Athletic Directors' Perceptions on Issues of Ethics Within Division III Intercollegiate Athletics

Felix M. Moreno

Follow this and additional works at: https://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd
ATHLETIC DIRECTORS' PERCEPTIONS ON ISSUES OF ETHICS WITHIN DIVISION III INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

A Dissertation
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Felix M. Moreno
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
December 2019
Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
School of Graduate Studies and Research  
Department of Professional Studies in Education

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Felix M. Moreno

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education

________________  
David M. Piper, D.Ed.  
Professor of Employment and Labor Relations,  
Advisor

________________  
Kelli Reefer Paquette, Ed.D.  
Professor of Professional Studies in Education

________________  
Meghan Twiest, Ed.D.  
Professor of Professional Studies in Education

ACCEPTED  

________________  
Randy L. Martin, Ph. D.  
Dean  
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Evaluating the decision making of athletic directors is important to better understand their perceptions on ethical issues within Division III college sports. Although mission statements and codes of conduct are in place for these institutions, such guidelines do not necessarily incentivize organizations and personnel to engage in ethical practices that foster honesty, respect, collective responsibility, and integrity. This gap between intent and practice generated four research questions that guided this qualitative study: First, what decisions are made by athletic directors that could lead to unethical practices? Second, how do athletic directors’ perceive media reporting on college athletics? Third, in what way do college athletic directors believe in the NCAA’s ability to promote ethical behavior? Fourth, how do athletic directors see the future of ethics in intercollegiate sports? This research may be key in helping athletic directors understand how competitive college sports can impact their ethical decision making in athletic programs.

The theoretical framework for this study relies on West Point’s Three Rules of Thumb model (Offstein, 2006) and Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) ethical theory. Both theories provide the framework to analyze the Pennsylvania athletic directors’ decision making in this study. The analysis in this study will include recommendations for athletic directors to make ethical decisions with regard to legality and fairness.
DEDICATION

To Laura, my wife, who has been by my side through the good times and bad. Thank you so much for your patience, love, and understanding through this difficult journey. To my lovely three children, Mason Felix, Madelon Lily, and Myles Felix, for giving me a sense of peace and joy in my life. I hope that my pursuit in life may inspire them to be greater than I could ever be.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am so thankful to be surrounded by so many wonderful people in my life. First, I want to thank God. He has been the rock of my life, and all things are possible when I put Him first. Psalm 23 was a constant reminder that I was not alone in this journey of enormous doubts.

I want to thank Cohort 14 family for their constant support in this journey when I felt like giving up. I owe a special thanks to Pamela, Wendy, Al, Justin, Aaron, and Maggie for making sure I was working on my dissertation. Thank you for believing in me.

I am indebted to my dissertation committee, Dr. Piper, Dr. Paquette, and Dr. Twiest, for your guidance. Thank you for your willingness to serve as committee members and teaching me so much.

To Dr. Piper, chair of my dissertation committee, thank you for your vision, faith in me, guidance, and support of my doctorate degree. Thank you for the hours spent working with me and pushing me to write.

To Susan Dawkins, my editor, thank you for being such an awesome and talented human being. Your kindness and words of encouragements during the writing of this dissertation kept me going. I recall many times your words, “You are doing meaningful work, don’t stop, keep going.” I am forever grateful to you.

To Delaware Valley University librarian staff, Claire Drolet, Marian Schad, Deb Helverson, Elise Georgulis, and Karen Sheldon, thank you for assisting me in gathering books and many journal articles.

Finally, thank you to my wife and three children for their support and understanding. I could not have done this without your support. I love you.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limitations and Delimitations of the Study</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Athletic Directors’ Career Patterns and Ethical Training</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NCAA Collegiate Athletic Association Manual</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Code of Ethics, Mission Statements, and Athletic Violations</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The NCAA Mission and Student Participation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Character Development and Sports</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“What is Character?”</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coaches and Character Development</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Challenge for Character Development</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definition of “Ethics”</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Effectiveness of Codes and Athletic Director</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History of Ethics (and Ethical Violations)</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Three Rules of Thumb”</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blanchard and Peale’s Ethic Check</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Pressure to Win and Intercollegiate Athletics Culture</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intercollegiate Athletic Culture</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant Interviewing</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Protocol</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expert Panel</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity and Reliability</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATA AND ANALYSIS</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Analysis</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Data and Findings</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helicopter Parents</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure to Win</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni Pressure</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Influence</td>
<td>81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting and Enrollment Pressure</td>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCAA Rules</td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question One</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Two</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Three</td>
<td>103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Four</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question One</td>
<td>111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Two</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Three</td>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Four</td>
<td>117</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Leadership in High Pressure Moments</td>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Future Studies</td>
<td>125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>140</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A – Permission Email From Rodney Bussey</td>
<td>140</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B – Interview Questions Research Matrix</td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C – Interview Protocol</td>
<td>142</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D – NCAA Pennsylvania Division III Members</td>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E – Consent to Participate in Interview Research</td>
<td>147</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F – Follow-up Email: Consent to Participate in Interview Research</td>
<td>148</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G – Rodney Bussey Interview Protocol Interview Questions</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H – Demographic Questions</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Research Question Matrix</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Participants’ Demographics</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In today’s intercollegiate athletic sport programs, the need to win creates significant pressure (Lumpkin & Doty, 2014). There is an increasing pressure to win in intercollegiate athletics, and many people will do whatever it takes to win even when it is ethically wrong (p.5). The environment that drives this culture has roots traceable to the 1940s. Producing winning teams puts coaches under enormous pressure as their job evaluations depend on their win-loss records; such emphasis on winning creates moral problems (Dodd, Achen, & Lumpkin, 2018; Orlick, 1978; Turpin & Koven, 2018). As for athletic directors, who are responsible for managing intercollegiate athletics sport programs, they expect only the best coaches, which also contributes to the high-pressure culture of intercollegiate athletics (Lederman, 1990; Smith, 2010). However, out of the desire to win-at-all costs, certain actions compromise the morality and priorities of athletic management and other administrators. This perception on winning, which operates in achievement contexts such as sports, is known as an ego-goal orientation. According to Kavussanu and Roberts (2001), an ego-oriented person tends to define success and competence by outperforming others. Nicholls (1989) argues that because of this notion of superiority, people in this competitive setting lack a sense of justice, fairness, and concern for the welfare of others. According to Duda, Olson, and Templin (1991), for example, unsportsmanlike play and cheating is related to ego orientation.

A winning culture without checks and balances loses sight of academic excellence and other values important in leading and mentoring student-athletes. In 2005, for example, Baruch College’s new vice president for student affairs wanted to build winning teams and make the National Collegiate Athletic Association tournaments, according to the athletic director
(Weinreb, 2016). The vice president and former basketball coach were cited for violating NCAA ethical conduct rules and allowing impermissible financial aid benefits to student-athletes (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2016).

The study of ethics in intercollegiate athletics addresses questionable decision making in highly competitive environments that may involve providing an extra benefit to students or engaging in recruiting violations to gain an advantage (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller 2003; Roman & Pantaleon, 2007), and provides the reason for this study. According to Lumpkin and Doty (2014), coaching with ethics and coaching to win has become an increasingly difficult dual task for intercollegiate athletic administrators and coaches alike. One wonders if promoting winning while being ethical can coexist for individuals guiding developing athletes.

In assessing leadership in intercollegiate athletics and sports in general, moral values, which are beliefs that help coaches and athletic directors navigate ethical dilemmas, are not always followed when individuals are truly tested. For example, concussions in sport is a topic that continues to draw public attention in moments when coaches have allowed hurt athletes to play for the purpose of winning games (Lumpkin & Doty, 2014). Tom Savage, a Houston Texan football player who lay shaking and disoriented on the field after striking his head against the ground, was allowed to return to the game several minutes later (Boren, 2017). When Coach Bill O’Brien was asked if he was concerned about Savage returning to play, he made two comments that seemed to rationalize his lack of moral obligation to his players. First, O’Brien said “he would have kept Savage out if he had seen the video” and then added “They [athletic trainers] just come to me that’s kind of where that’s at. I don’t have anything to do with that. All I do is coach” (Boren, 2017, para. 3).
O’Brien was not concerned about his player but about the job he was hired to do – win. Coaches, however, can be committed to winning while recognizing that the welfare of athletes takes priority. Coaches’ roles extend beyond coaching to winning and have been well-documented in the literature (Docheff, 1998; Eitzen, 1999; Roman & Pantaleon, 2007; Sage, 1990). As for playing a concussed athlete, the O’Brien example is one case of unethical decision-making that can be seen in high school, college, and professional leagues when leaders are unable to make decisions for those who may lack the authority to decide for themselves. Consequently, coaches put athletes as well as organizations at risk (Lumpkin & Doty, 2014). NCAA data show that college athletes suffered an average of 10,500 concussions in the last five years, and 3,400 of them were from football (“Concussion," 2017, p. 1).

In an athletics staff meeting years ago, my athletic director communicated that the university president only cares about student-athlete happiness. Student-athletes’ happiness in a highly competitive environment is an unrealistic expectation; when teams are winning, coaches, student-athletes, and the university community as a whole are euphoric. When the competitiveness of a team is absent (due to a young and inexperienced team, for example), the pressure to return to previous glory years creates an unpleasant environment for everyone involved, as was the case with ex-Rutgers basketball coach Mike Rice with his in-your-face tactics toward his players (Carino, 2013). Student-athletes are pushed to work harder by their coaches, and the athletic director pressures the coach into producing a winning team. It is this environment where the pressure to win-at-all-cost hinders individuals’ ability to make ethical decisions that prioritize the welfare of student-athletes and the guiding principles of the organization (Carino, 2013, Ehrlich, 1995; Fleisher, Goff, & Tollison, 1992; Lumpkin et al., 2012; Nyquist, 1985; Staudohar & Zepel, 2004).
In various intercollegiate athletic programs, a plethora of scandals reflect an environment of winning at all costs. To advocate for intercollegiate athletics, the goal of this research was to explore how intercollegiate athletics and academics can coexist while promoting a winning culture without compromising moral values.

To illustrate the winning-at-all-cost mentality, it is impossible to ignore one of the biggest scandals in intercollegiate athletics in which those in leadership positions failed to act ethically and morally (Vise, 2011). Pennsylvania State University head football coach Joe Paterno, a great leader for young men for 61 years, only reported the Jerry Sandusky sexual abuse incident to the athletic director, Timothy Curley. In a statement announcing his resignation, he stated, “This is a tragedy. It is one of the greatest sorrows of my life. With the benefit of hindsight, I wish I had done more” ("Statement: Joe Paterno," 2011, para. 4).

Both Bill O’Brien and Joe Paterno possessed exceptional leadership skills that many admire. However, these two outstanding coaches, in a critical moment with an opportunity to make an ethical decision regarding the safety of others, failed the leadership role bestowed upon them.

Ethical decision making in athletics extends beyond the walls of the athletics office. In Daniel De Vise’s (2011) article, “Eight Scandals that Ended College Presidencies,” two of the eight scandals pertained to unethical practices in intercollegiate sports:

1. *University of Colorado recruiting scandal.* President Elizabeth Hoffmann resigned in 2005 amid allegations that sex, alcohol, and drugs were used to recruit football players.

2. *St. Bonaventure NCAA scandal.* The president, athletic director, and basketball coach all resigned or lost their jobs in 2003, and the chairman of the Board of
Trustees committed suicide, all over the revelation that a men’s basketball player had played after failing to meet NCAA academic standards. (Vise, 2011)

In these two athletics scandals, the presidents and other officials failed to follow their institutions’ mission statements and the NCAA Ethical Code of Conduct (see NCAA Ethical Conduct in Chapter 2), which exist to communicate organizations’ values. President Hoffman violated the third guiding principle, that the university will “promote and uphold the principles of ethics, integrity, transparency, and accountability” (see University of Colorado Guiding Principles, 2010). New York Times reporter Kirk Johnson wrote that the investigations regarding the recruiting scandal failed to “root out the problems of big-money college sports and national competition for players” (2005, p. 3), which created an environment conducive to recruiting violations. As for the St. Bonaventure scandal, the root of the problem was that a student with a vocational certificate for welding and not an associate degree was allowed to transfer (Weir, 2012, p. 2). In outlining these violations with respect to NCAA ethical conduct guidelines, St. Bonaventure violated the third guiding principle outlining impermissible conduct regarding prospective or enrolled student-athletes.

Many institutional leaders, presidents, and athletic directors are frequently faced with challenges in managing ethical improprieties while upholding both university and intercollegiate athletics regulations (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2003; Fizel & Fort, 2004; Nyquist, 1985; Spivey, 2007). According to Fizel and Fort (2004), the process of upholding athletics regulations is difficult since boards of trustees have the ultimate control over American colleges and universities to fire and hire presidents and “rule on broad matters of academic policy” (p. 41). Boards are “protective of their power and influence” and will not give “complete power to presidents over governance of athletic programs” even though it is a logical step (p. 41). The
NCAA guidelines are clear, but many athletic administrators are not able to implement them. For example, Article 2, Principles for Conduct of Intercollegiate Athletics, delineates fundamental policies that member institutions must follow. The basic principles outlined in this section include institutional control, student-athlete welfare, sportsmanship, ethical conduct, sound academic standards, amateurism, and rules compliance. According to Article 2:

It is the responsibility of each member institution to control its intercollegiate athletics program in compliance with the rules and regulations of the Association. The institution’s president or chancellor is responsible for the administration of all aspects of the athletics program, including approval of the budget and audit of all expenditures.

(Revised: 10/3/05) (*NCAA Manual, 2017, p. 3*)

Gerdy (1997) believes that the focus on ethics has been lost at all levels, from senior administrators through athletic staff: “While well aware of what athletics should be, we continue to allow principles set out in the NCAA Constitution to be compromised in the name of more television dollars, championships banners, personal financial gain, and ego gratification” (1997, p. 5). One university president succinctly captured his view: “Presidents of big schools aren’t listening and don’t want to. There are lots of fans and lots of dough working against that. They don’t want to push against these interests” (Knight Commission, 2009, p. 16). The Knight Commission also revealed that most presidents believe that successful athletic programs benefit their institutions. These presidents believe that athletic success boosts school spirit (97 percent), helps gain national publicity (94 percent), raises the profile of their institutions among elected officials (93 percent), and improves the overall reputation of the school (93 percent) (p. 42).

For many competitive intercollegiate programs, sustaining ethical leadership is not an easy task. When the singular focus is on winning, ethical excellence is difficult to achieve
Ethical leaders will respond with integrity, emotional intelligence, self-awareness, commitment, and authenticity when dealing with pressure situations (p. 4).

Gerdy (1997) believes that the winning-at-all-cost mentality is a result of the pressure for athletic departments to fund their programs: “Less pressure to balance budgets means less pressure to win-at-all costs; less pressure to win-at-all costs means more room to make decisions based upon the academic and personal welfare of the student-athlete and the broader good of the institution” (p. 10). Current studies find fundraising to be a major role for both presidents and athletic directors in meeting institutional goals (Smith, 2015; Sturgis, 2006).

In a 1990 poll asking university personnel to choose a primary consideration for Division I athletics programs, 87 percent of university presidents, 83 percent of trustees, 88 percent of athletic directors, 76 percent of faculty, and 93 percent of coaches agree that the top consideration is for student-athletes to earn degrees (Knight Commission, 2001). Since that study, progress has been positive with presidential governance and academic reform. However, the Commission (2009) has acknowledged that the cost to compete in intercollegiate sports such as the Football Bowl Subdivisions (FBS, formerly Division IA) has been, in part, the problem for a “public university who has directed 60 percent of its capital expenditures toward a non-academic auxiliary unit whose annual budget is only eight percent of the entire university” (p. 1). For this reason, the Knight Commission conducted a study in 2009 to address the cost of intercollegiate athletics by focusing on FBS university presidents and views on the cost of economic pressure tied with participation in Division IA. University presidents were asked about the costs and financing of intercollegiate athletics and action they could take to effect change. Their responses centered on the themes quoted below:

1. Presidents’ belief that they have limited power to effect change
2. Frustration over the difficulties posed by anti-trust legislation with regard to controlling costs
3. Concern that outside sources of income diminish presidential authority over athletics and the ability to influence reform
4. Doubt that the conferences will make decisions or take actions that are against the self-interests of the most successful conference institutions
5. Doubt regarding the ability or will of the NCAA to address financial pressures affecting FBS [Football Bowl Subdivision] institutions
6. Support of the Knight Commission’s use of its “bully pulpit” (Knight Commission, 2009, p. 16)

While most agree that student-athletes’ degree attainment is a priority, there are challenges in supporting student-athletes academically. A study examining the challenges for supporting student-athletes revealed that “limited resources coupled with the pressure to win presented substantial challenges for the athletic department to support and foster the development of its student-athletes beyond the athletic realm of competition” (Nite, 2012, p. 6).

In the context of the challenges described above, intercollegiate athletics have received much negative press regarding unethical behavior. The growing concern about abuses in intercollegiate athletics that has threatened the integrity of higher education prompted the Knight Foundation to engage in an 18-month study that included athletes, educators, coaches, journalists, and administrators (Knight Foundation, 1993, p. 15). In their 1989 poll asking if big-time intercollegiate athletics were out of control, 78 percent concurred that the situation was out of control; in 1993, 52 percent felt the same way (Knight Foundation, 1993). The Knight Commission concluded that the problems facing intercollegiate athletics were due to a
governance structure that excluded college presidents. In 1996, the NCAA decided to replace the control held primarily by athletic administrators with college presidents to oversee all planning, policy activities, and budgets (Knight Foundation, 2001). The change in governance structure created another step with previously established rules in the NCAA to clean up scandalous environments and reestablish the integrity of the academy.

Statement of the Problem

The need to win at all costs has placed student-athletes in potentially negative environments. Incidents have occurred in which injured athletes have been required to continue to participate in athletic events, even with the risk that further injury could occur (Roman & Pantaleon, 2007). Furthermore, intercollegiate athletics at colleges and universities have received much negative press regarding unethical behavior that extends beyond playing injured athletes. Examples include sexual misconduct, unsportsmanlike conduct, recruitment violations, lying, cheating, altering transcripts, changing grades, and playing athletes who are either injured or may get hurt for the sake of winning games (Dodd, Achen, & Lumpkin, 2018; Smith, 2010; Vise, 2011). A concussed Houston Texan athlete was allowed to play even though his health was likely at risk. The University of Colorado recruiting scandal involved allegations that methods used to recruit talented football prospective student-athletes were not consistent with institution policy and NCAA rules, which created an unfair advantage (“College Town Grapples with Recruiting Scandal,” 2004). Meanwhile, St. Bonaventure allowed a student-athlete who did not meet NCAA academic standards to play basketball (“What Went Wrong at St. Bonaventure,” 2003). With the greater pressure that coaches feel to win, the temptation to ignore NCAA rules to get an edge seems to be a problem with Division I athletic programs. The overwhelming unethical practices surrounding Division I intercollegiate athletic programs have resulted from
the growth and commercialization of the sport and the significant influence of alumni on college campuses and the surrounding community (Frey, 1985).

While Division I scandals dominate the headlines, similar issues arise in Division III sports (Weinreb 2016). According to Inside Higher Ed (New, 2016), several Division III programs were awarding financial aid based on athletic ability, which is prohibited for Division III programs. The pressure to win or gain an advantage for participation in a national championship exists outside of the most well-known institutions (Weinreb, 2016). According to Weinreb (2016), many Division III institutions have began to embrace different priorities by lowering their admissions standards to aid the program. Evaluating the responses of Pennsylvania Division III athletic directors who govern and regulate the same programs is important to better understanding the ethical decision-making process in this and other divisions; thus, this study was undertaken. Results from this study will allow athletic directors to examine their own decision making, evaluate their own programs, and address ethical implications raised by this study.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the ethical decision-making processes of college and university athletic directors. This research will follow Bussey’s (2008) methodology in the study, *Perceptions of Selected Athletic Directors in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex Region Regarding Factors and Issues of Ethics in Interscholastic Athletics*. He designed interview questions specifically for athletic directors; permission to use his instrument was granted (see Appendix A). Bussey’s study revealed the following:

1. Media plays a major role in public perception of interscholastic athletics.
2. The pressure to win leads to unethical practices.
3. Observation is the primary method athletic directors use to assess the ethical achievements of their departments.

4. Parental involvement ranges from low to extreme.

5. Club teams negatively impact interscholastic athletics.

6. The UIL [University Interscholastic League] is very effective in providing ethical guidelines and support of interscholastic athletics.

7. There is a shortage of qualified coaches in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex

8. The athletic directors have a positive outlook on ethics and integrity in Texas interscholastic athletics (p. 63)

To better understand ethical misconduct in intercollegiate athletic programs, the study seeks to find “why” athletic directors may disregard institutional policy and NCAA guidelines when pressured to win and also seeks to identify differences in how college athletic directors respond to these situations.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the decision making of college and university athletic directors. The research questions include the following:

1. What decisions are made by athletic directors that could lead to unethical practices?

2. How do athletic directors’ perceive media reporting on college athletics?

3. In what way do college athletic directors believe in the NCAA ability to promote ethical behavior?

4. How do athletic directors see the future of ethics in intercollegiate sports?
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework selected for this study is drawn from the West Point Three Rules of Thumb model (Offstein, 2006) and Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) ethical theory. The West Point model provides basic ethical questions that athletic directors can use when they approach moments in which their honor is tested. This model allows athletic directors dealing with ethical dilemmas to ask the following questions:

Rule One: Does this action attempt to deceive anyone or allow anyone to be deceived?

Rule Two: Does this action gain or allow the gain of privilege or advantage to which I or someone else would not otherwise be entitled?

Rule Three: Would I be satisfied by the outcome if I were on the receiving end of this action? (Offstein, 2006, p. 33)

Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) Ethics Check Questions theory and Five Core Principles of Ethical Power are consistent with the Three Rules of Thumb model. Blanchard and Peale’s ethics check could help athletic directors approach ethical dilemmas by showing them how to examine the problem at several different levels (p. 18). The ethics check is comprised of three questions (quoted below) that the authors suggest will guide athletic directors toward a pattern of “right” behavior that will become habitual:

1. Is it legal? Will you [athletic director] be violating either civil law or organization policy?
2. Is it balanced? Is it fair to all concerned in the short term as well as the long term? Does it promote win-win relationships?
3. How will [this decision] make you feel about yourself? Will it make you proud? Would you feel good if your decision was published in the newspapers? Would you feel good if your kids and grandkids knew about it? (p.20)

Applying both the Three Rules of Thumb model and Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) Ethics Questions to ethical dilemmas faced by athletic directors can simplify otherwise complex situations. If one of the Rules of Thumb is violated, for example, athletic directors “will immediately know they are in danger of not surviving the moment with their honor intact” (Offstein, 2006, p. 32). Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) first question addresses existing standards for dealing with ethical dilemmas by asking “Is it legal?” The question provides the framework by which athletic directors consider the problem in terms of university policy, or code of ethics, or standard of conduct. The Three Rules of Thumb model can provide athletic administrators and coaches with the clarity and mental acuity to make ethical decisions (Offstein, 2006). In the cases of the Penn State scandal, University of Colorado recruiting scandal, and St. Bonaventure NCAA scandal, the Three Rules of Thumb model and Blanchard and Peale’s theory would have informed these leaders of the ethical implications of their decisions.

**Significance of the Study**

At all levels of higher education athletics, athletic directors are responsible for managing athletic programs. This research will help athletic directors to address ethical issues impacting intercollegiate athletics, including areas of misconduct such as unsportsmanlike conduct, recruitment violations, lying, cheating, altering transcripts, changing grades, and playing athletes who are either injured or may get hurt for the sake of winning games. With the findings about ethical decision making for those managing intercollegiate athletics, Pennsylvania athletic
directors will be able to examine the cultures of their programs and the implications when a Three Rule of Thumb model is not in place.

Based on the extensive NCAA Major Infractions list for Division I sports, which seems to have shifted over to Division III institutions, and the on-going scandals that continue to plague intercollegiate athletics, more research on ethical practices in all phases of the athletic program must continue. This study will focus primarily on athletic directors, as they are under enormous pressure to create a winning program, and the impact their decisions may have on the coaches they supervise.

**Research Design**

A qualitative basic interpretive approach was used to explore the decision making of college and university athletic directors. A basic interpretive approach considers “beliefs or framework that guide the actions of the researcher in conducting the study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 325). The interpretive approach allows for a better understanding of athletic directors’ decision making on ethical and unethical behaviors. Furthermore, this approach allows participants to describe their inner thoughts and experiences (Creswell, 2013). A basic interpretive approach is appropriate for inquiry into athletic director ethical decision-making experiences as a result of the pressure to win. Furthermore, this interpretive approach allows for an analysis of how athletic directors make decisions in a culture where winning is the only measure of success.

The sample for this study included six NCAA Division III college and university athletic directors who have worked in Pennsylvania for at least three years. Pennsylvania currently has 61 athletic directors at the Division III level and 16 who met the criteria; six were invited to participate after the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board approved the
study. One-on-one interviews, following Bussey’s (2008) interview protocol, with the six athletic directors were conducted as one of three primary methods for data collection. The review of athletic department codes of conduct and related intercollegiate athletic documents, such as institution mission statements, provided additional data sources. Member checking, a technique used to improve the credibility of qualitative research, provided the final source for data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher used multiple sources of data, or triangulation, to improve the validity of the study (Berg & Lune, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Silverman, 2013).

**Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

Ethics is a risky discussion topic for anyone in a leadership role because ethical violations can lead to dismissal: For that very reason, participants may not have wished to speak openly about ethical impropriety as they, their school, or both might easily be identified due to the small sample size of this study.

The nature of the sample also creates limitations. First, the study was limited to the experience of Pennsylvania athletic directors who were interviewed and by their willingness to share their views on issues of ethical and unethical behavior. Secondly, the study was limited to a purposeful sampling of athletic directors of six athletic directors of 61 Pennsylvania Division III members. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized beyond the sample.

The study was guided by two specific delimitations. First, this study was conducted with subjects in Pennsylvania who are serving as college and university athletic directors. Secondly, the athletic director must have been employed as an athletic director for a minimum of three years.
Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions of key terms were utilized.

Achievement Goal Perspective: “the driving force of individuals engaging in achievement situations” (Kavussanu & Roberts, 2001, p. 38).

Code of Conduct or Ethics: “a mechanism facilitating and ensuring ethical behaviors within organizations” (Yallop, 2012, p. 502).

Ego Goal Orientation: “person tends to use other-referenced criteria to define success and judge competence, and feels successful when he or she has outperformed others” (Kavussanu & Roberts, 2001, p. 38)

Honor: “attributes of leaders who shape their actions and decisions against a higher, usually noble principle” (Offstein, 2006, p. 6)

Leadership: “process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers” (Gardner, 1990, p. 1).

Moment: “point in time in which one enters a decisional intersection and one’s honor is either knowingly or unknowingly tested” (Offstein, 2006, p. 14).

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA): “a membership-driven organization dedicated to safeguarding the well-being of student-athletes and equipping them with the skills to succeed on the playing field, in the classroom, and throughout life” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.).

NCAA Division III: The largest of the three divisions both in number of participants and number of schools; they do not offer athletic scholarships to student-athletes. “Academics are the primary focus for student-athletes and the division minimizes the conflicts between athletics and
academics by creating shorter practice, playing season, and regional competition that reduces
time away from academic studies” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.).

Rationalization: “justification for things that we know are wrong” (Offstein, 2006, p. 28).

Summary

Evaluating the decision making of athletic directors is important to better understand
ethical improprieties in college sports. In the wake of the scandals that have plagued
intercollegiate athletics, athletic directors are positioned to address ethical issues currently
impacting intercollegiate athletics. Mission statements and codes of conduct are institutional
documents to guide employees. However, these guidelines do not always incentivize
organizations and personnel to engage in ethical practices. The pressure to win that athletic
directors and administrators face from stakeholders can impact ethical decision making
(DeSensi, 2014; Lumpkin & Doty, 2014).

The research may be key in helping athletic directors understand how competitive
programs can impact ethical decision making when winning becomes the singular focus.
Chapter two provides context for this study by exploring the scholarship on this topic. It
includes more detailed information related to the main focus of the study, such as definitions of
extics, code of ethics, and code of conduct, NCAA ethical conduct guidelines, character
development, coaches and job satisfaction, coaches under fire, and intercollegiate athletics
programs.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine decision making by athletic directors that could lead to unethical practices, as well as media reporting on intercollegiate athletics, the NCAA’s ability to promote ethical behavior, and the future of ethics in intercollegiate athletics. The NCAA member institutions are categorized into three divisions: I, II, and III. Together, NCAA member institutions include 98 athletic directors in Pennsylvania alone (14 Division I, 23 Division II, and 61 Division III). The three divisions are separated by the level of competitors’ skill and athletic departments’ budgets. For example, Division I schools have the largest student bodies, athletic budgets, and athletic scholarships. Division II institutions have smaller athletic department budgets and fewer scholarships. Division III schools offer no athletic scholarships, and, as a result, many of their athletes are on need-based financial aid (NCAA, n.d.). All three divisions promote an environment that encourages student-athletes to excel academically and athletically, but there is less focus on generating revenue in Division III institutions.

This study’s theoretical framework is grounded in two concepts related to ethical decision making, and this chapter will present a review of the literature related to the study of ethics and intercollegiate athletics, with a focus on Division III sports. It will provide an overview of the history of ethics (and ethical violations) in college sports. The review of literature is organized into three sections. The first section of this review explores athletic directors’ positions and training. Additionally, the first section also reviews the NCAA manual with regards to rules, ethical conduct, mission statements, and coaches who impart character development for their student-athletes; it also provides context for the role athletic directors play in managing intercollegiate athletics. The second section examines the theoretical framework for this study,
which includes West Point’s Three Rules of Thumb (Offstein, 2006) and Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) Ethics Check questions and the five core principles of ethical power. These two concepts can inform the ethical decision-making perspectives of athletic directors, which is the focus of this study. The final section reviews the pressure to win and the intercollegiate athletics culture within which athletic directors and coaches work. The discussion of intercollegiate athletics culture highlights leadership failures in athletic directors’ ethical decision making, which can lead to policies being ignored, rules violations being encouraged or overlooked, and coaches being fired for losing records.

**Athletic Directors’ Career Patterns and Ethical Training**

The focus of the study is on decisions made by athletic directors that could lead to unethical practice. A review of the literature on their career patterns and ethical training provides important context for the study. A common theme in the literature related to career paths of athletic directors is their previous athletic experiences. Fitzgerald, Sagaria, and Nelson (1994) find that athletic directors who competed at the collegiate level and then were college coaches were the most likely to secure athletic director positions. Their study suggests that careers of athletic directors evolve in a common and sequential manner that begins with participation as an athlete and continues with high school coaching, collegiate coaching, serving as assistant athletic director, and, ultimately, securing an athletic director position (p. 14). These experiences are integral for a career as an athletic director (Armstrong, 2015; Mullin, 1980; Wicker, 2008).

In a report titled *An Inside Look at Division I and Division III College Athletic Directors*, the following statistics were reported: 67 percent of current Division III athletic directors were collegiate head coaches at some point in their careers, while only 22 percent of current Division I
athletic directors were previously head coaches; 57 percent of current Division I athletic
directors had experience as student-athletes, compared to 58 percent of current athletic directors in Division III; and 32 percent of current Division I athletic directors had earned advanced
degrees in education, while 34 percent of current Division III athletic directors have done so (Wong & Matt, 2014). Lumpkin, Archen, and Hyland’s (2015) study assessing the background and career paths of athletic directors finds sport management to be the most popular major across all three divisions. In another study, which compared the job responsibilities of intercollegiate athletic directors and athletic general managers, most important educational preparation for both professions was found in “athletic administration, speech communication, public relations, and business management” (Hatfield, Wrenn, & Bretting, 1987, p. 143).

The focus of this part of the literature review was first to explore athletic director career patterns and training to better understand their role and, second, to identify skills they learned as student-athletes and as coaches that may impact their ethical decision making with regard to mission statements, the National Collegiate Athletic Association guidelines, and institutional codes of ethics. These documents serve to assist athletic directors in the management of their programs.

**NCAA Collegiate Athletic Association Manual**

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) manual is distributed to directors of athletics; faculty athletics representatives; senior administrators, presidents or chancellors; conference commissioners; and compliance officers (NCAA, 2008). The NCAA mission is to maintain an environment in which student-athletes and athletic activities are central to the educational experience of the student, and in which coaches play a significant role as educators.
To fully understand ethical violations with regards to the pressure to win in athletics, it is important to understand the content of this manual.

The NCAA has established a standard operating manual with guidelines about honesty and sportsmanship, sports wagering, unethical conduct, and several other ethical issues (NCAA, 2018). To address the ability of the NCAA to promote ethical behavior and the future of ethics in intercollegiate sports, the following three NCAA bylaws, quoted verbatim below, anchor this study:

1. **Honesty and Sportsmanship:** Individuals employed by (or associated with) a member institution to administer, conduct, or coach intercollegiate athletics and all participating student-athletes shall act with honesty and sportsmanship at all times so that intercollegiate athletics as a whole, their institution and they, as individuals, shall represent the honor and dignity of fair play and the generally recognized high standards associated with wholesome competitive sports (p. 45)

2. **Sports Wagering:** Sports wagering includes placing, accepting or soliciting a wager (on a staff member’s or student-athlete’s own behalf or on the behalf of others) of any type with any individual or organization on any intercollegiate, amateur, or professional team or contest. Examples of sports wagering include, but are not limited to, the use of a bookmaker or parlay card; internet sports wagering; auctions in which bids are placed on teams, individuals, or contests; and pools or fantasy leagues in which an entry fee is required and there is an opportunity to win a prize (p. 45)

3. **Unethical Conduct:** Unethical conduct by a prospective or enrolled student-athlete or a current or former institutional staff member, which includes any individual who
performs work for the institution or the athletics department even if he or she does not receive compensation for such work, may include, but is not limited to, the following:

a. Refusal to furnish information relevant to an investigation of a possible violation of an NCAA regulation when requested to do so by the NCAA or the individual’s institution;

b. Knowing involvement in offering or providing a prospective or an enrolled student-athlete an improper inducement or extra benefit or improper financial aid;

c. Knowingly furnishing or knowingly influencing others to furnish the NCAA or the individual’s institution false or misleading information concerning an individual’s involvement in or knowledge of matters relevant to a possible violation of an NCAA regulation;

d. Receipt of benefits by an institutional staff member for facilitating or arranging a meeting between a student-athlete and an agent, financial advisor, or a representative of an agent or advisor (e.g., “runner”);

e. Knowing involvement in providing a banned substance or impermissible supplement to student-athletes, or knowingly providing medications to student-athletes contrary to medical licensure, commonly accepted standards of care in sports medicine practice, or state or federal law. This provision shall not apply to banned substances for which the student-athlete has received a medical exception per Bylaw 31.2.3.2; however, the substance must be provided in accordance with medical licensure, commonly accepted standards of care, and state or federal law;
f. Engaging in any athletics competition under an assumed name or with intent to otherwise deceive; or

g. Failure to provide complete and accurate information to the NCAA, the NCAA Eligibility Center or the institution’s admissions athletic department regarding an individual’s amateur status. (p. 45)

These three NCAA bylaws were outlined because of violations in Division III programs. For example, the University of Wisconsin at La Crosse was cited for giving athletic scholarships when the school allowed athletic staff members to serve on scholarships selection committees that provided awards to athletes, a practice prohibited by the NCAA III Bylaw 15.4.5 (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2012). Elmhurst College was cited for awarding scholarships based on athletic merit to student-athletes, which is a practice forbidden by the NCAA III Bylaw 10.0 (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017). The College of Mount Saint Vincent head soccer coach arranged for his father to co-sign a student loan for a prospective student-athlete, and the athletic director denied his approval of the meeting, a violation prohibited by the NCAA III Bylaw 10.01.1 [Honesty and Sportsmanship] and 10.1 [Unethical Conduct] (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2018).

**Code of Ethics, Mission Statements, and Athletic Violations**

To better understand ethical decision-making that may lead to unethical practice, it is important to examine codes of ethics, mission statements, and athletic violations. Ethical codes are formal documents consisting of principles or moral values used to guide employees (Kaptein, 2004; Sacconi, 1999; Schwartz, 2001, 2004, 2005). According to Molander (1987), ethical codes are the “middle ground where internalized societal values and the law overlap” (p. 619). Chua and Rahman (2011) find that having organizations endorse ethical codes encourages staff
members to behave ethically. These codes embody moral values that social consensus constitutes as permissible practice.

In regard to intercollegiate athletics and ethics, DeSensi and Rosenberg (2003) point out that a “code serves as a means to guide, motivate, and monitor the performance of the sport manager in the ethical delivery of the services of the organization” (p. 136). These trained professionals are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the profession and organizations they serve; they should strive to “embody values, virtues, and standards of excellence appropriate to teaching, coaching, research, and other sport and physical education professions” (p. 137). Considering their social responsibilities and ethical duties to others should be an obligation for sports managers (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2003).

Similarly, mission statements articulate policies for guiding organizations’ strategic decision-making and long-term goal attainment processes (Sack, 2011, p. 5). When mission statements are defined appropriately, organizational effectiveness and goal progress can be evaluated. Mission statements and corresponding codes of conduct are designed to assist students, faculty, and administrators in making good decisions. According to Ireland and Hitt (1992), “mission statements can help focus the organization on what really matters – to itself as well as its stakeholders” (p. 34). Furthermore, mission statements are “intended to provide motivation, general direction, an image of the company’s character, and set of attitudes, through which actions are guided” (p. 35). Codes of ethics and codes of conduct are important for higher education institutions as they address ethical behaviors (Rezaee, Elmore, & Szendi, 2001).

For most athletic programs that have achieved notoriety for ethical violations, a review of their institutional mission statements and codes of conduct and ethics reveal a disconnect between those documents and the conduct of administrators, coaches, and student-athletes at
institutions facing athletic ethical scandals. The mission statements included common themes advocating “integrity and equity that enable to student-athletes to achieve excellence in their academic and athletic pursuits” (University of Minnesota, 2018), a daily commitment to “compliance, diversity, equity, and fiscal responsibility” (Penn State University, 2018), and “understanding of the ethical responsibilities and implications of one’s work and personal actions” (Arthur W. Page Center, n.d.).

Intercollegiate athletics have received much negative press regarding unethical behavior. For example, at Penn State the failure to report the sexual abuse of minors by a member of the coaching staff led to the firing of the long-standing football coach, the university president, and other administrators (Viera, 2011). The Penn State University scandal of 2011 was merely one of the many ethics scandals that have plagued intercollegiate athletic programs. In 2013, Rutgers University fired basketball coach Mike Rice after a videotape surfaced that showed him “shoving, grabbing and throwing balls at players and using gay slurs during practice” (Katz, 2013, p. 1). In 2014, one of the worst examples that year of athletic and academic misconduct occurred at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, where student-athletes received inflated grades in order to keep them eligible to play (Neff & Kane, 2014). The scandal centered on two former student-athletes in what were called “paper classes,” in which the class never met and only a final paper was required (Jacobs, 2015, p. 1). According to Jacobs, “these classes were explicitly utilized by members of both UNC academic and athletic departments to help athletes achieve a minimum GPA to maintain their NCAA eligibility” (p. 3). This unethical behavior was underscored by the fact that UNC eagerly admitted students with poor academic eligibility and kept those athletes playing year after year by knowingly utilizing such fraudulent
methods. By doing so, the first compromise of academic principles by creating such “paper classes” later fostered more extensive corruption (Smith & Willingham, 2015, p. 1).

Though those examples illustrate emerging ethical improprieties in a higher learning environment, they do not align with the school mission, code of ethics, and the vision set by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). For Division III institutions, for example, the goal is to make learning the “primary focus for student-athletes and the division minimizes the conflicts between athletics and academics by creating shorter practice, playing season, and regional competition that reduces time away from academic studies” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.). The NCAA provisions are clear in the focus on academics, especially at the Division III level, to assist athletic directors in navigating through decisions that could lead to unethical violation.

To explain these ethical improprieties, DeSensi and Rosenberg (1996) state that “the drive to succeed in Western nations, together with the “winning is everything” ” and “win at all costs” attitudes, have adversely affected many people’s ethical and moral judgments and actions” (p. 4). Through the exposure academic institutions receive through their successful athletic teams and the commercialization of sports and media coverage, the public has become aware of corruption and ethical improprieties in athletics (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2003).

It is clear that there is a lack of supervision of coaches by their athletic directors. The codes of ethics and mission statements may not provide athletic directors clear direction to lead their athletic programs.

**The NCAA Mission and Student Participation**

Intercollegiate athletic mission statements typically endorse “a commitment to the development of athletes academically, athletically, socially, and ethically” (Lumpkin, 2009, p.
Intercollegiate athletic statements are in place to help to create an educational experience for athletes while maximizing their athletic potential and preparing them for life. Lumpkin (2009) explains, regarding the role in intercollegiate athletics, that “coaches, players, and administrators, comply with institutions’ and intercollegiate athletic organizations’ regulations, respect each individual, and promote integrity within the context of fiscal responsibility” (p. 65). NCAA member institutions share common beliefs and indicate their commitment to such beliefs by endorsing seven core values, quoted verbatim below:

1. The collegiate model of athletics where the students participate as an avocation, balancing their academic, social life, and athletic experience.
2. The highest level of integrity and sportsmanship.
3. The pursuit of excellence in both academics and athletics.
4. The supporting role that intercollegiate athletics plays in the highest education mission and in enhancing the sense of community and strengthening the identity of member institution.
5. An inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes and career opportunities for coaches and administrators from diverse backgrounds.
6. Respect for institutional autonomy and philosophical differences.
7. Presidential leadership (of intercollegiate athletics at the campus, conference and national levels). (NCAA Core Values, 2018)

Given these points, the primary focus of intercollegiate athletic mission statements is to create an environment conducive to student learning. For example, the UNC academic scandals violated the first three core values, which NCAA member institutions share in common.
Steven (2012) explains that the core values learned through athletic participation are beneficial later in life. He writes, “Through participation in high school athletics, students learn how to work with others, employ problem-solving skills, and manage both successes and failures” (p. 32). Stevens collected the following testimonies of individuals whose lives were shaped through participation in interscholastic athletics:

My greatest experiences, the things that stand out in mind, are my high school experiences…the years from 14 to 17 are the ones that shape who a person is. You are teaching love and passion for the game. You are teaching how to deal with adversity. Where else do you learn that you have to show up for work? Where else do you learn that I have responsibility for not only myself but those beside me? (testimony of Joe Theismann, former Super Bowl quarterback and NFL network analyst at the opening general session of the National Athletic Directors Conference-December 11, 2011.) (p. 32).

My participation in high school athletics was fairly extensive. I played football, basketball and ran track. I also played American Legion baseball in the summer even though I was not on a high school team. Essentially I was never out of season. I think that the work ethic, the discipline, and the experience in working with a variety of people and coaches was very helpful in shaping those same skills in my later life. High school athletics served as an excellent preparation for life (testimony of Dr. Tom Osborne, Director of Athletics, University of Nebraska, former head football coach at the University of Nebraska and member of the U.S House of Representatives). (p. 32)
The greatest things that I have learned from coaching and being involved in athletics has been a strong sense of morality and ethics as well as learning to overcome adversity; being able to bounce back and continue to compete after a tough loss. If I was advising young people who are just getting started in the field of athletics, I would strongly recommend that they have a strong set of morals and ethics, and to always do the right thing. Also, they should work very hard at networking, especially with people who they believe have a strong character (testimony of Frank McLaughlin, Executive Director of Intercollegiate Athletics and Recreation, Fordham University, Bronx, NY). (p. 32)

Former athletes seem to agree that participation in sports builds character (Docheff, 1998; Eitzen, 1999; Sage, 1998, 1990).

**Character Development and Sports**

U.S. college sports, including football, baseball, crew, and track and field, were started by students in the 1860s and 1870s. By the 1920s, intercollegiate athletics had so grown in popularity that a need for effective administration arose. To manage these programs, coaches and other administrative staffers were employed (Keefe, 1975). Liu (2012) states that participation in sports has been linked to colleges and universities because athletic participation serves as an educational tool and enhances the mission of higher education. Similarly, Arnold (1999) argues that sport is a form of moral education when it is viewed as a valued human practice.

Research has consistently found that sports build character (Docheff, 1998; Eitzen, 1999; Sage, 1990, 1998). Lumpkin and Stokowski (2011) indicate that while interscholastic sports allow athletes to enhance sports skills, physical fitness, self-discipline, sportsmanship, teamwork, time-management skills, self-confidence, and mental toughness, they also promote life skills and
life lessons as well as improve academic performance – in other words, athletic participation builds character.

“What is Character?”

The term “character” includes moral traits such as honesty, integrity, generosity, and trustworthiness (Bredemeier & Shields, 2006). In contrast, psychologists and theorists of the late 1900s abnegated the term in part because characteristics of the environment dictate the behavior of an individual (Papalia, Sterns, Feldman, & Camp, 2007). This notion was supported by Hartshorne and May (1928) in a series of studies. Their studies (as cited in Bredemeier & Shields, 2006) noted that children could not be allocated into categories such as “honest” and “dishonest,” or cheaters and “noncheaters,” as children may tell the truth in one situation but not in another (p. 2).

Hartshorne and May (1928) and Kohlberg (1981, 1984) found environmental characteristics rather than individual character to be culprits of dishonesty. Kohlberg studied children’s moral reasoning and addressed characteristics of the environment as causes for individual behavior; he then theorized that there were six stages of moral development that children undergo. Other researchers also address the role environment plays in moral reasoning. For example, Bredemeier, Shields, Weiss, and Cooper (1986) found child aggression correlates with less mature moral reasoning as well as learned behavior from watching high contact sports, which is also supported by Smith’s (1978) study, which found one-third of male hockey players to have learned illegal hits by watching professional hockey.

Despite claims that sports build character (Docheff, 1998; Eitzen, 1999; Sage, 1990, 1998) and the shared beliefs articulated by the NCAA (NCAA Core Values, 2018), it is worth examining the impact coaches have on character development. The next section will examine
the literature that relates to character development in sports, as student-athletes may become
athletic directors tasked with ethical decision making.

**Coaches and Character Development**

Coaches are instrumental in the development of athletes’ characters (Docheff, 1998; Eitzen, 1999; Sage, 1990, 1998). Their teaching is not exclusive to the development of playing skills, psychomotor development, or the obvious benefits of engaging in physical activities; rather, coaches also impart lifelong lessons and moral values to their athletes through sports (Romand & Pantaleon, 2007). Hardman, Jones, and Jones (2010) support this view and assert that the “coach is centrally implicated in the realization of the good sporting contest in terms of both constituting and regulating appropriate behavior” (p. 346). They further state that “such moral responsibilities extend beyond policing foul play, teaching good manners and inculcating a raft of ‘fair play conventions,’ to the cultivation and fostering of certain virtues which are directly implicated in the realization of the value of sport” (Hardman et al., 2010, p. 346).

For sport to have a positive influence on its participants, the behavior and leadership of the coach is critical (Bredemeier & Shields, 2006; Hardman, Jones, & Jones, 2010). Strand (2013) and Lumpkin and Stokowski (2011) argue that character development is influenced by coaches who are positive role models. When coaches behave ethically, they reinforce the importance of ethical and moral behavior. By watching the coach, athletes learn how to manage time, respect others, accept responsibility, cope with failures and successes, and resist peer pressure (p. 50). Lumpkin and Stokowski (2011) believe that “coaches must model integrity by behaving in morally responsible ways” (p. 51). Athletes learn vicariously from their coaches about accountability – in other words, how to behave on and off the field, and how their decisions carry immediate or prolonged consequences. Therefore, events such as individual and
team meetings, practices, and competitions are teachable moments for coaches to reinforce
character development (Bolter & Weiss, 2012; Hamilton & LaVoi, 2017; Hardman, Jones, &

Martens (2012) and Strand (2013) agree that team rules establish parameters in teaching
moral values and serve as a platform for character and citizenship development. Strand writes
that having a list of team rules, such as “no swearing,” “listen to the coaches,” “be responsible,”
and “be a good sport” provides a character and citizenship development opportunity that enables
coaches to instruct student-athletes in appropriate societal behaviors (Strand, 2013). This
approach, Strand argues, is valuable as it allows athletes to understand what responsibility is and
what it looks like. When individuals are responsible, they assume ownership for what they have
done and correct their errors (p. 34). Coaches are powerful, and their position allows them to
shape athlete lives through deliberate actions (Hamilton & LaVoi, 2017; Peláez, Aulls, & Bacon,
2016; Strand, 2013).

Developing good character for both coaches and athletes requires a platform that includes
education, training, instruction, reflection, practice experience, and emulation (Hardman et al.,
2010). Because of the complexity of character development, Hardman et al. (2010) state that
“character includes habits of perception, cognition, emotion, and action. Doing the right thing
involves much more than knowing the right thing to do. Moral perception implies a certain
sensitivity or level of attention to particular morally salient features” (p. 350). In such cases,
coaches are bound by moral obligations; they should set exemplary behaviors and display a
commitment to the attributes that make the sport uniquely valuable. In doing so, Hardman et al.
(2010) conclude that coaches should be cognizant of their actions, coaching values, and the
ethical implications those values have upon those with whom they interact and influence.
The Challenge for Character Development

Ethical contradictions in college sports pose a challenge for character development. For example, Roman and Pantaleon (2007) found mixed messages about the capacity of rugby for “impacting of values such as team spirit, abidance by the rules of the game, respect for oneself and others, self-control, humbleness, and so on” (p. 75) and winning at any cost. For example, players learned cheating “transgressions” and “aggressive acts” from their coaches (p. 75). Roman and Pantaleon found these values to be questionable because both coaches and athletes want to have an advantage over the opponent in order to win. They concluded that coaches are respectful of their sports and the moral values athletes learned. However, given the pressure to win, players learned from their coaches to exhibit behaviors, rules transgression, and aggressive acts (Bredemeier et al., 1986; Hartshorne & May, 1928; Kohlberg, 1981, 1984; Smith, 1978). Coaches’ perceptions of the rules “can either teach athletes to lie, cheat, and steal, or they can promote positive behaviors” (Roman & Pantaleon, 2007, p. 76). Coaches, in a competitive role or facing pressure to win, can promote moral character by choosing ethical objectives over technical and tactical excellence (Roman & Pantaleon, 2007). Roman and Pantaleon’s conclusion is that character development through participation in competitive sports is neither positive nor negative, but the coach is the key in the process.

The emphasis on winning in a competitive context has created questionable moral decision-making for players and coaches (Dodd, Achen, & Lumpkin, 2018; Romand & Pantaleon, 2007, Turpin & Koven, 2019). Kavussanu and Roberts (2001) investigated moral judgment, intentions, and behaviors of college basketball players’ unsportsmanlike attitude and judgement about the legitimacy of intentionally injurious acts. Their study, which focused on behaviors used to intimidate an opponent, found that faking an injury or risking injuring a
basketball player was consider acceptable to other players. Strand and Ziegler (2010) similarly find that a majority of high school athletes in a mid-western state agree when an ice hockey coach orders a player to intimidate an opposing opponent; 29 percent of football players agree that inflicting pain on an opponent in hopes of intimidating them is appropriate; 43 percent of tennis players believe it is acceptable for a player to remain quiet when a referee erroneously awards a point for a ball that was called out when it was on the line. Similarly, coaches argue with referees in hopes of intimating them and influencing future calls (Strand & Ziegler, 2010).

Another contradiction can be seen between how coaches define character and how media defines it. According to Rudd (2006), the “winning at all cost” mentality is a phenomenon that can be seen in all sports and seems to have created confusion in what it means to display character. He proposes two distinctive types of character: social values, in reference to social character, and moral values, in reference to moral character. In defining social character, he refers to behaviors such as teamwork, loyalty, self-sacrifice, and perseverance. Moral character, in contrast, refers to values such as honesty, fairness, responsibility, compassion, and respect (p. 6). Rudd (1999) surveyed 38 high school coaches to understand their definitions of character; the results showed that coaches define character in terms of work ethic, perseverance, teamwork, and commitment. Rudd and Mondello (2006) provide additional insights on how two coaches defined character. The first argued:

I would say it’s the substance of a person…the make-up, the emotional, social make-up of a person that comes out…it’s inside and comes out in different actions. You can tell a person’s character a lot of times by their responses and I think character is based on what you know and not what you feel. (p. 7)
The second coach defined character as:

- It’s to accept your strengths and your weaknesses and how you’re going to take advantage of your strengths and how you’re going to improve on your weaknesses. Or how you get the most out of your God given talent, whether that be physically, academically, socially. (p. 7)

Rudd (2005) points out within the context of social values that the media and coaches similarly describe players to have displayed great character when they continue to play hard while hurt. Because of the distinct perspectives of the two coaches, the author goes on to explicate the reason why many feel there is a lack of sportsmanship in competitive sports today:

- [M]any coaches, athletic administrators, and parents may indeed place such a premium on social values such as teamwork, loyalty, self-sacrifice, and work ethic that they forget, or at least downplay, any emphasis on the time-honored moral values such as honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect. (2005, p. 7)

Based on the findings, the literature suggests that moral development is neither positive nor negative in athletic participation (Romand & Pantaleon, 2007). Because of the competitive environment, sports may impede or enhance moral decision. The next section will define ethics and examine codes of ethics to explore the decision making of athletic directors who manage intercollegiate athletics.

**Definition of “Ethics”**

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines ethics as “an area of study that deals with ideas about what is good and bad behavior: a branch of philosophy dealing with what is morally right or wrong” ("Ethic," n.d.). Manifestations of ethical behavior include the ideals of “duty, obligation, and moral responsibility… [and are recognized] though the application of ethical
inquiry and critical moral reasoning” (Malloy, Ross, & Zakus, 2003, p. 55). Lumpkin (2009) further claims that a “person’s morals are those motives, intentions, and actions that are right and good, rather than wrong or bad” (p. 3).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher defines ethics through the emergent themes of the literature review by categorizing ethical impropriety within a wide range of ethical situations that have gotten college and universities into trouble. These issues include the win-at-all-costs mentality, recruitment violations of prospective student-athletes, playing concussed or hurt athletes, sexual misconduct, altering student-athlete grades, and finally, the process through which institutions raise money that often allow those in leadership positions to compromise the morality and priorities in their administration.

**Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct**

It is important first to explain the distinction between a *code of ethics* and a *code of conduct*, as these two terms are mistakenly interchanged and second, to understand the motivation of individuals who ignore these codes because of the singular focus on winning (Lumpkin & Doty, 2014) and “winning at-all-costs” mentality (Rudd, 2005).

According to Nieweler (n.d.), codes of ethics are governed by decision making while codes of conduct are action-driven. A code of ethics “behaves like the constitution with general principles to guide behavior” (Nieweler, n.d.). Therefore, when individuals are faced with ethical dilemmas, a code of ethics will help guide them in the decision-making process. However, a code of conduct is a set of provisions in areas of an organization that employees must obey. Sexual harassment, racial intimidation, or viewing inappropriate or unauthorized content on company computers are examples of violations in organizational codes of conduct (Nieweler, n.d.). According to Gillikin (n.d.), these two types of codes are the most common
ways that companies self-regulate and provide direction to employees. In most cases, these two codes “are combined into a general ethics document that mixes principles for the right action with a list of actions that are required or prohibited” (Gillkin, n.d., p. 1). In the wake of scandals that have plagued Division III athletics, the motivation of athletic directors under pressure to win may explain why codes of ethics and codes of conduct are ignored or ineffective in guiding athletic directors.

**The Effectiveness of Codes and Athletic Director Leadership**

Codes of ethics were introduced in business decades ago, but they were concerned primarily with etiquette and less with ethical issues facing organizations (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2003, p. 136). They evolved when concerns for consumer rights and a mistrust of business organizations gained more attention in the 1960s and 1970s (p. 136). Critics, however, perceive codes as public relations tools that are created in the presence of scandals and, for that reason, are not effective (Stevens, 2008). Stevens (2008) found that codes can shape ethical behavior and guide employees in ethical decision making when managers behave ethically and sanctions are given when codes are violated. Similarly, Burton and Peachey (2014) added that athletic directors should enforce the codes equally for employees and students, as their ethical leadership will have an impact on them.

Greenwell et al. (2001) conducted a study on codes of ethics in intercollegiate athletics. The study centered on the conference governing bodies for intercollegiate competition, as the conference rules supersede institutional rules and are in a position to enforce ethical behavior when the motivation to win may lead institutions to violate the rules (Jordan et al., 2004). The study found that a code of conduct that addresses too many groups creates vagueness and
Greenwell et al. (2001) find NCAA conference codes to be inconsistent in three major areas:

1) Documents distributed by the conferences were policies and procedures related, not ethical codes.

2) While two-thirds did focus on enforcement of code policies, one-third did not indicate consequences for violations.

3) The conference codes address too many groups in a single code of ethics.

In addressing who is responsible and penalties for those who violate the code, Greenwell et al. (2001) found that “the commissioner is responsible for appropriating and enforcing penalties to punish violators” (p.120). In contrast, code enforcement remains questionable because “the conference commissioner, who is often asked to be both judge and jury, is often far too busy to monitor compliance with the code” (p.120).

Greenwell et al. (2004) followed their 2001 study by exploring coaches’ perceptions of codes of ethics, since coaches are usually blamed for violations. The purpose of the study was to identify “what NCAA coaches feel should be included in a conference code of ethics and examine coaches’ perceptions and understanding of their own conference code of ethics “(p. 134). After examining who the code should address in the study, Greenwell et al. (2004) found that coaches were willing to assume responsibility for the behavior of their student-athletes. Coaches were asked again to identify persons responsible for conduct and selected multiple groups. The study revealed that coaches agree that 91 percent of coaches, assistant coaches, and 90 percent of administrators are responsible for student-athletes’ conduct because they are the catalysts for ethical behavior encouragement. Other elements of the study examined unsportsmanlike conduct, and coaches were asked to indicate specific warnings to include in a
code of ethics. Coaches agree on specific warnings to include in codes of ethics, such as physical abuse, obscene gestures and profanity, inciting abusive action, gambling, taunting or verbal abuse, and tobacco or alcohol usage. However, the importance of prohibiting physical abuse and obscene gestures was ranked highest as an ethical concern.

In discussing ethical decision-making, coaches felt that those individuals who commonly violate the rules should be held accountable (Greenwell et al., 2004). Addressing those who violate the rules and having specific codes for each group is consistent with what the literature suggests. For example, Molander (1987) argues that “the strength of an ethical code is a function not only of its various canons but of its legitimacy and power in the eyes of those for whom it is written” (p. 620). He believes that individuals will obey ethical standards beyond their personal beliefs when codes have specific provisions for consequences if those standards are violated.

For codes to be effective, Greenwell et al. (2004) argue that they should avoid being vague (Molander 1987; Weeks & Nantel, 1992). First, codes should deal with a few principles when members of an organization are faced with a variety of ethical dilemmas. Next, a code should be target-specific, that is, customized to the groups and individuals to whom it pertains (e.g., coaches, student-athletes, and spectators). Then, leaders and members of the organization must adhere to the prescribed standard. Finally, consequences should be in place for those who violate the codes (Greenwell et al., 2004).

Other researchers have written about the necessity of codes being clear in order to be effective. According to Stevens (2008), communication and cultural values are the catalysts for codes of conduct success. When cultural values are conveyed clearly, codes become a central part of the organization by shaping employee behavior in a positive manner (Stevens, 2008). Trevino, Weaver, and Toffler (1999) and Trevino and Weaver (2003) confirm this notion and
find that codes are even more effective when leaders embrace communication and cultural values. While communication is crucial for codes of conduct to be effective, many athletic administrators seem unaware of this fact (Greenwell, 2004). Schwartz, Dunfee, and Kline (2005) note the responsibility for corporate boards in setting the tone for the organization. In other words, they suggest a top-down management system in which everyone knows what is expected. Consequently, for any organizational culture to embody effective codes of conduct, codes must be communicated through leadership while adopting measures for accountability.

Even when codes are clearly written, a factor in the effectiveness of codes is individuals’ lack of familiarity with them. At Robert Morris University, for example, Yahr, Bryan, and Schimmel (n.d.) assert that “trustees, faculty members, and staff have been asked to sign an acknowledgement that they have read and understand a new code of ethics” (p. 2). In order for Robert Morris University to assess the effectiveness of the code of conduct, the development of the new code of ethics has to include a code design, stakeholder involvement, code implementation, code enforcement, and organizational culture (Yahr et al., n.d.). Yahr et al.’s study found that 71.8 percent of the institution surveyed reported having a written code of ethics. However, their study showed that 17.2 percent were unaware of a code of ethics and only 72.8 percent had read it (p. 5).

Leaders must adhere to prescribed standards for codes to be effective (Jordan et al., 2004). With that understanding, the NCAA conference codes were designed to communicate expected behaviors for athletes, coaches, administrators, and officials (Greenwell, Crawford, Hancock, & Stoll, 2013). In evaluating the NCAA conference codes of ethics in all three divisions, Greenwell et al. (2013) identified seven major themes in codes of ethics including “1) sportsmanship, 2) values, 3) creating and maintaining a healthy competitive environment, 4)
compliance with rules and decisions, 5) equitable treatment, 6) welfare of athletes, and 7) professional conduct of coaches and administrators” (p. 176). The study identified areas frequently involved in unethical behavior, including “taunting/verbal abuse,” “profanity,” “physical abuse,” or “negative recruiting” (Greenwell et al., 2013). A failure to embrace some of these NCAA conference rules led to the firing of ex-Rutgers basketball coach Mike Rice. Although these codes of ethics are in place to encourage ethical behavior, such codes have not dissuaded or minimized unethical behavior (Kaptein, 2011).

From the previously mentioned studies, codes seem ineffective as they are not written clearly to indicate who is responsible. Yahr et al. concluded that the effectiveness of codes can be improved by interaction with those in the university organization. As for encouraging ethical behavior, Ariely’s (2008) study suggests that people need to be reminded of moral standards in order to improve moral behaviors (p. 40).

**History of Ethics (and Ethical Violations)**

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has been instrumental in the implementation of ethical codes for intercollegiate athletic programs. In addition to the NCAA Code of Ethics, all athletics programs, as well as individual sports programs, have a code of conduct in some form. However, ethical violations in intercollegiate athletics continue to rise (Connor & Mazanov, 2010; Jordan, Greenwell, Geist, Pastore, & Mahoney, 2004). In February 2013, for example, four football players from the University of Alabama were suspended for robbery and fraudulent use of a stolen university credit card (Wolken, 2013). In November 2013, ex-Rutgers coach Mike Rice, who was fired for mistreatment and verbally abusive language towards his players, confessed that “the pressure to win on a big stage prompted him to take in-your-face tactics that worked at Robert Morris (University) to the next level” (Carino,
In March 2003, Jim Harrick, the head basketball coach at Georgia University, was fired for granting credit hours to three of his basketball players who did not attend the basketball class he was teaching (“Harrick Quits Amid Georgia Scandal,” 2003).

Ethical violations in intercollegiate sports have a long history, and the National Collegiate Athletic Association established rules to deter groups from engaging in them (Decken & Wilson, 2006). In 2012, the Associated Press listed the worst scandals dating back to the 1940s. City College of New York (CCNY), a Division III institution, was involved in a basketball point shaving scandal from 1947 to 1950. The Boston College, a Division I institution, had three basketball players involved in fixing nine Eagles games from 1978 through 1979. Southern Methodist University, a Division I institution, found boosters funneling money to various football players through a slush fund controlled by school officials; Texas governor Bill Clements was involved. The University of Michigan, a Division I institution, had five basketball players who were paid by a booster; in addition, Ed Martin, a factory worker, gained financially from his gambling maneuvers. The University of Minnesota, a Division I institution, engaged in widespread academic fraud; one former manager claimed to have written over 20 papers for players. At the University of Georgia, a Division I school, the basketball coach and his son provided inflated grades to players for classes they seldom attended and paid players’ expenses. In a Baylor University murder case, when basketball player Patrick Dennehy was slain by his teammate Carlton Dotson, the coach instructed his players to lie to the NCAA and tell the investigator that Dennehy was dealing drugs. The University of Southern California, a Division I institution, was stripped of 30 scholarships and given a two-year ban when it was discovered that their Heisman winner parents were paid thousands of dollars by an agent. The Ohio State University football coach was aware that his players were trading memorabilia for cash and
tattoos, which is an NCAA violation, and kept the information a secret until his players participated in a 12-1 season that allowed them to win a Sugar Bowl over Arkansas. University of Arkansas football coach Bobby Petrino, who was fired, was having an extramarital affair with a former Razorbacks volleyball player and paid her $20,000 and gave her a job in the athletic department ("A List of the Worst Scandals in College Sports," 2012).

In addition to this extensive list, the University of Colorado, known for its shares of scandals, was found guilty in 2004 of enticing prospective football student-athletes with sex and alcohol, calling into question the legitimacy of their 1990 national title (Tsa, 2004). In 2017, at Susquehanna University, a Division III institution, a booster assisted a football player in paying his outstanding student education expenses; in 2016, Methodist University, a Division III member, awarded scholarships to 11 soccer players but no award given to non-athlete students (NCAA Major Infractions Database, 2018).

Serious scandals of a criminal nature have drawn media attention. While these scandals unfolded in various academic settings, all failed to adhere to the NCAA ethical conduct operating manual, which is intended to guide athletic directors who lead intercollegiate athletic programs. Generally, the NCAA ethical conduct guidelines and code of conduct are manuals designed to support athletic directors in making ethical decisions in a manner that encourages coaches and athletes to play by the rules. However, a gap in the literature remains regarding the relationships between these codes of conduct and athletic directors’ ethical decision making with the intercollegiate athletic programs they manage. The next section will review the theoretical framework informing this study of athletic directors’ ethical decision making.
Theoretical Framework

Athletic directors are frequently faced with challenges in responding to ethical improprieties in multiple athletic programs due to a focus on winning-at-all costs (Bussey, 2008; DeSensi, 2014; DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2008; Dodd, Achen, & Lumpkin, 2018; Sander, 2008; Turpin & Koven, 2019) and the pressure to win (Spivey, 2007; Weaver, 2011). This qualitative study sought to examine ethical decision-making in highly competitive intercollegiate athletic programs through the lens of West Point’s Three Rules of Thumb (Offstein, 2006) model for dealing with ethical ambiguities and Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) ethical theory, which includes Ethics Check questions and the five core principles of ethical power.

“Three Rules of Thumb”

The model is derived from West Point’s approach to developing student leaders. Offstein (2006) concludes that in most cases, highly competitive people thrown into extreme performance cultures are at a higher risk for ethical violations. In other words, “extreme competition is expected to drive duplicitous individual behaviors. The kind inspired by greed, guile, and self-interest” (p. xx). In his findings, the differences between West Point and most competitive organizations is the use of dishonorable behavior to move up the ladder.

Offstein’s (2006) analysis of leadership development was described by the sequence of “BE-KNOW-DO” as a way to explain how honorable leaders become successful at West Point. The “BE” relates to personal attributes that contribute to individual honor. It is the “being” that will directly impact the knowledge one seeks and how those plans are executed, or “doing.” Most literature on leadership, however, relies heavily on Knowing and Doing without Being (Offstein, 2006). At West Point, Offstein writes that leadership first begins by being right [BE, leading with honor] as the only option to lead honorably from the high ground. Since most
leadership books focus on seeking and gaining knowledge, or “Knowing,” and other texts focus on planning, organizing, and directing, or “Doing,” the “Being” component at West Point comes first in the person’s attributes regarding honor. It is the “being” that will directly impact the knowledge one seeks and how those plans are executed, or “doing” (Offstein, 2006).

The Three Rules of Thumb model relates well to intercollegiate athletics leadership and is at the core of athletic directors’ responsibility. Being, Knowing, and Doing are components of leadership that will enable leaders in any organization to lead with honor. “Without an honorable BE, the Knowing and Doing are rendered ineffective and, in some cases, can become downright dangerous” (Offstein, p. 3). Within the framework of “BE, Knowing, and Doing,” Offstein explains that leaders should look at how they communicate with others and ask themselves the following questions:

- Am I honest?
- Are there always hidden meanings?
- Do people spend a lot of time trying to make sense of my messages?
- Am I communicating or am I politicking? (p. 20).

The answers to these questions provide the leadership perspective that only comes from those leading from the high ground (Offstein, 2006). The high ground “leadership philosophy emphasizes honor in the BE portion of the BE-KNOW-DO” which means that “leadership will shape their actions and decisions against a higher, usually noble principle” (Offstein, 2006, p. 6). Consequently, young men and women at West Point are equipped with what they call “Three Rules of Thumb,” which are basic questions to be answered when one approaches a moment in which one’s honor is being tested.

Rule One: Does this action attempt to deceive anyone or allow anyone to be deceived?
Rule Two: Does this action gain or allow the gain of privilege or advantage to which I or someone else would not otherwise be entitled?

Rule Three: Would I be satisfied by the outcome if I were on the receiving end of this action? (Offstein, 2006, p. 33).

**Blanchard and Peale’s Ethic Check**

Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) Ethics Check questions and five core principles of ethical power will serve as the second framework for ethical decision making for Division III athletic directors. Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) Ethics Check asks the following questions:

1. Is it legal? Will you be violating either civil law or organization policy?
2. Is it balanced? Is it fair to all concerned in the short term as well as the long term? Does it promote win-win relationships?
3. How will it make you feel about yourself? Will it make you proud? Would you feel good if your decision was published in the newspapers? Would you feel good if your kids and grandkids knew about it? (p. 20).

These three questions can assist athletic directors in addressing ethical dilemmas. Blanchard and Peale’s first question looks at existing standards for dealing with ethical dilemmas by asking “Is it legal?” The legal question provides the framework by considering the problem in terms of the organization’s policy, or code of ethics, or standard of conduct. Company policy, frequently

…states that each of our employees is responsible for both the integrity and the consequences of his or her own actions. The highest standard of honesty, integrity, and fairness must be followed by each and every employee when engaging in any activity
concerning the company, particularly in relationships with customers, competitors, suppliers, the public, and other employees. (Blanchard & Peale, 1988, p. 21).

Such messages address the ethical expectations of the company through policy.

The second question, “Is it balanced?”, provides an additional framework for dealing with ethical dilemmas. Considering the question, “Is the decision going to be fair or will it heavily favor one party over another in the short or the long term?” acknowledges that imbalanced relationships over time force the victimized party to find other methods to get even (Blanchard & Peale, 1988). As a result, a win or lose situation that benefits one person or company at the expense of another will eventually come back to haunt the company. Asking “Is it balanced?” helps avoid such problematic scenarios from arising.

The final lens for dealing with ethical decision-making is “[h]ow will [this decision] make me feel about myself?” This question directs decision makers to focus on their own emotions and moral standards. The authors state that “an unethical act will erode self-esteem” because acting against our inner sense of what is right inevitably leads to feeling bad (p. 24).

To encourage ethical behavior when there are so many outside pressures encouraging otherwise, Blanchard and Peale (1988) developed the five core principles of ethical power (the Five Ps). These five core principles are purpose, pride, patience, persistence, and perspective.

The first principle of ethical power is purpose, referring to one’s objective or intention. However, this objective is not a single small goal; rather, “it is the picture you have of yourself – the kind of person you want to be or the kind of life you want to lead. It’s like your own personal mission statement” (Blanchard & Peale, 1988, p. 44). According to the authors, “there is a much higher chance that you will do the morally right thing if being ethical is part of your purpose – that is, if you picture yourself as an ethical person” (p. 45). In contrast, when people
disregard their purpose and choose the wrong action, they will not feel good about their decision regardless of how they may have justified their actions.

The second principle of ethical power is pride, meaning to having “a sense of satisfaction… from your accomplishments as well as those of the people you care about, like family or staff” (p. 47). Pride is dependent upon self-esteem, which leads to an ethical life and invokes the Ethics Check question “How will it make me feel about myself?” To have strong self-esteem means to have the strength to do the right thing even when external pressure exists to do otherwise (Blanchard & Peale, 1988). In contrast, a sense of inferiority often impacts one’s ethical behavior in two ways: false pride or self-doubt. According to the authors, false pride is a “negative kind of pride that occurs when people have a distorted image of their own importance” and believe “they are the source of all good ideas” and that “they don’t need help from others” (p. 48). Self-doubt, on the other hand, arises in people who “don’t like themselves very much and don’t trust their own judgment” (p. 51). For that reason, self-doubting individuals are driven to be liked by others and struggle to be morally strong when pressured (p. 51).

The third core principle is patience, an ability to wait and trust […] the process” (p. 58). Blanchard and Peale state that “it is difficult to have patience in today’s world of instant gratification,” and, consequently, “it is precisely because of the fast pace of our world that we so desperately need to rediscover the importance of faith and to take a long-range view of the consequences of our actions” (p. 59). When you have patience, you can accept a short-run loss if you are confident it will pay off in the long run.

The fourth core principle is persistence, meaning “sticking to your guns. It’s keeping your commitment and making your actions consistent with your guiding principles” (p. 65). In other words, an ethical person behaves ethically all the time regardless of the situation.
Blanchard and Peale recommend making a distinction between *interest*, which is doing something because it is convenient, and *commitment*, which is focusing on results and avoiding making excuses.

The fifth core principle is *perspective*, having “the capacity to see what is really important in any given situation”; perspective is the hub around which the other four P’s revolve (p. 69). Perspective is a form of reflecting:

Reflecting may seem like daydreaming, but it’s really very practical. The key is to find a way to achieve serenity and to listen for guidance from within. That gives me perspective, and when I can achieve perspective my purpose becomes increasingly clear (p. 79).

**The Pressure to Win and Intercollegiate Athletics Culture**

Athletic directors provide the leadership and can create an environment where coaches can be successful and be role models for the student-athletes they mentor. Coaches are a reflection of their athletic directors, and student-athletes of their coaches, because of the leadership tone set for expected conduct on and off the field. This section will look at the competitive environment as a possible cause for decision making that could lead to unethical practices and rules violations.

Coaches are instrumental in the development of young athletes, and, consequently, they are often viewed as teachers who are influential leaders. Because they are viewed in a position of leadership, they are expected to be role models and to represent themselves according to the highest ethical standards in multiple situations (Green & Reese, 2006). Their duties, according to Green and Reese, extend from working long hours with athletes to scheduling games,
preparing budgets, purchasing orders, teaching, and completing many other pertinent assignments (p. 320).

To remain competitive in college football, for example, coaches are under enormous pressure from prospective student-athletes, parents, athletic directors, and college presidents to establish winning teams (Sander, 2008). Sander writes:

The intense, high-stakes chase for top players – once associated only with marquee programs like Division I football, men’s basketball, and the top women’s basketball teams – is trickling down to other sports, as well as to lower divisions of the National Collegiate Association. (Sander, 2008, p. 4)

In describing this phenomenon, Sander (2008) interviewed numerous coaches. A women’s basketball coach from Kansas State University stated, “It’s not the coach walking in the gym saying, prove to me you can play. It’s the prospect saying, why weren’t you there?” (p. 4). A track and field coach at the University of Missouri at Columbia stated “the importance of getting the win has distorted the importance of getting the athletes to your school, and that has driven an absurd process” (p. 4).

At the Division III level, college coaches are experiencing unprecedented changes in recruiting practices. According to Sander (2008), coaches at this level recruit year-around, have smaller coaching staffs than Division I programs, and are typically responsible for coaching a second sport, while simultaneously shouldering the responsibility of added teaching and administrative duties. This structure where winning seems to be a priority is depicted through the culture of intercollegiate athletics.
Intercollegiate Athletic Culture

In 1990, Lederman discussed the past fall season, during which 34 coaches resigned, retired, or were fired by the end of the regular season. In part, many coaches left because “they had not filled the stands or won enough games to satisfy either themselves or, more commonly, their bosses” (p. 6). As reported, the pressure to win magnifies each year as the financial and public-relations stakes grow (Lederman, 1990). The fact that some coaches lost their jobs for not winning indicates that winning must be and is the name of the game (Lederman, 1990). One coach remarked, “I feel like I’ve given it a good try to make it a quality program, but we just couldn’t get it done, and the bottom line is you have to win” (p. 8). Another coach stated:

In this profession, it has always been that you have to win to survive. When a guy got in the profession, he knew that was going to be part of it. If he didn’t want to get involved in that, he shouldn’t have been in it. It’s been that way since the beginning of time.

(Lederman, 1990, p. 15.)

Pressure to win is a factor for various reasons. College presidents view athletics as the “front porch” of their campus and believe that having a winning football team helps with name recognition and attracting students (Weaver, 2011, p. 1). Weaver also reports that institutions competing in Big Ten conferences believe they have an advantage; they get the exposure that they need for recruiting purposes. Coaches can entice recruits with the possibility of media exposure, saying to them, “Come to the Big Ten, where your family can watch you play on television” (p. 5). She also addressed financial motivations; membership in the conference can provide revenue streams of almost $9 million dollars per year (p. 6). She further notes that other conferences feel the pressure to create such exposure and negotiate similar arrangements for their team. In an effort to generate more revenue, athletic departments are updating their aged
stadiums with more revenue-generating ones and are hiring new coaches with more lucrative salaries. With the increase in coaches’ salaries, presidents and athletic directors feel pressured to respond to their stakeholders, and coaches are evaluated weekly on whether they win or lose (Weaver, 2011). Consequently, “if the coach has a terrible season, the pressure builds to fire him. If he has a great season, the pressure is on to sign him an extension, whatever the cost” (p. 29). In many cases, the old coach and the new coach are on the same payroll for months at a time because early termination of coaches has now become common practice (p. 30).

In a quantitative study, Pigott (2008) investigated reasons for dismissal of high school coaches and found that “football and baseball had the most dismissal and boys and girls basketball were ranked third and fourth when compared with principals and head coaches” (p.48). Regarding reasons for dismissal, failure to win had the most responses from coaches and then administrators. In contrast, improper conduct had the most responses by principals, followed by failure to motivate and player /coach relationships. While examining the responses of principals and coaches regarding dismissal, Pigott (2008) noted a lack of communication to explain differences in perceptions of the two groups. Pigott (2008) maintains that coaches view principals as their superiors, which creates added pressure to be successful at their jobs. To lessen the pressure felt by coaches, communication between coaches and administrators needs to improve (Pigott, 2008).

In a higher education qualitative study on college presidents and intercollegiate athletics, Barrett (1985) found the following when asking presidents what surprised them or shocked them in matters relating to intercollegiate athletics. Presidents were shocked and frustrated over the persistence that some Athletic Booster Support Club members would condone cheating with no regard to the consequences and the impact on the institution reputations and academic programs.
There was “shock at the increasing cost of operating high visibility intercollegiate athletic programs and concerned over finding viable solutions to this growing problem” (p. 103). When asked for their dislikes and experiences in their roles as Chief Executive Officers, “they disliked the growing negative public image that abuses and scandals connected to intercollegiate athletic programs were bringing to the institutions’ name and academic reputation” (p. 113). Furthermore, they disliked defending increasingly multi-million dollar intercollegiate athletic budgets to their governing boards, faculty senates, and student bodies (Barrett, 1985). However, presidents took pleasure “in attending intercollegiate athletic events because it serves as an opportunity to bring the community of faculty, students and staff together with the corporate community of alumni, donors, friends, business and community leaders, etc., and provides opportunities to foster university relations within the state and local communities” (p. 113). Lastly, presidents took great satisfaction in seeing student-athletes graduate and become leaders in their community.

Barrett (1985) asked presidents to identify “what pressures, if any, do you feel in your role because of your intercollegiate athletic program?” (p. 117). College presidents responded by stating four possible areas where they felt pressure, quoted below:

1. Balancing large athletic budgets, keeping them out of the red while at the same time attempting to maintain an honest yet highly competitive intercollegiate athletic programs for both men’s and women’s sports (76%).
2. Intercollegiate athletic programs, however, do not place any more pressure than other academic issues or problems faced by them (69%).
3. Pressure from faculty to reduce or eliminate “special admission” of marginally academically prepared student-athletes, who do not meet the same admissions
criteria that other students under the institution’s “Special Admissions Program” do (38%).

4. Pressure of small but vociferous athlete support groups and alumni to have a strong winning team with a “win at all cost” attitude (31%). (Barrett, 1985, p. 117).

Within the context of the four areas identified by presidents, the study findings speak to the intercollegiate culture athletic directors are under. In his qualitative research, Bussey (2008), whose protocol is being followed for this study, reports that pressure to win leads to unethical practices. The perceived pressure, he writes, was described by one athletic director as “everyone wants to be successful, the environment is competitive, and you want job security” (Bussey, 2008, p. 46). Furthermore, coaches could be dismissed for a poor win-loss season, an expectation not clearly stated in athletic policy handbooks, which discusses only a coach’s responsibilities and expected behavior (p. 46).

In a quantitative study on Division I sports, Spivey (2007) reported that the ethical climate in highly competitive Division I football programs influences the decision-making process of administrators. She finds that athletic directors in such competitive environments tend to make decisions to satisfy the status quo (p. 92). Comparing the pressure experienced by athletic directors to that of the university president, she found that “athletic directors are under tremendous pressure to win; presidents, on the other hand, have largely been in an academic environment with less pressure to conform to a narrow constituency to achieve organizational goals” (p. 93). Indeed, “presidents’ decisions on personnel or disciplining a student rarely reach beyond the university. Yet similar decisions made by athletics directors are at times broadcast
nationwide due to the extensive media coverage given to intercollegiate athletics” (Spivey, 2007, p. 93).

The pressure to win in big-time college sports programs is a major factor for coaches and athletic directors. The result is often coaches’ careers being cut short by athletic directors (Holmes, 2011; Lederman, 1990; Smith, 2010). The pressure that athletic directors experience has been shown to impact their ethical decision making (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012; Bussey, 2008; DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2003; Spivey, 2007; Turpin & Koven, 2019).

The competitive culture may make it difficult for those in leadership positions to act as moral agents. According to DeSensi and Rosenberg (2003), the coach is a moral agent whose ethical behavior is challenged because of the pressure to win and the benefits and rewards associated with winning, which can influence some coaches to violate recruiting and eligibility rules (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2003, p. 119). When coaches are under enormous pressure to win, they can make poor ethical decisions, as seen in the example of the ex-Rutgers men’s basketball coach Mike Rice, who used abusive language towards his players, and was fired as a result (Carino, 2013, p. 1). Pressure to win is evidenced in other coaches’ careers being shortened (Smith, 2010). At Florida State University, the focus on winning led to head football coach Bobby Bowden being fired prematurely. According to Smith (2010), a 37-10 loss was a game changer and the retiring coach contract was not renewed (p. 1). Instead, the university president decided to hire an in-waiting coach in 2007 to replace the retiring coach Bobby Bowden in 2010 (Smith, 2010, p. 1). “The premature end to his coaching career,” Smith notes, “was a shift to [the head coach] previous support that had been constant through his 34 years in Tallahassee where he had 304 of his 379 coaching victories” (p. 2). However, Bowden’s early retirement was not the only outcome of the win-at-any-cost mentality. Eventually, Coach Bobby Bowden
was found to be involved in an academic cheating scandal, and 14 victories were stripped as a result of his NCAA violations (Dinich, 2010, p. 1).

**Summary**

The role of intercollegiate athletics is complex in a traditional academic setting. The world of big-time college sports has become national entertainment and a part of the popular conception of the college experience (Clotfelter, 2011, p. 3). As a result, it is important to understand ethical decision making of athletic directors in highly competitive environment.

Chapter two reviewed relevant literature related to intercollegiate athletics, codes of conduct and ethics, character development, coaches’ and athletic directors’ working environments, and the theoretical framework for this study. This study aims to bridge the gap in examining the decision making of athletic directors and instances of ethical impropriety in Division III intercollegiate sports. Offstein’s (2006) The West Point “Three Rules of Thumb” (Offstein, 2006) and Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) Ethics Checks questions and their five core principles of ethical power frame this study on Pennsylvania athletic directors’ ethical decision making. Chapter three will outline the research methodology that guided this study.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the decision-making processes of Pennsylvania Division III college and university athletic directors on ethics issues and how those processes could lead to unethical practices. According to Berg (2012), “qualitative researchers are most interested in how humans arrange themselves … their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, and social roles” (p. 8). The study addresses the thought processes of athletic directors and how their environments affect their decision making. A qualitative design is best for addressing the research questions.

Interview questions were specifically designed for athletic directors, and an alignment of this instrument with the research questions was performed (Appendix B: Interview Questions/Research Matrix and Appendix C: Interview Protocol). Data from interviews, in addition to relevant demographic information, were gathered from six Pennsylvania athletic directors. The research design, population, data collection method, and data analysis strategies are outlined in the following pages.

As described in Chapter 2, sports are popular on college campuses and continue to serve as part of the college experience (Clotfelter, 2011). The decision-making of administrators is highly compromised in competitive environments (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2003; Lumpkin & Doty, 2014; Spivey, 2007), including athletics. Division I athletics programs have been plagued with numerous scandals due to the pressure to promote their academic institutions through successful athletic programs (Spivey, 2007; Weaver, 2011). Division III institutions with highly competitive athletic programs program are also facing their share of scandals. For example,
Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology and various Division III programs were found rewarding prospective student-athletes with academic aid based on their athletic ability, which is against the rules (New, 2006).

In qualitative studies, “the researcher must allow the subjects to speak, in their own way and their own time, about those aspects of the experience in question that seem relevant to them” (Dukes, 1984, p. 200). To explore the ethical issues decision-making processes of athletic directors, qualitative methodology was chosen to enable a deeper understanding of ethical practices in highly competitive athletic programs. This approach allows the researcher to gather data from participants by allowing them to speak in detail about their highly competitive athletic programs work environment. Ideally, this approach allows the researcher to capture the subject’s experience and gain a deeper understanding of the issues at hand (Dukes, 1984).

**Research Questions**

This research utilized information gathered through interviews with six Pennsylvania college and university athletic directors in order to better understand their ethical decision making and how it is impacted by the highly competitive environment of intercollegiate athletics. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What decisions are made by athletic directors that could lead to unethical practices?
2. How do athletic directors’ perceive media reporting on college athletics?
3. In what way do college athletic directors believe in the NCAA ability to promote ethical behavior?
4. How do athletic directors see the future of ethics in intercollegiate sports?
Data Collection

Data for this study was gathered using multiple sources. Face-to-face interviews were used, but in order to accommodate participant schedules, telephone conferences were used as an alternative method to collect data. The interview instrument was created by Rodney Bussey (2008) and modified by the researcher to be used for Pennsylvania Division III athletic directors for this study. In addition, a review of participant institution mission statements and codes of conduct was completed. Each recorded interview was transcribed verbatim and sent back to participants in order to evaluate the accuracy of their statements. Furthermore, researcher observations and reflections were audio recorded to assist with data transcription. A follow-up second interview was done to probe participants on emerging themes connected with other participants’ statements.

The interview questions were designed to explore the perceptions of six Pennsylvania NCAA Division III athletic directors, in order to understand ethical misconduct in intercollegiate athletic programs when winning becomes the singular focus (Lumpkin & Doty, 2014). Each participant was identified by a pseudonym to allow the researcher to protect subjects’ identity. These interviews were conducted over a four-week period and consisted of one 60-minute session per participant. Probe techniques were used to follow up on any specific statements and to further clarify questions by the researcher. After the interviews were transcribed, member checking was used after each interview in order to check for accuracy. The interview transcript was sent to participants via email to allow them an opportunity to check for accuracy of their statements, elaborate further, or request deletions of erroneous statements prior to analysis. This approach ensured accuracy of information and provided an opportunity for follow-up questions.
Population

A list of potential athletic directors was generated using the NCAA website (see Appendix D: NCAA Pennsylvania Division III Members). To ensure that subjects met the requirements (of serving in an athletic director role in Pennsylvania for at least three years in revenue-generating sports), purposive sampling was used (Berg & Lune, 2012; Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), purposive sampling is an intentional approach in which the inquirer selects individuals with specific characteristics and sites because they can provide understanding of the research question to be answered.

The sample for this study includes six NCAA Division III college and university athletic directors who work in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania currently has 61 athletic directors at the Division III level, and 16 met the selection criteria. This sample was selected based on their football, men’s basketball, and women’s basketball programs, all of which are significant revenue-producing sports programs that contribute to the pressure of athletic directors to keep these programs winning. According to Burden and Ming (2003), these athletic programs are viewed as engine-driven and can generate an estimated revenue source of $4 billion a year, which is enough funding to support all other sports at the institution. Athletic directors with highly competitive programs in these sports were chosen as they are likely to experience ethical challenges related to the pressure to win and thus to generate revenue. The NCAA, D3football, and D3Hoods websites provide the history of these intercollegiate athletic programs from which the sample population was drawn. Additional participant selection criteria included the following: (1) have attained a master’s degree (to show a level of educational preparation for the athletic director role), and (2) have served a minimum of three years as an athletic director at the current place of employment, which provides adequate time to have learned institutional policies
and expectations. Upon receiving IRB approval from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and site permission, the researcher identified participants who met the criteria, invited them to participate, and selected six to be included in this study. Duke (1994) indicates that a large sample size is not required and recommends studying three to 10 participants.

Prior to contacting potential participants, IRB approval from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania and site permission for the schools in this study were obtained. After obtaining IRB approval and site permission, six NCAA Division III college and university members were invited via email to participate in the study (see Appendix E: Consent Cover Letter to Athletic Directors to Participate). The researcher informed potential participants in writing about the consent procedure, and explained in writing that they could withdraw from the study at any time. These instructions were provided via email to potential participants to avoid the risk or appearance of coercion. The potential participants were given a week to decide whether or not to participate and returned signed consent forms via email or in person. A follow-up email was sent within a week to remind them of the opportunity to participate in the study (see Appendix F: Follow-up Email to Participate).

**Participant Interviewing**

Qualitative research hinges on data collected through in-depth interviewing as one alternative to numerical data. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is a process that allows researchers to submerge themselves in the lives, perspectives, and emotions of the participants. According to Berg and Lune (2012), this submersion in the life, perspectives, and emotions of the participants is described as “life-worlds [which] include emotions, motivations, symbols and their meanings, empathy, and other subjective aspects associated with naturally evolving lives of individuals and groups” (p.15). Therefore, the in-depth interview chosen is
semi-structured, which is appropriate for qualitative data and suitable for participants holding particular viewpoints (Guthrie, 2010). This interview technique requires a plan in which the researcher asks open-ended questions to maintain a conversational flow and minimal speaking; the outcome of data is offered descriptively and can be used narratively (Guthrie, 2010).

Data were collected through face-to-face interviews, which solicited participants’ experiences with ethical challenges and the meaning and significance that they attributed to each experience. Additional data included demographic information, codes of conduct for participants’ institutions, and examination of related documents. The researcher asked open-ended questions by encouraging the participants to talk about issues related to the research questions (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007, p. 351). To answer the four research questions, in-depth interviews were used to explore Pennsylvania athletic directors’ ethical decision making in highly competitive intercollegiate athletic program. A narrative analysis was used to code themes (Creswell, 2013). The interview protocol was created by Bussey (2008) (see Appendix G) and designed specifically for athletic directors at the interscholastic level. Permission to use his instrument was granted (see Appendix A). Bussey’s (2008) instrument was modified to be used to interview Pennsylvania Division III athletic directors for this study (see Appendix B) and was piloted by an expert panel. To pilot the instrument, an expert panel was used to evaluate the instrument and to improve the quality of the instrument protocol. The researcher interviewed two athletic directors; each was asked to answer each question as if they were participating in the main study. Revision to the instrument was made based on feedback provided by the two expert panelists. The researcher created a matrix shown below (see Appendix B) to align the research questions with those in the interviews.
Table 1

*Research Question Matrix*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Research Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5, 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Interview Protocol*

The alignment of interview questions with the research questions can be found in the Interview Questions-Research Matrix (see Appendices C and D), which was based on Bussey’s (2008) protocol.

1. From your observation and experiences, what factors do you see occurring in intercollegiate athletics that cause you concern?

2. What do you think are the major factors that lead to unethical practices in intercollegiate athletics?

   *Probes:*

   How are they different today than when you first started as an athletic director? Are they occurring more frequently? Which sport or sports deal with these factors more often than others?

3. What role do you think the media plays in the public’s perception of athletes and coaches?

   *Probe:*

   What about parents’ behavior?

4. Tell how you determine if your program is meeting its ethical objectives?
Probes:

How are players’ behavior and performance evaluated? What do you look for that makes you feel comfortable in meeting your objectives?

5. How would you describe the responsibilities and duties of athletic administrators with respect to creating an ethical climate throughout intercollegiate athletic program?

6. How do you think your coaches would describe your efforts to create and maintain an ethical athletic program?

7. How would you describe the role of the NCAA in promoting ethical behavior in athletics?

8. If the NCAA asked you to define ethics, what would be your definition?

9. What is your prediction regarding the future of ethics and integrity in intercollegiate athletics?

Expert Panel

Expert review is recommended in order to refine interview questions prior to interviewing participants and to give the researcher practice using the instrument (Hill et al., 2005; Yin, 2003). For this study, the researcher used an expert review panel to evaluate the quality of the instrument protocol, identify potential biases, and improve the quality of the interview protocol. Expert panel review studies are advantageous as they “can give advance warning about where the main research project could fail, where research protocols might not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated” (Van Teijlingen & Hudley, 2002, p. 33). The researcher interviewed two athletic directors with the protocol proposed for the main study. These participants were asked to respond to the questions in the interview protocol as if they were in the actual study. Participants were then
asked to give feedback that was used to improve the clarity of the questions and data collection. The expert panel reviews were recorded in order to improve the interview protocol. Data collected from the review panel were not included in the main study, and all related data was destroyed.

**Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed with a basic interpretive method as “the researcher is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon.” For this particular qualitative study, “meaning is mediated through the researcher instrument, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive” (Merriam, 2002, p. 7). By choosing this approach, the researcher sought to process the views of the participants in order to discover and understand their ethical decision making processes. This qualitative approach was appropriate for inquiry into the perceptions of Division III athletic directors on issues of ethics, which allow them an opportunity to describe the pressure to win and the morality and priorities of the decisions made in those situations. The collected data were first inductively analyzed for identifying recurring themes, and then a descriptive account of the findings is presented (Merriam, 2002). For data analysis, the researcher divided the data into meaningful analytical units. The researcher then highlighted small data set with descriptive words where a master list for coding was developed and used. The coding process for this study was done in three steps:

1. **Step One:**
   a. Read transcripts the first time to begin manual coding on the second time before moving to the second participant
   b. Read transcripts line-by-line to identify and code concepts in data for coding master list.
c. Same process was performed for all six transcripts to establish a consistent method for handling the data collected.

2. Step Two:
   a. Organized concepts and looked for relationships among codes.
   b. Looked at frequency of codes to determine levels of importance.

3. Step Three:
   a. Selected codes for main ideas that were identified to develop the story and finalized emerged themes to answer the four research questions.

This method was used for this study for classifying, sorting, and arranging information to answer the four research questions that guide the study.

Data analysis in qualitative research consists of reviewing the data and then organizing that data into themes so that a narrative can be developed (Berg & Lune, 2012; Creswell, 2013). Systematic organization of data allows the researcher to draw various themes and patterns to trace back to the research question and literature review (Berg & Lune, 2012; Merriam, 2002; Miles & Gilbert, 2005).

Interviews with Pennsylvania athletic directors were transcribed, read, and manually coded. The second step of analysis was to return transcripts to participants to allow them to confirm or revise their statements and for the researcher to read them again. The third step was reading transcripts, identifying recurrent themes, coding, and organizing themes in order to discover the range of perspectives related to each research question.

The fourth step was to evaluate statements that were not related to the topic and delete them. The researcher classified, sorted, and arranged information and organized it into themes. This method allowed the researcher to explore trends in order to answer the research questions.
and to identify commonalities and differences from participants’ responses (Creswell, 2013).

The fifth step was to look at patterns in the data in order to answer the research questions. Analysis included categorizing, coding, and identifying themes, followed by examination of recurring themes (Moustakas, 1994). Overall, this systematic approach assisted the researcher in establishing validity and reliability and interpreting its meaning.

**Validity and Reliability**

In any research, validity and reliability are necessary for findings to be considered credible and trustworthy (Brink, 1993; Maxwell, 2005). Validity refers to the accuracy of the researcher observations and to whether or not the researcher’s conclusions are supported by the data, while reliability refers to the degree of consistency maintained by the research instrument(s) used by various researchers on different occasions (Creswell, 2013; Noble & Smith, 2015). The use of the terms dependability, authenticity, confirmability, credibility, and transferability in qualitative research strengthen the reliability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creswell and Poth (2018) maintain that reliability is enhanced when the “researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing good-quality recording devices and by transcribing digital files” (p. 264). Qualitative research aims to design and incorporate methods that lend credibility to findings by applying three concepts of qualitative research: (1) Validity, (2) Reliability, and (3) Generalizability (Noble & Smith, 2015). Validity is “the precision in which the findings accurately reflect the data”; reliability is “the consistency of the analytical procedures, including accounting for personal and research biases that may have influenced the findings”; and generalizability is the “transferability of the findings to other settings and applicability in other contexts” (Noble & Smith, 2015, p. 34).
To enhance the credibility of qualitative research for all of the above, Noble and Smith (2015) propose three strategies: (1) True value, (2) Consistency/neutrality, and (3) Applicability. True value refers to “reflexivity and reflection on own perspectives… reflective journal maintained and decisions documented” (p. 35). Consistency/neutrality refers to “achieving auditability… transparent and clear description of the research process from initial outline, through the development of the methods and reporting of findings… maintaining a research diary documenting challenges and issues assisted in maintaining cohesion between the study’s aim, design and methods” (p. 35). Applicability refers to “application of findings to other contexts…” (p.35).

In order to provide accurate reporting and demonstrate validity for this study, the researcher utilized an expert panel of two after IRB approval in order to pilot the interview protocol. The researcher utilized two athlete athletic directors as expert panelists to discover potential problems with the instrument protocol, identify biases, and improve the quality of the interview protocol by adopting Noble and Smith’s (2015) strategies. The researcher asked each expert panelist to provide feedback after being interviewed. Expert review is valuable because it allows the researcher to identify bias, where the study may fail, or areas where the interview protocol was not followed (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). To improve credibility for qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend using member checking as a technique to improve the study. For that reason, the expert panel was provided with interview transcripts to review the accuracy of their statements, which also addressed the validity and reliability of the protocol. The findings from the expert panel are not included in the final study.
Triangulation

Validity was reinforced by the use of multiple sources of data, which is known as triangulation (Berg and Lune, 2012). Triangulation allows the researcher to investigate multiple data sources to investigate the phenomenon being studied. To further strengthen validity of the study, multiple sources of data address the research questions: interviews and institutional data, including codes of conduct.

Summary

This study utilized an interpretative approach in investigating the decision-making processes of six Pennsylvania Division III college and university athletic directors on ethical issues in athletics. Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants with specific characteristics who would be capable of providing detailed responses to the research questions. This sample was selected based on their football, men’s basketball, and women’s basketball programs because of the revenue these sports generate and, thus, the pressure to win that could lead to ethically challenging situations. The researcher’s intent was to gain a greater understanding of the underlying causes for and future implications of unethical conduct impacting intercollegiate athletics.

In this study, six Pennsylvania college and university athletic directors were interviewed. In-depth interviews were the primary source of data collection; institutional data such as mission statements, demographic information, and documents (specifically, the athletic codes of conduct) also were used to answer the research questions. This study explores ethical decision-making in athletics by identifying and analyzing emerging themes from the interview questions. Athletic directors’ interviews, their institutions’ athletic codes of conduct, and institutional mission statements provide multiple sources that served to triangulate the findings.
Chapter Three described the methodology of this study of the decision making process of six Pennsylvania Division III college and university athletic directors on ethical issues in athletics. The results of this study, including the themes that emerged, are provided in Chapter Four.
CHAPTER 4
DATA AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to explore decision making by athletic directors that could lead to unethical practices. Chapter Four includes the survey results of six Pennsylvania Division III athletic directors, selected based on the number of years they had been in their positions and on the historical success of their football and/or basketball programs. Institutional documents, such as codes of ethics, are also included in analysis.

The first section of this chapter will provide demographic analysis of the participants that includes their gender, undergraduate majors, years of service as athletic directors, sport and years coaching, ethical training workshop participation, and current professions. In addition, the interview protocol is discussed.

The second section of this chapter will be divided into two parts and will examine the coding process for qualitative data and the themes that emerged throughout the interviews. The final section of this chapter will examine the qualitative data and findings. The analysis of the interviews will explore the decision making of college and university athletic directors. The section will address the pressure to win and intercollegiate athletics culture in an attempt to answer the following four research questions:

1. What decisions are made by athletic directors that could lead to unethical practices?
2. How do athletic directors perceive media reporting on college athletics?
3. In what way do college athletic directors believe in the NCAA’s ability to promote ethical behavior?
4. How do athletic directors see the future of ethics in intercollegiate sports?
Demographic Analysis

Six Pennsylvania athletic directors, three female and three male, with football and/or basketball intercollegiate athletic programs, participated in this study. See Table 2: Participant Demographics. One participant earned a degree in sociology, one in sports studies, one in mechanical engineering, one in health and physical education, and two in political science. Each of the athletic directors holds a degree beyond the undergraduate level, but that information is not included in order to preserve the anonymity of participants. Six of the participants had coached previous to their appointments, and three continue to coach. Participants’ years of service were in the range of one to five years for three of the athletic directors, with two in the range of six to 10 years, and one in the range of 11+ years. As for ethical training workshops, only one had attended an ethics training seminar. The workshop was in leadership for tennis for one athletic director. Another participant attended an NCAA Diversity and Inclusion training session, and one attended a Title IX workshop.

Each participant interview was completed in 35 minutes. Four of the participants chose to be interviewed in their offices, and two chose to write their answers to questions. All participants were pleasant and forthcoming in sharing their experiences as athletic directors.

Four interviews were video-recorded in their entirety, and two interviewees chose to write their answers. For the two participants choosing to write their answers, follow-up communication was required to clarify minor vague responses. Both responded quickly to clarification requests. The six interviews were transcribed, and emergent themes are described in the following sections.
Table 2

Participants’ Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants Name [pseudonym]</th>
<th>Mason</th>
<th>Myles</th>
<th>Jacob</th>
<th>Madelon</th>
<th>Sandy</th>
<th>Barbara</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Mechanical Engineering</td>
<td>Health &amp; Physical Education</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Sports Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Coached</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>Wrestling</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Field Hockey</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Coaching</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Training Workshop attended</td>
<td>Title IX</td>
<td>NCAA Diversity &amp; Inclusion</td>
<td>Ethics in Athletics</td>
<td>Leadership in Tennis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Profession I</td>
<td>Athletic Director</td>
<td>Athletic Director</td>
<td>Athletic Director</td>
<td>Athletic Director</td>
<td>Athletic Director</td>
<td>Athletic Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Profession II</td>
<td>Basketball Coach</td>
<td></td>
<td>Basketball Coach</td>
<td>Basketball Coach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic Director Years of Service</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative Data and Findings

Pennsylvania athletic directors were selected to be interviewed for this study. The selection criteria were that the participant have attained a master degree and have served a minimum of three years as athletic director at the current place of employment. The sample was selected based on their competitive football, men’s basketball, and women’s basketball teams, which are
revenue-producing sports programs and add to the pressure of athletic directors to maintain winning programs. The NCAA, D3football, and D3Hoods provided the historical rankings for these athletic programs from which the sample was drawn. Interviews took place during the summer of 2019. The researcher classified, sorted, arranged information, and organized them into themes. This method was used to allow the researcher to identify commonalities and differences from participants’ responses in order to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2013).

The interviews for this study were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim; the transcripts were compared for accuracy against the original recordings. Prior to analysis, the researcher looked for discrepancies in the transcripts. The transcripts were sent back to participants to confirm their statements.

The coding process for this study included reading the interview transcripts of each participant first with coding on the second read. For developing categories, the researcher divided the data into meaningful analytical units. The researcher then highlighted small data sets with descriptive words, from which a master list of codes was developed. The coding analysis was done in three steps:

1. Step One:
   a. Read transcripts the first time in order to begin manual coding the second time before moving to the second participant.
   b. Read transcripts line-by-line to identify and code concepts in data for coding master list.
   c. Performed the same process for all six transcripts to establish a consistent method for handling the data.
2. Step Two:
   a. Organized concepts and looked for relationships among codes.
   b. Looked at frequency of codes to determine levels of importance.

3. Step Three:
   a. Selected codes for main ideas that were identified to develop the story and to finalize emergent themes to answer the four research questions.

This process describes how the data was analyzed by the researcher in classifying, sorting, and arranging information to identify themes that emerged from the participant responses in this study. The next section reveals the emerging themes.

**Themes**

The following sections introduce themes that emerged from six athletic directors participating in the study. Furthermore, these sections include examples and participant statements that provide insights into leadership decisions that could lead to unethical practices. The analysis begins by analyzing the interviews to determine participants’ decision making that could lead to unethical violations. The themes that arose from the study will be explained.

**Helicopter Parents**

Helicopter parents are recognized for their excessive interest in the life of their young. Parents were a common topic of discussion for half of the participants. Three out of six made references to entitled parents, parental interference, and parental expectations for their students’ involvement in intercollegiate athletics. These participants found helicopter parents to be a negative aspect of their job experience.

Madelon, like two other interviewees, found helicopter parents to be a challenge. As Madelon succinctly stated, “Entitled parents create chaos at times” and described “dealing with
helicopter parents on many issues.” Madelon claims they seem to lack an understanding of the Division III regulations and only seem to understand “Division I philosophy and professional athletes.” Division III institutions, for example, do not offer athletic scholarships as Division I does, and Division III avoids conflicts between academics and athletics through shorter practices. Division III parents want promises of exposure and scholarships for their children. These parents’ perceived notions of their children’s athletic ability and the reality of the student-athletes’ skills have also created a hostile relationship for athletic directors and student-athletes’ parents.

Sandy reflected that parents become disgruntled “when an athlete does not achieve a status that parent thinks that a particular athlete or team should be achieving.” This belief has become a concern for her, and she added that that “these helicopter parents have convinced their young student athletes that the coach and/or administrator does not know how to run a program.” She concluded that even if teams are winning, it is not enough for these helicopter parents.

As a result of the sometimes hostile relationships between parents and administrators, Myles described the actions of a helicopter parent by saying that “it is so easy now for them to alert others about something that happened, something they’re not happy with” through social media platforms such as Facebook.

In summary, parents’ expectations, including expectations of scholarships and exposure, create challenges for Division III athletic directors. Furthermore, the promise of athletic scholarships and exposure is not part of the Division III philosophy, which is often misunderstood by parents.
Pressure to Win

The pressure to win was mentioned in all participant responses. All participants described different forms of this institutional pressure, including desire to win, recruitment of better student-athletes, healthy balance at work, job security, and high-stakes sports.

Sandy reflected on matters of ethics and integrity in this competitive environment. She envisions a future riddled with hard decisions. She states, “It is going to be tougher and tougher to maintain moral integrity and positive ethics with the pressures of winning.” She pointed out that the work environment has changed over the years, particularly with recruiting skilled student athletes. She explains, “It is more cut-throat in terms of winning” and also cites difficulty in “convincing a student athlete to attend my school.”

Madelon, like Sandy, feels similar pressure to win with respect to recruiting particular prospective student-athletes, which is part of the institutional pressure. “I think overall institutional pressure has grown, creating a trickle-down effect.” She adds that there is much more involvement in supporting all areas of the college, which has made it harder to maintain a healthy balance for each part of the job. She lists added responsibilities, including “helping with enrollment, additional fundraising, overseeing major facility projects, dealing with alumni on a daily basis, dealing with helicopter parents on many issues.” She now believes that days to reflect and engage in long-term planning for athletic directors do not exist anymore.

Similarly to Sandy, Mason, who is an athletic director and basketball coach, described the institutional pressure and the consequences for not winning with an example: “There is a basketball coach locally, she was relieved of her duties. She didn’t win a league game in two years. She had 18 players on her roster. They were all good students. They all matriculated, they all graduated. But because she didn’t win, she was let go.”
Shortly after he considered the local basketball coach’s misfortune, Mason went on to explain that she was doing her job by recruiting athletes that fit the university profile but got fired for not winning; he considers that decision unethical. The following statement captures Mason’s moral dilemma as an athletic director and coach himself:

I am going to bring 10 freshmen, and if by their sophomore year five or six don’t pan out, I am just recruiting over them. I just told those six families to take out that loan, take out that extra mortgage on your house, but you know what, your kids, we can just get rid of them because they are not performing and I am worried about my job. So that is in Division III; that is to me unethical.

Comparable to Myles, Jacob also thinks “there is pressure particularly on coaches and athletic administrators, that if they don’t show that they are competitive then their jobs are at stake.” To clarify this point, he added a general statement to illustrate the institutional pressure and unethical practices:

I think sometimes there is difficulty in college athletics when it comes to academic progress. I often think the rules are bent to ensure that top performers on teams are allowed to continue when the intent of the academic rules of their institution would say that they are not eligible.

In Division III, he explains that there is leeway for the schools to individually decide what constitutes academic progress. Furthermore, he believes that because of the pressure to win, “people’s ethics are compromised in order to keep their best players in the lineup.”

Distinct from other interviewees, Myles responded to the pressure to win when he took over as athletic director; he wanted to create a winning culture that his institution in the athletic department was missing. For him, the process was hard and it took time to find the right
administrative staff and the coaches he wanted. Myles stated that he had “to phase out quite a few coaches who thought, ‘I don’t have to recruit’ and ’I am just going to do the same as before and see who will start the season and see who shows up’.” His leadership approach was clear to his staff when he told them, “This isn’t expanded intramurals. We want to win national championships.”

Barbara, who is also a coach, described the pressure to win differently than the other athletic director interviewees. She claims that “the business side” of it and “the pressure to put your school on the map at any cost” are the main causes for ethical violations. “Sports itself is a forum to teach life lessons to student athletes, but the business side of it has changed all that.”

In conclusion, the pressure to win for athletic directors takes many forms such as concerns about job security, pressure to recruit talented athletes, desire to win or pressure to win, and establishing a healthy work environment.

**Alumni Pressure**

Institutions work very hard at engaging alumni and seeking their financial support. All participants agree that alumni pressure overall does exist, but half of the participants felt no direct pressure. The participants agreed that alumni are influential for colleges and universities where ethical decisions are compromised.

Madelon is constantly dealing with alumni. On game days, she says that winning is important to alumni and that their behavior can be problematic. She says that “their overall expectations create stress and pressure for coaches and administrators.” In her view, alumni do not understand the ”back end” work coaches and administrators put forth; as a result, they offer their opinions on how administrative decisions should be made.
In agreement with Madelon, Jacob described the same pressure and stress created at the hands of alumni. He believes that alumni help set the stage for inappropriate behavior and therefore is against alumni financial support with a winning expectation attached to it. He explained that “a lot of the scandals that we’ve learned over the years have had alumni participation or at least alumni pressure. When you hear later from those individuals why they did what they did, they felt pressure from alumni.” He loves supporting his own alma mater but strongly believes that “alumni participation [expectations on winning] is when things go awry.”

Myles, who understands the influence of alumni, considers the positive impact they can contribute to college campuses. “They are the ones who enhance these facilities at these schools.” To him, these are people who are committed to their alma mater but offer caution for the potential for violations.

In contrast, the remaining three participants asserted that they feel no pressure from alumni. Mason, however, noted his reason for the lack of pressure is that he does not have “millions of dollars donors.” To point out how powerful and influential these donors can be, he gave the following example:

I don’t know if you follow sports like basketball. Phil Martelli at Saint Joe’s got fired like a couple of weeks ago because he had some high level donors who said, we need to change. Again, he was doing everything right and his kids [student-athletes] were graduating. He got two down years [he lost and failed to compete at the NCAA tournament] because two of his best players were hurt. He was in the NCAA tournament three years ago [2016] and two big donors wanted change, [so] they changed.

To that end, alumni are extremely loyal to their alma maters and offer major financial support to their schools in hope to see them win. In many cases, alumni often overlook the...
guidelines athletic administrators are required to follow while establishing successful athletic programs.

**Media Influence**

Media play a huge role in public perceptions of athletic programs and create many challenges for intercollegiate athletics administrators. All participants perceived the media as unfair in the way events are reported. They agree that the media, in most cases, tend to sensationalize negative events.

Sandy believes the media makes all the difference regarding how they report games or the performance of an individual. She says that “perception is reality to most people, and since some people want drama, they often want something to be wrong with a particular athlete or coach.” In support of this statement, Madelon says that “what people see and hear on the news is the norm even if not true or realistic.” In agreement, Barbara says that “whatever is put on the media is blown out of proportion.”

To illustrate the effects of media reporting, three other participants provided more insights on how the situation is made worse. Jacob says that media can present something to be much greater than it is and think that it is because of the emphasis put on particular sports, such as basketball and football. “The consistent media blasting of those sports has created an environment to portray that more unethical things are happening.” He continues, “The stakes are so high and the pressure is so great and it’s created by the media and alumni.”

Conversely, Myles believes the media generate conversations that are driven by where their focus is. He thinks “it is the exposure, whether it is a sport team, hazing incident, or some sort of sexual assault, or a recruiting violation. All of these things are getting the attention from media sources.”
Media influence is a major concern for athletic administrators due to the way they report events. In many cases, they feel that stories are embellished and targeted to a particular individual or team.

**Recruiting and Enrollment Pressure**

Enrollment for many Division III institutions is a challenge and can result in financial problems and lack of job security for employees. All participants reported pressure in recruiting larger numbers of students. Enrollment for many institutions dictates how they do business, and it has become an issue athletic directors work to solve.

Myles spoke about this institutional obligation. “The basic requirement for us is to have more full-time students as pressure.” Sandy pointed out that the recruitment pool has gotten smaller. She says that “there are less student athletes to choose from” and “the numbers of actual athletes to recruit have dropped, so unethical practices occur even before a student sets foot on the court, field, or turf.” Madelon says it is “budgetary issues” that are related to enrollment. She adds that “schools who truly have ‘marquee’ sports or tiered sports, they are feeling more pressure.” She included examples such as “basketball, football, men’s lacrosse, baseball or wrestling, which depends on the school.”

Mason argues that “tuition-driven schools are largely to blame for unethical practices.” He says that “they put burdens on coaches to fill their rosters, and now you are seeing coaches being relieved of their duties because they did not win.” Similarly, Jacob thinks that “there is a decision to turn a blind eye to recruiting.” He continues that whether “it is communication or inappropriate visits, they don’t typically get reported when they should.” Barbara, who is struggling seeking female participation as her school, confessed that it is a challenge for many
athletic directors to have full teams. She says, “We are responsible to fill the team and if there is not enough interest, we need to look for it.”

Enrollment dictates the way institutions do business, and when students numbers are down, job security may be on the decline. The burden often pressures administrators to assist with enrollment through establishing successful athletic programs via the recruitment of talented student athletes while the selections pool has gotten smaller.

**Accountability**

Meeting with coaches consistently and frequently improves accountability and creates a positive ethical climate. All participants agree that lack of communication can negatively impact organizations with ethical violations. It is important that administrators hire good people, provide them with guidance, and understand the true value athletics provides to institutions.

Madelon feels that meeting with coaches to talk about concerns would be helpful. “I provide lots of guidance individually and to my entire staff, and we talked about a standard of expectations about how we are to go about things.” She feels that “it is important for administrators to set the bar and to confront the staff when concerns arise.” Consequently, she says that “it is about gathering information about what went wrong, provide guidance, and then find ways to improve and move forward.”

Similarly, Jacob, Sandy, Barbara, Mason, and Myles all agree that “setting the bar starts at the top” for accountability measures. However, ethical violations happen because of a lack of oversight. For athletic directors, Barbara adds that “we are in meetings all the time and you have to trust your staff.” Myles also says that the “lack of oversight and poor leadership comes from above” as the reason for violations when no one is questioning athletic directors and coaches, which creates a disconnect. He explains:
You really have to stay on top of your coaches because, we do background checks, but we don’t know who we are getting sometimes. I think unethical practices can arise. It is unfortunate because it only takes somebody like that to make a huge negative impact on your institution. I think oversight; it connects with all of the stories we are hearing on TV or in the past ones like the Penn State [Sandusky].

Madelon also described the importance of selecting and communicating with staff:

Hiring and keeping good people such as coaches, support staff, and administrators is the key. Unfortunately, I believe upper administration is unaware of the true value, work ethic, and opportunities provided by athletics. As such, legitimate pay and opportunities are hard to come by for coaches and staff. Keeping good people is a key to success. We need support from budgetary money, to salary increase, to facilities, to additional support staff to make it happen. The demands are growing, but the in-depth understanding of athletics is not.

Athletic directors believe that it is important to communicate often with coaches and to provide them with support. Athletic directors need support from higher administrators and for them to understand the lack of resources to get the job done.

NCAA Rules

The NCAA Handbook is a manual designed specifically to provide guidelines for addressing unethical conduct and other issues. Participant responses about the NCAA rules were varied. The discussions began with a very enthusiastic interviewee and then took an unexpected turn with the remaining participants. According to five participants, the NCAA manual seems to just provides guidelines and offers no accountability measures to deter rule violators.
Mason is enthusiastic about Division III sports. At this level, “We are the gold standard when it comes to integrity and athletes.” He believes that schools at this level ultimately want to win but will not sacrifice their values for money. He believes that allowing third parties with “big money in your athletic department” is going to create corruption.

Jacob is neutral in his views on the NCAA rules. He said that the “NCAA will continue to close the loopholes as they open up in order to block out those cheaters out there.” However, Madelon suggests that “we need some overhauling of the rules” and then conceded that possibly they are not being followed. She believes that the “NCAA provide guidelines, and you have to assume schools are following them.” “I think that if you look at the philosophy and identity of Division III in comparison to other divisions, you can see that if we try to achieve the philosophy, good ethical practices will play a large role.”

Participants agree that while the NCAA provides guidelines for addressing ethical conduct, it comes up short in providing strong accountability measures for those who break the rules. Therefore, the NCAA rules should be reexamined for accountability measures for violations.

The following section will explore the ethical decision that could lead to unethical practices by addressing the research questions with the interview responses of six participants in this study.

**Research Question One**

“What decisions are made by athletic directors that could lead to unethical practices?”

When participants were asked to respond to factors they see occurring in intercollegiate athletics that cause them concern, six athletic directors responded by indicating various areas of concerns such as enrollment, parental interference, athletic participation, and financial concerns.
Barbara, an athletic director and basketball coach, described her concern regarding female participation [enrollment] as a challenge in managing her athletic intercollegiate athletic program:

I don't know that it's a concern. It's more of a challenge, I guess, increasing the female participation. We've seen kind of a drop off and we're not sure if it's because of just the balance of life, work, and school. It's a commuter college, you know; their main focus is not athletics. It's kind of like a second thought, and we've seen a decrease in the number of female athletes in our school; we have four sports teams. So it's always a challenge in getting those female participants, a lot of them, you know, play the three sports because we bring them in and they start with soccer and then, Oh, do you play basketball? They play basketball. So, you know, I think that's going to be seen across the board that it is a challenge. And every college team's folding because there's just not enough female participants. You know, we're responsible to fill the team and if there's not enough interest or participation, we got to look for it. We got to figure out a way to fix it.

Sandy, an athletic director and basketball coach, described her experiences and concerns in dealing with parents’ interference:

The parental interference is becoming more and more concerning for me. It is great that they care about their child, but the problem is that they also have convinced their young student athletes that the coach and/or administrator does not know how to run a program, like they do (not all parents, but more and more of them). It is scary that even if you win, it still is not good enough. The parents’ only real joy, and it has been filtering into the athletes, is when their child plays... success of their play is often not a factor. This is troublesome indeed.
Madelon, an athletic director, shared concerns similar to those of Sandy’s and listed them:

1. Entitled parents create chaos at times and dealing with helicopter parents on many other issue.

2. Budgetary issues- mostly related to enrollment (for many schools)

3. A lack of understanding from the general public about Division III athletics (what it means, what it’s all about) – the public only sees DI and professional.

4. Youth sports and their grip on kids – and unrealistic expectations put on kids/families to participate year round - which leads to a whole host of issues.

5. Referring to the entire enterprise of youth sports – from offerings to parental expectations, to the promise of exposure and scholarships.

Jacob, an athletic director, expressed concerns in the area of academic progression and coaches not reporting violations:

I think that sometimes there is difficulty in college athletics when it comes to academic progression. I think often the rules are bent to ensure that top performers on teams are allowed to continue when the intent of the academic rules of their institution would say that they're not eligible. In Division III, there's leeway typically built into it because the school decides what constitutes academic progression. Unfortunately, the tracking of it isn't where it was intended by the NCAA when it comes to academic eligibility. You know, whether they have a full class load, a full-time student, or those types of things when they drop classes and such. I think that in some cases, people’s ethics are compromised in order to keep their best players in the lineup.

I think sometimes there is a decision to turn a blind eye to recruiting. They are aware of some things and once they become aware of it, they stop it but they don't report it. I think
in the strictest sense of ethics, you have an obligation to report when you have these minor recruiting violations, whether it's in communication or that it's an inappropriate visit, things like that. I'm not saying that they go completely unchecked. I'm just saying they don't typically report those when they should.

Mason, an athletic director and basketball coach, had concerns centered on student loan debt and lack of transparency:

I'm only going to speak from a Division III perspective just because that what I know is from Division I, which is what I read in the media too. My biggest concern at our level, I believe, is the amount of debt our students are incurring when they attend our university. I mean, depending upon what school you're at, depending on the socioeconomic background of your student athletes, I don't think, I believe many of them understand what they're signing up for. We had a year or two that I felt that we were admitting students, they were incurring Stafford loan debts, maybe an alternative loan debt, maybe a Parent Plus loan debt, not succeeding in the first year having to drop out because of academics, but then are $20,000 in debt and to some families, whether you're $20,000 or $20 million, it doesn't matter. They're not going to be able to pay it back. I know that's probably not sports related, but I think in our climate ethically as universities, depending on most upper middleclass richer families, wealthier families, it seems like, they might have better handle on it. I just think some of the students at universities, I really believe a lot of these students are going to school and if they don't graduate, they're not going to have the means five, 10, 15 years from now to pay that debt off. That's my biggest moral obstacle that I, fortunately for the school I work for, we do have very high retention rate. So, it's in the high 78th percentile. So most of our students do graduate and do receive
jobs so they are able to pay back. Now they still have high student loans, but at least you feel better that those students are actually working and are able to pay off that debt.

Myles, an athletic director, had concerns similar to Mason’s:

High school graduation rates. More students are going part-time instead of full time; it has an impact on our numbers. So the basic requirement for us is to have more full-time students - that's 12 credits or more. If we have more students who are taking fewer courses, that will definitely impact how we can recruit. A lot of times, it's financial for our students. Our students are juggling work, classes, sports, all that. So to me that's a big one.

He added:

The demographic or the mentality of our customer is changing. For example, the attitude about what they like to do as far as involvement, which sports are flourishing and which ones are not as interesting to our students anymore. That's concerning to me, like what sports I'm looking at more. I am thinking about five years from now. What sports are going to survive and which ones are not? Should we be doing more a niche-types sports - smaller, unique ones that are may be more interesting to the area. For example, I have an interest in maybe shooting sports or archery. It might be smaller numbers, not like a soccer team that is 20 plus, but what sports are going to survive the next five years? What new ones should we bring? Like Esports [electronic sports, which uses multiplayer video game competition online] is a hot thing right now. That's a big chunk of money. Again, as an evolving person, I'm looking at what's going to keep them here. What's going to get them across the finish line, which is to graduate.
Participants were asked to share major factors that lead to unethical practices in intercollegiate athletics, the frequency of those violations since the start of their employment, and which sports deal with these factors more often.

Sandy spoke about the challenge of recruiting quality student athletes and the business side of winning:

Unethical practices occur when an athlete does not achieve a status that a parent/coach/administrator thinks that particular athlete or team should be achieving. There is also the challenge of less student athletes to choose from...numbers of actual athletes to recruit have dropped, so unethical practices occur even before a student sets foot on the court, field, or turf.

She added:

The climate definitely has changed over the years. It is more cut-throat in terms of winning and in terms of actually convincing a student athlete to attend your school.

I would say that football and men's basketball these behaviors are more prevalent, though it should not rule out all the other sports.

Madelon also spoke about the pressure to win and recruiting expectations:

Pressure to win. Pressure to recruit a certain number of kids. Pressure to assist in all areas of the college – which, at times, makes it harder for us to do our actual jobs. I think overall institutional pressures have grown, creating a trickle-down effect. It’s becoming harder to maintain a healthy balance of each part of the job. There are more and more things to do on the job; it has become supporting all areas of the college (always has been but again, more of it) – examples include helping with enrollment, additional fundraising,
overseeing major facility projects, dealing with alumni on an almost daily basis, dealing with helicopter parents on many issues.

On the frequency of violations, she added:

They do occur more frequently – the idea of summer projects, or time to reflect, time and space to do long term planning – don’t exist anymore – …All sports are dealing with the pressures – however, I think those sports with the ability to bring in larger recruiting numbers probably feel it a bit more. And, for schools who truly have “” sports or tiered sports, they are feeling it more. It could be basketball/football, but could also be men’s lax or baseball or wrestling – just depends on the school.

Barbara spoke about the pressure to win, similarly to Madelon and Sandy, with a business focus as a cause of concern:

I think that one of the things that may lead to that is more of the business side of it. I think somewhere along the line, it went from the fun and the sport itself and the skills that you get out of it. By skills, I mean, you're playing the playing skills but also teaching student athletes life lessons through athletics essentially. I just think somewhere along the line, the business aspect took over the money, took over the sponsorship money, took over the TV deals, took over and if you don't win, there is so much pressure and people will do anything to win and keep their job. I think balancing that, for some, is clearly difficult as you see it in the news. When I see it, I’m glad because I don't think I want to be an athletic director at a big name school cause I don't want to have to deal with the people that come to you and say, you have to win, I'm not like that. So I can't imagine that. But I think, it's the pressure of winning and the pressure of putting your school on the map at any cost. And I think just people get sidetracked. I don't think they're all bad
people. I just think that they get so caught up in the image of things that they kind of get lost in the shuffle.

She added by referencing the media, which includes all platforms for public awareness of unethical practices:

I would still say that I have been the athletic director for four years, but I was also the assistant for 10 years. I don't know that it's gotten worse. I think people… it's getting out there more with the social media aspect of things, and I think maybe there was unethical things going on all along. It's just now more prominent because of the social media, the websites, the tweets, it's just more pronounced now. So I think the social media aspect is probably a big player in that.

On the frequency of unethical violations, she added:

I don't know that unethical practices are occurring more frequently. I think there again that they're just talked about more. I mean, I don't know. Not here. So I don't, I just think that people talk about it more, because if you think about it, one day something will happen at some school and then like a few months later, something else will happen at another school, and then they forget about that. But then, they kind of just keep going like a domino effect.

She then added her opinion for the reason for athletic scandals:

In my opinion, it would be the schools and the programs that bring in the most money. So the footballs, you know, schools with basketball. . . well, let me rephrase it, that's typically where you see the most, because that's where the most pressure is to fans. I'm talking about sports generating money. Money's the tickets to sponsorships, you know; that's where I see it happening.
Jacob spoke about the pressure to win and that competition is put above education:

I think it's this desire to win. Competition is put above the holistic approach that athletics is about education. A big part of education is understanding the priorities in life, and the priorities in life is not to compromise your integrity in the pursuit of winning. I think there's pressure, particularly on coaches and athletic administrators, that if they don't show that they're competitive then their jobs are at stake and sometimes they lose sight of the education aspect of our jobs that we are educators. Part of educating is holding the line on integrity and setting the example that competition, although it’s important, is not the top priority. The top priority is the educational aspect of it. We have a mandate to ensure that integrity is kept within our industry and that fairness, equity, and all those things are maintained with our integrity.

He added:

I think that more and more, the evolution of our rules have provided more guidance about how to address, making it more clear by taking the gray areas out. I think that has helped. I think that is a collective through the membership to adjust the rules to help and ensure that we are very clear that's considered you know, breaking the rules or the wrong intent. I think the rules are tighter and it's forcing more the hand of those to do the right thing. It's clearer about what's wrong and what's right. I think there's some evolution that's happened there. I think this past year was really clear with Division I basketball, that there are certainly improprieties that are occurring at a pretty large scale.

On the frequency of unethical practices, he added:

Frankly, I don't know if it's more frequent. I think that's a hard thing. We don't really see the totality of the violations when it comes to integrity with the rules. You know,
behavior that lacks integrity. So I don't really know if it's higher or lower. You try to get a sense, but that's anecdotal. You really don't know. I think the big scandal last year, there's so much press that would make you feel like it's more, but I don't really know if it is. I think the sports that have the higher fan base, the greater economics, the money that's involved when it comes to media, the larger salaries for the coaches. I think that creates the environment where it is more likely ethical boundaries are broken. So I think football and basketball, the large sports like that.

Mason, like the others, pointed out the pressure to win and also added enrollment as an added pressure for coaches:

There's a lot of areas, but mostly when schools are tuition-driven. They put burdens on coaches to fill their rosters and now you're seeing some coaches being relieved of their duties because they didn't win. At our level, Division III, when the philosophy is we're an extracurricular activity. Does student government officials or professionals in universities, are they held to that same standard? So if they have an event and you're expecting a hundred people and only 25 or 30 show up, do they get fired? But you know, there's a basketball coach locally, she was relieved of her duties. She didn't win a league game in two years. She had 18 players on her roster. They were all good students. They all matriculated, they all graduated. But because she didn't win, she was let go. So ethically we're doing everything we're supposed to do. We are bringing in students that fit that university’s profile. But because they're not winning, they get fired.

He added on the unethical part of this process:

So therefore the unethical part is, I’m going to bring in 10 freshmen and by their sophomore year five or six don't pan out, I'm just recruiting over them. And I just told
those six families, take out that loan, take out the extra mortgage on your house, but you
know what, your kids, we can just get rid of them because they're not performing because
I'm worried about my job. That is to me looking at family in the eye and saying come and
play for me as long as they continue to develop and get better. So that's in Division III,
that is to me unethical.

Mason went on to describe many factors that have changed over time:

Well, I think tuition has changed. Expectations of administrations have changed.
Presidents are more involved now. When I lost to ___College [pseudonym], my president
called me and said, hey, how come we lost to ___ College? But now it's not so much. It's
not like I'm Jay Wright at Villanova and they're saying, Why'd you lose to Georgetown
and Marquette? But they’re now asking questions. Well, you need to get better athletes?
To me it's like 20 years ago, as long as we got good students and they graduated, that was
fine. And getting back to the first answer, the student loan debt wasn't as large 20, 25
years ago.

He continues regarding upper management involvement over athletics and winning:

So I think the administration is more involved in athletics, which is good and bad. But
having those students incur that debt now as opposed to in 1995 is night and day.
Students were graduating with $15,000 worth of student loans. That's like one year now.
Some students now are graduating with $60,000 worth of student debt. So I think that's
changed a lot. Expectations of wins and losses have changed a lot. No longer good
enough to carry 45 men on the men's lacrosse roster now. It's you got to carry 45 men and
you better make sure that they don't get in trouble because if one gets in trouble, they all
get blasted. They all get painted with that big brush. It's the men's lacrosse team that's bad
as opposed to one individual. So there's a lot of factors in that field. Like there's tons of factors that you could probably write a book just on that question alone.

Mason added:

My biggest moral concern is the debt. I think it transcends race. I think the biggest, not so much a sport, but the student who is at a low end on the socioeconomic scale, whether you want to stereotype poor white kids or poor black kids. Pick the sport, basketball, baseball, track and field. I think those are like the sports like men's lacrosse which tend to have the more white suburban families. That's not going to affect them when it comes to money. But the lower end socioeconomic kids again, but it doesn't matter the race. There are always going to fight an uphill battle. Now, my answer to your question, my big moral thing is the student loan debt that sometimes we're setting these kids up for failure. It is not more which sports deal with these factors but what part of the social economic scale you fall on.

Myles took a slightly different spin to describing the pressure to win by providing examples and the reason for unethical practices that exist:

I think lack of oversight and poor leadership from above. I think that everybody has to report to somebody and if you were asleep at the wheel and not really asking questions of your athletic director or your coaches and if you're not involved in some way, if you're disconnected, you were in a different campus and know all your sports or at another campus there things are going to, people are going to take it upon themselves to do things the way they think they should or want to. At this level, we're Division III and the coaches that we hire all have other jobs. You hope that they’re good people. You really have to stay on top of coaches because, you know, we do background checks and
everything, but we don't know who we're getting sometimes. And so, I think unethical practices can arise. It's unfortunate because it only takes somebody like that to make a huge negative impact on your institution. And so, I think oversight; it connects with all of the stories we're hearing on TV or in the past ones like the Penn State.

On the frequency of unethical practices, he added:

It feels like a new story, but it's like what if you really look at what it started like; that person has been here for how many years? It's ongoing you know. When you do see at the Division I level, you'll see coaches that, you know, why are you stepping down? Why have they resigned? Oh, because they were about to get in trouble for whatever. So they moved, they're moving on. So these practices were in place, a process that was set up there for a long time.

He added:

It seems like college basketball continues to be a real issue. This is how they're being recruited. All you've got to do is look at the graduation rates and what are they doing with them? Are they just coming in for one year and then leaving. Is that really the mission of the institution? If that's not, is there a different mission for athletics because that's what it feels like. College football is there, too. I'm sure it's all influenced by the professional component of them wanting to get to the pros. I mean all, I think there are all those sports that have their challenges, but I think that the ones that stick out to me are basketball and football. I'm assuming baseball too, but I would say those are my top two.

Participants agree that the pressure to win is a major factor that lead to unethical practices. All six participants agree that football and basketball deal with these factors more frequently than other team sports.
Research Question Two

“How do athletic directors perceive media reporting on college athletics?”

When participants were asked the role the media plays in the public’s perception of athletes and coaches, they unanimously agreed on the impact it has in athletics. When probed about alumni behaviors within the context of the role of the media, three participants felt they added additional pressure.

Sandy had the following perspective on media reporting:

Media can play a huge role in coaches’ and athletes’ perception, especially social media. How the media reports a game or event happening to a team or individual athlete can make all the difference in the world. Perception is reality to most people...because most people want drama, want controversy, often want "something" to be wrong with a particular athlete or coach in order for their son/daughter/niece/nephew/favorite player/favorite team to be seen in a better light than the athlete/coach in question.

Barbara took a similar perspective on media reporting as Sandy:

I think it plays a huge role. Oh yeah. We're just at a time where you can't really say or do anything without being, you know, you just got to be really careful. You know, we have social media here and I hate it; but it's like a necessary evil but you have to have it; but you got to be real careful, you know, and I think with like professional athletes and even bigger name college athletes, whatever they put on social media seems to be so blown out of proportion and you know, you just got to be careful. So we have a whole social media policy and you just got to be careful. It stays with you, you know, and people bring something back you posted 10 years ago.
She added:

We don't deal too much with alumni. We're in the process of doing a better job with that. But I think if you're talking about like bigger name schools, like the Penn State, I think they have a lot of pull within the university or college, especially those like bigger name schools where they donate a lot of money. So again, you're talking about the business influence, they influence decisions. You know, it becomes really political and it becomes diluted by that. So I think they can, they (alumni) can have a huge role in that.

Madelon shared similar views on media reporting to Barbara and the role alumni play:

Media is less of an issue at DIII - but the media plays a huge role in the overall perception of athletics – what people see and hear on TV, news, and social media is “the norm” – even if not true or realistic.

She added:

Alumni behavior is always a challenge – especially when at games and not acting in a manner becoming of alumni. Their overall expectations also create additional stress and pressure on coaches/administrators. Easy for them to sit in their easy chair and judge what we do – especially when their view is only from the lens of them as a player (during their competitive days). They don’t fully understand the “back end” of coaching or administration.

Jacob also shared his perspective on the role of the media and alumni:

I think they play a large role. They play a large role in that, depending upon how they report. They can overexpose something to be much greater than it is. I think that’s also due to the microscope that they put on particular sports and the constant blasting of the media in those sports they create. To me, I think they create the environment where more
unethical things are happening because of it. So I think the media makes it worse. I know that's part of the experience for a lot of those fans in those sports is the constant coverage by media. But I think it creates the environment where individuals make choices that are inappropriate at a greater level in those sports.

He added:

I think the same thing with alumni. I think alumni help set the stage for inappropriate behavior, in my opinion. I don't think alumni participation is a good thing. As an alumni myself, I love to participate with my school but I think that's where a lot of times it goes awry. A lot of scandals that we've learned about over the years have had alumni participation or at least alumni pressure. When you hear later from those individuals why they did what they did, they felt the pressure that came from alumni as well. Not to mention, we said earlier the media coverage is a big deal. The stakes are so high and the pressure is so great and it's applied by media and alumni.

Myles also shared his perspective on media reporting and alumni:

I think there's more attention through the media, which helps to generate conversations. Then you see the webinars popping up and all those things too, right? I think it's driven by how much exposure is given, whether it's a sports team, hazing incident, or some sort of like sexual assault, a violation, recruiting. All of those things are getting the attention from media sources. And I think that helps drive the conversation. So it feels like more, but I don't know if it really is. I think they were there in the past. It's just now they're getting the attention through ESPN and all social media outlets. It could be a helicopter parent posting on a Facebook page. It's so easy now for a helicopter parent or anyone to
alert others about something that happened, something they're not happy with or whatever.

He added:

Alumni who take it too far, where they start to have favorites or are buying gifts for athletes. And you know it goes into another area for the NCAA. But then that could be potential recruiting violations. But I think these are really important. They also are the ones who enhance these facilities at these schools. I worked for ___ University and there were 800 students. They have amazing facilities, and it was all because of alumni. You see, they have an amazing alumni base. And my first year, now I'm like.. How.. Why is this? Why is this place so special? It's in the middle of nowhere and they're cranking out PAs and people were making serious money - physicians, assistants, occupational therapist. So they feel like they've got this fantastic education and now they're giving back to the place that made it happen for them. That arena is amazing, right? So that's how they got all that stuff done.

Mason described the impact on athletics the media has on reporting and donors:

Well, you'd probably have to look at Division I. You see all those coaches that are caught up in the scandals with the shoe contracts now. They're getting bribed to have people. You see that the federal investigation with those two actresses, they're bribing to get their kids in. Like one kid was on the rowing team and never rowed before in their life. So I think a lot of people perceive… one student athlete at the University of Alabama and as a football player who does something wrong, now the Division III football player at ___ College is painted with that same picture. I think we're so concerned about what the bad kids are doing, nobody talks about what the good student athletes are doing. Like nobody,
I mean there’s 40 people in your track and field team; 38 of them every day could be doing the right thing. But if one or two do something wrong, it's the track team that's getting painted with the big brush. And I always say this, they're student athletes, I'll probably get in trouble for saying this, but when they do something right, they are our students, Mason, Mason, they are our students but when they screw up, they’re mine, and that's my biggest pet peeve. And I say, well, why are they mine? Because you always remind me they're students first. So when they mess up or you need something from him, why do you call us as coaches? Why don't you call their advisor? Why don't you call the head of whatever the department, the history department, the business, why don't you call them to go track them down? Why do you call us? You know, when that same student who was involved in student government, like if I had a student who was on my basketball team but also was involved in student government and that student somehow screwed up, I get called and the head of student government doesn’t. The head of student activities doesn't get called. And I'm like, help me out with that. But when they do something really well and they're honored, they are Mason, Mason they are ours. They're more than just an athlete. And I go, I'm sitting in my 24 years. I get that all the time.

On donor pressure, Mason feels no pressure. “Not at our level. We don't have million dollar donors. Villanova won a national championship for basketball and the guy donated $25 million to redo their facility. We're not getting anything. So there's no pressure at all.”

He added:

I don't know if you follow sports like basketball, Phil Martelli at Saint Joe's got fired like a couple of weeks ago because he had some high level donors who said, we need to change. Again, he was doing everything right and his kids were going to school, never
got in trouble with the NCAA, never got in trouble with the law. They were graduating and he had two down years. Who's in the NCAA tournament three years ago? In the last two years, his best players were hurt and because two big donors said we wanted to change, they changed. And that's the stuff that just, you know, and we're relying on 18 to 20 year old kids for our wellbeing.

**Research Question Three**

“In what way do college athletic directors believe in the NCAA’s ability to promote ethical behavior?”

When participants were asked to describe the role of the NCAA in promoting ethical behaviors, one athletic director was supportive of it while five others were not sure.

Mason’s perspective was supportive of the NCAA in promoting ethical behavior and their involvement in various events.

Mason described his perspective on the role of the NCAA in promoting ethical behaviors:

At our Division III level, I think they do a great job. In regards to participation with Special Olympics, all the different events that our student athlete advisory committee participates in community service, you know, from on campus and off campus. The NCAA priority is really student athlete development, especially at our level. I think they do a tremendous job. I can't really speak to Division I because, I mean, think about it. Those student athletes from morning to night in season, out of season, how do they have time to do anything else? You know, I believe our level Division III gives the greatest balance for a student athlete. They can be involved in the play, they can play their sport, they could succeed in the classroom and if they want to just go to different events on
campus, they have the time to do it. I think the NCAA at Division III constantly promotes ethical behavior and student athlete growth and everything we do.

Jacob’s perspective for promoting ethical behavior was grounded on the NCAA creating a platform that provide guidelines and hold individuals accountable:

I think it's really important for the NCAA because it promotes competition. It promotes the whole association as a member-run organization in the pursuit of excellence in sports. But if that's all that they propagate, then you'll lack providing direction and setting a culture of integrity as well. You have to do both. You can't just push for great competition and not also push for ethical behavior in all things. It has to be both. I think they have a mandate and a requirement to push ethical behavior. What I mean by that is to hold people accountable when it does not happen. They have to do that. So the rules and policies must be clear. When they are violated, individuals must be accountable in a graduating scale obviously but they need to be held accountable.

Myles’ perspective was similar to Jacob’s when describing the role of the NCAA:

We follow the NCAA rules but there's more flexibility with recruiting and some other pieces. They have their code and their standards. I also think the NCAA, all the stories that they've had to deal with and all the issues, they have a full team of marketing people. They have programs that these athletes have to go through on campus. But it comes down to the NCAA being able to require certain training or requires certain standards, but then, if somebody is out of line, they have to back it up with punishment and some of the stuff that they’ve done; I just think like recruiting violations and things are like slap on the wrist stuff. I mean, the biggest one I think was probably Sandusky. That whole thing with Penn State, there was huge ramifications for that. And they took action. But with some of
the other things, it seems like they just get away with a lot. It's really hard. I also get that you're trying to keep people amateur status and you know, they've seen their friends go pro and not, or just you get all this money and it's a really tough situation.

Sandy, Barbara, and Madelon were similar in their responses and were not sure of the role of the NCAA promoting of ethical behaviors.

Sandy’s point of view was that “recent behaviors in men’s basketball has heightened the role of the NCAA in promoting ethical behavior. I would say it is now in the forefront of their agenda much more so than the past.”

Barbara also shared her perspective on the NCAA’s role in promoting ethical behavior:

I don't know that they do enough prevention. I think it only comes out when there's something wrong. I mean, they have standards and they have rules, you know. I wouldn't want that job. I think it’s holding people accountable. I don't care who you are. If you want to protect the reputation of college athletics, you have to hold people accountable. And if you don't, this is what happened. You know what I mean? I'm not in their shoes. I would never want to be in their shoes.

Madelon responded similarly:

Hmmmmm – I don’t know how the NCAA’s role in promoting. I think they feel there is a handbook of rules – and schools follow it. But, I think in general, if you look at the philosophy and identity of Division III (and other divisions), you can see that if we try to achieve the philosophy, good, ethical practices will play a large role.

**Research Question Four**

“How do athletic directors see the future of ethics in intercollegiate sports?”
Question four investigated how athletic directors see the future of ethics. Participants were forthcoming about the importance of integrity in sports.

Myles described the future of ethics as follows:

People will continue to be unethical. Athletics is a funny bird because, in my personal opinion, people are unethical all the time in athletics. Whether they realize it or not, they're looking for an angle. They're looking for a competitive advantage. So it's always gray and I'm pushing the envelope on a time, so depending on your perception of it, they could be unethical and just daily operations in some way. It's how far did they push it, whether it is considered cheating. So it could be everything from how you recruit somebody to a certain type of equipment or the height of your hub or the size of your field, or the type of grass used, or your stadium size and how loud you want it to be. So it's going to continue and it all depends on what gets people in an uproar, like what things they feel are over the line. I feel like we're not going to make progress where it's just going to continue both pieces. We'll continue forward at the same rate.

Mason described the future of ethics with the influence of outside support:

Well, I think as long as there's big money involved you're always going to have corruption. Whether it's intentional or not. Once you get involved in all that, and you get third parties involved in your athletic department, and I think that's where rules are broken and bent, um, for the benefit of whoever has the most money.

Jacob described the future of ethics as uncertain:

I don't know that it's going to get better or worse. My hope is that it gets better. I think we will continue to close the loopholes as they open up in order to block out those cheaters out there, those that are unethical. I think we'll be able to nullify the accomplishments of
those who cheated to receive it. But you know, my hope is that it would improve. I will tell you that I think you're never (I don't mean to be such a pessimist) but I think because of the pressure of the high stakes in some sports to think that it'll go away and we won't have to worry or be eradicated forever is not a reasonable approach. These are human beings that make self choices. And I think there will be self choices that will happen and that will be ethical. The hope is that we tighten the rules so that we can catch them, that we can help them and the situation for those who did it honestly.

Madelon described the future of ethics as ineffective:

I think we need to do some overhauling of our rules – which would have a trickle-down effect on high school sports (maybe) and youth sports (maybe), and in doing so, ethics may follow and be strengthened. I fear that when money is involved, there will always be issues. Hiring and keeping good people (coaches, support staff, and administrators), is key. Unfortunately, I believe upper administration is unaware of the true value, work ethic, and opportunities provided by athletics. As such, legitimate pay and opportunities are hard to come by for coaches/staff. Keeping good people is a key to success. We need support – from budgetary money, to salary increases, to facilities, to additional support staff to make it happen. The demands are growing, but the in-depth understanding of athletics is not.

Sandy described the future of ethics as challenging:

It is going to be tougher and tougher to maintain moral integrity and positive ethics with the pressures of winning. Couple that with the amount of money that is being exchanged as collegiate athletes strive to play at the next level...the future is going to be riddled with difficult decisions within the NCAA.
Barbara described similar sentiments regarding the future of ethics:

As much as I would like it to get better, I think until parameters are set and accountabilities heightened, it probably would get worse. I was just saying, you can have a big scandal and get fired from an institution and somebody else is going to hire you. And all these people on the lower end never get that chance. It's cut-throat up there. I don't know. I don't see it getting better in the near future, but hopefully I am wrong.

Summary

This chapter examined themes that emerged from the perspectives of six Pennsylvania college and university athletic directors on situations that could lead to unethical practices. The participants’ responses on situations that could lead to unethical practices could benefit athletic directors by consistently applying the theoretical framework model when communicating with their supervisors. The final chapter will discuss the results and their relationship to Offstein’s (2006) “Three Rules of Thumb” and Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) Ethic check questions, the implications from this study, and recommendations for future studies.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the decision-making processes of Pennsylvania Division III college and university athletic directors on ethics issues and how those processes could lead to unethical practices. The focus of Chapter Five is to examine the four research questions that guided this study through the analysis of themes that emerged through the interviews with six Pennsylvania college and university athletic directors. First, what decisions are made by athletic directors that could lead to unethical practices? Second, how do athletic directors perceive media reporting on college athletics? Third, in what way do college athletic directors believe in the NCAA’s ability to promote ethical behavior? Fourth, how do athletic directors see the future of ethics in intercollegiate sports? A framework to establish decision-making was based on Offstein’s (2006) “Three Rules of Thumb” and Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) Ethics check questions. This chapter will then conclude with implications of this study and recommendations for future studies.

Offstein’s (2006) “Three Rules of Thumb” was used in this study to examine the decision making of Pennsylvania athletic directors. Offstein’s model indicates that participants working in highly competitive environments who operate in extreme performance cultures are more at risk for ethical violations. The Three Rules of Thumb model enables participants to enhance their ethical decision making for intercollegiate athletics sports programs by answering three questions:

Rule One: Does this action attempt to deceive anyone or allow anyone to be deceived?

Rule Two: Does this action gain or allow the gain of privilege or advantage to which I or someone else would not otherwise be entitled?
Rule Three: Would I be satisfied by the outcome if I were on the receiving end of this action? (Offstein, 2006, p. 33).

Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) Ethics Check questions were used to examine the ethical decision making of Pennsylvania athletic directors. The Ethics Check questions enable participants to address ethical dilemmas, which are aspects of managing an intercollegiate athletic sports program (Blanchard & Peale, 1988). The Ethics Checks can enable intercollegiate athletic directors to consider three questions when making decisions:

1. Is it legal? Will you [athletic director] be violating either civil law or organization policy?
2. Is it balanced? Is it fair to all concerned in the short term as well as the long term? Does it promote win-win relationships?
3. How will [this decision] make you feel about yourself? Will it make you proud? Would you feel good if your decision was published in the newspapers? Would you feel good if your kids and grandkids knew about it? (p.20)

Seven themes emerged from the data:

1. Helicopter parents’ expectation of scholarships and playing exposures is not in alignment with Division III practices.
2. Pressure to win leads to ethical violations.
3. Alumni pressure helps set the stage for ethical violations.
4. Media influence plays a major role in the public perception of athletes, coaches, and athletic directors.
5. Recruiting in order to increase institutional enrollment places pressure on administrators and coaches for lack of winning.

110
6. Accountability creates a positive ethical climate.

7. The NCAA rules offer no meaningful measure of accountability for rule violators.

The themes were examined in this study to answer the four research questions in the next section.

**Research Question One**

“What decisions are made by athletic directors that could lead to unethical practices?”

Question one investigated the perceptions of athletic directors’ decision making that could lead to unethical practices in their intercollegiate athletic sports programs. The rules are often bent for top student-athletes who are academically ineligible to continue to play in order remain competitive. This finding is consistent with both Smith (2011) and Vise (2011) regarding unethical practices in various university and educational settings, such as altering transcripts or changing grades to remain competitive. Lumpkin and Doty (2014) also reported that the pressure to win can impact ethical decision making for athletic directors and administrators. In 2017, Susquehanna University, a Division III institution, was found guilty when a booster paid for a student-athlete’s expenses; in 2016, Methodist University, a Division III institution, awarded 11 scholarships to 11 soccer players while non-athlete students were not considered (NCAA Major Infractions Database, 2018).

The participants in this study agreed that enrollment is a major challenge for them as they are expected to attract students while maintaining competitive athletic programs. Sandy spoke from the perspective of recruiting from a smaller pool of students while convincing students to attend her school. In this particular case, she says “unethical practices occur when an athlete does not achieve a status that parent/coach/administrator thinks that particular athlete or team should be achieving” and “unethical practices occur even before a student sets foot on the court, field, or
turf.” In addition, Madelon added the “pressure to recruit a certain number of kids” and pressure to assist in all areas of the college – which, at times, makes it harder for us to do our actual jobs.” Many institutions are tuition-driven, meaning that tuition is the primary revenue source for operation and creates added pressure for coaches and administrators to recruit heavily.

Moreover, Jacob, Barbara, Mason, and Myles all agreed about the pressure to win as a cause for unethical practices. Jacob made two interesting comments alluding to the desire to win. He spoke about the desire to win and added that “competition is put above the holistic approach that athletics is about education” and he believes that “there’s pressure, particularly on coaches and athletic administrators, that if they don’t show that they’re competitive then their jobs are at stake and sometimes they lose sight of the education aspect of our jobs that we are educators.” He also said, “I think that sometimes there is difficulty in college athletics when it comes to academic progression. I think often the rules are bent to ensure that top performers on teams are allowed to continue when the intent of the academic rules of their institution would say that they are not eligible.” Lumpkin, Stoll, and Beller (2003) and Roman and Pantaleon (2007) found that highly competitive environments may provide an extra benefit to students, or recruiting violations are used to gain an advantage. Weinreb (2016) says many Division III institutions have embraced lowering their admissions standards to assist athletic programs. Lumpkin and Doty (2014) say that coaching to win and displaying ethical leadership has become a difficult task for both administrators and coaches. Producing winning teams puts coaches under enormous pressure, which creates ethical problems (Dodd, Achen, & Lumpkin, 2018; Orlick, 1978; Turpin & Koven, 2018).

The results of the study indicate that the pressure placed on highly competitive people or intercollegiate athletic sports programs leads to higher risks for ethical violations, which is
consistent with both Offstein’s (2006) Three Rules of Thumb model and Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) Ethics Checks questions. Either of these two frameworks can be useful to athletic directors to lead from a higher ground by asking those critical questions in a moment of crisis. Both models invoke those in leadership positions to ask themselves honest questions before deciding what actions to take. When answering the first rule of thumb question, “Does this action attempt to deceive anyone or allow anyone to be deceived?” for example, an affirmative answer to the questions would inform administrators as well as coaches that the decision should not be made. Jacob’s statement that he thinks “the rules are bent to ensure that top performers on teams are allowed to continue when the intent of the academic rules of the institution would say that they are not eligible” would have failed the first test. Since the decision does not consider the student, it is not a win-win situation and, therefore, it failed the second test. If the administrators put themselves on the receiving end, it would fail the third rule as they would not be satisfied by the outcome.

Participants consistently agreed that the pressure to win takes various forms, such as job security, institutional pressure to increase enrollment, pressure to win, and creating a healthy work environment, which can create many challenges. Many institutional leaders are facing many challenges when upholding school policy and athletics regulations (DeSeni & Rosenberg, 2003; Fizel & Fort, 2004; Nyquist, 1985; Spivey, 2007).

**Research Question Two**

“How do athletic directors perceive media reporting on college athletics?”

Question two investigated the impact media has in college athletics and the notion that sports build character. Athletic directors believe that the media is unfair and that the media only report student-athletes’ wrong doing. Furthermore, the notion that sports build character is
questionable when looking at the numerous scandals reported of athletes’ wrongdoing. Intercollegiate athletics has received its share of negative press, including sexual misconduct, unsportsmanlike conduct, lying, and cheating (Smith, 2011; Vise, 2011). According to Romand and Pantaleon’s (2007) study, competitive sports is neither negative nor positive for character development. Regarding character, Rudd (2005) added that “winning at all costs” has distorted our belief regarding what it means to display moral fiber.

All participants agree that the media play a significant role in the public perceptions of coaches, athletes, and administrators. They perceive the media to be unfair in the way incidents are reported. One participant feels that student-athletes on the wrong side of the law are immediately connected to the athletic department but not to their academic major departments. Jacob suggested that the advisor or the head of the student’s major department (e.g., history department or business) should be contacted and not just athletics.

Madelon, Myles, and Jacob also felt that the media set the stage for added pressure. Jacob says that the media sensationalize and exaggerate events. “The consistent media blasting of those sports has created an environment to portray that more unethical things are happening.” Myles agrees and says he thinks “it is the exposure, whether it is a sport team, hazing incident, or some sort of sexual assault, or a recruiting violation.” Sandy adds that “perception is reality to most people, and since some people want drama, they often want something to be wrong with a particular athlete or coach” Alumni and the general public respond to what they see on television and social media outlets, which impacts administrative decisions in intercollegiate athletic programs. One participant succinctly described the problem by stating, “A lot of the scandals that we’ve learned about over the years have had alumni participation or at least alumni pressure.”
While the literature review suggests that sports build character and that the leadership of the coach is critical (Bredemeier & Shields, 2006; Hardman, Jones, & Jones, 2010), Rudd (2005) argues that we lack understanding about what it means to display character when a “winning at all costs” phenomenon can be seen in all sports. Countless coaches, administrators, and parents may place such a premium on social value that they downplay the emphasis on honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect (Rudd, 2005). Roman and Pantaleon (2007) find that pressure to win can promote character development by choosing ethical principles over tactical excellence. They conclude that participation in competitive sports is neither positive nor negative for character development, but the coach is perceived as critical piece in that process. Strand (2013) agrees and adds that coaches’ positions allow them to shape the lives of athletes. In all, the media has served as an educational tool for fans, parents, and alumni in the commercialization of sports and media coverage. The ethical improprieties that we see for embracing the “winning is everything” attitude has impacted the moral judgement and actions of individuals (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2006).

Participants agreed consistently that media coverage is a concern for administrators in the way events are reported. The reporting of incidents can mislead the public that more wrongdoing is happening.

**Research Question Three**

“In what way do college athletic directors believe in the NCAA’s ability to promote ethical behavior?”

In question three, participants were asked their thoughts on the ability of the NCAA to promote ethical behavior. Five participants were unsure of the NCAA’s ability to promote ethical behavior, while one participant felt they do a great job. The trend among participant
responses can be summarized as a lack of punishment for institutions breaking the rules.

Greenwell et al. (2001) found that NCAA conference codes are inconsistent in three critical areas to explain the lack of punishment. The study revealed that the effectiveness of the NCAA conference code as follows:

1) Documents distributed by the conferences were policies and procedures related, not ethical codes.

2) While two-thirds did focus on enforcement of code policies, one-third did not indicate consequences for violations.

3) The conference codes address too many groups in a single code of ethics.

Greenwell et al. (2004) conducted a second study that revealed that consistent violators of rules should be held accountable.

Madelon’s perspective was revealing when she stated, “I don’t know the NCAA’s role in promoting. I think they feel there is a handbook of rules – and schools follow it.” Barbara’s perspective was similar. She says that “I don’t know that they [NCAA] do enough prevention. I think it only comes out when there’s something wrong.” Participant responses show a lack of awareness as to how the NCAA promotes ethical behavior because there is no severe punishment given to those who breaks the rule.

The literature suggests that when communication and cultural values are adopted, ethical codes become effective (Trevino, Weaver, & Toffler, 1999; Trevino & Weaver, 2003). Organization manuals or codes for ethical decision making are ineffective because they are vague (Greenwell et al., 2004; Molander 1987; Weeks & Nanter, 1992), and codes should be specific and customized to groups and individuals with provisions for consequences when rules are violated (Greenwell et al. 2004; 1987). Five participants felt that the NCAA handbooks
simply provide guidelines for addressing ethical conduct but offer no real consequences for those breaking the rules.

**Research Question Four**

“How do athletic directors see the future of ethics in intercollegiate sports?”

Question four investigated how athletic directors see the future of ethics in intercollegiate sports. The interview responses revealed consistently that moral integrity will be difficult to maintain where there is money or third-party involvement, lack of support staff, and pressure to win. The pressure to win in athletics will continue to influence those in leadership positions where recruiting violations and eligibility rules may consistently play a role (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012; Bussey, 2008; DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2003; Spivey, 2007; Turpin & Koven, 2019). Lederman (1990), Roby (2014), and Smith (2010) indicate that the pressure to win is a major factor for both coaches and athletic directors and, as a result, coaches’ careers are repeatedly cut short by athletic directors for lack of winning.

Sandy’s position was that “it is going to be tougher and tougher to maintain moral integrity and positive ethics with the pressures of winning” and added that “the future is going to be riddled with difficult decisions within the NCAA.” Barbara said that “as much as I would like it to get better, I think until parameters are set and accountabilities heightened, it probably would get worse.” Similar to Barbara, Madelon made reference to the NCAA rules and said, “Not sure - I think we need to do some overhauling of our rules – which would have a trickledown effect on high school sports (maybe) and youth sports (maybe), and in doing so, ethics may follow and be strengthened. I fear that when money is involved, there will always be issues.” Jacob said that “I don’t know that it’s going to get better or worse. My hope is that it gets better. I think we will continue to close the loopholes as they open up in order to block out those cheaters out there,
those that are unethical.” Mason was more general in his response by including all three divisions. He added that “as long as there’s big money involved at the higher level, you’re always going to have corruption. Once you get involved in all that, and you get third parties involved in your athletic department, I think that’s where rules are broken.” Barrett (1985) reports that support groups and alumni add to the pressure of “win at all costs” by 31 percent.

Spivey (2007) reports that administrators’ ethical decision-making is influenced by highly competitive programs. Frey (1985a) claims that unethical practices surrounding athletics is a result of the media influence of sports and pressure from alumni on college campuses and neighboring community. For participants managing athletics, it will be difficult to maintain ethics as one participant specifically described that the pressure to win continues. Participants believe that the integrity of athletics will improve when loopholes in the rules are eliminated.

**Relationship to Theoretical Framework**

This study sought to examine to the ethical decision making of college and university athletic directors. Offstein’s (2006) “Three Rules of Thumb” model can assist athletic directors dealing with ethical dilemmas. Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) ethical theory can also assist athletic directors when approaching ethical dilemmas in high-pressure moments. Both Offstein’s (2006) “Three Rules of Thumb” model and Blanchard and Peale’s ethical theory are consistent in providing leaders with guidance in understanding the decision making of participants’ approaches.

**Ethical Leadership in High-Pressure Moments**

Participant responses indicate that transparency promotes accountability within the coaching staff. Communicating clearly with coaches often can inform them of standard procedures to avoid ethical violations. Ariely’s (2008) study found that reminding people of
moral standards improves behavior. Offstein’s (2006) “Three Rules of Thumb” model shows that administrators should communicate honestly when leading from a higher ground. According to Offstein, leading from the high ground is a “leadership philosophy that shapes decisions from a noble principle” (p. 6)

Through all the interviews, participants stressed the importance of meeting regularly with individual coaches and staff to provide guidance and support in order to create an ethical climate. Madelon reflected upon her communication with her staff: “I provide lots of guidance individually and to my entire staff, and we talked about a standard of expectations about how we are going to go about things.”

Additionally, participants echoed the idea of “setting the bar” to create measures of accountability for the ethical delivery of services. This concept is consistent with the literature for the responsibility of managers by Desensi and Rosenberg (2003), policies for guiding organizations by Sack (2011), and mission statements on what matters by Ireland and Hitt (1992). In contrast to athletic directors for the guidance and support they deliver to their staff, participants felt a lack of support and guidance for leadership from upper administration. Myles reflected that violations are rooted in the nonexistence of questioning of athletic directors and coaches because there is a “lack of oversight and poor leadership [that] comes from above,” which creates a disconnect within the organization.

Helicopter parents contribute to the pressure of winning because of their expectations of what they envisioned for their students’ athletic participation. For helicopter parents, it was interesting to find that many parents didn’t understand the Division III philosophy when discussing promised scholarships and playing exposure. In the recruitment process of prospective students, athletic directors should inform coaches to communicate early the differences among
the three divisions to parents and athletes. Madelon reflected that parents only understand the “Division I philosophy” with respect to scholarships. All participants felt that parents are a challenge to deal with, seem not to understand Division III philosophy and regulations, and misjudge their children’s athletic ability and place blame on the coach or the administration for their inability to run a program.

As a result of the pressure to win, the working conditions in such competitive environments can be toxic and force individuals to compromise their moral values. The findings are consistent with the literature on the “winning at all costs” mentality (Kavussanu and Roberts, 2001; Roman & Pantaleon, 2007; Rudd, 2017). Offstein’s (2006) model also highlights that people in highly competitive environments are at higher risk for ethical violations. Offstein’s (2006) “Three Rules of Thumb” model and Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) Ethics Check questions can be useful tools for athletic directors when high demands are placed on them and also when establishing expectations for the coaches they supervise. This framework can help athletic directors avoid ethical violations and can assist them in their decision making through the chain of command.

Alumni pressure can come from the third-party donors whose financial support influences how institutions do business. Participants in this study agree that alumni help set the stage for ethical violations. Myles reflected that “they are the one who enhance these facilities at the schools.” Madelon added that “their overall expectations create stress and pressure for coaches and administrators.” Mason commented on the influence donors have on institutions when giving an example of former Saint Joseph’s University basketball coach, Phil Martelli, who was fired because a major donor wanted change.
Offstein and Blanchard and Peale’s frameworks can assist athletic directors when communicating with alumni. Athletic directors should consider the three ethical questions provided by Blanchard and Peale to address first “Is it legal?,” second “Is it balanced?,” and third, “How would it make you feel?” before accepting funds. According to Blanchard and Peales (1988), the legal question allows athletic directors to consider the problem by adhering to a company policy or standard of conduct. The “balance” question will weigh athletic directors’ decisions on fairness for all involved. The final question allows athletic directors to look for how the decision makes them feel according to their moral standards.

Media influence is an unmanageable platform for athletic directors, as they can’t control the presentation of incidents as reported. Athletic directors, however, can educate faculty and staff to work collectively as mentors to serve all students. In many cases, students in trouble are often assumed to be connected to the athletic department and no other discipline. Mason reflected and says that, “I had a student who was on my basketball team but also was involved in student government and that student somehow screwed up; I get a called and the head of student government doesn’t.”

The NCAA rules provide guidelines for universities in addressing unethical practices, but participants of this study suggested a revision of those rules. The NCAA guidelines are clear but difficult to implement (Fizel & Fort, 2004). Four participants in this study alluded to the lack of punishment or accountability for violators. Barbara says that “if you want to protect the reputation of college athletics, you have to hold people accountable.” Jacob also reflected on the NCAA rules not being clear and said that “when they [the rules] are violated, individuals must be accountable in a graduating scale obviously but they need to be held accountable.” To put it
another way, Myles argues that “if somebody is out of line, they have to back it up with punishment” and added that the sanctions given are “like slap on the wrist stuff.”

Recruiting pressure for Division III institutions presents a financial problem and an absence of job security for employees. This is consistent with the documentation on coaches fired for not satisfying their bosses (Holmes, 2011; Lederman, 1990; Roby, 2014) and changes in recruiting practices for Division III (Sanders, 2008). The pressure to win has become a factor as winning records help institutions to get recruiting exposure (Weaver, 2011). Mason states that “tuition-driven schools are largely to blame for unethical practices” and, furthermore, “they put the burdens on coaches to fill their rosters and now you are seeing coaches being relieved of their duties because they did not win.”

Through participant interviews, there was no evidence of athletic directors’ familiarity with the frameworks used for analysis in this study. Participants did not cite the use of company policy, code of conduct, code of ethics, or the NCAA manual for addressing ethical issues. The study highlights two useful frameworks that can assist athletic directors through the process of making ethical decisions.

**Conclusions**

The findings for this study provide insight into the various challenges facing Pennsylvania Division III athletic directors. Participants shared similar experiences and challenges in managing successful intercollegiate sports program. The study provided useful insights as noted in both the research questions answered and the ethical leadership in pressure moments and its relationship to the theoretical framework. Athletic directors’ ethical decision making should continue to be explored, including the factors of institutional pressure and
expectation to win at the Division III level and how those impact individuals in highly competitive work environments.

This study shed light on expectations to win. The pressure to win took many forms, including job security, institutional enrollment, alumni pressure, helicopter parents, and media pressure. These results support the literature findings for ethical improprieties related to the “winning is everything” mentality and the need to “win at all costs” (DeSensi & Resenberg, 1996). Spivey (2007) found that athletic directors in competitive environments made decisions simply to satisfy the status quo (p. 92). The results of this study support growing research for athletic directors in highly competitive environments.

Implications

The pressure to win leads to ethical violations (Bussey, 2008; DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2006; Roman & Pantaleon, 2007; Rudd, 2017; Spivey, 2007). Offstein (2006) and Blanchard and Peale’s (1988) frameworks can be useful to administrators in assisting them with ethical dilemmas. When athletic directors interact with others, Offstein’s (2006) framework suggests that they should ask themselves questions such as “Am I honest?”, “Are there always hidden meanings?”, “Do people spend a lot of time trying to make sense of my messages?”, and “Am I communicating or am I politicking?” (p. 20). These leadership perspectives allow athletic directors to clearly communicate with helicopter parents and handle institutional pressure, alumni pressure, or pressure to win in terms of what they can do based on institutional policy or areas outside of their scope of practice.

The study highlights that the system is unfair to student-athletes, coaches, and administrators and that winning prevails over ethics. Therefore, colleges and universities should reinforce values in their academic settings by following their mission statements and leading
with integrity. The literature suggests that the pressure to win at all costs has hindered administrators’ ability to lead with integrity and to prioritize the welfare of student-athletes and the guiding principles of the organization (Carino, 2013; Ehrlich, 1995; Fleisher, Goff, & Tollison, 1992; Lumpkin et al., 2012; Nyquist, 1985; Staudohar & Zepel, 2004).

For Division III institutions, athletic programs operate as extensions of admissions offices for recruiting students while also modeling highly competitive practices of higher divisions without athletic scholarships. Athletic directors are feeling pressure as their jobs have evolved to serve their institutions in various areas such as enrollment, fundraising, facility projects, and alumni relations in addition to establishing competitive athletic programs, and much more. For these administrators, recruiting for athletics is the driving force in assisting their institutions with enrollment in order to balance revenues and expenses. Athletic directors expect coaches to recruit heavily and to develop competitive programs.

As a result of this study, athletic directors should communicate the value of athletics for college and university campuses to other administrators. Athletics is a platform to highlight the learning environment for student-athletes and the academic programs and services available to all students for how they will be trained to serve as leaders after college. This could provide attractive messaging for universities and colleges to show their uniqueness and how those differences allow them to develop the leaders of tomorrow. Such an approach will minimize the burdens placed on athletic directors and coaches to serve as an extension of the admission process to meet enrollment needs.

Secondly, athletic directors should make conscious efforts to communicate to parents about the Division III philosophy and to provide parents with education to address those overly involved guardians, or helicopter parents. During the first-year orientation for students, athletic
directors should have a meeting with all parents about the mission of the institutions tied with the philosophy of their intercollegiate athletics department and how parents can be appropriately involved.

Third, alumni engagement is an integral part of higher education. Athletic directors should focus on maintaining positive relationships with alumni and getting them involved to support the athletic department environment for students while advocating lifelong lessons the students will gain when integrity is at the foundation of the athletic department. The same recommendation is appropriate for athletic directors in fostering a positive relationship with the media. Athletic directors should use their positive narrative to help media sources understand that mistakes made by some athletes can serve as educational life lessons; furthermore, institutions can look at these matters as areas of learning as well as others what not to do in the future.

Finally, winning is at the forefront for Division III athletics because it is believed that winning attracts new students and will provide job security for athletic directors. This pressure to win environments has been found to compromise moral values of those in leadership positions; athletic directors should consider adopting an ethical framework like those used in this study to assist them in ethical decision making and when communicating with administrators, coaches, parents, and alumni. Furthermore, ethical training for athletic directors should be ongoing, perhaps including an NCAA yearly seminar.

**Recommendations for Future Studies**

This study investigated the ethical decision-making processes of college and university athletic directors. For ethical decision-making in highly competitive environments, additional research is needed to better understand the complexity of highly successful athletic programs
within academic settings. This study adds to the body of research in this field. The findings in this study include interpretive data that provide a deeper understanding of decision making of athletic directors that could lead to unethical violations.

The study explored decision making that could lead to unethical practices. Further research is needed with other demographics, including Division III institutions belonging to other conferences and regions. The current study investigated the ethical decision-making processes of college and university athletic directors in Pennsylvania. Other research could address the perspectives of directors of enrollment and the working relationships among athletic directors, coaches, parents, and alumni.

**Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the decision-making processes of Pennsylvania Division III college and university athletic directors on ethics issues and how those processes could lead to unethical practices. The findings of this study demonstrate the challenges for athletic directors as the scope of their jobs has evolved in this highly competitive environment. The pressure to win for these athletic directors has taken many forms such as job security, pressure to recruit for institutional financial health, alumni pressure, helicopter parents, and media pressure. Athletic directors are responsible for the recruitment of quality students in high numbers; fundraising; facilities projects; maintaining strong relationships with parents, donors, and alumni; and establishing highly competitive programs but doing so honestly.
References


doi:10.22543/0733.111.1209


doi:10.1123/jsm.8.1.14


Gillikin, J. (n.d.). *Difference between code of ethics and conduct*. Retrieved from


Rudd, A. (2017). Sport spectator behavior as a moral issue in college sport. *Journal of Amateur Sport, 3*, 96-114. doi:10.17161/jas.v.0i0.5923


Smith, E. (2010, August 24). Bobby Bowden writes about being forced out by Florida State. *USA Today*. Retrieved from


Hemisphere.


doi:10.1093/intqhc/mzm042


Retrieved from

http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/sports/college/mensbasketball/story/2012-03-15/st-bonaventure-sheds-scandal-returns-to-ncaa-tournament/53552366/1


Retrieved from http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ncaaf/sec/2013/02/12/alabama-football-players-arrested-on-robbery-charges/1912299/


Appendix A

Permission Email From Rodney Bussey

Hi Felix,

You have my permission to do so.

If you wouldn’t mind forwarding me a link, I’d like to see your study upon its conclusion.

Cheers!

Rodney Bussey, Ph.D., CWP
Southern Adventist University
School of Physical Education, Health, and Wellness
Phone 423.236.2457
Fax 423.236.1850

On Jun 20, 2017, at 6:18 PM, Felix M Moreno <f.m.moreno@iup.edu> wrote:

Dr. Bussey,

I am a doctoral student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I have enjoyed reading your dissertation, and I am conducting a similar study in the state of Pennsylvania. I am in need of a letter of permission to use your instrument. Please let me know if you would need additional information.

Kind regards,
Felix Moreno
Appendix B

Interview Questions Research Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Research Statements / Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>5, 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C
Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol
Project: Athletic Directors’ Perceptions on Ethical Issues Within Division III Intercollegiate Athletics
Time of the Interview:
Date:
Interviewer: Felix M. Moreno
Interviewee:
Position of Interviewee:
Number of Years in Position:

Purpose Statement:

There has been limited research in assessing the perceptions of intercollegiate athletic directors on ethical issues within NCAA Division III colleges and universities. To better understand the ethical misconduct that continues in big-time intercollegiate athletic programs, the study examined the decision making of Pennsylvania college and university athletic directors to better understand their thoughts on ethical and unethical behaviors related to the field of athletics and the NCAA ethical Conduct (Bylaw, Article 10). For this study, six current athletic directors will be interviewed and their personal demographics will be obtained.

1. From your observation and experiences, what factors do you see occurring in intercollegiate athletics that cause you concern?
2. What do you think are the major factors that lead to unethical practices in intercollegiate athletics?
   a. Probes:
   b. How are they different today than when you first started as an athletic director? Are they occurring more frequently? Which sport or sports deal with these factors more often than others?
3. What role do you think the media plays in the public’s perception of athletes’ and coaches’?
   a. Probe:
   b. What about alumni’s behavior?
4. Tell how you determine if your program is meeting its ethical objective?
   
a. Probes:
   b. How are players’ behavior and performance evaluated? What do you look for that makes you feel comfortable in meeting your objectives?

5. How would you describe the responsibilities and duties of athletic administrators with respect to creating an ethical climate throughout intercollegiate athletic program?

6. How do you think your coaches would describe your efforts to create and maintain an ethical athletic program?

7. How would you describe the role of the NCAA in promoting ethical behavior in athletics?

8. If the NCAA asked you to define ethics, what would be your definition?

9. What is your prediction regarding the future of ethics and integrity in intercollegiate athletics?
Appendix D

NCAA Pennsylvania Division III Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Albright College</td>
<td>Middle Atlantic Conferences</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Allegheny College</td>
<td>North Coast Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alvernia University</td>
<td>Middle Atlantic Conferences</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Arcadia University</td>
<td>Middle Atlantic Conferences</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bryn Athyn College</td>
<td>North Eastern Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bryn Mawr College</td>
<td>Centennial Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Cabrini University</td>
<td>Colonial States Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Cairn University</td>
<td>Colonial States Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Carnegie Mellon University</td>
<td>University Athletic Association</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Cedar Crest College</td>
<td>Colonial States Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Chatham University</td>
<td>Presidents' Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Clarks Summit University</td>
<td>Colonial States Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Delaware Valley University</td>
<td>Middle Atlantic Conferences</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>DeSales University</td>
<td>Middle Atlantic Conferences</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Dickinson College</td>
<td>Centennial Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Eastern University</td>
<td>Middle Atlantic Conferences</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Elizabethtown College</td>
<td>Landmark Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Franklin &amp; Marshall College</td>
<td>Centennial Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Geneva College</td>
<td>Presidents' Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Gettysburg College</td>
<td>Centennial Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Grove City College</td>
<td>Presidents' Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Gwynedd Mercy University</td>
<td>Colonial States Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Haverford College</td>
<td>Centennial Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Immaculata University</td>
<td>Colonial States Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Juniata College</td>
<td>Landmark Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Keystone College</td>
<td>Colonial States Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>King's College (Pennsylvania)</td>
<td>Middle Atlantic Conferences</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>La Roche College</td>
<td>Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Lancaster Bible College</td>
<td>North Eastern Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Lebanon Valley College</td>
<td>Middle Atlantic Conferences</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Lycoming College</td>
<td>Middle Atlantic Conferences</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Marywood University</td>
<td>Colonial States Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Messiah College</td>
<td>Middle Atlantic Conferences</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Misericordia University</td>
<td>Middle Atlantic Conferences</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Moravian College</td>
<td>Landmark Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Mount Aloysius College</td>
<td>Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Muhlenberg College</td>
<td>Centennial Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Neumann University</td>
<td>Colonial States Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Pennsylvania College of Technology</td>
<td>North Eastern Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Penn State University, Altoona</td>
<td>Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Pennsylvania State Univ. Erie, the Behrend College</td>
<td>Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Penn State Harrisburg</td>
<td>Capital Athletic Conference Inc.</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Penn State Berks College</td>
<td>North Eastern Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Penn State University, Abington</td>
<td>North Eastern Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>University of Pittsburgh, Bradford</td>
<td>Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Pittsburgh, Greensburg</td>
<td>Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Rosemont College</td>
<td>Colonial States Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>University of Scranton</td>
<td>Landmark Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Saint Vincent College</td>
<td>Presidents' Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Susquehanna University</td>
<td>Landmark Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Swarthmore College</td>
<td>Centennial Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Thiel College</td>
<td>Presidents' Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Ursinus College</td>
<td>Centennial Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>University of Valley Forge</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Washington and Jefferson College</td>
<td>Presidents' Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Waynesburg University</td>
<td>Presidents' Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Westminster College (Pennsylvania)</td>
<td>Presidents' Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Widener University</td>
<td>Middle Atlantic Conferences</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Wilkes University</td>
<td>Middle Atlantic Conferences</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Wilson College</td>
<td>North Eastern Athletic Conference</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>York College (Pennsylvania)</td>
<td>Capital Athletic Conference Inc.</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Consent to Participate in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Felix M. Moreno from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about athletic directors’ perceptions on ethical issues within Division III intercollegiate athletics. I understand I will be one of six athletic directors interviewed for this research study.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I may withdraw or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one will be told.
2. I understand that most interviewees in the study will find the discussion interesting and thought provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview, I have the right to decline to answer any question or end the interview.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by a researcher (Felix M. Moreno) from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The interview will last no more than one hour. Notes will be taken during the interview. A recording of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. If do not want to be recorded, I will not be able to participate in the interview.
4. I understand the research will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent use of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies, which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
5. Faculty from my institution will neither be present at the interview nor have any access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.
6. I understand the research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Studies Involving Human Subjects, Indiana University of Pennsylvania. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted through Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
7. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
8. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

My Signature: ____________________________ Date: ________________

My Printed Name: ____________________________ Date: ________________

Signature of Investigator: ____________________________ Date: ________________
Appendix F

Follow-up Email: Consent to Participate in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Felix M. Moreno from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about athletic directors’ perceptions on ethical issues within Division III intercollegiate athletics. I understand I will be one of six athletic directors interviewed for this research study.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I may withdraw or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one will be told.
2. I understand that most interviewees in the study will find the discussion interesting and thought provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview, I have the right to decline to answer any question or end the interview.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by a researcher (Felix M. Moreno) from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The interview will last no more than one hour. Notes will be taken during the interview. A recording of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. If do not want to be recorded, I will not be able to participate in the interview.
4. I understand the research will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent use of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies, which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
5. Faculty from my institution will neither be present at the interview nor have any access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.
6. I understand the research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Studies Involving Human Subjects, Indiana University of Pennsylvania. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted through Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
7. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
8. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

My Signature: ___________________________ Date: ________________

My Printed Name: ________________________ Date: ________________

Signature of Investigator: ____________________ Date: ________________
Appendix G

Rodney Bussey Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

1. From your observation and experience, what factors do you see occurring in interscholastic athletics that causes your concern?

2. What do you think are the major factors that lead to unethical practices in interscholastic athletics?
   Probes:
   How are they different today than when you first started as an athletic director?
   Are they occurring more frequently?
   Which sport or sports deal with these factors more often than others?

3. What role do you think the media plays in the public’s perception of ethical behavior of athletes and coaches?
   Probe:
   What about parent’s behavior?

4. Tell how you determine if your program is meeting its ethical objective?
   Probes:
   How are coaches evaluated on commitment and performance of ethical values?
   How are players’ behavior and performance evaluated?
   What do you look for that makes you feel comfortable in meeting your objectives?

5. How would you describe the responsibilities and duties of athletic administrators with respect to creating an ethical climate throughout the district’s athletic program?

6. How do you think your coaches would describe your efforts to create and maintain an ethical athletic program?

7. How would you describe the role of the UIL in promoting ethical behavior in athletics in Texas?
   Probe:
   What more might the UIL do to promote ethical behavior?

8. If the UIL asked you to define ethics, what would be your definition?

9. What is your prediction regarding the future of ethics and integrity in interscholastic athletics?

(Bussey, 2008).
Appendix H

Demographic Questions

1. Gender
   a. Male
   b. Female

2. Age
   b. 30-39
   c. 40-49
   d. 50-59
   e. 60-65
   f.

3. Undergraduate major: _________________________________________________

4. Years of service as an Athletic Director: ________________________________

5. Sports coached and for how many years:

   ________________ years

   ________________ years

   ________________ years

6. Courses or ethical training workshops attended & how many years:

   ________________ years

   ________________ years

   ________________ years

7. Highest Level of Education
   a. Bachelor’s
   b. Master’s
   c. Doctorate