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Toward a Better Understanding:

Three Studies on Diversity in Intercollegiate Athletics

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in

Education

by

Laura M. Bernhard

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Toward a Better Understanding:

Three Studies on Diversity in Intercollegiate Athletics

by

Laura M. Bernhard

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Walter R. Allen, Chair

Diversity is one of the most widely discussed topics in society, but is neither clearly defined nor well understood (Unzueta & Binning, 2012). Given the number and visibility of student-athletes of color (Laphick, Hoff, & Kaiser, 2010), the athletic department is rarely considered as needing to address diversity; yet, diversity goes beyond numerical representation. Indeed, diversity in organizations includes the culture and climate, and must be actively managed through both policy and practice—the congruency of which can be telling. This dissertation sought to examine the organizational context around diversity in Division I athletic departments through three individual yet inter-related studies. The first study investigated what messages athletic departments and universities express regarding diversity through mission statements; the second study examined what athletic departments are doing to address diversity through policy and programming and how these messages fit together; and with the organizational context in

mind, the third study explored how athletic staff define and perceive diversity by focusing on what identities are most salient to their understanding of the concept.

Given the importance of written documents to expressing a value for diversity, the first study examined how NCAA Division I athletic department mission statements address diversity and how those messages compare to the university missions. Mission statements from 40 departments and institutions were examined using an iterative content analysis framed by Chesler and Crowfoot's (1989) organizational analysis of racism framework. A hierarchy for form of inclusion was created, and missions were then considered by the extent of inclusion, population focus, and level of accessibility. Findings show that while the majority of mission statements address diversity, the nature and extent of that inclusion varies greatly by document type as well as across institutions, affecting the clarity of the messages conveyed.

As mission statements are limited in their ability to capture the organizations' true approach to diversity, the second study built directly on the first by incorporating additional data sources including NCAA certification documents, departmental websites, qualitative responses from staff members, and staff demographics. The study sought to explore if and how athletic departments address diversity through their written policies, what actions they take through staffing and programming, and how these messages fit together. Accordingly, the lens of institutionalism (Powell & Dimaggio, 1991), which outlines how organizations may articulate formal views that are not supported by their daily actions, framed the discourse analysis of documents from eight Division I institutions. Findings show a range of written and reported commitments to diversity, the level and congruency of which were interpreted as how athletic departments value diversity. The study began to outline a continuum for diversity management

approaches and supported the idea that having a written commitment to diversity is a necessary prerequisite for action.

With this organizational context in mind, the third study sought to understand how athletic department staff understand and perceive diversity in the workplace. In sports, diversity is often framed in racial terms (Birrell, 1989)—a perspective that may silence other identities that are particularly salient to both those competing and working in athletics. To better understand how diversity is framed in athletics settings, an online survey was created to identify what identities are most salient to intercollegiate athletics staff members' understanding of diversity. Over 600 responses from 20 institutions were collected and findings show that while staff do see race as highly salient, other identities (including gender, age, sexual orientation, and nationality) also consistently emerged. Thus, for a more effective diversity approach and to create a more inclusive culture, departments should move beyond a singular focus on race and frame diversity more broadly. An additional finding was that individual identity shapes perception and saliency (Unzueta & Binning, 2012), suggesting that departments should survey their staff members to understand what identities are most important within their unique organizational context.

As effective diversity management can elicit many benefits for organizations (Robinson & Dechant, 1997), it is imperative to understand how athletic departments are addressing diversity, how these approaches are perceived by students and staff, and in turn, to develop and implement best practices for a more inclusive environment. Through three separate yet interconnected studies, this dissertation begins to explore the organizational context around diversity in Division I athletic departments and by suggesting implications for policy and

practice at the departmental and NCAA level, the hope is to start a conversation that leads to change for students and staff alike.

The dissertation of Laura M. Bernhard is approved.

Tyrone C. Howard

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University of California, Los Angeles

2015

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my family.

I am who I am because of you and this dissertation is not just my accomplishment but all of ours.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> *Diversity has become the rallying cry of mainstream America including the hallowed halls of academia. Although colleges and universities across America are working to increase the number of women and minority faculty members and students, this push for diversity in higher education seems to stop when it reaches the athletics department...*
>
> - Underwood (cited by Duderstadt, 2002, p. 1)

This quote comes from Dr. Clarence Underwood, the Director of Athletics at Michigan State University at the time, from the opening speech he gave at a conference on Diversity in Sport. While made over a decade ago, current media coverage, empirical research, anecdotes, and my own personal experience would suggest that this statement still rings true today. Despite ongoing efforts by many campuses to increase (numerical) diversity, athletic departments have largely failed to address diversity both in terms of representation amongst student-athletes and staff, and in generating a culture and climate of acceptance and inclusivity. As such, this dissertation sought to explore the role of diversity in college athletic departments as it relates to staff members through three individual yet inter-related studies. The first study investigated what messages athletic departments and universities express regarding diversity through mission statements; the second study examined what athletic departments are doing to address diversity through policy and programming and how these messages fit together; and with the organizational context in mind, the third study explored how athletic staff define and perceive diversity by focusing on what identities are most salient to their understanding of the concept.

While each study employed a different methodology and was framed from a different perspective and theory, the studies build upon each other and collectively provide a deeper and more nuanced view of the larger topic. These three studies add to the scholarship on diversity in college athletics, and by focusing on staff—of particular interest given the legal ramifications surrounding diversity in the workplace—they offer a unique perspective and supplement the body of work on student-athletes. It is my hope that findings from this dissertation, at the very least, begin or contribute to a conversation that too often goes unheard; however, findings may also help inform scholars, administrators, and athletics leaders on how to more effectively address and manage a diverse intercollegiate athletics workforce, perhaps leading to a more inclusive departmental culture for staff and students alike.

Statement of the Problem

On campuses nationwide, both the workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012) and student body (Pryor, Hurtado, Saenz, Santos & Korn, 2008) have grown increasingly diverse as a result of demographic trends, legal mandates, and social pressures. Over the years, various pieces of legislation such as Title VII, Title IX, the GI Bill, and the Americans with Disabilities Act have broadened opportunities and instituted more equitable practices throughout higher education. In addition to changing demographics and policies, notions of acceptance and inclusion have become paramount and with growing concern over the individual experience of students, attention is being paid to the surrounding culture and climate for diversity within organizations. Further, a commitment to diversity and inclusion has been shown to be critical to the institution's ability to attract and retain talented students and workers (Fink, Pastore, & Riemer, 2001; McKay et al., 2007), and create goodwill with consumers (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). This calls for higher education institutions to attend to diversity both in representation and

in climate, a concern reinforced by the fact that bringing together people from different backgrounds, cultures, and ways of thinking is fundamental to the very notion of higher education (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002).

While diversity has gained appeal and importance in higher education, there is little knowledge of how the concept is being defined, valued, or attended to in intercollegiate athletics and how this affects the experience of individuals working in the field. Indeed, even as diversity, equity, and inclusion have become buzzwords and points of emphasis for colleges and universities and the governing body of intercollegiate athletics—the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA; Cunningham & Fink, 2006; Hurtado, 2007), it is not clear to what extent athletic departments are addressing these concepts. This discontinuity is further emphasized by the high visibility of athletic departments, often referred to as the "front porch" of the university (Suggs, 2003), as their actions reflect upon the institution as a whole—highlighting the importance of the departments' treatment of diversity. Yet, and perhaps due in part to its high profile nature, little is known about the climate for diversity in athletic departments beyond anecdotal stories; and with reports of racism, discrimination, and hostile work environments, it is evident staff members who do not fit the traditional majority (i.e., white, Protestant, able-bodied, heterosexual males) may have negative experiences (Fink et al., 2001). Thus, there is a need for empirical work on the experiences of athletic department staff around issues of diversity and if and how athletic departments are addressing diversity.

Purpose and Scope of the Research

The aim of this dissertation was to enhance our understanding of diversity in intercollegiate athletics, by focusing on staff and the organizational context of NCAA Division I (DI) athletic departments. Through a three study design, this dissertation sought to explore if and

how diversity is included in official departmental statements, what athletic departments are doing to address diversity in policy and practice, and given this organizational context, how athletic staff understand and perceive diversity. By utilizing a three study design, as opposed to the traditional single study method, I was able to take a deeper look at each topic—drilling down with more focused research questions and using different frameworks and methodologies to best answer each query. While each study was framed and conducted as a standalone piece of work, these studies build upon one another and collectively provide a richer and more detailed examination of the larger topic.

Study 1. The first study explored if and how select NCAA DI athletic departments address diversity by examining what their mission statements reveal, and how those messages compare to that of the larger university. While the mission is limited in its ability to express the complete identity of the organization, it arguably communicates the most central characteristics to both internal and external constituents (Bart, 1996), and is a primary platform for organizations to state their commitment to diversity (Wilson, Meyer, & McNeal, 2012). Chesler and Crowfoot's (1989) organizational analysis of racism framework, which calls for an explicit inclusion of racial justice in the mission statement, was adapted to focus on an explicit mention of diversity in athletic department and university mission statements, and the notion of interdependence between the individual department and larger campus was considered (Terry, 1981).

The data consisted of mission statements from 40 of the top ranked public Division I FBS institutions in the country. A content analysis, relying on both objective (e.g., recording the number of times a word is used) and subjective (e.g., interpreting the text's meaning) measures, was applied and five overarching themes for form of inclusion emerged: (1) explicit mention—

using some form of the word “diversity,” “equity,” or “inclusion;” (2) implicit—alluding to diversity concepts (e.g., "serving all people"); (3) policy—including affirmative action or equal opportunity; (4) indirect—supporting a statement that supported diversity; and (5) absence—those that did not include diversity in any way. These themes created a taxonomy for form of inclusion and institutions were categorized accordingly. The findings show that the majority of mission statements included diversity in some form but the nature and extent of that inclusion varied in its clarity, altering the effectiveness of the messages conveyed (Meyer, 2008). For example, statements that only address diversity through policy appear to be meeting legal obligations, whereas documents that expound upon the inclusive environment the organization seeks to create outlines a much clearer purpose and approach. Further, the finding that implicit mentions can be just as if not more meaningful than explicit mentions challenges the framework. In conclusion, the study points to the importance of wording, which can either support or detract from the intended message, and is perhaps why organizations spend considerable resources on crafting their mission statements.

Study 2. Diversity in organizations can have divergent outcomes (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998) and must be actively managed through both policy and practice—the congruency of which can be telling. As such, the second study examined if and how athletic departments address diversity through written policies, what actions they take through staffing and programming, and how these messages fit together. This study builds directly upon the first, adding additional data points including NCAA certification documents, website content, demographic statistics, and qualitative responses from departmental staff members. The theoretical lens of institutionalism, which outlines how organizations may articulate formal views that are not supported by their daily actions, was applied to investigate the interplay between rhetoric and reality (Powell &

Dimaggio, 1991), and a discourse analysis of all documents was conducted. Discourse analysis is a systematic inquiry of language (Fairclough, 2001) and was employed in this study to understand what messages athletic departments are communicating about diversity through written language and documentation of action (or lack thereof).

Participating institutions were chosen based on geographical region (West, Central, and East) and budget level (high and low). The resulting sample of eight DI FBS institutions, while small in size, allowed for a detailed analysis of all documents. The findings showed that there was a wide range in both espoused and enacted commitments to diversity—a range that was unanticipated as all athletic departments are held to the same standard for the purposes of certification by the NCAA. In light of this standard, how each athletic department chose to address the certification protocol—the language used, level of detail given, and differences between each institution—were analyzed and interpreted as signs of departments' commitment to diversity (Fairclough, 2001). Departments were categorized by level of commitment (low/high) and evaluated accordingly. Given the importance of effectively managing an increasingly diverse workforce (Robinson & Dechant, 1997), in.sight into the organizational context is needed. This study begins to do that, continuing a line of inquiry into how athletic departments address diversity

Study 3. Through a content and discourse analysis of documents, the first two studies began to examine how athletic departments address diversity; however, they did not specifically seek to understand how the term was being used. With this in mind, the third study sought to explore how athletics staff define diversity by asking them to identify what identities are most salient to their understanding of the concept. Drawing on Jones and McEwen's (2000) framework of multiple dimensions of identity, which posits a strong interplay of individual demographics

and context on identity saliency, the study also considered what effect, if any, individual background and the college athletics context have on staff members' perception of diversity. Understanding how individuals within an organization define diversity is critical because if the organization takes a narrow view of diversity (e.g., as referring only to racial minorities; Nkomo & Cox, 1996), this may discount how people additionally define themselves—a silencing that can have deleterious effects for the individual and can also undermine the organization's own diversity efforts.

To gather what identities are most important to athletic department staff members, an online survey was created utilizing demographic, likert-scale, and open-ended items. Data was collected from over 600 individuals at 20 institutions across the country, representing a variety of institutional types and athletic budgets. Given the exploratory nature of the study, the analysis relied primarily on demographic and descriptive data. Results show that, consistent with previous research (e.g., Nkomo & Cox, 1996), staff do in fact consider race to be the most central identity to their understanding of diversity, however, they also identified gender, age, sexual orientation, and nationality as central dimensions. This finding not only adds to the literature on diversity, but also suggests that athletic departments' diversity management efforts must go beyond the conventional identities of race and gender, and should be sure to attend to identities salient to their membership and within their specific organizational context.

Significance

Diversity remains a contentious and oft-debated topic in higher education, calling for more work not only on its value and place on campus (Hurtado, 2007), but also on how people perceive and understand the concept and if and how diversity plays out in their daily work. One area of campus that has received little attention by scholars but often has the highest percentage

of students of color (Loughran & Etzel, 2008) and is a space that confronts race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability on a daily basis is the athletic department. Even though there is a growing body of research on diversity in college sport (e.g., Cunningham, 2008, 2009; Fink et al., 2001), most studies take a singular focus (e.g., solely on race or gender), consider demographic statistics rather than policy or action (e.g., Cunningham, Bruening, & Straub, 2006), or concentrate on student-athletes and not staff (e.g., Beamon, 2008). This dissertation begins to address those gaps, by examining not only how people understand diversity in a broader sense, but also how their workplace addresses diversity in policy and written record of action. Even as each study is a separate piece of work, the inquiries inform each other and by taking this non-traditional three study approach to the dissertation, I was able to develop a richer understanding of the topic and create a more meaningful examination of diversity in college sport. Together, the three studies provide a more nuanced understanding of what diversity means in the college sports context, and findings may inform departmental leaders on ways to better address stakeholder needs, with the ultimate goal of creating a more inclusive environment for all members.

A Note on "Diversity"

Diversity is one of the most widely discussed topics in society (Smith, 1995) —and the focus of this dissertation—yet remains a concept that is not clearly defined nor well understood (Unzueta & Binning, 2009). Indeed, my own grappling and confusion with how to talk about this concept, particularly with those who were reluctant to broach the subject, is what led me to this dissertation topic. The desire to understand what people mean when they say "diversity," or that their department is "diverse," is what led me to develop the third study in particular, but is also what gives me pause when asked to define the concept in my own work. Given my experiences in intercollegiate athletics, I presume that most people are referring to racial diversity, or

specifically the representation of black bodies, when they discuss diversity in sport; however, given my positionality as a woman, as someone pursuing a graduate degree, and as having played a less traditional sport, these identities were all salient to my experiences as an athletic department staff member and I was curious to know in what ways other people were thinking of diversity.

Despite my own hesitations, it became clear that outlining the concept was a necessary step in my work. For the first two pieces, I conceptualized diversity in racial terms, both because this is how it has been conventionally defined (Unzueta & Binning, 2010), and also because race continues to be a central feature of athletics (Brooks & Althouse, 2013). And yet, just as I had surmised, the third study showed that other identities are indeed salient to athletic department members' understanding of diversity—identifications which are shaped both by who we are and where we are. Thus, I encourage scholars and practitioners to be clear in how they are using the term, but also be open to broader definitions and other ways of outlining the concept. Being clear in our usage of the term is key to having effective, productive, and meaningful conversations around diversity; and even though race may often be a starting point, and an important one at that, our conversations must move beyond this identity to truly create a diverse and inclusive environment.

CHAPTER 2

BETWEEN THE LINES: DIVERSITY AND NCAA DIVISION I ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENTS

Introduction

With the racial integration of higher education in the 1960s, student bodies at large, and athletic teams in particular, have become increasingly diverse (Brainard, 2009; National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA], 2012). In fact, at many institutions the athletic department is one of the most racially diverse areas of campus, with a high proportional representation of students of color (Loughran, Etzel, & Schinke, 2008). Given the racial/ethnic diversity of such departments, it seems easy to assume that college athletics might have little need to address diversity, as the term is often defined in racial terms (Unzueta & Binning, 2010) and by numerical representation (Unzueta & Binning, 2012). Yet, diversity goes beyond race and numbers to additionally encompass the surrounding culture and climate (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999), meaning athletic departments must continue to do work to ensure a positive climate for all members (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999).

Even as few instances of overt racism have been reported in college athletics, racism remains a strong undercurrent (Brooks & Althouse, 2013). Indeed, the very existence of majority black teams entertaining predominantly white audiences, as is the case for many Division I (DI) football and basketball teams, has raised questions of racism (Hawkins, 2010). In addition, the media consistently portray athletes of color more negatively than their white peers (L. Davis, 1998; Van Sterkenburg, Knoppers, & De Leeuws; 2010), graduation rates differ significantly by

race (NCAA, 2012), and few leadership positions are filled by non-whites (Lapchick & Kuhn, 2011). Given the visibility of athletic departments in the higher education landscape, often termed the "front porch" of their institutions (Suggs, 2003), the messages these departments convey regarding diversity are important to the identity of the entire institution. Therefore, this study explores if and how select NCAA DI athletic departments address diversity by examining their mission statements, and how the language used compares to the messages of the larger university.

In this paper I conceptualize diversity in racial terms, both because this is how it has been conventionally defined (Unzueta & Binning, 2010), and because race continues to be a central feature of athletics (Brooks & Althouse, 2013). I also incorporate the terms of equity and inclusion as they help to embody diversity in terms of the culture and climate (Clayton-Pedersen, 2008), they inevitably emerge when considering policies for diversity (Chan, 2005), and they are part of the language used by the organizations in my study (NCAA, 2011b). Finally, I focus on the mission statement because of its role as a public recording of campus priorities (Meacham & Barrett, 2003). In light of these conceptualizations, inattention to diversity in organizational mission statements can be seen as a sign that creating a positive climate may not be a core institutional value and inequities may exist—a relationship highlighted by the organizational analysis framework (Chesler & Crowfoot, 1989).

Within higher education, the mission statement "represents a consensus on campus-wide values, expectations for student learning and development, and a statement of campus priorities for many years ahead" (Meacham & Barrett, 2003, p. 6). While the mission is limited in its ability to express the complete identity of the organization, it arguably communicates the most central characteristics to both internal and external constituents (Bart, 1996), and is a primary

platform for organizations to state their commitment to diversity (Wilson, Meyer, & McNeal, 2012). Thus, the questions guiding this study were: (1) Do NCAA DI athletic department mission statements emphasize diversity, and if so, in what ways? (2) How are the ways athletic department mission statements address diversity related to those of their respective university mission statements?

Amidst the backdrop of continuing racial issues in college sports (e.g., the alleged exploitation of those of color; Hawkins, 2010), this study examined what athletic departments state regarding diversity and sought to identify ways in which they could more clearly address the concept. Even though diversity is a key topic in organizational research (Wolfe et al., 2005), few studies explore what diversity means for sport organizations, and even fewer look at how athletic departments' documents address diversity (Wilson et al., 2012); this study begins to address these gaps in the literature. Findings shed light on what institutional and departmental mission statements reveal about diversity, identify patterns of disconnect between messages, and provide athletics practitioners and stakeholders with important information on how their department is communicating a commitment to diversity.

Literature Review

The literature review is structured in the following way: first, select issues surrounding race in intercollegiate athletics are highlighted as they relate to both student-athletes and staff; second, the growing emphasis placed on diversity by universities and the NCAA is outlined; and third, the ways in which institutions and athletic departments are addressing diversity is examined, with a focus on mission statements. These bodies of literature highlight how diversity goes beyond numbers to additionally encompass the culture and climate as experienced by individuals of color (Brown, 2010), experiences which are framed by the growing organizational

emphasis on diversity, and finally, an emphasis that is conveyed first and foremost through written policies such as the mission statement (Wilson et al., 2012).

Race and Intercollegiate Athletics

Sports has long been heralded as one of the most integrated spaces in American society—a place where the jersey on your back matters more than the color of your skin (T. Davis, 1994). Yet, some would argue that racism in sports remains prevalent by simply becoming more covert and subtle (T. Davis, 1998), often overshadowed by the headlines of overt racism and discrimination coming from campuses nationwide (Museus, 2008). As an example of this subtlety, even though increasing numbers of students of color are participating in intercollegiate athletics, they remain concentrated in certain sports (e.g., football and basketball; NCAA, 2012), and in certain positions (e.g., those of a more physical nature; Meggyesy, 2000). Further, studies on the student-athlete experience have found that student-athletes of color report feeling "used" or valued more for their athleticism than their academic potential (Beamon, 2008), and face stereotyping and discrimination by faculty and peers (Oseguera, 2010).

In spite of the increasing diversity of student-athletes, the positions of leadership and power in college athletics continue to be held predominantly by white males. In fact, for the 120 DI schools that were part of the Football Bowl Subdivision in 2011, 84% of athletic directors and 100% of conference commissioners were white males (Lapchick & Kuhn, 2011). Within athletic departments, coaches of color, similar to student-athletes of color, tend to be concentrated in certain sports and have fewer chances to advance professionally (Cunningham, Bruening, & Straub, 2006). Studies have shown that they are often placed in peripheral roles without leadership potential (Anderson, 1993) and are hired for the lone purpose of recruiting (Brown, 2002). As a result, many coaches of color report feeling tokenized and discriminated against

based on their race (Cunningham et al., 2006), and subsequently leave the profession earlier than their white peers (Cunningham, Sagas, & Ashley, 2001). The experiences of student-athletes and coaches of color, and visible lack of racial diversity among athletics leaders, shapes the organizational climate for diversity in intercollegiate athletics, and signals the need to examine issues of racial (in)equity.

Universities, the NCAA, and Diversity

The racial issues present in athletics are in direct contrast to the inclusion efforts by higher education institutions at large, which have shown an increasing recognition for the importance of diversity (Hurtado, 2007). Indeed, university presidents have spoken out about the value of diversity (Association of American Universities, 1997; Bollinger, 2003), and rising numbers of institutional mission statements affirm the role that diversity has in enhancing both teaching and learning (Alger, 1997). Many institutions also have a strategic plan for diversity (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005), have altered their official documents (Wilson et al., 2012), and put various measures into place including new administrative structures, more inclusive admission policies, and funding sources for teaching about diverse cultures (Garcia et al., 2001)—with these actions showing that diversity is a clear point of emphasis at the university level.

As athletic departments answer to both their host institution and their national governing body, the NCAA, it is important to note that the NCAA has also shown an increasing commitment to diversity. In 2005, former NCAA President Myles Brand created the Office of Diversity and Inclusion as a subsidiary committee. In 2010, it was restructured to have a more direct line to the President, and to put more of a focus on climate in addition to simply increasing

numbers of both students and staff of color (Brown, 2010). In continuation of these aims, the organization hosted an Inclusion Summit in 2011, releasing the following statement:

> As a core value, the NCAA believes in and is committed to diversity, inclusion and gender equity among its student-athletes, coaches and administrators. We seek to establish and maintain an inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes and career opportunities for coaches and administrators from diverse backgrounds. Diversity and inclusion improves the learning environment for all student-athletes, and enhances excellence within the Association (NCAA, 2011b, para 1).

While this statement was written to engender the view of an organization with a high level of commitment to addressing diversity, it does not outline a comprehensive approach for action. In fact, growth in diversity at the top levels of college athletics has stagnated (Lapchick, Hoff, & Kaiser, 2010). This incongruity highlights the need for written commitments to be clear and comprehensive (Meyer, 2008), as well as purposeful in outlining actionable steps so organizational members can act in support of the mission both at the national organization and institutional level.

Perhaps in response to these initiatives, athletic departments have also begun to recognize the importance of addressing the climate for diversity (Fink, Pastore, & Riemer, 2001). Some have created specific value statements addressing diversity and a select few have even added positions with job titles including "diversity" and "inclusion" (e.g., the Associate Athletic Director of Leadership and Diversity Initiatives at the University of Nebraska). Even as organizations throughout higher education, including the NCAA, have implemented diversity initiatives and scholars have examined the climate for diversity at the institutional level (e.g.,

Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1992), there is little knowledge of if and how athletic departments are attending to diversity.

Addressing Diversity

In order to assess the extent to which organizations prioritize and address diversity, one must take stock of their policies and procedures. Indeed, "a first step in signaling an institution-wide commitment to diversity is for the top campus leadership to issue statements of support, purpose and action" (Chang, 2002, p. 23). Accordingly, higher education institutions have acknowledged this importance and developed policies to address the recruitment and retention of underrepresented minorities at the student, staff, and faculty level (Chan, 2005; L. Davis, 2002). Diversity-related discourses, including mission statements, are a vital part of institutional efforts, making documents an apt place to look for an organization's stated commitment to diversity on both institutional and departmental levels (Wilson et al., 2012). In fact, Wilson and colleagues (2012) questioned whether an institution could claim it values diversity if there is no mention of diversity in its mission statement—the official statement of values. As such, the authors call on schools to reflect on whether their statement accurately describes their values and what that language implies both internally and externally (Wilson et al., 2012).

Mission statements. The mission statement reflects an organization's aims, values, and priorities (Boerema, 2006), and conveys the official and unofficial purposes of the organization. While work has been done on the mission of higher education as a field (Bowen, 1977), and across institutions (Morphew & Hartley, 2006), very little is known about the mission of one of the most visible pieces of a college's identity—the athletic department (Ward & Hux, 2011). In one of the few studies to investigate this topic, Meyer (2008) found that athletic mission statements prioritized the development of student-athletes, athletic achievement, and being a

community leader, but also addressed compliance with rules, and the need to produce revenue and provide entertainment. However, to date, few if any studies have looked specifically at how athletic department statements address diversity, nor how they fit with the institutional mission given the call for the athletic program's purpose “to be clearly stated in the institution's publications and [to] be consonant with the purposes and objectives of higher education as a whole” (Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools as quoted in Thelin & Wiseman, 1989, p.103). With this focus in mind, a review of the extant literature revealed the following gaps: work examining diversity efforts by athletic departments (Singer & Cunningham, 2012), if departments even consider this to be an issue, and how they address diversity in written policy . This study begins to address these gaps by examining athletic department and university mission statements for explicit and implicit inclusions of diversity, the surrounding context, and how these messages fit together.

Theoretical Framework

This study employed Chesler and Crowfoot’s (1989) organizational analysis of racism framework which outlines five fundamental elements of modern organizations: mission, culture, power, structure, and resources. According to Chesler and Crowfoot (1989), these elements influence the policies and practices that in turn impact different racial groups within organizations and affect the overall climate for diversity. The mission is the official goals and purposes of the organization, a statement of core values which are then reflected in people’s common understandings of member behavior, creating an organizational culture. Power is manifested in the decision-making processes of the organization, while its structure is akin to the procedures and technologies that form the ways the organization meets its goals. Finally, resources are the goods, manpower, and funds that organizations transform into finished products

for consumption. These elements are interdependent (Terry, 1981), such that if the mission does not address racial justice, then it is unlikely that other parts of the organization will be committed to promoting respect for all people regardless of race, making the mission an important starting place. Katz (1978) characterized this interdependent relationship as a “web” of organizational discrimination (p. 75) and Chesler and Crowfoot (1989) outlined how institutional racism can present itself through the five organizational elements, including in a lack of explicit attention to racial equity as a goal in the mission. While the framework focuses on institutional racism by searching for an (in)attention to racial equity, additional studies have applied the theory to other identities or measures of inclusion (Townsend, 2006). For the purposes of this study, I adapted the framework to consider diversity more broadly by focusing on an explicit mention of diversity in the mission statement.

The organizational analysis framework is fitting for this study's examination of athletic departments’ emphases on diversity because it addresses interdependence on two levels. First, interdependence within an organization is measured among the five elements, with the mission statement providing an apt place to start for determining an organization’s actual commitment to diversity. Second, interdependence can also be thought of on the institutional level, with departments as elements of the larger college or university. Even though institutions have an overall unifying mission, individual departments on campus may have their own mission relating to the services they provide (e.g., sporting events for entertainment) and the populations they serve (e.g., student-athletes and the public). Accordingly, the missions may or may not correspond in their guiding purposes, and this notion of cohesion (or lack thereof) provides a useful lens for examining how the two organizational emphases on diversity may or may not relate to one another. Further, given the premise of interdependence, relating the two mission

statements may help to explain why different athletic departments emphasize diversity in different ways.

Methodology

The research questions for this study were: (1) Do NCAA DI athletic department mission statements emphasize diversity, and if so, in what ways? (2) How are the ways athletic department mission statements address diversity related to those of their respective university mission statements? To examine and interpret how these organizations emphasize diversity, this study employed a content analysis of both athletic department and university mission statements. Content analysis is a systematic approach to evaluating written or spoken messages (Naccarato & Neuendorf, 1998), and offers a reliable and unobtrusive method of inquiry (Insch, Moore, & Murphy, 1997). Other studies examining mission statements have used this method (e.g., Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009; Andrassy & Bruening, 2011; Ward & Hux, 2011), providing a valid way to examine the extent to which these organizations place an emphasis on diversity in their official documents.

Sample

NCAA DI is the highest level of competition in college athletics and is the level most commonly represented in the media and in scholarly research. Using purposive sampling to ensure that leaders in the field of college athletics were studied, the top 50 DI athletic programs in the nation were selected (Patton, 2002). The program rankings were according to the 2011-2012 Director's Cup Standings (National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics, 2012), a well-known measure of overall athletic success at the DI level (Cunningham, 2002). Private institutions were excluded in order to create a more homogenous sample in terms of governance, resources, and campus size—factors shown to affect the climate for diversity (Hurtado, 1992).

This selection criterion resulted in a sample of 41 large, public universities, however, one school did not have a publically available departmental mission statement and was excluded. The remaining sample of 40 schools represents all 5 of the major DI conferences (6 from the ACC, 5 Big Ten, 11 Big 12, 6 Pac-12, and 9 SEC institutions) and are geographically distributed throughout the country (see Appendix A for full list).

Athletic department and university mission statements were copied or downloaded from the respective institutional websites in the fall of 2012. All data were converted to MS Word documents and uploaded into the qualitative data program Dedoose for analysis. Throughout data collection I took note of how difficult documents were to locate, and used the availability of these statements to make inferences about how the organizations value diversity via athletic department and institutional websites (Wilson & Meyer, 2009).

Data Analysis

Content analysis has objective (e.g., recording the number of times a word is used) and subjective (e.g., interpreting the text's meaning) aspects; both forms of analysis were used to make inferences about the value organizations place on diversity. Based on the literature, I began data analysis with initial codes for the explicit use of "diversity," "equity," and "inclusion," yet remained open to emergent codes—allowing my analysis to be both inductive and deductive (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Insch et al., 1997). After conducting a preliminary review of the data additional codes were added, including the implicit mention of diversity, naming a diversity policy, and describing support for the university mission. The codebook was refined throughout data analysis, continuing in an iterative process until it was determined to be a good fit—believed to capture all of the ways the organizations wrote about diversity. The mission statements were then categorized by the way they included diversity: explicitly, implicitly, in

policy, indirectly, or not at all. An indirect emphasis was defined as the university mission emphasizing diversity and the athletic department mission stating it supported the university's mission. These broader categories created a taxonomy of inclusion and were used to explore themes across the data.

To answer the question of how the organizations emphasized diversity, how statements discussed diversity (e.g., how brief or descriptive the inclusion was) was further analyzed. Statements were also coded for the constituents they addressed (solely students, staff, or both), specific identities they addressed (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender), and the format of the document (e.g., bulleted vs. sentence). Collectively, these categorizations were then used to compare the athletic department and institutional emphases on diversity and to determine the level of connection between them. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the analysis was largely descriptive—relying on the use of frequency and percentages along with qualitative analysis to interpret the meaning behind the messages.

To establish reliability, I first coded all of the documents in Dedoose then had an independent reviewer check five percent of the codings (Neuendorf, 2002). The reviewer was given a brief overview of the study as well as the refined codebook and completed the coding using the same data analysis program. The Kappa statistic was calculated and our independent coding of the documents measured 92%, surpassing the widely accepted threshold of 0.90 (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002; Neuendorf, 2002).

Positionality

In qualitative work the researcher should reflect on his or her positionality, as this experience can help to elicit or explain possible biases affecting the research (Gergen, 2000)—an important consideration given the subjective nature of content analysis. I have worked in DI

intercollegiate athletics for nine years, and three of my places of employment were included in this sample. From interacting with student-athletes, coaches, and staff I have heard anecdotes of racial tension and discrimination within the athletic department setting; and as a woman of color, my first-hand encounters with discrimination incited my interest in this area of study. However, to bolster trustworthiness, I relied on the codes such as inclusion form and population focus to drive the thematic analysis and drew from the literature and theory to interpret the meaning of excerpts.

Limitations

Mission statements are a requisite component of a diversity plan or program, yet remain an insufficient reflection of institutional commitment to diversity. Institutions can emphasize diversity through means other than mission statements (e.g., staff positions, events, or marketing materials). Therefore, it is difficult to fully evaluate the athletic departments' actual emphasis of diversity since day-to-day actions may confirm or refute messages supplied in official statements (Wilson et al., 2012). To this end, results from this study cannot be seen as a definitive conclusion of an athletic department's or institution's commitment to diversity. Additionally, the sample is not representative of higher education institutions at large, and in light of the sample characteristics, findings may not be generalizable to institutions beyond large, public DI universities.

Results

The research objectives of the study were to understand if and how select athletic departments address diversity in their mission statements and how this language compares to that of the larger institution. As a first step in discerning emphasis, and guided by the theoretical framework which calls for explicit attention to racial equity, the iterative analysis process

produced five overarching themes for *form* of inclusion: (1) explicit mention—using either some form of the word “diversity,” “equity,” or “inclusion;” (2) implicit—referring to nondiscrimination or alluding to diversity concepts (e.g., "serving all people"); (3) policy—including either the affirmative action or equal opportunity policy; (4) indirect—supporting a statement that supported diversity; and (5) absence—those that did not include diversity in any way. Findings show mission statements can be grouped by the form of diversity inclusion, the extent of that inclusion (i.e., as a word or more elaborative statement), whether they had a specific population focus, and the level of accessibility. Consistent with content analysis, patterns developed according to document type and subsequently the connections between universities and athletic departments were also examined.

Form of Inclusion

The hierarchical taxonomy of inclusion derived from Chesler and Crowfoot’s (1989) call for explicit attention to racial equity, and thus diversity, in the mission was used in my analysis. Even though the missions may have emphasized diversity in multiple ways, each statement was assigned a holistic code; the breakdown of schools by document type and main form of inclusion is shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Main Form of Inclusion by Document Type

	Athletic Department		University	
Form of Inclusion	N	%	N	%
Explicit	18	45.0	26	65.0
Implicit	9	22.5	2	5.0
Policy	3	7.5	0	0.0
Indirect	2	5.0	- -	- -
No Mention	8	20.0	12	30.0
Total	40	100.0	40	100.0

The findings show that 20% more university than athletic department statements explicitly addressed diversity. Athletic departments, however, were far more likely to implicitly discuss diversity or include diversity-related policies, resulting in a higher overall percentage of diversity inclusion in their statements (80% versus 70% of universities); though this difference is largely negated when indirect inclusions are excluded, a form which universities cannot express.

Explicit diversity. Eighteen athletic departments, or 45% of the sample, included an explicit form of diversity in their statement, either through the word "diversity" or through some form of "equity" or "inclusion." For those using the term directly, which included 15 of the institutions, 7 simply listed "diversity" as a value or included it as a bulleted point. The University of Iowa, was one of these, listing "diversity" as a key goal, while the University of South Carolina stated they seek to "develop an appreciation for diversity." Other statements were more descriptive, either elaborating on what was meant by diversity or making reference to the larger departmental culture, such as Iowa State University's declaration that "the department is committed to providing equitable resources in a diverse environment for all student-athletes." These longer inclusions provided more interpretation on the department's part, and served to better communicate how departments conceive of diversity in daily practice as opposed to the more ambiguous nature of a single word.

As discussed earlier, I also considered the terms "equity" and "inclusion" as part of the definition of diversity, recognizing that the institutions in this sample and the NCAA often use the terms interchangeably to convey the concept of diversity (NCAA, 2011b). Based on the data, 9 athletic departments (or 23% of the sample) mentioned equity or inclusion; for 3 of these departments, this mention counted as their explicit form of inclusion, as they did not also include the term "diversity." In general, the phrasing around equity and inclusion tended to be longer and

more explanatory, and was almost always included in complete sentences rather than as bullet points (just three schools included these terms as singular words in list form), supporting the idea that these terms embody the culture and climate around diversity rather than just quantifiable benchmarks (Clayton-Pedersen, 2008). Inclusion was generally talked about as relationships between people, as in Purdue University's call for "inclusiveness among all constituencies," or in terms of the environment, as in the University of New Mexico's statement that they are "committed to student-athlete success and competitive excellence by creating an inclusive environment." When discussing equity, institutions wrote about it in a general sense addressing either the process (e.g., Oklahoma State University's goal "to embrace equality") or the outcome (e.g., Auburn University's vision of "equitable treatment for all"), and just two institutions touched on both facets of equity. Thus, while almost 50% of the athletic department sample included diversity in an explicit way, the nature of that inclusion and the messages conveyed varied greatly.

Implicit diversity. For 9 (or 23%) of the athletic departments, diversity was only addressed in an implicit manner. These inclusions were largely in programmatic terms such as the University of Indiana's stated goal "to maintain an equitable, balanced and well-rounded program for all participants," or in terms of opportunities, as in West Virginia University's statement that their department "believes in offering extensive opportunities for varsity intercollegiate athletics for men, women and minorities." Similar to West Virginia, many of these departments specifically identified the provision of opportunities for both sexes as well as minorities. While it was assumed the reference was for racial/ethnic minorities this was not often specified, calling in to question how these departments are defining who is a 'minority,' even as the term is largely considered outdated (Texeira, 2005).

There were also differences in implicit mentions by which constituents the statement was targeting, categorized as either student-athletes or staff. This differentiation may allude to whether or not the department sees itself as serving students first and foremost as part of the larger institution's educational mission, or as more of a business needing to concern itself with personnel issues. As an example, the University of Arkansas' athletic statement lists a core goal being to "recruit and maintain the highest quality administrative and coaching staff that believe in and uphold the department's mission." While this goal was included in a list along with degree attainment and supporting a positive experience for student-athletes, the department also sought to increase its fan base, maintain athletic facilities, and produce revenue—showing a focus that extends well beyond the academic mission of the institution.

In terms of racial diversity, 15 athletic department mission statements (38% of the sample) referred to race, ethnicity, or "minorities" specifically. Of these, just 5 departments included an explicit mention of both race and diversity—as in LSU's goal to encourage "cultural, ethnic and gender equity and diversity"—meaning less than 15% of the sample meets Chesler and Crowfoot's (1989) call for explicit attention to racial equity in the mission statement. In a mixture of implicit and explicit inclusions, three statements call for the offering of equitable opportunities or treatment of student-athletes and staff by gender or ethnic background. However, the majority of statements (7 or 18%) that were coded for race referred to "minorities." Again, context presumes they are referring to racial minorities but it is not specified and creates ambiguity, thereby not meeting Chesler and Crowfoot's (1989) call for explicit attention in either sense—to race or diversity.

Diversity policy. In a different take on discussing diversity, three institutions (eight percent of the sample) mentioned a specific policy, such as equal opportunity, in their athletic

department mission statement. Interestingly, these were all unique mentions with no crossover with explicit inclusions. In absence of other supporting documents, this may suggest that these departments only consider diversity in terms of a mandated policy. For example, the University of Oklahoma (OU) states the athletic department is expected "to adhere to the OU principles of equal opportunity in programs and employment." This statement was part of an operating principle that also addressed adherence to the rules of the University, the NCAA, the Conference, and all local, state, and federal laws, showing a further consideration for protections from liability. Conversely, the University of Texas' athletic department statement uses policy in a way that clearly outlines their goals for equity and inclusion, going beyond the cursory mention for legal reasons, and expresses an explicit commitment to diversity even without using the word itself:

> The University of Texas at Austin is committed to an educational and working environment that provides equal opportunity to all members of the University community. In accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits unlawful discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, including sexual harassment, age, disability, citizenship, and veteran status. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression is also prohibited pursuant to University policy.

While race is explicitly included in this statement, this listing appeared to be a standard group of legally protected identities, and was not commonly included in statements. Thus, findings show that the inclusion of diversity policies can be used in ways that both serve to meet legal obligations as well as communicate explicit diversity and inclusion goals.

University Missions

Athletic departments are not completely autonomous units, but are located within the physical confines of and ultimately beholden to their host institutions. Therefore, the university mission statements were also examined as a way of providing context to the findings from the departmental statements. On the whole, university mission statements were more direct with their inclusion of diversity; when diversity was mentioned, it was most often by using some form of the actual word rather than with a policy or in an implicit manner. Indeed, 23 universities (or 58%) included some form of the word "diversity" in their mission statement—far more than athletic departments. And instead of using diversity to describe the make-up of the student body or staff (i.e., compositional diversity), university statements tended to discuss it in a more holistic sense by alluding to the culture and the overarching goals of inclusivity they aim to achieve. For example, an excerpt from the University of Oregon's mission statement begins with conduct, where they strive for "dedication to the principles of equality of opportunity and freedom from unfair discrimination for all members of the university community," and the statement goes on to define diversity in relation to the climate, seeing "an acceptance of true diversity as an affirmation of individual identity within a welcoming community." Thus, the nature of the inclusion was generally more comprehensive as opposed to listing a single word or bulleted value, as was the case in many athletic department statements.

In terms of implicit mentions, 15 institutions (or 38% of the sample) utilized this form of inclusion. Similar to athletic departments, many universities discussed equality of opportunity for students, but value was also placed on having a diversity of perspectives as well as creating an inclusive environment. In one notable example, Arizona State University (ASU) manages to express full inclusivity without listing the various ways or social identities that are often used to

measure diversity, stating their mission is "to establish ASU as the model for a New American University, measured not by who we exclude, but rather by who we include." The University of Minnesota provides another example of a statement that is comprehensive in its message even without explicitly including the term "diversity:"

> In all of its activities, the University strives to sustain an open exchange of ideas in an environment that embodies the values of academic freedom, responsibility, integrity, and cooperation; that provides an atmosphere of mutual respect, free from racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice and intolerance; that assists individuals, institutions, and communities in responding to a continuously changing world; that is conscious of and responsive to the needs of the many communities it is committed to serving.

This language provides a definition and direction for constituents for how the University envisions its ideal environment. While similar to Texas' athletic department statement which also conveyed inclusivity without explicit usage, Minnesota's statement comes less from a legal protections and deficit-minded perspective (i.e., what is not allowed), and makes it clear that integrating a value for diversity into the campus is an essential goal for the University.

In terms of addressing race, just four university statements included an explicit mention. Two institutions wrote of attracting and serving students and staff from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, thereby addressing racial diversity explicitly. And even as the University of Virginia also seeks to expand opportunities for racial/ethnic minorities, they refer to this status as a "special challenge" along with physical disability and insufficient funds, making this explicit mention of race a less than equitable addressing of the identity. Lastly, and in an alternate approach, the University of Minnesota seeks to prepare students for "active roles in a multiracial and multicultural world," referring to racial diversity in a broader sense and as external to the

university. Thus, the inclusion of race in university missions differed greatly from their athletic departments both in quantity (4 versus 15, respectively) and context.

Indirect Inclusion

An alternate way of categorizing the inclusion of diversity was indirectly, whereby the university's mission directly emphasized diversity and the athletic department said it supports the university, creating an indirect link. Given the athletic department's position as a part of the larger institution, it seems logical for there to be a connection between the two organizational mission statements; however, just 17 or 43% of the athletic department statements stated they supported their university mission. Of these 17, 12 have university missions that include diversity in some form. This is an important relationship, as for two institutions, this indirect emphasis was the only way that their athletic departments addressed diversity, highlighting the importance of the relationship between the department and its university.

Absence of Diversity

Alternatively, 8 athletic departments (or 20% of the sample) did not include diversity in any way in their mission statement, while 12 university statements (30%) also had no mention. Two institutions crossed over both groups, meaning they did not include diversity at all in either their athletic department or university mission statement (Missouri and Virginia Tech), while another institution's sole form of inclusion came from the mention of a policy in its athletic mission. For these three institutions, the almost complete absence of diversity in their official statement of principles creates a void where issues of culture and climate for diversity are not made a central concern. This void coincides with recent occurrences of explicit racism on campus, including the appearance of racist graffiti at the University of Missouri (David, 2011). By not having an explicit mention of diversity in their mission, these institutions do not have the

written commitment to fall back on and are at risk for a lack of understanding about the importance of diversity and inclusion to the campus as a whole and the athletic department in particular. While these finding support Chesler and Crowfoot's (1989) contention of interdependence, this is certainly not to say that organizations which include diversity in their mission statement are protected from racial incidents.

Connection Between Statements

Drawing on this notion of interdependence, each institution was also considered as an individual case study—looking across the athletic department and university missions to make sense of the patterns and level of cohesion between their emphases (see Appendix A for more information). Table 2.2 shows the breakdown of institutions by form of inclusion and document type, helping to illustrate the level of connection between statements.

Table 2.2

Number of Institutions Mentioning Diversity by Inclusion Form and Document Type

Documents	Diversity	Equity/Inclusion	Implicit	Policy
Athletic Department (only)	9	8	8	3
University (only)	16	6	8	1
Both Statements	7	1	7	1
Neither Statement	8	25	17	35

According to the results in Table 2.2, it is apparent that very few institutions shared similar approaches in emphasizing diversity across their athletic department and university mission statements. In fact, only seven institutions had agreement between the two statements for using the word "diversity" or for implicit inclusion, and only one institution matched for both "equity" or "inclusion" and policy forms of inclusion. This highlights a disconnect between how these organizations emphasize diversity in their official statements of purpose. While providing different interpretations of diversity may serve to reach a broader group of constituents, it may also convey conflicting messages and confuse both internal and external members.

Accessibility

During data collection, I also took note of how easily accessible statements were, using the athletic department and institutional websites to make inferences about the organizations' level of public commitment to diversity (Wilson & Meyer, 2009). Table 2.3 shows the breakdown for the four main ways that mission statements were accessed: (1) via a direct link from the home page, (2) by conducting an internal search on the website, or (3) by using the Google search engine; and for the four documents I was not able to locate through any of these methods, (4) a university or athletic department representative was contacted via email and the document was sent to me electronically.

Table 2.3.

Mission Statements by Level of Accessibility and Document Type

	Athletic Department Mission Statements		University Mission Statements	
Level of Accessibility	N	%	N	%
Direct link from home page	22	55.0	16	40.0
Internal search on website	12	30.0	16	40.0
Search engine	2	5.0	7	17.5
Not available online	4	10.0	1	2.5
Total	40	100.0	40	100.0

When combining the first two methods of access, so that all documents were located internally to the organizations' websites, the two document types had very similar rates of accessibility (85% for athletic departments and 80% for universities). Further, there was a significant amount of crossover in this accessibility, whereby institutions that made their university mission statement available on their website were also likely to make their athletic department statement available. For these 27 institutions (68% of the sample), making their mission statements accessible appears to be part of a broader institutional effort to share their purposes and goals with the public. Relating accessibility to form of inclusion, those that made

their statements available via a direct link were far more likely to include diversity in an explicit way—of the 22 athletic department statements, 60% were coded as explicit and of the 16 university statements, 75% were coded as explicit. Thus, a more open access philosophy for institutional documents seems related to a more open treatment of diversity in the mission statement (Wilson & Meyer, 2009).

Discussion

An examination of athletic department and university mission statements, using content analysis, offers insight into what these organizations value most (Boerema, 2006). Accordingly, the content tended to reflect the traditional view of both athletic departments' and universities' purposes (Wilson et al., 2012). For athletic departments this included working to help student-athletes excel both academically and athletically while competing on a national level (Meyer, 2008; Ward & Hux, 2011). For the universities, the emphasis was on the traditional pillars of education, research and service, and working to serve their local community (Morphew & Hartley, 2006). The focus of this study, however, was on if and how these statements emphasized diversity, with particular attention to racial diversity. The findings illustrate the majority of mission statements included diversity in some form but the nature and extent of that inclusion varied greatly in its explicitness and clarity, altering the effectiveness of the messages conveyed (Austin, 1994; Meyer, 2008).

For the two institutions which did not include diversity in either statement, this complete absence may affect other elements in the organization and allow Katz's (1978) "web" of discrimination to take hold. In light of the recent instances of overt racism occurring at campuses across the country (David, 2011; Valencia & Baldacci, 2014), institutions must assess how they are addressing the climate for diversity throughout all of their organizational elements (Chesler

& Crowfoot, 1989). A critical first step is to ensure the inclusion of diversity in the mission statement and for senior leadership to issue statements of support (Chang, 2002); however, beyond mere inclusion, the nature of how diversity is written about may be telling of the true value placed on it. As such, statements that only address diversity through policy appear to be meeting legal obligations, and those that simply list the word “diversity” as a value do not make it clear how this concept is being defined or integrated into the workings of the organization. This cursory treatment or ambiguous commitment to the concept does not give constituents a clear set of values or direction to act upon in order to create a positive culture and climate for all (Williams et al., 2005).

On the other hand, documents that expound upon the environment organizations seek to create within the principles of equity and inclusion, or discuss the importance of considering diversity on all levels (i.e., student, staff, faculty) and in all facets (e.g., recruitment, retention, success) convey a more comprehensive approach. As universities and athletic departments seek to reach prospective and current students, their families, as well as current faculty and staff, having a clear set of well-written values may offer the organizations’ audiences evidence for how these values are carried over into daily practice. Accordingly, even though explicit diversity was given a higher place in the taxonomy of inclusion, findings from this study show that there is a difference between an explicit inclusion of the term and explicitly committing to diversity in concept and climate (Williams et al., 2005). Indeed, the findings illustrate that implicit inclusions can be just as, if not more, descriptive, showing that a clear inclusion can be accomplished in more than one way; thereby refining Chesler and Crowfoot’s (1989) assertion that there must be explicit attention to racial equity in the mission.

This study also highlighted the importance of cohesion between departmental and institutional statements, underlining the notion of interdependence on an organizational level (Terry, 1981). When the two missions support one another it bolsters the organizational support for valuing diversity and presents a united front to the public. One such example was the University of Georgia whose athletic mission statement conveyed that providing equal opportunities for students and staff not only serves to "enliven and enrich" the community, but also "reinforces the university's commitment to diversity." On the other hand, when the two missions lack cohesion, it signals a disconnect between department and institution and sends conflicting messages to constituents (Austin, 1994). For institutions that had only one statement emphasizing diversity, campus leaders must decide if diversity is a value to be espoused by all campus units, and for those that included diversity in different ways in their university and department statements, leaders should examine whether the variance in emphasis benefits their constituents by providing different interpretations—ensuring that if a disconnect exists, it is intentional and beneficial for all.

This study added to the literature on how athletic departments and universities address diversity in their mission statements and the level of cohesion between messages. By continuing a line of research on diversity work by athletic departments (Singer & Cunningham, 2012), the import of emphasizing diversity in written statements (Chang, 2002; Wilson et al., 2012), and using content analysis as a method for examining language (Neuendorf, 2002), the findings from this study added nuance to these fields.

Implications for Practice

This study calls attention to athletic department and university mission statements and what they communicate about the organization's core values. Given the visibility and strength of

the message conveyed, athletic departments should examine their official documents to evaluate what is being said and how those written statements translate into daily practice, supporting the call by Wilson and colleagues (2012). Consideration should also be given to how easily accessible the statements are and what measures of accountability are incorporated as it is critical for diversity policies to include statements of support but also verbiage regarding purpose and action (Chang, 2002).

Even as written statements regarding diversity are a critical first step for institutions, they remain insufficient for achieving lasting change. To truly make excellence inclusive, Williams et al. (2005) argue that institutions must align structures, resources, symbols, and cultures throughout the entire organizational framework. This starts with the recognition that diversity cannot be thought of solely in terms of access and numbers, but must be considered through a more holistic view (Chang, 2002). To move past one-time statements of support that focus on compositional diversity, institutions must foster active engagement across difference, through sustained and coordinated efforts, in order to reap the benefits of diversity (Gurin et al., 2002; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005); furthermore, these efforts must be thought of on both an institutional and departmental level and for both students and staff (Hurtado, 2007).

In light of these calls to action, and considering athletic departments are governed by the rules and regulations of the NCAA, this organization's power should be leveraged to enact change. One such way would be through the currently suspended NCAA Certification process. To receive certification, athletic departments were required to complete a self-study and prepare a comprehensive report covering issues such as academic outcomes and Title IX compliance as well as "minority issues" every 10 years (NCAA, 2011a). While the process was suspended in light of the considerable time and cost required for completion, the NCAA should reinstitute the

Certification guidelines paying specific attention to how departments address diversity, equity, and inclusion. This may include ensuring departments explicitly address diversity in their written policies and statements and that these commitments are publically available and easily accessed. Departments should also be required to show efforts to provide comprehensive resources and programming for both staff and student-athletes, attending to issues of race and ethnicity as well as other social identities. Given the NCAA's stated commitment to diversity (NCAA, 2011b), member organizations should be required to attend to issues of diversity culture and climate and held accountable for their actions.

The process for enacting change at the departmental level may start with the formation of a diversity committee or taskforce. A first step for the committee would be to evaluate if and how diversity is addressed in the departmental mission statement and other policies and how this aligns with the university mission. An important next step would be to survey both student-athletes and staff about their perceptions of the climate for diversity within their team structure and in the department, in acknowledgement of the variation of member experiences (Cunningham et al., 2006). Work should also be done to determine what efforts are being made to address diversity and inclusion in practice, and assess their effectiveness. And even though the focus of this study was on race/ethnicity, the broader climate for diversity should be considered (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999). To reflect this, committees should have a diverse representation of constituents by position (e.g., student-athletes, coaches, staff), seniority (e.g., time in department and staff level), and by various social identities (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, age). Lastly, it is critical for this committee to have the support of senior staff and athletics and campus leadership to ensure the committee is not just symbolic but is empowered to enact real change.

Future Research

As this was an exploratory study that sought to determine if and how select athletic departments are emphasizing diversity, recommendations for future research are provided. First, the sample only included large public institutions, and a content analysis of missions at private and smaller schools would increase our understanding of the field of DI FBS institutions. Second, even though this study added to Chesler and Crowfoot's (1989) organizational framework by adapting it to consider diversity in a broader sense, beyond just racial equity, future work could continue to explore this application as well as other specific social identities. The current study also applied the framework to an analysis of mission statements, however Chesler and Crowfoot (1989) identified five organizational elements and these other areas (e.g., resources, power, culture) should be examined to better address notions of interconnectedness. Finally, this study was not able to measure actual action; future studies should look into if and how departments are actually addressing diversity in daily practice. To gain a greater depth of understanding of each institution, strategic planning documents that establish goals, accountable individuals, and timelines for work related to campus diversity should be considered, with NCAA certification documents providing one possible avenue for future research.

Even though this study was a preliminary look into if and how athletic departments emphasize diversity in their mission statements, the findings offer a taxonomy for form of inclusion that can be applied in future work, and also provide an analysis of how organizations are emphasizing diversity in their official written documents. In conclusion, by examining the organization's official statement of purpose, one can get a sense for how these institutions view diversity, and the extent to which it is an integral part of their mission and daily conduct.

CHAPTER 3

SENDING MESSAGES: ATHLETIC DEPARTMENTS' DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Given changing national demographics, legal mandates, and social pressures, both the workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012) and the college-going population (Pryor, Hurtado, Saenz, Santos & Korn, 2008) have become increasingly heterogeneous. These two trends converge on college and university campuses nationwide with one department in particular—intercollegiate athletics—showcasing this diversity in highly visible ways. Indeed, a visual review of many team rosters and departmental employee directories highlights that college sport is diverse—at least racially. While diversity in organizations has the potential for great benefits including increased creativity and innovation, it has also been shown to create interpersonal conflict (Cox, 1991), leading diversity to be identified as one of the greatest issues facing sport organizations today (Cunningham & Fink, 2006).

Moving beyond a cursory acceptance of diversity, given inevitable demographic trends, organizations have begun to embrace diversity for its potential competitive advantages—a perspective often referred to as "value in diversity" (Cox, Loebel, & McLeod, 1991). This viewpoint is grounded in research that diversity leads to better utilization of talent and more creativity within groups (Robinson & Dechant, 1997), increases employee satisfaction and retention (Joplin & Daus, 1997), and results in higher organizational productivity (Johnson, 1992; Thomas, 1992). Conversely, empirical research has also found that diversity can have negative outcomes, particularly when left unmanaged or managed poorly. For example, diversity

in work groups can cause a decrease in organizational commitment (Fagenson, 1993), low cohesion between groups, communication breakdowns, and higher turnover (Milliken & Martins, 1996). Given these conflicting results, (see Williams & O'Reilly, 1998), certain situations or conditions within the organization may moderate outcomes. One such condition may be the organization's outlook on and treatment of diversity, referred to in the business literature as diversity management.

Diversity management is a comprehensive managerial process that includes written documents, trainings, staff positions, and ongoing programs (Thomas, 1992). The effectiveness of the management is derived both explicitly through formal means (e.g., official policies) and implicitly through everyday activities (e.g., staff interactions); the congruency of these messages provides an important insight into the organization’s true outlook on diversity and shapes members' experiences (Rothenbuhler, 2006). In light of the increasing professionalization of college sports and the departments' high visibility on campus, this study explores if and how select Division I (DI) athletic departments address diversity through their mission statements and policies, what actions they take through staffing and programming, and how these messages fit together. While diversity may refer to many dimensions of identity, this study will focus on racial diversity allowing for a more concentrated analysis and for comparison to demographic data as race is one of the few identities collected on a national scale. This focus fits given the continued primacy of race in sport (Long, Robinson, & Spracklen, 2005), and because that is often how the term diversity is defined in contemporary workplaces and institutions of higher education (Unzueta & Binning, 2010).

As the student population on college campuses has diversified, and athletic departments work to maintain a competitive edge, athletic administrators must understand how to best address

and manage diversity. Effective diversity management has been shown to help in recruiting and retaining talent, to save costs, and ultimately to foster business growth (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). While there is a growing body of work on diversity in sport organizations (e.g., Cunningham, 2008, 2009; Fink, Pastore, & Riemer, 2003) few studies have focused on athletic departments' specific actions surrounding diversity; this study will begin to address this gap in the literature. Findings will shed light on what departmental documents reveal about diversity, how departments touch on diversity through daily actions, and identify patterns of disconnect, thereby providing athletics practitioners and stakeholders with important information on how certain departments are managing diversity.

Literature Review

The literature review begins with a contextual overview of Division I intercollegiate athletics, racial diversity at both the student-athlete and staff level, and the experiences of organizational members of color. The concept of diversity management is then defined and applied to athletics organizations, a key piece of which is clearly and publicly expressing a commitment to diversity. This commitment is considered in both written form and action, and the possibility for disconnects between messages are highlighted. Finally, the theoretical lens of institutionalism is outlined, offering a framework for examining and making sense of the congruency between the espoused and enacted commitments of athletic departments around diversity.

Diversity in Intercollegiate Athletics

Since the inception of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in 1906, the landscape of college sport has changed immensely. Currently, intercollegiate athletics is a multibillion dollar business, where many Division I (DI) athletic departments more closely

resemble multinational corporations than the nonprofit institutions which house them. This is particularly true for members of the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS)—the highest level of competition in college football. FBS schools have the largest athletic departments in the nation, with some supporting more than 900 student-athletes, 250 full-time staff, and annual budgets of over $100 million. As a result of this growth, coupled with changing demographic trends, legal mandates, and various social pressures, those participating in and administering college sports have grown increasingly diverse. Indeed, in DI college football and men's basketball, the two most visible sports, the student-athletes are 57% and 70% students of color, respectively. And even as the top of the organizational chart has seen more minimal change, people of color make up 25% of assistant coaches, 14% of head coaches, and 15% of all athletic staff nationwide (Lapchick, Agusta, Kinkopf, & McPhee, 2013).

The increasing number of racial minorities throughout college sport is notable; however, diversity goes beyond numbers to additionally encompass the surrounding culture (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999). One way of gauging the diversity culture of an organization is to examine the experiences of individuals who differ from the majority. From this, it is clear that college sport must attend to the needs of its increasingly diverse membership. Studies show that student-athletes of color report feeling "used" for their athleticism while their academic interests often go unsupported (Beamon, 2008), and they face stereotyping and discrimination by both faculty and peers (Oseguera, 2010; Sailes, 1993). Coaches of color tend to be concentrated in certain sports and in certain roles, namely that of recruiting (Brown, 2002), and report feeling tokenized and discriminated against based on their race (Cunningham, Bruening, & Straub, 2006). In light of athletic departments' increasingly complex structures, the racial and ethnic diversity present at both the student-athlete and staff level, and the negative

experiences reported by some members, the effective management of diversity has become more important than ever for athletic organizations and college administrators.

Diversity Management

Diversity management can be defined as a voluntary program designed to integrate all organizational members into formal company programs and informal social networks (Gilbert, Stead, & Ivancevich, 1999). Researchers have conceptualized this process as a continuum, where organizations can move from intolerance to appreciation (Joplin & Daus, 1997), assimilation to integration (Thomas, 1992), or from being monolithic to multicultural (Cox, 1991). Ultimately, having a proactive diversity strategy means that organizations are likely to value diversity and incorporate diversity initiatives into their mission statement, policies, procedures and practices (Allen & Montgomery, 2001; Thomas, 1992), and have diverse individuals holding key power and decision-making positions (Cox, 1991; Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999; Ely & Thomas, 2001). In work on sport organizations, trademarks of inclusive environments include adoption of a broad view of diversity, comprehensive approaches to developing a diverse workforce, maintenance of a flexible organizational structure and open lines of communication (Cunningham, 2009; Fink & Pastore, 1999).

Expressing a Commitment

In order to assess the extent to which departments are acknowledging diversity's role in their organization and addressing it, one must examine their policies and procedures. The mission statement reflects an organization's aims, values, and priorities (Boerema, 2006). For athletic departments this includes the development of student-athletes and athletic achievement, but also the need to produce revenue and provide entertainment (J. Meyer, 2008). The mission is also a primary place for organizations to state their commitment to diversity (Wilson, K. Meyer & McNeal, 2012), especially as incorporating diversity is an important first step in effective

management strategies. Even so, written statements are just one way that organizations can signal a commitment to diversity and if this commitment is not integrated into the fabric of the organization's daily operations, that statement may remain largely symbolic.

To measure the level of integration or congruency between messages, it is necessary to examine what athletic departments are doing to address issues of racial and ethnic diversity. A primary way of doing this is through a review of their certification documents and websites. In an effort to ensure a standard level of service, the NCAA created a certification process similar to the academic accreditation process assessed to the entire institution (a process that does not generally include non-academic departments such as athletics). NCAA certification was instituted as a way of assuring institutional accountability, requiring departments to conduct a comprehensive self-study and develop a plan for making and maintaining progress in certain areas including that of “minority issues” (NCAA, 2011). In this section, departments are asked to outline the services and programs they offer which address the needs of their student-athletes and staff of color including, but not limited to, partnerships with cultural centers on campus or diversity trainings. Given the need for NCAA approval, these documents provide the most detailed accounting of each department’s resources and programming related to diversity. The departmental website also provides information on the accessibility of diversity statements or programs and how departments plan to address areas critical to the climate for diversity and inclusion (Wilson & K. Meyer, 2009).

Possible Disconnects

To truly integrate diversity into the organizational structure, Williams, Berger, and McClendon (2005) argue that institutions must align structures, resources, symbols, and cultures throughout the entire organization. When there is a lack of fit between message and intent,

organizational members may take note. Indeed, in a study of campus climate Harper and Hurtado (2007) found that students were aware of the incongruence between espoused and enacted institutional values around diversity. Many students of color noted that the campus was quick to invoke the word diversity and yet little was done to affect daily interactions, with students remarking they continued to experience discrimination. Thus, as long as administrators espouse commitments to diversity without engaging it in practice and enacting a deeper transformation, students and staff of color may continue to feel dissatisfied (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). A disconnect between stated and actual commitments has also been studied in athletic departments as Andrassy and Bruening (2011) found evidence of a disparity in relation to departments' commitment to community service. The authors concluded that the rhetoric around community service in mission statements was far stronger than what occurred in reality as noted on departmental websites (Andrassy & Bruening, 2011); however, it remains to be determined whether a similar finding will emerge in athletics with regards to diversity.

Theoretical Framework

Mission statements represent one of the most visible ways for schools to express their support of diversity to students, faculty, staff, and the external community. This formal show of support may be translated into curricular or co-curricular activities (Hurtado, et al., 1999), allowing members to engage with diversity in their daily lives. However, whether or not this translation from written rhetoric to institutional practices occurs is based on many complex organizational factors (Weick, 1976). Accordingly, commitment at one level (e.g., representational diversity of students) may not translate to another (e.g., large scale transformation; Smith, 1995). In organizational behavior, this lack of translation can be viewed through the lens of institutionalism (Powell & Dimaggio, 1991). This view rationalizes that

organizations may enact a view institutionalized in society (e.g., supporting diversity) in order to maintain legitimacy, but that these statements may operate only as myths. Indeed, when these views require some level of transformation, institutionalism dictates that the views may not be fully adopted and that preexisting “institutionalized arrangements are reproduced because individuals often cannot even conceive of appropriate alternatives” (Powell & Dimaggio 1991, p. 11). Simply put—organizations stay the same because it is easy to do (or conversely, the status quo is maintained because change or transformation is difficult).

The theoretical lens of institutionalism seems particularly fitting for examining how organizations address diversity, a concept that is often given verbal or written support but requires a much deeper commitment to enact widespread change. The theory has been applied to fit between organizational context and action (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996), and broadly to the field of higher education (H. Meyer & Rowan, 2006), but not to institutions’ treatment of diversity. Thus, the theory is used in this study to make sense of how athletic departments may articulate formal views regarding diversity that are not supported by their daily actions; or as conceptualized by Weick (1976), where institutional rhetoric and missions that focus on diversity may be loosely coupled with actual actions and behaviors.

Methods

In applying the theoretical lens of institutionalism to an examination of department’s espoused and enacted commitments to diversity, the research questions guiding this study were: (1) What messages are athletic departments conveying about diversity through their mission statements, written documents, and websites? (2) What actions are athletic departments taking to address diversity? (3) Are the messages, policies, language, and programs consistent across institutions? Are there differences by geographic region, institution type or athletic budget? To interpret how athletic departments address diversity, this study employed a discourse analysis of

athletic department and university mission statements, NCAA certification documents, articles, departmental websites, and written perspectives from select staff members.

Discourse analysis is a systematic inquiry aimed at description, interpretation, and explanation of the language in use, and is an appropriate methodology for exploratory research as a means to describe and interpret textual representations (Fairclough, 2001). In this study, discourse analysis was employed to understand what messages athletics departments are communicating about diversity and how these both shape and are affected by the organizational culture. The language in the texts and on the websites was analyzed with the aim of identifying discourses around diversity, equity, inclusion, and acceptance. Other studies comparing textual artifacts (e.g., Richardson, 2007) and examining policies and websites (e.g., Tamatea, Hardy, & Pinnes, 2008) have used this method, providing a valid way to examine the extent to which these organizations place an emphasis on diversity and the level of congruency between forms of written communication.

Sample

As the highest level of competition in college athletics, NCAA DI is the level most commonly represented in the media and in scholarly research. While these schools have a shared athletic mission in terms of providing entertainment and gaining national prominence (Siegel, 2001), the 125 FBS members are spread throughout the country and represent a variety of institutional type, selectivity, and amount of resources (financial and otherwise). Even as athletic conference remains an important division for intercollegiate athletics, recent realignment has shifted the unifying regional identities of these groups (Masiel, 2011). Thus, geographic region, a factor shown to affect openness to difference (Florida, 2002), was selected as an initial categorization to ensure geographic representation.

Four regions were identified (West, Central, Southeast, and Northeast) and purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) was utilized to identify institutions at the high ($75 million average) and low ($23 million average) ends of athletics budgets (Equity in Athletics, 2012). This budget breakdown was chosen as a way of classifying institutions given the wide range of expenses within DI FBS departments (from a high of $145 million to a low of $18 million), and because being in the high category roughly represents membership in one of the big five conferences (ACC, Big 12, Big Ten, Pac-12, SEC). As part of a larger project, institutions were also asked to distribute a survey regarding staff member's understanding of diversity to all department staff and only schools that participated in both stages of the project were included in this study, with a sample goal of eight institutions. Only one school from the Southeast provided their documents so the regions were collapsed (see Table 3.1). While small, the sample size allows for a close analysis of the data and fits the exploratory nature of the study (Pitts, 2004).

Table 3.1

Participating Institutions

Region	Budget	Institution	Athletic Conference
West	High	University of Colorado	Pac-12
	High	University of Oregon	Pac-12
Central	High	University of Iowa	Big Ten
	High	University of Nebraska	Big Ten
	Low	University of Houston	American
East	High	University of West Virginia	Big 12
	Low	Ball State University	Mid-American (MAC)
	Low	Eastern Michigan University	Mid-American (MAC)

Note: Institutions will hereafter be referred to without the usage of "University"

Data Collection

Athletic department and university mission statements and NCAA certification documents were collected throughout the fall of 2013. These documents were either downloaded from the department's website or, if not publically available, requested from a department

representative via email. The majority of campuses readily supplied all documents, however, a few declined to participate and were removed from the sample, with no discernible trend in those who declined. Given the 10-year cycle for certification, these documents ranged from 2005-2011 and reflect the department's efforts at that time. To understand athletic departments' actions around diversity, each department's website was reviewed. Athletic department websites are one of the main ways departments communicate with both internal members and the public, making site content a primary forum for expressing commitments. To include both current (i.e., content displayed on the website at the time of data collection) and archival (i.e., content accessed through an internal search) content, the term "diversity" was searched for and all relevant results from the last 10 years examined, including materials regarding diversity initiatives, staff positions, and committees. This website analysis was completed in the spring of 2014 and reflects the online content at that time. Finally, as part of the survey from the larger project, staff members were invited to answer questions about their department's diversity efforts and to share their perspectives on the topic. These responses were downloaded from Qualtrics, and all data were converted to Word documents and uploaded into the qualitative analysis program Dedoose.

Analysis

Discourse analysis relies on description, interpretation, and explanation of language to reveal connections between text, as well as links to organizational and institutional matters (Fairclough, 1993; 2001). By considering the larger context, discourse analysis is also concerned with what is not said. Thus, I began data analysis with initial codes drawn from the literature while also taking note of their absence. I further remained open to emergent codes, creating an inductive and deductive analysis process (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Each form of document was read through multiple times, first to consider the text in full then annotated and

coded with each subsequent reading. Texts were also examined by document type as well as institution to assess and account for both textual and organizational differences. Codes were generated and refined throughout data analysis, continuing in an iterative process until it was determined to capture all of the ways departments did (or did not) address diversity.

Moving beyond an objective notation of whether or not the term "diversity" is included, my analysis sought to understand *how* diversity is discussed. This included the brevity or descriptiveness of the inclusion as well as the tone of the writing. In order to do so, I noted if a specific group of constituents or demographic identity was included, legal mandate or policy named, or if the broader environment or climate was addressed. To examine the actions being taken by the department I categorized types of programming and staff positions, then considered the level of detail in the description and the ease of accessibility of each posting on the website. The contexts of these inclusions were compared and a level of fit determined between espoused and enacted commitments across departments. Once all coding was completed, an outside reviewer with knowledge of intercollegiate athletics checked 10% of the codes, and our independent analysis generated a Kappa statistic of 85%, surpassing the accepted threshold for reliability (Neuendorf, 2002).

Positionality

At its core, discourse analysis is subjective interpretation and what makes meaning to one researcher may not register for another based on their interpretive lens. Thus, it is essential to reflect on positionality (Gergen, 2000), disclose personal assumptions and biases (Creswell, 2003), and be explicit about perspective and position (Finlay, 2002). I have worked in DI intercollegiate athletics for nine years and as a woman of color, have often felt as though I am "the only one" in many athletics spaces based on my gender and/or race. Through my own

experiences and the anecdotes shared by both student-athletes and staff, I have noticed varying levels of commitment to diversity by athletic departments with marked differences by geographic region and to some extent budget and size. And as a staff member within a large organization I have noticed the disconnect between written statements of value and daily practice. Certainly my experiences incited my interest in this topic and informed my thematic analysis, but I drew from the extant literature and theoretical framework to conduct my discourse analysis and help interpret the meaning of excerpts to bolster trustworthiness and reliability.

Limitations

Organizations may emphasize diversity through means other than written documents and day-to-day actions may confirm or refute messages supplied in official statements (Wilson et al., 2012). Therefore, it is difficult to fully evaluate the athletic departments' actual emphasis on diversity. While I tried to account for some of this by including certification documents in the study, they are written to meet the criteria and gain approval of a professional organization and are not an objective record of departments' programmatic emphasis on diversity. As such, the method of discourse analysis was chosen because it accounted for embedded bias and the fact that departments wrote these documents with a specific audience in mind. Even so, results cannot be seen as a definitive conclusion on an athletic department's commitment to diversity. An in-depth case study of each department would provide better insight into their daily actions and the experiences of staff members around diversity. Finally, the sample is small and findings cannot likely be generalized outside of institutions similar to those included in the study.

Findings

The research objectives of the study were to understand how select DI FBS athletic departments emphasize diversity in their written statements and how those messages fit with

their reported actions. All documents were examined for inclusion of the term “diversity,” but were also analyzed for descriptiveness and tone. Initial codes included using the word as merely the term (e.g., “we value diversity”), as a descriptor (e.g., “diverse communities”), implicitly (e.g., “equity”), or in a more elaborate or descriptive manner (referring to culture, climate, etc.). The language around diversity was then considered within document type, institution, region, budget level, and staff and student demographics. This section includes descriptive findings from each document type, organized into department’s espoused and enacted commitments, after which each institution is considered as an individual case study to gauge the level of connection between messages.

Espoused Commitment

Mission statements. Three athletic department mission statements included diversity explicitly, one did so implicitly, and four did not include the term at all. Of the four that lacked inclusion, three are in the Central region. For those statements that did include the term, two spoke of embracing or demonstrating a respect for “equity and diversity” (Colorado, Oregon)—a common phrasing—with both of these schools coming from the West. In the most descriptive statement of all, Ball State's athletic department seeks to “support differences in our department...through what we say and what we do,” thereby making them the only department to address both language and action. All inclusions of the term were in sentence format, referred to all department members (student-athletes and staff), and were readily available as a direct link on their respective departmental websites. However, the fact that four athletic departments neglect to include the term in their mission at all is of note.

For university mission statements, one was not publically available, while the remaining seven all included the term “diversity” with the inclusion varying greatly in content and focus.

Five universities used “diversity” as a descriptor—e.g., “diverse population of students” (Houston) or “diverse world” (Ball State), while five referenced diversity conceptually—e.g., “model a culture of diversity and inclusion” (West Virginia). Oregon had the most descriptive statement, mentioning diversity in multiple forms, and was also the only institution to reference the concept of identity—defining their goal of inclusion to be “acceptance of true diversity as an affirmation of individual identity.” As in this instance, when institutions used more elaborative statements, it was easier to understand and envision their goals and the processes used to attain them. Finally, looking across universities, there were no discernible trends in rhetoric by region, budget, or racial demographics of staff or students.

Websites. As a forum with constantly changing content, each website's archives were searched by entering the term “diversity” in the search bar. All relevant results from the last ten years were collected and considered, including five strategic plans, an institution-wide non-discrimination statement (Iowa), as well as articles about the department being recognized for its diversity efforts (Colorado), for having a female Athletic Director (Eastern Michigan), and the hiring of a new Associate Athletic Director to oversee diversity initiatives (Nebraska). Two of the strategic plans were specific to the athletic department, outlining multi-year goals and including a restatement of the mission. For Ball State, this restatement of the mission, which includes the term “diversity,” was the sole inclusion of the term. Colorado's plan stated a desire to serve individuals from “diverse communities,” an inclusion independent from the mission, and one that used the term as a descriptor. Alternatively, Iowa's strategic plan explicitly included diversity as a point of emphasis along with a number of descriptive statements and West Virginia's plan specifically addressed social justice, moving beyond a cursory mention of diversity. Perhaps most interestingly, three department websites (Ball State, Oregon, and West

Virginia) had no results from searching the term "diversity," with no regional (one from each) or budgetary (two high, one low) trends. Again, this absence was noted and is important to consider given the sheer volume of data on websites, the frequency with which they are updated, and that official departmental websites are used to develop and signal a distinctive brand identity (Saichaie, 2011)—one that apparently may not include diversity (Wilson & K. Meyer, 2009).

In examining these written messages about the goals or purposes of the organization as well as documents procured from their website, it became clear that some departments were far more successful in expressing a commitment to diversity than others. When departments or universities simply listed the term, or used it merely as a descriptor, how they defined the concept, planned to achieve a respect for diversity, or create an inclusive culture was not made clear. Alternatively, schools that took time to clearly outline goals or attach processes to outcomes, and made these statements easily accessible, appeared to prioritize diversity and see it as integral to the functioning of the organization.

Enacted Commitment

Certification documents. The certification process requires departments to report on various aspects of their organization including gender and racial equity, student-athlete welfare, and academics. The focus of this study was on the "minority issues" section, the very title of which seems outdated and unclear (Texeira, 2005), presumed to refer to racial minorities. Inclusion of the word "diversity" ranged from a low count of 3 (Nebraska) to a high of 29 (West Virginia) in reports, and documents ranged in level of description and detail—some were very direct and terse (Nebraska) and others more elaborate (Eastern Michigan). While these are required documents with mandatory points to cover, the writing varied greatly in both quantity

and quality, and the studies' attention to detail implied departments' level of commitment to diversity and the importance they placed on communicating this to the NCAA.

Four schools mentioned diversity training in documents, however, the scope and frequency ranged significantly. Houston reported they had wanted to offer a training for staff and had also wanted to send senior administrators to a regional workshop for training but admitted neither had occurred, citing a lack of funds. Ball State held a one-time mandatory training workshop and cited the availability of university-wide training, while Eastern Michigan mandates professional development in diversity issues every other year and held NCAA Diversity workshops for all athletic staff twice in the past seven years.

All certification documents referenced various campus offices and events that address issues of diversity, but again, the way these were described signaled variation in the commitment to the topic. Some documents merely listed general campus efforts and initiatives while others talked about opportunities to collaborate and drive the conversation. As an example of the former, Nebraska states that student-athletes are involved on campus outside of sports, as if to suggest there is little need for athletic department-specific programming (about diversity or otherwise) because the student-athletes are accessing it elsewhere. Alternatively, Colorado outlined their Diversity Subcommittee that has the goal of incorporating diversity throughout departmental practices and Houston detailed their mentoring program for student-athletes of color. By examining these reports, which supposedly detail all efforts made in the area of "minority issues," it becomes clear that not only is it important to consider what departments say they are offering in terms of training and events, but also how they write about it. Indeed, the language around action and effort in certification reports is just as telling, if not more so, than the organization's stated mission. Even as the mission is the official statement of goals or guiding

principles, the certification document is a written record of what departments purport to do in support of diversity—writing that seems more reflective of the day to day.

Demographics. As a further sign of action, data on the racial/ethnic breakdown of athletic department staff, student-athletes, and the general student body were examined and considered within each institutional context. Staff and student-athlete data were taken from the certification documents and reflect the populations at the time the report was submitted (ranging from 2005-2011). All departments were over 80% white at the staff level, ranging from a low of 81% (Colorado and Eastern Michigan) to a high of 89% (Nebraska and Oregon)—numbers that are high but not necessarily surprising given national statistics (e.g., 86% of all DI coaches are white; Lapchick et al., 2013). Non-white staff were predominantly Black, ranging from 6% (Oregon) to 19% (Eastern Michigan), while few (4% or less at each school) identified as Asian, Hispanic, Native American, or "Other."

Student-athletes were also predominantly white at all institutions in the sample, but there was a far greater range than at the staff level. The student-athlete population at Eastern Michigan was just 58% white—a sample low—a number possibly explained by the smaller size of the department and the fact that it supports fewer non-revenue sports (sports that are traditionally predominantly white). Alternatively, Iowa's student-athlete population was 83% white—the sample high—and perhaps, as noted by the department, a result of recruiting within geographic limitations given the state's small non-white population. Interestingly, the schools with the three highest white student-athlete populations (Iowa, Nebraska, and Ball State) also had the three lowest numbers of diversity codes in their certification documents (8, 3, and 5 respectively), perhaps indicative of attempts, whether explicitly or implicitly, to downplay diversity.

As with staff, the distribution within the non-white racial/ethnic groups was also noted, as at some institutions the athletes of color were completely represented by Black students while at others they were more representative of all racial categories (Oregon had a high of 6% Asian student-athletes). Connecting student-athlete representation to that of staff is important as student-athletes spend a significant amount of time in athletics spaces interacting with athletics staff (Bell, 2009), and research shows that the presence of same-race individuals in positions of authority impacts student-athletes' self-concept and career trajectories (Cunningham, 2003). However, it is difficult to draw conclusions based on these demographics because athletic staff are not disaggregated by position or departmental area.

Another comparison of note was the percentage of Black student-athletes and Black members of the general student body (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

Difference Between Percentage of Black Student-Athletes and Students

Institution	Black Student-Athletes	Black Students	Difference
University of Houston	33	10	23
University of West Virginia	26	3	23
University of Colorado	21	2	19
University of Oregon	19	2	17
University of Nebraska	17	2	15
Ball State University	20	6	14
University of Iowa	15	3	12
Eastern Michigan University	26	19	7

For some institutions the difference was rather striking, such as at West Virginia where 26% of student-athletes were Black while just 3% of students were, and Colorado where the difference was 19% in favor of student-athletes (21% vs. 2%). This disparity may shape the experiences of both student-athletes and students, especially as it relates to notions of departmental and

institutional commitments to diversity, and is something athletic and university administrators should take into consideration.

Staff Perceptions

As part of a larger study, staff members from each athletic department were invited to participate in an online survey about diversity. The survey collected participants' demographics, asked them to identify which identities were most salient to their understanding of diversity, and rate diversity's importance to their department; a final open-ended item allowed participants to submit any concluding thoughts on the topic. This item generated 33 qualitative responses, predominantly from white participants, which were uploaded to Dedoose and subjected to an open coding scheme. While the subject of responses was varied, including feedback on the survey, personal feelings about diversity, and defining the term, one third of responses expressed strong feelings about considering diversity in hiring and promotion—a topic not surprising given the target population of full-time staff members, many of whom have hiring and supervising responsibilities in their department. The prevailing theme of these responses was one of support for diversity as long as it did not translate into preferential hiring or promotion, a finding that echoes previous research on white staff members' beliefs about affirmative action, a policy that is often incorrectly conflated with quotas (Unzueta, Lowery, & Knowles, 2008).

(Dis)Connects

To determine a level of fit between a department's espoused and enacted messages around diversity, each school was considered as an individual case. From this, it became clear that some departments were more effective in communicating a commitment and following through with action. Consistent with previous literature in which diversity management is conceptualized as a process or continuum (Cox, 1991; Thomas, 1992), each institution was rated

as having low or high clarity in their espoused and enacted commitment and categorized accordingly (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3

Departments by Level of Clarity in Espoused and Enacted Commitments

		Enacted Commitment	
		LOW (lack of follow-through)	HIGH (clear actions taken)
Espoused Commitment	LOW (diversity addressed in cursory manner or not at all)	○ Houston ○ Iowa ○ Nebraska	
	HIGH (concept defined, goals clearly outlined)	○ Ball State ○ Colorado ○ Oregon	○ Eastern Michigan ○ West Virginia

Low Espoused/Low Enacted. Nebraska and Houston had the least expressive commitments to diversity with no mention in their athletic department missions, a single inclusion as a descriptor in the university missions, and certification documents that read as compulsory and disengaged. It should be noted that Nebraska's report is from 2005, in which they acknowledged some shortcomings and, since then, the department has added a position to oversee diversity initiatives. Houston's certification document comes across as disengaged while also exposing disconnects. As an example, they state a primary goal is to maintain a diverse coaching and administrative staff, but then list the corresponding action item as reporting of data on staff by race/ethnicity—data may show the numbers but does nothing to outline how the department plans to recruit and maintain said staff. Houston also lists the action item of creating a committee to address "minority" opportunities but soon after state that opportunities have not been an issue which seems contradictory. The department should reassess their stated goals and corresponding actions as there seems to be a missed opportunity to get ahead of issues and build on forward momentum rather than waiting for a problem to arise. While Houston is perceived as having a cursory treatment of diversity, they also show awareness of their shortcomings and state

their intent to alter the department mission to include diversity, to offer training, and to hire more staff of color as ways of improving their commitment to diversity; and yet, their report is from 2006 and it seems few of these changes have been implemented.

Iowa was a unique case as they did not have a clear written commitment to diversity, nor did they have a high level of action, but there was a great awareness and ownership of shortcomings and a desire to address the issues. This almost led to them being classified as having a high level of enacted commitment, however, there was insufficient evidence of departmental action around diversity. Even so, the department seemed to use the self-study and certification process as a way to identify deficiencies and outline appropriate remedies. As an example, student-athletes were surveyed and they shared that diversity programming seems to be targeted specifically towards African American students, and often from a male perspective, to which the department responded with a plan to consider diversity more broadly in policy and practice. The department also acknowledged that the responsibility for addressing minority student-athletes issues resides with a single staff member, yet they have an Equity Subcommittee that is underutilized and could take on more tasks. Thus, while lacking a mention of diversity in the mission and having noted deficiencies in the certification document, the university and department seem to take a thoughtful approach to diversity and must be held accountable to follow through.

High Espoused/Low Enacted. The three schools in this category had clear written commitments but did not appear to follow through in their actions with few examples of concrete actions being taken—apparent cases of institutionalism. For example, Ball State has an expressive mission statement and certification document, and specifically state that they will reflect a commitment to diversity in what they say and what they do, and yet they admit there has

been a lack of follow-through and acknowledge an "inconsistency in commitment to diversity." Colorado has descriptive and thoughtful written messages on diversity in both athletics and university documents, but they acknowledge shortfalls in meeting goals from the last certification report. Further, they make lofty claims about the efficacy of their Diversity Plan and Committee without having actual data or proof that goals are being met. Finally, Oregon's university mission was the only one to mention identity, yet their certification document comes across as very reactionary rather than proactive, and does not provide evidence they are taking steps to address diversity.

High Espoused/High Enacted. Eastern Michigan (EMU) and West Virginia provide the most comprehensive treatment of diversity in their written statements and reported actions. EMU includes a detailed and thoughtful outlining of programs, trainings, and policies, and discuss diversity beyond representation to include culture, climate, and identities beyond race such as veterans and the LGBT community. EMU also has a clear plan for advertising positions to a wide array of audiences, and perhaps not coincidentally, have many coaches and high ranking administrators of color. Most importantly, they include diversity as a core competency in the performance evaluation of staff, which is a clear way to integrate a commitment to diversity throughout the organization with measures of accountability. Eastern Michigan also has the highest percentage of individuals of color at all levels (staff, student, and student-athlete), a level of representation which may be related to or reflective of their thoughtful treatment of diversity.

Moving beyond a high level of commitment, the athletic department at West Virginia (WVU) showed the most connected and integrated approach to diversity—an unexpected finding given the reputation of the state and campus in regards to racial diversity. While the department was required to resubmit their minority plan to the NCAA Certification Committee (which does

not seem to be a common occurrence), this extra effort may have encouraged a greater level of thought. The report mentions the campus has an Office of Social Justice to investigate allegations, provide training, and publish written statements on diversity, with consideration given to where statements are published and how departments are organized. They give further consideration to how the athletic department's commitment connects to the university's and how expectations are communicated to staff, coaches, and student-athletes. In terms of hiring and recruiting the department's view is: "WVU recognizes that few opportunities allow demonstration of a profound commitment to diversity and social justice in athletics than the hiring and/or promotion of coaches in high-profile sports," showing an incredible amount of awareness and responsibility. And they conclude with "from the mission, to governance, to administrative structure, to policies and procedures, WVU aggressively pursues a comprehensive agenda designed to enjoy the benefits found in broad diversity and a pluralistic community"—an approach that more organizations should adopt.

Discussion

This study sought to examine how athletic departments address diversity in mission statements, documents, official websites, and through written records of their action. The theoretical lens of institutionalism was applied to understand the connection (or lack thereof) between the department's espoused and enacted commitments to diversity. As such, the discourse analysis of documents shows that some departments are in fact more effective in expressing a commitment to diversity, both in their official statements and in the reporting of their actions, and this was compared across geographic region, budget, and both staff and student racial demographics. While this study only examined eight institutions, a wide range of responses and corresponding levels of commitment were identified. This range was unanticipated

as all athletic departments are required to address the same points relating to gender equity and "minority issues" for NCAA certification (NCAA, 2011). Additionally, as departments seek to gain both approval of the NCAA and parity with their athletic peers in the competitive DI environment, it was thought that isomorphism may create similarity in the wording and approaches taken by departments (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). In spite of these reasons for resemblance, there was a range of responses, and so how each athletic department chose to address the certification protocol, the language they used, the level of detail given, and the differences between each institution were analyzed and interpreted as signs of departments' expressed commitment to diversity (Fairclough, 2001).

The broad range of responses was then considered through the lens of diversity management, given athletic departments' positioning as professional organizations. Research suggests that the process of diversity management results in a continuum of approaches (Cox, 1991; Thomas, 1992), represented by the institutions in this study. Three departments were found to have a low espoused commitment and to have taken minimal action, three had a high level of clarity in written policy but low action, and two departments showed a clear commitment to diversity in both policy and programming. Of note, no departments were found to have low espoused commitment and high action, showing that expressing a commitment in policies seems to be requisite step for lasting change (Wilson et al., 2012). Interestingly, geographic region, which has been shown to relate to openness to difference (Florida, 2002), was not found to affect commitment. Further, no patterns emerged according to department budget, or by staff and student racial demographics.

For those institutions that had clear statements but little stated action, the framework of institutionalism helped make sense of the disconnect. Institutionalism rationalizes that

organizations may enact a view in order to maintain legitimacy, but when some level of transformation is required, organizations may not follow through leaving these formal statements to operate only as myths (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). This framework is particularly fitting for diversity as the concept has widespread social support but is not easily defined or addressed by organizations (Smith, 1995; Unzueta & Binning, 2010), and individuals may not support its application in practice—as evidenced by some of the qualitative responses from this study. This disconnect in translation appears to have resulted in marked differences between the espoused and enacted commitments of select departments, lending support to Weick's (1976) supposition that official statements may be loosely coupled with actual organizational behaviors.

While the NCAA Certification report focuses on issues facing student-athletes and staff of color (NCAA, 2011), four departments did not include diversity in their mission in any way. This absence seems to highlight a disconnect between the values of the national governing body of intercollegiate athletics, which has demonstrated extensive support for diversity through a wide range of initiatives (Lapchick et al., 2013), and select member institutions. As a result, athletic departments should examine their commitment to diversity and consider revising official statements. This easily addressed omission is critical as incorporating diversity into an organization's formal statement of purpose is a first step to signaling a commitment to diversity (Wilson et al., 2012). Further, the findings show that a lack of written commitment is in fact connected to a lack of action, as the four institutions with no mention of diversity were also deemed to have little programming around diversity. Alternatively, the two institutions that were deemed to have high espoused and enacted commitments to diversity clearly addressed the concept in written statements and showed evidence of follow-through in their actions. Both Eastern Michigan and Western Virginia moved beyond citing diversity as a term or descriptor

and elaborated on what an integrated approach to diversity looks like for their departments. This alignment of mission, values, and structures is key as organizational members can sense inconsistencies (Covey, 1991).

One way that inconsistencies may manifest themselves are through members' lived experiences or in their own perceptions of diversity. As such, the survey included various open-ended items that allowed participants not only to include other salient identities not named, but also to reflect or share their thoughts on the subject of diversity. Throughout the responses that addressed staff recruitment and representation, a consistent pattern of support then denial emerged, whereby participants would state the importance or value of diversity and then quickly revert to the notion of merit. As one participant stated, "diversity is important because the student-athletes need to see it....but I still believe the most qualified person should get the job and don't believe in quotas." This semantic style, consisting of contradictory statements, may allude to what Bonilla-Silva (2002) termed as "colorblind racism." This style is characterized by statements that begin with "I'm not racist, but," or in this case, "diversity is good, but," with the post-interjection clause alluding to their true opinion on the issue. This statement of the socially accepted view ("diversity is good") followed by the individual belief ("but merit is more important") may also be a linguistic form of institutionalism, as how organizational members feel about diversity is both shaped by and contributes to the overall organizational climate for diversity.

Even though these findings are descriptive in nature, the discourse analysis of each data type and institution begin to reveal the organizations' commitment to diversity. By drawing on documents and public statements, as well as internal measures of staff perceptions, certain conclusions were able to be drawn regarding each department's actions around diversity. Given

the small sample and data limitations, this study represents a preliminary step in determining organizations' commitment to diversity, however, the findings do lend support to the application of institutionalism in understanding athletic departments and may provide a starting point to creating an organizational rubric or grading system for diversity. Empirical work on diversity in athletics should be continued and is increasingly important given the changing demographics of both students and staff and the need for active management of diversity in the workplace and on university campuses nationwide.

Implications and Future Research

To truly understand a department's commitment, an intensive case study with observations, extensive document review, and interviews with various organizational members should be conducted. An in-depth exploration of members' lived experiences would be particularly informative as the findings revealed that even if departments have a written commitment and record of efforts to address diversity, there may be staff members who do not fully believe in the department's message or continue to uphold their own colorblind views. Or, as in the case of Iowa, a commitment to diversity may have not been clearly expressed in statements, but they are committed to assessing shortcomings and taking action. Given time and funding limitations, this level of data collection was not feasible for this study; however, future research should continue to explore how diversity is defined, applied, and leveraged in athletics spaces for both staff and student-athletes as well as in other areas of higher education. Studies on diversity should continue to draw on both quantitative and qualitative data and further test the framework of institutionalism. Empirical work seeking to understand how athletic departments are addressing diversity is necessary as effective diversity management can elicit many benefits

for organizations (Robinson & Dechant, 1997) and successful approaches can be applied to departments across campus.

Findings from this study not only suggest avenues for future research, but also implications for policy and practice. The first is that athletic departments must integrate diversity efforts with their mission statement and policies across all facets of the organization given that statements and actions are connected (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Indeed, research shows that diversity efforts are likely to fail when organizations neglect to integrate it with their mission and isolate efforts to a single unit (Holvino, Ferdman, & Merrill-Sands, 2004). As part of this, organizations must clearly define diversity and are encouraged to take a broad view that goes beyond specific identity markers or hiring policies. Further, input from members should be solicited and open lines of communication established. Diversity initiatives should then be aligned with the core goals and key products of the organization (Holvino et al., 2004), thereby signaling to members that diversity is integral to the success of the department as a whole. Departments that are able to adopt a broad view of diversity, have comprehensive approaches to developing a diverse workforce, and incorporate diversity initiatives into their mission statement, policies, procedures and practices are seen as proactive, open, and inclusive (Allen & Montgomery, 2001; Cunningham, 2009; Thomas, 1992)—perceptions (and realities) to which all departments should aspire.

The NCAA Certification process was suspended in 2012 for all members recognizing that the required self-study and report compilation were arduous processes that lack real consequences. As the NCAA considers how to improve this process, consideration should be given to the accessibility of these documents and to their content. Making these reports publically available and more direct by asking departments to report on specific benchmarks,

would make it clearer to the general public and encourage accountability. Aside from West Virginia, which stated they were required to resubmit their report, the bar for meeting the national governing body's expectations appears low. Additionally, regardless of what departments outlined as planned actions, there was no measurable way to check for completion or consequences for goals not being met, which re-emphasizes form over substance. Thus, clear consequences should be outlined and enforced if the NCAA aims to move more departments along the diversity management continuum, a standard that should also be applied to the NCAA and conference offices.

In revising the certification process, thought should also be given to the language used. Indeed, the very terminology “minority issues” is outdated and ambiguous (Texeira, 2005), while also implying there are in fact issues. At the very least, if and when organizations use phrasing such as “minority,” care should be taken to specify context or consider alternate, and more up-to-date, language. Lastly, certification or progress reports should be required far more often than the current 10-year cycle. More regular surveying and gathering of feedback from staff should be collected to allow more open lines of communication generally, but also specifically to efforts around diversity. These efforts will aid in creating better alignment between espoused and enacted commitments within departments, as well as between member institutions and their governing body.

CHAPTER 4

DIVERSITY IN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHETLICS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Introduction

Diversity is one of the most widely discussed topics in society (Smith, 1995), and has important—even legal—ramifications for organizations (Cox, 1991; Cunningham, 2007), but is neither clearly defined nor well understood (Unzueta & Binning, 2012). Indeed, one of the greatest dilemmas in addressing diversity in organizations is the lack of a common, well-defined outline of the concept. Current definitions range from narrow—emphasizing an individual's race, ethnicity, or gender (Nkomo & Cox, 1996), to broad—including one's lifestyle, sexual orientation, or tenure with the organization (R. Thomas, 1992). And even as the socially held definition of diversity has evolved, highlighting a broadening perspective of differences (Smith, 1995), both intercollegiate and professional athletics have tended to rely on a narrow perspective. In fact, sports, while often described as a microcosm of society (Eitzen, 2012), has long framed diversity largely in terms of race and gender (Birrell, 1989).

The racial framing of diversity in sports fits, given the continued primacy of race on the playing field (Long, Robinson, & Spracklen, 2005) and the fact that gender is often held constant on teams; however, this overemphasis on visual identities can obscure others that may be particularly salient for individuals within the athletic context (Cunningham, 2007). Indeed, as messages of physicality and masculinity proliferate in sport, an individual's disability status, academic aptitude, or gender expression may be simultaneously silenced by the organization yet central to the individual's identity. Thus, if athletic organizations take a narrow view of diversity (e.g., as referring only to racial minorities; Nkomo & Cox, 1996), this may discount how people

additionally define themselves—a silencing that is not only important to the experience of those competing but also for those who work in athletics. This is important because a narrow racially-defined view of diversity may lead to the ineffectual management of a workforce that is increasingly diverse (D. Thomas & Ely, 1996); and without effective management, diversity in organizations can have negative effects for staff including increased interpersonal conflict and higher turnover (Cox, 1991; Milliken & Martins, 1996).

Even though race may continue to be the primary identity in college sport—precisely because of the import of racial policies in higher education, various legal mandates, and its highly visible nature—the framing of diversity in athletics should extend beyond race, at the very least to other demographic markers (D. Thomas & Ely, 1996). This is a significant consideration as the organizational framing of diversity helps dictate the level of inclusivity and climate, thereby shaping staff members' experiences (Joplin & Daus, 1997). As such, the purpose of this study was to allow intercollegiate athletics staff members to define diversity in their own terms by identifying what identities are most salient to their understanding of diversity. Through various analyses, the study also sought to explore what effect, if any, individual background and the college athletics context have on staff members' perception of diversity.

As those participating in and administering college sport continue to diversify (Lapchick, Johnson, Loomer, & Martinez, 2014), it is important for organizational leaders to understand how both students and staff make meaning of diversity. Indeed, arriving at a common understanding is key to effectively addressing diversity, and departments with effectual diversity management systems are better able to recruit and retain talented workers, are more productive, and maintain more favorable employee attitudes (Fink, Pastore, & Riemer, 2001). While there is a growing body of literature on diversity in sport (e.g., Cunningham, 2009; Fink et al., 2001),

studies often take a singular focus (i.e., on race), and few have explored the meaning of diversity in sport or asked those involved how they define the concept (Doherty, Fink, Inglis, & Pastore, 2010). This study begins to address those gaps, providing a baseline understanding of how intercollegiate athletics professionals view diversity—knowledge which may allow departments to more effectively address members' various identities, and in turn, create more inclusive departmental cultures.

A key supposition of this study is that diversity may mean different things to different people based on both who they are and where they are (Ely 1994; Unzueta & Binning, 2012). This calls for a theory that considers the interplay between an individual's core (social identity) and context (intercollegiate athletics) in shaping identity saliency and one's understanding of diversity. Thus, Jones and McEwen's (2000) multiple dimensions of identity model was chosen for its consideration of both individual and contextual influences, and is outlined below. The model then provides a framing for the review of literature, as well as informing the research questions, analyses, and findings.

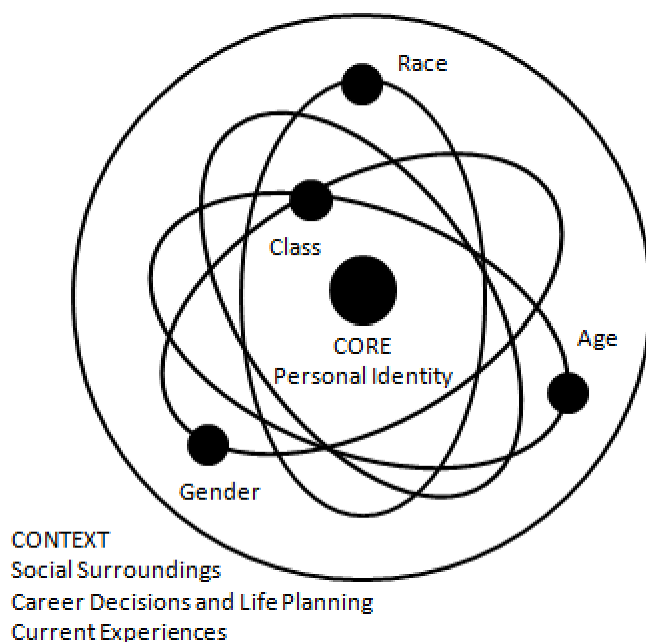
Theoretical Framework

Social psychology attempts to understand and explain how individuals' thoughts and behavior are shaped by their position or role in a larger and complex social structure (Allport, 1969). Given the purpose of this study, Jones and McEwen's (2000) model of multiple dimensions of identity was used. The framework relies on a micro-level approach—focusing on the individual within a specific context, while also attending to the macro-level (e.g., social forces). The model consists of a central circle depicting the individual's core personal attributes and characteristics, surrounded by intersecting orbits that represent various dimensions of identity (e.g., race and culture), all situated within a larger circle of sociocultural conditions (see

Figure 1). Identities intersect with each other and with the larger environment, becoming more or less salient to the individual—thereby acknowledging the effect context has on an identity's salience. For example, race may be particularly salient for individuals of color in predominantly white spaces or gender for women in male-dominated spaces—both of which are frequent contexts in sports.

Figure 1.

Multiple dimensions of identity.



In this study, the larger context is the intercollegiate athletics department—a field long dominated by issues of race and gender (e.g., the racial integration of teams, enactment of Title IX), and more recently by sexual orientation and gender expression (e.g., treatment of LGBT athletes; Cunningham & Melton, 2011). In addition to these more visible identities, the context is also shaped by physical ability, socioeconomic class, and educational attainment, given the departments' location on college and university campuses. Thus, athletics provides a very particular context, yet each individual comes with their own set of identities and experiences, and

may understand diversity to mean different things in the same space. By focusing on the individual, but acknowledging the organizational context, this study seeks to understand how athletics staff define diversity within the athletic context, how their own identities may shape that definition, and how this understanding may inform the organizational approach to diversity.

Literature Review

As the theoretical framework posits that an individual's perception and understanding of diversity are influenced by both who they are and where they are, the core of social identity and the context of college sports are explored. How diversity is defined and perceived by individuals and organizations is considered, and as diversity in the workplace can have divergent outcomes, a brief overview of organizational approaches to diversity management is included.

Core of Social Identity

Tajfel (1982) argues identity has two components: a personal component derived from personality and physical traits, and a social one that comes from group memberships such as race and class. These dual components have been conceptualized as being on a micro and macro-level (Tajfel, 1982). First, individuals self-categorize (the micro-level), then as each category or identity is shaped by the social and political context, a value is attached (the macro-level; Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998; Unzueta & Binning, 2012). Individuals must then reconcile their identities and the attached values to understand who they are and where they stand in the larger social context. As these values are continually shaped by social structures, the demographics of an organization can alter the meanings people attach to their groups when they are in a particular setting (Ely, 1994). Thus, people make sense of their reality based not only on who they are, but by who surrounds them, and the value attached to the groups present. It follows then that

understandings of organizational diversity may vary widely based on how individual members identify as well as the specific context they work in.

College Sports as Context

As workplace context shapes perceptions and understandings of identity, it is important to examine the landscape of college sports, viewing it as a unique context within both higher education and athletic settings. Modern day intercollegiate athletics is a $12 billion dollar business where single Division I (DI) athletic departments spend millions on their sports—the University of Texas, for example, spent $145 million in 2014 alone (Equity in Athletics, 2014). This spending is largely concentrated in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) which at the time of this study represented 125 institutions[1], and for whom intercollegiate athletics is by and large a business. For these departments, as in corporate settings, there is a "bottom line" regarding the organization's success. In DI FBS athletics this involves winning games, putting people in the seats, and attracting media attention, sponsorships, and donations (Scott, 1997). Given these priorities, departments may view diversity from an instrumental perspective—seeing diversity as a means to an end rather than as a goal in and of itself. This may lead to a focus on the visual display of "diversity" to aid recruitment or fundraising efforts but allow for a lack of attention on the creation of an inclusive environment for all members. Perhaps as a result, athletic staff who differ from the traditional majority (i.e., white, Protestant, able-bodied, heterosexual males) have historically encountered less than accepting environments (Fink et al., 2001).

In light of the visible underrepresentation of women and people of color as coaches and administrators (Cunningham 2010; Lapchick et al., 2014), token positions, such as the Senior Woman Administrator, have been created in an attempt to diversify departmental leadership. Nevertheless, the leaders of college sports remain largely homogenous with white men filling

[1] Three institutions joined the FBS in 2014, bringing the total to 128 members.

84% of athletic director and 100% of conference commissioner positions for DI FBS schools (Lapchick & Kuhn, 2011). This reality, however, is in discord with the messages of the departments' host institutions which have historically espoused values of equity, inclusion, and social justice (Bowen, 1977). And even as college sports have been shaped by the racial integration of higher education, the enactment of Title IX, and the push for acceptance of all sexual orientations, athletic departments still struggle with inclusivity (Fink et al., 2001). This contrast between ideals and reality may arise from the possibly conflicting identities—of both business and place of higher learning—that athletic departments embody, and certainly creates a unique context for their members.

Defining Diversity

One of the greatest issues facing organizational leaders is coming to an understanding of what diversity means for the organization and its members (Cunningham, 2007). Although workplace diversity typically refers to demographic differences of one sort or another among group members (Ely & D. Thomas, 2001; McGrath, Berdahl, & Arrow, 1995), there is a wide range of definitions from narrow and focused, to broad and all encompassing. Indeed, some organizations rely on a legally derived definition of diversity as pertaining simply to differences in gender, race/ethnicity, or age, others incorporate physical ability and sexual orientation, or the heterogeneity of attitudes and beliefs, and some consider diversity to be any way in which people differ (Joplin & Daus, 1997). These broader definitions have gained traction in the business world as they are more inclusive of all the ways people may identify, and may serve organizations better in terms of relating to their diverse workforce and customer base. Accordingly, Cunningham (2007) suggested sport organizations define diversity as "the presence

of difference among members of a social unit that lead to perceptions of such difference that impact work outcomes" (p. 6)—a truly broad stance.

While it is important for organizations to present a unified definition of diversity, individuals within the same context may understand, perceive, or interpret the concept differently. Indeed, social psychology posits that an individual's identity groups, or how one identifies, shapes his or her perceptions of social reality in particular settings (Alderfer, 1987; Barak et al., 1998). Simply put, who you are affects how you view things. This effect has been studied within the context of organizational diversity by asking individuals what social identity groups (e.g., women, Blacks, Asians) are most closely associated with diversity. Unzueta and Binning (2012) found that each minority group tended to see itself as being highly associated with the concept of diversity. They also found that some minority groups look beyond numerical representation to consider structural representation, or where people are in the organization's hierarchy, in determining whether or not an organization is diverse. Thus, both social identity and organizational context play a key role in shaping individuals' understanding and perceptions of diversity (Unzueta & Binning, 2012).

Organizational Approaches to Diversity

As the American workforce has become increasingly heterogeneous (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012), organizations are having to negotiate and accommodate difference in the workplace. This management is critical as diversity has been shown to have positive, neutral, or even negative outcomes. If left unmanaged or managed poorly, diversity in an organization can cause communication breakdowns and low cohesion among groups, and may ultimately lead to higher turnover (Milliken & Martins, 1996). Conversely, effective management can result in many benefits for both individual members and the organization including better recruitment and

retention of talent, increased creativity and problem solving, cost savings, and enhanced leadership effectiveness (Cox, Loebel, & McLeod, 1991; Fink et al., 2001; Robinson & Dechant, 1997). Attainment of these benefits, however, is predicated on an effective and proactive approach where written documents, trainings, and ongoing programs are developed to reflect the organization's view of diversity (Cunningham, 2007; R. Thomas, 1992)—an approach that starts with a clear understanding of the term, and one that is inclusive of members' salient identities.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore how athletic department staff members define diversity in their workplace. Based on Jones and McEwen’s (2000) conceptual model, the research questions focus on the core of social identity, the context of the department, and what identities are most salient to individuals' understanding of diversity. The research questions were: (1) What are the demographic characteristics of athletic department staff at select NCAA DI FBS institutions? (2) How diverse do staff perceive their department to be? (3) What social identities are most important to athletic department staff members' understanding of diversity? (4) Do demographic background and organizational context influence how DI athletic department staff understand diversity? Given the historical and continued primacy of race in sport (Long et al., 2005), it was thought that most people would denote race as integral to their understanding of diversity. The goal of this study, however, was to allow individuals to take a broader perspective by including and prioritizing other identities.

In order to address these questions, a short questionnaire was developed based on a review of the literature, similar previously validated surveys, and items suggested by various members of the intercollegiate athletics community as well as diversity scholars. The survey addressed individual identities by collecting demographic information while organizational

identity was measured by having participants rate their department in terms of diversity, as well as various institutional characteristics. To examine staff members' understanding of diversity the questionnaire included multiple choice and five-point likert-scale items regarding identities and contexts and a single open-ended question that allowed participants to reflect on the topic overall (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). While this study sought to allow participants to openly identify and rank what identities are most salient to their understanding of diversity, 11 primary social identities were selected for both the ratings and rankings items to simplify data analysis. The selected identities included: race, age, gender, nationality, social economic class, language, sexual orientation, political orientation, religion, geographic origin, and ability; participants were also allowed to write-in additional choices. The questionnaire was piloted with a select group of athletics staff representing various levels of management, occupational areas, and gender, who provided feedback on the content and wording, and none of whom were included in the final sample (Barak et al., 1998).

Data Collection

Even as DI FBS institutions have a shared athletic mission of competing and gaining national prominence (Siegel, 2001), the 125 members are spread throughout the country and represent a variety of institutional types, levels of selectivity, student body size, and amount of resources (financial and otherwise). Given the exploratory nature of this study, all FBS institutions were invited to participate. Following Dillman’s (2000) advice for making multiple contacts, each department's Athletic Director and Senior Woman Administrator were contacted via email up to three separate times. If six emails were sent without receiving a response, the department was removed from the list as well as all departments that declined to participate. For the institutions that did consent, the department contact was sent a recruitment email with an

individualized link to the Qualtrics survey and was asked to distribute it to all full-time athletic department employees. As each department has approximately 100-200 full-time employees in a variety of organizational areas and locations on campus, email was chosen as the best method for contact. A follow-up email was sent one week later, and after one month, each survey link was closed to bar further participation.

Sample

Thirty one departments agreed to administer the survey, however, five failed to send the survey out to their staff. Another six departments had two or less responses and were excluded from the final sample in order to protect participant anonymity. This left a final sample of 20 athletics departments which cumulatively generated 627 responses (see Table 4.1 below).

Table 4.1.

Participating Institutions

Institution	Conference	Athletic Budget (millions)
Ball State University	Mid-American	22.7
Eastern Michigan University	Mid-American	27.8
Georgia Tech	ACC	63.6
Iowa State University	Big 12	62.2
Miami University	Mid-American	28.9
Michigan State University	Big Ten	93.7
Ohio University	Mid-American	27.0
Rutgers University	Big Ten	78.9
University of Alabama - Birmingham (UAB)	Conference USA	27.5
University of Colorado	Pac-12	66.3
University of Hawaii	Mountain West	40.4
University of Houston	American	42.6
University of Idaho	Sun Belt	19.7
University of Iowa	Big Ten	106.9
University of Nebraska	Big Ten	81.6
University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV)	Mountain West	63.7
University of Oregon	Pac-12	94.9
University of Texas, El Paso (UTEP)	Conference USA	28.9
University of Wyoming	Mountain West	29.7
West Virginia University (WVU)	Big East	73.5

Participating institutions are spread throughout the United States, and across the spectrum of athletic department budget (Equity in Athletics, 2014), allowing for a broad range of organizational contexts. From big names with big budgets (e.g., the University of Oregon at $95 million) to smaller schools that we rarely hear about in DI athletics coverage (e.g., Ball State at $23 million), the sample demonstrates the wide range of DI FBS institutions. In fact, half of the sample had an athletic budget of $43 million or less and there were just as many representatives of the Mid-American Conference as the Big Ten (four total), and no members of the Southeastern Conference—one of the most oft-cited in big time sports. As the first research question was concerned with the staff-level demographics, the participant sample is described in detail below.

Table 4.2 shows the gender and racial breakdown of the sample as compared to national data on professional athletic department staff (Lapchick, et al., 2014).

Table 4.2

Sample and National Athletic Department Staff, by Demographic

Demographic	Sample (%) (n=627)	National (%)
Female	47.5	34.5
White	85.2	85.3
Black	10.0	8.6
Hispanic	3.0	3.0
Asian/Asian American	1.8	1.3

While this study is over-representative of women, perhaps not surprising given general survey response rates by gender (Sax, Gilmartin, & Bryant, 2003), the sample is fairly representative of intercollegiate athletic department staff by race, nationwide. Moving beyond traditionally reported demographics, 26% of respondents were 18-29 years old, 32% were 30-39, and 42% were 40 years or older. Attending to sexual orientation, relationship, and parental status, 93% of respondents identified as heterosexual, 59% were married, and 45% were parents or legal

guardians. Almost half (49%) identified as Christian, 28% as Catholic, and 14% reported having no religious affiliation. Just 2% of the sample identified as non-native English speakers, while 12% reported having a disability of some kind (e.g., physical, learning, or chronic illness).

Looking at their work and career preparation, 34% of the sample reported a Bachelor's degree as their highest level of education, while 49% had a Master's degree. In terms of departmental area, a quarter of respondents were coaches, 9% were administrators, and 8% of the sample was in sports medicine, academics, or team support. The other 12 departmental areas (including areas such as marketing, ticketing, and video) account for the remaining 40% of the sample. Ten percent of participants hold an Assistant or Associate Athletic Director title while 42% have hiring responsibilities, and 40% supervise other full-time employees. And even though 46% have worked in college athletics for over 11 years, over 50% of the sample had worked in their respective athletic department for 5 years or less.

Data Analysis

All data were downloaded from Qualtrics as Excel documents and uploaded to SPSS 17.0 for analysis. First, descriptive analyses were run on all variables. From this, it became evident that five identities were the most salient to participants' understanding of diversity. Thus, the analysis focused on these five—race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and nationality. Given the number of institutions, all data were first examined in the sample aggregate, then the data were disaggregated by department to search for institutional differences or outliers as a means of measuring organizational context. To further test the conceptual model, t-tests and analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted between social identity groups and their corresponding departmental diversity ratings and identity ratings. However, as all participants were U.S.

citizens and information on participants' country of origin was not collected, more detailed analysis by nationality was not possible.

To further test the effect of core and context on participant's understanding of diversity, five linear regressions were run on each of the main identities' importance to diversity in the college athletics workplace. The dependent variable asked participants to rate the importance of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and nationality on a five-point likert-scale. Independent variables included individual demographics such as race, highest level of education, and religion, while organizational contexts included athletic budget, control (public/private), and geographic region (a full list of variables is included in Appendix B). To add to the departmental context, a factor of Perceived Diversity was created from participants' ratings of race, gender, age, and nationality (α=.718; see Appendix C). Perceived diversity by sexual orientation was omitted to create a stronger factor—a loading which may have been affected by the identity's less apparent nature, and evidenced by the high number of participants who said they "did not know or were not sure" how diverse their department was by this dimension.

Finally, respondents were allowed to write-in identities for the ranking items, as well as share concluding thoughts in an open-ended item at the end of the survey. A few participants (n=11) took the opportunity to include additional identities, while others (n=68) used the concluding text box to remark on the role of diversity in hiring staff or to the administration of intercollegiate athletics. This text was downloaded from Qualtrics into an Excel document and uploaded to the qualitative analysis program Dedoose. The text was analyzed through an iterative process where both inductive and deductive approaches integrated theory, literature, and the data to derive themes (Creswell, 2003).

Limitations

The data collection process made it clear that this is a difficult population to access. While all efforts were made to contact and follow-up with department representatives, the sample is not representative of all DI FBS institutions and the group of individual participants may not be representative of the staff within each athletic department. The goal of the survey was to allow participants to define diversity as broadly as they desired, however, for logistical reasons, the survey was created with a quantitative base and rating system rather than the truly open-ended format originally desired. Even as participants were allowed to write in options, having pre-set identities may have altered their responses. Finally, while I have participants' perceptions of their department's diversity, and other objective data, I do not have a full picture of the departmental context. In fact, certain less visible identities may be of particular importance, and daily actions may alter the department's culture or diversity message (Wilson, Meyer, & McNeal, 2012), thereby influencing participants' understanding of diversity within their departmental context.

Findings

As stated previously, the findings will focus on the identities of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and nationality. The sample was predominantly white (80%), and almost half (48%) of participants were female. Approximately one quarter (26%) were 18-29 years old, 32% were 30-39 years, and 42% were 40 and above. Seven percent of participants identified as non-heterosexual, and all were U.S. citizens. The remaining research questions are addressed below: first, organizational context was examined by members' ratings of departmental diversity. Second, staff members' understanding of diversity was measured through both their rankings and ratings of identities. Finally, to address the effect of core and context, items were disaggregated

by corresponding identities and by individual departments throughout, and linear regressions run on the importance rating for each of the five main identities.

Department Ratings

To gain a sense of organizational context, staff were asked to rate how diverse their departments were by various social identities. Nineteen percent of all participants (representing all 20 institutions) reported their departments were very racially diverse, while 5% felt their department was not at all diverse by race. Just 3% of all white participants reported this, while 14% of all black participants felt the same. A one-way ANOVA by race revealed statistically significant differences between groups ($F(3, 491) = 4.793$, $p = .003$), with a Tukey post-hoc showing that blacks ($M = 2.7$, $SD = 1.16$, $p = .001$) view their department as significantly less racially diverse than whites ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 1.11$).

Almost one third (32%) of all participants felt their department was very diverse by gender—21% of all female respondents and 35% of all male respondents. A t-test confirms that women see their department as less diverse by gender than men ($t = -5.761$, $p < .001$). Just 2% of participants reported that their department was not at all diverse by gender, and interestingly, the majority of whom were male. One of the two females reporting a lack of gender diversity was a strength and conditioning coach, a very male-dominated profession, perhaps pointing to the effect of context on perception (Ely, 1994).

Only 6 people (1%) reported that their department was not at all diverse by age, and all were 50 years or older, while 31% felt their department was very diverse by age, representing all institutions and age groups. A one-way ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences between groups ($F(4, 424) = 2.661$, $p = .032$), with those ages 40-49 ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.905$, $p = .027$) seeing their department as most diverse by age and significantly higher than those who

were 60 years or older (M = 3.4, SD = 1.05). For sexual orientation, 41% of the sample said they were unsure or did not know if their department was diverse, 5% reported that it was not at all diverse, and 14% reported their department was very diverse. A comparison of the means shows that those who identify as heterosexual see their department as significantly more diverse than non-heterosexual members ($t = -4.654$, $p < .001$). For nationality, 11% reported their department as not at all diverse while 10% noted the opposite. While nationality was an unanticipated area of importance for staff, participants consistently reported this as being a top identity and is an area for further examination in future research.

Salient Social Identities

To understand how participants defined diversity, the survey asked respondents to both rank their top three identities as well as rate each of the 11 identities in their importance to diversity. Both sets of items were asked in reference to diversity in general and specifically within the college athletics workplace, and the two contexts were considered separately. First, the general diversity items were examined in the aggregate to establish a baseline, and then each department was broken out to search for institutional differences or outliers; with the same process applied to the college athletics workplace items. This multi-layered approach sought to unearth any potential differences by specific institutional or organizational contexts, as outlined by the framework.

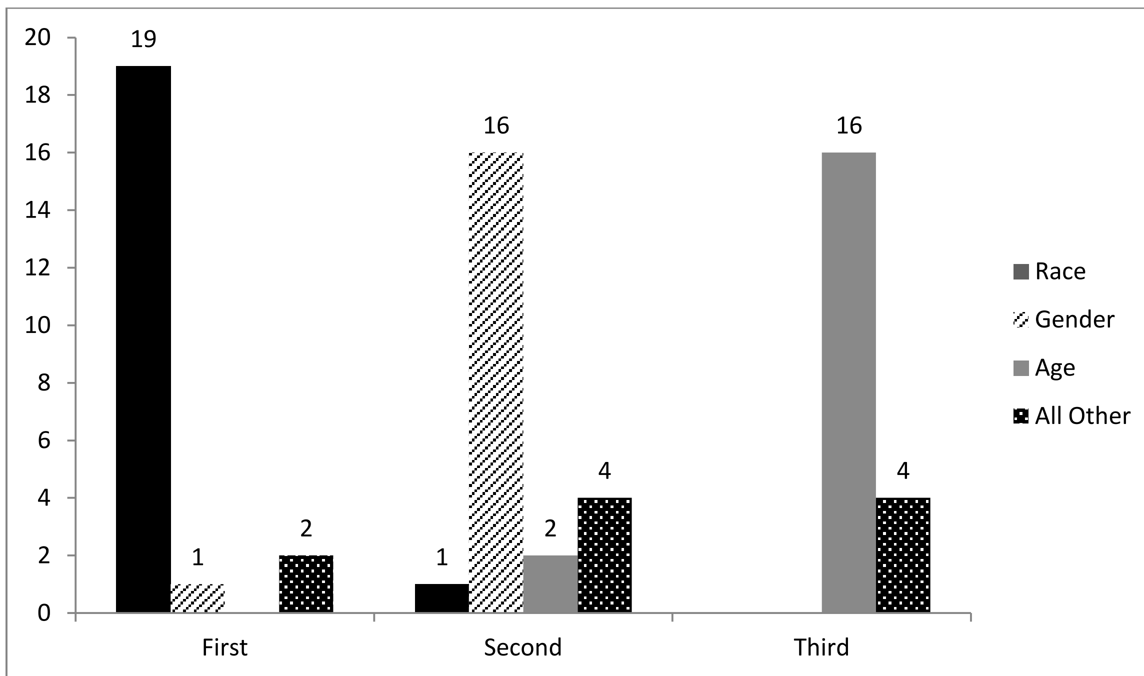
Identity rankings. Participants were asked to consider diversity in general and rank their top three identities, selecting one identity per rank order. Frequencies of the rankings reveal that athletics staff overwhelmingly identify race as the single most important identity, with 63% of the aggregated sample ranking race first. For the second most important identity, gender had 34% of the vote, while sexual orientation and nationality had nominal representation (10% each).

For the third most important identity, 27% of respondents selected age, with sexual orientation again garnering 10% of the vote. Thus by popular vote, the rankings show that participants consider race, gender, and age to be the most important identities to their understanding of diversity in general, followed by sexual orientation and nationality.

Disaggregating the data by institution, this ranking order remained surprisingly consistent. Indeed, there were just 5 institutions (out of 20) that had a different order, and only one in which race was not the primary identity for diversity in general (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2

*Identity Rankings, by Number of Departments**



*Totals for each ranking order may add up to more than 20 due to ties

Looking at differences in the rankings, the University of Hawaii ranked geographic origin third, and was the only institution to include this identity. The University of Houston ranked nationality second, and both Miami University and Iowa State University had it third. The one true outlier was the University of Idaho which had gender, ability and class tied for first, race and

age second, and sexual orientation third. It should be noted, however, that this school only had 12 respondents (as compared to the sample high of 84), and all institutions that differed from the aggregated sample had lower response rates. While 19 institutions had race as the primary identity, there was a marked difference in the percentage of participants selecting race as their top choice from a low of 41% at both Hawaii and Idaho to a high of 94% at the University of Alabama-Birmingham (UAB). There was also a range in the number of identities chosen at each level from a low of 2 (race and gender) at both Eastern Michigan University (EMU) and UAB to a high of 9 at the University of Nebraska.

Looking at the identity rankings specific to the college athletics workplace, it became clear that race, gender, and age remained at the forefront. Disaggregating the sample by institution revealed four outliers. At the University of Houston, staff members identified language, ability, socioeconomic class, and geographic origin as their third most important identities. The University of Idaho staff ranked race and nationality first, while West Virginia had race first, but nationality and sexual orientation second. Finally, UNLV had race first, nationality second, and age and geographic origin third—making them the only school where participants did not include gender at all in their identity rankings. Attending to distribution across the top ranked identity, Idaho had the lowest representation for race at 22% while UAB had the highest with 81%. These are the same schools at the low and high ends for the "diversity in general" rankings, yet the percentages for both are lower. For number of ranked identities, UAB again had the fewest at 2 (race and gender), while 4 schools (Georgia Tech, Michigan State, Nebraska, and Rutgers) had a high of 8. Interestingly, of the 11 offered identities the only ones not to be selected by participants were political orientation, language, and religion.

Identity ratings. Respondents were also asked to rate each of the 11 provided identities in their importance to diversity in general and specific to the college athletics workplace. Given the goal of this study, and the lack of significant differences between the two contexts as determined by the rankings and ratings, this section focuses on the results for diversity in athletics. All rating items were on a five-point scale from "not at all important" to "extremely important." When combining the top two categories, 71% of participants rated race as very important, making it the highest rated identity; gender was second with 60%, while age (47%), nationality, (40%) and sexual orientation (34%) rounded out the top five. All other identities were rated as being very important by fewer than 30% of respondents.

Given the supposition that individual demographics shape identity saliency (Jones & McEwen, 2000), each rating was examined by its corresponding demographic marker. Similar to the departmental diversity ratings, concern for the in-group emerged, with most minority groups rating their corresponding identity as more important than the majority group. Perhaps not surprisingly, women ($M = 3.92$, $SD = .924$) see gender as significantly more important to diversity in athletics than men ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.047$, $t = 4.945$, $p < .001$). For age, a one-way ANOVA reveals significant differences between groups ($F(4, 419) = 6.447$, $p < .001$) with those ages 18-29 ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .866$) viewing age as more important than both the 40-49 ($M = 3.13$, $SD = .981$, $p = .004$) and 50-59 age groups ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.16$, $p < .001$). Finally, those who identified as non-heterosexual saw sexual orientation as significantly more important ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.02$) than their heterosexual peers ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.088$, $t = 3.484$, $p = .001$). Interestingly enough, the only non-significant difference was for the importance of race to diversity by racial group ($F(3, 485) = .165$, $p = .920$). While there was some difference at the

highest level of the scale with 21% of white staff members rating race as "extremely important" as compared to 31% of staff of color, this difference was not statistically significant.

Effect of Core and Context

To test the effect of identity and organizational context, five linear regressions were run on the importance rating for each of the main identities. For race, two variables were significant: highest level of education (β = .145, p = .015) and the perceived diversity factor (β = -.186, p = .001). This means that the more formal education received, the more important the perception of race to diversity. Alternatively, the more diverse one perceives their department to be by visual identities, the less important race is to his or her understanding of diversity in athletics. This was the only model for which the perceived diversity factor was significant.

For gender, four variables were statistically significant (see Table 4.3). In essence, being male, older, and more politically conservative are all negative predictors of gender's importance to diversity in college athletics, while the sole positive predictor was level of formal education.

Table 4.3

Significant Predictors of Gender's Importance to Diversity in Athletics

Variable	B	SE B	β	p
Gender	-.374	.108	-.185	.001
Age	-.213	.066	-.225	.001
Highest Level of Education	.226	.084	.154	.007
Political Orientation	-.145	.071	-.109	.041

For the importance of age to diversity, two variables were significant: gender (β = -.154, p = .007) and age (β = -.200, p = .007), and both were negative predictors. Thus, being male and older meant perceiving age as less important to the concept of diversity. Finally, the model for nationality only had one significant variable: age (β = -.180, p = .016), and it was again negative.

The importance of sexual orientation to diversity in college athletics had four statistically significant variables (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4

Significant Predictors of Sexual Orientation's Importance to Diversity in College Athletics

Variable	B	SE B	β	p
Race: Latino	-.707	.300	-.127	.019
Gender	-.308	.122	-.143	.012
Region: West	.447	.221	.181	.044
Undergraduate Student Body	.000	.000	.153	.036

Being male and Latino (as compared to white) were negative predictors. However, both undergraduate student body size and being in the West region (as compared to the East) were positive predictors of the importance of sexual orientation to diversity, making this the only model where institution-level variables were significant.

Open-Ended Responses

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, and to allow participants to define diversity in their own terms, participants were also given the opportunity to further identify dimensions or identities in open-ended response boxes after the ranking and rating items. Eleven participants took this opportunity for each subset of diversity in general and diversity in college athletics items. Additional responses for diversity in general included: commitment/work ethic/discipline, work experience or experience in the field, family background, introvert/extrovert, and leadership. For diversity specific to the athletics workplace, participants shared many of these same identities as well as that of athletic identity. This shows the breadth of identities that athletic department staff members associate with diversity, even above and beyond the 11 provided. In addition to sharing these identities, many participants (n=68) utilized the open-ended question at the conclusion of the survey to share their perspective on diversity overall, discussing if and how identities are important, or by reflecting on the exercise of rating and ranking identities.

The primary discourse in these reflections was that how someone appeared, identified, or was perceived was of little importance to their work, and that department staff members should instead be selected and evaluated primarily on their ability to do the job at hand. As one participant shared, “diversity is not an important issue for me. Results are what’s important. I associate with those who can produce results, regardless of who or what they are.” This sentiment of not “seeing” identity, but rather emphasizing merit or outcomes, was the prevailing theme throughout the qualitative responses. Interestingly, all of those expressing this “merit first” sentiment were white and the majority were male, however, they came from a variety of institutions and geographic areas. It is also a theme that sheds light on the organizational context of DI FBS athletics, which is ultimately a business driven by winning on the national stage. In total, the open-ended responses ranged from thoughtful and reflective to angry and negative. In fact, in response to the overall topic, one participant shared “it is a bunch of garbage,” while another wrote, “this survey is typical diversity bull… and is a waste of my time”—showing that clearly the topic continues to generate visceral hostility.

Discussion

This study sought to establish what social identities are most important to athletic department staff members’ understanding of diversity and what, if any, effect individual identity and organizational context have on that understanding. To do so, an online survey was developed and data collected from 627 staff members at DI FBS institutions nationwide. When compared to the national population of athletic department staff, the sample was over-representative of women but representative by racial/ethnic group. Traditionally, these are the only measures one has to consider when studying members of athletics, however, this study collected several other important dimensions including age, religion, political orientation, highest degree earned, and

sexual orientation. The findings show that staff are diverse in many ways beyond the traditionally reported measures of race and gender—something that should be considered in future research on intercollegiate athletics staff, and particularly in any work dealing with diversity (Cunningham & Melton, 2011; D. Thomas & Ely, 1996).

To better understand how staff conceptualize diversity as well as the organizational context of each department, research questions explored how diverse staff perceive their department to be, how staff rank and rate identities in their importance to diversity, and relationships between the core and context on their ratings of identity importance. For perceptions of department diversity, the minority group consistently perceived the department as less diverse, with staff of color less likely to view their department as very racially diverse or those over 60 years old less likely to see their department as highly diverse by age. These findings not only support previous research on differences in minority/majority definitions and perceptions of diversity in organizations (Unzueta & Binning, 2012), but also suggest that in certain contexts different identities will become more salient, shaping your perception. As athletics is a profession dominated by heterosexual, middle-aged, white males, it makes sense that women, staff of color, and members of the LGBT community would consider those identities to be highly salient to their understanding of diversity, and also for them to be more likely to note the lack of numerical representation of their in-group.

In terms of the identity rankings, results show that staff members do consider race to be the most central identity to their understanding of diversity, both in general and specifically in the context of intercollegiate athletics. This finding is consistent with previous research (Birrell, 1989; Nkomo & Cox, 1996), and confirms the study's hypothesis. After race, however, participants identified gender, age, sexual orientation, and nationality as the next most important

or salient identities. While the first two identities of race and gender were expected based on extant literature, the last three identities were less expected and are ones that receive significantly less attention in research and the sports lexicon (Shore et al., 2008). Even as age is likely salient in any workplace, given its more visible nature, it may be heightened on a college campus where the majority of students are 18-22 years old. The ranking of nationality was a surprise, particularly as all participants are U.S. citizens, but may be influenced by the increase in international students and student-athletes (Zonder, 2013), or signaled by the ongoing national debates over immigration. Finally, the inclusion of sexual orientation seems fitting given the growing saliency of the identity in the sports realm (Cunningham & Melton, 2011). This increased attention has been spurred by recent announcements from athletes in prominent sports (e.g., Michael Sam in the NFL), nationwide campaigns promoting acceptance (e.g., You Can Play), and conversations at the departmental and national level around policy and programming (NCAA, 2014).

Given the study's focus on organizational context, the data were also disaggregated to the institutional level to examine for possible differences by department. As participants were free to select any number of identities in their rankings, a range of responses emerged. The finding that UAB staff only identified two identities—race and gender—while Nebraska had nine (including socioeconomic class and ability) points to institutional differences which may be affected by campus size (Nebraska has twice as many undergraduates and student-athletes), location (Midwest versus South), or the social and historical legacy of the state and campus around diversity. There were also differences in distribution, from a low of 41% picking race as the primary identity at Idaho to a high of 94% at UAB. When considered together, these two statistics make it evident that race may be the single most salient identity at UAB, while on other

campuses, athletic department staff members identified many other non-traditional identities as also salient. While these additional dimensions are clearly identified by staff as important, they are rarely addressed in diversity work or policies—calling not only for a broader discussion of diversity but also for departments to address identities beyond that of race and gender.

The identity ratings were consistent with the rankings as race, gender, age, nationality, and sexual orientation were identified as the most important identities to participants' understanding of diversity. When the ratings were disaggregated by their corresponding identity, it became clear that individual demographics continue to shape one's perception and understanding of diversity. In fact, for most dimensions, members of the minority group were more likely to rate the identity as being "extremely important" (e.g., women and gender, non-heterosexuals and sexual orientation). This fits with work on minority perceptions and definitions of diversity (Unzueta & Binning, 2012), and also with Jones and McEwen's (2000) theoretical framework which posits that who you are affects how you view the world.

The regressions sought to further test the effect of core and context. Results show that individual demographics have an effect on importance ratings, albeit only for a few of the social identities. One identity that consistently emerged was age—as a negative predictor in three of the five models (race, gender, and nationality). This is interesting as it suggests older generations may understand and perceive diversity differently—something for organizations to consider. Alternatively, highest level of formal education was a positive predictor in two models (race and gender), and the Perceived Diversity factor was significant for race. The notion that as perceived diversity of visual identities goes up in an organization, the importance of race decreases is interesting and supports the effect of context on understanding of diversity. Finally, and contrary to the study's hypothesis, institutional characteristics had little to no significant effect on identity

rating, with the lone exception being for region and undergraduate student body size on the rating for sexual orientation. This finding fits as states in the West tend to be more progressive, particularly around issues of sexual orientation, and it also seems logical that the larger the student body, the more visible LGBT issues may be. In this sense, it was surprising that institutional characteristics did not enter more of the models.

This study sought to test the effect of organizational context through descriptive analysis of the rankings and multivariate analyses of the ratings but found a lack of significant differences by institutional characteristics. Indeed, for the rankings just five schools strayed from the order of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and nationality, and the differences were minimal (e.g., switching of order), with no pattern by region or budget. There was also a lack of significant institutional characteristics in the regression models. This consistency of responses across a wide array of campus types was unexpected as it was thought there would be more differences by geographic region (Florida, 2002), or by athletic conference or budget given the wide range within Division I FBS members. And yet, there were few discernible differences across departments for the rankings and ratings. While this may initially suggest a lack of effect by the organizational context, it may also point to a larger organizational context beyond the department—that of NCAA Division I.

To answer the overarching research question, it seems clear that individual identity shapes athletic department staff members' understanding of diversity while organizational context (as originally conceived) may have more minimal effects. The identity ratings and perception items show that individual identity affects one’s understanding and definition of diversity, lending support to Jones and McEwen's (2000) framework. And yet, given the consistency in answers both within and across departments, it seems that the organizational

context of departments has little effect. It is, however, hypothesized that the larger context of intercollegiate athletics (more so than any one department) may foster a shared sense of identity above and beyond traditional dimensions, leading very diverse individuals to perceive and define diversity in similar ways. This collective membership may in fact supersede individual identity—an assertion that contradicts both the traditional discourse and theory and is perhaps a phenomenon unique to athletics where team dynamics are fostered with the belief that 'we all win and lose together,' and is a dimension ripe for further exploration.

While DI athletics may provide an overarching organizational context, it is still important to attend to differences by department. It is no surprise that diversity may mean different things or be perceived in different ways at the University of Hawaii than at Iowa State, and it follows that no singular definition or approach will work for all athletic departments. As such, these organizational differences, no matter how small, are important to consider when coming to a definition of diversity and in creating a diversity management protocol. Indeed, an approach will only be effective if it takes into account what identities are most salient to that organization's members and views their diversity as a benefit rather than a burden (Morrison, 1992).

Future Research

The findings of this study, while informative, are but a preliminary look into how athletic department staff understand diversity and more work is needed in this area. Despite a growing body of diversity in sport literature (e.g., Cunningham, 2007, 2009; Doherty et al., 2010; Fink et al., 2001) few, if any, studies have asked participants directly how they define, understand, and perceive diversity—work that is needed at the individual department level as well as on a national scale. Once the term is clearly defined, a first step to effectively managing diversity, additional in-depth case studies are needed to better understand specific department cultures and

how they approach and address diversity (Singer & Cunningham, 2012). More extensive knowledge of how different types of diversity manifest and are treated in intercollegiate athletics, as well as the identification of departments that are successful can inform best practices for policies and programs.

As the sample for this survey and the national data show, athletics staff remain predominantly white and majority male. While the mismatch between student-athletes and coaches by racial/ethnic background has long been discussed and studied in football (e.g., Bozeman & Fay, 2012; Lapchick et al., 2014), little work has been done in other sports or for staff positions beyond coaches. However, many non-coaching staff members have direct and ongoing contact with student-athletes (e.g., athletic trainers, academic advisors, mental health professionals)—roles where representation of various identities may be just as important. As one participant wrote, “it is important for the athletic staff to represent the diversity of the population we work with.” Also, high level administrators—those in the position of hiring others—may have the greatest power to affect representation, and should be included in any discussion of staff diversity and department planning. Lastly, some of the larger athletic departments are comprised of over 100 full-time staff members (not including coaches) all contributing to the departmental culture, yet these non-coaching staff members are rarely addressed in reports and empirical research (Lapchick & Kuhn, 2011). Thus, greater attention should be given to all athletic department staff members beyond the frontlines of coaches.

Another result was that age, nationality, and sexual orientation are salient identities to staff members, yet are rarely included in any discussion of diversity. To extend the current work of the NCAA which provides a diversity database on student-athletes, institutions and

conferences[2] as well as the annual Race and Gender Report Card generated for college sport (Lapchick et al., 2014), demographic data beyond race and gender should be collected, reported, and studied. From the open-ended responses, the supposition of a mutually exclusive relationship between diversity and merit emerged. Respondents expressed a sentiment that diversity was important, however, people should be hired based on skill and merit. This relationship and staff members' feelings around the two concepts should be explored, specifically as they relate to sports and the athletics workplace.

Finally, it is clear from the results of this study that athletics develops a unique shared identity around the struggle and success of sports—as one participant noted, "we are all here to win and improve." With the consistent findings across all 20 institutions despite the array of geographic locations, budgets, department size, and social and historical context of the campuses, it seems that DI FBS intercollegiate athletics has a strong organizational context. This context should be further explored in areas beyond diversity and in other Divisions to see if the DI identity holds when compared to DII and DIII institutions, and future research on members of athletic departments should be sure to attend to organizational context.

Implications and Conclusion

This study sought to allow participants to define diversity in their own terms by offering 11 primary identities as well as the space for participants to write in additional ones. In spite of the provision of multiple identities, both traditional (e.g., race, gender) and less so (e.g., geographic origin, language, religion), race emerged as the primary identity in shaping staff members' understanding of diversity. Even so, other less talked about identities were also consistently identified as highly salient. In fact, a clear pattern from the rankings and ratings emerged with gender, age, nationality and sexual orientation being identified by respondents.

[2] See http://web1.ncaa.org/rgdSearch/exec/main.

This is one of the most critical findings of this study as athletics staff do appear to see diversity as going beyond race which may highlight areas of concern for staff members, or at the very least signal that our understanding of diversity must go deeper—beyond surface-level identities. Indeed, many scholars have begun to encourage the view that diversity is about many differences (Cunningham, 2007; Joplin & Daus, 1997).

The idea that intercollegiate athletics must take a broader definition of diversity is important both because sport is a microcosm of society (Eitzen, 2012)—one that is increasingly diverse in many ways—but also because college sport is a powerful and prominent field, one ultimately concerned with winning and creating revenue (Scott, 1997). As a business, if department staff feel as though central parts of their identity are overlooked or improperly addressed in the workplace, this can cause isolation (Ibarra, 1995). Further, ineffectual management of worker diversity can cause communication breakdowns and low cohesion among groups which may lead to higher turnover (Milliken & Martins, 1996). Alternatively, an effective approach to diversity can lead to many benefits for the organization including the recruitment and retention of talented workers, increased productivity, and more favorable employee attitudes (Cox et al., 1991; Fink et al., 2001).

As departments move towards creating a diversity policy, training, statement, or program, they should survey their staff and ask what identities are most important to them, thereby taking into account the unique context of their organization. This information should then be used to develop a clear and comprehensive definition of diversity that will guide and shape the department's diversity management approach. Once an approach has been developed, the plan and expectations must be clearly communicated to all organizational members. This piece is key as all participating departments reported having a diversity plan yet just over half of survey

respondents reported being aware of any departmental policies (57%), programs (51%), or trainings (56%) on diversity—a clear sign that a more comprehensive approach is needed.

Another key issue that emerged came from participants' open-ended responses where they seemed to equate diversity with numerical representation. This misunderstanding led many of them to express a desire to minimize or ignore "diversity" in favor of merit or skill, pushing a colorblind agenda in the workplace. Diversity, however, is not simply about numbers or representation of one group, but should be seen as an ongoing process where the goal is inclusion rather than merely representation (Thomas, 1991). Identities, in fact, should not be ignored but addressed and celebrated to create a supportive and inclusive departmental culture. As one participant wrote, "if we want to be truly diverse and truly accepting of others, it means accepting them as they are." Thus, efforts should be made to shift the mindset of athletic department staff members, particularly those who expressed outwardly hostile sentiments, and change the organizational culture around and understanding of diversity from measurable outcome to one of process.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Overview

Even as diversity has gained widespread acceptance throughout higher education, we know little of how the concept is being defined, valued, or attended to intercollegiate athletics—one of the most visible units on campus. Through a three study design, this dissertation sought to explore if and how diversity is included in official departmental statements, what the written records of their actions reveal, and how their staff members understand the concept. The three studies were conducted in consecutive order, and collectively begin to give a sense of the organizational context surrounding diversity in Division I FBS athletic departments. While the studies were exploratory in nature findings confirm previous literature, build upon theoretical frameworks, point to new areas for research, and suggest ways intercollegiate athletics practitioners and leaders can more effectively address diversity in their organizations.

In truth, this is a line of research that would best be served by in-depth case studies of each department to truly understand the organizational culture around diversity; however, this level of access being granted does not seem likely—at least not for empirical research purposes. For example, even though I had worked in multiple athletic departments, had numerous conversations about diversity issues with various staff members, and assured administrators that the research would be done in a constructive way, no department seemed willing to allow me the necessary access to their documents and staff. While athletic departments are generally weary of opening themselves up to researchers, perhaps not surprising given the latest academic and personnel scandals (e.g., fake classes at the University of North Carolina or the recent suspension

of Syracuse basketball coach Jim Boeheim; Wolverton, 2015), they seemed especially hesitant about work on diversity and of work that may take an evaluative turn. Thus, the three studies that comprise this dissertation relied for the most part on publicly available documents and an anonymous survey—devised as a way to tap in to the organizational context around diversity in light of the accessibility constraints.

Study 1, “Between the Lines,” explored if and how athletic department mission statements address diversity and how these messages compare to that of the larger university. This study was the starting point for this line of research and shows how I originally began to think about these issues from an organizational standpoint. While the data certainly has limitations—as mission statements are inherently short and concise documents—I believe missions cannot be overlooked for the insight they provide into the guiding principles of the organization. Indeed, the very purpose of the mission statement is to outline the organization’s main goals and objectives and is a prime place to state a commitment to diversity (Bart 1996; Wilson, Meyer, & McNeal, 2012).

A content analysis of mission statements from 40 of the top ranked public Division I FBS institutions across the country was conducted. Findings show that the majority of missions did include diversity in some form, but the nature and extent of that inclusion varied altering the effectiveness of the messages conveyed (Meyer, 2008). While the study added nuance to the framework and suggested implications for practice, conference and journal reviewers have expressed concern over the use of mission statements as the sole data source. Some have commented that missions are archaic, incomplete, and that few people know what they say, and yet, this seems to raise a larger issue—if missions are not a valid source for finding an organization’s values, what purpose do they serve? Why do organizations spend considerable

resources on crafting a mission statement if no one reads them? And ultimately, if missions are merely symbolic, how do organizations arrive at a commonly agreed upon set of goals and principles that guide decision-making on a daily basis? This study, while certainly limited in its coverage and depth, began to unearth if and how athletic departments address diversity in written documents, while also raising issues of organizational culture, consensus-building, and the role of mission statements in modern day organizations.

Study 2, "Sending Messages," built directly on the first piece. Acknowledging the limitations of a single data point, this study incorporated website content, NCAA certification documents, and demographic statistics in addition to mission statements. The theoretical lens of institutionalism, which outlines how organizations may articulate formal views that are socially expected but may not be supported by their daily actions, was applied to examine the interplay between rhetoric and reality (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). As this piece sought to investigate the (in)congruency between written word and action, a detailed discourse analysis was applied to data from eight DI FBS institutions. The findings showed that there is a wide range in both espoused and enacted commitments to diversity, allowing departments to be placed on a continuum of diversity management.

As conclusions were drawn about athletic departments' explicit and implicit messages around diversity and implications suggested for how they can more effectively manage it, the study is ultimately limited by the fact that I was relying on self-reported measures of action. Again, documents cannot provide a complete sense of the organizational context—a phenomenon that should additionally be explored through observations and interviews to understand how the department's intentions are expressed on a daily basis and the lived experiences of staff members. Even with these limitations, this study offers a new perspective on

diversity in athletic departments and moves the conversation forward on creating a comprehensive approach to diversity management in intercollegiate athletics.

Given my own grappling with how to define the term "diversity," Study 3 was interested in doing just that. The study, titled "What Does it Mean?," sought to unveil how athletic department staff members understand the concept of diversity as well as how individual demographics and organizational surroundings shape that understanding. This study was driven by my own experiences as being a woman and person of color, and how different identities became more salient to me depending on my context. Questions of how individual identities and the intercollegiate athletics workplace shape views of diversity were explored through an online survey and the multiple dimensions of identity framework (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

While diversity is so often framed in racial terms (Nkomo & Cox, 1996), findings from this study show that other identities are particularly salient to athletics staff—something athletic departments must consider when addressing diversity. Indeed, staff consistently identified gender, age, sexual orientation, and nationality as central dimensions to their understanding of diversity. Further analyses also showed that individual demographics do shape identity saliency and perception of diversity, however, organizational context—as originally conceived—had little to no effect. These findings add depth to an area that is often singularly focused, and encourages broader perspectives on the topic.

These three studies touch on a topic not often investigated in athletic settings. I hope that the findings inform scholars and encourage additional academic investigation into this area, but more importantly, I hope that athletics practitioners and leaders use these findings to inform their own work and encourage more open conversations that lead to action. This is the ultimate goal of my work—to conduct research that has actionable outcomes for participants or subjects—to do

work that bridges the divide between academics and practice. One way that I have tried to start this is by generating reports for the institutions that participated in my survey (see Appendix E). This was in part to thank departments for their participation but also with the hopes of moving the conversation forward—that administrators would use this information about what dimensions of identity are important to their staff to better address and serve their members. In this sense I hoped that my research would not only be consumed and informative but also part of a larger transformative process. To continue this, selected implications for policy and practice are included below.

Implications

Previous research has found that proactive organizations have a broad view of diversity, integrate diversity and inclusion throughout the organization by having policies, procedures, and practices to develop a diverse workforce, have diverse leadership teams, open lines of communication, and actively work to realize the benefits of diversity (Cunningham, 2009; Fink & Pastore, 1999). This dissertation confirmed some of these findings while also suggesting new implications for policy and practice. Thus, the takeaways from the three studies are for organizations to:

- **Be clear in their usage of the term.** Organizations should clearly articulate how they are thinking about and defining the term "diversity" while also remaining open to an evolving definition. Weick (1979) advises leaders to highlight the broadening perspective of diversity rather than getting caught up in defining the term precisely.
- **Move beyond numbers.** Organizations should think about diversity not just in terms of numbers and representation but also in a culture of acceptance and inclusion (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1999). This means moving from viewing diversity

from an instrumental perspective—seeing diversity as a means to an end—where departments may focus on the visual display of "diversity" to aid recruitment or fundraising efforts, to encouraging all staff to see diversity, equity, and inclusion as goals in and of themselves, where departments actively work towards creating an inclusive environment for all members.

- **Have a comprehensive approach.** Create a comprehensive diversity management approach (from documents and websites to trainings and programs) and communicate that clearly in written policy as well as to all organizational members and stakeholders. Members must be aware of all that is offered as well as be able to share their concerns or requests for additional areas of support.
- **Include diversity in the mission statement**. Incorporating diversity into the mission statement is an important and necessary first step in the process (Cox & Beale, 1997). Study 2, in fact, showed that without written commitment there was little to no action.
- **Follow through with action**. While written and verbal forms of communication are central, "little or nothing will be dismissed as accidental" and organizational members will interpret action or lack thereof as purposeful (Rothenbuhler, 2006, p. 14). Thus, organizations must be sure to support their words with action. Examples may include: offering diversity trainings, forming a committee to address diversity and inclusion, partnering with other campus offices to provide support for staff and student-athletes (e.g., Black Student Union), and hiring diverse staff members and administrators.
- **Integrate diversity throughout the organization**. One way of creating action is to integrate diversity initiatives throughout the organization and link them to fundamental objectives and core goals. Integration raises awareness and linking diversity measures to

core functions creates accountability. As an example, diversity should be part of the recruitment process, performance evaluation, and compensation scale for employees (e.g., how did they contribute to the diversity of the department or to creating a more inclusive climate?; Cox & Beale, 1997; Holvino, Ferdman, & Merrill-Sands, 2004).

- **View diversity as an asset**. The way diversity issues are framed is critical to how the organization (and members) approach the topic (Smith, 1995). Organizations that view employee or client diversity as an asset rather than an obstacle are more likely to achieve the possible benefits. Departmental leaders play a large part in shaping the organizational view and should be cognizant of how they talk about diversity both formally and in passing.
- **Revise the NCAA Certification process.** The NCAA Certification process was halted for all institutional members in 2012 but could serve as a useful tool for changing how athletic departments address diversity. If the NCAA were to create and enforce benchmarks around diversity policy and programming, with real repercussions for not meeting the standard, they could encourage action on a large-scale basis. Institutional members should revisit this process and consider how it can best be leveraged.

Conclusion

This dissertation allowed me to merge two of my greatest research interests—diversity and athletics. The process of conducting this research has deepened my understanding of both topics while also revealing that I still have a lot of work to do; I myself must come to a better understanding of diversity—how to define it, how to operationalize it, and how to talk about it, especially with those who are resistant. This dissertation has allowed me space to explore these avenues, challenged me to deepen my own thinking, and pushed me to articulate goals for my

work. This research has opened up space for me to start a conversation in athletics, a place that has long had the numeric representation of racial minorities but in my experience has often been reluctant to have real and meaningful conversations around diversity. Thus, I hope this dissertation serves as a starting point for myself and others to start conversations. It is clear that there is still much work to be done.

Appendix A.

Full Sample with Rank, Conference and Main Form of Diversity Inclusion

NACDA Rank (in 2011)	Institution	Athletic Conference (in 2011)	Athletic Dept.	University
23	Alabama	SEC	X^i	
19	Arizona	Pac-12	X^p	X^e
30	Arizona State	Pac-12	X^e	X^e
20	Arkansas	SEC	X^e	
28	Auburn	SEC	X^e	X^i
11	California	Pac-12	X^e	
2	Florida	SEC	X^i	X^e
5	Florida State	ACC	X^i	X^e
18	Georgia	SEC	X^e	X^e
21	Illinois	Big Ten	X^e	X^e
38	Indiana	Big Ten	X^i	X^e
48	Iowa	Big Ten	X^e	X^e
46	Iowa State	Big 12	X^e	
29	Kentucky	SEC		X^e
32	Louisville	Big East		X^e
13	LSU	SEC	X^e	
27	Maryland	ACC	X^p	X^e
10	Michigan	Big Ten	X^i	
34	Michigan State	Big Ten		X^e
22	Minnesota	Big Ten	X^e	X^e
49	Missouri	Big 12		
37	NC State	ACC	X^e	
40	Nebraska	Big Ten		X^e
41	New Mexico	Mountain West	X^e	X^e
8	North Carolina	ACC	X^e	X^e
4	Ohio State	Big Ten		X^e
14	Oklahoma	Big 12	X^e	
42	Oklahoma State	Big 12	X^e	
24	Oregon	Pac-12	X^e	X^e
12	Penn State	Big Ten		X^e
47	Purdue	Big Ten	X^i	X^e
36	South Carolina	SEC	X^e	X^e
33	Tennessee	SEC		X^e
6	Texas	Big 12	X^p	
3	UCLA	Pac-12	X^i	X^e
15	Virginia	ACC	X^e	X^e

NACDA Rank (in 2011)	Institution	Athletic Conference (in 2011)	Athletic Dept.	University
35	Virginia Tech	ACC		
31	Washington	Pac-12		X[i]
45	West Virginia	Big East	X[i]	X[e]
26	Wisconsin	Big Ten	X[i]	X[e]

Note: X signifies diversity was mentioned, [e] explicit, [i] implicit, [p] policy

Appendix B.

Variable List and Coding Schemes

Dependent Variables	Coding Scheme
Thinking of diversity in the college athletics workplace, how important are the following identities: Race Gender Age Sexual Orientation Nationality	Scale: 1=not at all important to 5=extremely important

Independent Variables	Coding Scheme
Race[a]: Black	Dichotomous: 1=not marked, 2=marked
Race[a]: Asian/Asian American	Dichotomous: 1=not marked, 2=marked
Race[a]: Latino	Dichotomous: 1=not marked, 2=marked
Gender identity	Dichotomous: 1=female, 2=male
Sexual Orientation	Dichotomous: 1=heterosexual, 2=non-heterosexual
Marital status	Dichotomous: 1=not married, 2=married
Income	Scale: 1=$39,999 or less, 2=$40-59,999, 3=$60-99,999, 4=$100-139,999, 5=$140,000+
Age	Scale: 1=18-29, 2=30-39, 3=40-49, 4=50+
Highest level of education	Scale: 1=high school or some college, 2=Bachelor's, 3=Master's, 4=Doctorate
Political orientation	Scale: 1=liberal, 2=middle, 3=conservative
Religious affiliation	Dichotomous: 1=all else, 2=Christian/Catholic
Disability	Dichotomous: 1=has a disability, 2=no disability
Frequency: Have in-depth conversations with student-athletes about diversity	Scale: 1= never, 2=seldom, 3=occasionally (1-2x/mo), 4=often (1-2x/wk), 5=very often (daily)
Departmental area[b]: Coach	Dichotomous: 1=not marked, 2=marked
Departmental area[b]: Student-Athlete support	Dichotomous: 1=not marked, 2=marked
Departmental area[b]: Business	Dichotomous: 1=not marked, 2=marked
Athletic budget (in millions)	Continuous
Geographic region[c]: West	Dichotomous: 1=not marked, 2=marked
Geographic region[c]: Central	Dichotomous: 1=not marked, 2=marked
Geographic region[c]: South	Dichotomous: 1=not marked, 2=marked
Student body	Continuous
Institutional control	Dichotomous: 1=public, 2=private

[a] Reference group: White
[b] Reference group: Administration
[c] Reference group: East

Appendix C.

Perceived Diversity Factor

Perceived Diversity Factor (α=.718)	**Factor Loading**
How diverse are members of your AD by:	
Gender	.773
Nationality	.744
Race	.741
Age	.701

Appendix D.

Survey Instrument.

Q1 Age	What is your age?	1 = 18-29 2 = 30-39 3 = 40-49 4= 50-59 5 = 60+
Q2 Education	What is your highest level of education?	1 = High school diploma/GED 2 = Some college 3 = Bachelor's degree (BA, BS, etc.) 4 = Master's (MA, MS, MEd, etc. 5 = MBA 6 = JD 7 = Doctorate (PhD, EdD, etc.) 8 = Other graduate/ prof. degree
Q3 State	If you attended college, in what state was your undergraduate institution located?	(State abbreviation text box)
Q4a Years in Athletics	How long have you worked in: College Athletics?	1 = Less than 1 year 2 = 1-5 years 3 = 6-10 years 4 = 11-15 years 6 = 16+ years
Q4b Years in Dept	This Department?	
Q5 Future	Do you see yourself working in college athletics for the rest of your career?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Q6 Position	What departmental area do you work in?	0 = Not Selected 1 = Selected
	Team Coach (Head, Assoc., Asst.)	
	Team Support Staff (e.g., Ops, Admin Asst)	
	Administration	
	Academics	
	Business & Finance	
	Communications	
	Compliance	
	Development	

	Equipment	
	Event Management/Game Operations	
	Facilities	
	Human Resources	
	IT/Computer Support/Web Services	
	Marketing - Internal (e.g., Sports Information)	
	Marketing - External (e.g., Sports Properties)	
	Nutrition	
	Sports Medicine	
	Strength and Conditioning/Sports Performance	
	Student-Athlete Development/Student Services/Life Skills	
	Tickets	
	Video	
	Other (if checked, please fill in)	Write-in
Q7a Title	Are you an Athletic Director or the Head Director of your area?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Q7b	If yes, please select your title.	0 = Not selected 1 = Selected
	Director	
	Assistant AD	
	(Sr.) Associate AD	
	Athletic Director/SWA	
Q8 Hiring	Do you have hiring responsibilities?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Q9 Supervise	Do you supervise other full-time employees?	0 = No 1 = Yes

Q10 Income	Please provide your best estimate of your total family income last year. Consider all income from all sources before taxes.	1 = Less than 20,000 2 = 20,000-39,999 3 = 40,000-59,999 4 = 60,000-79,999 5 = 80,000-99,999 6 = 100,000-119,999 7 = 120,000-139,999 8 = 140,000-159,999 9 = 160,000-179,999 10 = 180,000-199,999 11 = 200,000 or more
Q11 Household	What is your marital status?	1 = Married/Civil Union 2 = Divorced 3 = Separated 4 = Single
Q12 Dependents	Are you a parent or legal guardian?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Q13 Politics	How would you characterize your political views?	1 = Far left 2 = Liberal 3 = Middle of the road 4 =Conservative 5 = Far right
Q14 Language	Is English your native language?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Q15 Disability	Do you have any of the following disabilities or medical conditions? (check all that apply)	0 = Not Selected 1 = Selected
	Learning disability (dyslexia, etc.) Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder Physical disability (speech, sight, mobility, etc.) Chronic illness (cancer, diabetes, autoimmune, etc.) Psychological disorder (depression, etc.) Other None of the above	

Q16 Citizenship	What is your citizenship status?	1 = U.S. citizen – born in the U.S. 2 = U.S. citizen – naturalized 3 = Permanent resident (immigrant) 4 = International (F-1, J-1, H1-B, or other visa) 5 = Other
Q17 Race	How do you identify? (Select all that apply)	0 = Not Selected 1 = Selected
	<u>Black</u> African American/Black African Caribbean Other Black <u>Asian</u> East Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Korean) Southeast Asian (Cambodian, Vietnamese) South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Nepalese) Other Asian <u>White</u> European Middle Eastern Other White <u>Hispanic or Latino</u> Mexican American/Chicano Puerto Rican Central American Other Hispanic or Latino American Indian or Alaska Native Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	
Q18 Gender	What is your gender identity?	1 = Female 2 = Male 3 = Transgender
Q19 Orientation	Which term best describes your sexual orientation? (check all that apply)	1 = Bisexual 2 = Gay/Lesbian 3 = Heterosexual/Straight 4 = Questioning/Queer

Q20 Religion	What is your preferred religious identification?	1 = Catholic 2 = Christian (Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Protestant, etc.) 3 = Judaism 4 = Mormon/LDS 5 = Eastern (Buddhist, Baha'i, etc) 6 = Hindu 7 = Muslim/Islam 8 = Atheist 9 = Other affiliation 10 = No religious affiliation
Q21 Define	When you consider **diversity in general**, how important are the following identities?	1 = Not at all Important to 5 = Very Important
	Race/Ethnicity	
	Gender	
	Nationality	
	Age	
	Religion/Spirituality	
	Sexual Orientation	
	Ability/Disability Status	
	Social and Economic Class	
	Language	
	Geographic Origin (Home City/State)	
	Political Beliefs	
	Other (please identify)	
Q22 General Rank	When you think about **diversity in general**, please rank the top three identities in importance to you.	Drop down
Q23 Define in Dept.	When you think about **diversity in the college athletics workplace** how important are the following identities?	1 = Not at all Important to 5 = Very Important
	Race/Ethnicity	
	Gender	
	Nationality	

	Age	
	Religion/Spirituality	
	Sexual Orientation	
	Ability/Disability Status	
	Social and Economic Class	
	Language	
	Geographic Origin (Home City/State)	
	Political Beliefs	
	Other (please identify)	
Q24 Work Rank	When you think about **diversity in the college athletics workplace**, please rank the top three identities in importance to you.	Drop down
Q25 Rating	As a whole, how diverse are members of your athletic department with respect to:	1 =Not at all Diverse to 5 = Very Diverse
	Race/Ethnicity	
	Gender	
	Age	
	Religion/Spirituality	
	Sexual Orientation	
	Ability/Disability Status	
	Political Beliefs	
	Social and Economic Class	
Q26 Represent	How important is it for an athletic department to have a diverse representation of:	1 = Not at all Important to 5 = Very Important
	Student-athletes on teams	
	Coaching staff	
	Academic and other support staff	
	Senior staff/administrators	
	Conference/NCAA Staff	

Q27 Importance	In your view, how important is diversity in an athletic department for the following:	1 = Not at all Important to 5 = Very Important
	Financial health	
	Recruitment of talented student-athletes	
	Athletic achievement of teams	
	College experience of student-athletes	
	Personal growth of student-athletes	
	Recruitment and retention of qualified staff	
	Workplace climate	
Q28 Policies	Are you aware of any athletic department **policies** that address diversity?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Q29 Programs	Are you aware of any athletic department **programs** that address diversity?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Q30 Training	Does your department hold a diversity training?	0 = No 1 = Yes
Q31 Open-ended	This survey has asked you to reflect upon what diversity means and how it relates to the intercollegiate athletic department. If you would like to share additional thoughts on diversity, please do so in the space below.	Write-in

Appendix E.

Sample institutional data report.

University*
Athletic Department Diversity Survey

Data collected and prepared by:

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*Name of University removed

Introduction

The following report presents summaries of results from the Athletic Department Diversity Survey (ADDS). In spring 2014 all Division I FBS member institutions were invited to participate and asked to distribute the online questionnaire to their full-time staff members. A total of 627 surveys (87 partial) were submitted from 20 departments nationwide. This report is based on responses from the **64** full-time staff members from the **University of ----------** who participated in the study.

The report begins with a description of respondents' general background characteristics as well as information about their position in the department. The report then moves to the diversity items including participants' ratings of their department in terms of diversity as well as what social identities are most important to their understanding of the term.

Summaries of responses to quantitative items are presented in table format, and aggregated to the department level. Some items may include percentages from the full survey sample to offer comparison (pending sample size).

At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were asked if they had any additional thoughts on the topic of diversity and were allowed to provide open-ended qualitative feedback. A summary of those responses are included where applicable.

Sample Description

Tables 1-5 show the distribution of respondents with respect to demographic items as well as information regarding their position and tenure in the department.

Regarding individual social identities, the sample was 50% women and 92.1% heterosexual. Almost half (47.6%) indicated that a Bachelor's was their highest degree while 31.7% had a Master's. Almost one third of respondents reported they identified as Catholic (30.6%) or Christian (27.4%), while 29% reported having no religious affiliation and 4.8% were Atheist.

Table 1. Racial Breakdown of Sample for U (%)	
White	80.8
Hispanic	7.7
Black	5.8
Other	1.9

Table 2. Marital and Parental Status for U (% "Yes”)	
Married	66.7
Parent or Legal Guardian	36.5

Tables 3-5 focus on participants' role in the athletic department including their area of focus, job title, responsibilities, and tenure in the field and organization.

Table 3. Departmental Area (Aggregated %)

Coach	15.6
Team Support Staff	10.9
Administration	10.9
HR/Compliance/IT	9.5
Academics/SA Development	7.9
Business/Development	7.8
Marketing (Internal/External)/Communications	15.7
Sports Medicine/Strength & Conditioning	6.3
Event Management/Facilities/Equipment	7.8
Other	7.8

Table 4. Job Title (% "Yes")

Director	15.6
Hiring Responsibilities	31.3
Supervise Others	28.6

Table 5. Tenure in the Field and Department (%)

	In Athletics	In the Athletic Department at U
Less than 1 year	4.8	14.3
1-5 years	29.0	42.9
6-10 years	22.6	19.6
11-15 years	17.7	10.7
16 or more years	25.8	12.5

Diversity Ratings

Survey respondents were asked to rate how diverse their athletic department is in terms of various social identities. Responses ranged from "Not Diverse" to "Very Diverse" on a five-point scale. Table 6 presents summaries for the last two response options, combined (Mostly/Very Diverse) as well as those who reported they were "Not Sure/Don't Know."

Table 6. Diversity Ratings for U Athletic Department (%)

How diverse are members of your athletic department by....	Mostly/Very Diverse	Not Sure/ Don't Know
Race	33.4	---
Gender	65.5	---
Age	63.5	1.6
Sexual Orientation	50.0	19.0
Class	30.2	33.3
Nationality	29.5	8.2
Political Beliefs	19.4	59.7
Religion	14.2	66.7
Ability	6.4	33.3

Understanding of Diversity

The survey asked respondents to rate how important various social identities are to their understanding of diversity in general and specific to the college athletics workplace. All items were measured on a five-point scale and the top two responses are combined and shown in Table 7. Differences of more than 10 percentage points are highlighted.

Table 7. Identity Importance to Diversity (% Important/Extremely Important)

How important are the following identities to diversity...	In GENERAL?	In the COLLEGE ATHLETICS WORKPLACE?
Race	82.2	82.3
Gender	63.0	76.4
Age	55.3	50.9
Nationality	48.2	37.2
Sexual Orientation	47.3	60.7
Class	41.0	41.2
Ability	35.2	39.2
Language	32.7	27.4
Geographic Origin	25.0	29.4
Religion	24.1	21.6
Political Beliefs	14.3	9.8

The survey then asked participants to identify what identities were most important to their understanding of diversity in GENERAL. When asked to rank their top three identities, the majority of respondents (65.5%) selected race as their first choice, gender was second, and interestingly, age was the third highest overall. The top choices for each ranking level are shown in Table 8, with responses over five percent shown.

Table 8. Identity Rankings for Understanding of Diversity in General (%)

	First	Second	Third
Race	65.5	16.7	
Gender	18.2	37.0	5.7
Sexual Orientation		11.0	20.8
Age			34.0
Class			18.9

Participants were then asked to identify the most important identities to their understanding of diversity in the COLLEGE ATHLETICS WORKPLACE. Again, the majority of respondents (72.5%) selected race as their first choice, with gender in second, and age third. The top choices for each level of ranking are shown in Table 9, and only responses over 5% are included.

Table 9. Identity Rankings for Understanding of Diversity in College Athletics (%)

	First	Second	Third
Race	72.5	17.6	
Gender	15.7	39.2	14.0
Age		13.7	34.0
Sexual Orientation		9.8	18.0
Class		5.9	12.0
Geographic Origin			8.0

The ADDS also asked participants to consider the importance of having a diverse representation of individuals on teams, staff, and at the regional or national level. Again, the top two response selections are combined and shown here as well as a comparison to the full sample. Differences of 10 percent or more are highlighted.

Table 10. Importance of Diverse Groups (% Very/Extremely Important)

Importance of having diverse....	Department	Full Sample
Student-athletes on teams	70.4	59.6
Coaching Staff	81.5	69.8
Support Staff	77.8	68.8
Senior Staff/Administration	79.7	70.0
Conference/NCAA Staff	70.3	62.8

Table 11. Departmental Efforts (% "Yes")

Are you aware of any policies on diversity?	78.2
Are you aware of any programs on diversity?	68.5
Does your department hold diversity training?	61.1

Qualitative Responses

At the conclusion of the ADDS, respondents were asked to share any additional thoughts on diversity. Eight people from your department took the opportunity to respond to the open-ended item. Three of these responses spoke of the need for a greater representation of racially diverse staff members particularly in comparison to the student-athlete population.

> "Student-athletes should have role models who can relate to them within the athletic department staff."

> "Diversity is important because the student-athletes need to see it; they're often the most diverse group on any campus to begin with, so their coaches, staff, etc., should reflect that."

One person expressed an appreciation for considering identities beyond race, and broadening the definition of diversity.

Finally, one respondent felt very strongly that the department could do more in terms of diversity training, education, and support. They felt that diversity was often given a cursory treatment and that many would benefit from truly learning about cultural competency and diversity. Additionally, they cited a need not just to offer this education but for the department to truly show its commitment to valuing and prioritizing diversity.

> "Improving this area of our department would enhance everything that we do if it was deemed to be a priority of both our student-athletes, coaches, and staff."

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