

PREDICTING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONGST STUDENTS FROM THE PRESENCE OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS: WHAT ROLES DO GENDER AND BCS-AFFILIATION PLAY IN THE RELATIONSHIP?

Aaron W. Clopton, Ph.D., Marshall University

The integration of sport and community dates back to ancient Greece, and, most probably, long before (Stone, 1981). Sport existed in America during the early years (Smith, 1988) and, as early as 1830's, American cities' sports produced voluntary associations in teams and clubs; thus, providing one of the first venues for America that would cut across class and ethnic barriers and produce wholesome urban communities to the best of their ability (Dyreson, 2001). Empirically, partial data supports the significant contribution to community by sport (Mitrano & Smith, 1990; Wilkerson & Doddier, 1987). The latter study, explored the collective conscience of a community, examining such constructs as satisfaction and community engagement. They found that communities that win or participate in sport register higher levels of the community collective conscience (Wilkerson & Doddier, 1987). Thus, community studies at various magnitudes of population sizes and over a vast reach of history and space confirm the assertion that sport is a collective representation. Moreover, it is a salient part of their awareness, quite probably, due to the fact that it is a focus of conversation, publicity, and, now, the mass media. Further, it exists as a unifying force for those communities it represents, and this is, simultaneously, a consequence of the inter-community conflict it engenders and the intra-community communication network it establishes (Stone, 1981). Eitzen and Sage (1989) also noted that the enthusiasm generated by sport is a unifying agent for the community and a cohesive force. The purpose of this research endeavor was to explore sport's ability as this unifying agent for community and cohesion at the intercollegiate level on a college campus.

INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

In a time of scarce resources for higher education, athletics consume large amounts of capital, time, and other resources. Intercollegiate athletics programs must be able to justify their place in higher education, and establish their place in the mission of each institution (Knight Higher Education Collaborative, 2003). The majority of past literature measuring the impact of athletics attempt to utilize alumni donations and pecuniary aspects to validate or invalidate an athletics program. The cumulative results of the following studies are mixed in terms of what a winning athletics program can generate regarding alumni donations and fans' fiscal support. Most, however, do find that highly successful intercollegiate sports and sporting programs elicit a significant increase in alumni donations, with football often having the largest and most significant impact on financial support (e.g. Baade & Sundberg, 1996; Daughtery & Stotlar, 2000; Sigelman & Brookheimer, 1994). A second realm of research with intercollegiate athletics has shown its potential to enact a positive effect on the enrollment and admission rates of the respective college or university (e.g. Chressanthi & Grimes, 1993; McEvoy, 2005; Toma & Cross, 1998).

A third empirical area measuring the impact of intercollegiate athletics on the campus looks at the graduation rates and academic environment. A university's academic thrust into the landscape has been shown to be enhanced by a successful football or basketball team, whether

in terms of advertising effects (Tucker, 1992) or academic perceptions (Lovaglia & Lucas, 2005). This line of research has also noted that the connection between graduation rates of either student-athletes or the general student body and each school's athletics success rates have been found to be tenuous, if present at all (Mangold, Bean & Adams, 2003; Rishe, 2003). However, Mangold et al. (2003) included their thoughts on athletics' influence on the campus community, articulating that:

...one of the benefits attributed to college sports programs is their ability to bring students together and provide them with a sense of pride and identification with the institution...seen from this perspective, it is reasonable to hypothesize that intercollegiate athletic programs would enhance the attainment of institutional goals (acquiring knowledge, making good grades, graduating), since university goals are embedded within the larger community structure of the university. The issue here is that sports build a sense of community among students and, perhaps to a lesser extent, faculty. Since the notion of student community is central to many theories of student performance, we hypothesize that intercollegiate sports facilitate and sustain the development of student communities (p. 543-544).

At the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision, institutions and their football teams are often utilized by universities to develop this connection of students to each other, to alumni, and to both the past and future (Toma, 2003). This direct link to the past exists for students and all those who will attend (Beyer & Hannah, 2000; Deshler, 1985; Gladden, Milne, & Sutton, 1998; Toma, 2003). Previous research has also indicated that, in many ways, university athletics provide a sense of communal involvement within the university, the local community, and sometimes within the state or region (Beyer & Hannah, 2000; Melnick, 1993).

CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY

The notion of connection to the community has grown with increasing prominence in society (Putnam, 2000) and in higher education (Boyer, 1990; McDonald & Associates, 2002). It was Boyer (1990), while leading The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, who promoted the six necessary elements to enhancing campus community. Among these, was the notion of a "celebrative community," one that has its own traditions and heritage that cause pride and foster an emotional connection. This includes, among other activities, athletics. The inclusion of this ideal is necessary for a healthy community, one which has a shared culture, distinctiveness, tradition, and affirms itself, in addition to building morale and motivation through ceremonies and celebrations that honor the symbols of shared identity (Gardner, 1989). Strong athletic teams can add to these traditions and celebrations on a campus unless winning at all costs becomes a negative force (Toma, 1999 & 2003; Willimon & Naylor, 1995). Furthermore, all campus activities demonstrate the values of a campus and encourage university support as a method of building community (Gonzalez, 1989; Peck, 1987; Young, 1999).

One need for conducting research on this topic is depicted in each college and university's desire to generate this community amongst their students. The sense of community fostered on residential campuses remains the reason that many students go away to school, despite the convenience of a local institution with lower tuition rates (Toma, 2003). Student affairs administrators have also often anguished over the poor levels of community on their campuses (McDonald & Associates, 2002). This is due, in part, to the evidence supporting the notion that students who perceive a greater sense of community on campus persist longer in school (Mangold, Bean, & Adams, 2003; McCarthy, Pretty, & Catano, 1990; Tinto, 2000). Additionally,

with a greater sense of community comes a higher level of satisfaction with the undergraduate experience and elevated academic production (McDonald et al., 2002). Theoretically, one would hypothesize that the more satisfied one is with their college experience, the higher the probability of that person donating funds back to the university. Thus, a perpetual cycle exists between keeping students satisfied, so they become satisfied and grateful alumni.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework of this research draws its impetus from the seminal work in sport and community integration (Stone, 1981). Stone (1981) used two measures of community identification: 1) a measure of *objective* integration with the community, and 2) a measure of *subjective* identification or “felt belongingness.” Subjective identification with the community, under “objectively improbable conditions,” was most frequent among participant fans (67%) than non-fans (25%) (Stone, 1981). Later, these “sports fans” began to be viewed as beneficial to society because an interest in sport promoted personal interaction, something that leads to such social elements as cohesion and a strengthening of major social values (Smith, 1988). Other research echoed these sentiments, showing that identifying with a sports team may replace more traditional and community-based attachments to a larger social structure (Branscombe & Wann, 1991).

Further, Wann and Robinson (2002) examined a similar premise on a college campus, as Stone (1981) did in an urban community. They found that those students who identify as fans of the school sports teams were more likely to identify with, maintain higher perceptions of, and socially integrate into their university. Identification, perceptions, and social integration measures were all appraised with two to three items. The purpose of this study, then, was to integrate the work of Stone (1981) and Wann and Robinson (2002) to explore if a relationship exists between the presence of a school’s athletics department and perceiving a higher sense of community on campus.

Campus community stems from research performed by Lounsbury and DeNeui (1995). Operating under the framework of the psychological sense of community phenomenon (PSC) (Sarason, 1974), they transformed the established Sense of Community Index (Chavis & Newbrough, 1986) into the Campus Atmosphere Scale. The Campus Atmosphere Scale, using the PSC phenomenon, demonstrated that students who experience greater levels of PSC actually persist longer at their institution than those students with lower levels of PSC (Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1995). They found PSC higher among fraternity/sorority members, private school undergraduates, students living on campus, out-of-state residents, on-campus workers, seniors, and females (Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1995, 1996). It was, therefore, necessary to account for these variables in the current study. Similarly, extroversion and the size of an institution have also been found to contain a significant relationship with PSC on campus (DeNeui, 2003; Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1996). Finally, DeNeui (2003) discovered that over the course of one’s freshman year, and after controlling for the student’s level of campus participation, overall PSC does not increase.

The purpose of this research, then, contained multiple levels. First, the foremost intention was to address the relationship between the presence of intercollegiate athletics on campus and the perceived sense of community levels. Further, the mean differences of sense of community levels needed to be assessed and compared across the gender variable, as well as across the indicators of athletics competition level. Second, because much of the aforementioned literature on college sport has viewed the NCAA Division I level, this study sought to thoroughly examine the highest level of intercollegiate athletics, including both the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision and the NCAA Football Championship Subdivision (Brown, 2006), and what differences it maintains over the remainder of college sport. The tertiary intent of this study

was aimed at observing the presence of the variables of gender and the affiliation with the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) and what impact these variables enacted upon the connection of college sport with the campus community. The BCS consists of schools from the Atlantic Coast Conference, the Big East Conference, the Big 10 Conference, the Big XII Conference, the Pacific-10 Conference, the Southeastern Conference, and the University of Notre Dame (The BCS is..., n.d.).

METHOD

The data for this research were obtained through the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), a national organization charged with the mission of exploring the landscape of higher education and, specifically, the impact of such higher education elements as service-learning, leadership development, faculty mentoring, as well as assessing a wide variety of instructional practices. These particular data were drawn from a national study of college students through the 2003 College Student Survey (CSS), which assessed students' college experiences and their perceptions of college and was administered to over 700 colleges. A total of 34,087 college students completed the 2003 CSS. Of these responses, 18,681 were deemed usable after selecting out respondents from schools with athletics programs and full-time, undergraduate students aged 18 - 24.

Data here were weighted to adjust the sample to reflect proportions of students attending various types of colleges and universities across the country. Thus, with weights the institutional sample reflects the diversity of baccalaureate institutions nationwide in terms of type (four-year college versus university), control (public versus private) and level of athletics competition. It should be noted that the weight variable was normalized, such that applying it to the sample corrected for the biases indicated, but did not inflate, its size.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Of the total sample in this study (n = 18,681), a large majority, 61.4%, of the respondents were women (n = 11,469). The remaining 38.6% of the respondents were men (n = 7,212). Furthermore, only 22.1% of the students had joined a sorority or fraternity (n = 4,131) and 69.1% of the students spent less than two hours a week participating in a student club or group (n = 12,894). Moreover, 98.3% were 18 or 19 years of age (n = 18,367) and 92.0% of the students lived on campus or in Greek houses (n = 17,188).

SENSE OF COMMUNITY SCALE

The dependent variable in this study, the perceived sense of community, was established by a sense of community scale taken from the 2003 CSS. This was a nine-item scale that assessed each respondent's sense of community with similar questions as seen on the Campus Atmosphere Scale, a previously used instrument for measuring the sense of community in a valid and reliable manner (Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1995). The scale used questions to explore each student's satisfaction with such campus constructs as: sense of community, overall college experience, likelihood to re-enroll, et al. The scale exhibited high internal consistency and reliability with a Cronbach's α of .78.

DIRECTOR'S CUP POINTS

The Director's Cup was developed in 1993 by the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) as the first-ever cross-sectional all-sports national recognition for both men and women (NACDA, 2003). Points are awarded for athletic success across the board of all three NCAA divisions and NAIA athletics. Published annually, points from these totals indicate the overall success rate of each university or college's athletics program. For this study, point totals from the Director's Cup standings were acquired for the years of academic years 2001 - 2002 and 2002 - 2003, both the year the CSS was administered and the year prior.

The remaining independent variables were taken from the CSS instrument. Used to develop greater control, these variables have been empirically linked to community perceptions on campus: gender (Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1996, McDonald et al., 2002), social experiences (George, 2001; Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1996), campus residence (Pascarella, 1983), distance from home (Elliott, 2002), and more.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data analysis consisted of two phases: comparison of the means and analysis of the relationship between the presence of athletics on campus and the perceived sense of community amongst the student respondents. In the first phase, independent sample t-tests were conducted to examine any significant differences in the perceived sense of community levels between males and females, and BCS institutions and non-BCS institutions. Additionally, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted on perceived sense of community levels across the levels of athletic competition (NCAA Division I,II,III and NAIA).

The second phase analyzed the relationship between athletics presence and sense of community via regression analyses. To examine the overall relationship, a stepwise regression was conducted with the total sample. Further, separate regression analyses were to be conducted after disaggregating the data for both gender and BCS affiliation.

RESULTS

MEAN COMPARISONS

Results from the first phase of data analysis are displayed in Tables 1 and 2. Overall, females ($M = 35.01$) perceived a significantly higher sense of community than the male students ($M = 34.16$; $t_{(18206)} = 11.51$, $p < .0001$). At the level of athletic competition, it was determined that those students attending NCAA Division I institutions ($M = 34.50$), had the lowest of all perceived levels community, although only significantly lower than the NCAA Division II level ($M = 35.08$) and the NAIA level ($M = 35.09$; $F_{(3,18204)} = 12.15$; $p < .001$). Significant differences here were determined by using the Bonferroni adjustment for the four levels of the ANOVA. This post-hoc procedure was also selected because of the unequal distribution of sample sizes at each level (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2002). Furthermore, among the NCAA Division I institutions, those from BCS-affiliated schools had a significantly higher level of perceived community ($M = 35.40$) than those from non-BCS institutions ($M = 33.94$; $t_{(8801)} = -13.80$, $p < .0001$).

PREDICTABILITY OF SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Overall, the data revealed that there was, indeed, a significant, though nominal, relationship between the total number of Director's Cup points and the perceived levels of sense of community across all respondents from all levels of athletic competition ($R^2\Delta = .002$, $F_{(1,17774)} = 42.35$, $p < .0001$). Because of the unique differences between the levels of intercollegiate athletic competition i.e., NAIA, NCAA I, NCAA II etc., it was deemed necessary to examine for the presence of an interaction between athletics level and athletics presence (total Director's Cup points) that might be influencing the results. In other words, the impact of scoring high in the Director's Cup standings might be significantly different at the NCAA Division I level than at the NAIA level. When the regression analysis was conducted with the interaction in place, the interaction between the level of athletics competition and athletics presence did, in fact, demonstrate a significant presence ($\beta = .001$, $p < .0001$). Therefore, because of the unique relationship at each level and for reasons affecting external validity, it was decided that the data should be disaggregated along levels of intercollegiate athletics and the remaining analyses would be examined at the NCAA Division I level only ($N = 8803$). The regression makeup of both the overall sample and the NCAA Division I level only are presented below in Table 3.

GENDER

When the data were analyzed along the gender line with a separate regression analysis for both male students and female students, both analyses exhibited low, although statistically significant, $R^2\Delta$ values of .02 ($F\Delta_{(1,3489)} = 51.25, p < .0001$) for males and .01 ($F\Delta_{(1,5090)} = 38.00, p < .0001$) for females. However, while the female students at the NCAA Division I level posted a statistically significant larger mean ($M = 34.80$) than the male students ($M = 34.01$; $t_{(8801)} = -6.89, p < .001$), the presence of athletics had a significantly larger impact on the sense of community of the male students ($B = .002$) than the female students ($B = .001, p < .05$). Stated otherwise, whatever impact the overall athletics success in the Director's Cup standings had on the sense of community on campus, however nominally, it played a significantly larger role for the male sample in the data.

BCS AFFILIATION

Similar to the gender variable, the data were divided along the variable of BCS affiliation. In a more conspicuous contrast, those students from non-BCS institutions showed no significant relationship between total Director's Cup points and perceived sense of community levels. Conversely, the BCS regression revealed a significant predictability with $R^2\Delta = .01$ ($F\Delta_{(1, 3333)} = 19.12, p < .0001$). Because of this significant discrepancy in the regression relationships, further exploration seemed merited. Using Sobel's test for mediation ($z = -4.96, p < .001$), it was discovered that BCS affiliation provided a full mediation of the relationship between the total amount of Director's Cup points and the sense of community levels of the responding sample (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Sobel, 1982). This significant finding further illustrates that, not only do the unique characteristics of the NCAA Division I institutions reveal a distinct power allocated for intercollegiate athletics - as demonstrated by the presence of the aforementioned interaction - but, moreover, being a part of the Bowl Championship Series brings with it a significant, positive relationship with the school's overall success in the annual Director's Cup ($r = .64, p < .01$) and with the sense of community on campus ($p < .15, p < .01$). More importantly, though, said affiliation further mediates the relationship between the presence of athletics and the sense of community on campus.

DISCUSSION

Myriad results came about from the data used in this study on college sport and campus community. First, and not surprisingly, female college students in the sample put forth a significantly higher sense of community than their male counterparts, a phenomenon that echoes previous literature (DeNeui, 2003; George, 2001; Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1995, 1996). A similar existence occurs with females as sports spectators, where a higher connection of communal affect is derived as opposed to male sports fans (Ogden, 1999). Another noteworthy finding was the significant differences between levels of athletic affiliation. Students from the NAIA level, here, the lowest of all the levels of athletics competitions, posted the highest of all sense of community scores. Conversely, those respondents from the NCAA Division I level, the highest level of college athletic competition, displayed the lowest of all sense of community levels. These results were both significant and notable. One of the justifications for the commercialization and promotion of big-time athletics is for the enhancement of college sport's ability to draw students together and contribute to the sense of community (Mangold et al., 2003). With the NAIA at the opposite end of the spectrum, this resultant analysis might have been the most surprising of all the results. One explanation, though, exists in the fact that most of the NAIA realm of athletics consists of private, liberal arts universities which have consistently posted the highest levels of community on campus in previous research (Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1995, 1996; McCarthy et al., 1990). Further convoluting the outcome, however, was the revelation that, when comparing the NCAA Division I institutions, those responses coming from BCS-affiliated institutions posted significantly higher levels of perceived community over those students coming from non-BCS-affiliated colleges and universities. This outcome is one

that would have been predicted by the functionalists in college athletics that call for the increase in promotion and commercialization of big-time athletics and why the administrators in both the NCAA Football Championship Subdivision and the Football Bowl Subdivision engage in the spectacle of mimetic isomorphism (Gates, 1997) as has been shown in the dramatic increase in membership levels of the Football Bowl Subdivision over the last 20 years (Wolverton, 2005).

The second stage of data analyses viewed the relationship between the presence of athletics on campus and the subsequent perceived sense of community levels amongst the students. Overall, the data show that the level of athletics success for each institution in the annual Director's Cup standings did significantly predict the perceived sense of community levels. With Director's Cup point totals garnering a B-weight of .001, the presence had a minimal contribution, despite high significance. Because of this particular finding, further research seems necessary to further elucidate this potentially tenuous relationship.

A highly noteworthy finding occurred with the presence of the interaction variable, a presence that clarified that the presence of athletics success in the Director's Cup standings played a significantly different role across the levels of athletic competition in this sample. Because of this, the analyses and generalizability of the findings became restricted to the NCAA Division I level to narrow the focus of the research.

At that NCAA Division I level, male and female respondents displayed significantly different ($p < .05$) impacts upon their perceived sense of community levels by the presence of athletics success. Quite predictably, the impact that athletics success had on the sense of community levels was higher for the male students than for the females. This resonated throughout previous research studies which dictated that the importance of being a fan and of closely following, or being impacted by, their favorite teams was significantly higher for male college students than for female college students (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; End, Dietz-Uhler, Demakakos, Grantz, & Biviano, 2003; End, Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, & Jacquemotte, 2002; Iso - Ahola & Hatfield, 1986). This is one reason why the vastness of marketing for intercollegiate athletics on campus is often aimed at the male student population. What is forgotten, however, is that the female students still maintain a significant relationship between the presence of athletics and sense of community.

Finally, upon the final analysis of the predictability of perceived sense of community by the level of athletics success on campus, it was revealed that the relationship itself was fully mediated by the school's affiliation, or lack thereof, with the Bowl Championship Series. In fact, those students at Division I institutions that are not part of the BCS showed no significant relationship of predictability by athletics success upon their sense of community. Again giving credence to the support of college sports at the highest level, this finding legitimizes many of the anecdotal claims established in the previous literature and that have been used to validate the financial supporting of intercollegiate athletics (e.g. Duderstadt, 2001; Sperber, 2000; Toma, 2003). What was notable was the notion that not only does the Division I level of NCAA competition create a culture that sets it apart from the rest of the amateur sporting world - a world that is taken to an even higher culture of competition by the BCS - but that this was reflected in the data and the subsequent analyses. This finding requires much further insight with additional research and data to aid in clarifying the findings. However, at first glance, it does appear to support the notion of "ratcheting up," or mimetic isomorphism that is characterized by the administrators in the NCAA Football Championship Subdivision, or at the lower levels of the Football Bowl Subdivision, continuing to invest increasing amounts of capital and resources in hopes of producing the perceived benefits that come with the BCS-affiliation. These particular data lend to that notion.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Limiting the research in this study, first and foremost, was the difficulty in being able to effectively assess the direct connection between community and athletics presence. Many variables ultimately exist to confound the relationship and only a finite amount of them could be controlled for in the study. Of those particular variables, this study did not include any element of fandom, as it was unknown to what extent each respondent would classify themselves as a “fan” of the athletics teams on campus. The second limitation occurred in attempting to garner an accurate depiction of the presence of athletics on campus. While the Director’s Cup point standings has often been thought of as a valid and reliable standard for assessing athletics success, it may not provide a direct transfer of “presence” of the athletics program into the campus fabric. Similarly, the inverse is also true.

Another limitation of the study occurred in the sampling of undergraduate students. In this study, over 98% of the respondents were 18 or 19 years of age and 92% lived on campus or in a Greek house. This demography limits some of the generalizability of the study.

Finally, because very little empirical research exists supporting the findings of this study, it became necessary to gain a full depiction of the phenomenon through the quantitative realm of the 2003 CSS.

Based on the preceding limitations, the author recommends, for future research efforts, a number of suggested directives. First, a thorough qualitative investigation into the issue would improve the study’s ability to capture the unique individual connections that each college student creates, or does not create, with the athletics program on campus. Through this avenue, we would gain greater insight into the role that success plays with the sense of community on campus and what potentially negative impacts the athletics presence may possess with the student body community.

Another suggested area of research would be to take the insight acquired from the qualitative exploration and to revise the current study for a re-administration. With the national datasets in line, a longitudinal research effort could be undertaken to clarify the picture of college sport and its impact on the sense of community on campus.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND ATHLETICS ADMINISTRATORS

Because of the magnitude placed on the need for developing campus community in higher education today, administrators in student affairs, higher education governance, and intercollegiate athletics possess a shared ownership over the results of this research. Armed with the knowledge that a successful college athletics program has now been shown to significantly contribute to the university’s sense of community, policy makers in student affairs need to meticulously, and thoroughly, review the level and ideals currently being promoted through the athletics department and whether each of those are at the appropriate degree. These administrators should also conduct surveys to assess, and longitudinally track, the sense of community on campus. Knowing of the relationship of a perceived sense of campus community and the positive academic outcomes for undergraduate students (Mangold et al., 2003; McCarthy et al., 1990; McDonald et al., 2002; Tinto, 2000), the presence of the intercollegiate athletics program, and at least its potential as a community builder, must be thoroughly examined and perpetually appraised. One suggestion would be to utilize more athletics events to correspond with more university-wide student events, such as mixers, club meetings, the beginning of social gatherings, etc. More specifically, because the data confirmed the connection to a sense of community from athletics success across the department, it is recommended that colleges and universities look towards expanding the

presence and promotion of the Olympic sports on campus, rather than solely relying on the traditional higher-profile sports of football and men's basketball. The gatherings at Olympic sporting events are often smaller and more intimate and lend themselves to, perhaps, an environment that is more conducive to fostering levels of community amongst the students.

The second recommendation calls for intercollegiate athletics officials to review their marketing policies and content for gender presence on campus and the traditional avenues that are in place for promoting athletic events on campus. While a narrow, significant difference existed between males and females for the impact athletics success had on sense of community levels, the female college students in the sample still revealed a significant predictability of their perceived sense of community from their institution's success in athletics. College sport marketers need to further explore the potential of the female college student on campus as a target audience and the potential that lies in the presence of successful Olympic sport programs on campus.

CONCLUSION

The overall results from this study do support the anecdotal notions from previous literature that have suggested that big-time college athletics do create a "rallying point" for the students on campus and are able to enhance the sense of community (Boyer, 1987; Mangold, et al., 2003; St. John, 2004; Toma, 2003). Moreover, as the data revealed, the higher the level of athletics competition (i.e., NCAA Division I vs. NAIA/NCAA Divisions II and III or BCS affiliation vs. Non-BCS affiliation), the greater the impact that athletics success in the annual Director's Cup standings had on the perceived sense of community levels on campus. The relationship between athletics success and the sense of community for males and females exhibited a statistically significant difference, with the impact of athletics success upon sense of community greater for the male college students. Notably, however, the relationship was significant for both genders. Finally, one key finding was the fact that a school's status as a member of the Bowl Championship Series proved to fully mediate the relationship between the presence of athletics success and the impact it has upon the sense of community amongst the students on campus.

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TABLE 1

Independent Samples Test for Sense of Community Means for Gender and BCS-affiliation

variable	Mean		Std. Dev.		SEM		t	df	Sig. (2-tld)
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female			
Gender	34.16	35.01	5.10	4.66	0.06	0.04	11.51	18206	<.001
	BCS	Non-BCS	BCS	Non-BCS	BCS	Non-BCS			
BCS-affiliation	35.40	33.94	4.72	4.83	0.08	0.07	13.80	8801	<.001

TABLE 2

Bonferroni Procedure for Differences Among Levels of Athletics Competition

Level of Athletics	Mean	NCAA I	NCAA II	NCAA III	NAIA
NCAA I	34.50	0	-.58*	-0.21	-.59*
NCAA II	35.08	.58*	0	-.37*	-0.01
NCAA III	34.71	0.21	-.37*	0	-0.38
NAIA	35.10	.59*	0.01	0.38	0

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

TABLE 3

Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Predicting Sense of Community (Overall, N = 18681; NCAA I, N = 8803)

Variable	Overall Sample			NCAA I Level		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Step 1						
Gender	0.08***	0.07	0.08***	0.67***	0.10	0.07***
Distance from home	0.13***	0.03	0.03***	0.22***	0.05	0.05***
Step 2						
Greek membership	0.52***	0.08	0.05***	0.48***	0.12	0.04***
Working full-time	-0.86***	0.13	-0.05***	-0.90***	0.18	-0.05***
Socializing with friends	0.43***	0.02	0.13***	0.46***	0.03	0.13***
Clup participation	0.61***	0.02	0.20***	0.59***	0.03	0.20***
College athlete	0.41***	0.08	0.04***	0.42***	0.11	0.04***
Campus residence	0.81***	0.14	0.05***	1.07***	0.21	0.06***
Avg. college grade	0.73***	0.04	0.14***	0.77***	0.06	0.14***
Step 3						
Public/Private inst.	1.52***	0.11	0.10***	1.66***	0.13	0.14***
Step 4						
Director's Cup Points	0.001***	0.00	0.05***	0.002***	0.00	0.10***

Note. Overall Sample: $R_2 = .02$ for Model 1; $R_2\Delta = .10$ for Model 2; $R_2\Delta = .01$ for Model 3; $R_2\Delta = .002$ for Model 4 ($ps < .001$).

NCAA I: $R_2 = .03$ for Model 1; $R_2\Delta = .11$ for Model 2; $R_2\Delta = .01$ for Model 3; $R_2\Delta = .01$ for Model 4 ($ps < .001$).

*values significant at the .05 level

** values significant at the .01 level

*** values significant at the .001 level