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Making Sense of Competing Logics in the Collegiate Athletic Field: The Sensemaking Processes of College Athletes

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The increasing shift towards professionalism, from amateurism, in the collegiate athletic field is due to several recent events forcing these changes including recent changes to name, image, and likeness policies and the Supreme Court decision in NCAA v Alston (2021) allowing college athletes to receive greater financial support for educational expenses. With the recent changes shifting the collegiate athletic field it is important to understand how actors in the field make sense of these contradictory and changing logics. This study focuses on how college athletes make sense of the contradictory and changing logics in the collegiate athletic field. Logics inform how actors think and behave as well as how they make sense of the world (Thornton et al., 2012). Drawing from interviews with 21 college athletes, we conducted a hybrid coding analysis and found six logics structuring college athletes thinking and behavior. Through a combination of six different sensemaking processes college athletes merge the professionalism and amateurism logics to create a hybrid logic; pro-am. We discuss the implications including the empirical articulation of how logics shape sensemaking and how stakeholders can utilize our findings to inform their own strategies.

Keywords: College Athletes, Institutional Logics, Professionalism, Sensemaking

There are several recent changes in college athletics shifting the field towards a level of professionalism unseen before. Changes include the recent adoption of an emergency policy allowing college athletes to profit from their name, image, and likeness and the Supreme Court's decision in the *NCAA v Alston* (2021) case increasing the educational benefits college athletes can receive (Murphy, 2021). Professionalism is a logic referring to the financial remuneration of athletes as well as the access to relational networks, professional associations, personal capital, and reputation and status (O'Brien & Slack, 2004; Thornton, et al., 2012). Logics are the meaning systems in a field that actors deploy to make sense of policies, practices, norms, and assumptions in a bounded network, field, or industry. The recent changes in college athletics shifting the field toward a professionalism logic has many claiming the long-held logic of amateurism to be dead (Russo, 2021). Amateurism as a logic concentrates on the fair and safe educational, leadership, and career opportunities for college athletes.

Previous research focuses on how amateurism shapes college athletes' experiences and their identity development (Adler & Adler, 1991; Beamon, 2008, 2012; Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2012; Killeya-Jones, 2005; Paule & Gilson, 2010). Additionally, there is research detailing how amateurism contributes to the exploitation of college athletes economically (Hawkins, 2010; Huma & Staurowsky, 2012; Huma et al., 2020; Sack & Staurowsky, 1999; Southall & Weiler, 2014; Southall, et al., 2008) and academically (Cooper & Cooper, 2015). There is some research examining the mechanisms and processes the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) uses to maintain dominance over college athletics (Nite, 2017; Nite et al., 2019; Southall & Staurowsky, 2013).

The recent changes in college athletics shifting the field from amateurism to professionalism provides an opportunity to explore the interplay between logics and sensemaking (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Sensemaking is an individual's ongoing processing and interpretation of events through interaction with others for the purpose of understanding and engaging current and future events (Colville, et al., 2016; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995). Sensemaking theory has utility for exploring the processes of how individuals think about environmental cues. Logics influence actors' sensemaking in important ways as logics provide a meaning system for interpreting the world.

There is research within sport exploring institutional logics (Gammelsæter & Solenes, 2013; Nissen & Wagner, 2020; O'Brien & Slack, 2004; Stenling, 2014; Southall et al., 2008; Southall & Staurowsky, 2013; Svensson, 2017). There is also research exploring how logics shape actors sensemaking in sport contexts (Hemme et al., 2020; Nite et al., 2013). However, there has been no research exploring how college athletes' sensemaking aligns with logics composing the collegiate athletic field.

In this study we explore how college athletes make sense of the various logics within the collegiate athletic field. Specifically, we follow the qualitative methods previous researchers employed to connect institutional logics with actors' sensemaking (Bévort & Suddaby, 2016; Hemme et al., 2020; Lok, 2010; Nite et al., 2013). This includes conducting interviews with college athletes participating in several college athlete organizations including a university student-athlete advisory committee (SAAC), a leadership group, and a cultural affinity group.

This study contributes to the literature in numerous ways. First, college athletes are an important stakeholder group for those maintaining and those changing college athletics. Second, understanding the logics framing college athletes' sensemaking provides insight into what is

important to college athletes. Amateurism is changing in college athletics, however, the fight for increased protections and rights is not over (Murphy, 2021). What is important to college athletes and how they make sense of competing logics in the field provides insight into areas college athlete advocates can explore to develop strategies that will resonate and lead to change. Lastly, findings from this study provide empirical and theoretical insight into the connection between logics and sensemaking. Thornton et al. (2012) argue institutional theory is a multi-level analytical theory, however, there continues to be limited research, both in sport literature and the larger management field, exploring institutional concepts at the micro-level (Hemme et al., 2020).

Conceptual Framework

Sensemaking examines how organizational actors process, interpret, understand, and engage the world (Colville et al., 2016; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995). An institutional logics perspective provides a robust explanation for the role symbolic meaning systems have in shaping actors thinking and behavior (Thornton et al., 2012). Logics structure individual's thinking and behavior that, in turn, inform how individuals engage in sensemaking. Yet individuals also possess a level of agency allowing them to challenge, change, and reshape logics within bounded contexts through the sensemaking processes (Seo & Creed, 2002). In the sections below we discuss sensemaking, logics, and how the two interact in a reciprocating fashion.

Sensemaking

Sensemaking is a widely conceptualized process spanning various fields (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Weick (1995) defines sensemaking as a “process grounded in identity construction, retrospection, enactive of sensible environments, social, ongoing, focused on and by extracted cues, and driven by plausibility rather than accuracy” (p. 17). Maitlis (2005) focuses on what sensemaking does, highlighting the social component for creating understanding and affecting the world, defining it as,

preced[ing] decision making and follow[ing] it: sensemaking provides the ‘clear questions and clear answers’ that feed decision making, and decision making often stimulat[ing] the surprises and confusion that create occasions for sensemaking... Sensemaking is a fundamentally social process: [Actors] interpret their environment in and through interactions with others, constructing accounts that allow them to comprehend the world and act collectively. (p. 21)

Conducting a comprehensive review, Maitlis and Christianson (2014) sought to capture all the components others highlight, defining sensemaking as, “a process, prompted by violated expectations, that involves attending to and bracketing cues in the environment, creating intersubjective meaning through cycles of interpretation and action, and thereby enacting a more ordered environment from which further cues can be drawn” (p. 67). However, even since Maitlis and Christianson's (2014) more robust definition of sensemaking, others such as Colville et al. (2016), criticize previous understandings of sensemaking as being retrospective rather than acknowledging the ability of sensemaking to make sense of the world in the present and future.

These various definitions do possess similar components of sensemaking such as, social, ongoing, retrospective, and action oriented. For instance, sensemaking is social in two instances; the social stimuli provoking a need to sense make and the process of making sense of the stimuli through interaction with others (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Further, sensemaking is an ongoing process not only occurring when novel, unexpected, or confusing events take place (Weick, 1995, p. 49), but is also a consistent process where actors establish narratives and metaphors of everyday routines (Patriotta, 2003). Another common concept across definitions is retrospection (Weick, 1995). Actors must experience stimuli or engage in an interaction to make sense of what is occurring. Even as an event is occurring actors take in what is occurring and swiftly make sense of what is happening. Lastly, as sensemaking is action oriented, actors make sense of stimuli and interactions with the purpose of acting (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Even if they choose to not engage in action, when comprehending stimuli, they are doing so with the intent of engaging in interaction (Weick, 1995). The intent of engagement leads the actor to craft a response in preparation whether they give the response or not.

To address the varying definitions of sensemaking and provide a more concise definition, we understand sensemaking to be *the ongoing process and interpretation of stimuli through interaction with the purpose of understanding and engaging current and future stimuli*. Our definition attends to the need of sensemaking as a social, ongoing, retrospective, and action-oriented process. In the next section, we describe institutional logics and subsequently connect sensemaking and logics.

Sensemaking and Sport

Previous research in sport and sensemaking explores sensebreaking, sensegiving, and collective organizational identity formation in a community sport organization (Wegner et al., 2019), strategic sensemaking of small to mid-size community governments hosting sport events (Djaballah et al., 2015), how cultural narratives provide mental models for athletes making sense of a concussion (Zanin et al., 2019), and racialized organizational sensemaking (Carey, 2013).

Other research explores how employees in organizations handle change and conflict (Hemme et al., 2020; Nite et al., 2013). These two studies provide insight into processes individuals employ to make sense of change and conflict including, commitment, adoption, compartmentalization, and hybridization which we discuss in further detail below.

Institutional Logics

Institutional logics are the, “supraorganizational patterns of activity through which humans conduct their material life in time and space, and symbolic systems through which they categorize that activity and infuse it with meaning” (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 232). Logics are the symbolic systems giving meaning to practices, policies, laws, rituals, norms, values, and beliefs of a bounded network, field, or industry (Thornton et al., 2012). While logics can stretch across contexts, field-specific logics are context specific. For instance, previous research in college athletics surfaced winning at all costs, maximizing profit (Nite & Nauright, 2020; Nite et al., 2013), the collegiate athletic model (Southall & Staurowsky, 2013), education, and commercial logics (Southall et al., 2008). Research conducted in other fields have found logics specific to those contexts that have not surfaced in college athletics (Legg et al., 2016).

Logics provide actors the symbolic meaning systems for interpreting material conditions. Logics provide the rationalization for why individuals behave or think the way they do. For instance, Legg et al. (2016), found family members who had children in a youth soccer association possessed a *winning is important* logic while the sport governing body possessed a *lifelong participation* logic. Family members interpreted the actions of the governing body through the winning is important logic, critiquing and even taking actions that contradicted new policies designed to foster life-long participation.

Logics shape individual's thoughts and actions. The logic or logics an individual subscribes to in a field will structure how they think about certain events and how they should respond. In the next section, we discuss how previous research has connected logics and sensemaking.

Sensemaking and Institutional Logics

Logics provide a macro-level understanding of field, organizational, and individual behavior while sensemaking provides an understanding of how actors process, interpret, and engage logics (Thornton et al., 2012). In particular, the logics linked with an actor informs their identities, what information is important, and how they should process, interpret, and engage (Thornton et al., 2012). Practically, logics do shape individuals' actions, thoughts, and language (Loewenstein et al., 2012). Similarly, sensemaking focuses on individual practices and language to understand how they process and interpret the world (Weick et al., 2005). Logics shape the practices and systems of interpretation of actors and sensemaking is about processing and interpreting the world; the logics informing an individual's thoughts and behaviors will influence how they make sense of different situations or issues that arise. Further, sensemaking provides insight into the agency individuals possess as people engage in the process of addressing contradictions, conflicts, and changes in logics.

There is limited research exploring the connection between logics and sensemaking (Hemme et al., 2020). Previous research focuses on contexts with multiple logics to extrapolate how individuals make sense of contradictory, competing, or changing, logics and suggests there are six processes individuals employ to handle these moments (Bévort & Suddaby, 2016; Creed et al., 2010; Hemme et al., 2020; Lok, 2010; Nite et al., 2013). The first process is a commitment to the dominant or original logic; individuals hold onto preexisting logics (Hemme et al., 2020). The second process, adopting a new logic, is when a new logic is introduced and an individual adopts the logic immediately (Hemme et al., 2020). The third process, compartmentalization, is when two contradictory logics exist simultaneously. Individuals will employ the meaning systems of one logic in certain contexts and the other in other contexts (Nite et al., 2013). The fourth process, change agent, is when an actor who possesses a contradictory logic seeks to change other logics to mirror or fit with the one they possess (Creed et al., 2010). The fifth process, creative prospective, is when an individual is confronted with a new logic and they engage in innovative forward thinking about how the logic will affect their behavior (Bévort & Suddaby, 2016). The last process is the creation of a hybrid logic. When individuals encounter two contradictory logics, they can merge and create a hybrid of the two logics (Hemme et al., 2020).

When exploring logics and sensemaking, there is a need to understand the logics composing the context under investigation. When logics contradict, compete, or change,

individuals will engage in one of the sensemaking processes to develop a structure for their thinking and behavior.

Collegiate Athletic Logics

Previous research surfaced several logics existing in sport and specifically college athletics (Nite et al., 2013; Nite & Nauright, 2020; Southall et al., 2008; Southall & Staurowsky, 2013). Logics beyond college athletics include, life-long participation, winning is important, amateurism, professionalism, and community stewardship (Hemme et al., 2020; Legg et al., 2016; O'Brien & Slack, 2003, 2004). Logics specific to the collegiate athletic field include winning at all costs, maximizing revenue, commercialism, education, and the collegiate athletic model (Nite et al., 2013; Nite & Nauright, 2020; Southall et al., 2008; Southall & Staurowsky, 2013).

Important to this study are the logics most applicable to the collegiate athletic context including winning is important, amateurism, professionalism, the collegiate athletic model, commercialism, education, winning at all costs, and maximizing revenue. Winning is important refers to understanding sport participation as a task of besting opponents (Legg et al., 2016). Winning at all costs refers to individuals and organizations doing anything, including cheating and allowing abuse to proliferate, to ensure the team wins (Nite & Nauright, 2020). Commercialism and maximizing revenue both refer to similar meaning systems including the importance of revenue sources and engaging in profit driven activities (Nite & Nauright, 2020; Southall et al., 2008). Education refers to academic, personal growth, and learning opportunities (Southall et al., 2008). Amateurism as a logic refers to the fair and safe educational, leadership, and career opportunities for college athletes. Professionalism refers to the financial remuneration of athletes as well as the access to relational networks, professional associations, personal capital, and reputation and status (O'Brien & Slack, 2004; Thornton et al., 2012). Lastly, the collegiate athletic model merges several of the previous logics to provide an overarching logic college athletic stakeholders employ to understand the collegiate athletic system. The collegiate athletic model refers to the devotion of amateurism while engaging in revenue generating activity to support educational opportunities (Southall & Staurowsky, 2013).

There is a well-documented and long historical conflict existing in college athletics (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998). From the onset of college athletics players, coaches, athletic and university administrators have sought to provide athletes compensation while maintaining players are only amateurs playing sports for educational benefits. The conflict between these two competing logics negatively affects college athletes as the pressure to win, the messages college athletes receive regarding their presence on campus, and the decision making by athletic leadership leads to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse as well as financial and academic exploitation (Adler & Adler, 1991; Beamon, 2008, 2012; Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Hawkins, 2010; Huma & Staurowsky, 2012; Huma et al., 2020; Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2012; Killeya-Jones, 2005; Sack & Staurowsky, 1999). In the last twenty years, the pressure has increased significantly with Ramogi Huma starting the National College Players' Association (NCPA) and leading several attempts to change the field (Huma & Staurowsky, 2012; Huma et al., 2020; Sack, 2009).

The most recent changes to the collegiate athletic field include the adoption of State Bill 206 – pay to play (Murphy, 2021). The bill prohibits any sport governing body from limiting athletes' ability to profit from third party endorsements. Further, the Supreme Court ruled in

favor of former college athlete plaintiffs, finding the NCAA is in violation of anti-trust law by artificially limiting the amount of compensation an athlete can receive. Both disruptions continue to push the collegiate athletic field toward professionalism creating changes to policies, practices, and norms. Amateurism, the main institutional logic defining college athletics for over the last century is shifting and changing. It is important to understand how college athletes, those ultimately most affected by these changes, are making sense of the changes occurring. As such, this study responds to the following research questions:

- 1: What logics are governing college athletes' thinking and behavior?
- 2: What sensemaking processes do college athletes employ when thinking about the competing and changing logics of the college athletic field?

Method

In alignment with previous research exploring logics and sensemaking, we conducted interviews with several college athletes closely aligned with governance at one NCAA Division I university. In total, we completed 21 semi-structured interviews with college athletes. We have disassociated demographic information from the participants to ensure their anonymity due to the sensitivity of certain events.

Data Collection

We conducted interviews with 21 college athletes from one NCAA Division I university who were members of one of three organizations. The college athlete organizations included a university Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), a leadership training program, and a cultural affinity group. We selected these organizations as they all reside on one university campus, cut across several college athlete demographics including sport, gender, race and ethnicity, and nationality, and they were involved in governance issues on campus. Two rounds of interviews occurred. The first round occurred at the end of a Spring semester and the second round occurred at the end of a Winter semester. We completed two rounds of interviews to attract more participants to increase the volume of data with the intent of reaching saturation of findings (Creswell, 2013).

For both rounds of interviews, we gave an in-person call for members of each organization to participate in interviews. We provided sign-up sheets for individuals to complete with contact information. In total, three participants from the cultural affinity group (total population = 10), six participants from the leadership group (total population = 14), and fourteen members from the SAAC (total population = 50) participated in interviews. The first round of interviews yielded 12 participants and the second yielded an additional 9 new participants. The participants' identities reflect the composition of the organizations from which they were recruited. For instance, these organizations were primarily composed of seniors and juniors and with significant women participation. The sole freshmen who participated in the study was an older student who took several gap years to pursue other athletic opportunities. Overall, we interviewed 6 men and 15 women. Participant demographics include 1 individual who is Asian, 5 who are Black, and 14 who are white, 13 were seniors, 6 were juniors, and 1 was a first year.

Data Analysis

We employed a hybrid coding strategy to analyze the data (Miles et al., 2018). A hybrid coding strategy engages in a deductive and inductive coding strategy. A deductive coding strategy relies on previous patterns, concepts, and themes to inform the interpretation of the data (Miles et al., 2018). An inductive coding strategy allows patterns, concepts, and themes to emerge from the data (Miles et al., 2018). Gioia et al. (2013) articulate the numerous steps to perform a hybrid coding strategy. The strategy relies on multiple iterations of coding allowing similarities to emerge to inform patterns, concepts, and themes. Whether previously theorized or emerging from the data the pairings of data inform larger processes, themes, and concepts providing explanation of the observed phenomenon.

For this study, the six sensemaking processes of changing logics and the logics of sport informed our deductive data analysis. That is, we deductively coded interview transcripts for the six sensemaking processes as well as eight logics of sport. Further, inductive coding allowed codes to surface from the data. These codes reflect processes or logics participants discuss that do not reflect previously theorized concepts. After the initial round of coding, we paired codes to generate concepts and then we analyzed the concepts to determine if they were a process, logic, or if we could pair them again. This process occurred several times until there were six logics and six sensemaking processes.

Specifically, we used NVivo software to coordinate the coding and analysis of data. We analyzed the interview transcripts first for logics and then for sensemaking processes. First focusing on logics, we analyzed the data for meaning systems participants would employ when describing, explaining, or discussing their experience. The analysis included applying both previously theorized logics as well as providing us space to code emergent patterns. After the first round of coding, we reviewed the codes to determine similarities, pairing those that were similar into second level codes. We then engaged in another round of analysis and pairing utilizing the codes constructed through the first round of coding and pairing. We repeated the process of analysis and pairing one more time to ensure consistency across developing patterns and concepts. The final step included analyzing the patterns and concepts to determine whether they still reflected previously theorized logics or if a new logic needed to be conceptualized to explain the meaning systems observed. We repeated this same process for sensemaking. Once we completed coding for both logics and sensemaking, we analyzed each logic to determine if a sensemaking process was occurring and then each sensemaking process to determine if a logic was present.

In total, there were 594 codes for logics and 659 codes for sensemaking processes. In the end, six logics and six sensemaking processes surfaced that reflect and expand on previous findings. Previous research theorizes several logics existing in college athletics and sport more broadly. This study found five logics influencing college athletes thinking and behavior previously theorized. The sixth logic we found articulates an emerging hybrid logic. Further, previous research theorizes six sensemaking processes. We found four previously theorized sensemaking processes, expand upon one previously theorized process, and articulate a sixth. Table 1.1 provides a visualization of the codes and concepts informing each logic. Table 1.2 provides a definition and example of each sensemaking process. Further, we engaged in consistent peer debriefs during data collection and data analysis to ensure accuracy of the codes and patterns developed (Creswell, 2013).

Table 1
Concepts Informing Collegiate Athletic Field Logics

Codes	Concepts	Logics
Fair Equal No Difference	Fairness	
Classes Major Extracurricular Projects Study Hall Academic Advisors / Mentors Academic Emphasis	Educational Opportunity	Amateurism The fair and safe educational, leadership, and career opportunities presented the avocational participation in intercollegiate athletics.
Captaincy Leadership workshop Recommended for SAAC	Leadership Opportunity	
Volunteering Internships Career Prep Career Fair Interview Practice	Career Opportunity	
Pressure from coaches	Pressure from Coaches	
Putting in time Extra training Why I'm here	Dedication to Athletics	Athletic Success Committing to athletic excellence
Love my sport Enjoy what I do	Love of Sport	
Recruiting Rules Hours In-season hours Out-of-season hours Communication Playing time Extra Benefits	Regulations	Compliance The various tools and offices to remain in alignment with rules and regulations determining eligibility
Time Sheets Compliance Officer Compliance Meeting Compliance Office	Compliance	
Women's sports Marketing women's sports Facilities for women's sports	Gender Equity	Inclusivity <i>Performative Inclusivity</i> Espoused Investment into women's sports, all sports, and hearing college athletes' voices <i>Substantive Inclusivity</i> Tangible and impactful investment into all sports and creating opportunities to include college athletes in decision making
Facilities for non-high profile teams Second class athlete	Equal Representation	
Lack of voice Not included in decision making They don't care Not real power Not invested SAAC	College Athlete Voice	
Gear Scholarship Money Housing Food	Financial Compensation	Professionalism The financial remuneration, access to relational networks, professional associations, personal capital, reputation, status, and relationship to coach and sport
Training with pro-team Draft	Professional Association	
Agent Family Advisor	Personal Capital	
Status Benefits	Status / Reputation	
Travel Boss Employee	Business Relationship	
N/A	Professional Benefits of Amateurism	Pro-Am Commitment to the academic merits of college athletics while enjoying certain professional privileges
N/A	Commitment to educational identity	

Findings

The next section is comprised of three subsections. The first provides a brief overview of the six sensemaking processes we found participants employ. Table 1.2 provides definitions and examples of each sensemaking process. The second section discusses the six logics we found. We found six logics of which five reflect previously articulated logics. Two logics, athletic success and professionalism are informed by previous logics but have been updated to reflect how they structure college athletes' thinking and behavior. We also discuss the emerging hybrid logic; pro-am. The last section examines the interaction between participants' sensemaking processes when making sense of the contradictory and changing logics. We articulate three combinations of processes that create sensemaking pathways.

Sensemaking Processes

Previous researchers proposed six sensemaking processes including, commitment to dominant or original logics, adopting new logics, hybridization, change agent, compartmentalization, and creative prospective. We found participants engaged in commitment, creative prospective, change agent, and hybridization. We also found participants engaged in the processes of conflict management and explanation. Through our analysis we found previously studied sensemaking processes, such as compartmentalization, to be a subprocess of the larger process of conflict management. Explanation is a process previously not theorized. We found participants' explanations of events and ideas to be a key process for understanding how they make sense of contradictions and change.

Commitment (21 participants; 241 codes). Commitment to original logic is the process wherein an actor commits to the original dominant logic informing their thinking and behavior. We found participants engage in an active argumentation and a passive acceptance of dominant logics. Active argumentation included arguing, such as providing reasons for why a logic was rational, they would express gratitude for the benefits a dominant logic provides them, they would recite important features of a logic, but would not be able to articulate a tangible example, or they would make rationalizations for why the material reality did not match with the believed meaning system. Passive acceptance is when participants felt changes would not affect them, they did not care, or felt so disempowered to affect change they do not try or have stopped trying.

Creative Prospective (10 p.; 20 c.). When discussing increasing professionalization of college athletics participants did engage in forward thinking about how it would affect them and what changes they would like to see. Overall, participants who engaged in creative prospective thought about the changes they would like to see and the potential negative outcomes of increasing professionalization.

Change Agent (4 p.; 18 c.). Change agent refers to the process of individuals actively working to change the logics they encounter to align with the logics they possess. Participants discuss both their express desire to change logics and describe their actions to make changes.

Table 2
Further Evidence of Sensemaking Processes

Sensemaking Process	Defintion	Example
Commitment	When an actor perpetuates a dominant or old meaning system for understanding their experiences	"I love the NCAA. It's been a dream of mine to play hockey, to play in the NAA since I, I don't know, first knew what it was. I think it's a really good opportunity for so many people, they've been so good to so many student-athletes" (Participant 4)
Creative Prospective	When actors engage in innovative forward thinking about how changes will affect them	"It'll definitely affect smaller schools and the smaler sports, because sometimes we always joke, one of our [Players] is kind of a diamond in the rough. She's from [State]. And nobody really knew about her. She came to a camp and my coach was like who are you? Kind of blown away. So for stuff like that... And she knew she was good, but she was just like, yeah I just kind of want to stay home. But if she knew she was good in a big school, she was like ooh, I can go to this school and get a really big check because I know my name will be everywhere. I think that'll definitely change things and kind of change the level playing field of finding recruits" (Participant 14)
Change Agent	When actors actively work to change logics they encounter to align with the logics they possess	"I have also been able to bring it up in conversation, whereas before they would acknowledge things are happening, but they wouldn't be like, well, how do we go about it? They just be like, okay, this is what's happening. Our [Sports] teams, we don't really need to focus on it. Whereas now that I'm here, I'm like, this is what we need to be able to elevate this program. And it's almost like a reinforcement, like I'm there, I'm here, hello, say hello to me. So yeah, It's kind of been like a little bit of a push. Yeah. Like bring it up to the forefront more" (Participant 15)
Conflict Management	When actors questions logics or get frustrated. They can also compartmentalize contradictory logics.	"There's a level of perfection that I feel that we're all forced, standard that we're all forced to live by. And I think it can drive you a little bit nuts because I think athletes in general, we're all kinda pretty much perfectionist in certain ways, to certain degrees, and then having this kinda looming presence of athletics always around you to be perfect - you have to be a perfect student, perfect athlete, the perfect representation for the school that I don't know if it's necessarily worth all of the other drama and stress that it causes you sometimes and you're not necessarily, at least from my experience, you're not getting that much in return" (Participant 7)
Hybridization	When actors merge two or more logics together to create a single meaning system	"I think personally, again, I wouldn't be able to afford school and probably wouldn't be able to get into schools coming out of high school and, look at me now[...] I have gotten an education. Now, I developed my athletic ability on a college level and was provided with the opportunity to grow myself into a career" (Participant 16)
Explanation	When actors use stories, experiences, descriptions, and explanations to further articulate a point	"They offered me the most money, 'cause as a defensive player, they don't get full rides mostly. So I got three years. Three years is like big" (Participant 9)

Hybridization (20 p.; 47 c.). Hybridization is the process wherein individuals combine two logics into a single meaning system to understand practices, policies, norms, and assumptions. We found participants engaged in a hybridization process when addressing the contradictions existing between amateurism, compliance, and professionalism.

Conflict Management (19 p.; 164 c.). Participants experienced conflict and contradictions between logics in their daily lives as well as when describing their experiences. When participants experienced these conflicts and contradictions, they discussed how they processed, understood, and interpreted the events. Specifically, participants would question the dominant logic and express frustration. At times participants would just compartmentalize contradictions by acknowledging separate spaces require different ways of thinking and behaving.

Explanation (20 p.; 169 c.). We found explanation to be a sensemaking process not previously theorized, but an important process participants engaged in to make meaning of their collegiate athletic experience and the contradictions they encounter. When describing their experience all the participants would provide stories, experiences, or explanations. Participants' explanations of recruitment, their relationships with personnel, their academic and athletic schedule, and their participation in different groups provide insight into the various structures and meaning systems governing their thinking and behavior.

Logics

Six logics surfaced in the interviews with college athletes. The six logics include, amateurism, athletic success, compliance, inclusivity, professionalism, and pro-am.

Amateurism (21 participants; 164 codes). Amateurism is the fair and safe educational, leadership, and career opportunities presented through the avocational participation in intercollegiate athletics. Participants discussed the notion of fairness, safety, and educational, leadership, and career opportunities as they described their experience as college athletes. For instance, many coaches have routine meetings, check-ins, and reports on grades and class attendance. One athlete described their coach sitting a top player for failing to attend class,

And also the thing is, it doesn't matter who you are. So like freshman year, our best [athlete], we're at [opponent university] in the hotel and we're all sitting Friday... We have mandatory study hall in the morning for all freshmen and guys who have academic issues. I was a freshman, so I'm sitting in the lobby, and [Coach] is monitoring study hall, sitting, walking around, gets a coffee, and he gets a phone call from [Academic Advisor]. And she says that she got an email from one of [Top Player's] professors, [Top Player] is our Friday night [athlete]. He got paid like just below a million dollars last year or two years ago. [Top Player] missed class. And [Coach] pulled [Top Player] aside, ripped him a new one in the lobby. And [Top Player] didn't [play] that day. Even though it's a massive series. The policy is the policy. It doesn't matter who you are.
(Participant 6)

Athletes also discussed opportunities to grow as a student and person. Many described leadership opportunities through athletics, while others described opportunities that happened because of athletics, like one athlete who was able to attend an athletic conference symposium on mental health and present their original research on the topic.

Beyond the academic emphasis and opportunities, fairness surfaced when athletes discussed their experience, “They don't get more tutors than I do... that I know of. They don't get more resources than I do. So, it's really not unfair to me” (Participant 13). The participant provided this response to being prompted about the potential changes to college athletics. The participant does not see the system as being unfair as every college athlete is provided relatively the same benefits.

Compliance (17 p.; 68 c.). The compliance logic surfaced through descriptions of various tools and offices to maintain alignment with rules and regulations. The athletes also possessed a strong working knowledge of the various rules and how they governed their lives. Participants would discuss rules structuring recruiting, the number of hours of athletic activity they could engage in, and the types of training they can perform. For instance, there are many nuanced rules governing the recruiting process and many of the participants discussed how they had to strategically engage in communication,

Yeah. So you... Freshman year you draft an email like, dear [Coach], Or dear [Coach], my name is [NAME] and I am a freshman at [High School], [Town], [State] and this is um, this is my position. This is my uh, these are my [Sport] accolades. This is my academic stuff. These are my academic accolades. I would really love to come play for you in your program. Um, I'll be at these tournaments over the summer. My schedule for this is this, like... So you would email them before every single tournament. (Participant 10)

Participant 10 provides insight into how they use their knowledge of the rules governing recruiting processes to strategically communicate with coaches. Others discuss the number of hours they can train for, in-season and out-of-season limitations, scholarship benefits, and more.

Inclusivity (14 p.; 100 c.). Inclusivity surfaced in several ways, including gender equity, equal representation of sports, and college athlete voice. We also found participants described inclusivity as performative and substantive. Performative inclusivity acknowledges the espoused investment into women's sports, all sports, and hearing college athletes' voices. Substantive inclusivity is the desire by participants to establish tangible and impactful investment into all sports and hear college athletes' voices in athletic department decision making.

Discussed by several participants, a series of actions by one team brought attention to gender inequities and lack of equal representation of sports at their university. The actions highlighting the gender and sport disparities demonstrated the espoused belief in inclusion and the subsequent lack of substantive support. The actions taken by one team allowed many of the participants to reflect on the inclusivity of the athletic department. As one participant stated,

I don't think our athletic department has ever turned a blind eye, but they only focus on things that help better them. When I think it just doesn't help the entire student athlete population as a whole. And it goes back to those revenue

generating sports, where it's like, we're just going to focus on these. And it's like, but these sports are not doing well or they need this, they need that. And it's like if you're saying you're representing the entire athletic department, why are you not representing the entire athletic department? Why are you only representing the three sports in the spotlight? So I think that's just kind of been like, the issue for me is just like, I don't like when people say like, oh, I'm here to represent the entire athletic department. It's like, you're not, you're representing three sports and you have 20 other sports that are like drowning. (Participant 14)

Beyond, inclusivity focusing on women's and non-high-profile sports, participants also discussed college athletes' involvement in the athletic department and the NCAA. Participants expressed both having a voice and not feeling empowered to utilize their voice,

I don't think we have the power to voice in big issues like that you hear about [referring to increasing professionalization]. We are able to voice our opinions on different regulations. Like, like this year we voted on, um, recruitment. When you can start recruiting, when coaches can be in contact with you, what you can do on your recruiting visits, stuff like that. (Participant 16)

Performative inclusivity is the belief actors are engaging in actions that create inviting and supportive environments without providing tangible investment into material structures. Substantive inclusivity is the expressed desire by participants to see impactful investment into inclusive practices. Here, participants articulate how there is an expressed belief and commitment to hearing voices and all athletes are important, but, there is a lack of structures and investment to bring the espoused belief to fruition.

Athletic Success (20 p.; 99 c.). Previous researchers described winning at all costs and winning as important (Legg et al., 2016; Nite & Nauright, 2020). While those two logics informed athletic success, we found athletic success to describe pressure from coaches to succeed, a love of the game, and dedication to the sport. The athletes' devotion to success did not come across as a willingness to sacrifice everything or as being the only important thing. However, it surfaced as a willingness to invest in themselves to get better on their own time. One participant describes their willingness to go over time, "it's just like I'm here to get in what I need to get in. If we go over time, we go over time" (Participant 18). This participant does not care if they go over the required hours. They are here to put in the work they need to reach their athletic goals. Participants also describe their love for their sport, "like right now we also don't have practice and I would love to play [sport] like every day" (Participant 2). This participant would play their sport everyday if they could, however, due to NCAA regulations they were in a no practice period.

We also found participants describe pressure from their coaches to invest more time into their sport to be successful. One participant describes their coaches' commitment to athletic success and how that structures their life, "I've always told, like, you know, friends, family members, girlfriends that, you know, if [sport] calls I gotta go. You know what I mean? Like, you can hate me all you want, but there's nothing I can do about it" (Participant 15). This participant captures the pressure coaches place on athletes due to the coaches' desire to have a successful athletic team.

Professionalism (16 p.; 58 c.). Professionalism refers to the financial remuneration to athletes as well as the access to relational networks, professional associations, personal capital, and reputation and status. Participants discuss their access to professional associations, the status they possess, and the personal capital they can leverage. For instance, one participant describes their ability to train with professional organizations,

I train a lot. I train with the team, [professional sport organization], they're professional teams. So that's why I train a lot there. It's very good quality, very high level there. And I play a lot of tournaments in the summer too. (Participant 21)

Participating with professional teams during the summer months was one professional opportunity participants discussed.

Additionally, participants discussed professionalism as structuring their relationship between them and their coaches and sport. Participants describe their presence on campus as well as when they travel as business, coaches are bosses, and there is a level of mutual respect that exists between the coaches and athletes. One participant described travel as, "I mean, it's a business trip. It's not like we're going and like exploring everywhere" (Participant 1). Another describes the relationship between her and her coaches, "It's more like a professional relationship" (Participant 3). Another participant describes how they adopt a business mentality to navigate college athletics, "And obviously, just saying that it is a business, but that's how I think about it and that's how I approach it, and that's how I learn to navigate in the spaces" (Participant 15). Another participant describing how their experience feels professional,

Just on days when you just know you have to... so the five-day travel trips. On things like that, the team and being an athlete is kind of overpowering your life and you're not in class, so you don't feel like a student, you're not on your campus. So you don't feel like a student, you're in a hotel. On days when it's like being an athlete kind of overtakes everything, I'd say that's when it feels like that's all that I really am. (Participant 20)

While professionalism is receiving payment, access to relational networks, professional associations, personal capital, and reputation and status, the experiences college athletes' have with their coaches and participating in their sports provides an additional layer to what is professionalism. Beyond the benefits, the amount of control, presence, respect between the participants and coaches inform the professionalism logic among college athletes.

Pro-Am (20 p.; 105 c.). The pro-am logic captures the hybridization of the amateurism and professionalism logics. We describe the process of hybridization in later sections. The pro-am logic surfaced when participants discussed the contradictions between amateurism and professionalism and changes to the field. Participants committed to the academic merits and professional environment of athletics by merging the two logics together allowing them to retain their student identity while enjoying professional privileges. For instance, participants were clear they valued the educational, leadership, and career opportunities they receive. Participants also discussed fairness when contemplating the increasing professionalization of college athletics.

This participant describes how they view professionalism as potentially hindering the perceived fairness that exists in college athletics,

If my teammate that I'm running with every day is getting paid, I don't even know, whatever amount of money, to... not run here, but is running and gets all this money, and I'm the same year, I run the same events, I run the same time and she's getting whatever, Joe's Pizza is sponsoring her and giving her money, I'd feel some type of way. I think it's just really going to disrupt team dynamics. That's the only problem that I have with it. And how fair is it? But life's not fair. So, you can say all of that. But I think it's really going to disrupt team dynamics and team cultures. (Participant 13)

However, participants described the professional benefits they already receive such as status, financial benefits, and other material benefits. These benefits provide athletes the justification for continued use of amateurism governing college athletics. For instance, one participant acknowledges that it would be great to receive increased professional benefits, but already receive a lot,

Like in my position I would say it would be great for me to get paid and everything. But otherwise, like I feel like as student athletes you already get so many things. Like you get all the facility, you are able to practice, you get the fuel station and everything. So I feel like we already get a lot, we get all the materials, so like people are probably jealous- about the things we get. So I don't know if it's a whole good idea overall. (Participant 2)

Another participant argues why college athletes should not receive full professional benefits, such as a salary, due to the professional benefits they already receive,

I think we're generating stuff for our own. I'm not that well known, but people are watching me, they're texting me saying good game. I'm gaining from all the attention. There are 9,000 people in the stands and we had 100 season ticket holders [meet] with us and they all knew my name, so it's pretty cool to see. (Participant 4)

This participant is describing the status and reputation that athletics provide which is an element of professionalism. Yet, they are stating these benefits as a justification for remaining an amateur.

Making Sense of Logics

After analyzing the various processes of sensemaking in combination with the logics informing participants thinking and behavior, we determined several combinations of processes and logics. The first combination is the several processes that lead participants to engage in a hybridization process of the professional and amateurism logics creating a pro-am logic.

The second combination occurs when participants experience contradictions around inclusivity. They engage in commitment, change agent, and conflict management processes to make sense of the situation. The third combination includes the conflict management process participants utilize to make sense of contradictions between compliance and athletic success. Figure 1.1 provides a visualization of each of these sensemaking pathways.

The Hybridization Path. The hybridization path consists of participants engaging in a combination of sensemaking processes. First, participants would engage in an explanatory process - stories, experiences, and explanations – describing their experience as a college athlete. These explanations would surface amateurism, compliance, athletic success, and professionalism meaning systems that informed participants understanding and interpretations of their experiences. As contradictions would surface in their explanations many participants engaged in a commitment to amateurism through both active argumentation and passive acceptance that would lead to the articulation of a hybrid logic, the pro-am logic. When participants engaged in active argumentation, they would do so by describing the professional benefits they already receive. When participants engaged in passive acceptance of amateurism, they would often highlight how others would benefit, but they personally would not benefit from increased professionalism. As they continued to discuss changes to the collegiate athletic field, the pro-am logic would surface again as they would engage in creative perspective as they envisioned what college athletics could be.

To articulate the path to hybridization we highlight Participant 5 as she explains both amateurism and professionalism, reconciles the contradictions between these two logics through a commitment to amateurism by actively rationalizing amateurism given the professional benefits she receives. Participant 5 describes herself as a highly motivated and successful student. She entered university with a 4.0 GPA and has maintained a GPA above 3.0 her entire college career. She chose the university due to the scholarship package she would receive and the availability of the academic major she wanted. She describes actively crossing other universities off her list due to the lack of the academic major she wanted to pursue.

Participant 5 also describes how she feels relationships with her coaches are professional,

I definitely feel like an employee. There are certain things that I feel like I have to hold back on because my coach is essentially my boss. And if I do something that they don't like, or then I'm going to be taking a hit for it. And I almost feel like it's more than just an employee, because my almost everyday actions get controlled, but it's we don't necessarily have the protection of an employee. (Participant 5)

Despite her own description of her experience as being professional, when further asked about the increasing professionalization of college athletics she expresses a commitment to the current amateurism by articulating professional benefits,

Honestly, when I think about what I get, it's more than just getting my school paid for. We have the cost of attendance now. I am so beyond grateful cause there's not a lot of people in the country, especially [Sport] players that can say that... freshman, sophomore year, when I was in the dorms, I had the meal plan. Now that I'm in the apartment, I don't have the meal plan. I get compensated that money. This summer, this was really awesome. I was doing my internship. It was

being paid for as a class so I got room and board money while I was living in [Place]. I wasn't getting paid my internship. I think about it and how many people get to say that? I'm so beyond grateful for everything that I've been given here. (Participant 5)

Participant 5 provides a clear example of how participants engage in the hybridization process reconciling contradictions between the professional and amateur logics through an active argumentation process. Through an active articulation of the professional benefits athletes receive, they commit to the amateur identity due to the educational benefits they receive.

The other path to the hybridized pro-am logic is the passive acceptance of amateurism despite the potential for professional benefits. Seven participants (11 codes) discuss revenue generation as being an important aspect of professionalization. Due to a lack of revenue generation by their team, participants do not believe they, their sport, or team, would be worthy of receiving compensation or other benefits. For instance, one women athlete discusses the fine line between those who should receive opportunities and those who should not,

There's a fine line. Like, sports that bring in a lot of money for the school and bring us a lot of attention, I think those athletes should get recognized. Especially like knowing that they're under so much pressure and they're so stressed and it's almost like they're athlete-students, not student-athletes. Like, they're put on such a high pedestal and are put under so much pressure. I wouldn't say I'm a professional athlete. But when I look at players like, [Top Woman Athlete], [Top Woman Athlete], or [Top Woman Athlete], like, I view them as professional athletes. If I was on a team like [Top Women's Team] or like [Top Women's Team], who have brought in so many national championships and are put under such a huge spotlight, and there's so much pressure on those athletes. I mean, you are like professional athletes, in my mind. (Participant 11)

Participant 11 highlighted other athletes and teams that exist within her university and her sport. Yet, Participant 11 highlights the profitability of these teams and individuals as being important aspects for determining whether an individual or a specific team are professional. As Participant 11 does not recognize herself as a professional she views herself as an amateur that co-exists with individuals who are professional. Thus, the passive acceptance of not being a professional simultaneously results in the articulation of the pro-am logic wherein professionalism and amateurism simultaneously exist.

The Managing Inclusion Path. The managing inclusion path centers on participants grappling with the contradiction between the performative inclusivity of the athletic department and the substantive inclusivity they desire. Through explanations of their experience participants discussed the contradictions between performative inclusivity, substantive inclusivity, compliance, and athletic success. We found different participants engaged in two sensemaking paths when making sense of these contradictions.

The first was a commitment through active argumentation to performative inclusivity. Those who engaged in active argumentation provided excuses for why athletic department leadership were slow to respond to issues,

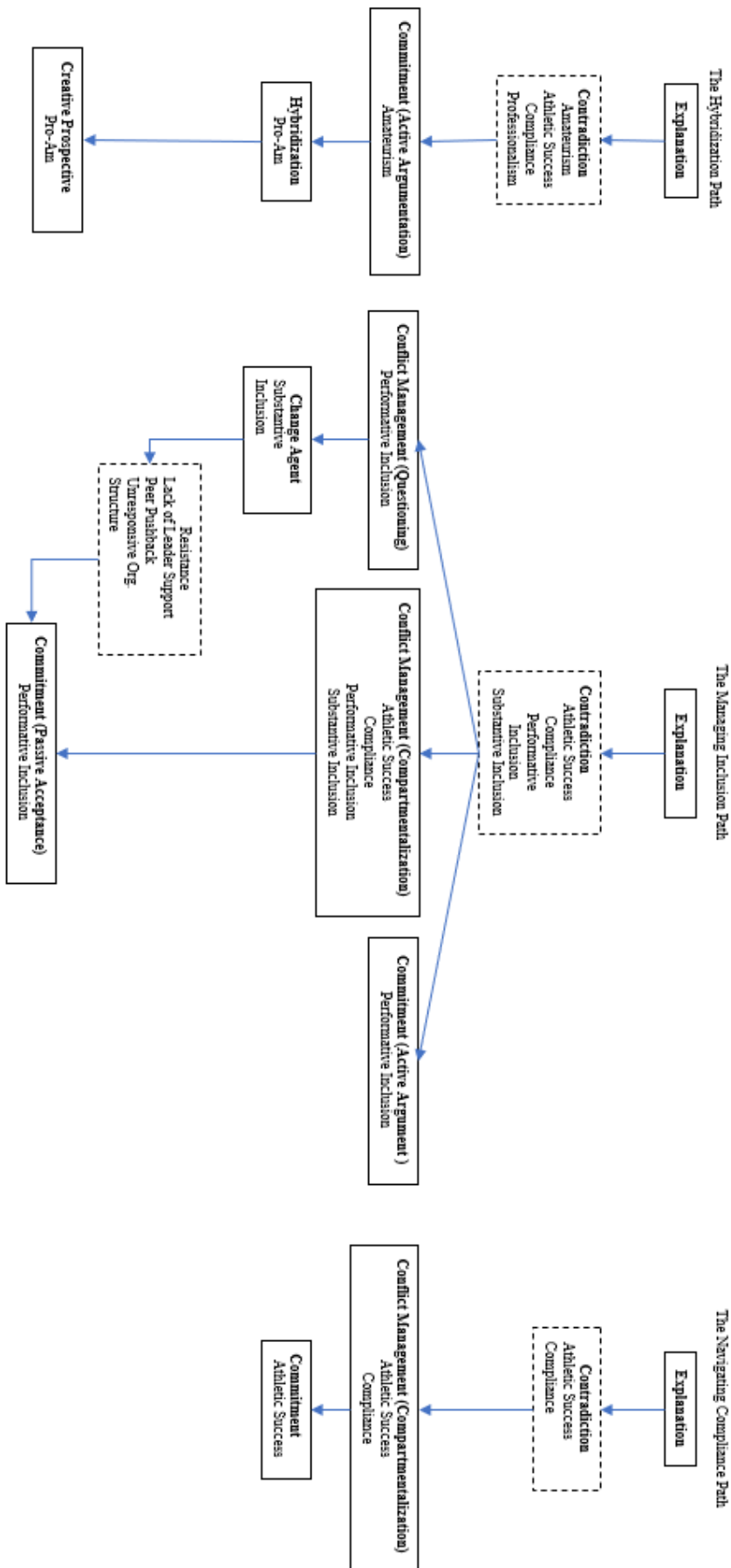


Figure 1.
Sensemaking Pathways

We've sat down with [leadership] before and I've also sat down privately with [Assistant Athletic Director] and also with [Athletic Director] and brought up concerns there. They are very responsive and they hear us. It is difficult because I know they're both very busy and they have a million and one things on their platters. So like, me telling [Athletic Director] that I think him making a physical appearance would be very impactful, isn't always feasible, even though I say it a million times. But you know, they've got a lot of things going on. But they are very receptive to what we have to say and we are their number one concern, and we know that. It's uh, just that they have a lot of concerns. (Participant 10)

When athletes did engage in behaviors to create change, the same participant, Participant 10, suggested those unhappy with the athletic department should join certain organizations to create change,

So [they] a, [they] just, in particular, very active on Instagram and social media. I do think there's a much better way to go about it. Um, especially because you know, [they] got two very impactful [SAAC] representatives from [their] own team. (Participant 10)

The same participant blamed SAAC representatives and college athletes for not being proactive as representatives, "I think what happens is we have disinterested reps. And they don't relay the message to their teams, so then their teammates don't know like, oh I can go to SAAC and say like, this, this, this" (Participant 10). Those committed to performative inclusivity actively engaged in rationalizations for why athletic department leadership were unable to address issues. Those who actively defend the performative inclusivity of the athletic department also encourage engaging in change actions, however, they articulate the need to use the governance mechanisms in place to do so.

The second path involved participants engaging in conflict management processes including questioning dominant logics and compartmentalization. Those who compartmentalized passively accepted performative inclusivity. For instance, Participant 13 describes how she experienced a contradiction between performative and substantive inclusion, how athletic leadership provided an explanation for the contradiction leading her to compartmentalize the disparity and passively accept the disparate treatment.

I mean, like [NAME] said, we have a problem with we don't get a media day. And I've heard people try to contact marketing, really, for us to get a media day and our coaches, which when [Assistant Athletic Director] was like, "Oh, well some coaches don't even respond." We were like, "Hopefully that's not us, because we'd love to have a media day." And not even contacting the right people. Marketing's probably like, "What the heck? We don't do media days for the track team." So, I mean, that's on us. But that was really helpful, knowing what department does what here. (Participant 13)

Participant 13 describes how her team does not receive the same marketing as other sports, but once athletic leadership discusses the proper channels of communication, the participant

compartmentalizes the unequal treatment and passively accepts athletic leaderships' explanation for the disparities.

Other participants who questioned the performative inclusion did engage in actions to create change,

We get we're not a revenue generating sport. [Sport] is not in the face of the public as much as [Sport] is or [Sport] is, but you are an institution where you have 23 sports and you're only focusing on three, three or four. And we just felt really, it was kind of backhanded, and every sport felt that, but nobody was empowered to say it until we did. (Participant 14)

Participant 14 describes how several teammates engaged in action to pull the athletic department leadership towards practicing a more substantive inclusivity. Actions included a virulent social media post, meeting with athletic leadership, and joining SAAC. However, as Participant 5 describes,

With the social media thing, initially their response was because marketing was understaffed. That was the excuse I got. Of course the big post that happened, that propelled the change. So I scheduled a meeting before [the big post]. But that [meeting] came afterwards. The meeting came, the meeting was afterwards. So I actually took a lot of the hit for that. So it's just interesting because I think, I really honestly think, and SAAC is a place, there's a lot of good comes from SAAC, but I think it's there to be like, "Look, we do give student athletes a place to have a voice." And I was pretty much told don't come to us like this if you have a problem. Go to SAAC. Have you talked to SAAC?" They're like, "Have you talked to your SAAC rep yet? Why aren't you in SAAC?" Now, I'm like, "No." I mean, we all talk. My team...we talk about it. What is talking at SAAC really going to do? Because the only time they really asked, "Does anyone have anything?", is right when the meeting's ending, and it's more based on, "Anything that went on with your locker room? Anything you guys need?" It's not real. (Participant 5)

After meeting to discuss inequities, athletic leadership directed Participant 5 to join SAAC, which they did. However, as Participant 5 points out, SAAC is, "just a box to check off for the athletic department" (Participant 5) that does not provide a real space to voice concerns. As another participant describes,

[We] always get the short end of the stick, and that's why we don't say anything, because we know nothing's going to happen. And it's... What is my opinion going to do? If I come to SAAC and I say this, I don't feel like anything's going to happen because nothing has happened before. (Participant 17).

Although participants wanted to make change and actively took steps to try and create change, they met resistance leading to a passive acceptance of performative inclusivity.

The Navigating Compliance Path. Participants acknowledged, “the main reason for many student athletes to go to school is to better their athletic... to give their athletic abilities to teams and really experience athletics” (Participant 18). There is a desire on the participants part to do what they can to be the best athlete they can be even if it means practices running longer or putting in extra work. The participants knowledge of the various regulations allowed them to navigate the rules to increase the time they would spend on athletics. When experiencing contradictions between these two logics participants would compartmentalize each logic to navigate around regulations and be comfortable with the contradiction. For instance, one athlete describes the loopholes of off season,

It's kind of like their loophole I think, because we can only have, I think it, the numbers five, but we can only have like five days of competition, which, I mean, if you only had five games the whole spring that would be kinda brutal. So then they're like, "All right, we'll just put three [games] per day. (Participant 1)

Another participant describes how there is a lot more training that needs to occur outside of the allotted hours,

Me and my roommates at night often, maybe four or five times a week go to the [facility] and [for] extra ... practice. To keep up with the game now, because it's so much faster like I said, there's a lot more outside of the set 2:00 to 5:30 slot that happens. (Participant 6)

This participant is also reflecting on how the official time is 20 hours a week, but “there is a lot more outside” of the set hours that occurs. The participants want to participate in their sport and want to be the best they can be. To train as often as they believe they should be, they will compartmentalize their desire to succeed and knowledge about compliance to meet their athletic goals. Thus, participants’ compartmentalization of compliance leads to their commitment to athletic success.

Discussion & Implications

This study found several key theoretical and practical findings. Theoretically, we confirm previously theorized sensemaking processes and collegiate athletic field logics. Also, we expand our understanding of several sensemaking processes and add insight into several new logics. Most importantly, we provide a robust description of sensemaking pathways that individuals engage in when they encounter contradictory and changing logics. Practically, we uncover several important logics informing the thinking and behavior of college athletes. The pro-am, inclusivity, and athletic success logics provide insight into important meaning systems governing college athletes thinking and behavior as they navigate contradictions and changes to college athletics and what they hope to receive from their experience. We provide insight into the implications of these findings.

Refining Sensemaking Processes

Previous researchers theorized six sensemaking processes; commitment, adoption, hybridization, compartmentalization, change agent, and creative prospective (Bévort & Suddaby, 2016; Creed et al., 2010; Hemme et al., 2020; Nite et al., 2013). We found six sensemaking processes including four previously theorized processes; change agent, commitment, creative prospective, and hybridization. Also, we surfaced two additional processes: explanation and conflict management.

Previous scholarship theorized the commitment to a dominant or original logic as a broad sensemaking process certain people engage in when faced with a contradictory or new logic (Hemme et al., 2020). This study surfaced commitment as both an active argumentation and passive acceptance. Some participants actively argued in support of dominant logics while others passively accepted that they could not do anything to change logics. Those who engaged in active argumentation committed to dominant logics through a rationalization process that either excused limitations or presented information to demonstrate the benefits of current systems. Those who passively accept dominant logics were unable to engage in a creative prospective to imagine a different system. Rather, the dominant logic constricted their thinking such when they contemplated change, they were only able to think of ramifications within the structure of the dominant logic framing their thinking. In totality, commitment as a sensemaking process demonstrates how individuals function as sites of reproducing dominant meaning systems. People, and in this case college athletes, are not passive actors carried by a system providing rules, norms, and assumptions. Rather, college athletes internalize these rules, norms, and assumptions and work to reproduce them in their own behavior and thinking.

Explanation is a process important for participants when they engaged in sensemaking. Through participants' stories, experiences, and explanations, they sought to clarify how a policy, norm, or assumption affected their life. That clarification through stories, experiences, and explanations proved to be fruitful for eliciting the logics informing their thinking and behavior. Previous research outside of sport discusses certain sensemaking processes such as narratives and metaphors that individuals will use when describing cultural practices (Patriotta, 2003; Patriotta & Brown, 2011). However, within sport research there is no research documenting descriptive or explanatory processes individuals use to articulate their experiences. The explanatory process we found adds to the sensemaking processes people employ when they experience contradictions or changes to logics.

Lastly, conflict management is built on the previously theorized sensemaking process compartmentalization (Nite et al., 2013). Participants in this study compartmentalized contradictory logics leading to a commitment to dominant logics. However, questioning the dominant logic and expressing frustration with practices, norms, and assumptions was an important component of the compartmentalization process. Participants actively question meaning systems informing their lives, however, many compartmentalize the contradictions they experience. Thus, the management of the contradictions better reflects the sensemaking people engage in as it is not just a simple compartmentalization, but the participants actively avoiding further questioning contradictions.

Broadening Logics of College Athletics

Previous studies proposed multiple logics exist in the collegiate athletic field (Nite & Nauright, 2019; Nite et al., 2013; Southall et al., 2008; Southall & Staurowsky, 2013) as well as several other logics in sport (Hemme et al., 2020; Legg et al., 2017; O'Brien & Slack, 2003, 2004). In this study, amateurism, professionalism, pro-am, compliance, athletic success, and inclusivity surfaced as logics governing the thinking of college athletes.

Hybridizing Strategies. We found participants recite and believe in the educational aspect of college athletics. Participants also discuss the professional nature of their relationships with coaches and their sport in addition to other previously theorized professional privileges they have access to such as training with professional teams and the status they possess on campus and in the community (O'Brien & Slack, 2004; Thornton et al., 2012). The articulation of these two contradictory logics led to the unification of a pro-am logic. The pro-am logic refers to the retention of one's amateur status for the educational benefits while enjoying certain professional privileges. Previous research found actors resisted a shift from amateurism to professionalism (O'Brien & Slack, 2004). Other research articulates how individuals will engage in a hybrid sensemaking process when experiencing change to logics (Hemme et al., 2020). The hybridization of the logics provides a bridge between the older understanding of practices, norms, and assumptions and the new understanding.

Moreover, it appears college athletes are engaging in a similar bridging process. Amateurism has defined many of the participants lives for so long that being able to fully comprehend what college athletics could look like as a professional system is difficult. The participants are aware and appreciative of the educational benefits they receive being a college athlete. Potentially not fully understanding how a professional system would function, participants fear the loss of the educational aspects of the college athletic system. However, participants are also aware of the benefits they receive and like having access to professional privileges. Currently, participants understand these professional privileges as extensions of amateurism rather than as benefits outside stakeholders have fought and won for college athletes to receive as part of ongoing attempts to professionalize college athletics. Nonetheless, the educational aspect of college athletes' experience is important in how they understand contradictions and changes to the system.

The development of the pro-am logic has significant practical implications. The pro-am logic creates a rationalization for the continuation of college athletes as students while receiving professional opportunities. Even as the NCAA works to modernize college athletics, allowing athletic departments more flexibility (Russo, 2021), the emergence of this pro-am logic is the next evolution in maintaining a non-employee status for college athletes. The desire by college athletes to still have academic opportunities and be students bodes well for athletic departments, conferences, and governing associations wary of providing college athletes full employee status. The professional opportunities college athletes receive, especially NIL, create a buffer for collegiate athletic leadership allowing them to further admonish full professionalization. In other words, the previous argument that college athletes receive a "free" education (Osbourne, 2014) that was so successful in maintaining amateurism for so long will be replaced with an argument that college athletes receive an abundance of professional opportunities. Of course, these professional opportunities will supersede the benefits college athletes would receive if they gained full employee status. At this time, it appears college athletes, or at least the participants of

this study, have adopted this mentality as they are leery of adopting a full professional meaning system for making sense of their role and experiences as collegiate athletes.

Taking Inclusivity Seriously. Inclusivity is another salient logic we surfaced from this data set. Inclusivity through gender equity, equal representation of all sports, and including college athletes' voice in decision making are important issues in the broader collegiate athletic field. Within the context of this study, participants discuss how the athletic department engage in a performative inclusivity despite participants desire and actions to create investment in substantive inclusivity. Increasingly, people are aware of issues of equity and view inclusion in decision making to alleviate these issues. College athletes similarly want to be involved in decision making processes and want athletic departments to make meaningful investments in inclusive practices.

College athletes and other college athletic stakeholders, such as fans, are acutely aware of the lack of inclusivity in college athletics (Hensley-Clancy, 2021). Despite years of outwardly stating a commitment to inclusivity, it is apparent college athletes expect more substantive inclusion policies, practices, and norms. Athletic departments may continue to engage in performative inclusivity; however, college athletes are willing to engage in action to make change. While this study found participants came to passively accept the athletic departments performativity after experiencing resistance, this does not negate the possibility of these athletes becoming remobilized and engaging in deeper change attempts. College athlete advocacy groups should also be aware of these issues facing college athletes. College athletes experience unequal treatment based on demographic issues such as gender, the sport they participate in, and their status as a college athlete. As many college athlete advocacy groups are concerned with the professional status of college athletes, the unfair and unequal labor conditions created based on individuals' identities is a labor concern. These issues present opportunities to mobilize college athletes into a unified labor movement that could lead to greater concessions such as compensation or other professional opportunities.

Professional Training Opportunities Lastly, previous research theorizes winning as important and winning at all costs (Legg et al, 2016; Nite & Nauright, 2020). We found college athletes feel pressure from coaches to invest a considerable amount of time into their support. We also found athletes love their sport and want to dedicate time to being the best athlete they can be. Many acknowledged they came to university to better their athletic ability and have a college athletic experience. Previous research exploring college athlete experiences often positions the athletic experience as total control over the athlete body (Adler & Adler, 1991; Beamon, 2008, 2012; Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Hawkins, 2010; Huma & Staurowsky, 2012; Huma et al., 2020; Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2012; Killeya-Jones, 2005; Sack & Staurowsky, 1999; Southall & Weiler, 2014). While there is certainly evidence suggesting athletes lead very structured lives beyond their control, which as many previous scholars have argued is problematic given the constraints of the current system, college athletes also enjoy their sport and want to dedicate time to being the best they can be.

As college sport governing bodies and college athlete advocacy groups continue to work to change college athletics, centering strategies that balance these three aspects will be important. For instance, college athlete advocacy groups hyper focus on compensation when it appears increasing other professional privileges for athletes, such as increasing opportunities to train with professional organizations will resonate with athletes more, especially those that

do not believe they are profitable.

College sport governing bodies should consider the professional nature of athletics. As one participant described their opportunities to train with professional teams as an internship, it is time college sport governing bodies recognize the professionalism of athletics. For instance, creating policies or athletic periods where academic requirements are lessened to allow athletes to fully focus on athletics would allow athletes to invest the time they want to be the best athlete they can. These athletic periods should be balanced with academic periods where the athletic demands are more regulated to allow athletes the opportunity to focus on the educational opportunities they appreciate.

Competing Logic Sensemaking Pathways

A major theoretical contribution is the articulation of sensemaking pathways. Previous research documents sensemaking processes individuals utilize to process, interpret, understand, and then enact when facing contradictions and changes in logics. Our work suggests these processes work in combinations depending on the logics participants were discussing. For instance, we found explanations and commitment lead to hybridization and creative prospective when considering the pro-am logic. We also found explanations, commitment, conflict management, and change agent to be a combination when considering inclusivity. Lastly, we found explanation and conflict management and commitment to be an important combination when considering athletic success.

The combinations of sensemaking processes illuminate how individuals work through making sense of contradictions and changes. Further, in this particular context the combinations demonstrate how our participants come to reproduce dominant logics. For instance, the participants hybridization of the amateur and professionalism logics was not an attempt to reconcile the differences between two contradictory logics. Rather, the development of the hybrid pro-am logic came from a commitment to amateurism and the perceived benefits of amateurism.

Passive acceptance is also an important component of both the hybridization process and ultimate commitment to dominant logics such as performative inclusivity. Participants tried to envision a different collegiate athletic system or would actively engage in change efforts when encountering contradictory logics. However, these participants encountered considerable resistance from athletic leadership and other college athletes. The continued resistance to change from others led certain participants to passively accepting that they could not create the change they wanted.

The sensemaking combinations provide insight into the agency people possess within structures (Seo & Creed, 2002). People are not passive receivers or carriers of rules, norms, or assumptions (Coburn, 2016; Donaldson & Woulfin, 2018; Woulfin, 2015). Rather, people create new meaning systems that integrate contradictions and changes. We also found people question and even challenge dominant systems, but structural forces, such as lack of leadership support, unresponsive organizations, and peer pushback can arrest challenges and attempts to create change at the interpersonal level.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, the data collected for this project was collected as part of a larger ethnographic project. While the interviews surfaced many instances of sensemaking, the interview protocol was not specifically designed to elicit sensemaking amongst participants. Future research would benefit from crafting an interview protocol specifically tailored to eliciting sensemaking. Second, some of the potential changes discussed in the interviews have come to fruition. We argue the sensemaking that occurred is still important and provides insight into how college athletes were making sense of change as it was occurring. Future research should explore college athletes sensemaking now that change to name, image, and likeness has occurred. Third, this study did not include many college athletes participating in high profile sports. This is partly due to high profile sports lack of presence at observation sites. The lack of high-profile participants may have skewed the findings of this project as high-profile participants are more likely to benefit from increased professionalization opportunities. Future research should continue to explore a diversity of college athletes from sports including high profile sports such as football and basketball. Lastly, the participants of this study all came from one university. Although, the university under study routinely fields several championship caliber teams across a variety of sports, sampling across a variety of institution type, such as a Power 5, Group of 5, and other NCAA levels, may provide different insights. Future research should seek to include a diversity of college athletes from a variety of universities.

Conclusion

There are many changes occurring in college athletics leading to the increasing professionalization of college athletics. As these changes occur it provides an opportunity to explore how people make sense of the changes and the contradictions between old meaning systems and new meaning systems. Specifically, we explored how college athletes are making sense of the contradictory and changing logics.

We found college athletes possess several logics that inform their thinking and behavior including amateurism, professionalism, athletic success, compliance, and inclusivity. As college athletes grapple with the contradictions of these logics and changes to the collegiate athletic structure increasing certain logics, such as professionalism, they employ several sensemaking processes. At times, college athletes' employ combinations of sensemaking processes to articulate a hybridized professionalism and amateurism logic, pro-am. At other times, college athletes' employ combinations of sensemaking processes that lead to an active commitment and other times a passive commitment to dominant logics.

Nevertheless, the combinations of sensemaking processes articulate how logics reproduce through individuals thinking and therefore maintain their dominance in structuring actors' thinking. Further, the combinations provide insight into how college athletes make sense of the changes occurring in college athletics which in turn creates opportunities for those seeking to change college athletics to develop policies and strategies that align with college athletes' structures of thinking and behavior.

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