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Colleen Starrs
starrscolleen@gmail.com

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF US COLLEGE
ATHLETIC SCANDALS IN TRADITIONAL NEWS MEDIA AND MEDIATED
COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE COLLEGE

By

COLLEEN STARRS, Bachelor of Science

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

Stephen F. Austin State University

In Partial Fulfillment

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For the Degree of

Masters of Interdisciplinary Studies

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

May, 2018

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ATHLETIC SCANDALS IN TRADITIONAL NEWS MEDIA AND MEDIATED
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By

COLLEEN STARRS, Bachelor of Science

APPROVED:

Dr. Sudeshna Roy, Thesis Director

Dr. Joyce Johnston, Committee Member

Dr. Suzanne Manniss, Committee Member

Dr. Robert McDermid, Committee Member

Dr. Robert Culpepper, Committee Member

Pauline Sampson, Ph.D.
Dean of Research and Graduate Studies

ABSTRACT

This study critically analyzes organizational and mass media communication about the Penn State Child Sexual Abuse Scandal of 2011. The author examines the different ways in which Pennsylvania State University administrators and officials communicated the scandal internally to their community (campus community and surrounding city community) and compared it to how *The New York Times* communicated the scandal through their unique media platform to the world. The timeline for the data is from November 1, 2011, to July 31, 2012, as the scandal broke to the world, as well as, the months immediately after. The findings suggest that as the ownership of the communication changes, there is a constant endeavor to re-contextualize the communication. PSU athletic department and university administrators chose dissociative strategies to communicate about the scandal that engulfed every corner of their university in order to protect their reputation in the eyes of the community and country. On a national level, *The New York Times* dramatized the scandal greatly in ways that lead to more readers and consumers of their articles and papers. Further discussion of the media representation of the scandal and communicative techniques expressed by all parties involved, the entire Penn State University and *The New York Times*, ultimately lead to the conclusion that the protection of financial interests of the University and the mass media institutions pushes away the socially responsible communicative actions in the wake of this scandal.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background of the Problem

In today's hyper-mediated world, journalists and reporters alike are the first to obtain details of an organizational scandal as it unfolds in real time. They control every aspect of the representation of the scandal from how it is portrayed in the media to who is being portrayed as the victim and perpetrator. Media consumers are fed these stories on a near constant basis keeping up the importance of the story for the days following the scandal. The longevity or shelf life of the scandal in the traditional media is based on audience response and interest. Some scandals are sustained for months and keep coming back to the news cycle again and again when certain parts of the scandal are revisited over a period of time. Some other scandals are forgotten and lose their allure quickly. The traditional media messages about the scandal are edited in ways that ensure the largest number of viewers and social followers. What is very rarely brought to the attention of the public, however, is the internal communication within the organization involved in said scandal. The ways in which an organization handles communication during times of crises may be significantly different from the ways in which the media portrays the information and represents the same scandal. This paper investigates the portrayal of just such a scandal that unfolded in intercollegiate athletics in the past decade. Institutions of higher education deal with scandals differently from scandals that

unfold at direct consumer-oriented organizations. What makes the Universities unique are their stakeholders starting from current athletic department and students to current non-athletics students, faculty, parents, community members, rabid fan base, staff, administrators, board members, and if it is a state-funded institution, state administrators. Throw into this mix the media's interest in such scandals. How to juggle communication that is appropriate for each of these groups amidst an unfolding scandal is a fascinating study in itself. It is even more telling when such communication is compared to how traditional media represents the same scandal. This paper thus attempts to map the strategies of communication undertaken by a University hit by an intercollegiate athletic scandal and the compares those to media representation of the scandal. The purpose of this paper is to provide a deeper understanding of crisis communication, its various connection to culture, politics and economics especially in the realm of US intercollegiate athletics. Given how in the United States, college athletics is run much like a business and ticket and merchandise sales and broadcast contracts provide a source of income for the institution, this study provides an in-depth analysis of communicating and managing a scandal that has broad and far-reaching implications.

Research Questions

This study aims to formulate answers to two main research questions. The first research question inquires about what ways are public scandals being communicated and managed by the organizations involved in them. The second research question focuses on discovering what exactly are the differences and similarities between the ways in

which such scandals are represented by the organization via press released, internal memos, etc. and the traditional media, newspapers, blogs, etc.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

American University and College Culture

From an early age, kids in the United States don college “gear” that represents where their parents had gone to college. “Gear” can be any article of clothing or item that identifies a specific university or college. College gear comes in virtually any size and almost any item. One of the most common ways of identifying oneself in the United States is by wearing something that represents a person’s favorite school, even if that person hasn’t actually attended it themselves. The representation of a university through gear is just one way in which the American college culture is expressed. Step foot on any college or university campus and you will not question where you are due to students, faculty, staff, and community members of every type wearing something representing that school. The college culture is expressed through many different facets; clothing and other gear, athletic events, pep rallies, homecoming, alumni events, spirit programs and teams, and even weekends that celebrate the students’ parents, to name a few.

London anthropologist Cristina De Rossi depicts culture as something encompassing “religion, food, what we wear, how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones, and a million other things.” (Zimmerman, 2017). While every American university or college is different, the cultures present on the different

campuses are relatively similar in the sense that they are represented through campus activities, what students, staff, and faculty wear, and the communicative tendencies of such gear and activities.

Creating a culture that extends throughout an entire university is no easy task. It is met with many different challenges, one of the most significant being student enrollment. Colleges and universities do not exist without students and the school's reputation depends on the types of students enrolled. Desirability and popularity of a specific school can be expressed through enrollment numbers, specifically what experts call "the yield" (Powell, 2017). Institutions compete with one another to have higher yields. The yield "is the percentage of students who enroll at the school after being admitted" (Powell, 2017). The aspects of a school that appeal to students vary from level of rigorous academic programs, the athletic teams, the social life of the school's surrounding city, to the cost of tuition and availability of financial aid and assistance. Universities compete with one another to offer the most number of extracurricular activities such as clubs and student organizations, the lowest tuition rate, the most opportunities for financial aid and assistance, and even the nicest and most modern amenities such as residential living areas and recreational fitness facilities. This competition for *appeal* plays into the broader American college culture.

American Athletic College Culture

Separate from the greater American college culture is a narrower Athletic Culture that exists within operating athletic departments of colleges and universities. From the

outside looking in, foreign students in the United States may come to believe that American college life “centers on college (American) football, or the basketball team.” (Cooke, 2013). Intercollegiate athletics is a billion-dollar industry in the U.S. with men’s basketball and football accumulating the most money year after year and attracting the most fans and supporters out of all the other NCAA sports. The National Collegiate Athletic Association is one of the largest tax-exempt corporations in the country that not only focuses on the safety of athletes but also on protecting the amateurism of the student-athletes while furthering the academic missions of the NCAAs 1,123-member institutions. Of the half million student-athletes currently competing, 54,000 of them compete annually in the 90 NCAA championships across all 3 divisions in 24 different sports. All 1,123-member institutions make up the NCAAs 98 different athletic conferences that span across all three divisions.

The Power 5

Of these divisions and conferences, there exists a subculture known as “Power 5”. Power 5 schools are a subset of the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) member institutions that make up the Southeastern Conference (SEC), Big Ten Conference, Big 12 Conference, Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), and the Pacific-12 Conference (PAC-12). The schools that represent the Power 5 subset also represent a certain culture that focuses on power, size, and athletic success. Power 5 schools are statistically larger in regard to student enrollment and size of the athletic department than other Division I institutions (Sheehan, 2017). These schools are also commonly regarded as “premier

research institutions” (Sheehan, 2017) which explains the schools’ overall larger expenditures as well as their annual revenues. Athletically speaking, these institutions have extremely high performing athletic programs with decades of success, national championships, and a very high caliber of student-athletes. The stigma that comes with playing a sport for a Power 5 program suggests that you are an elite athlete that is bound for an athletic career that stretches beyond intercollegiate athletics.

As discussed earlier, there exists a competitive nature between American colleges and universities to be better than one another through better offerings in financial aid and assistance, scholarships, and other amenities. Similarly, a competitive nature exists within intercollegiate athletics that does not necessarily focus on the student-athletes themselves. Athletic departments of NCAA member institutions are seldom profitable and very rarely generate any sort of revenue. In fact, majority of athletic departments lose a significant amount of money every single year. The Power 5 schools are the lone exception to this. Typically speaking, Power 5 schools have extremely larger budgets than their fellow Division I institutions which explains their generally larger expenditures on things such as team travel, facilities, and even coaching salaries. Sheehan suggests the Power 5 schools operate in a “cartel” manner within the NCAA. He discusses the extremely minimal movement of schools in and out of the FBS level as well as within the conferences themselves. “No school joining the FBS in the last thirty years has become a member of a Power 5 conference.” (Sheehan, 2017). These findings, and others in the same study, suggest that the cartel-like behavior and restriction into the elite Power 5

conferences are what help the NCAA maintain the competitive balance among Division I FBS, FCS, and other institutions. Roughly 40% of the Power 5 schools experience profitable athletic departments. This is not to say, however, that Power 5 schools are immune to losing money. For example, the University of Texas at Austin, member of the Big 12 Conference, earned around \$161 million but still lost nearly \$2.8 million (Sheehan, 2017).

These Power 5 schools have created their own elite group of athletics that is not shy in spending large amounts of money to prove their elitism within the NCAA and within their sport programs. These schools can be considered the top tier of intercollegiate athletics and they set the standard for how an athletic program should be. Whether that standard is realistic or not depends on the size of the school and athletic department that is trying to compete with the Power 5 university.

American Student-Athlete Culture

No other nation in the world takes intercollegiate athletics as seriously as the United States. Intercollegiate athletics can be viewed as a microcosm of American society in the sense that it takes a small population, compared to the entire population of students enrolled in some sort of higher education, and represents the greater American culture that emphasizes sport, competition, and athletic ability. The NCAA has reached a new all-time high in the number of total student-athletes competing across all 3 divisions. As of the 2013-2014 academic year, the NCAA sponsors over 472,000 student-athletes. Of that near half million student-athletes, males outnumber females by 12%. Male

student-athletes make up roughly 56% of the NCAA student-athlete body while females represent the remaining 44%. With more programs being created at member institutions, that gender gap is on its way to closing. Broken down, these percentages equate to an average of 430 student-athletes per institutional student-athlete body with an average of 243 males and 187 females (Johnson, 2014).

It is easy to pick out the student-athletes from the non-athlete students on a campus. What we don't see too often, however, is the team culture that is produced and manifested through intertwining relationships and friend networks amongst team members and coaching staffs. Athletics requires (depending on the sport) anywhere from 10 to 100 strangers of different ethnic, racial, and socio-economic backgrounds to work together cohesively on one court or field to be successful. There are cultures within each individual team and then there is a general culture surrounding the entire student-athlete body. Student-athletes are a special population within the general student body of a university or college, yet they are held to different standards than their non-athlete peers. The term "student-athlete" suggests that young adults who play intercollegiate athletics focus on their student identity more so than their athletic identity. This, however, is not the case. Student-athletes continue to report that they feel they spend more time focusing on their athletic responsibilities than their academic responsibilities (Gutting, 2012).

According to the NCAA website, the major difference between Division I and Division II is the university's allocation of financial resources. Division I institutions choose to "devote more financial resources to support their athletic programs" while

Division II institutions cannot afford to do so simply because the same financial resources of Division I programs are not as accessible to Division II programs. Because Division I institutions have those financial resources readily available, they can afford to recruit extremely high levels of athletic talent for their athletic programs, thus putting extreme emphasis on the athletic responsibility of that student. Student-athletes of high major and Power 5 institutions are stigmatized to be bigger, better, faster, and stronger than the student-athletes competing at other levels within the NCAA. Football players fall victim to this stigma more than any other student-athlete. In recent years, society has associated a high level of masculinity with the sport of football, professionally and collegiately. Heterosexual male athletes are continually perceived and represented in the media in ways that suggest they are superior to women and that they are what society would consider being the norm.

Masculinity in Intercollegiate Athletics

Historical legislature, such as Title IX, has played a major role in the participation and inclusion of females in athletics at the collegiate level as well as the collegiate coaching level. The first impacts of Title IX were increased numbers “of women in athletic leadership positions on campuses...between 1987 and 1992” (Guttman, 1991). Consequently, more males were hired to coach the newly added female athletic programs at these universities who were trying to comply with Title IX legislation, therefore seeing an overall decrease of “women coaches...between 1972 and 1987” (Guttman, 1991). It would be unfair to assume that the males hired to coach female student-athletes between

those years were hired simply due to their gender, but, this finding does draw attention to the culture of masculinity in intercollegiate athletics that places males at the top of the leadership roles and the marginalization of female coaches. It is extremely common to see males coaching female student-athletes at the intercollegiate level, but it is extremely rare to find a female in a coaching position within a male athletic program. As of 2014, a 43.4% of women's teams were coached by women while 2 to 3.5% of men's teams were coached by women (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). This same report found that there are likely to be more females in coaching positions within an athletics department when the athletic director is also a female. The same was found when the athletic director was male; more male coaches were employed than female (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014).

The continued marginalization of females within intercollegiate athletics only adds to the masculinity culture and the dominance of males in these leadership positions such as senior administrators, coaches, and other athletic departmental positions. Taking a look at sexist scores for people involved in hiring decisions shows that there is a direct and positive correlation to masculinity scores (Aicher & Sagas, 2010). Furthermore, modern day sexism could be a reason why men are hired more often for head coaching positions within intercollegiate athletics (Aicher & Sagas, 2010).

Coach Language

The communication between college coaches and their athletes is another way in which culture can be spread throughout a team. Verbal communication and the language chosen is vital in the expression of ideas, thoughts, and feelings between everyone

involved in athletics (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). What you say, how you say it, and when you say it are important because it exposes the culture of the team. Watch a collegiate or professional sporting event and you will get your share of profanity used by players speaking to one another as well as coaches speaking to players. A former assistant football coach at Western Kentucky University stated, “you go to a college practice and you hear everything under the sun” (Ambrogi, 2011). It could be that the increased levels of pressure, stress, and competition at the collegiate level are causes for the increased use of profanity toward individuals within a team.

Marketing, Recruitment, and Retention

No other higher education system in the world puts as much emphasis on intercollegiate athletics as the United States does. College sports have become a staple in everyday American life. Many universities and colleges’ reputations are greatly impacted by the level of athletic talent within their varsity sports programs. American high school students spend their early years of childhood cheering on their favorite college football and basketball teams and therefore end up making the decision to attend that same college or university in order to continue supporting their favorite teams. Intercollegiate athletics are not just beneficial to the student-athletes participating, but are beneficial to the surrounding town and community as well as the entire university or college. Cultures are subsequently created within the communities around the successes of the athletic programs of a specific university.

Universities as a whole benefit greatly from their athletic programs financially, economically, and in reputational manners. College athletic programs have the ability to impact a university through direct profits, branding, enrollment, and long-term relationships. The multibillion dollar industry of intercollegiate athletics generates revenue that is given to the entire university through external affairs such as media and branding rights to name just a couple. A study done by ESPN delves into the revenues and expenses of each NCAA member institution by taking a look at ticket sales, student fees, away games, donations, media rights, and branding. This study also shows what the university as a whole makes from the same categories. According to the ESPN website, it was discovered that Power 5 juggernaut, The University of Alabama, topped the revenues chart enjoying more than \$13 million from media and branding rights, nearly \$30 million in donations from fans, supporters, and boosters, and \$28 million in ticket sales in the 2008-09 academic year alone (Emma, 2013). During that same year for Alabama, their athletic department's total revenue amounted to \$123,769,841 with the entire university enjoying \$4.1 million. The University of Alabama has their football team to thank for that \$4.1 million due to its unsurmountable success in the last 10 years and the winning culture that has accumulated thousands of fans and supporters throughout the country.

Alabama's athletic department is part of a small minority within Division I FBS institutions. In 2014, only 24 Division I FBS athletic departments earned a profit, generating more revenue than what they spent (Burnsed, 2015). The majority of NCAA

DI institutions are not profitable but the ones that are profitable are mostly Power 5 institutions who operate on much larger budgets compared to their fellow NCAA member institutions.

Although very few universities earn a profit from their athletic departments, university administrators are still utilizing the benefits of sports to more successfully market their university to potential students. Recruitment is a top priority to every university or college. Universities and colleges strive to attract as many students as possible as well as the best possible students to attend their institutions. It's been examined that an institution's popularity and number of applications rise when the institution's athletic programs have successful winning seasons (Sternberg, 2018). This occurrence can be explained through the concept of the availability heuristic which relates winning championships to giving an institution more visibility in the eyes of their region or the entire nation, therefore making the institution more available in potential students' minds (Sternberg, 2018). Athletics is also beneficial to the number of current students enrolled at a university. At many smaller Division II and III institutions, the student-athletes can represent a significant percentage of the entire student body. For smaller Division III schools such as Wheaton College in Massachusetts, student-athletes make up 23% of their entire 2009 student body (Moltz, 2009). Student-athletes have the opportunity to raise the institutional enrollment numbers as well as increase the diversity of entire student bodies.

Intercollegiate athletics can be directly connected to revenue generation for universities, student recruitment, student retention, as well as networking events and opportunities for alumni and current students. Because of these benefits that intercollegiate athletics brings to the greater university or college, it's important for the university or college to market themselves efficiently and effectively in order to better themselves as an institution.

Media Representation of College Sports

Media broadcasting rights drive each conference and are at the helm of revenue generation. As of 2016, the Southeastern Conference (SEC) became the most valuable conference in intercollegiate athletics after it raked in a total of \$90 million with the addition of the SEC Network broadcasting channel and various other television deals (Smith, 2016). Media broadcasting companies such as Fox, ESPN, and CBS claim broadcasting rights for the major conferences (Power 5). Fox, for example, has a major broadcasting deal with the Big Ten Conference while ESPN claims the SECs and ACCs rights. The Big 12 and PAC 12 currently have similar television broadcasting contract deals with both Fox and ESPN. CBS is in partnership with the Turner Broadcasting System (TBS) and share the broadcasting rights of the NCAA March Madness men's division I basketball tournament which generates around \$900 million in rights and fees every year.

The millions, and in some cases billions, of dollars spent on television deals are paramount to the success and popularity of each Power 5 conference. Intercollegiate

athletics is consumed and projected through myriad media platforms that range from institutional and conference television and internet platforms to the king of sport broadcasting, ESPN. College sports fans now have the capabilities to watch their favorite teams wherever they go thanks to new smartphone apps, live streaming capabilities, and social media networks that cover college sporting events from games, player and coach interviews, to even practices. NCAA Division I football and men's basketball are the most consumed college sports within the NCAA. In 2016 alone, 74.81 million people watched a college football game on television and another 15.83 million people attended a game in person (Fuller, 2017).

Because these two sports are the most favorited among the fans, it makes sense their seasons run back to back. June and July are months spent talking about which high school recruits are committing to which major football programs, August through November are months that see the most college football action with games every Friday and Saturday, and the playoffs and bowl games beginning in mid-December and culminating with the College Football Playoff National Championship game played in the first week of January. Towards the end of the college football regular season, college basketball begins to come to life. Friendly exhibition games between major Division I programs and smaller Division I or even Division II programs start occurring and the media immediately begins to predict how teams will perform the coming year, which freshmen recruiting class will be the strongest, and who the teams that will contend for a

playoff run in March will be. The months from August to March are perhaps the busiest months for intercollegiate athletics with the two highest profile sports competing nonstop.

Media coverage has become a round-the-clock necessity in intercollegiate athletics. Fans are constantly checking stats, chat rooms, message boards, etc. to find the latest news of their favorite teams. When a head coach is fired, for example, it hits the media almost instantaneously. Interviews are broadcasted on multiple different outlets, replayed on even more outlets, and analyzed on other platforms. It's almost impossible for the high-level coaches and elite athletes to make a move without someone seeing it, recording it, broadcasting it, or streaming it. Athletes and coaches are scrutinized and are placed in a constant spotlight. Their behaviors, decisions, and actions are analyzed by sport broadcasters across multiple platforms and networks. This never-ending cycle revolves around the media's ability to create a social reality around intercollegiate athletics which in turn becomes the norm of athletics and continues to feed into the media representation of these athletes, coaches, and the broader world of intercollegiate athletics. Because the media puts such a heavy emphasis on these young student-athletes, we now have major media events that shine a light on the athletes preparing for their professional athletic careers. At the end of February and the beginning of March, the NFL Scouting Combine gathers the most elite college football standout athletes to perform rigorous drills, physicals, and other tasks that highlight their skills and abilities to make them as attractive as possible to NFL coaches and scouts. This event is widely anticipated every single year and is broadcasted live throughout the entire combine.

Results are posted on media outlets and are constantly compared to results of other athletes.

More importantly than the act of covering these media events and creating frenzies on social media sites are the tone and context of what actually is being portrayed. Scholarship suggests that there are more studies commonly done on the media representation of gender and race in athletics than there are on media representation of intercollegiate athletics culture. Extensive literature on race at the collegiate and professional athletic levels has been published by many different scholars with all sorts of reasons for researching. Their findings reveal everything from the racial stereotypes in broadcasting to the possible benefits of diversity in an institution's general student body. Limited research exists specifically on race and ethnicity in a single athletic program however. Race, "a socially constructed reality, rather than based on distinct biological and genetic differences" (Graves, 2005; Hammonds, 2005; Omi & Winant, 1994; Snipp, 2003, Simpson, et al., 2007) affects people on all different levels depending on their personal life experiences as well as their individual ways of identifying themselves. Once we decide to pay much closer attention and start drawing connections between comments and the athletes they are directed towards, we begin to realize the trend among sports commentating. "Black men players tended to be stereotyped as naturally athletic, quick, and powerful, while White men players continued to be touted for their hard work, effort, and mental skill." (Eastman & Billings; 2001). These findings are not the first to come about. Rada and Wulfmeyer (2005) found similar results in their studies in sports

by stating how typically White athletes are more likely to be praised for things such as mental abilities and Black players more likely to be praised for their raw, natural ability. Such sports commentary influences public opinion, and, as such, influences the attitude that future athletes' families have towards each other. More research continues to suggest that the perception of race in athletics through the media is favorable toward Caucasian males, as they are the majority of intercollegiate student-athletes. There is a lack of research done and analyses on the media representation of college athletic culture so I am aiming to fulfill this gap in literature with this study of media representation of intercollegiate athletic scandals and post-scandal representation.

The constant emphasis of events like this and on the people involved leads to the nexus between revenue generation, media, and the powerful people in college administration as well as the NCAA. The American college culture and the American college athletics culture feed into the media through the constant emphasis on athletic ability and talent. This constant attention from media on athletics is something that administrators should want to take advantage of and use to their benefit but also should want to avoid in case of a scandal. Media outlets have the power to find out vast amounts of information and can use that information to shed light on a university's athletic program in a positive or negative way.

Conflict Framing in the Media

Frames are absolutely essential for human beings to properly absorb, assess, and analyze information presented to them in the surrounding world. "Frames are built upon

underlying structures of beliefs, values, and experiences...” (Kaufman et al., 2003) which provide different motives for the ways in which people who have different values and opinions frame events, attitudes, and opinions in the media. The interpretations of events portrayed in the media can be advantageous to certain groups of people depending on the frames utilized in the representation of the events. Scandals and other heavy conflicts that involve intercollegiate athletic programs have extremely negative impacts on recruitment, admissions, amount of money in alumni donations, and the reputation of the university, athletic program/department, as well as the coaches, athletes, and other top administrators involved (Reynolds, 2003). The media holds the power to frame events and scandals in any way they choose that will get them the highest ratings, the most viewers, and biggest following. This concept of media sensationalism is the driving force behind framing of conflicts, scandals, and various other events in the media.

Athletic Cultures and the Need for Competition

There is no clear-cut plan or an easy to follow step-by-step process for an athletic program to become a championship contender in a major conference. It takes years of building a viable team culture, seasons that have more losses than wins on the board, various coaching changes, managing player turnover rates, and trying to gain and uphold the support of the surrounding community, fans, students, university, and boosters. For some universities, top administrators want a successful athletic program within a few years of hiring a new head coach, which puts a great amount of pressure on that head coach and their staff to find the best student-athletes to turn an entire program around.

Meeting the need for competition with successful winning seasons calls into play a coach's desire to win at whatever costs. Morality is a core value that is instilled and developed in young athletes' minds from birth through their adult years. Studies have shown that an athlete's most important source of moral guidance is their coach (Concordia University, 2011). It was also found in the same study "that coaches inherit their moral values from their own coaches," from their days as an athlete (Concordia University, 2011). Morality can be explained in myriad ways depending on who is explaining the concept. Research suggests that the athletic environment elicits "temporary moral adaptation in which moral reasoning was less mature (e.g. more egocentric and individualistic as compared with daily life moral reasoning..." (Pelaez et al., 2016). This concept of "bracketed morality" suggests the existence of a balance between artificial rules on a sport field or court and the win at all costs mentality instilled in athletes' and coaches' minds that drives them to be the most competitive people they can be. Research further suggests that there is a correlation between the desire to win athletic competitions and the level of moral development within athletes and coaches. It's been discussed that by diminishing the "win at all costs" mentality, coaches and other athletic administrators can more effectively build a team culture that promotes healthier moral development (Nielsen, 2014).

Major College Football Scandals

The NCAA has had its hands full in recent years with scandals of all sorts and levels of severity. Since the turn of the century, there have been 9 major intercollegiate

football scandals that have left fans, former coaches, boosters, and many others involved with the programs, with a tainted view of their once beloved football team. Each of these scandals were different in their illegal offenses and rule breaking and each scandal had a different lasting impact on the program.

To start the new millennium of collegiate football scandals was the University of Alabama. In 2001 news surfaced that a well-known booster had offered one of Alabama's top high school recruit's high school head football coach \$150,000 to ensure the head high school coach would steer or encourage the student-athlete to join Alabama's team. Once the news broke of the scandal, the Alabama Crimson Tide was given a 2-year ban from all college football bowl games, 5 years of probation, and the loss of 21 scholarships on the team. The Crimson Tide struggled through another scandal involving textbooks that was punished by vacating 21 wins from the 2005, 2006, and 2007 seasons, just before current head coach Nick Saban took control of the program.

May of 2004 saw a temporary end to Coach Gary Barnett's tenure at the University of Colorado after it was determined that he, with the poor oversight of other top university administrators, had allowed for the use of sex, alcohol, and drugs to entice recruits to join their program. There was also noted to be a serious issue with rape allegations; the program had received its sixth allegation against them in just 3 years. No major penalties were handed to the program, but the allegations and findings did negatively impact the recruitment of future players, causing the program to experience 10

consecutive losing seasons. Coach Barnett was reinstated after his paid administrative leave and continued to coach for another year and a half before being fired.

2005 was a fantastic season for the University of Southern California standout, Reggie Bush. Bush had won the coveted Heisman Memorial Trophy but shortly thereafter was accused of accepting extra benefits and hundreds of thousands of dollars in gifts, resulting in the forfeiting of the trophy. It was concluded that the dollars and gifts given illegally to Reggie Bush were also used by his parents to pay their rent during the time they were living in a house in Southern California. The program was forced to give up their wins from the 2004 and 2005 seasons, given a 2-year ban from all postseason play, placed on probation for 4 years, and was given a reduction in scholarships for 3 years. The lasting impacts of these punishments were minimal, except for Reggie Bush whose near entire collegiate career had been taken away from him along with his Heisman Trophy.

Following the Reggie Bush scandal was Florida State's cheating scandal in 2007 where a total of 61 student-athletes at FSU were caught in academic fraud violations. 23 of those students were members of the football program who were subsequently kept from playing in the 2007 Music City Bowl game. The lasting implications from this scandal were miniscule in comparison to other scandals at other universities. FSU's head coach at the time of the scandal retired and they hired current head coach Jimbo Fisher.

To start off the new decade, the University of North Carolina was caught in an academic scandal that has only recently been settled. In 2010 it was discovered that a

tutor for the football team had been writing papers for two of the team's top student-athletes while also encouraging the two of them to sign with a specific sport agent's agency. The two athletes were also found guilty of accepting cash and other gifts and benefits from sports agent Terry Watson. 11 other members of the football team were suspended from the team at the beginning of the year for accepting improper benefits. Aside from the sports agent issue, it was also alleged that the university had been offering fake courses to improve player GPAs and eligibility. The only lasting impact of these scandals on the university and the football program was a struggle to recruit the same caliber players as before.

Continuing the trend of Power 5 BCS level teams getting caught in scandalous behavior was Ohio State in 2011 after it was discovered that six members of the football team had been selling their championship rings and jersey for tattoos in return. Head coach at the time Jim Tressel confessed his knowledge and awareness of the actions of his players and had attempted to cover it up. Tressel had resigned from his position in May of 2011 and was given a 5-year show-cause penalty by the NCAA. The only lasting impact this scandal had on the football program was the new reputation and public view of the head coach that was once loved by all.

Once again there was a scandal involving impermissible benefits and gifts that rocked a major college football program; the University of Miami. In 2011 it was found that at least 72 Miami athletes had been enjoying cash, cars, yacht trips, jewelry, meals, and even prostitutes from a Ponzi scheme mastermind who is now serving a 20-year

federal prison sentence. At the breaking of this scandal, 13 Miami athletes were declared ineligible for the entire season, a 2-year bowl game ban was self-imposed, and the NCAA placed the program on 3 years of probation among other punishments. Ironically, there were no lasting impacts of this scandal. In fact, Miami's football program's following 6 seasons were more successful than the 5 years prior to being caught.

Perhaps one of the most heinous of all scandals to come to the public's attention was the 2011 discovery that former Penn State defensive coordinator Jerry Sandusky had been molesting and sexually abusing young boys who were members of his own charity called "The Second Mile" for more than 3 decades. Completely aware of these sex acts was the former and late head coach Joe Paterno, who did nothing to stop them or alert the authorities. Paterno passed away shortly after retiring from the university and Sandusky will be serving the rest of his life in prison. The program rebuilt itself within 4 years and even competed for a Rose Bowl. The lasting impacts of this scandal are not so much related to the football players or the program itself, but instead it has ruined the reputations and credibility of once great coaches.

Finally, the most recent infamous scandal to hit collegiate football was the sexual assault allegations at Baylor University. This issue is currently still undergoing investigations and information is still being produced and analyzed. Between 2011 and 2014, there have been 52 rapes committed by 31 football players. The NCAA has not taken any action against the football program yet. As more allegations and accusations come about, this scandal has the potential to be the largest in college football history.

The clear lasting impact of this scandal is the demolished name and reputation of Baylor University as well as those of the coaches who were fired, administrators who were fired and who resigned, and the hurt and suffering of the victims and their families.

Media Portrayal of Scandals vs. University Portrayal of Scandals

Using myriad framing techniques allows the mainstream media outlets to spin any amount of information and present it to the public that is acceptable to their desired audience as well as the opinions of those associated with the media outlets. It is important to study the differences in which the media communicates, presents, and portrays scandals that occur within an intercollegiate athletic football team versus how the university itself portrays, presents, and communicates the scandal to those associated with the university (students, staff, faculty, boosters, regents, etc.) because the differences impact opinions formed and how we as bystanders view these scandals and scandalous people.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Purpose

Purpose

The purpose for this study is to examine the ways in which various techniques of media framing present a major event in the news to the public in comparison to how the same major event is presented to a smaller, more direct audience. By focusing on the Penn State University child sex abuse scandal, comparisons and contrasts can be derived from the ways in which the media and Penn State University press handled and presented information of the scandal to the public and to the community surrounding the university itself.

Method

For this study, utilizing the critical approach method, a framing analysis was conducted on content presented in the national news media outlets, Pennsylvania news outlets, as well as press releases from Penn State University's athletics website, found under their "General News" section. In comparing these media outlets and their intended audiences, phrases and dialogue shared in the Penn State press releases and the national media outlet releases of the scandal were examined, compared, and contrasted. The selective usage of phrases, quotes, and various other communicative tendencies were key points of interest when examining the documents provided on the internet.

This study focused on comparing media releases published in two separate time periods revolving around the scandal: the year the scandal broke to the public (November of 2011 to November of 2012) and the current year, 2017. The various university press releases discussing the scandal within Penn State University's football program examined were dated and published within 5 years of the breaking of the scandal to the media and public. On November 5th of 2011, PennLive reported former Penn State football coach Jerry Sandusky was arrested and released on \$100,000 bail in response to his 40 counts of criminal behavior. Following, on November 7th, 2011, Penn State University athletic officials released a terse memo to the university and public sharing former Athletic Director Tim Curley's personal request for administrative leave to solve his legal issues with regards to his active role in covering up the sex abuse scandal. To determine the differences in framing of the scandal through different media outlets, coding categories were created to examine the main frames and ideas presented in each press and media release regarding the scandal, the coaches, and other Penn State University officials who were involved.

Limitations

One of the largest challenges in discussing the media representation of this infamous scandal was of course the size and extensive coverage of the scandal. This ordeal was the first of its kind and was never before seen in intercollegiate athletics, to that extent. The amount of press and media coverage is too substantial to be analyzed in this paper. The limitation of data collected and analyzed was done by focusing on the

time periods of the year the scandal broke to the public and the current year, 2017.

Another limitation experienced in this study was the lack of documents and memos collected that were distributed internally among Penn State University athletic department and university employees. Those documents could have aided and assisted in the analysis of communicative tendencies of the scandal.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

Pennsylvania State University Communicative Techniques

The communicative techniques and methods of the child sex abuse scandal utilized by Pennsylvania State University can be divided into two different groups. There are different documents, press releases, and interviews that were held by university officials and the athletics department administrators. For the sake of this study and this section, I first analyzed the methods used and documents released by the athletics department. I then analyzed the documents and press releases from the university's online newspaper, *The Daily Collegian*. Combining and comparing documents from the athletic department archives and *The Daily Collegian* allowed for a detailed and accurate representation of how Penn State handled the impacts of the scandal and gave insight into how a major university responded to such scandalous and illegal behavior.

Penn State Athletic Department Communication

Throughout the tumultuous months surrounding the scandal as it broke to the world, the Penn State athletic department continued to release numerous statements, formal press releases, and held multiple press conferences to express their thoughts, discuss action plans, and to update the community on the current state of the entire athletics department. These releases were all archived and can be accessed on their website www.gopsusports.com/genrel/psu-genrel.html. Sticking to the timeline set of

November 1st, 2011 to July 31st, 2012, I analyzed a total of ten different documents that I deemed relatable to the child sex abuse scandal and that encompassed and subliminally expressed the ideas, beliefs, and values of the athletics department. The ten documents varied in length of statements, who was speaking and delivering the message, and the topics discussed. The contextual analysis done exposed a few main commonalities and themes in the words spoken, underlying tones of the messages delivered, and the themes that persisted throughout the months surrounding the news coverage of the scandal. These ten documents vocalized a sense of minimization of the scandal, disassociation of members of the university with the football program and other individuals involved in this scandal, and the power struggle that existed between university athletics and the greater university community.

The specific words “child sex abuse scandal” rarely were spoken by university athletic officials. Mentioning the crime for what it was did not seem to be a priority of the university athletic officials when giving their statements to the media. In fact, the crime itself was hardly spoken about as a crime in general. It was often referred to as the “Sandusky matter” on July 12th, 2012, “child abuse crimes” on July 12th, 2012, which deliberately left out the sexual misconduct connotation behind the crime, “legal situation” on November 7th, 2011 which was the first statement released from the Penn State athletic department regarding the breaking to the public of the news that their former football coach had been sexually violating and harming innocent young boys for decades, and “terrible events” on November 9th, 2011. By intentionally avoiding addressing the

crimes committed for what they legally and literally were, the university athletic department inadvertently portrayed themselves as trying to calm the reactions to the original allegations and then the proven guiltiness of one of their former employees. This tactic expressed their concern for the public outrage that would surely increase had they continued to use “child sexual abuse” when referring to the scandal. By referring to the scandal using lesser intense terms, the Penn State’s athletic department was able to moderate the public opinion of the university and their athletic programs. Minimization of the former football coach’s crimes was also evident in the manner of which the on-campus students and faculty spoke about moving forward and leaving this in the past. The idea of life at Penn State after this scandal was a very common talking point in the press releases, interviews, and statements given by the athletic department administrators. In attempt to revive school spirit and pride at Penn State, students coordinated the “WEstillARE” event. One student who participated was asked about what the event meant to her, to which she replied with “It shows that we’re more than just a couple people who made bad decisions...Penn State is so much more than just those few people.” (Johnson, 2011). By referring to years of sexual misconduct and predatory behavior of a major campus influence to “bad decisions” completely minimizes the impacts, nature, and harm caused by those crimes. This was another attempt by a Penn State community member to pave over the bad by making it seem as if this kind of occurrence is common and not as bad as people are making it out to be. The fact of the matter is that the crimes committed by the Penn State employee were not “bad decisions”

but in fact were part of a much greater culture surrounding and encompassing the football program, the athletic department, and ultimately the university itself. Penn State created a culture of denial and when the spotlight pointed at them, they attempted to minimize the crime in order to minimize the damage done to their brand through media coverage of the details, of the trial, and of the public perception.

The next major theme evident in the documents released by Penn State's athletic department is disassociation. The language spoken and used by the administrators and by the Board of Trustees show them disassociating and distancing themselves from the scandal itself, therefore making it seem as if they are not part of the problem, but instead, good people who still represent Penn State. In the July 12, 2012 statement released by Penn State in response to Judge Freeh's report on the case, the administrator delivering the statement said "...the Board was unprepared to deal with the events that occurred in November 2011." This statement completely removes Penn State's athletic department and their administrators from the equation and places the responsibility to have known about the horrible crimes being committed by a Penn State employee on a group of individuals who spend very minimal time with the football program itself. Just weeks after news of the crimes committed, at the WEstillARE event mentioned above, a student who attended the on-campus event had stated "We are so much more than a football team." This dialogue expressed disassociation between the football team and the rest of the institution. This student expressed her identity in the greater Pennsylvania State University as opposed to the Penn State football team. Disassociation continued to

present itself throughout the press releases in the form of avoiding speaking about and mentioning the football program in general. This tactic kept the spotlight from the media off one of the most historically well-known collegiate football programs in all of NCAA history and drew a line that separates what the former assistant coach did from what the program under Joe Paterno had accomplished. The disassociation occurred to ensure the community of Penn State and rest of the world following the news that the crimes committed by the former assistant football coach were not related to the university itself nor the athletic department.

The third and final theme found to be most persistent throughout the documents analyzed was the concept of a power struggle and dominance held by all of Penn State athletics within the entire institution. Athletic programs and departments are major factors in a university's identity, particularly men's collegiate basketball and football. These top revenue generating programs can help mold the public perception of not only the athletic department but also the university. Many head coaches of Division I athletic programs are the highest paid individuals on a university campus, including earning more than the university president. In the first statement by the Pennsylvania State University Board of Trustees on the scandal released on November 9th, 2011, they stated "We promise you that we are committed to restoring public trust in the University." This quote suggests that an athletic program as prestigious as Penn State's football team can make or break the level of trust that a community has in an entire university. Per the July 23rd, 2012 statement given by Penn State President Erickson on the NCAA Consent Decree,

athletics can actually assist in forming the entire culture of a campus. "...and agree that the culture at Penn State must change." "...all of our head coaches will come together to make the change necessary to drive our university forward." These examples display a type of dominance that athletic programs have over the remainder of the university. In his first interview as acting athletic director, Dave Joyner was immediately asked "You talked about Athletics becoming one more classroom. Again, are you talking about athletics becoming right sized in the university? Do you believe that Athletics has overstepped its bounds, particularly the power and influence of coach Paterno over the running of the University?" His response to these questions were vague, indirect, and avoided the questions entirely. He was then asked directly if the power of Penn State's athletic department contributed to the tragedy itself, to which he responded, "I think that remains to be seen as we get into the investigations that are on-going." Joyner continued to give vague answers and provided an "if-so" scenario to the media by saying, "if that is the case, the way that that doesn't happen is by this College of Intercollegiate Athletics and that attitude about how life should be for all students." This direct quote tells the audience that he is not willing to acknowledge the amount of power and influence an athletic department of a major power 5 institution has on the institution itself.

The Daily Collegian

The Daily Collegian is an independent, non-profit, student-run newspaper organization whose goal is to "...publish a quality campus newspaper and to provide a rewarding educational experience for the student staff members." (About the Collegian,

2014). This newspaper publishes articles every weekday during the academic school year and generated hundreds of articles discussing the child sex abuse scandal, the status of the university during that time, and progress of the trial and eventual sentencing of Jerry Sandusky. Fifteen separate articles that pertained to how the university and the university's athletic department handled the media and how they attempted to keep the public perception and community trust intact were collected from *The Daily Collegian's* website and then critical thematically and contextually analyzed.

After analyzing the articles, there were three major communicated themes that were prevalent. The data from the athletic department press releases and *The Daily Collegian* articles proved to be similar in discourse with the recurring minimization of the scandal and the distancing of university officials, administrators, and Penn State community members from the football program. The data from *The Daily Collegian* expressed a new sense of urgency in the rebuilding of school pride and community trust in the institution itself. While barely mentioned in the athletic department releases, this seemed to be a powerful point of reference in *The Daily Collegian* articles.

Minimization of Scandal. As mentioned in the previous section regarding the athletic department press releases, *The Daily Collegian* released an article on November 7th, 2011 that used a direct quote from the same athletic department press release that referred to the criminal investigation as "Curley's legal situation". This of course was in response to the former athletic director, Tim Curley, requesting temporary administrative leave while he was investigated and then tried in court. The same Collegian article

referenced the grand jury's findings of the investigation and directly quoted them when referring to the "sexual conduct" of Sandusky. The word "conduct" can be defined as the act, manner, or process of carrying on something. The use of the word "conduct" minimizes the exact nature of the crimes...illegal, unwanted, and harmful. Instead, the report should have referred to the behavior of Sandusky as "misconduct" to emphasize the nature of the crimes of being unwanted, illegal, harmful, and improper. This example of scandal minimization was not directly related to *The Daily Collegian*, but instead, can be placed on the grand jury's report of their investigative findings.

Perhaps one of the more alarming instances of minimization was in a December 16, 2011 article published on *The Daily Collegian's* website by Penn State student Kristin Stoller. In the second paragraph of the article, Stoller shines light on the crime to the reader by saying "...where he [Sandusky] is accused of sexually abusing some boys" (Stoller, 2011). The use of the word "some" can be synonymously replaced with words or phrases such as "approximately", "about", "roughly", "more or less", and others that suggest to the reader the crime committed against the young innocent children was not as severe as it could be because of the number of victims. This suggests that the number of victims of Sandusky are nearly irrelevant in the overall scheme of things. Perhaps the exact number of victims of Sandusky's crimes were unknown at the time of publishing this article, however, there were enough victims coming forward to lead to his arrest and arraignment to deserve being referred to more than "some boys".

Months after the trial had begun, arrests were made, and individuals were relieved of their job duties at Penn State, an article was released on *The Daily Collegian's* website that continued the occurrence of scandal minimization. This January 13, 2012 article quoted the institution's new president in a speech given to alumni: "We're not going to let what one individual did destroy the reputation of this university" (The Associated Press, 2012). The use of the words "one individual" by Penn State President Rodney Erickson completely diminishes the acts of perjury and covering the scandal up by former athletic director Tim Curley, former vice president Gary Schultz, and former president Graham Spanier. By placing the blame solely on one individual, the one who initially committed a crime, the new president was protecting the reputation of all Penn State administrators. However, for him to say that "one individual" was the reason for a large uproar is false and miniscule in reality to who were actually involved.

Distancing of PSU Community Members from Football Program. In the first public message delivered by the late Joe Paterno to the entire Penn State family and community, he urged "In the meantime I would ask all Penn Staters to continue to trust in what that name represents, continue to pursue their lives every day with high ideals and not let these events shake their beliefs nor who they are" (Petrella, 2011). *The Daily Collegian* released this article the day that Joe Paterno delivered that message. Paterno was essentially asking everyone who paid attention to the scandal to ignore the scandal, ignore the crime, ignore the critics, and to disassociate themselves from the football team in general, in order to stay focused on their love for Penn State University in general.

Asking people to continue living their lives as if nothing had happened and this scandal did not exist was an impossible task due to the level of respect, connection, and love once had for fans of Penn State football.

Following Paterno's first statement to the public was an article published by *The Daily Collegian* titled "Team won't let Sandusky scandal affect it on the field" (Petrella, 2011). The author of this article discussed the ways in which the 2011 football players have very little to do with Sandusky and the crimes he committed. Although Paterno suggested an act of disassociation, it would eventually be impossible for the 2011 players to comply because of Paterno's direct connection to the scandal. In fact, 2 days following his plea for his players to disassociate themselves from the previous coach, he was fired and relieved of his duties. The players of the 2011 team were now directly related to the scandal in the sense that their season has now been overshadowed by the actions and inactions of their former coaches.

Similar to the section of disassociation and distancing of people within the athletic department, *The Daily Collegian* reported on and interviewed students at Penn State who believed the same acts of disassociating and distancing should be taken. For example, a senior marketing and public relations student stated "...the actions of a few don't represent the whole...This doesn't change what it means to be a Penn Stater" (Szkardnik, 2011). This statement sends a message to the entire Penn State community that students such as the one quoted identify themselves without regard to the football program and that their institution is not defined by one athletic program.

The last instance of disassociation mentioned in the articles the author wants to bring attention to was a January 13, 2012 article published that discussed Penn State President Rodney Erickson's views on the scandal itself. He was quoted by *The Daily Collegian* saying,

It grieves me very much when I hear people say 'the Penn State scandal.' This is not Penn State. This is 'the Sandusky scandal.' We're not going to let what one individual did destroy the reputation of this university (The Associated Press, 2012).

Very little needs to be said in explanation of this quote. The university president was trying to explain to the world watching their every move that what their own employee did in their university's facilities was not who the greater university is. The fact of the matter is, Penn State University was directly impacted by this scandal, regardless of the name, because it was a Penn State employee, Penn State facilities, and Penn State administrators allowed the child sexual abuse to continue for decades. The former president, vice president, and athletic director inadvertently created a culture of lying, deceitfulness, and immoral behavior for their inactions. By disassociating themselves from the football program and the former assistant football coach, Penn State is trying to salvage what's left of their reputation in the eyes of the community, the NCAA, and the various other Power 5 institutions who have found themselves in the midst of similar scandals.

Rebuilding Of School Pride & Community Trust. Pride can be expressed in myriad ways. For a university this can mean through articles of clothing, university gear, and student support of on-campus organizations and athletics. After the Penn State Child Sexual Abuse scandal broke to the world, turmoil engulfed the entire university and community, and beloved administrators were fired, school pride and community trust in the institution and their values, morals, and ethics were the first things to vanish out of sight. The regaining of “Penn State pride”, a concept that many students and administrators identified with, was of utmost importance and priority for everyone around the community. Many articles published by *The Daily Collegian* offered insight into interviews of people who wished to stick to their school pride, wished to focus on it, and wished to get back to normalcy on campus.

Days after the guilty verdict for Sandusky was read, then-acting athletic director David Joyner released a statement to the community acknowledging the lack of trust the community now has in their institution, saying,

The trust of our community has been broken, but Penn State Athletics will move forward to regain that trust, with student athletes serving as the role models we expect them to be, and coaches living by example. Our hope is that this verdict grants peace to the victims and their families and allows them to move forward in their recovery process. (Gilbert, 2012)

Although the current student athletes had nothing to do with the scandal and the immoral behaviors and inactions of their leaders, the responsibility to move the campus forward

was placed on them by their new leader, Joyner. Placing the responsibility on those student-athletes is contradictory in the sense that many people had publicly stated “we are more than football”. The students on campus felt that way, however, the idea of the responsibility to change the culture and to set a better example for the greater university was placed on the athletes and therefore suggested they have greater power on an institution than just the regular student body.

For the younger community members who were deciding where to attend college in the future, the choice would seem to be a little more difficult to make with the recent scandal. A June 25th, 2012 article published by *The Daily Collegian* interviewed a high school senior who responded to criticism of her decision to attend Penn State even after the scandal broke with “...I think ultimately it’s our responsibility to come together as a student body” (Pianovich, 2012). This student was identifying herself as part of the Penn State student body before she had even stepped foot on campus to attend school there. As the plea for the unification of the student body and the importance of staying positive about what it means to be a Penn State came from many administrators, this plea was answered with raised application statistics for the 2012-13 school year. President Rodney Erickson had received more than 40,000 applications in December of 2011 which was a 4% increase from the year before (Pianovich, 2012). With more students wanting to attend Penn State even after one of, if not the worst, crimes ever committed in intercollegiate athletics was brought to light, it would appear that Penn State pride was a force that is not easily diminished.

Similar pleas for students to not lose pride came from other students already in attendance at Penn State during the scandal. “Never lose pride in your institution.” (Szkardnik, 2011). A comment was made by a male senior philosophy student who had spent three calm years at Penn State, scandal-free. A student leader, director of PRIDE Penn State Sportsmanship Team Public Relations, reported to *The Daily Collegian* that “This doesn’t change what it means to be a Penn Stater” (Szkardnik, 2011). The author argues that the underlying culture that this scandal created throughout the years actually defines who Penn State is and where they stand morally and ethically. The current students of Penn State, however, were blissfully unaware of the culture that was forming underneath their noses for the past decades while Sandusky, Curley, Paterno, Schultz, and Spanier were working together to keep a blanket over the crimes being committed over and over again on the campus. The author would continue to argue that referring to this as “the Sandusky scandal” is intentionally minimizing the entire situation by only referring to a single person involved. Undeniably, this was and is “the Penn State scandal” that involved the highest university administrators and officials including the president, vice president, athletic director, and the former winningest football coach of all time.

Penn State News

The Pennsylvania State University public website, www.psu.edu, is accessible to the world. The articles on the website presented no direct author for individual authors, instead there were media contacts offered to the readers. For this portion of the research,

data was collected from the news link on this website after narrowing the search down using the specific deadline set of November 2011 to June 2012 that involved stories on Jerry Sandusky and/or the scandal itself. Fifteen different articles were gathered from the website that were related to the breaking of the scandal, official university responses and reactions, and various other topics that revolved around the child sex abuse scandal. After analyzing the articles, the author determined the most common themes presented in these pieces and the tones of which they were written as being the importance of the university moving forward from this scandal, raising awareness of the type of crime committed as well as information on resources available to community members and campus and university members, and crime minimization.

Moving Forward. It should come as no surprise to the world who watched this scandal unfold that the minds of those at the epicenter, Penn State community members and administrators, were focused on how they would move on from the scandal. The Penn State News website has archived hundreds of articles from the time of the scandal breaking. Very few articles focused on the trial, the specific crimes committed by their former assistant football coach, and the perjury committed by the university's former top administrators. Instead, on November 7th, 2011, Penn State News published an article that quoted the former university president, Graham Spanier, saying,

The University will take a number of actions moving forward to increase the safety and security within our facilities and make everyone aware of the protocols in place for handling these issues. (Mahon & Powers, 2011)

Just days after the scandal broke to the world and details of the heinous crimes were coming out, the university had already begun thinking about ways to move beyond this. The words “move forward” or “moving forward” can be found in numerous articles published on the website. Former Penn State President Spanier was quoted to have said them in nearly every public statement he released. Shortly after his first statement was released on November 7th, 2011, Spanier then stated that a change in leadership of the university will make a smooth pathway for the university to move forward, discussing his resignation as president.

This theme of forward movement for the university continued as the new president, Rodney Erickson, took the reins of Penn State in mid-November of 2011. In one of his first public statements, Penn State News published an article with him discussing the need for “... [Penn State] individuals committed to moving forward with a shared sense of purpose.” (November 14, 2011). Before publicly making five promises to the Penn State community, President Rodney Erickson synonymously stated his confidence that the community was “moving in the right direction” after the highest level of change in leadership at the institution transpired.

The theme of moving forward was not only encouraged by the highest administrators and leaders of the university at the time. Penn State News released an article discussing the curricular impacts the scandal had made on the university and how faculty throughout Penn State’s campus utilized the scandal in their classrooms and learning environments. A November 28th, 2011 article published by Penn State News

has an entire section entitled “Moving Forward” that discusses ways in which faculty members are encouraging their students to think critically and process the information that had been inundating the campus community for weeks. Through the in-class discussions, PSU faculty were hoping that the students would be able to properly process the scandal, the crimes, the information released from victims, and ultimately be able to move on from the scandal and move forward with their lives as being Penn Staters.

Awareness. In addition to the institution moving forward, one of the tactics labored by the Penn State administrators was increased awareness of and increased number of resources available to community members regarding victims of sexual assault, discussions on responding to a crime like child sexual abuse, offering counseling services, and improved academia on the “widespread and complex social problems of child sexual assault...” (February 15, 2012)

Moving forward as an entire university and community meant a group effort by everyone involved. Penn State News released a January 9th, 2012 article discussing how the Office of Student Affairs improved their Center for Women Students website so that it would have more “information about sexual assault resources available at each Penn State campus” (Mountz, 2012). The same article also made mention of Penn State’s creation of a phonenumber for victims of sexual assault and relationship violence to call and receive necessary help.

The following day, January 10th, 2012, an article was published by Penn State News sharing information on a public event being held on campus that was set to be a

panel discussion that discussed things such as child abuse legal definitions, “the dynamics of child sexual abuse” (Foreman & Knowlton, 2012), and topics related to reporting such crimes. The same article stated that the “goal of the program is to raise awareness of the legal and ethical issues and clear up misinformation about child sexual abuse.” (Foreman & Knowlton, 2012)

To continue the trend of announcing great things happening on campus and with the university, Penn State announced, as of March 21st, 2012, that they would be offering completely free counseling services to the victims and anyone who suffered from crimes committed by the former Penn State football coach. Penn State even went so far as to improve educational programs on campus to broaden “the study and awareness of sexual assault to include victims of all ages” (February 15, 2012).

The articles that were published on Penn State News primarily focused on tactics to improve the safety of current students, children of the community, and the victims who suffered the sexual abuse as young children. The articles did not mention the details of the crime and rarely referred to the crime as “child sexual abuse”. The university used this media outlet to express to the community all the good that was coming out of the scandal and all the improvements being made to the institution’s protocols as well as leadership changes.

Minimization and Disassociation. As the data has shown through the two other media outlets, *The Daily Collegian* and the Penn State Athletics Department press releases, minimization continued to prove a common method utilized by Penn State to

soothe over the public's perception of the university. Penn State News released an article on November 7, 2011, discussing the stepping down from their leadership roles of former Athletic Director, Tim Curley, and former Vice President, Gary Schultz. This was the same day the Penn State athletic department also released a statement notifying the media that Curley would be placed on administrative leave. Direct quotes were not used in the Penn State News article, however, paraphrasing was recurrent as seen in the referral to Curley's "legal situation". This minimization of Curley's hand in covering up the crimes committed was also in the athletic department's statement the same day.

A November 9, 2011 article quoting former president Graham Spanier mentioned him referring to the child sexual abuse crimes as a "predatory act" and then continued to state that "...no one person should define this university" which, as stated previously, was a common statement made by people associated with the university. These two separate statements demonstrate minimization of the crime and disassociation of the university administrators and community from the former football coach and Penn State employee. By making this statement and choosing those words, Spanier was placing the blame for the crime on a single individual as opposed to the numerous others who helped cover it up. By failing to spread the blame, the former president was minimizing the extent to which Penn State administrators were directly involved with the crimes.

Referring to the crime itself has proven to be the most abundant form of minimization in Penn State written media. On November 18th, 2011, Penn State News reported that the NCAA was beginning an investigation into the university's athletic

programs "...in the wake of allegations of sexual abuse..." Referring to the crime as anything other than "child sexual abuse" is in fact minimization of the crime itself because each of the three words distinctly describe the crime. Various other words were used in referral to the crime such as "issue" and "problem" in November 14th and December 8th, 2011 articles respectively. By avoiding calling it by what it was, a crime, Penn State was attempting to manage their social perception in the eyes of their community. The crime continued to be referred to as "issue" and "child abuse" three more times in two separate articles that dated November 28th, 2011 and the previously mentioned article of December 8th, 2011.

National News Media Communicative Techniques – *The New York Times*

The New York Times is a US national newspaper that covers national news events, topics, and discussions and uses its global reach to bring worldwide current events to the readers. Their articles have been archived on their website, www.nytimes.com, and can be accessed by the public. This portion of the data consisted of 335 articles published by The New York Times dated within the same timeline set for the previous data collections (November 1st, 2011 through July 31, 2012). All of the articles gathered were located in the website's archives using search words such as, but not limited to, "Jerry Sandusky" and "Penn State Child Sex Abuse" and the articles were then compiled into a single document that exceeded 400 pages. The author compiled all articles into a single Microsoft Word document, analyzed all pages, discarded articles that were deemed unrelatable to the topic of this thesis, and discovered the five most common themes. The

themes discovered are as follows: minimization of the crime, use of alliterations and plays-on-words in article titles, relating the events to other current events in intercollegiate athletics, and the depictions of Joe Paterno's legacy.

Minimization. As the data has represented in the various other collections of written pieces analyzed for this research, *The New York Times (NYT)* exhibited their own minimization of the crimes committed by the former Penn State football coach. Blatantly listed in the titles of multiple articles published throughout 2011 and 2012, the crime was communicated to the world and the readers in ways that took away the severity of the nature of the crime. The very first article published by The *NYT* on November 6, 2011 in relation to the child sex abuse scandal at Penn State was titled "A Sex Abuse Scandal Rattles Penn State's Football Program". Not only does the title express no mention of the children victims involved, the title also suggests that the scandal's impacts were not extended to the Penn State campus or the surrounding community.

One day later, The *NYT* published another article, similarly omitting details and description of the crime with an article titled "Penn State Scandal Shakes the Happy Valley Family to Roots". In one day, The *NYT* seemed to relate the crime and scandal to the entire institution as opposed to just the football program. However, by calling it the "Penn State Scandal", this left plenty to the imagination for the readers as there are endless possibilities as to what the scandal possibly could have been.

Interestingly, the next article with a title exhibiting minimization of the crime seems to change the depiction of the crime throughout the article's content. The

November 9, 2011 *NYT* article titled “Abuse Scandal Seen Leading to Paterno Exit at Penn State” made no mention of the children victims or sexual nature of the abuse.

Throughout the article, the authors make mention of the crime and refer to it in multiple different ways, “sexual abuse scandal” and “sexually abusing eight boys” for example (Viera & Thamel, 2011).

The inconsistencies of the crime depiction continue throughout numerous other articles collected from *The NYT's* archives. Rarely, if at all, did the titles of articles refer to the crime in the same ways as the content of the articles did; most often the titles actually depicted less than the content. The November 15, 2011 article supported this claim by referring to the scandal as “Penn State Abuse Case” in the title and stating the act of “...sexually abusing young boys...” in the content (Viera & Jo Becker, 2011).

Another November 9, 2011 article written by Lynn Zinser of *The NYT* also minimized the crime in the article title and the remainder of the article mentioned the victims in relation to their age just twice, one instance being mention of a 15-year-old and the other using the words “few kids” in referral to the victims of Jerry Sandusky. The last example of minimization that the author wanted to bring to the readers’ attention is the continued referral of the scandal as “Penn State Scandal”. When January of 2012 rolled around, it was to no one’s surprise that the scandal would have lasting impacts on every corner of Penn State’s campus and community which could potentially explain *The NYT's* tendencies to refer to the crime as the “Penn State Scandal”. However, this article depicted the crime for what it was in its entirety by referring to it as “...the child sexual

abuse scandal...” (The Associated Press, 2012). It is interesting to note the lack of descriptive titles of *The NYT* when compared to how the authors of those articles refer to the crime later in the content portion of the articles.

Alliterations and Plays-On-Words. *The NYT* is one of the most read and followed newspapers in the world, having won more Pulitzer prizes than any other newspaper in the world. One of their top priorities is gaining and maintaining viewers, readers, and followers. The more people that read their articles, the more money they earn, and the more successful they are as a company. One of the first things a reader noticed is the title of an article. That title, while it has the attention of the potential reader for a few seconds, must be appealing and interesting enough to encourage the reader to continue reading. Ways in which *The NYT* can do just that are through clever titles that provide almost a comic relief in the news or with the use of alliterations. The importance of gaining viewers and readers was not ignored when Penn State’s child sexual abuse scandal broke through the news. The data collected from *The NYT’s* archives shows many examples of the company’s authors getting creative with their article titles in order to attract readers.

A November 9, 2011 article published by *The NYT* offers a slight glimpse into the issue arising at Penn State. A title such as “Personal Foul at Penn State” does not provide potential readers with much information about the severity and heinousness of the scandal and crimes committed, but instead it promotes football and sport terminology that

would attract a lover of sport or Penn State athletics fan and encourage them to continue reading the article, only to find gruesome details about the crimes.

Nearly a week later, another author and writer at *The NYT* added a clever spin on her article, entitling it “Taking the Air Out of a Season.” Lynn Zinser published her article discussing football, professional and collegiate and the struggles faced on the field at the professional level between teams, coaches, and players, as well as a brief mention of the upcoming Major League Baseball season. The last few sentences of the article, however, focused on the scandal that captivated the country and sports world. She further minimized the scandal by not mentioning any of the victims’ ages and the severity of the scandal and crimes. She avoided discussing the gruesome details of the scandal, avoided mentioning names of those involved except for Sandusky and Paterno, and instead, asked the readers to wonder to themselves why this scandal happened in the first place and why the investigation took so long to take place.

The last two examples of article titles that are used to attract readers were published on the same day, July 24, 2012, toward the end of the scandal in the news media. Both articles, written by different authors, discuss the penalties and punishments Penn State received from the NCAA. The article titled “Penn State Is Hit Hard. Is It Enough?” related the commonly used football terminology, “hit hard”, to the scandal, and appeared to encourage the readers to think brutality is the answer to the scandal that broke the news months before. This article holds a negative tone toward the significance and power that football has at major institutions with the author going so far as to say

“...football is always placed ahead of everything else.” (Nocera, 2012) including the health, welfare, safety, and education of young people. Finally, the second article published that day with regard to the punishments placed on Penn State was titled “Real Penalty for Penn State, but No Cheers Yet”. This title depicted exactly what occurs at a college football game; a team that is disliked receives a penalty from the referees for behavior that is not within the rules and the opposing team and fans cheer in mutual dislike of that team and support of the penalty. The author, Pete Thamel, explained some of the punishments handed to Penn State such as their four-year postseason ban and \$60 million fine. The portion of his title, “but No Cheers Yet” drew readers in by making them wonder why people were still not satisfied with the results of this scandal and criminal behavior. His reasoning was simple; cheering would not occur until the behavior displayed and criminal culture at Penn State changed as well as changes within all intercollegiate athletics. The author was eluding to the main point that these sanctions, while significant at the time of publishing of the article, would be temporary and then the institutions were free to do whatever they wanted to move on. These sanctions and punishments did not guarantee a total culture change at the highest level of intercollegiate athletics, specifically football.

The use of the figure of speech, alliteration, was evident in multiple articles written and published by *The NYT*. The first example of alliterations that occurred in the articles was a November 13, 2011 article titled “The Angry Aftermath For a Program Gone Awry”. While wordy and seemingly un-descriptive of the scandal itself, the article

drew the readers in by the unique choice of words and phrases. This particular article was rare in its content and rare in its referral to the scandal, being one of the only articles examined in this research to refer to the scandal as something other than “the Penn State Scandal” or the “Jerry Sandusky Scandal”. Instead, the unnamed author of this article professed it is more than a football program’s problem and is actually a societal scandal with impacts that reached much farther than the football field and the locker room. This article took a personal approach to discussing the matters involved as the author discusses his own opinions on the healing processes of all involved, the lack of moral compasses at the intercollegiate athletic level, and where Penn State stands as a community.

The other significant example of alliteration in these articles was the November 20, 2011 article by Jodie Valade titled “In Battle of Beleaguered, The Nittany Lions Prevail”. Not only did this title directly associate the Penn State football program with the scandal, it promoted a violent and brutal image in the reader’s minds and made them wonder what exactly the football program was involved in and how they seemed to come out on top of. The article focused very little on the raging scandal that involved so many innocent lives and instead, focused on Penn State’s football game against Ohio State. “The Battle of the Beleaguered”, while clever in its name, actually related Penn State’s scandal to that of Ohio State’s football program scandal.

Relativity to Intercollegiate Athletics as a Whole. Pennsylvania State University is a staple to intercollegiate athletics with outstanding athletic history in nearly all of its varsity sports and boasting extremely successful program coaches, Joe Paterno being

among them. Various writers at *The NYT* made sure to tie Penn State back into the realm and greater world of the NCAA and of sport in general by publishing articles that compared their child sexual abuse scandal to various other scandals at major institutions, interviewing fellow head coaches who shared the likes of Joe Paterno with regard to program success and winning reputations, and also by showing that Penn State was a chapter in one of the worst years of intercollegiate athletics in history.

With the scandal still surfacing and details emerging, a November 14, 2011 article was published that contained excerpts from an interview with the famed Duke University head men's basketball coach, Mike Krzyzewski. This article and interview showed and encouraged the world watching the scandal unfold to believe Paterno was an innocent bystander in a situation that never could have been predicted by quoting Krzyzewski "I think he's a great man and it's a horrific situation" (Bernstein, 2011). Months later, after the investigative reports were published, this was found to not be the case. However, using another top-level coach of a power 5 institution was a very intuitive decision made because Krzyzewski holds the same, if not more, power of the media and power of the minds of fans all around the country due to his success, the same as Paterno. The interview by Krzyzewski was that of an attempt to save Paterno's legacy and public perception.

The positivity seemed to disappear as the days went on and the scandal grew in its severity. Greg Bishop, *The NYT* author of "Syracuse Assistant Denies Sexual Abuse Claims", covered a story slightly similar to that of Penn State's child sexual abuse

scandal that involved a men's basketball coach sexually abusing a young ball-boy years prior. Bishop's article compared Syracuse's accusations and actions with Penn State's and made poignant mention of the firing of university officials at Penn State but not any officials at Syracuse. With the length, details, and gruesomeness of Penn State's scandal, the scandal at Syracuse did not seem significant enough to make the major headlines in ways Penn State did.

The *NYT* author, Jodie Valade, of the "In Battle of the Beleaguered, The Nittany Lions Prevail" article chose to relate current events at Penn State with current events at Ohio State University. As mentioned earlier in this study, this Valade article discussed the football game between the two institutions but the reason for the alliterated title is that the game being a battle between two programs whose leaders had come under fire for illegal behavior within their respective programs. While the tattoo scandal at Ohio State was severely lacking in repercussions and lasting impact on the community, *NYT* continued to compare the scandal at Penn State with fellow NCAA member institution scandals. Another *NYT* author chose to relate the scandal at Penn State to two other scandals in the NCAA from years in the past. Joe Nocera, author of "Penn State Is Hit Hard. Is It Enough?", compared Penn State's reactions to the news breaking of the scandal to that of men's basketball scandals at the University of South Florida and the University of San Francisco. Both schools decided to take it upon themselves to suspend their programs as punishment for their illegal actions and the author chose to express his

own opinion by stating that he wished Penn State's officials had acted in similar ways, instead of waiting for the NCAA to hand them their sanctions.

The next few articles analyzed for this research showed *NYT* authors discussing in a very broad manner the ways in which intercollegiate athletics had a horrible month as well as a very challenging year. These authors took the focus off Penn State and their corrupt leaders and started discussing multiple ways in which the member institutions of the NCAA had been failing to lead morally and ethically sound institutions. George Vecsey titled his December 11, 2011 article "A Miserable Month in the World of Sports". His article examined all the corruptness in college sport as well professional sport. His overall main argument he supported with proof from Jerry Sandusky getting away with his crimes for so long, Syracuse's men's basketball coach getting away with his child sexual abuse for years, and for the National Hockey League allowing brutality in games that lead to player deaths, is because we as a society did not want to know about the dirty secrets that are hiding underneath the surface of our favorite sport teams. The spectator is an important factor of all sports, professional and collegiate, and they have the power to create cultures within different leagues and sports, as shown in Vecsey's article about the tragic month of December in 2011. Continuing the trend of a brutal year in sport, Pete Thamel wrote an article titled "2011: Distracting, Distressing Year in College Sports" right at the 2012 New Year. Thamel's article made mention of every major scandal that occurred at the collegiate level of sport in 2011. Power 5 institutions Auburn, Tennessee, Connecticut, Syracuse, Ohio State, Central Florida, and Miami all contributed to the

culture of the NCAA that thrived on cheating, lying, and completely disregarding the NCAA rulebook. Penn State's child sexual abuse scandal seemed to top off 2011 in a negatively groundbreaking way and writers at *The NYT* did not want their readers forgetting about the numerous other scandals that were hitting the NCAA at its core.

The Legacy. When it came down to the sanctions, fines, bans, and punishments handed to Penn State by the NCAA, when all was said and done, and even when details, victims, and more guilty people were continuing to emerge, Joe Paterno's legacy seemed to be a major talking point at *The NYT*. It is not everyday people choose to associate other people with the word "king" but *NYT* writer Bill Pennington certainly felt the need to do just that in his November 9, 2011 article "King of Pennsylvania, Until Now". The article depicted the legendary Paterno in as bright and positive lights as possible by mentioning statistics that ranged from how many victories he had on the playing field to how much money his family helped raise for the community and university throughout the years. The article was written in a manner that grabbed the hearts of readers, forced them to think about the person they once loved so much, and to question whether or not that love was strong enough to look past the crimes committed under his leadership. The author wanted readers considering what they thought was morally right and if Paterno really should have fallen from grace in the way that he did. Months later, after the new year, and days after the death of Joe Paterno, writer Richard Goldstein published an article similar to that of Pennington's in the sense that it discussed all of the great things Paterno was able to accomplish while at the helm of Penn State's football program.

Many statistics mentioned in this article were the same statistics mentioned in Pennington's just months before, however instead of referring to Paterno as king, Goldstein referred to him as an "unequaled coach".

One particular quote from Joe Paterno in wake of the scandal breaking early November of 2011 was "I wish I had done more". This quote was mentioned in many *NYT* articles in reference to the former coach. *NYT* writer Lynn Zinser went so far as to say that that phrase is what will keep Joe Paterno's coaching legacy in the dark. Nearly eight months after the fact and after the school received its punishments, the legacy of the former coach was still making headlines. This time, however, a writer for *The NYT* declared the legacy itself had officially been changed forever. The article and declaration came days after the final investigation released its findings which pinned majority of the responsibility for why the crimes committed under Paterno's leadership were able to occur, on Paterno himself as well as various other former Penn State top administrators. The writers at *The NYT* discussed Paterno's legacy in multiple different lights; some positive, some nostalgic, and some negative. A November 11, 2011 article written by George Vescey used a tone that identified himself as part of the community that was let down and surprised to hear about the crimes committed by Paterno, Sandusky, and others at Penn State. The title itself used the word "we" which immediately identified and related the author with the Penn State fans and community. The article discussed the shock and betrayal fans and community members felt when they discovered their beloved coach was not the man the media had portrayed him to be.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

After thorough critical textual analyses of the four separate media outlets (Penn State Athletics Department, Penn State News, *The Daily Collegian*, and *The New York Times*), readers will notice common themes in content written, recurring methods of communication imposed by the writers of those media outlets, and subliminal attitudes expressed through the writing itself. With similarities between the four types of media outlets also come significant differences. There were communicative differences within the various Penn State news and media outlets as well as differences between the Penn State media outlets and *The New York Times*.

First, minimization seemed to be the most apparent method of writing and speaking when it came to Penn State athletic department officials being interviewed and questioned throughout the months of the scandal. It seemed as if PSU officials and administrators wanted to control the public backlash and outrage as much as possible, so they attempted to lessen the degree of the crimes committed through choice vernacular. Common ways the former administrators and officials did this were by referring to the crime using words other than “child sexual abuse”. It is important to comprehend that each of those three quoted words hold valuable meaning in the overall explanation and definition of the crime and scandal itself. The three words account for the victims; “child”, the crimes committed; “sexual”, and the seriousness of the crimes; “abuse”. For

anyone to omit a word in referral to the crime, which occurred numerous times throughout the articles published by PSU news sources, is to minimize and curtail what exactly occurred on the campus of Penn State. It seemed Penn State administrators and officials were more apprehensive about their reputation and the inevitable decline in the public eye. Protection of the university reputation as well as the athletics reputation evidently was one of the top priorities, with little regard to the wellbeing and care of the victims and their families.

Going hand in hand with protecting and salvaging the remainder of the Penn State reputation were attempts to distance the entire university and athletics department from the crimes and the former football coach, Jerry Sandusky. These acts of distancing were most apparent anytime students, staff, faculty, or community members said something such as, but not limited to, “we are more than football” or “the acts of one individual do not define us”. By disassociating oneself from the crime and perpetrator, Penn State had hoped to remain at the top of the intercollegiate athletic world and still be a prestigious higher education institution. Penn State administrators had to plan for the worst, being things such as decline in applications to the university, loss of monetary support from donors and boosters, and even students transferring out of PSU entirely. Disassociating and immediately distancing themselves from the crime and Jerry Sandusky was their proactive tactic to avoid such occurrences.

Disassociation and minimization are just two of the exemplified communicative techniques. The findings offer an explanation that leads to the idea of communication

ownership. The methods and vernacular change when the ownership of the communication shifts. For example, the articles published by *The NYT* was completely unassociated with Penn State. Their articles tended to be more story like, factual, and detailed. The articles were also extremely dramatized by the writers so as to attract and gain readers. The articles written by Penn State's *Daily Collegian* were much more critical of the scandal and people involved because the writers at *The Daily Collegian* were Penn State students, who were opinionated and freer to say what they felt. The student writers for *The Daily Collegian* had nothing to lose, as opposed to the athletic department administrators who needed to be extremely cautious with their choice of words when releasing their statements to the public for the consequences were much larger. Penn State administrators' motivation for their word choices and communicative tendencies to the media were heavily influenced by the need to protect their reputation among the Power 5 conferences as well as their monetary benefits.

The economical aspect of a Power 5 institution plays a major hand in setting priorities for the institution's administration. Penn State had millions of dollars to lose over the negative public backlash, diminished reputation, as well as the decline in donations, booster gifts, and support from the community. Scandals have myriad negative effects on an institution, organization, or company, but how the individuals react and respond to the crisis determine the outcomes. Penn State administrators chose diminutive methods to protect their overall assets and wellbeing while *The NYT* chose to communicate the scandal in a way that benefitted their organization.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

In a society where sports are king and universities and institutions rely on their athletic programs to maintain their reputations, priorities and ethics are often at odds with one another. Top officials and administrators must make decisions, when faced with a crisis situation, that affect how they handle the crisis, how they communicate about the crisis, and what they want to protect or preserve. Most often, we see these officials and administrators choosing to preserve their reputations and cover themselves from the inevitable public backlash and media outrage. What Penn State demonstrated very effectively throughout the months of the scandal being at the forefront of everyone's minds, is that a Power 5 institution with as much public influence as Penn State had, will first and foremost protect their reputation. An institution at the level at Penn State has more to lose than most when it comes to scandals and crises being branded throughout the media outlets of the world, especially when intercollegiate athletics is at the heart of the scandal. "Big money" institutions will do everything in their power to protect their pockets as well as to ensure to their donors, boosters, and supporters that they are still a thriving institution that is levels above their scandalous past.

The most important aspect of communication that came through in this inquiry is that during times of crisis, higher education institutions implement plans that protect their own interests first and foremost. These interests range from institution reputation,

recruitment of future students and employees, protection of current administration and leadership positions, and protection of the flow of money in and out of the institution. Such plans include communicative language that utilizes careful verbiage selection, precise undertones, deflective strategies, praising of inconsequential things, and enhancing the strengths of the institutions through language. In the case of mass media, the strategy is also one of protection but with a focus on different interests such as readership, circulation, national attention, and the revenue flow. Such protection happens through sensationalizing of the crisis or scandal, dramatization, and spotlighting on victim narratives.

Despite the strategies of protection, in times of scandal there is also a section of media that critiques the entire process of scandal representation and management. In this case, *The Daily Collegian* and *The New York Times* took on this role. This type of communication that critiques the on-going strategies and tries to thwart the deflective elements of communication by the higher education institution proves that there are ways in which media communication can help protect the interests of victims. These types of communication are opposed to the idea of upholding the legacy of a famed former football coach, football program, or university reputation. On the contrary, this type of communication raises important questions about the credibility and legitimacy of the practice of covering up by people in positions of power at these institutions.

As demonstrated further by Penn State, our society is one that values sport, competition, reputation, and money more than ethics, morality, and respect. *The New*

York Times emphasized their need and goal of attracting readers to their written work. The types of writing and communicative techniques differ when it comes to ownership of the communication itself. Penn State showed different types of writing (critical vs. non-critical) between their athletic department press releases and the student-run newspaper, *The Daily Collegian*. Penn State chose to write and discuss the scandal in very minimalistic and dissociative terms while *The Daily Collegian*, which is run by students and not administrators or officials, opted to speak about the scandal in a more critical and opinionated manner.

This research was done to analyze and compare media and communicative techniques of a major higher education institution when a scandal consumes the community and the world. The research, data, and analyses show that the child sexual abuse scandal at Penn State, while horrific and truly immoral, is representative of a much larger and all-encompassing culture within intercollegiate athletics and higher education. The economical aspect of being considered a Power 5 institution is enough to change priority lists for those institutions, which reflect what society values most; money, success, and athletic competition and fame.

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VITA

Colleen E. Starrs graduated from Walled Lake Central High School in 2012. She attended the University of West Florida, in Pensacola, Florida, and received her Bachelor of Science in Sport Management Degree in 2016. She began and completed her graduate studies at Stephen F. Austin State University and completed her Master of Interdisciplinary Studies Degree in 2018. She began her professional career in intercollegiate athletics working in the athletic department at Stephen F. Austin State University where she worked as a Graduate Assistant while earning her Master's degree. Currently, she serves as the Athletic Academic Services Assistant at Stephen F. Austin State University for men's and women's track and field, men's and women's cross country, and men's and women's golf.

Permanent Address: 3300 Pearl St. #120, Nacogdoches, Texas 75965

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