 2). The analyzed broadcasts offer strong evidence that the NCAA’s strategic decision-making in relation

to NCAA Division I men's tournament broadcasts reflects Oliver's (1991) notion of "acquiescence," with little apparent attempt to modify production protocols in order to deliver on the organization's supposed educational mandate. In this sense, it is apparent that this study offers support for Andrews' (1999) contention that we have essentially reached the "end of sporting history" with no alternatives to the predominant corporate, commercialized form. Further, we are clearly in accordance with Giroux's (2003) concerns regarding the increasingly corporative nature of the university with the vast majority of practices and processes subjugated to the pursuit of external funding.

### Conclusion

Washington (2004; see also Washington & Ventresca, 2004) has plotted the evolution of the NCAA as an institution designed to enhance visibility and resources for member schools. Our work is clearly in sympathy with this finding, though by pointing to the existence of a dominant commercial logic and articulating the mutually constitutive effects of this on particular outcomes, we extend work in this area. Clearly apparent are the ways in which, to borrow from Thornton (2002), decision-making is continually focused toward those issues that are consistent with the dominant logic, and away from those that are not. Much current thought holds that organizations and institutions, far from existing in a static state, have structures and systems that must be continually reenacted (e.g., Jarzabkowski, 2005). In this enduring state of 'becoming' (see also Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), we realize a mutually constitutive link between the dominant logic and the activities of organizational actors. The consequence is, as illustrated by Lounsbury (2002) and Thornton (2002), a continual reinforcement of the dominant logic and further marginalization of any competing logic. Thus, while there may be an 'official' rhetoric espousing educational values, this is very much ceremonial conformity to what is perceived to be

a requirement for institutional legitimacy that is not backed up by the behaviors of organizational actors (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In essence, the attachment of collegiate nomenclature effectively becomes a point of competitive differentiation designed to distinguish NCAA Division I men's basketball in an increasingly crowded marketplace. While some officials, industry analysts, and members of the general public may cling to a perceived notion of an educational logic that influences decision-making, this is little more than – depending on your viewpoint – naïve interpretation or deliberate misleading of how NCAA division I men's basketball is constructed.

This study offers evidence that college sport reflects Lounsbury's (2007) contention that, "most environments are subject to multiple competing logics that provide a foundation for ongoing contestation and change" (p. 302). While clearly college-sport, reflected in the various NCAA divisions, and other intercollegiate athletic associations (e.g. National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics [NAIA], National Junior College Athletic Association [NJCAA], and National Christian College Athletic Association [NCCAA]), is reflective of multiple, competing logics, the NCAA is so dominant that it, together with its commercial partners, inevitably shapes the prevailing logic of the "big-time" Division-I college sport field.

Reflective of such competing logics, summaries of the differences between the three NCAA membership divisions highlight this organizational fragmentation. On the NCAA website, NCAA Division I athletic departments, most notably those in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) classification, are described as "usually fairly elaborate programs" and the foci of the D-I summary are requirements involving attendance and location of contests (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2007c, para. 1). Perhaps coincidentally the term "student-athlete" never appears. In contrast, the Division III summary notes:

Division III athletics features student-athletes who receive no financial aid related to their athletic ability and athletic departments are staffed and funded like any other department in the university. Division III athletics departments place special importance on the impact of athletics on the participants rather than on the spectators. The student-athlete's experience is of paramount concern (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2007c, para. 3).

Cognizant of these differences the NCAA has developed a governance structure that allows for these logics to co-exist.

In fact, the 1973 reorganization of the NCAA into three distinct and autonomous divisions, with separate independent management councils and the abolition of the necessity for association-wide approval for policies specific to each division (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2007a, 2007b), lends credence to the organization's long-standing recognition of the dominance of a commercial logic in Division I and supports our study's conclusion that production of NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament broadcasts is shaped by just such a dominant logic.

While clearly once CBS buys the rights to the NCAA tournament, it controls the commercials and, in fact, all nonprogram content associated with the broadcasts, the NCAA asserts that it "controls" its championship events and that all decisions regarding NCAA championships are first and foremost made on the basis of student-athlete welfare. In official documents the NCAA notes that even though CBS has purchased rights to NCAA Division I men's basketball game broadcasts, "All television rights (over the air and cable), both live and delayed, will be under the jurisdiction of the Division I men's Basketball Committee" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2006a, p. 33). In light of our findings, if the NCAA's assertion

that it maintains control over the game broadcasts is false, the NCAA has ceded control of the broadcasts to CBS and as a result, CBS's dominant commercial logic permeates the analyzed broadcasts. However, if the NCAA has retained jurisdiction over the broadcasts, the broadcasts offer strong evidence that a commercial logic has come to dominate the NCAA Division I field.

Needless to say, there is a need for further research in this area. While investigations of Meyer and Rowan's (1977) "ceremonial façades" will, in all likelihood, not be welcomed by the NCAA or university athletic departments, there is clearly a need for research designed to evaluate the extent to which other televised intercollegiate athletics events convey particular messages. In addition, we suggest that analyses of other college sport event broadcasts along a spectrum of "commercialization" (e.g. Division I football bowl games, NCAA Division I women's basketball tournament, Division I baseball "College World Series," Division I women's softball national championships, Division II national championships, and Division III national championships) would be useful to determine if such broadcasts exhibit the same corporate, commercialized form found in this study. Further analysis should be conducted to determine the extent to which the commercial logic evident in NCAA Division I men's basketball broadcasts is being adopted in the production of other college sporting events. The development of CSTV and ESPNU as additional broadcast platforms for delivering "non-revenue" college sporting events to consumers offers a potentially useful setting for such analyses.

In addition, it may be appropriate to extend the work of Green, Costa, and Fitzgerald work (2003) to examine the effectiveness and value of the NCAA logo's visual exposures during event broadcasts (See Debner & Jacoby, 1994; Shapiro, MacInnis, & Heckler, 1997). Further studies should also qualitatively assess the perceptions and motives of broadcasters representing

college and professional sport events to determine if any differences exist between such broadcasts. In addition, research probing consumers' perceptions of the educational importance of events such as March Madness and Division I football bowl games might reveal the effectiveness of NCAA public-relations activities attempting to reinforce the "educational" aspect of big-time college athletics. Such research might raise further questions regarding the apparent educational "façade" of big-time college athletics and lead to further investigations of the NCAA's operations to determine the extent to which college sport is a commercial enterprise unrelated to universities' educational missions.

## References

- Altheide, D. L., & Snow, R. P. (1979). *Media logic*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Andrews, D.L. (1999). Dead or alive? Sports history in the late capitalist moment. *Sporting Traditions: Journal of the Australian Society for Sports History*, 16(1), 73-85.
- Associated Press News Service. (2006, October 4). Congress asks NCAA to justify tax-exempt status. Retrieved January 10, 2007, from <http://www.sportsline.com/general/story/9705399>
- Bailey, W. S., & Littleton, T. D. (1991). *Athletics and academe: An anatomy of abuses and a prescription for reform*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Barley, S. R., & Tolbert, P. S. (1997). Institutionalization and structuration: Studying the links between action and institution. *Organization Studies*, 18, 93-117.
- Berger, P., & Luckman, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books Doubleday & Company.
- Bignell, J. (1997). *Media semiotics: An introduction*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Bosman, J. (2006, March 16). The media business: Advertising: March Madness afflicts advertisers. [Electronic version]. The New York Times. Retrieved January 10, 2007, from <http://select.nytimes.com>
- Bourdieu, P. (1996). *On television & journalism*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste* (R. Nice, Trans.). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Brand, M. (2006, September 11). President's message – Call for moderation is a complex message, not a mixed one. *The NCAA News Online*. Retrieved September 13, 2006 from <http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal>
- Brown, G. T. (2002, March 18). The \$6 billion plan: NCAA wants TV contract to increase revenue, decrease tension between scholarly mission and commercial image. *The NCAA News*. Retrieved May 5, 2006 from <http://www.ncaa.org/wps>
- College Sports Television, Inc. (2005, November 3). CBS to acquire CSTV: College Sports Television Networks: Popular cable and satellite sports network with nearly 15 million subscribers marks CBS's entry into cable sports arena. Retrieved December 22, 2006, from <http://www.cstv.com/genrel/110305aac.html>
- Cresswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks: CA: Sage Publications.
- Cousens, L., & Slack, T. (2005). Field-level change: The case of North American major league professional sport. *Journal of Sport Management*, 19, 13-42.
- Debner, J. A., & Jacoby, L. L. (1994). Unconscious perception: Attention, awareness and control. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 20, 304-317.
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron-cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48, 147-160.
- du Gay, P., Hall, S., Janes, L., Mackay, H., & Negus, K. (1997). *Doing cultural studies: The story of the Sony Walkman*. London: Sage Publications.

- Duncan, M. C., & Brummett, B. (1991). The mediation of spectator sport. In L. H. Vande Berg & L. A. Wenner (Eds.), *Television criticism: Approaches and applications* (pp. 367-387). New York: Longman.
- Elsbach, K. D., & Kramer, R. M. (1996). Members' responses to organizational identity threats: Encountering and countering the business week rankings. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *41*, 442-476.
- Feldman, M. S. (2000). Organizational routines a source of continuous change. *Organization Science*, *11*, 611-629.
- Feldman, M. S., & Pentland, B. T. (2003). Reconceptualizing organizational routines as a source of flexibility and change. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *48*, 94-118.
- Friedland, R., & Alford, R. R. (1991). Bringing society back in: Symbols, practices, and institutional contradictions. In W. W. Powell & P. J. DiMaggio (Eds.), *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis* (pp. 232-262). Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Gerdy, J. R. (2006). *Air ball: American education's failed experiment with elite athletics*. Oxford, MS: University Press of Mississippi.
- Giroux, H. (2003). *Public Spaces / Private Lives: Democracy Beyond 9/11*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Green, S. E. (2004). A rhetorical theory of diffusion. *Academy of Management Review*, *29*, 653-669.
- Green, B. C., Costa, C., & Fitzgerald, M. (2003). Marketing the host city: Analyzing exposure generated by a sport event. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, *4*(4), 335-354.

- Greenwood, R., & Hinings, C. R. (2006). Radical organizational change. In S. Clegg, C. Hardy, W. W. Nord, & T. Lawrence (Eds.), *Handbook of Organizational Studies* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 814-842). Thousand Oaks: CA: Sage Publications.
- Greenwood, R., & Suddaby, R. (2006). Institutional entrepreneurship in mature fields: The big five accounting firms. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49, 27-48.
- Gruneau, R., Whitson, D., & Cantelon, H. (1988). Methods and media: Studying the sports/television discourse. *Society and Leisure*, 11(2), 265-281.
- Gough, P. (2006, May 5). Pardon the interruptions: Primetime ads increasing. *The Hollywood Reporter.com*. Retrieved May 9, 2006 from <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/thr/television>
- Hall, S. (1980). Cultural studies: Two paradigms. *Media, Culture and Society*, 2, 57-72.
- Harvey, D. (1990). *The condition of postmodernity: An enquiry into the origins of cultural change*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Holm, P. (1995). The dynamics of institutionalization: Transformation processes in Norwegian fisheries. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40, 398-422.
- Jarzabkowski, P. (2005). *Strategy as practice: An activity-based approach*. London: Sage Publications.
- Jepperson, R.L. (1991). Institutions, institutional effects, and institutionalism. In W.P. Powell & P. DiMaggio (Eds.), *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis* (pp. 143-163). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lawrence, T. B., & Suddaby, R. (2006). Institutions and institutional work. In S. Clegg, C. Hardy, W. W. Nord, & T. Lawrence (Eds.), *Handbook of Organizational Studies*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp.215-254). Thousand Oaks: CA: Sage Publications.

- Lounsbury, M. (2002). Institutional transformation and status mobility: The professionalization of the field of finance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 45, 255-266.
- Lounsbury, M. (2007). A tale of two cities: Competing logics and practice variation in the professionalizing of mutual funds. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(2), 289-307.
- Madden, P. A., & Grube, J. W. (1994). The frequency and nature of alcohol and tobacco advertising in televised sports 1990 through 1992. *American Journal of Public Health*, 84, 297-299.
- Meyer, J., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutional organizations: formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83, 340-363.
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2002, March 18). CEOs don't blink on corporate tag. *NCAA News*. Retrieved October 21, 2006, from [http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal/newsdetail?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/wps/wcm/connect/NCAA/NCAA+News/NCAA+News+Online/2002/Association-wide/CEOs+don't+blink+on+corporate+tag+-+3-18-02](http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal/newsdetail?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/wps/wcm/connect/NCAA/NCAA+News/NCAA+News+Online/2002/Association-wide/CEOs+don't+blink+on+corporate+tag+-+3-18-02)
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2005a). *Corporate Champion and Corporate Partner Program*. Retrieved July 29, 2005, from <http://www.ncaa.org/partners/partners.html>
- National Collegiate Athletic Association (2005b). *NCAA Championship – Basketball Commercial Format*. Retrieved August 2, 2005, from <http://www.ncaa.org/>
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2005c). *NCAA Trademarks*. Retrieved July 29, 2005, from <http://www1.ncaa.org/eprise/main/Public/CBA/Trademarks.html>
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2005d). *Our Mission*. Retrieved April 15, 2005, from [http://www2.ncaa.org/about\\_ncaa/overview/mission.html](http://www2.ncaa.org/about_ncaa/overview/mission.html)

- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2005e). *The NCAA's Advertising and Promotional Standards*. Retrieved July 29, 2005, from <http://www1.ncaa.org/eprise/main/Public/CBA/BrdcstMan/Sect3/AdvStand>
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2005f). *The NCAA Brand*. Retrieved April 15, 2005, from [http://www2.ncaa.org/about\\_ncaa/ncaa\\_brand/](http://www2.ncaa.org/about_ncaa/ncaa_brand/)
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2006a). *2006 Division I men's basketball championship handbook*. Retrieved September 8, 2006, from [http://www.ncaa.org/library/handbooks/basketball/2006/2006\\_d1\\_m\\_basketball\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.ncaa.org/library/handbooks/basketball/2006/2006_d1_m_basketball_handbook.pdf)
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2006b). *2006 national college basketball attendance: For all NCAA men's varsity teams*. Retrieved September 8, 2006, from [www.ncaa.org/stats/m\\_basketball/attendance/2006\\_basketball\\_attend.pdf](http://www.ncaa.org/stats/m_basketball/attendance/2006_basketball_attend.pdf)
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2007a). *Historical outline of multidivision classification*. Retrieved July 28, 2007, from [http://www.ncaa.org/about/historical\\_outline.html](http://www.ncaa.org/about/historical_outline.html)
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2007b). *Rules & bylaws*. Retrieved July 28, 2007, from [http://www2.ncaa.org/portal/legislation\\_and\\_governance/rules\\_and\\_bylaws/](http://www2.ncaa.org/portal/legislation_and_governance/rules_and_bylaws/)
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2007c). *What's the difference between Divisions I, II and III?* Retrieved July 28, 2007, from [http://www.ncaa.org/about/div\\_criteria.html](http://www.ncaa.org/about/div_criteria.html)
- Nelson, R. R., & Winter, S. G. (1982). *An evolutionary theory of economic change*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

- Neuendorf, K. A. (2001). *A flowchart for the typical process of content analysis research*. Retrieved March 29, 2004, from <http://academic.csuohio.edu/keuendorf/content/resources/flowc.htm>
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- North, G. (2004, April 6). Lew Rockwell.com *Before March madness*. Retrieved July 27, 2005, from <http://www.lewrockwell.com/north/north264.html>
- O'Brien, D., & Slack, T. (2003). An analysis of change in an organizational field: The professionalization of English rugby union. *Journal of Sport Management, 17*, 417-448.
- O'Brien, D., & Slack, T. (2004). The emergence of a professional logic in English rugby union: The role of isomorphic and diffusion processes. *Journal of Sport Management, 18*, 13-39.
- Oliver, C. (1991). Strategic responses to institutional processes. *Academy of Management Review, 16*, 145-179.
- Padilla, A., & Baumer, D. (1994). Big-time college sports: Management and economic issues. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 18*, 123-143.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Riffe, D., Lacy, S., & Fico, F. G. (1998). *Analyzing media messages: Using quantitative content analysis in research*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Rossmann, G. B., & Rallis, S. F. (1998). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Ruef, M., & Scott, W.R. (1998). A multidimensional model of organizational legitimacy: Hospital survival in changing environments. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 43, 877-904.
- Sage, G. H. (1998). *Power and ideology in American sport*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Scott, W. R. 2001. *Institutions and organizations* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Scott, W. R., Ruef, M., Mendel, P. J., & Caronna, C. A. (2000). *Institutional change and healthcare organizations: From professional dominance to managed care*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Seo, M., & Creed, W. E. D. (2002). Institutional contradictions, praxis, and institutional change: A dialectical perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 27, 222-247.
- Shapiro, S., MacInnis, D. J., & Heckler, S. E. (1997). The effects of incidental ad exposure on the formation of consideration sets. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24, 94-104.
- Silk, M. L., & Amis, J. (2000). Institutional pressures and the production of televised sport. *Journal of Sport Management*, 14, 267-292.
- Southall, R. M., Nagel, M. S., & Gerdy, J. R. (2006, March). *Method to the madness? Analysis of 2005 NCAA men's basketball tournament telecasts*. Paper presented at the annual conference of The Drake Group, Indianapolis, IN.
- SportsLine.com, Inc. (2006a). *Bob Dekas: Coordinating Producer, NCAA Basketball*. Retrieved December 22, 2006, from <http://cbs.sportsline.com/cbssports/team/bdekas>.
- SportsLine.com, Inc. (2006b). *Tony Petitti: Executive Vice President and Executive Producer CBS Sports*. Retrieved December 22, 2006, from <http://cbs.sportsline.com/cbssports/team/tpetitti>.

- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Suddaby, R., & Greenwood, R. (2005). Rhetorical strategies of legitimacy. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 50, 35-67.
- Thomas, B. (2006, October 2). Letter to Dr. Myles Brand. (Available from Committee on Ways and Means, U.S House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515).
- Thornton, P.H. (2002). The rise of the corporation in a craft industry: Conflict and conformity in institutional logics. *Academy of Management Journal*, 45, 81-101.
- Tsoukas, H., & Chia, R. (2002). On organizational becoming: rethinking organizational change. *Organization Science*, 13, 567-582.
- Vasquez, D. (2005, March 17). Ad dollars and sense of March Madness. *MedialifeMagazine.com*. Retrieved October 21, 2006, from [http://www.medialifemagazine.com/News2005/mar05/mar14/4\\_thurs/news4thursday.html](http://www.medialifemagazine.com/News2005/mar05/mar14/4_thurs/news4thursday.html)
- Washington, M. (2004). Field approaches to institutional change: The evolution of the National Collegiate Athletic Association 1906-1995. *Organization Studies*, 25, 393-414.
- Washington, M., & Ventresca, M. J. (2004). How organizations change: The role of institutional support mechanisms in the incorporation of higher education visibility strategies, 1874-1995. *Organization Science*, 15, 82-97.
- Weiberg, K. (2001, October 22). Too much corporate fruit around to reduce the harvest. *The NCAA News*. Retrieved May 15, 2006 from [http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal/newsdetail?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/wps/wcm/co](http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal/newsdetail?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/wps/wcm/co)

nnect/NCAA/NCAA+News/NCAA+News+Online/2001/Editorial/Too+much+corporate  
+fruit+around+to+reduce+the+harvest+-+10-22-01

Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (1994). *Mass media research: An introduction* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.).

Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Zucker, L. (1977). The role of institutionalization and cultural persistence. *American*

*Sociological Review*, 42, 726-743.

Table 1

*NCAA Championship Division I Men's Basketball Commercial Format*

Category	Total Time
<i>Maximum Commercial Time per Game</i> <sup>a</sup>	27 minutes (1620 seconds) <sup>a</sup>
<i>Full Television Timeout</i> <sup>a</sup> Length	2 minutes, 15 seconds (135 seconds) <sup>a</sup>
<i>Permissible Commercial Format</i> <sup>a</sup> Full Television Timeout Length	2 minutes (120 seconds) <sup>a</sup>
Amount of Standard Commercial Advertisement (ADV) <sup>b</sup> per Game (Utilizing Permissible Commercial Format)	46 minutes (2760 seconds)
Standard Commercial Advertisement (ADV) per Game (Utilizing Full Television Timeout and Permissible Commercial Format)	48 minutes, 30 seconds (2910 seconds)

<sup>a</sup> Note. All terms are from *NCAA 2006 Division I men's basketball championship handbook* (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2006b, p. 107).

<sup>b</sup> A standard commercial advertisement is an advertisement broadcast during a "full television timeout."

Table 2

*Nonprogram Content Summary*


---

Category	Total Seconds	Average time per Broadcast
ADV	74157	39 min, 52 seconds
NCAA	1620	52 seconds
CORP	956	31 seconds
GR	6584	3 min, 32 seconds
GR/VER	4773	2 min, 34 seconds
GR/ACA	58	1.8 seconds
ED	197	6.36 seconds

---

<sup>i</sup> The NCAA and the Illinois High School Association are members of the March Madness Athletic Association LLC, which owns the registration to March Madness. The NCAA is the exclusive licensee of this mark in connection with the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship and the Division I Women's Basketball Championship (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2005f).

<sup>ii</sup> "Play-in" game held on Tuesday, March 14, 2006 was broadcast by ESPN and not included in study population.