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2009 Bowl Championship Series Telecasts: Expressions of Big-Time College-Sport's Commercial Institutional Logics

Richard M. Southall

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Crystal Southall

The University of Northern Colorado

Brendan Dwyer

Virginia Commonwealth University

The Bowl Championship Series (BCS) is the preeminent National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) event. It consistently generates high television ratings and attracts millions of dollars of advertising spending. Given the limited analysis of the organizational conditions that frame these broadcasts' production, this study examines the impact of influential actors on the representation process. Using a mixed-method approach, this paper investigates the production of 2009 BCS broadcasts, and examines the extent to which these broadcasts are consistent with college sport's espoused educational mission. Through a critical examination of the dominant institutional logic that underpins their reproduction, this study reveals how such broadcasts reflect both past choices and future influences related to television production structures and practices.

According to the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) (2006a) website, the BCS "...is an arrangement of five bowl games that are (sic) managed by the 11 Division I-A conferences and the University of Notre Dame together with the local bowl committees" (Bowl Championship Series, 2006a, para. 1). In addition to providing a format in which the two top-rated National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) teams meet in a national championship game, the BCS also engenders fan excitement by matching eight other highly-regarded teams in four other bowl games. The BCS has undeniably succeeded in achieving these goals. Additionally, within the existing bowl system it has provided for more television exposure and generated more postseason revenue than ever before. As the BCS website (2006b) notes, "The total economic impact in the host cities from the five BCS games in January 2009, was estimated at more than \$1.2 billion" (Bowl Championship Series, 2006b, para. 25).

While not technically an NCAA entity, the Bowl Championship Series "...is managed by the commissioners of the 11 NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision ("FBS") (formerly Division I-A) conferences, the director of athletics at the University of Notre Dame, and representatives of the bowl organizations" (Bowl Championship Series, 2006b, para. 3). Highlighting the bowl system's cooperative nature, the BCS website contains links to the websites of two other organizations: NCAA Football and Football Bowl Association, which are aligned with the Bowl Championship Series. The NCAA Football (2009) website notes, "NCAA Football represents a coalition of the American Football Coaches Association (AFCA), the Collegiate Commissioners Association (CCA), the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which are the stakeholders for college football" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2009, para. 2).

While not among NCAA Football's listed stakeholders, the Football Bowl Association lists eleven conference partners and over thirty affiliated college football bowl games. While, according to the NCAA, "...competitions created by the BCS are not part of the NCAA championship program, nor are they administered by an NCAA committee or the national office staff" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2008a, para. 5), FBS bowl games "...are licensed by the NCAA and benefit from enabling NCAA bylaws" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2008a para. 10). Both the public, which "...identifies bowls as a part of NCAA football" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2008a, para. 10), and the NCAA itself, which acknowledges college football bowl games "...are a limited joint venture with the [bowl] organizing committee, participating conferences, NCAA member institutions and the NCAA" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2008a, para. 10) recognize the linkage between NCAA FBS football and the bowl system – including the BCS. In addition to these several stakeholders' coalition, various media corporations are also involved in the college-football bowl system. In addition to broadcasting 24 bowl games (as of 2009) Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN), Inc. owns five bowl games: (a) Bell Helicopter Armed Forces, (b) Hawaii, (c) Las Vegas, (d) New Mexico, (e) Papajohn's.com, and (f) St. Petersburg Bowls (Entertainment and Sport Programming Network, n.d., para. 7).

In short, while bowl-organizing committees, conferences, the BCS, NCAA Football, the Football Bowl Association, and various media corporations form a conglomeration of not-for-profit and for-profit corporations, coalitions and associations, the general public connotes FBS

bowl games as NCAA products. Recognizing this associated symbiotic relationship, the NCAA notes on its website, “The goodwill and intellectual property of the NCAA is therefore affected by the success and failure of the bowls” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2008a, para. 11).

While they cheer on their favorite team, the 1.7 million fans who reportedly take part in the “college bowl experience” (Football Bowl Association, 2008, para. 1) may never question if, or to what extent, bowl-game broadcasts help the NCAA and its member schools retain “...a clear line of demarcation between intercollegiate athletics and professional sports” (Thomas, 2006, p. 2). In response to questions about the increasingly commercialized nature of college-sport broadcasts, NCAA representatives have consistently denied big-time college sport, whether the NCAA Division-I Men’s Basketball Tournament or BCS bowl games, is inconsistent with the NCAA’s stated core purpose of “...integrat[ing] intercollegiate athletics into higher education” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d., para. 2). A 2006 statement by Erik Christianson, NCAA spokesperson, crystallized the association’s position on the fundamental purpose of college sport, “We educate student athletes; they are students first” (Associated Press News Service, 2006, para. 4).

As the pinnacle of NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision competition, Bowl Championship Series broadcasts provide an opportunity to examine the spectacle of college football at its penultimate. While BCS bowl games undoubtedly provide high-profile stages for participating football teams, they also generate considerable revenue for college athletic departments. According to the BCS (2009) website, 2008-2009 bowl games “...paid \$228 million to colleges and universities for the 2008-09 season and project to pay approximately \$2.5 billion over the next decade” (Bowl Championship Series, 2009, para. 1). In addition to being visible cultural components of college life and exploitable revenue streams, college bowl games in general - and BCS games in particular - are also identified as advertising and public-relations vehicles through which television networks garner audience share and promote their programming, advertisers reach potential consumers, and universities directly (e.g. from rights fees) and indirectly (e.g. from future student fees and alumni donations) generate additional revenue. These BCS bowl-game products, consumed by, in particular, television audiences are heavily mediated and are the result of apparently contested institutional pressures and negotiated arrangements among stakeholders (Riffe, Lacey, & Fico, 1998; Silk & Amis, 2000, Southall, Nagel, Amis, & Southall, 2008; Southall & Nagel, 2008). However, despite the vast amounts of money involved, and academic and popular press research devoted to big-time college sport, scholarly inquiry into the construction and delivery of televised BCS football games remains lacking (Southall & Nagel; Southall et al.).

Utilizing content and semiotic analyses this paper explores the ways in which competing institutional logics – belief systems that essentially work to constitute appropriate and acceptable courses of action (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Scott, Ruef, Mendel & Caronna, 2000) – shape the (re)presentation of Bowl Championship Series football games. As part of our analysis, we identify two perceived institutional logics – ‘educational’ and ‘commercial’ – and assess the consequences of the dominant position held by the commercial logic, and critically examine the institutional mechanisms that constitute, and are constituted by, the chosen television production structures and practices associated with these broadcasts.

Theoretical Context

Football bowl game broadcasts are heavily mediated events resulting from choices made by influential actors involved in their production. These actors include the NCAA, athletic conferences, university athletic departments, boosters, corporate partners, and broadcast organizations. It should be noted that the communication end product (i.e. broadcasts) are the assumed consequence of antecedent individual, organizational, social and other contexts (Riffe et al., 1998). These contexts affect decisions regarding a televised game's representation. As Silk and Amis (2000) argued, a broadcast organization's actions result not only from choices based on internal arrangements and pre-determined objectives, but also "...from a comparatively narrow range of options that have been deemed legitimate by influential actors within the firm's organizational field" (p. 269).

Friedland and Alford (1991) noted that decisions pertaining to the construction of sport broadcasts are dependent upon extant institutional logics. Specifically, institutions "...have a central logic – a set of material practices and symbolic construction – which constitutes its organizing principles and which is available to organizations and individuals to elaborate" (Friedland & Alford, p. 248). In a field, such institutional logics determine what are considered acceptable or unacceptable operational means, establish routines, guide the evaluation and implementation of developed strategies, and create precedent for further innovation (Duncan & Brummett, 1991; Friedland & Alford; Nelson & Winter, 1982; Washington & Ventresca, 2004). These logics manifest themselves in a particular field as generalized expectations, or normative shared typifications that allow individuals within the institutional field to engage in coherent, well understood, and acceptable activities. In this sense, then, institutional logics become "encoded in actors' stocks of practical knowledge [that] influence how people communicate, enact power, and determine what behaviors to sanction and reward" (Barley & Tolbert, 1997, p. 98). Eventually, these logics become taken-for-granted "facts" reflected in particular unquestioned courses of action.

Over time, contestation among different institutional logics may emerge. Such conflicts most often result in the emergence of a dominant logic that works to establish local-meaning frameworks that guide strategy and structure by focusing the attention of decision-makers towards those issues that are most consistent with the perceived dominant logic and away from those issues that are deemed to be inconsistent (Thornton, 2002). Cousins and Slack (2005) highlighted how the cable broadcasting industry's deregulation in 1977 resulted in an industry-wide shift from a "sport-specific" logic to "...a logic that emphasized the entertainment aspects of sport and its value to corporate and broadcast buyers" (p.39). Similarly, Southall et al., (2008) and Southall and Nagel (2008) demonstrated ways in which the dominant commercialized institutional logics associated with NCAA Division-I men's and women's basketball have substantially altered what were considered to be acceptable activities at the individual, organization, and field levels.

As NCAA president, Brand (2006a; 2006b) articulated what Sack (2009) identified as "... 'academic capitalism,' an approach to university governance that emphasizes the importance of 'the bottom line'" (p. 78). Consistent with academic capitalism, college athletic departments utilize the same marketing practices and seek to exploit the same revenue streams as professional

leagues such as the National Basketball Association (NBA) and the National Football League (NFL). However, as has clearly been outlined by defenders of the NCAA's collegiate model, the defining differentiation between big-time college and professional sport is the "fact" college athletes are "amateurs" engaging in college sport as an avocation.

Table 1 - *Institutional Logics of Commercialized College Sport (BCS)*

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Commercialized Logic</i>
Economic system	Market Capitalism Academic Capitalism
Organizational identity	D-I college basketball as business
Legitimacy	Market position of "BCS"
Authority structures	Conferences FoxSports/ESPN NCAA Advertisers/Sponsors
Mission	Build competitive position Increase cash flow and revenues
Focus of attention	Resource competition
Strategy	Acquisition growth Build market share
Governance	Conference & Corporate control

From this academic capitalist perspective, whether college-sport television broadcasts exhibit the same broadcast production elements as "professional" sport broadcasts (Southall et al., 2008; Southall and Nagel, 2008) or the exploited revenue streams are derived from the same sources as those used by professional leagues and franchises is irrelevant when it comes to differentiating amateur and professional sports (Brand, 2006a). As Sack (2009) noted, the difference between college and professional sport lies with whether the athletic participants are paid, and from Brand's (2006a, 2006b) perspective of academic capitalism, athletic scholarships do not constitute "pay for play."

The commercialized institutional logics reflected in big-time college sport broadcasts complement the corporate goals of sponsors, broadcast entities, advertisers, and many other stakeholders. Suggestive of such logics, it is theorized the Bowl Championship Series displays many characteristics of one of Chandler's (1962) ideal-typical corporate descriptions – the multidivisional form (M-form) (See Table 1). The M-form provides for greater control of both the associated stakeholders and product-market competition of FBS college football. Each bowl game (with the exception of the national championship game, which rotates annually) is akin to a BCS operational division. Each BCS bowl game is a separate, geographically dispersed product, with its own finance, sales and marketing departments. While there may be cooperation among bowl committees on developing and implementing strategic marketing plans, operational decision functions are the responsibility of the separate bowl committees.

However, strategic decisions that affect the BCS as a whole are made by the BCS managers: "...the commissioners of the 11 [FBS] conferences, the director of athletics at the University of Notre Dame, and representatives of the bowl organizations" (Bowl Championship Series, 2006a, para. 3). This strategic change allows the BCS senior management to autonomously make decisions regarding all BCS issues and focus on rationalization of revenue maximization, while monitoring each bowl game's contribution toward achieving the BCS's overall corporate goals. Similar to Williamson's (1975) description of an M-form corporation, it is theorized the BCS system not only allows for a redistribute of divisional (i.e. bowl-game) revenues, but also provides a framework within which stakeholders can monitor how well each BCS bowl-game broadcast helps achieve the arrangement's overall goals. From this theoretical framework, this study seeks to determine if BCS broadcasts (similar to NCAA Division-I men's and women's basketball tournament broadcasts) offer evidence of a commercialized institutional logic, which reflect both past choices and future influences that are reflected in television production structures and practices.

As the basis for examining and understanding the dominant logics that underpin current BCS broadcasts, it is important to contextualize these game telecasts as culminations of many negotiated decisions and actions among the many prominent stakeholders involved in FBS governance (AFCA BCS, BCS bowl organizations, CCA, NACDA, and the NCAA), broadcast entities, and corporate sponsors and advertisers. It is apparent that influential actors in other settings have been able to exert pressures that constrain the broadcast representation of a given sport event (Duncan & Brummet, 1991; Silk & Amis, 2000, Southall et al., 2008; Southall & Nagel, 2008).

It should also be noted institutional pressures exerted on broadcast organizations involved in televising college sport may come not only from sponsors/advertisers specifically doing business with a network, but also from the sanctioning or licensing body (NCAA) and its members, as well as that body's aligned sponsors and/or licensees. In addition, these pressures may be exerted explicitly in formal or legal regulations, or may be taken-for-granted assumptions usually enconced in institutionally-prescribed codes and values (Silk & Amis).

Within a controlled broadcast setting (e. g. BCS telecasts) additional pressures may be exerted at the macro – and micro – levels. These pressures combine to create the institutional logics that define legitimate activities by key decision-makers. Macro-pressures may be exerted at the field level through coercive, mimetic and normative mechanisms (Silk & Amis, 2000; Southall & Nagel, 2008; Southall et al., 2008). Such coercive pressures can be exerted formally (e.g., through established rules) or informally (e.g., by cultural expectations or expressions of formalized gatekeepers).

Southall and Nagel (2008) and Southall et al.(2008) noted the manner in which established broadcast entities (CBS and ESPN), in concert with the sanctioning body (NCAA), collaborate to ensure the delivery of a product that not only conforms to expected broadcast-industry norms, but also provides opportunities for all parties involved to practice cooperative product-brand management and extension. In addition, both studies provided evidence of mimetic pressures through the utilization of professional-sport broadcasting formats typical of other sport-event broadcasts (e.g. National Football League [NFL] and National Basketball Association [NBA]). Finally, normative mechanisms were apparent in championship handbooks

and guidelines utilized to train television workforce staff to produce broadcasts that complied with established industry and sanctioning body standards.

While field-level forces are important, it is also necessary to consider the cognitive, or micro-level, processes that emanate from the ways in which individuals interpret accepted rules to make sense of the world around them (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Scott, 2001). In this respect, activities become institutionalized through a process of “reciprocal typification of habitualized action” (Berger & Luckman, p.54). This leads to the creation of routines: repetitive, recognizable patterns of interdependent actions involving multiple actors (Feldman, 2000; Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Nelson & Winter, 1982). As routines become established, they become conduits through which acceptable courses of action are spread. These routines result in a shared belief structure that in turn leads to the appropriateness of established courses of action being unquestioned and taken-for-granted (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Jepperson, 1991; Nelson & Winter; Seo & Creed, 2002; Zucker, 1983). Consistent with Silk and Amis (2000), Southall and Nagel (2008), and Southall et al. (2008), found evidence of such micro-level processes in the manner in which NCAA men’s and women’s Division-I basketball tournament broadcast personnel relied on subconscious naturalized codes to guide courses of action. The consistent use of language (e.g. student-athletes, amateurism, “...the next level”) reflected such naturalized symbolism and codes.

Altheide and Snow (1979) identified a media logic (involving chosen forms, patterns, or habits of thinking and processing) that “...has become so taken for granted by both communicator and receiver that it has been overlooked as an important factor in understanding media” (p. 10). This identified media logic includes such elements as: type of content, grammar, time-structure, tempo, organization, special techniques, camera angles, or graphics. Consequently, since televised spectator-sport broadcasts are extensively mediated and reflect such institutional logics, broadcasts should always be studied in connection with the institutions to which they are heavily linked. Such an analysis may reveal how collaborating organizations have resolved organizational-level ambiguities and adopted a dominant logic (Duncan & Brummet, 1991).

The macro and micro-pressures outlined above work to facilitate and constrain the array of options perceived as available to decision-makers and act to shape broadcasts. By definition, all televised (or mediated) sport broadcasts are representations of a reality not directly witnessed by television viewers. This re-packaging or re-presenting of a mediated event involves not only the decision to broadcast some sports and not others, but also the decision to accentuate particular aspects of a sport event for listeners and viewers (Sage, 1998; Silk & Amis, 2000). Since mediated event producers consciously or sub-consciously pre-determine a broadcast’s theme and select the information they will convey to the viewers, the reproduced experience of any such event is restricted and consists of mediated event “highlights” portrayed in the broadcast. Television producers and directors, as well as newspaper editors and journalists, decree which event aspects fans will experience. In a collaborative effort, producers, directors, and sanctioning organizing committees consciously or subconsciously telescope events, magnifying or minimizing certain elements of the occasion or personalities to fit into the parameters established by the network, sponsors, and/or the sport’s sanctioning body or league.

Southall et al. (2008) documented this mediation in NCAA D-I men's basketball broadcasts (e.g. CBS's "One Shining Moment" montage), in which television-sport producers intentionally compose, light, write, frame, crop, caption, brand, target and/or censor each broadcast's content to satisfy various stakeholders' needs, wants or desires. Each broadcast thus becomes little more than a simulacrum (Harvey, 1990) of the actual event. Little surprise, then, that Gruneau, Whitson and Cantelon (1988) contended that sport-media representation occludes the social and historical "character" of modern sport, with economic pressures and informational possibilities combining "...to produce conventions about what constitutes 'good television'" (Gruneau et al., p. 266).

While viewers do not passively accept the represented broadcast, they do interpret the broadcast's meanings based on their individual cultural background and life experiences. As Sage (1998) argued, each represented event comes to have many meanings, depending on how it has been constructed by the major stakeholders, represented by the broadcasters, and interpreted by viewers through their cultural lens. This variation in viewers' cultural perspectives explains why some viewers accept a certain representation of an event text while others reject it. It follows from this that producers' representations may be designed to satisfy certain constituencies. However, the actions of key decision-makers – event organizers, directors, producers, graphic designers, commentators, script writers, and so on – will inevitably constrain the range of available interpretations of those consuming the broadcast. This is because while the meaning of the reproduced broadcast is an individual interpretation or decision made by a viewer or broadcast decision-maker, these cultural intermediaries craft broadcasts that occur within a particular institutional context based upon the dominant institutional logic. Guided by this theoretical background, the next section details this study's data-collection methods.

Methods

To uncover possible links between, and outcomes of, the macro- and micro-pressures discussed above, quantitative and qualitative data collection, utilizing a mixed-methods approach including content and semiotic analyses, was utilized. The 2009 edition of the *Bowl Championship Series* ($N = 5$ games) began on January 1, 2009 and included four traditional bowl games: Rose, Allstate Sugar, Tostitos Fiesta, and FedEx Orange. The 2009 BCS culminated on January 8 with the FedEx BCS National Championship game between the University of Florida (Gators) and the University of Oklahoma (Sooners). In order to ensure our conclusions were not based on a single broadcast's idiosyncrasies, the study's sample consisted of all five BCS game broadcasts. In addition, to contextualize the sampling unit and gain insights into the labor production of BCS broadcasts, primary and secondary sources were analyzed. Primary sources included documents and/or websites (e.g. *NCAA.org*, *bcsfootball.org*, *footballbowlassociation.com*, *ncaafootball.com*) outlining contractual-based advertising and promotional standards, and/or broadcast policies and procedures. Secondary sources consisted of periodicals such as *NCAA NewsOnline*, newspapers, sports magazines, and sport-business trade publications.

Content Analysis

Neuendorf (2002) identified four threats to content-analysis reliability. These include a) utilizing a poorly executed coding scheme; b) failing to adequately train coders; c) not allowing for coder fatigue; and d) not detecting the presence of a rogue coder. This study's coding schema, utilizing seven game-broadcast analysis units, was based upon previous content-analysis research, including 2006 and 2007 NCAA D-I men's and women's basketball broadcasts (Riffe et al., 1998; Southall & Nagel, 2008; Southall et al., 2008). These developed units allowed for the broadcasts' manifest content (physically present data or surface structures physically present and countable) to be identified, categorized and then statistically analyzed (Neuendorf). The broadcast-analysis units developed comprised the following nonprogram categories:

Commercials Breaks:

- (ADV) Standard commercial advertisements
- (NCAA) NCAA public service announcement
- (CORP) Corporate-sponsor PSA

In-Game:

- (GR) Non-standard sponsorship graphics without verbal commentary
- (GR/VER) Non-standard sponsorship graphics with verbal commentary
- (GR/ACA) Academically-related player-information graphics
- (ED) Positive or negative educational commentary

This study's content-analysis coding schema was consistent with protocol outlined in previous research (Madden & Grube, 1994; Southall et al., 2008) and involved analysis of nonprogram broadcast content from pre-game, in-game and post-game segments. Nonprogram content included traditional commercial advertisements (including network commercial time, local advertising spots, promotions, and public service announcements [PSAs]), as well as "nonstandard" in-game advertisements, graphics, promotional announcements and game-announcer commentary (Gough, 2006). Nonprogram messages were also categorized as commercial or educational in nature.

In this study, educational messages were not limited to those detailing a university's academic mission; they included any discussions of an athlete's major or course of study, classroom performance or grade point average (GPA). In addition, identified educational messages were categorized as either positive or negative in nature (e.g. A negative educational message might detail an academic "scandal" or a player having been declared academically ineligible, while a positive educational message might involve either a non-negative neutral message – for example a player's major being designated – or positive discussions, such as a player being described as an "Academic All-American.").

Since multiple coders were utilized to conduct the quantitative content analysis, a coder-training program was developed utilizing standardized coding matrices. Discussions of developed broadcast-analysis units took place prior to coders viewing game broadcasts. While broadcast-format standardization reduced coder-training requirements, it did raise concerns about potential coder fatigue (e.g., boredom). Since all games were recorded, coders were not asked to

work to the point of fatigue. In addition, coders were able to review a broadcast tape more than once before submitting a final completed coding matrix.

In order to establish intercoder reliability and provide basic validation of the coding schema, a number of reliability tests have been proposed, including Scott's pi (π) and Cohen's kappa (κ) (Riffe et al., 1998; Neuendorf, 2001, 2002). Given the small sample size, and in adherence to accepted protocol, all broadcasts were tested for reliability (Neuendorf, 2002; Wimmer & Dominick, 1997). The resulting Scott's pi (.83) and Cohen's kappa (.83) established acceptable levels of intercoder reliability (Neuendorf, 2002).

Semiotic Televisual Analysis

In addition to the quantitative content analysis, the study also utilized qualitative methods to uncover possible mythic messages not only represented during BCS game broadcasts, but also promoted in organizational documents, operational handbooks, and public statements (Bignell, 1997; Cresswell, 1998; Neuendorf, 2002; Patton, 2002). Such an analysis allowed the data to be critically examined for both linguistic and visual signs to determine “. . . what [was] portrayed and symbolized . . . and what [was] absent or silenced” (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 146). In examining the data in this fashion, various levels of analysis were established. These levels ranged from individual words and images to overall concepts - words and visual images grouped in concept clusters – contained in the broadcasts and documents (Bignell; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Not only are BCS games publicly perceived as NCAA events (the participating universities are NCAA members); organizationally there are strong connections between the BCS and the NCAA. Therefore, during this analysis, represented broadcast content was examined for consistency with stated NCAA goals, rules, policies and guidelines, as well as organizational parameters outlined in primary and secondary sources, including official documents found on the NCAA.org, bcsfootball.org, ncaafootball.com, and footballbowlassociation.com websites. Such analysis allowed the broadcasts' visual and audio techniques to “speak” to the evaluators (Patton, 2002). In addition to game-specific content and standard advertisements, non-standard advertising and non-football specific in-game messages were evaluated (Bignell, 1997; Madden & Grube, 1994).

The Research Setting: NCAA FBS College Football and the BCS

There is no question college sport in general – and college football in particular – occupies a central place in American culture. Brand (2009) noted this in his 2009 State of the Association speech: “[College sport] has become integral to many of our universities and colleges, institutions which are the guardians of our traditions and histories and the harbingers of our futures. College sports generates (sic) a significant economic impact in communities all across the country” (para. 14). In order to contextualize the analysis of 2009 BCS television broadcasts, it is necessary to examine college football within its cultural and business contexts. It is important to note college football has inherent value, not only to its millions of fans who consume reproduced telecasts, but also to broadcast corporations (e.g. niche collegiate sport

cable stations, regional sport networks, and major cable and broadcast networks) for whom college football is a lucrative marketing and advertising platform.

The BCS was created independently of the NCAA in 1998 with the goal of matching the nation's top two FBS teams in a national championship game (Bowl Championship Series, 2006b). The individual bowl games associated with the BCS are some of the most highly publicized events within the spectator sport lexicon delivering large audience shares and providing broadcast entities with sizeable returns on investment. For example, the 2009 FedEx BCS National Championship Game earned a 17.0/27 according to Nielsen ratings (Media Post, 2009). Advertising inventory rates for all BCS games were substantial, with FoxSports obtaining up to \$950,000 for a 30-second spot during the Allstate BCS Sugar Bowl championship game (Media Post).

In addition to broadcasters, college football's commercial value extends to many stakeholders, including the NCAA, conferences, participating universities, as well as corporate sponsors and advertisers. Somewhat inevitably, given the resource-limited environment in which member NCAA institutions operate, big-time college football, with its ability to maximize revenue-generation opportunities, epitomizes big-time commercialized college sport. The BCS is a microcosm of this revenue generation with the five games resulting in approximately \$141 million dollars being redistributed to NCAA Division-I (FBS and Football Championship Subdivision [FCS]) athletic departments (Bowl Championship Series, 2009). In response to critics who contend the BCS is simply another example of overly-commercialized college sport, university and NCAA administrators contend such revenue-maximization efforts are not only necessary, but consistent with the NCAA's – as well as member colleges and universities' educational mission (Brown, 2002; Brand, 2006a).

Publicly reticent to discuss possible conflicts and identity dissonance (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996) within the field, NCAA Football and BCS administrators, as well as broadcast executives, rarely – if ever- directly address possible conflicts between educational and commercial logics within the field of college football broadcasts. Recent and ongoing acknowledgment by college-sport stakeholders of the need for increased commercialism in college sport is reflective of a commercial institutional logic. Since 2003, the NCAA and member D-I universities have consistently embraced increased college-sport commercialization. At the beginning of the 21st century, while, some college-sport marketers had "...expected things to go back to the dark ages" (Smith, 2009, p. 28), the NCAA and university presidents have been applauded by corporate partners for expressing the belief that "...there should be more, not less, [commercialism] as long as it stays within the framework of amateurism and promotes the accomplishments of the athletes and their teams" (Smith, p. 28). This sense of cooperation is evident in the statement of "...Tim McGhee, executive director of corporate sponsorship at AT&T, an NCAA corporate champion, 'I see an NCAA that is more responsive to corporate partners and how we market our products and services'" (Smith, p. 28).

However, Bob Lawless, NCAA Executive Committee Chair, seemed to recognize the possibility of such conflict, noting "There's a realization that when you receive a certain amount of revenue from a network that they're going to generate revenue in order to meet the agreement of the contract" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2002, para. 6). According to *The NCAA News*, college presidents are unperturbed with "...a corporate partner essentially

‘sponsor[ing]’ the NCAA’s educational mission,” as long as it is “...done well and tastefully” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, para. 2, 6).

While previous research has demonstrated the NCAA has effectively acquiesced control over its Division-I basketball tournament broadcasts (Southall & Nagel, 2008; Southall et al., 2008), since from its inception the BCS has been a non-NCAA arrangement, the NCAA does not exercise direct control over BCS broadcasts. However, the conferences and universities that comprise the BCS do have the capacity (through contract negotiations with BCS broadcast partners) to exercise control over the conveyance of educational messaging within BCS broadcasts.

Utilizing impression management (see Elsbach & Kramer, 1996), football bowl-game stakeholders, including the Football Bowl Association (2008), describe bowl games as quasi-educational experiences that provide players with “...new & unique experiences” (Football Bowl Association, 2008, para. 17), such as:

Players take part in many diverse experiences and see many sights during their bowl trips. In Tampa they visit Busch Gardens and the beaches. Players at the Holiday Bowl have lunch and tour an aircraft carrier. Players visit the Alamo in San Antonio, tour historic Alcatraz in San Francisco, Disney theme parks in Orlando, go snowmobiling in Boise, experience a luau and visit Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, and much more (Football Bowl Association, para. 17).

Websites, such as *footballbowlassociation.com*, are designed to address such apparent identity dissonance (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996) arising from the increasing commercialization of FBS college football. The Football Bowl Association (2008) website represents bowl games as charitable entities that support local causes and charities, noting:

Many bowls contribute in excess of \$100,000 annually to charitable causes and host camps for disadvantaged youth. A small sample of charities benefiting include the Boys & Girls Clubs, numerous hospitals, YMCA, local education programs through elementary and high schools, college scholarship programs, the United Way, Make a Wish Foundation, Boy Scouts of America, and the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation (para. 16).

Such website postings are designed to represent today’s bowl system – and the BCS in particular – as a charitable benefactor, not simply an economic arrangement whose primary purpose is to redistribute hundreds of millions of dollars to stakeholders.

Such impression management reflects the recognition that as long as criticism of the BCS and bowl games by fans, members of Congress, and the president is limited to complaints that Boise State, Utah, or Hawaii deserve a chance to play in a BCS game, BCS stakeholders have little to worry about. Even scrutiny by various members of Congress (most often in the House of Representatives) that has resulted in formal, if not forcible, condemnation of the BCS as a violation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, calls for Justice Department investigations, and introduction of the “College Football Playoff Act of 2008” (Armsby, 2009) seems to be little more than political grandstanding, designed to appeal to college-football fans and boosters’

desire for a National Football League (NFL)-style playoff system. It should be noted that such competitive or economic discussions regarding the BCS exhibit no evidence of characteristics or rhetoric associated with educational institutional logics.

However, since the BCS is an arrangement tangentially associated with the NCAA, member conferences and universities can choose when to associate themselves with the NCAA brand – with its nostalgic ideals of amateurism and sportsmanship that play on the NCAA’s brand attributes: “Learning. Balance. Spirit. Community. Fair play. Character” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2005b, para. 2) – and when to associate itself with other brands, such as the NFL, FedEx, or Tostitos. In contrast the NCAA does not have such leeway. It is, by default, associated with the BCS. Such a dichotomy is more likely to result in institutional dissonance within the and NCAA field, since according to the NCAA’s (2005a) advertising policies, “The NCAA strives to be associated with entities and messages that ... champion the STUDENT-athlete reflecting the integration and balance that student-athletes achieve every day between academics and athletics” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2005a, para. 1 - emphasis in original).

Within this setting, the study’s results can be used to determine the extent to which the Bowl Championship Series’ institutional logics are reflective of an organizational arrangement characterized by an economic system grounded in market capitalism, and an organizational identity in which college football is primarily a business venture. If such commercialized logics are dominant and the BCS’s organizational legitimacy is based upon its market position, then the arrangement’s paramount mission – exhibited through BCS telecasts – should be to build and enhance the BCS’s competitive market position. Against this theoretical backdrop, the next section reports the study’s results.

Results

A critical component of BCS bowl-game broadcasts is nonprogram commercial advertisement and sponsorship content. Consistent with broadcast-industry practices, the commercial format of BCS games is predetermined and scripted. Divided into quarters, with extended pre-game and half-time segments, a college-football broadcast provides numerous opportunities for commercial messaging. Within the constraints of the game, a broadcast entity (NewsCorp or ABC) has the ability to enter the marketplace and sell these broadcast segments (traditionally 30 to 60 second blocks) to advertisers. However, since all postseason bowl games, including BCS games, are licensed by the NCAA, advertising policies intended to “...exclude those advertisements that do not appear to be in the best interests of higher education” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2008b, p. 23) are outlined in the NCAA Football 2008-2009 Postseason Football Handbook. These guidelines include exclusions on: (a) “Alcoholic beverages that exceed 6 percent alcohol by volume...,” (b) “Cigarettes and other tobacco products,” and (c) “Organizations promoting gambling” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2008b, p. 23). In addition, unless an advertiser has obtained prior written approval from the NCAA President, commercial advertisements cannot “relate” an advertising entity or product to participating NCAA institutions or student-athletes, or the Association itself (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2008b).

Guidelines that delineate the minimum amount of public service announcement (PSA) messaging available to participating teams, institutions, and the NCAA are also delineated in the handbook. For 2009 BCS bowl games these minimums were as follows:

A minimum of 120 seconds shall be reserved on radio broadcasts and telecasts for promotional messages of the participating teams and higher education. Each institution shall receive one 30-second position in the telecast to air its promotional message. The NCAA shall receive 60 seconds of promotional time (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2008b, p. 29).

These minimums reflect the BCS's (2006c) stated goal of "...incorporate[ing] an NCAA public service announcement in the BCS game telecasts if possible" (Bowl Championship Series, 2006c, para. 6).

Utilizing previously established nonprogram content categories (Southall & Nagel, 2008; Southall et al., 2008), analysis of the five 2009 BCS broadcasts revealed a total of 15,058 seconds ($M = 50$ min., 11 sec. per broadcast) of standard commercial advertisements (ADV), which is – on average – approximately 10 minutes more than NCAA Division-I men's basketball (Southall et al.) and 28 more minutes than NCAA women's basketball tournament broadcasts (Southall & Nagel, 2008).

Consistent with previous studies, commercial advertisements (ADV) were delineated from public service announcements (NCAA and CORP). Consistent with negotiated guidelines (See Bowl Championship Series, 2006c; National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2008b, 2009), an average BCS broadcast contained 2 minutes and 13 seconds ($n = 667$ seconds) of NCAA PSAs. This was twice the NCAA PSA average for either the men's or women's NCAA D-I basketball tournament broadcasts (Southall & Nagel, 2008; Southall et al., 2008) Additionally, on average each BCS broadcast contained 60 seconds ($n = 302$) of corporate PSAs. Table 2 presents a summary of the BCS broadcasts' nonprogram content.

Technological advances, such as digital television recorders (e.g. *Tivo*), allow television viewers to "fast-forward" through standard commercial breaks. While sport events are somewhat insulated from being "tivoed," since fans still often watch such live sport events in real-time, sport marketers and advertisers increasingly utilize within-game graphics and verbal references to decrease the likelihood of audiences being able to skip standard commercial advertisements and PSAs. In the sampled BCS broadcasts such commercial graphics and verbal messages comprised a substantial amount of nonprogram content: GR total (7,659 seconds cumulative total/per-game average: 25 minutes and 32 seconds), GR/VER total (3,841 seconds cumulative total/per-game average: 12 minutes and 48 seconds). The average of over 38 minutes of graphics (both with and without accompanying verbal commentary) within BCS broadcasts dwarfed the amount within NCAA basketball tournament broadcasts (Average of approximately six minutes per broadcast).

Table 2 - *BCS Broadcast Nonprogram Category Summary*

<i>Category</i>	<i>Total Seconds</i>	<i>Mean (M) per Broadcast</i>
ADV	15,058	50 min, 11 sec
NCAA	667	2 min, 13 sec
CORP	302	60 sec
GR	7,659	25 min, 32 sec
GR/VER	3,841	12 min, 48 sec
GR/ACA	53	11 sec
ED	82	16 sec

The educational message categories developed included: academically-related player information graphics (GR/ACA), and educational commentary by game announcers (ED). Table 3 summarizes the 2009 BCS nonprogram educational message content. Interestingly, in the sampled BCS broadcasts, only the FedEx Orange Bowl contained academically-related player-information graphics (nine graphics for a total of 53 seconds). In addition, while there was a total of 82 seconds of educational commentary in BCS broadcasts, over 73 percent of such commentary ($n = 60$ seconds) was contained in the FedEx Orange Bowl. Of the 5 educational messages within the Orange Bowl, four messages - detailing player ineligibility as a result of poor grades or other negative academic issues - totaling 42 seconds (70% of the Orange Bowl's total) were negative in nature. The other 22 seconds of educational messages were divided between the Allstate Sugar and Tostitos Fiesta Bowls, which each contained one positive message (Allstate - 15 seconds; Fiesta - 7 seconds). Finally, both the 2009 Rose Bowl and BCS National Championship games were devoid of educational messages.

Discussion

It has been argued that Western society's major institutions, including Christianity, capitalism, the family, democracy, and the bureaucratic state, have logics that guide action (Friedland & Alford, 1991). In addition to investigations focused on the societal level, there have been field or industry-level examinations, including financial services (Lounsbury, 2002), educational publishing (Thornton, 2002), professional US sport (Cousens & Slack, 2005), English rugby union (O'Brien & Slack, 2004), and US college sport (Southall & Nagel, 2008; Southall et al., 2008). In keeping with Friedland and Alford's theorizing, each of these discussions noted an historical process, in which competing industry-level institutional logics resulted in the emergence of a dominant logic.

Table 3 - *BCS Broadcast Educational Messaging Summary*

<i>Game</i>	<i>Graphic with Academic Information (positive or negative)</i>		<i>Educational Messages by Commentators (positive or negative)</i>	
	<i>Units</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Units</i>	<i>Time</i>
Allstate Sugar Bowl	---	---	1 (pos)	15 sec
FedEx National Championship	---	---	---	---
FedEx Orange Bowl	9 (pos)	53 sec	5 (1 pos; 4 neg)	60 sec
Rose Bowl presented by CITI	---	---	---	---
Tostitos Fiesta Bowl	---	---	1 (pos)	7 sec
TOTAL	9 (pos)	53 sec	7 (3 pos; 4 neg)	82 sec

Our study provides confirmation of the apparent existence of two different institutional logics, termed here ‘educational’ and ‘commercial,’ within the FBS NCAA college football field. In addition, consistent with previous research (Southall & Nagel, 2008; Southall et al., 2008) there is evidence to suggest a commercial logic has been dominant for almost as long as the NCAA has been in existence, and college football has been broadcast. As Washington and Ventresca (2004) suggested, it seems evident US universities and colleges developed sport programs to enhance their resources and increase visibility. This is exemplified by the aggressive pursuit of television rights fees by NCAA members since the early 1950s, as well as universities’ willingness to engage in seemingly fratricidal litigation (e. g. *Board of Regents v. NCAA*) in order to clear the way for commercial-revenue maximization (see Washington, 2004). As Thornton (2002) elucidated in another ‘educational’ setting (publishing), the existence of a dominant commercial logic has pronounced implications for the direction of strategic decision-making. In the remainder of this paper, we discuss the implications of our suppositions.

A primary justification for big-time college football at the highly visible FBS or BCS level relates to such athletic contests’ potential to communicate these institutions’ educational story to the viewing public (Gerdy, 2006). If college-football broadcasts are vehicles through which this “educational” purpose is pursued, it should follow that the content – the images portrayed and messages conveyed – of such telecasts, would reflect intercollegiate athletics’ stated values and communicate higher-education’s expressed purposes. Therefore, it would seem legitimate to examine the extent to which televised college-sport events (e.g. BCS bowl games, NCAA D-I basketball tournament games) are representative of these universities’ expressed educational values and purposes.

University presidents, NCAA representatives, athletic-department administrators, and corporate and broadcast partners will argue that lessons learned from participation in college sport are as important as those learned in traditional classrooms. Such claims seek to refute any

claim that highly commercialized broadcasts reflect a conflict between educational and commercialize institutional logics. However, it could be argued that such “life-lessons” can be learned in any “life” context. From this perspective any event or experience from which a person learns should be termed educational. If BCS broadcasts’ primary purpose was conveying educational messages, such as teamwork, self-discipline, and overcoming adversity it would seem such messages would be explicitly made part of the television production practices.

Based on this study’s results, the 2009 NCAA Bowl Championship Series broadcasts provided little evidence that any such educational logic was influencing strategic decision-making. While the primary messages conveyed during any college-sport contest are, of course, going to be related to the game itself, there are also significant nonprogram messages conveyed during a broadcast. In 2009 BCS bowl game broadcasts, which were typically more than three hours in length, educational messages were rare. On average, there was less than a minute of educational messages, but over 86 minutes of commercial advertising per broadcast. Within BCS telecasts, discussions of higher education, academics or broader university missions of teaching, research or service did not occur. While broadcast entities fulfilled negotiated obligations regarding NCAA and university PSAs, the lack of standard advertising presence by the NCAA or participating universities within broadcasts, suggests these entities are unwilling or unable to purchase additional advertising time. With the cost for a 30-second spot during a BCS national-championship broadcast being approximately \$1mil (MediaPost Communications, 2008), this seems a reasonable assumption. Interestingly, other than such negotiated ‘educational’ PSAs, additional educational messaging was clustered within two BCS broadcasts (FedEx Orange Bowl and Allstate Sugar Bowl). In fact, the BCS National Championship and Rose Bowl broadcasts contained no educational messaging, while the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl contained only seven seconds of such messaging.

While product branding did occur within BCS broadcasts, very rarely did university-specific branding take place. Instead, consistent with the dominant institutional logic, athletic monikers, nicknames and quasi-franchise, “program” or ball-club references were the norm. The effect of this is to reinforce what have - to all intents and purposes - become sporting brands (e.g., Gators, Buckeyes, Sooners, etc.) within a college-sport media complex.

As far back as 2001, college athletic administrators recognized that television networks will do everything they can to add value and increase advertising sales in order to pay ever-increasing rights fees for college-sport events (Weiberg, 2001). Consistent with NCAA president, Myles Brand’s (2006a) call to conduct the business of college sport well, on average BCS bowl-game telecasts provide almost 90 minutes of commercial advertising opportunities per broadcast. Such commercial activity, which comprises approximately one-quarter of each broadcast, is entirely consistent with the field’s dominant commercial logic. If an educational logic was affecting decision making, one would expect educational messages, both during the in-game broadcast and during commercial breaks, would total more than the mere seconds that are currently offered.

This study’s results demonstrate the 2009 BCS bowl-game broadcasts do indeed offer evidence of a “partnership” among FBS stakeholders, but contrary to rhetoric espoused by NCAA and university officials, as well as corporate and broadcast partners, it is a partnership built on commercial, not educational, values. While within the college-sport field it is possible

for there to be “...nothing wrong with money and making it, especially if you can use it to further your mission” (Brown, 2002, p. 4), this study offers evidence that concerns regarding college sport’s lack of academic credibility – at least in reference to the educational value of BCS bowl-game broadcasts – is accurate. As at least one NCAA faculty athletic representative noted, “The problem comes when the money diverts you from what you’re supposed to be doing” (Brown, p.4). This study demonstrates that during BCS bowl-game broadcasts the public is overwhelmingly bombarded with commercial nonprogram messages. While the BCS member schools may promote their football “brands,” education was rarely, if ever, represented during 2009 BCS bowl-game broadcasts. The ‘collegiate’ label associated with these sport products has effectively become no more than a point of differentiation to separate these NCAA licensed games and participating teams from other professional televised sport leagues and events.

The uncovering of a distinctly commercialized dominant logic that guides decisions related to BCS bowl-games is useful because it highlights the key influence that shapes day-to-day broadcast operational routines (see, for example, Feldman & Pentland, 2003), as well as “...the relatively constant dispositions and strategic heuristics that shape the approach of a firm to the nonroutine problems it faces” (Nelson & Winter, 1982, p. 15). As Barley and Tolbert (1997) and Suddaby and Greenwood (2005) noted, unless a dominant logic is uncovered, any revision to the existing mode of operation, guided by ingrained and deep-rooted codes is unlikely.

Further, this study supports previous research (Southall & Nagel, 2008; Southall et al., 2008), which has uncovered how a dominant logic can become established despite contradictory publicly-espoused rhetoric of institutional leaders. While O’Brien and Slack (2003, 2004) documented some disagreement among participant stakeholders as to how change should occur with respect to the shift from amateurism to professionalism in rugby union, such disagreement was very quickly confined to the margins of any discussions. By contrast, just as NCAA men’s and women’s D-I basketball tournament broadcasts, BCS bowl-game telecasts offer strong evidence of a dominant logic apparently inconsistent with the oratory of many college-sport stakeholders. This study extends our understanding of how change in institutional logics occurs and supports recent theorizing (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Southall et al.) about institutional change.

This study’s sampled BCS bowl-game broadcasts also demonstrate an interesting institutional contradiction. Normally, lower levels of variation in routine actions indicate increased institutionalization levels. In addition, lower levels of rhetoric tend to indicate greater levels of institutionalization (Green, 2004). While BCS bowl-game broadcasts do indeed exhibit low levels of variation in broadcast routines, there is not a correspondingly low level of contradictory rhetoric. Even though BCS broadcasts, just as other college-sport broadcasts, reflect a dominant commercial logic, when questioned about the commercial nature of college sport NCAA and college athletic-department administrators consistently espouse non-commercial educational messages.

In addition, there is evidence of coercive, mimetic, and normative mechanisms at work (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Coercively, there is the ever-present future threat of non-renewal, or significant reduction, of television rights fees agreements. The desire to retain this revenue

stream, particularly in the context of ever-decreasing university funding from state and federal sources and concomitant pressures to secure funding from external sources, is apparent.

From a mimetic standpoint there is clear evidence of alignment between BCS and NFL broadcasts. The use of in-game non-program graphics and verbal commentary to advertise FOX and ABC or ESPN programs and sponsors, as well as describe in-game content was consistent in the telecasts of both sports properties. This increased integration of a network's entertainment properties into a sport's broadcasts is consistent with the melding of sports and entertainment. Similar to NFL broadcasts, BCS bowl-game broadcasts have consistent commercial breaks at designated times within a game. These designated commercial breaks allow the network to guarantee a sponsor or advertiser a designated number of impressions per broadcast, and offer the ability for sport broadcasts to seamlessly integrate themselves into other entertainment broadcasts. Such broadcast routines are consistent with the integration of the BCS broadcasts within established television production practices that comply with the desired commercial logic and emphasize entertainment.

Finally, there are normative pressures at work. As Silk and Amis (2000) noted, since there is little time to reflect in the often chaotic environment of 'live' televised sport, operators at all levels rely on established norms to make rapid decisions. Since FoxSports broadcasted only five college football games during the 2008-2009 season, it is not surprising, many of those involved in producing BCS telecasts learned their values and guidelines in "professional" sport broadcasting. It makes sense that professionalized codes or media logics apparent in this milieu would be readily apparent in their college-football broadcasts.

For example, a cursory examination of two principals involved in the production of Fox Sports' BCS telecasts offers evidence of how transference of professionalized codes to an ostensibly "amateur" sports property can occur. To say the least, Mike Burks' (coordinating producer for the 2009 FedEx Orange Bowl and BCS National Championship games) resume is impressive. Burks' credentials include:

11-time Emmy-award winner, who has produced more than 2,300 shows worldwide. He has produced 25 NFL seasons, and has been part of eight Super Bowls for CBS and FOX. He has also produced 25 NBA seasons, including ten NBA Finals, ten All-Star Games for CBS and TNT and seventeen March Madness Tournaments for CBS. Burks' talent for producing live-action sports television also includes five Olympics, where he produced the Alpine, snowboard and basketball coverage for CBS and NBC. Burks' resume includes coverage of more than 20 different sports worldwide. (Yahoo, Inc., 2009, para. 5).

Similarly, Rich Russo, director for the 2009 FedEx Orange Bowl and BCS National Championship games, is a ten-time Emmy award winning director and Fox Sport's A-team NFL director. He has been with Fox Sports since 1994, "...since FOX got the NFL" (Living in Media, 2009, para. 6). On a weekly basis he directs Fox Sport's coverage of NFL games. For the BCS broadcasts, Russo utilized 20 cameras; while for a normal NFL game the number of cameras ranges from 10 to 14, depending on the game. He also makes use of 14 tape machines, and manages a technical staff (audio, video and utility crew) of between 125 to 150 people. However,

regardless of the sport, Russo utilizes "...a certain core group of people who travel together" (Living in Media, para. 14).

Within the BCS broadcast field, the prevalence of prominent broadcast decision-makers with long associations to professional sports properties is significant since as these actors make sense of their enacted environment (Weick, 1995) they also transmit their understanding to others (Zucker, 1977). These producers and directors' broadcast routines, which have been learned during years of producing and directing numerous professionalized sports, become seen as social 'facts' (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; see also Greenwood & Hinings, 2006). Such "...routinization of activity [becomes] the 'locus' of operational knowledge" (Nelson & Winter, 1982, p. 104). Broadcast entities' organizational knowledge of how to represent BCS bowl games is reducible to its producers and directors' knowledge of how to represent NFL (i. e. professional) football. It is no surprise that BCS telecasts are strikingly similar to NFL broadcasts. This is because, as Seo and Creed (2002) suggest, without alternative courses of acting being apparent, it is highly unlikely that there will be any change to the status quo.

The likelihood that actors within an institutional setting will challenge institutional homeostasis, through envisioning and realizing alternative courses of action, is determined by their levels of embeddedness (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006; Holm, 1995; Seo & Creed, 2002). Such embeddedness is not easily overcome. The ability to do so is a function of actors having an awareness of alternatives, being open to those alternatives, and then having a motivation to change (Greenwood & Suddaby). Faced with continuing media consolidation, unless college athletic administrators insist that media partners' implement and evaluate broadcast strategies in order to increase adherence to universities' educational mission, the continual transference of professionalized media logics to college-sport properties will likely continue to increase. Simply put, broadcasters have no motivation to change.

The analyzed broadcasts offer strong evidence that strategic decision-making in relation to 2009 Bowl Championship Series broadcasts reflects Oliver's (1991) notion of "acquiescence," with little apparent attempt to modify production protocols in order to deliver on college sport's supposed educational mandate. This study also supports Andrews' (1999) contention that there is no alternative to sport's predominant corporate, commercialized form. Further, we are clearly in accordance with Giroux's (2003) concerns regarding the increasingly corporative nature of the university with the vast majority of practices and processes subjugated to the pursuit of external funding.

Conclusion

Washington (2004; see also Washington & Ventresca, 2004) has described college sport – as embodied within the NCAA – as an institution designed to enhance member universities' visibility and resources. This study extends previous work in this area (Southall & Nagel, 2008; Southall et al., 2008), clearly demonstrates the existence of a dominant commercial logic and articulates the mutually constitutive effects of this on particular outcomes. Consistent with the dominant logic within the field of college sport, BCS decision making is continually focused toward those issues that are consistent with the dominant commercial logic and away from those that are not (Thornton, 2002). Much current thought holds that organizations and institutions are

not static in nature, but have structures and systems that must be continually reenacted (e.g., Jarzabkowski, 2005). In this constant state of ‘becoming’ (see also Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), our work sheds light on a mutually constitutive link between the dominant logic and the activities of organizational actors. As a result, similar to Lounsbury (2002) and Thornton, behaviors of BCS broadcast actors continually reinforce the dominant logic and further marginalize any competing logic. The ‘official’ rhetoric espousing educational values is nothing more than required ceremonial conformity necessary for institutional legitimacy, and not reflective of the actual behaviors of organizational actors (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In essence, even the rare attachment of educational nomenclature to BCS telecasts is nothing more than a point of competitive differentiation designed to distinguish NCAA FBS college football within a crowded sport marketplace. While some may claim an educational logic influences BCS strategic decision-making, such a claim bears little resemblance to reality.

This study supports Lounsbury’s (2007) contention that, “most environments are subject to multiple competing logics that provide a foundation for ongoing contestation and change” (p. 302). While college-sport - and college football specifically - reflected in various NCAA divisions (FBS, FCS, D-II, and D-III), as well as other intercollegiate athletic associations (e.g. National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics [NAIA], National Junior College Athletic Association [NJCAA], and National Christian College Athletic Association [NCCAA]), clearly reflects multiple, competing logics, the NCAA’s FBS commercial logic is so dominant that it, together with its commercial partners, inevitably shapes the prevailing logic of the “big-time” Division-I college-football field.

In fact, the 1973 reorganization of the NCAA into three distinct and autonomous divisions, with separate independent management councils and the abolition of the necessity for association-wide approval for policies specific to each division (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2007a, 2007b), lends credence to the organization’s long-standing recognition of the dominance of a commercial logic in its Football Bowl Subdivision and supports our study’s conclusion that production of BCS broadcasts is shaped by just such a dominant logic.

While clearly once Fox Sports and ABC (and now ESPN) buy the rights to BCS broadcasts, they control the commercials and, in fact, all nonprogram content associated with the broadcasts. However, the NCAA still technically licenses all bowl games, and the Bowl Championship Series is an arrangement developed and ultimately controlled by university and conference stakeholders. In light of our findings, it seems highly likely such college and university administrators have effectively ceded control of BCS broadcasts to their broadcast partners. As a result, these broadcast organizations’ dominant commercial logics permeate such broadcasts. Conversely, if the BCS, NCAA, and member universities claim they still retain jurisdiction over the broadcasts’ content, analyzed broadcasts (e.g. D-I men’s and women’s basketball, BCS bowl-games) offer strong evidence that a commercial logic has come to dominate the Division-I (FBS) college-sport field.

Without a doubt, there is a need for further research in this area. Such research may seek to explore evidence of a proposed third institutional logic within big-time college sport: amateurism. While there seems to be little doubt big-time college sport reflects a commercialized institutional logic consistent with the NCAA’s notion of amateurism, future research should investigate such whether such expressions of amateurism exemplify Meyer and Rowan’s (1977)

“ceremonial façades.” One method of inquiry would be to utilize economic cartel theory and examine whether the current big-time collegiate economic model still exhibits amateurism’s key tenet: a clear line of demarcation between amateur and professional sport.

There is also clearly a need for continual examination of messages conveyed during televised college-sport events. We suggest analyses of a variety of college-sport broadcasts along a spectrum of sports, NCAA Division, and perceived “commercialization” (e.g., Division-I baseball and softball “College World Series,” as well as Division-II and Division III national championships) to determine if such broadcasts exhibit the same corporate, commercialized forms found in this study. Such analysis may help determine the extent to which the commercial logic evident in BCS bowl-game broadcasts has been adopted in the production of other college-sport events. The development of a myriad of additional broadcast platforms designed to deliver “non-revenue” college sporting events to consumers offers a potentially useful setting for such analyses.

Finally, further qualitative studies should be undertaken to assess the perceptions and motives of broadcasters representing college and professional sport events. In addition, research probing consumers’ perceptions of the educational relevance of college-sport events such as March Madness and Division-I football bowl games might reveal the effectiveness of NCAA public-relations activities as impression-management vehicles. Such research may answer questions regarding the apparent educational “façade” of big-time college athletics and lead to further investigations of big-time college sport to determine whether it may have become a commercial enterprise unrelated to universities’ educational missions.

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