They're Getting Away with Murder: The Social Account Ability of Collegiate Athletes

Justina Ixcia Phillips

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THEY'RE GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER:
THE SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
OF COLLEGIATE ATHLETES

by

Justina Ixca Phillips

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
Department of Sociology

Western Michigan University
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THEY'RE GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER: 
THE SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY 
OF COLLEGIATE ATHLETES 

Justina Ixcia Phillips, M.A. 
Western Michigan University, 2002 

The purpose of this research is to study deviant behavior among collegiate student athletes. This study involves institutions in the Midwest region of the United States, particularly the Mid-American Conference (MAC). This study took on a sociological approach by interviewing specialized athletic officials, and examining different levels of social control by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), along with its interaction with the Mid-American Conference. Various variables that affect social control such as gender, race, and economic conditions were also examined to get an understanding of how these factors influence behavior.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Ronald Kramer, for introducing me to the topic of sociology and sports. I would also like to thank committee members Dr. Douglas Davidson and Dr. Timothy Diamond. I appreciate everything that you’ve done for me during my years as a student. To my loved ones, Mary Phillips-Smith, who continuously reminded me that God would see me through, and to David Smith, LaTanya Phillips, Alicia Phillips, Derrion Hamilton, Penny Smith, Anthony Lewis, Jr., the Marshall family, Johnnie Lee Dismuke and family, Willie Lee Smith, Jr., and family, along with the past and present members of Douglass Community Organization and Western Michigan University’s athletic department. Special thanks to Lisa Thorne for editing and checking citations on such short notice. This piece is dedicated to everyone who can see that the overall experience of intercollegiate athletics is valuable, and a true reflection of society.

Justina Ixcia Phillips
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ............................................................... ii  
LIST OF FIGURES ...................................................................... iv  
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................ v  

CHAPTER  

I. INTRODUCTION ................................................................ 1  
  Sport and Society ................................................................. 1  
  Review of Literature ............................................................ 7  
    Youth Participation .......................................................... 7  
    Progressing Towards Crimes ............................................. 9  
    Sociological Issues ........................................................ 11  
    University Procedures ....................................................... 13  
  Methods ........................................................................... 15  
  Purpose ........................................................................ 15  
  Subject ........................................................................ 15  
  Procedure ........................................................................ 15  
  Interview Questions ........................................................ 16  
  Limitations and Textual Resources ...................................... 17  
  Summary ........................................................................ 19  

II. A DESCRIPTIVE PROFILE OF COLLEGE ATHLETES INVOLVED IN CRIME ................................................................................. 20  
  General Trends ..................................................................... 21
Table of Contents – continued

CHAPTER

Institution Results............................................................... 24
Summary of Results................................................................... 32
Race, Gender and Age............................................................. 35
A Theoretical Approach to Understanding Deviant Behavior Among Collegiate Athletes............................................................... 35

III. UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND A RESPONSE TO A CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR................................................................. 43

Institutional Control......................................................................... 44
Public Policies on Conduct.............................................................. 45
The Good.......................................................................... 46
The Bad............................................................................ 47
The Ugly........................................................................... 48
Codes of Conduct at MAC Institutions........................................ 49
Holding Athletes to “Different” Standards..................................... 57

IV. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS................................. 61

Restructuring Our Ideas for the Success of Today’s College Athlete..... 63
Study Limitations and Future Research........................................ 69
Conclusion........................................................................ 71

APPENDIX................................................................................ 73

BIBLIOGRAPHY........................................................................ 75
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Anomie/Strain Theory................................................................. 38

2. Phases of Rational Choice........................................................... 41
LIST OF TABLES

1. Three Digit Code and Letter Code of Those Interviewed ......................... 21
3. Race, Sex and Age Category of Subjects Interviewed .............................. 35
4. Institutions and Sanctions ........................................................................ 58
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Intercollegiate athletics are important for educational reasons, and an integral part of the student body. Many college programs bring excitement to campuses because of their competitive spirit. Although it may appear as if college athletics only have the goal of winning in mind, they struggle to improve on many different facets within an athletic department.

One facet that college athletic departments have to deal with is the behavior of student athletes outside the athletic arena. This thesis will examine behavior of collegiate athletes along with social control policies of different institutions in the Mid-American Conference. Furthermore, I will pursue a sociological approach by looking at variables such as race, gender, and economic conditions of those who in the past were involved in criminal behavior.

Sport and Society

The athletic world is a world within itself. This world is similar, if not identical at times to the larger world. Many athletes and athletic teams are community role models, who can pack the stands with supportive fans. Unfortunately, individual athletes can also steal, commit illegal sexual acts, fight, and violate other laws. In the world of athletics, many athletes may also experience or see racism or sexism, along with other forms of discrimination. Americans have seen many changes in racial and
gender ideals due to sports. An example of this change occurred in 1947 when the
great Jackie Robinson, an African American, broke the color barrier in professional
baseball. This integration of baseball allowed white America to see the talent level of
many African Americans that was not seen before. It also slowly allowed other
blacks into the league, and contributed to a better understanding of race issues in the
United States as a whole. Not only are social issues such as race and gender found in
athletics, but economic components are also in this arena. Athletic directors spend
countless hours negotiating with the media for television coverage and
advertisements. This is because of enormous financial assets for athletic departments.
These resources are necessary for some athletic departments just so they can survive
financially. Just like any other social group, athletic teams have their own rules,
norms, penalties, and privileges. This is how athletics resemble society as a whole.

Analyzing student athletes in relation to society is very important because it
involves studying sports as a social phenomenon. Studying sports as a social
phenomenon is critical, simply because sports is a social structure that society has
constructed. According to Sport and Society author Jay Coakley (1998), society
shapes sports, and in turn, sports shape society. Many believe that this structure has a
tremendous impact on the attitudes, the behavior of individuals, and the behavior of
groups as a whole.

Despite many of the favorable and unfavorable characteristics of the athletic
world, many are still attracted to this world. Across the United States there are
thousands of young athletes who compete on the elementary, middle and high school
levels. A small percentage of them will get the opportunity to live out their dream, and become collegiate athletes.

What many fail to understand is that walking in the shoes of a college student athlete is no easy task. There’s a tremendous amount of pressure on athletes who may have dominated his/her high school teams, but now the reality sets in and they’re competing for a spot on a college team. College athletes have to prove to coaches that they are capable, and should be part of the starting lineup. Not only do college athletes become stressed because of coaches, but the pressure to excel in the class is also a challenge. A student athlete’s time is very restricted. They have to have a good concept of time management skills considering practice times, traveling to events, weight training, and study sessions. Because of this, many student athletes experience extreme emotional problems in the first few years of college. This is a time in their lives in which they are exposed to an entirely new and different lifestyle. They have to become independent in many ways, and a disciplined, strong, mature-minded individual to survive this experience. If a student athlete makes a bad decision during their college careers, it may be something that he/she will regret for the rest of his/her life.

An organization that attempts to guide student athletes with sports and other social roles is the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The NCAA is an organization established to improve and uphold institutional control for intercollegiate athletics. The NCAA is a voluntary association with a membership of over 1,200 institutions involved. They adapt rules to promote and develop
educational leadership along with athletic excellence. Some rules of the NCAA include things such as having 24 or more credit hours per year to establish progression towards a degree, rules against academic fraud, prohibition of gambling on NCAA games, and monitoring of practice times. Student athletes also have to abide by the rules of each institution along with the specific rules of the athletic department as well. All of these rules, along with the pressure of peers, coaches, parents, and professors are sources of pressure and stress to an athlete. In some cases stress and pressure, along with various other social factors such as ones background or past environment may cause a student athlete to commit a criminal and deviant act.

It is evident that criminal acts in America are prevalent. Every day on the television news or the front page of a newspaper, someone mentions a criminal act of some sort. Politicians and police chiefs have become elected by the public just because they “promised” to reduce crime in a particular area. In many cities inmates are released early due to overcrowding of a facility. Research has shown that in the year 2000, 32.1 percent of those arrested were under the age of 21. Research has also shown that males comprise 77.8 percent of those arrested. Although blacks make up about 15 percent of the total U. S. population, 27.9 percent were arrested while 69.7 percent of those arrested were white (UCR 2000). These numbers are very disturbing, but there are many similarities between national numbers and the arrest rates for college students.

*The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Chronicle 2002) noted that arrest rates for college students are almost identical to the national arrest rate for those who are
21 years old and under. *The Chronicle* did, however, stress the fact that 24.3 percent of those arrested were influenced by alcohol and or other drugs.

Although alcohol and other drugs are the causes of many crimes for students, athletes, and others in society, it is important to look at the broader picture. A plausible explanation for many of these behaviors is, once again, the structure of society. Many athletes involved with crime that we hear or read about are from lower class families. Economic inequalities and crime are directly related. Although young athletes may get the opportunity to attend college, some of the old habits or ways of life are still the same.

Just like many other college students, athletes sometimes attend parties, hang around negative crowds, and make bad decisions. The difference between the average student, and a student athlete is the amount of attention that the student athlete receives. It seems as if the spotlight is always on athletes, especially the exceptional ones. Because athletes get special attention from the media, it may appear that athletes are more privileged than the general student body. In this media driven world, many people may form an opinion that may not be based on the whole truth. The media decides what story to print, and it is usually very good or very bad news. No one wants to hear about what is going on in the middle of a story, or about the “normal” life of an athlete. Take a newspaper layout for example: The best stories are on the front page. The headlines attract the attention of readers and these readers form an opinion based on the information. Even though athletes may make
bad decisions during their college years, based on society's ideals, acting in a criminal manner is one that is not highly respected, no matter who they are.

Many causes of crime among student athletes are due to the belief that they are "above the law". In many instances, exceptional athletes have overstepped their boundaries numerous times without penalty. Because of this, they may begin to believe that they're entitled to do as they please. This is an attitude that is prevalent in many locker rooms across America.

It is time for the bar of expectations for student athletes to be raised to a higher level. Student athletes should be held accountable for their actions. Student athletes are not taking responsibility for their behavior off the field given the resources of the institution. Institutions should expect a commitment to high standards for all of its student body, including student athletes. Through my research, I have found several factors that have influenced student athletes to commit criminal acts. Student athletes should not be treated any differently than others student at an institution. This study will hopefully assist all involved parties to better understand issues such as the reasons behind the criminal act committed by student athletes, institutional policies in regards to criminal acts, along with gender, athletic affiliation, and economic/family conditions of student athletes. Now more than ever, people are interested in different economic classes, ethnic groups, and cultures. Because of this, it is important for coaches and administrators to do background checks on athletes when they recruit. I believe that if coaches and/or administrators do this, they may see warning signs before bringing a particular athlete to an institution. This is not to
say that all athletes who have had problems in high school will continue to engage in
deviant behavior, but sometimes certain characteristics of an individual can identify
future problem areas. It may even be time for some institutions and athletic
departments to revisit certain disciplinary policies for student athletes who are
involved with criminal acts. University Bowl games are not more important than the
emotional stress of a female that has been gang raped by members of a football team.
More importantly, one’s athletic ability should not supersede his/her criminal
behavior.

Review of Literature

Researching student athletes and crime warrants an understanding of many
different issues. The role that youth sports have played in sports, along with race,
gender and economic concerns are among the major issues. Behavioral issues and an
understanding of the institution or university policies are also a concern. These
factors are all intertwined in any investigations of the problem of college athletes and
crime.

Youth Participation

Due to the popularity of several major sports activities, Americans have
glorified individuals based on achievements gained from participating in athletics.
Because of this, parents have been introducing their children to organized sports more
and more over the past decade. Coakley and Dunning (2000) describe organized
youth sport participation in sports as performance based, rather than "fun". Adult coaches often teach children that winning isn't everything, but instead, it is the only thing that matters. With this win at all cost attitude, we have seen parents frustrated to the point that they start to fight, along with youth cheating to win.

In many areas, children are not being raised as children were in the past. Learning how to play a game in an informed way is losing the interest of many. Rules are even being applied to games that, in the past, had no structure at all.

While youth are becoming more involved in sports at a young age, they are also learning other components that come with the role of athletics. That is, youth are learning that with great athletic ability comes popularity, along with other social roles and a variety of social amenities. Youth also believe that to enhance their athletic ability, performance-enhancing drugs may be the answer. Also, because of an athlete's popularity, some communities will allow young athletes to overstep boundaries that a non-star child athlete would not be allowed. Youth are continuously forgetting the true meaning of sportsmanship and integrity. If they are allowed to overstep boundaries as a youth, they will grow up thinking there are things they can get away with because they're good athletes. Eitzen (1996) believes that what some young athletes fail to realize, is that certain characteristics learned in sports are desirable, while others involve ethical dilemmas.
Progressing Towards Crime

Based on the finding of Benedict (1998), college and professional athletes go through a formative stage before they participate in criminal activity. Much of their criminal behavior is learned before college or high school. Benedict referred to most of the illegal or disruptive activities that college athletes are involved in as simply due to the fact that they are “socially irresponsible”. Benedict also argues that because athletes are the most sought after individuals on campus by the media, younger children unconsciously seek this opportunity for popularity.

There are other reasons for criminal activity among student athletes besides overstepping their boundaries at a young age. The relationships between athletes and masculinity have been a topic of investigation for some time. Because men are thought to be naturally aggressive, they are sometimes blamed for committing sexual acts, while other are just preyed on by females who lie for popularity or money. Toufexix (1990) notes that today’s athletic environment is one that encourages sexual violence. She summarizes studies that found a large number of sexual acts on college campuses were committed by members of a fraternity or members of an institution’s football or basketball teams.

Benedict and Klien (1997) examined arrest rates for collegiate and professional athletes accused of sexual assault against females. They found that athletes are arrested at a higher rate than non-athletes, but not convicted at the same rate of non-athletes. Although Benedict and Klein concluded that athletes are treated
more leniently than non-athletes, it is important to stress how the legal system
operates. Most of these athletes have the ability to obtain competent legal counseling.

The lack of good judgment is not the sole reason for athletes misbehaving
sexually. Koss and Gaines (1993) found that although many collegiate settings are
correlated with sexual tension, the use of alcohol consumption plays a major role in
behavior. *Sportsline* writer Dennis Dodd (1999) focuses on the fact that alcohol can
cause a lapse in judgment, which can cost an athlete their scholarship and freedom.

This lapse of judgment is not only concerning sexual acts, but all decisions that are
made when someone is under the influence of alcohol. Kirschenbaum (1989) suggest
that because of the increased use of alcohol, athletes are no longer committing “funny
college pranks”. Instead athletes are accused of rape, assault, gambling on college
games, break-ins, and drug trafficking. “Universities are being robbed of their

Athletes with questionable character traits are being reviewed more closely
due to the increase of problems on college campuses. An analysis by Curry (1998)
contends that aggression transcends the locker room for many athletes. This is
another part of the culture in athletics. His research provides an understanding of the
language that is used in the locker rooms of male athletes, and believes such talk
supports “rape culture”. Sexist language by males is part of their culture, but this is a
major problem when dialogue leads to sexual abuse.
Race, crime and economics in society stir many emotions in America. The media has portrayed African Americans, and other minorities in a negative fashion. This portrayal is similar to how some view sports. This is due to years of miseducation and stereotyping of different groups. Lapchik (2000) expresses that although we are in a new millennium, whites still believe that African Americans are less intelligent and more likely to be violent. Due to the fact that African American collegiate athletes make up 57 percent of participants in basketball and football, many “think black” whey they think of these particular sports. African American athletes and African American commentators such as Don McPherson continuously express the misrepresentation of African Americans in athletics. McPherson, a former black quarterback at Syracuse University and commentator for Black Entertainment Television, tried to reverse the negative image of black males by being a good student, and wearing a suit to class with the Wall Street Journal under his arm. Unfortunately his peers told him that he was a “good black man, different from the rest”. According to McPherson, this type of stereotyping is still prevalent on many college campuses.

The issue of economics is always an issue when looking at crime among ethnic groups. Young athletes who come from lower class areas have blocked opportunities. It is speculated that this population of athletes are the ones who will commit most crimes. Berry and Smith (2000) suggest that because of the social process that comes with organizational influences, African Americans athletes are
expected to engage in such behavior. Berry and Smith also explain that this group is a target of racial bias among social control agencies. Furthermore, because of racial bias, Berry and Smith contend that African Americans should not be the primary concern due to the fact that not all African Americans athletes are from an economically disadvantaged area. Many are from middle class areas. Berry and Smith also expressed the fact that many white college athletes have been involved in criminal activities. Snyder (1994) explains that many athletes may not be economically disadvantaged or of lower class origins based on a case study of white athletes committing serious crimes. Snyder concludes that there is a quest for excitement, a defective character trait, peer pressure, and once again the issue of alcohol may be an influence for some student athletes. Overall, the media plays an important role in the perceptions of athletes, race, and violence, along with the fact that crime by African American athletes are disproportionately reported and punished.

Although there are many females involved in collegiate athletes, we rarely hear of negative characteristic, as far as the issue of crime. Because females have fought so hard to gain respect on the collegiate level, females tend to appreciate the right to participate in athletics. Although there is a lack of research pertaining to females and crime, Lyon and Klafs (1973) assume that females are more outgoing and better leaders if they are involved in sports. Females are also less “tense” than their male counterparts, and are “achievement-oriented individuals. Even though females are less likely to become involved in criminal activities, they are prone to
emotional experience while going through college. According to Coakley and Dunning (2000), this emotional experience among female athletes increases their feeling on self-identity.

The topic of females and crime, once again, can be related to how society is. In society there is not an abundant number of females who participate in criminal activities. Those who participate in crime are predominately males. This is the same for athletics. The overall number of females involved in crime is increasing. Because of this it will be interesting to see how this impacts female athletics.

University Procedures

University officials are beginning to be questioned more and more due to the increase of crime on campuses by students in general. The issue is taboo, and is not readily discussed. Some universities even go to great lengths to support or hide incidents from the media or local police departments. This should not be tolerated on any college campuses. Athletes have an obligation to be persons of good character, and whether they like it or not, they are role models in the community.

Zinser (1998) describes many embarrassing acts done by student athletes, as well as a few policies put into place by universities, to make sure their student body clearly understands that there is zero tolerance for criminal actions. Large universities such as the football powerhouse Virginia Tech have one of the toughest policies due to the arrest of 20 football members in the same year. Although it is embarrassing, maybe some criminal actions will open the eyes of university officials,
and the implementation of tougher policies will funnel down to other institutions. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Chronicle 2002) admits that many institutions take chances on athletes who may have had problems in the past. Every person is entitled to go down the wrong path at one point in his or her life, but to recruit those who continuously do so should be reconsidered.

It appears as if the issue of crime among student athletes is one that can be explained more if we understand the individual, along with the cultures of different athletic teams. Weiss (1999) found that athletes from many different environments have maladaptive behaviors, such as gambling and addictions. His study, an addiction-specific measurement for the assessment with 250 individuals concluded that researchers need to focus on athletes more to find possible explanations or causes for the general population.

During a student athlete’s years in college, they can go through a period of extensive personal change. Because of this, it is necessary for athletic departments to communicate with its athletes so they don’t embarrass themselves or the university. Department officials need diversity training to pinpoint behaviors, because athletes are from different ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds. If attempts are not made to reduce negative behavior, it could lead to more problems for the athletic department, and a lack of future opportunities for many student athletes.
Methods

Purpose

This study will take a sociological approach to investigate the issues related to crime among student athletes by interviewing athletic officials, and examining different levels of social control by the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Subject

Seven officials within the Mid-American Conference (MAC) were administered a series of questions. The sample includes 7 individuals who are Directors of Compliance at various Mid-American Conference institutions, and other administrators who have worked closely with collegiate student athletes. Each institution is a midsize institution with approximately 18,000 students or more, and 12 varsity sports or more. The Director of Compliance Officer is responsible for administering institutional control for the university, along with administering the rules of the NCAA. To ensure institutional control, they are to report any violations to the university in a timely matter. Compliance Officers at institutions not only work closely with student athletes, but they also serve as a liaison between many social groups on campus.

Procedure

Each subject was selected primarily based on convenience. The individuals questioned were emailed a short summary of the topic, or contacted via phone to
inquire if they were interested in answering questions about collegiate athletes and crime. A summary of the questions was discussed at length to avoid confusion for those contacted by phone.

During the spring of 2001 through May of 2002, the primary researcher traveled to institutions according to the agreed time and dates for an interview. Subjects were first asked to read and sign a consent letter that stated that all information given would be confidential, and codes instead of names would be used to express findings. During this systematic interview, a series of questions were asked, while trying to pinpoint any race, gender, economic, and other important social influences that may create a better understanding of the problem being studied. This thirty-minute interview consisted of the following questions:

Interview Questions

1. Does (coded name of institution) have formal policies in regards to student athletes and criminal behavior?
2. Can you please explain the policy that you have in depth?
3. Do you have written documents that student athletes are aware of that explain your policy on crime?
4. Has your institution had many problems with its student athletes and crime?
5. What team(s) would you say have the most problems with criminal behavior?
6. Do you believe that racial and ethnic dimensions are connected with the problem of student-athletes involvement with criminal activity?
7. Do you believe that it may be social class dimensions connected with student-athletes and crime?

8. Does your institution use its discretion, or follow strict procedures for each case of crime and student-athletes?

This research is a qualitative study, where the interpretation will come from descriptive analysis. After the interview was completed, each participant freely allowed open conversation. Many expressed their overall feelings on the issue of crime and collegiate athletes, along with proposed solutions, or other resources.

Limitations and Textual Resources

Although this study includes a representative sample within the Mid-American Conference, it is very limited in its findings. Because of this, a general assessment of crime and collegiate student athletes were collected using various search engines. These search engines are informational sources, which provide a lot of resources pertaining to the issue of crime and collegiate athletics. Information was gathered from the following sources:

1. Bad Jocks.com: Where Cops Meets Sportscenter is a website that informs readers of the relationship between sports and crime. This website provides a long list of crimes by professional and collegiate athletes, along with a list of resources such as books, articles, and other helpful websites that are related to this topic.
2. Jerk of the week.com: This website identifies all of the current leading teams and individuals who have displayed negative characteristics. It is an up to date list that ranges from professional teams to small colleges.

3. No Status Quo.com: This site provides statistics and short articles about athletes involved with crime.

4. Jocks n Cops.com: This site provides over 30 different crimes along with a description of the recent crimes in which athletes were involved. This list ranges from assault to writing bad checks.

5. Sportline.com/ESPN.com: These sites are news sites that summarize current happenings in the sports world. On both sites, particularly sportline.com, a long list with detailed summaries on each topic is given when keywords such as rape, athletes and crime, or theft are entered under the site index. The number of incidents ranges from 1000 or more. These sites were used the most because they summarized incidents from beginning to end, along with using quotes heard from lawyers, school officials, coaches, and at times the player involved themselves.

Other sources of information gained were accessed through Western Michigan University's interlibrary loan services. Because the library did not provide certain journals or articles, I was allowed to obtain sections of scholarly journals about collegiate athletes and crime through interlibrary loans. The access of information on Internet sites, along with other news articles or journals provided a clearer understanding of the topic.
Summary

Studying the behavior of collegiate athletes is a complex issue because no single individual or athletic team is alike. College athletic programs are diverse, and because of this, many should implement multicultural awareness activities. Subsequent chapters will focus on the different social backgrounds of college athletes and in the general society.

Chapter two will provide a descriptive profile of student athletes who are involved in crime. This chapter will also focus on theoretical explanations for those who are involved in criminal behavior. The information documented will be from interviews conducted, along with information on cases that were publicly documented.

Chapter three will focus on procedures and policies at higher learning institutions. This chapter will particularly look at the institutions responses to criminal behavior on campus. Just like chapter two, chapter three will use theoretical explanations to understand the various policies.

The final chapter will provide a summary of the research along with the obstacles associated with attempting to conduct the research. Recommendations will also be provided to hopefully inform more athletic administrators and athletes on the rising problem of crime in collegiate athletics, along with strategies to reduce criminal behavior. An overall conclusion will be drawn based on current events and interviews from athletic officials.
CHAPTER II

A DESCRIPTIVE PROFILE OF COLLEGE ATHLETES INVOLVED IN CRIME

While many student athletes are provided structures to help them to become people of character, a number of them do not take advantage of this structure. On many occasions the actions of a student athlete can defame their name, their teams' name, and the name of the university they attend. This chapter will focus on the descriptive profile of collegiate athletes who have been involved in criminal/deviant behavior. Short summaries of each institution where an official was interviewed, along with a few public acts among collegiate student athletes will be discussed to better understand this topic. Various theories will also be used to highlight this increasing problem. Finally, social issues such as race, gender, and social class will be evaluated to determine if there is a connection between the social problems of student athletes, and the social problems within the general population.

A three-digit code will be used to identify each institution. A letter code will also be used to identify the individual interviewed at the institution. The three-digit code, and the letter code will be summarized in order of those interviewed (see Table 1).
General Trends

Many problems appearing in the media and public at larger institutions are very similar to the results found in this study. The breakdown in families and secondary education systems across the country has caused a variety of problems among students at institutions. It has been shown in the past that many players from single parent homes and first generation college students are prone to socialization problems. Along with other added responsibilities, student athletes experience emotional and cultural shifts within their new environment (Teel 1997).

According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Flores 2002), it appears as if it is difficult for many institutions to find a balance in condemning criminal behavior and giving second chances to an athlete who has had a troubled pass. Many officials at institutions are very confident that problems are bound to happen every year. A NCAA study found that while male student athletes only make up 3.3 percent of the total student body, they commit 19 percent of the sexual assaults on campus. Another study at Towson’s State found that 55 percent of 12,000 people there believe

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<th>Three Digit Code (Institution)</th>
<th>Letter Code (Individual)</th>
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<tr>
<td>001</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
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<td>002</td>
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Table 1. Three Digit Code and Letter Code of Those Interviewed
that most acquaintance rapes on campus are by student athletes. Rick Telander can understand this stereotype because of the macho attitude promoted by coaches. This macho attitude “leads to physical dominance” and problems with females. It has gotten to the point that many don’t feel comfortable with the male athletic teams on campus (Teel 1997).

Recently, several athletes on college campuses have faced criminal charges that have gone public. These charges range from assaults to rape (see Table 2). Countless problems are associated with drugs and alcohol abuse. The use of steroids is not uncommon among student athletes, and may be a link to deviant/criminal behavior. This is because they are known to cause hyperactive and aggressive behavior. Alcohol, drugs, and steroids can all have an influence on how student athletes may think and behave.

In some cases those in the general public will try to get satisfaction out of picking fights with student athletes. Virginia basketball star Chase Metheney, once mentioned that many of the athletes stay in their house on the weekends because people like to pick fights with them. Students want to see if they can beat up an athletes, so they can brag to others on campus (Teel 1997).

Situations may also be exaggerated due to the media, but the overall concern in any case is the accountability of the student athlete. The issue of accountability is lost for many of today’s athletes. This is because of the entitlement culture in which collegiate athletes are immersed. The stardom and fame makes many feel unaccountable for their actions. Former Virginia Tech basketball coach Jeff Jones
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<th>Offense/Charges</th>
<th>Sport</th>
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<td>Sexual Battery</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royce Hooks, Brent Nash/ Iowa St.</td>
<td>Assault and Second Degree Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Gaines, Marcus Oliver, Dominic Smith, Louis Truscott/ University of Houston</td>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarence Young/Univ of Indiana (Bloomington)</td>
<td>Attempt Rape/Sexual Battery</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakim Hill</td>
<td>Third Degree Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Perez, Barry Sommer, Benjamin Hodges/Univ of West Georgia</td>
<td>Sodomy and Aggravated Assault</td>
<td>Baseball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markus Curry/Univ of Michigan</td>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toren Gordon/Western Carolina</td>
<td>Manslaughter</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedric Benson/Univ of Texas</td>
<td>Drug and Alcohol</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Colorado players and recruits</td>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly Baraka/ Univ of Michigan</td>
<td>Possession of Marijuana</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Football Players/Virginia Tech</td>
<td>Multiple Offenses</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Players/ Grambling State</td>
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<td>Football</td>
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<td>University of Miami</td>
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<td>Football</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Nebraska</td>
<td>Multiple Offenses</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melvin Whitaker/Univ of Virginia</td>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Lauren Swierczek/Univ of Virginia</td>
<td>Shoplifting</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven Thomas, Brandon Williams/Univ of Georgia</td>
<td>Aggravated Assault/Sexual Battery</td>
<td>Basketball/Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Brown, Jason White/Washington State</td>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Peterson/Univ of Michigan</td>
<td>Possession of Marijuana Embezzlement</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy Reiners/Iowa State</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alcohol Charges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Watts/Kentucky</td>
<td>Drunk Driving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Warwick/ Univ of Florida</td>
<td>Fraud</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Dykes, Abram Elam, Lorenzo Crawford, Justin Smith/Notre Dame</td>
<td>Rape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justin Thomas/ Univ of Louisville</td>
<td>Third degree assault, Resisting arrest, disorderly conduct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Bryant, Kenny Harley/ Boston College</td>
<td>Assault and Battery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon Ford/ Univ of Missouri</td>
<td>Possession of Marijuana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby Cruise/Univ of Akron</td>
<td>Embezzlement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Female Student Athlete

Table 2. Popular Acts of (Public) Crime by Collegiate Athletes

contends, “young athletes don’t understand work ethic and sacrifice because they’ve been catered to and spoiled.”

Institution Results

The area in which institution 001 is located in is a small rural town. The campus population itself is only about 17,000 students. This number is the smallest among all institutions in the sample.

The subject interviewed at this institution, (“A”), believes that deviance and crime among their 500 student athletes is not a problem. The few problems, may be less than a half a dozen in the school year, are usually university crimes such as loud music in dorms or vandalizing university property.
The subject focused on the relationship between the community and its student athletes. There is a close bond between the two. The student athletes are aware that whether they like it or not, they are role models. All teams also have to do community service work says “A”. The students go into schools to speak to students and clean up around the community to make the environment a better place.

“A” pointed out the fact that different teams and coaches generate different policies. “A” believes that coaches are strict with rules. In the past, any serious incident was sent straight to the athletic director. “A” explained that the few problems that they do have are from the football team due to their large roster size. Interesting enough, “A” mentioned that because of problems in the past with the football team, coaches try to do background checks to see if a prospective student athlete has had a troubled past. This, he explains, may be a big reason why 001 has not had many problems.

While focusing on the broader sociological issue, “A” believes that race in not an issue when it comes to the student athletes at their particular institution. Although race in not an issue, “A” believes that social class is an issue “because of how one is raised.” “A” briefly summarized many social class issues in society as a whole, mentioning some behavioral effects a child can have due to single parent homes. “A” explains that “this behavior can come from everywhere, and many athletes in our programs are from single parent homes.”

Additionally, “A” believes that many student athletes are picked on based on the fact that they are student athletes. “A” says, “because the city is so small, the
media blows many incidents out of proportion.” Furthermore, “A” believes that athletes tend to get out of trouble more than the non-athletes on campus. “Even though all students should be treated fairly, they are not.”

002 is an institution in an urban area. This institution has 20,000 students along with nearly 450 athletes. Because the campus is urban, numerous minorities choose to attend this institution, and several are a part of the athletic program.

The spokesperson for 002 explained that there are no written formal policies regarding student and crime. Each case is handled individually by the athlete’s particular coach. Each year the department stresses gambling and the university policy, but the issue of crime as a major concern is not a part of this discussion. Some coaches may have “unwritten rules” of which teams are aware. Coaches are comfortable handling cases individually, along with the involvement of the athletic director for serious incidents.

“B” explains that the department is somewhat bothered with the behavior of certain student athletes. In many cases, the media picks on athletes because they’re always in the “limelight.” “B” further explains that this is just something that comes along with being an athlete. “Society as a whole gives too much attention to athletes who are involved in crime. Many situations are overblown.”

Once again, the majority of the problems at 002 are from the football team. The reasoning for this is the size of the roster. Although “B” believes that no race or ethnic dimensions are involved, he does believe that many problems are from student athletes who are from low economic backgrounds. “B” explains that individuals from
“rougher neighborhoods” play the role of intimidator which leads to bar fights and assaults. Many student athletes bring the same attitude and behaviors from the environment in which they were raised in, not taking into consideration that they are now in a different environment.

“B” seemed to be curious about star athletes and their sense of entitlement. “B” elaborated on this and concluded that certain behaviors are symptomatic of a particular sport. “B” believes that although student athletes commit crime at the same rate of the regular student body, the crimes and behaviors manifested by the student athletes are at a greater level. Each sport has its own “norms and culture”. This makes problems appear to be bigger than what they are, says “B”.

003 is also in a small rural area. The institution has nearly 18,000 students enrolled, along with 450 student athletes. This institution takes pride in the interaction between the students and its community.

Although this institution is in a rural area, many coaches choose to recruit in larger urban cities. This is because of the lack of talent in the area of the institution. Because of this, institution 003 has had a several publicized problems in the past.

Because the area is so small, criminal activities by student athletes are always on the front page of the local newspaper, says “C”. Often, problems are from the large teams that are difficult to control, like baseball, track and field, and football. In the past, basketball had problems, but under the new coach there are no problems. This is because of the new coach’s zero tolerance policy, says “C”.
“Although “C” believes that many problems are from non-scholarship “walk on athletes” who want a connection with the program for popularity reasons, “C” also believes that racial and social class dimensions are also factors in criminal behavior at this institution. “C” clearly expressed that inner city African American male student athletes commit more crime than anyone else. Although scholarships pay for dorms, food, and tuition, many still have to find ways to “escape the environment” says “C”. When the resources are not there, they may result to illegitimate ways to get money.

While not focusing specifically on race or class, “C” also said that some athletes just commit “crimes of stupidity” such as “peeing on walls.” “C” said that “no matter what color, everyone and every team has done something stupid. Destruction of property, weapon charges and theft are common. This is not related directly to race or ethnicity,” says "C".

One of the biggest cases at 003 was a rape case that resulted in a student athlete doing prison time at a state institution. Although this embarrassed the program, this individual embarrassed his family and himself more. Because of this, “C” feels that some coaches should look at past records due to the fact that the individual sentenced did have a behavioral problem in the past.

Overall, “C” feels that a high percentage of athletes commit crimes due to binge drinking. Drinking is a big problem on this campus. Alcohol is the essential ingredient in many cases because with its consumption students can’t rationalize what is right or wrong says “C”. “By nature, athletes push things to the edge. It’s a
competitors thing, and the culture of an athlete. This culture may lead to rape at times,” says “C”.

Because of the few problems in the past, the student athletes and the community are aiming for a better relationship. Athletes are required to do community service work each year. Slowly the athletes are building the support of the community. The community now understands that the athletes are just regular students who make mistakes and have problems.

004 is a suburban institution with over 22,000 students enrolled. This institution also has nearly 500 athletes in its program. Although most coaches recruit regionally, this particular football coach recruits heavily in the other regions.

The athletic department has experienced a wide range of different problems with their athletes. The football team is associated with having the most problems. This is apparent because of the size of the team and the publicity given to them by local media. It is looked at as “college students just being college students.”

“D” explains that there is a policy in place that came about due to the behavior of a particular athlete. Although “D” believes that this policy has nothing to do with race or ethnicity, he personally believes that in some cases the economic background of a student athlete plays a large role in behavior. “D” revealed stories of white kids from the “suburbs” who were caught stealing and selling drugs. “Kids just make bad decisions, many cases can not be associated with black or white”, says “D”.

Over the years the problems have decreased at this institution. This is because some of the coaches are beginning to look at characteristics of the prospective student
athlete beyond talent on the field. With this, coaches and administrators at this institution are hoping the press will focus on the positive aspects of the program. If coaches recruit problem athletes it is because they are hoping to turn a kid around. “No one wants a renegade program”, says "D".

005 is in a rural area with nearly 19,000 students enrolled. With 20 varsity teams and 450 student athletes this institution has not had many problems with student athletes and crime. This is due to the tolerant relationship with the community and its student athletes.

Under past and present administrations, this institution has always stressed that their athletes act in a respectable manner on and off the field. “E” said that there has been a time when a student athlete acted out of character. This particular athlete was used as an example to others and suspended from his team. This was simply letting the athletes know that there is “no tolerance for such behavior” says “E”.

Because 005 is surrounded by other larger institutions, it is believed that there is not a lot of negative media for the public to “feed off of.” Smaller problems are handled accordingly through the department using discretion. “For larger schools, this may not be the same”, says “E”.

006 is a suburban institution with approximately 25,000 students enrolled. This institution has 18 varsity teams with a ballpark figure of 475 athletes. There is a relatively low level of criminal activity at this institution, says 006.
The problems are most prevalent with the larger teams such as hockey, baseball, and football. These teams commit a wide range of offenses. Some offenses include fighting, assaults, underage drinking, and in some cases rape.

Although policies are in place at 006, "student athletes make the same mistakes as a regular student. Many problems are due to the level of drinking, not the roster size" says "F". Because "F" is a former athlete of the institution, he recalls an experience of a friend pushing the limits with a female. Luckily this event did not go public, as it probably would have at a larger institution.

"F" did not believe that race is as much of a problem as "socioeconomic concerns." Social environment makes a huge difference in some decisions of college students. Many minorities are not fortunate enough to avoid "going over the line, but white kids make bad decisions also. Overall, race itself has nothing to do with behavior, said "F".

"F" believes that police officers and professors use discretion on student athletes. "There is a perception that student athletes have it better, but society puts sports on a pedestal, so what do we expect?", asked "F". "F" concluded by saying that student athletes need to think about the long term/short term consequences for their actions. "In all cases athletes should be temporarily suspended until all facts are out." says "F".

The last institution examined was 007. 007 has an overall student population on 21,000. With its 18 teams and 425 athletes, the "arrest rates" are on the low end at this institution.
The representative of 007 says that their success is due to the communication between administrators and athletes. “Student know our policies when they are recruited”. Depending on the behavior displayed, 007’s policy may range from suspension from competition to disciplinary actions by the local legal system. “We also do mandatory team meetings throughout the year to touch on such issues”. “No breaks are given simply because they’re an athlete”, says “G”.

The few problems at 007 vary by team from semester to semester. It seems to be either field hockey, which is a female sport, or football that “display character problems”, says “G”. Judicial Affairs keep records of student athletes’ behavior compared to the general student body. The low number can be accredited to the communication structure between administrators and the athletes. “Our students know that they should be careful when making decisions outside the athletic realm”, says “G”.

Summary of Results

As the results show, there are many underlying themes here. These results are all different in terms of what each institution may designate as a problem. While some may focus on crimes such as robbery or assaults, many other institutions have the discretion to leave such issues up to the local investigative agencies.

African American poor male from a single parent home are important factors when reviewing the results in this particular study. This is simply because these characteristics account for the majority of deviant/criminal behavior problems in
collegiate athletics. This study also found that males who compete on teams that are large in numbers, such as football, and baseball, are also prone to deviant/criminal behavior.

It is important to note that many subjects mentioned the fact that most of the problems are from the large male teams, but field hockey, which is a small problem for 007, is a female sport. This team usually carries between 25-40 athletes at a time. Many of the females recruited are also from the New England states or the Netherlands with family backgrounds that are financially well off. Although the reasons for problems are not known, an individual familiar with the program did say, “I can see those snooty rich girls causing problems.”

Due to the structure of society, certain individual members of a particular team may be at more of a disadvantage than someone in another sport. For example, one could use the average collegiate tennis team. On a tennis team, the numbers are small, and many of the players come from well to do families who can afford practice times, equipment, and personal coaches. On the other hand, the average collegiate football team is large in numbers with many of the players coming from minorities in the inner city. This itself is cause for more people to be critical when it comes to the high numbers of certain athletes involved in criminal activity.

As I mentioned previously, patterns of deviance can be explained by looking at the structures within society. Typically in society, black Americans and other people of color are economically disadvantaged. Because of this, society has also typically arrested and incarcerated people of color in prisons at a higher rate than
white Americans. This ongoing cycle has been part of the American system for years.

Many black Americans live in poor neighborhoods, which usually mean a poor education. With poor education and poor neighborhoods also comes a lack of good paying jobs. This is the dark side of the “American Dream” according to Steven Messner and Richard Rosenfeld (1997).

Messner and Rosenfeld believe that America exaggerates and emphasizes the importance of monetary achievements, while devaluing alternative means of success. This “promotes a preoccupation with the realization of goals while de-emphasizing the importance of the ways in which these goals are pursued”(1997: 10). This can be related to many of the problems with black American student athletes at institutions. Although the black American athlete may be given an athletic scholarship, other students may possess consumer goods that these particular athletes wish to possess. If this is the case, then the end result may be theft or a robbery.

In more extreme situations, patterns of deviant behavior among collegiate athletes can be traced to excessive alcohol consumption, a history of character flaws, factors outside the athletic realm, or it can just be the culture of a particular sport that has an impact on behavior (Coakley & Dunning 2000). It is also important to recognize the word “student” athlete. No matter which team an athlete participate in, he/she may make mistakes simply because she/he is a college student. Like everyone else, college students sometimes make mistakes.
Race, Gender, and Age

I believe that some subjects were willing to discuss issues openly while some were not. Based on the body language of those interviewed in person, I personally felt as if gender and race dimensions were an issue in the interview process.

Considering that I'm a young African American female, I noticed that the minorities interviewed were very open to discussing race issues while, all but one white American was willing to discuss the issue of race openly (see Table 3). The white American who did discuss information openly could have done so due to prior knowledge of each other, and the fact that we both had many things in common. One commonality is that we are both former athletes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>African Amer</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Biracial Amer</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Race, Sex and Age Category of Subjects Interviewed.

A Theoretical Approach to Understanding Deviant Behavior Among Collegiate Athletes

No single theory can be used when explaining criminal/deviant behavior among collegiate athletes. I believe that major sociological theories can help explain
deviance systematically because college athletes are very diverse, and may respond to environments differently. Major sociological theories used will include the learning theory, anomie/strain theory, control theory, along with the rationale choice theory.

The learning theory (differential association theory) was developed by a widely recognized criminologist by the name of Edwin H. Sutherland. Sutherland studied how people come to commit crimes. His theory included structural dimensions that may predict a pattern of crime. This theory can be better understood by summarizing nine statements by Sutherland (Akers 1998: 23-24):

1. Criminal behavior is learned, not inherited.
2. Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication.
3. The principle part of learning of criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups (not movies or newspapers).
4. The behavior that is learned includes both complicated or simple, with specific motives used to break the law.
5. Specific motives are learned from definitions of legal codes as favorable or non-favorable.
6. An individual becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violations of law over ones that are unfavorable.
7. Criminal behavior may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity.
8. The process of learning criminal behavior involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning.
9. Criminals and non-criminals express the same general needs, drives and values.

As one may see criminal/deviant behavior is a process. Although there have been criticisms of this theory, the behavior of many student athletes can be
understood when using Sutherland's framework. This is because student athletes from neighborhoods with high crime rates are also prone to commit individual acts of deviance. In addition to one's neighborhoods, "contextual variables like class, race and societal norms...have consistently been empirically validated in delinquency prediction" (Akers 1998: 155).

Important work after Sutherland's death explained that violence could also be learned through the media (Akers 1998). Although many student athletes from low economic neighborhoods may be involved in thefts, some may also become involved in deviance such as assault, or sexually aggressive behaviors. The attitudes and beliefs about females are part of this learning theory, and may be a reason for the increased number of rapes among male collegiate athletes.

The anomie/strain theory is one that is bases off the Chicago School of Sociology. Sociologist such as Robert K. Merton believed that crime was rooted in one main area in American society, the slums (Lilly 1989). The anomie/strain theory suggests "social structure limits access to the goal of success through legitimate means" such as college education, corporate employment, family connections (Lilly 1989: 64).

Many have learned that the structure of society generates pressures for deviance, mainly in the lower class neighborhoods. Opportunities in America are unequally distributed, and because of this "cultural promise social structure cannot deliver success for all" (Messner & Rosenfeld 1997: 53).
Robert Merton proposes a typology of adaptations that shows different ways in which people resolve strains from the inability to achieve success (see Figure 1) (Lilly 1989). With an in depth analysis of this theory, it may appear that the issue of deviance among collegiate athletes is not the topic. It is important to realize that any crimes in the general population that are from anomie/strain theory can be linked to the same things that student athletes do. College athletes, rich or poor, may not always want to conform to the values of society. Many sociologists believe that the criminal actions of athletes, such as “drug abuse and doping” can be explained by Merton’s anomie/strain theory (Coakley & Dunning 2000: 466).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adaptation</th>
<th>Culture Goals</th>
<th>Institution Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conformity; believes in cultural process</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation; illegitimate means for money</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritualism; goals by mitigating strain</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retreatism; escapes society with alcohol/drugs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebellion; wants new set of goals and means</td>
<td>-+</td>
<td>-+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ = Acceptance  
- = Rejection  
-+ = Rejects values and wants change

Figure 1. Anomie/Strain Theory

may accept the goal and reject the accepted means of attaining the goal (Innovation). The result may be deviant actions when values are rejected.

The control theory is the third major sociological theory that can be used to explain deviance. The control theory is most recognized through the work of
Gottfredson and Hirschi. This theory focuses on the fact that some people are “motivated towards deviance, but only those who are relatively free of the bonds of commitment to, and believe in, conventional orders, attachment to others, and involvement with conventional institutions of society actually manifest their deviant motivation in unacceptable behavior” (Tittle 1995:7). In terms made simpler, it asks why don’t people break the laws instead of why do people break the law.

For many, the control theory is a strong theory because it suggests that people are likely to commit crimes when they are free from any social bonds. Although one may not think of their behavior in terms of control, belief, involvement and attachment, this may have a major influence on behavior. This is great for explaining the behavior and socialization process of teenagers and young adults with behavioral problems.

An extension of the control theory is self-control theory. Self-control expresses the “characteristics relevant to the commission of criminal acts” (Gottfredson & Hirschi 1990:8). Deviance among college athletes can also be explained through this not because of a lack of various social bonds, but specific elements of self control have been connected with the behavior of collegiate athletes.

Acts done out of low self control are done because of immediate gratification; it is an easy, simple task, it is thrilling, takes little skill, along with discomfort for the victim (Gottfredson & Hirschi 1990:89). In recent studies on collegiate athletes, these are the specific reasons given for their criminal actions (Snyder 1994).
The last theory that will be used to explain deviance among collegiate athletes is the rational choice theory. The focus here is that actions are primarily because of personal choice. Rooted in classical sociologist theories of Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham, the rational choice theory suggest that while an individual possess certain factors such as background and other situational factors, may or may not be a reason why someone is involved in criminal behavior.

Figure 2 illustrates many rational decisions that one may have. Although crime is a rational choice, certain backgrounds may predispose someone toward crime. Motives (money), previous experience, or learning can also lead to the ability to rationalize crime even more. Situational factors, blocked opportunity, and readiness to commit a crime can all play a role in the rationalization of criminal behavior.

This rational choice theory is very sophisticated because many other factors can be incorporated into this model. Other factors may include how one may rationalize for individual pleasure, or the simple fact that conforming by itself is a form of rationalization. All of these points can be related to any one involved in deviance, even those who are part of collegiate athletics.

These theories are used to explain the social problems of deviance/criminal behavior. Although I am studying the problems with collegiate athletes, it is important to understand that these theories do not discriminate. They explain deviance among collegiate athletes because like many other organizations, athletics is a social construction that is based on the norms and values in the United States.
Individual behavior can’t be understood because of a simple theory. Theories have weak points. Some argue against many theories because they may not explain different actions of others, but it would be impossible to explain the actions of all based on one theory. The argument for the control theory is that it doesn’t explain why bonds are broken in the first place. The anomie/strain theory can be debated because all crime are not class based which leads many wondering why the rich and powerful become involved with crime. The argument against the learning theory is that it does not account for the different group rates of crime, because it is based on the individual attributes or traits (Akers 1998). Lastly, many argue that the rational
choice theory has a weakness in the area of crime because it is focused more on political sanctions and not behavioral concerns (Gottfredson & Hirschi 1990:8).

Although these theories may have weaknesses in explaining deviant behavior, it is important to realize that the reasons for deviant behavior can vary, and can also be complex. The overall descriptive profile of collegiate athletes involved in crime is that the majority of the student athletes are from lower class/minority backgrounds, but this is also true in terms of crime and the general population. This is the trend of deviance in America. Unfortunately this is to be expected due to the structure of society, the emphasis of monetary success, along with the lack of opportunities for many in society.
CHAPTER III

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND A RESPONSE TO CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

Codes of conduct are established because institutions expect students to behave in a respectable manner at all times. The university setting in America is an adaptation of the European model. This adaptation meant that discipline would also be implemented in the lives of those who would choose to attend a university. During my research process, administrators and university officials made it clear that they did not only want to educate, but would also lay out rules that would prepare students for social influence, and other factors in a college environment.

University policies are designed to assist with disputes and behavioral problems on campus. These policies are for administrators, faculty, and students. The rules of various athletic departments are derived from the rules of the university of which they are a part. The athletic conference that the institution is affiliated with, along with the expectations of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, are also integrated as part of the expectations of student athletes.

As in chapter two, this chapter will summarizes the policies of each institution. The critical points will later be evaluated for a more complete understanding of the athletic department studied. A brief summary of public polices will also be examined to look for similarities.
Institutional Control

The Mid-American Conference (MAC) was established to provide student athletes the opportunity to acquire an education, while participating in athletics. This diverse organization of 13 institutions complies with and enforces conference and NCAA rules at all times. The MAC is committed to fair play and sportsmanship-like conduct from coaches, administrators, and student athletes at all times (MAC 2002: 37).

The official MAC handbook consists of a constitution, various bylaws, sports operating code, along with championship and officiating information. Although many issues are covered, the only issues that are about the direct behavioral aspect of a student athlete include scholastic behavior and sportsmanship/participation demands. The MAC has no specific rules about other behavioral issues, but says that they are bound by the rules of the NCAA as well as the institution.

Although the MAC is bound to the regulations of the NCAA, it too, does not have policies that focus on criminal/deviant behavioral issues of student athletes. Instead, the NCAA focuses on ways to “stimulate and improve intercollegiate athletic programs for student athletes to promote and develop educational leadership…. and athletic excellence” (NCAA 2002: 1). The NCAA also explains to the institutions that they are affiliated with the fact that the institutions are responsible for all of the actions of those involved in the athletic realm (2002: 3).

Many of the bylaws in the NCAA are so broad that they can be interpreted in many ways. Institutions can use many of their own rules to explain things within the
NCAA context. The NCAA leaves decision-making issues pertaining to behavior to the institution. The NCAA wants institutions to incorporate responsibility, positive relationships, fairness, and all other issues that can directly affect student athletes lives, but only enforce and penalize institutions when they violate rules in certain areas such as recruiting, academic, financial aid, and playing season rules.

Other than the illegal use of drugs and gambling, in the 222 pages of the MAC manual or the 460-page manual of the NCAA does not directly touch on other criminal/deviant problems. Surely, if institutions violate any bylaws, harsh penalties are implemented. Such penalties include probation periods, fines, review of NCAA membership, limitations of television appearances, suspension, and worst of all, termination of an athletic program (a.k.a. death penalty).

Public Polices on Conduct

Although we are now looking at policy instead of behavior, just as in chapter 2, many issues are very similar with other public institutions. Policies are unique in some cases because they may be tailored to prevent specific situations, which occurred in the past. Policies are also similar because institutions try to make sure that members in the community are comfortable knowing that there is a policy in place that discusses issues that can help protect the community.

Campuses across the United States have had similar policies and penalties for athletes at various intuitions. Many are disappointed with athletes and their behavior problems. It may appear as if institutions want control, but they have policies
because they are trying to create a safe intellectual environment. Some large schools have even stated that those with a troubled past cannot be recruited at their particular institution. This may cause a deterrence effect for small college athletes, and high school athletes. It will also allow them to be more aware of this increasing problem with athletes and deviant behavior.

The Good

Florida State University has a specific policy dealing with student athletes. Athletes that are arrested on felony charges are immediately suspended until it is out of the court system. Convictions result in dismissal from the team, while misdemeanors are dealt with based on discretion from coaches and administrators. In both, misdemeanor and felony charges, administrators reserve the power to review police reports to ensure that the charges are appropriate enough to penalize the student athlete (Gibeaut 2000).

The Idaho Board of Education was so angry with state universities and crime among student athletes that they passed a rule that forbids all Idaho schools from recruiting convicted felons. They also made it so that if a student athlete commits a crime while in school, he/she will automatically be ineligible to participate in athletics. This rule passed without a dissenting vote (Zinser 1998).

The University of Kentucky has a no-tolerance rule for its student athletes. Major misdemeanors or felony cases result in a loss of grants for the season,
according to their policy. The athletic department also has a right to discontinue an
athletic scholarship as long as the individual charged with a crime is in school

One of the toughest public polices was established at Virginia Tech. Because
of problems in the past with their athletes (21 athletes arrested in one year), they
established a policy that would automatically suspend any player charged with a
felony. Top administrators do not allow discretion to be used by coaches in felony
charges in this strict policy. Those with misdemeanor charges are also suspended for
two contest, with a 50 percent increase in drug testing. Although counseling is
offered to help student athletes, these rules are put into place hoping to decrease the
level of embarrassment that has taken place over the years (Zinser 1998).

The Bad

The media focuses on other penalties that are made public, but are not so
harsh. For many, a lack of punishment represents how much the athletic department
is concerned for the individual student athlete versus a winning program. The
University of Virginia hired in Lauren Swierczek as their assistant director of media
relations. This was not even a slap on the hand considering that the former basketball
star was formally charged with shoplifting at a local mall. No athletic penalties were
even discussed on this matter.

Rolando Howell, a former athlete of South Carolina, was not penalized by the
judicial system after his money order scheme of falsifying $4385 went sour. His
penalty included missing only a few exhibition games during pre-season. Another minor slap on the hand.

The University of Pittsburgh has also had problems with athletes involved in criminal behavior. Although administrators believe that a stronger policy should be implemented, nothing has yet been done to decrease crime among its student athletes. While some players are suspended from participation, others may not receive disciplinary action at all. A major problem with this is that there is no consistency with the policy.

These are just a few examples of institutions that have had problems, but didn’t implement institutional penalization to correct the situation. In certain cases, institutions can hide incidents so the public cannot acknowledge what occurred. This too, is detrimental to a program because it may be better for administrators to tell the truth. If rumors are spread throughout the community that they failed to act on certain incidents, it can later tarnish the reputation of all parties involved. People in the community have a right to know what problems exist on their local college campus.

The Ugly

Overall, athletic codes are taken seriously at most institutions. While many student athletes leave institutions because of harsh penalties, they are often allowed to transfer to another institution and participate in intercollegiate activities elsewhere. Many institutions are happy to take in a great athlete who at one point in his/her life
had legal problems. Coaches may be hoping for a better team, or even hoping to change that individual’s lifestyle.

With the ability to transfer, many feel that the NCAA should penalize student athletes who are involved in criminal activities. Because the NCAA has no policies pertaining to criminal behavior, it raises questions among many. Some believe that the NCAA should enforce laws, while others think that it is solely up to the state and local agencies to bring justice and enforce appropriate behavior. The NCAA is a powerful organization that has the power to respond to this national concern, but will not because they respect the decisions of the criminal justice system. It would also be a legal nightmare. Guido Stempel of Ohio University believes that if the NCAA enforces behavior, it can get rid of the double standards that exist between athletes and the law (Stempel 1997).

Codes of Conduct at MAC Institutions

The athletic department at 001 depends very much on city laws, and the general student code of conduct to maintain respectable behavior among its student athletes. Because the student code is so broad, coaches usually generate their own unwritten policies. This is also because of the fact that the general code of conduct distributed by the athletic department is vague.

Overall, the philosophy of 001 is to maintain a program that is organized and conducted “as an integral aspect of the education program of the institution.” This department believes that its programs are designed to display positive values in hopes
to one day build individuals with strong morals and loyalty to the university. The department is also aware that in order to be recognized in the community, it too, needs to operate comparably with all other institutions in the area. The tradition on the field, in the classroom, and in the community at 001 is what many have come to believe as a “tradition of excellence.” Expectations are clear when students first enter 001 and the department makes a commitment to this.

At 001, athletic participation is a privilege, not a right. Although much of the athletic code stresses academic integrity, issues such as illegal gambling on college games, and the illegal use of drugs and alcohol are also stressed. This emphasis is primarily the result of the Mid-American Conference regulations and the NCAA rules. Violations of such rules may result in ineligibility of intercollegiate participation.

Harsher violations of the law are detailed exclusively in the student code at 001. This code expresses that when a student violates state, federal, or local sanctions off-campus, disciplinary actions will be carried out by the justice system accordingly. The status of being a student athlete at 001 does not allow for special consideration. Lastly, the policy at 001 stresses individual responsibility. If a serious problem occurs, there is no other choice but to have them directed to the states criminal justice system.

001 understands that college years are critical, and in many cases, second chances are given. Coaches are relied on heavily to promote positive character traits among their student athletes. The staff and administrators understand that balancing
life as a student athlete is a challenge. Because of this, they provide the necessary resources to achieve in the classroom and in the athlete's particular sport.

The athletic code of conduct at 002 emphasizes to its student athletes that although they are a public figure, outside of athletics, athletes do not represent the university. Student athletes are subject to eligibility sanctions if rules of the conference are not taken into consideration. Although the code of conduct for the department and the institution has been established, each coach is allowed to use his/her discretion.

Officials take issues such as academic dishonesty, alcohol and drug abuse problems serious because it is a national concern. Students are allowed second chances depending on the behavior. Student athletes are also referred to rehabilitation to remedy the problem.

Problems that can't be handled through the Judiciary Council system at 002 are handled through the city and local legal system. Unfortunately the general code along with the athletic departments code does not mention disciplinary actions for those who have violated local laws. At many institutions athletes are suspended from their teams if they have a case pending, but this is not the case at 002. They wait for a plea of innocence or guilt before any decisions are made.

Formal policies at 003 are broad-based. They cover academic, social, and criminal activities. Because they are so broad, coaches automatically believe that suspension, and or dismissal, from the team may be needed if a student athlete is involved in criminal activity. If the athlete feels that the suspension is harsh and
unwarranted punishment, they are entitled to a campus hearing within 48 hours. This hearing includes the athletic director, faculty representative, coach, and the athlete. This committee has the right to make recommended suggestions to make sure that justice is fulfilled.

The code at 003 specifically says that because student athletes who commit a crime or those arrested for committing a crime at their institution must "report the arrest to his/her coach immediately." Those who are arrested are suspended from practice and playing pending the investigation. This is for both felony and misdemeanor charges (except traffic citations).

More specifically 003's code has harsher penalties for illegal sexual behavior and the use of illegal substances. 003 feel that it is a responsibility to have students and staff free from an environment of illegal sexual conduct. They also feel as if education and counseling should be used to help athletes prevent these problems.

Overall 003 have policies that are well understood. Their policies are broad, but this is because they integrate the general student code, MAC policies, and the NCAA's code within the policy. For actions beyond campus crimes, local agencies get involved. When this happens it is no longer a negative image of ones team, but an embarrassment to the individual who committed the crime, along with his/her family.

The athletic department at 004 established guidelines that are not uniform for all violations. So students don't feel that they are treated unfairly, 004 has penalties for first, second and third offenses. Just as many other institutions, 004 enforces the
student code of conduct for the general student body along with the MAC and NCAA codes.

Student athletes with alcohol and drug problems are expected to pursue a three-step process called the "student athlete assessment model". First the department randomly tests an athlete. If an athlete tests positive, a warning is given along with implications of retesting at a later date. If the athlete tests positive a second time, a six-week counseling session is implemented with other assessments if needed. If the student athlete tests positive again, he/she is dismissed from the team, but not necessarily the university.

Coaches and staff also communicate with their student athletes on the specific issue of date rape at 004. They expect that athletes will conduct themselves in an ethical manner at all times. They try to prepare student athletes to avoid this situation because of the harsh penalties by local and state laws. In a past incident, a student athlete acted in a negative sexual manner, and was dismissed from the university along with sanctions from the state.

Gambling illegally on NCAA games is also an act that 004 enforces. The Director of Compliance, along with coaches, communicates and educates student athletes on this topic. Participation in any activities can result in actions from the NCAA and more importantly federal prosecution.

004 enforces violations of state and local laws without using the three-step process presented above. If a student athlete is charged with a state/federal violation, he/she is suspended from participation. A written statement notifying the student
athlete of suspension is also sent to his/her home. Based on specific information, the athletic director at 004 can modify team penalties, or simply wait until it is decided by the legal system.

The policies at 004 are clearly expressed in the athletic code of conduct. It was important for them to establish different guidelines because all crimes and behaviors are not the same. This department has stressed to coaches that their teams are a reflection of the university, both on and off the field. Because of this, coaches try to build individual relationships with every athlete.

The athletic department’s policy at 005 is entitled “Student Athletes Bill of Rights.” Rights and rules are to be upheld at all times with this policy. In any situation a student athlete has the right to a grievance procedure if needed.

Once again, just as other institutions, the rules are designed to be consistent with their general student code of conduct along with NCAA and MAC policies. University violations are handled through the Office of Judiciaries. Depending on the verdict, an athlete may lose his/her athletic aid, or be dismissed from the team. Disciplinary actions established by 005 are very straightforward. Offenses and penalties are divided by Code A and Code B offenses, which are all reviewed by the University Judiciaries. Coaches and the university administration have the discretion to initiate disciplinary action before the Judiciary office reviews it.

Code A offenses includes violations that may result in immediate expulsion. These violations include activities such as academic misconduct, obstruction of property, bodily harm, possession of dangerous weapons, and other violations of
criminal law. Code B, a lesser offence, may only result in probation. Such offenses under Code B include disturbing the peace, possession of marijuana, and the unauthorized use of alcoholic beverages.

It is important to remember that although the policy is established, discretion is used because of different circumstances in each case. In past cases the end result was suspension of two contests or cancellation of grants being imposed. Coaches have the options of referring an athlete to counseling or verbally warning them, but in some of the worst cases, a dismissal from the team and the institution has been the end result.

006 also has policies that are in place based on the NCAA, student athlete handbook, along with the institutional policies. There is a standard practice to handle each case uniquely because all are not identical. In extreme cases, federal, state, and local penalties were sufficient enough to bring the problem to justice.

The athletic code of conduct at 006 specifically focuses on alcohol arrest, assaults, possession or sale of illegal drugs, rapes, and theft. Participation in gambling activities will also result in disciplinary action. In cases where alcohol and/or drugs are involved, team physicians perform assessments to determine appropriate counseling. In harsher cases, student athletes are suspended or put on probation, depending on the type of behavior displayed.

007 have an athletic department that is committed to understanding the behavior of its student athletes. The behavioral policies that are in place at this institution are based on the institutions police department, its Judicial Affairs office,
and the athletic director. The student athletes also have to abide by the MAC and NCAA polices that are established.

007 believe that it is “imperative” that student athletes be model citizens. The policy further explains that student athletes are held to a higher standard than non-athletes because of “prestige” reasons. Because the student athletes at 007 are scrutinized so harshly on and off the field, they are given counseling and assistance to prevent problems with law enforcement agencies and the Judicial Affairs office.

In cases where a student athlete is arrested, for any reason, the policy at 007 explains that the case is immediately reviewed by the head coach, athletic director, and the athlete to determine disciplinary action. This is in addition to the disciplinary actions by the university itself. An arrest and charge of a misdemeanor during season will result in suspension of next contest. A felony charge during the season will result in suspension for the remainder of the season pending the end result of the legal system. In misdemeanor charges, financial aid and sports medicine may or may not be continued.

When student athletes participate in illegal activities out of season at 007, there is a possibility that they may be suspended from practice and competition from the next upcoming season. The athletic director and coach also review these cases. A felony charge off campus and out of season has a punishment of immediate suspension from the team. Once again, financial aid and sports medicine may or may not be continued in such cases.
The policies at 007 are very straightforward. Throughout the year student athletes are constantly reminded to be people of character. Coaches and athletes meet frequently to ensure that this is understood. If a student athlete at 007 cannot agree with the disciplinary policy, they may not participate in any intercollegiate activities at 007.

Figure 6 is a diagram that reiterates the specific offenses and sanctions mentioned above. It is important to recognize the different problems at institutions, along with a breakdown of sanctions that an institution may impose. This diagram will hopefully allow for a better understanding of legal processing and the use of discretion at different institutions.

Holding Athletes to “Different” Standards

As I mentioned earlier, the separate policies for student athletes can raise many concerns. While many student athletes feel like they have enough pressure due to demands of professors, coaches, and the general student code of conduct, the student athlete code of conduct may generate even more pressure. While questions arise, one may ask is it even fair to hold student athletes to a higher standard than non-athletes?

While conducting this research, I came to the conclusion that the student athlete code of conduct does not hold student athletes to a higher standard, but instead it addresses different issues. Because of this, it is somewhat difficult to compare the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Offense(s) covered</th>
<th>Sanction(s)</th>
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| 001         | *Academic Dishonesty  
*Gambling on NCAA/Professional events  
*Drug/Alcohol Use | *Use of discretion by professor  
*Possible criminal prosecution  
*Support Programs/Dismissal from institution/athletic program |
| 002         | *Sexual Harassment  
*Drug Use  
*Gambling on NCAA events | *Conseling/Education/Dismissal  
*Suspension, non-renewal of grants, counseling  
*Permanent loss of eligibility |
| 003         | *Academic Dishonesty  
*Sexual misconduct/ Gambling on NCAA  
*Drug Abuse | *Probation/Suspension  
*Expulsion  
*Lose of eligibility  
*Treatment/Suspension |
| 004         | *Gambling  
*Alcohol/Drug use  
*Academic Dishonesty  
*State and Local violations | *Disciplinary actions based on NCAA (Suspension)  
*Counseling  
*Discretional review by Judicial Affairs  
*Suspension |
| 005         | *Academic Misconduct  
*Civil Disturbance/Bodily Harm/Destruction of Prop  
*Possessions of Drug | *Discretion is used by professors  
*Monetary fines, Discretion based on city/state policy  
*Education/counseling/cancellation of grants |
| 006         | *Date Rape  
*Gambling  
*Alcohol/Drug Usage | *Avoidance counseling/expulsion  
*state/federal prosecution  
*Educational counseling |
| 007         | *Arrest | *Discretion based on coach, suspension of contest/season, state/local prosecution |

Table 4. Institutions and Sanctions

athletic policies with the general student code of conduct. Take a minor in possession ticket for example.
In a general student code of conduct a minor in possession may not be mentioned at some institutions, but it is mentioned in the student athletes code of conduct at the majority of the institutions studied. The athletic department addresses this issue because the use of alcohol, along with behavioral effects can hinder the ability of a student athlete. If the department can provide assistance before a problem is created, they will. This is done because athletic departments are concerned with both winning and, for the most part, with the behavior of the individual athlete. Many athletic departments truly understand that student athletes make mistakes, just as any other student. The difference is, that unlike any other student, student athletes are provided more opportunities to avoid punishment for illegal activities. Student athletes are investments, and investments have to be protected.

Administrators and coaches may also emphasize different issues in the athletic code because of pressure. Pressure can be received from the NCAA and MAC because they want the institution to bring in funds for the program and have winning teams. Pressure also comes from individuals within the local community as well as from administrators within the institution itself. Although university administrators want winning teams, they also want positive role models and graduation rates to increase for the student athletes.

The media scrutinizes administrators at universities with public problems harshly. This is because of a lack of punishment for student athletes who behave in a criminal fashion. Administrators have a right to be worried about the university’s image because of possible recruits and other students who may want to attend later in
life. They also have a right to worry because of what alumni, who may donate generous funds, may think. A negative image does have an affect on a university. This too is another reason for athletic codes. Universities try to let student athletes know that the media is looking for someone to act out of character so negative stereotypes can continue.

Lastly, I believe that the policies are developed because administrators understand that athletes may have behavioral problems before they arrive on campus. Many universities admit students with low grade point averages, troubled backgrounds, and low-test scores because of their athletic ability, but students with low grade point averages and troubled backgrounds are not allowed into the band if they play the saxophone well. The code is put into place with hopes to alleviate problems before they start. If individuals with troubled pasts know before hand that there may be a chance of losing their scholarships, maybe they will abide by the rules of the athletic department.
CHAPTER IV
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was originally designed to describe and explain deviant/criminal behavior among collegiate athletes. After an extensive review of the literature, the bulk of the research data were collected from Mid-American Conference institutions. A number of sociological issues were examined during the research process, specifically race, class and gender.

After studying deviant/criminal behavior among collegiate athletes this study found that athletics is a true reflection of American society. Imagine if someone went into a prison and randomly selected 100 inmates. It is likely that the prisoners picked will be similar to many Division I A football or basketball programs; A young, minority male from an impoverished or broken home who is also from an area in which education in the school system was likely not stressed enough.

The results of this study show that crime among college athletes is a problem. It is more so a problem with African American male athletes. The majority of those with problems is also from a more challenging economic background and may find it hard to adapt to their new environment.

Because society and athletics are surrounded by issues of race, economic, and gender, it only seemed necessary to question those interviewed about these social dimensions as they related to a student athlete involvement in deviant/criminal behavior.
I also found that it was a very valuable experience for me to do many of the interviews face to face. This allowed for a more personal interview and I felt that many more issues were touched on, even if it were just a gesture or comment made from the individual interviewed.

The policy implications of this study are also important to understand because of the different levels of problems at particular institutions. I hope that more studies like this one will move for higher education institutions to re-think weak policies on behavior for all students. Fortunately, this research did show that those with strict disciplinary polices designed to reduce or prevent disputes and behavioral problems were effective.

Much of the literature and many of those interviewed did agree that there is a major problem with student athletes and alcohol. This conversation was brought up often stressing the lack of rationality among student athletes when they consume alcohol. This is an important topic, but oddly, was not one of the original interview questions.

Athletic officials are aware of many problems impacting student athletes, and are prepared to make changes. Unfortunately, these changes have to come with more in depth understanding of modern day problems. There also has to be a way to build better relationships for communication and understanding.

Overall, it is hard to pinpoint the starting point of deviant/criminal behavior among collegiate athletes. This is because many of the things that may trigger such behavior were in existence long before the individual athlete arrived on a college
campus. Such behavior can stem from childhood background, or it could be because of the athletic environment itself. No matter what triggers the behavior, I believe a number of activities can be implemented for student athletes so they will be better prepared for the choices and obstacles they may face during their career as a college athlete. These recommended activities should start from youth and continue on into adulthood. Activities need to be implemented to educate parents, coaches, fans, media, and others in the community as well.

Restructuring Our Ideas for the Success of Today's College Athlete

Subtle messages start early. I truly believe that the education and involvement of parents in the early stages of athletics is important. Yes, it is important for a child to look out in the stands and see that they have unconditional support from their parents, but it is even more important for parents to understand the dynamics of organized youth sports. Over the years children's sports have moved from "fun and games" into an activity that emphasizes winning and competition, along with preparing the youth for future success in athletics. This may appear to be no big deal, but in the end this mentality can bring many negative consequences.

One such negative consequence of youth athletics is that with the increasing emphasis on competition, children may begin to form a "win at all cost" attitude. A child's true childhood may be lost due to the many practice hours in their desired sport, along with the pressures of coaches and parents who may continue to stress
performance. A parent’s pressure could hinder a parent/child relationship in the long run.

Changes and restructuring should be implemented so children can remain interested in sports in a healthy way. Parents and children can both be involved while learning that education is a priority over athletic activities. Hopefully, young children can be taught earlier that participation in extra-curricular activities is a privilege, no matter how much talent a child may possess. If education and fun are continuously stressed by coaches and parents, hopefully parents will understand that the overall development of a child is more important than winning and competition. This educational process should continue as the child gets older, along with intensifying the importance of other things that come with being an athlete.

During the high school years, administrators and coaches should begin to focus on what should be expected at the next level as a collegiate athlete. The athletes should be encouraged to act in a respectable and law abiding manner. They should understand that they represent the team, coach, their family along with themselves at all times. High school athletes are the center of attention in many areas. Because of this they should prepare for the media to scrutinize them.

High school athletes should also be aware of NCAA rules as they enter their junior and senior years. When it is time for them to go through the NCAA Clearinghouse (an initial eligibility guide for college bound athletes) counselors should speak with them on issues that they need to know along with further explanation on behaviors expected along with penalties that are enforced.
Furthermore, small informational gatherings should be held with all college bound athletes with a local higher education institutions compliance director, and a hand full of coaches. At this gathering high school athletes will continue to learn what is expected and tolerated. Parents should also be encouraged to attend so they can be informed on NCAA policies. If collegiate coaches can’t do an informational, maybe a short video should become a simpler way to explain what is expected. This can be sent to each and every high school in America. If high school athletes have questions they can be directed to someone in the NCAA office or a higher education official who is able to answer their questions and concerns.

During the recruitment process, coaches should become more personable. Because coaches may not have access to juvenile records, a relationship should be in the process of building. The recruitment process should not only be about talent, but gaining a relationship and building trust, so why not come right out and ask about behavioral problems an athlete may have had in the past. Collegiate coaches should also contact the schools counselor or administrator for questions pertaining to a particular recruits lifestyle or family background.

During student athletes collegiate years a number of activities that are already available can be expanded to help them make better choices and achieve personal growth. One such program is the CHAMPS/Life Skills program that is through the NCAA (Challenging Athletes Minds for Personal Success). This program was initiated by the NCAA foundation in 1991. In 1994 institutions begin to participate in this program. The CHAMPS/LS goal is to “provide services and support to the
membership, public, and media to develop and enhance the life of student athletes through educational programs and resources focusing on gender equity, student athlete welfare and lifestyles” (NCAA 2001). Throughout the years, institutions have began to implement the programs so student athletes can leave, not only with a degree, but as a better developed person, in terms of personal development, learning career development, and having a commitment to service. Various programs have been put into place, by the athletic departments involved in CHAMPS/LS at different times throughout the year. Some examples of activities are things such as doing workshops on leadership, having alcohol and drug abuse presentations, career-resume writing labs, volunteer activities with the youth and elders in the community, and diversity training etc. These are just a few activities that get athletes involved in positive activities. This involvement can also create better attachment and loyalty between student athletes and those in the community. An area with successful programs has more trust with a university and holds the athletic department in higher regard.

The National Center for the Study of Sport in Society is an organization that has benefited many. This organization aims to increase awareness in sports and its relation to society. Founded by Sociologist Richard Lapchick, this organization develops programs to help identify sports related problems in society. Lapchick recognizes the good and bad side of sports in youth athletics, high school or college athletics. Athletes in this program are utilized to deliver programs needed for the lives of young adults.
One of the many programs that The Center for the Study of Sport in Society has implemented since 1984 is the Urban Youth Program. This program targets the barriers that restrict youth participation in certain sports due to economic reasons. Other programs created by the Center includes the MVP program, which is an educational program on domestic violence, and the Project Teamwork program that trains young athletes and sends them into schools to promote conflict resolution.

All programs developed by the Center are multi-racial and mixed gendered programs to promote diversity and ethnic understanding. The Center has focused on the lives of young athletes and provided them opportunities to grow, gain leadership experience and mature. The Center has done research that clearly shows that programs of this nature are very effective for the lives of young athletes.

Another program that has been implemented for student athlete success is called Character Counts (CC). Although this non-profit organization is not a part of the NCAA, many institutions firmly believe in its philosophy. CC’s mission is to work to advance character education by teaching trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

This program is aimed at youth, but it also helps adults and coaches to prepare the youth to meet “life’s challenges” on and off the playing field (Character 2002). CC also provides ethnic awareness and leadership seminars to coaches, adults, and athletes. Sportsmanship and character development are the main things that this program is tailored towards. Character Counts activities shows that although they
love to see the youth succeed on the field and in the classroom, personal success and good ethical traits are also an asset in life.

The NCAA CHAMPS/LS program started in 1994 and went from 50 members to well over 400 university athletic departments involved. Character Counts organization and The Center for the Study of Sport in Society have also increased their participants. As I stated earlier, having athletes being involved in positive activities is very important for a number of reasons. When there is continuous involvement with the community, I believe that student athletes may re-think their decisions, just because there may be someone in the public who will see them act in a negative manner. Also, for those from a different environment community involvement and positive activities can make some student athletes feel more comfortable because they know more about the local environment. Student athletes can build relationships with others off campus whom they may be able to communicate with, confide in, and trust.

The above-mentioned programs are activities that could be implemented to hopefully benefit the individual and the team, but there should still be things done strictly for the individual. Individual involvement would most likely take place within the athletic academic counselors and or athletic advising office due to the amount of informal time that the athlete spends in this department. In depth counseling can be done for student athletes who are considered to be “at risk”. This term, “at risk”, can be used for student athletes who are at risk in the area of academics or those who have had family problems, or are from a challenging
background. Seniors should do exit interviews so departments will know how they could have made an athlete’s experience better or if the department met the overall needs of the student athlete. If a relationship is built throughout the staff within the department, maybe some signs of behavior will begin to show, and they can be discussed proactively. The student athlete may also feel more inclined to not become involved with deviant/criminal behavior with this relationship.

A visible relationship throughout departmental staff could be an added bonus to student athletes by itself. Interaction could break down barriers and alleviate isolation, something that many entering athletes may feel. This relationship can open up the lines of communication and also stimulate cultural awareness for both parties.

The suggestions made here could be difficult to implement due to a shortage of funds needed to operate. No matter how many resources a department may or may not have, departments still need to find ways to communicate with student athletes so student athletes can understand what is expected while they are in college. There are also many ways that coaches can better understand the history and lifestyles of student athlete’s from all races and economic conditions.

Study Limitations and Future Research

This research was done using only seven higher education institutions in the Mid-American Conference. Intercollegiate athletics in America is comprised of hundreds of different institutions. There are many other conferences throughout the United States. Because of this, the final results are only based on a small sample of
the problems associated with deviance/criminal behavior in collegiate athletics.
Although a small sample size is used, I believe that the findings can be a reflection of
the problem because of the literature reviews and various efforts that are being put
forth across the United States to decrease the problems within athletics. The findings
of others involved that were from articles, web sites, and newspapers can allow for
further understanding, but are also limited due to the dynamics of the media, along
with the honesty of a particular institution.

The bottom line is that there is a small problem with student athletes and
deviant/criminal behavior, but there is also a problem with other college age adults
and criminal/deviant behavior. While we are concerned with athletes we can’t always
look at athletics in a negative manner. Yes, it is true that many athletes will not
graduate in four years, but the majority of all entering freshman also do not graduate
in four years (Lapchick 2000). Furthermore, there is an even bigger problem with the
structure of society. The issues presented in this study reflect the overall problems in
society. There are many challenges that can be related to, or entirely separate from
this study and will not be discussed in detail. Further research can be done focusing
on the vast economic levels and different social problems that economics may bring.
There could also be a more detailed study that will allow student athletes themselves
to discuss why they believe deviance/criminal behavior among student athletes is an
issue. Although this could be a touchy subject, it would be a better study simply
because who will know student athletes behavior better other than student athletes
themselves.
Conclusion

While it may take a while before we find ways to reduce the problem of deviance/criminal behavior among student athletes it is important that we all start somewhere in our own way. It may mean that an illiterate athlete doesn’t pass a class, or a student may have to be late for practice due to tutorial sessions. It may even mean that a parent has to attend regularly scheduled meetings with their child’s teacher and miss a few of their child’s athletic events, but something should be done to refocus on the greater good of youth and collegiate athletics. Some may think that student athletes are aggressive, and are “dumb jocks”, but this term did not start when a student entered college. No matter what is believed, higher education officials along with those in the community who may have lead the way for a college athlete need to work closely with student athletes. This will hopefully open the lines of communication for academic, athletic, and social success of all athletes. Our ideas and attitudes need continuous restructuring to give student athletes a true chance to succeed both on and off the playing field.

Overall the issue of crime and collegiate athletes is one that is very complex. This is because understanding society is complex. Because this issue is hard to understand, we need to first understand the sociological issues that are connected with different groups of people. Student athletes are overwhelmed with the environment surrounded by his/her athletic team(s), but this should be something that will allow them to one day be a better person. The whole point is that athletics is about life. If
institutions, coaches, and administrators fail to enforce the important qualities in athletics, student athletes may fail to succeed at life, and that is what really matters.
APPENDIX

Protocol Clearance From the Human Subjects
Institutional Review Board
Date: May 25, 2001

To: Timothy Diamond, Principal Investigator  
   Justina I. Phillips, Student Investigator for honors thesis

From: Michael S. Pritchard, Interim Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 01-05-19

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled “They’re Getting Away with Murder: The Social Accountability of College Athletes” has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: May 25, 2002
BIBLIOGRAPHY


