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The Influence of a University's Social Identity on Changing Athletic Affiliations

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Over the past 40 years, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has established itself as the dominant intercollegiate athletics association within the United States, in part by expanding opportunities for schools to become members of the association. As a result, many universities decision makers decided to change their school's athletic affiliation to the NCAA. The purpose of the present research is to examine the impact that five social identities---size, women's college, historical black college and universities, and geography---have on the likelihood that members of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) move the NCAA. Previous research by Washington (2004-2005) illustrated that colleges were simultaneously influenced by multiple identities. Results from a logistic regression model showed that NAIA universities that are categorized as historical black colleges, women's colleges, and located in the New England and Rocky Mountain regions are more likely to move to the NCAA when other schools in those particular identities move to the NCAA. These results could help the NAIA to target specific schools for membership as well as talk to those schools that are leaving to better explore why they are moving to the NCAA.

B y the turn of the 20th century, brutality in college football and acts of cheating (e.g., athletes participating for more than one institution) in all sports evoked the need for governance within college athletics. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) was founded as a potential solution to the brutality and cheating among colleges and university sports' teams (Smith, 1988). The NCAA gradually matured through the first few decades of existence; however, the problem of cheating and athlete eligibility that once plagued college sports prior to

the establishment of the NCAA in 1906 became increasingly evident. Many college administrators sensed that college sport was shifting away from the valued balance of academics and athletics. The need for athletic governance in the form of inter-organizational affiliation was acknowledged by participating institutions, especially the "Big Three" of Harvard, Yale and Princeton (Smith, 1988). Thus, there was a market for adding additional athletic associations to provide a choice for universities. By the 1950s, the options for additional intercollegiate athletic associational support grew as the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) formed. In direct response to the establishment of the NAIA, the NCAA developed the sanity codes during the 1940s and 1950s. The sanity codes were the first attempt at establishing the NCAA as a governing body to deal with clarification of rules to member schools and enforcement of those rules. The primary area that the sanity codes administered was the amateur status of student-athletes, academic standards, financial aid, and recruiting of student-athletes (Byers & Hammer, 1997; Smith, 2012; Washington, 2004).

Beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the sanity codes began the membership competition between the NCAA and NAIA where a clear dominance of membership began to favor the NCAA (Smith, 1988; Washington, 2004). By 1966, the NAIA had grown to 517 member institutions, while the NCAA had 536 member institutions. Since 1967, the NCAA created 3 and then 5 divisions and reluctantly added women's sport. The increase in divisions and the addition of women's sport sponsorship by the NCAA created additional opportunities for a university to join the association. NCAA decisions were also made in response to the NAIA in an attempt to adjust membership rules in favor of its current membership for universities that participated in collegiate athletics (Washington, 2004). Between 1973 and 1996, the NAIA lost 196 members, many to the NCAA. During this same period, the NCAA grew from 757 to 996 member institutions, an increase of 239 schools (Washington, 2004). This restructuring introduced a hierarchy based on the perceived status of the NCAA within the United States intercollegiate athletic system and an opportunity for institutions to move up and down this hierarchy (Smith, 2012). This resulted in over 300 universities moving from a rival athletic association (e.g., NAIA, USCAA, and NJCAA) to the NCAA since 1980 according to the NCAA (E. Summers, personal communication, July 2010). In 2011, 17 universities were approved by the NCAA to begin the process of moving into Division II or III (Brown, 2011; Pickle, 2011). The question remains, what factors influenced these universities to move from the NAIA to the NCAA?

One way to examine the question of university movement is through an examination of a university's social identity. Washington (2004-2005) reviewed 500 NAIA member colleges and tracked their sport governance affiliation (NCAA or NAIA) between 1973 and 1999. Washington based his methodology on Rao, Davis, and Ward's (2000) assertion that the likelihood of movement to another association emerged when members who shared specific identities abandoned the in-group to join an out-group. Schools can be faced with three choices: join another conference in the same association, become independent (no conference affiliation) in the same association, or move to a different association. Washington (2004-2005) then examined the multiple social identities that a university had and the potential effect identities may have on athletic association transition decisions. Tracking schools that were members of the NAIA in 1973, Washington (2004-2005) found that the presence of certain identities, such as conference affiliation, religious affiliation, and historical black college and university (HBCU) designation, increased the likelihood of NAIA members to move to the NCAA.

Washington (2004-2005) only used NAIA member schools in 1973; therefore, schools

that became members of the NAIA after 1973 were not included in the sample. A further limitation was the instability and definition of conference association. Conference association focused on concentrated geographic areas and does not account for various geographical factors that may influence the choice that universities can make to move associations.

The present research attempts to extend and address limitations of Washington's (2004-2005) research by examining NAIA membership from 1968 to 2011. During this sample period, there are 19,692 university-year observations, which encompass over 900 different universities within the NAIA. During this same time frame, many universities changed athletic associations by moving from the NAIA to the NCAA and vice versa. The present research accounts for movement to and from the NAIA. Instead of using conference membership, the present research examines the geographical regions located in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). IPEDS is "the primary source for data on colleges, universities, and technical and vocational postsecondary institutions in the United States"[1] and is compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics through the United States Department of Education. By examining IPEDS geographical regions instead of conferences, this distinction attempts to better evaluate the three choices universities face.

For sport management researchers, the present study examines interactions within the organizational field of US colleges and universities, an element Washington and Patterson (2011) stated as lacking in sport management research. Scott (2008) defined an organizational field as a "community of organizations that partakes of a common meaning system and whose participants interact more frequently and fatefully with one another than with actors outside the field" (p. 86 as cited in Scott, 1994, p. 207-208). The results from the present research shows the impact of a university decision to change is partially influenced by the decisions of other members of the organizational field.

The present research estimates a logistic regression model incorporating identities such as religious affiliation, women's college designation, and historical black college designation, the present research finds that certain identities are likely to cause a university to change athletic associations. These results have important implications for the NAIA, the NCAA, and individual universities that are considering the application process for NCAA membership.

Literature Review

As Benjamin and Podolny (1999) suggested, people or organizations affiliate themselves with higher status classes shape the perceived value of the person or organization to consumers and stakeholders. In some instances, membership affiliations are easier to observe through the quality of the person/product (Benjamin & Podolny, 1999). The differences in quality could be true for colleges and universities as a whole. Historically, the NCAA was the association for high status universities such as the University of Michigan, Duke University, and the University of Tennessee (Getz & Siegfried, 2010). With the strategic decisions made by the NCAA to expand its membership to compete with the NAIA, it allowed schools to associate themselves with perceived higher status schools. When prospective students are researching and visiting universities to decide whether to attend that particular university, it may be easier to examine or observe the university's affiliations than its quality. As Washington (2004-2005) stated, "[t]he choice for colleges was whether to join the NCAA as an institution where prestigious schools play or stay with the NAIA which represented the smaller and more regional schools" (p. 39). This choice can also be influenced by decisions made by other universities with similar

characteristics, such as social identity.

Social Identity

Organizations may choose to affiliate themselves with other associations due to similar characteristics or identities. The recognition of organizational behavior in relation to organizational identification continues to be a vital piece in the overall development of an organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Organizational development begins with "a specific form of social identification" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 22). Rao, Monin, and Durand (2003) defined social identity as the "self-image derived by actors when they categorize themselves as members of a collectivity or occupants of a role" (p. 797).

The literature on social identity theory reviews how people view themselves as belonging to one group and not to others (Stets & Burke, 2000). Social identity evolved from the research of Tajfel (1978, 1982), Turner (1975, 1982, 1985) and Tajfel & Turner (1985) with the transitioning from individualistic psychology to psychological groups. However, this individualistic psychology (Turner & Oakes, 1986) was derived prior to Tajfel and Turner's (1985) social identity concept. Individualism in social psychology was summarized by Allport (1924) and later by Asch (1952) suggesting that the application of an individual's psychological configuration in a social setting goes unchanged when transitioning from non-social to social events. Furthermore, the individual responses to such social events were simply reacting to other individuals surrounding the event rather than the event itself (Turner & Oakes, 1986).

As Allport (1924) and Asch (1952) viewed the social environment from an individualistic point of view, it was Turner (1982) who discussed how social identity could function as a group concept rather than an individual within a group. Turner (1982) used the term *depersonalized* to lessen the effect of the individual within the group and enhance the group behavior. This enhancement led to the construction of self-categorization theory. Self-categorization theory aimed to identify methods where individuals become integrated into groups (Turner, 1985; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Turner & Oakes, 1986). Self-categorization theory explained groups in terms of structure and functioning of the social self-concept, where people are evaluated within the group in relation to how the group behaves.

Turner and Oakes (1986) evaluated the evolution of social identity theory and emphasized the importance of further advancing social identity theory from an individual state to a group dynamic, "...the aim in moving ever more specifically from applying the social identity concept to group behavior to social influence to group polarization is to demonstrate concretely the predictive empirical power of the concept" (p. 242). Furthermore, Turner and Oakes (1986) stated:

> The social identity concept is a specification of that psychological representation of the whole and the self-categorization theory offers a detailed predictive explanation of just how the feat is accomplished, how individual psychology processes can produce more than just individual behavior and how a science of the individual need not be individualistic. (p. 250)

Previous research applying the broad themes of social psychology and social identity theory to the sport industry has typically taken the distinctive form of fan psychological identification with a sport team (Wann & Branscombe, 1990). Topics closely associated with

team identification examined sport fans psychological connection to new sports teams (Lock, Taylor & Darcy, 2011; James, Kolbe & Trail, 2002), fan attendance decisions (Madrigal, 1995; Mitrano, 1999; Sutton, McDonald, Milne & Cimperman, 1997) and fan motivations (Fink, Trail & Anderson, 2002; Trail & James, 2001).

Literature investigating new sport teams has focused on the specific relationship with the team and the community in which the team resides. Both James et al. (2002) and Lock, Taylor and Darcy (2009) identified a psychological connection between new season-ticket holders of newly formed Major League Baseball teams in their first seasons. It was James et al. (2002) who found fans with a strong bond to the new professional sport team having several motives for becoming a season ticket holder while the bond was less to be desired in terms of ticket purchases for those fans with a weak connection to the team.

While the previous literature has reviewed team identification from a fan's perspective, a unique look into building team identification with new sport teams became clear by examining the "process" and "manifestation" that lead to the development in team identification through an internal organizational perspective (Lock, Taylor, Funk & Darcy, 2012). With the use of social identity theory and the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM), Lock et al. (2012) investigated how fan team identification matures in connection with members of a new sport team. The PCM suggested that four psychological characteristics---awareness, attraction, attachment and allegiance---might describe behavioral involvement (e.g., playing, watching, buying) with a sport or sporting event (Funk & James, 2001; Shilbury, Westerbeek, Quick, Funk, 2009).

Lock et al. (2012) analyzed team identity perceptions with members of the newly formed Sydney Football club using interview data. Four distinct outcomes emerged from these interviews. First, the development of team identification became *central* as the self-conceptualization of the members impacted the day-to-day activities and operations. The term central was unique in this case as it was defined "through the progression from an externally driven, substitutable bond to an internalized and consuming identity" (Lock et al., 2012, p. 290). Second, team persona became more complicated as members of the team learned more about other members and the organization through game attendance, player performance and individual personalities. Third, as the season continued and success began to build, members identified with the team through team related news and media searches. This type of team identification was enforced by previous research noting, "individuals will seek to align themselves with social categories, which reflect positively on their self-concept" (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Lock et al., 2012, p. 291). Finally, it was found that members actively promoted the football club to the community as a method to make the team more identifiable. "This behavior also provided members with a mechanism to show others that they were loyal and committed fans" (Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Lock et al., 2012, p 291).

Fan identification, which is considered a significant avenue for an organization in pursuit of economic vitality, hinders on sport consumerism behavior (Fink, Trail & Anderson, 2002). These behaviors result in fans attending games, paying more for tickets, spending more money on team merchandise (Fink, Trail & Anderson, 2002; Madrigal, 1995; Mitrano, 1999; Sutton, McDonald, Milne & Cimperman, 1997). It was Dutton, Dukerich and Harquil (1994) that furthered the understanding an organization's social identity through two organizational images. The first examined the members of the organization and their "distinctive, central and enduring" (p. 239) perceptions about their lives within the organization. The second organizational image examined focused on a member's perception of what non-organizational member's perceptions about the organization. These member perceptions lead to patterns of social interactions where

organizations shape and define themselves. This is an important aspect of organizations having the ability to further understand their own social identity because it emphasized not only an organization's internal viewpoint, but also implies the necessity of understanding an organizations social identity from an external point of view.

The need to further understand an organization's social identity was also suggested by Fink et al. (2002) and their review of eight motives that contributed to team identification. Their study examined questionnaires from one large Southern university at two intercollegiate basketball games. Seven of the eight motives were significantly correlated to team identity, however it was the motive of vicarious achievement that was considered the primary indicator in this study. Fink et al. (2002) noted vicarious achievement as "the need for social prestige, self-esteem and sense of empowerment that an individual can receive from their association with a successful team" (p. 198).

Individuals often go out of their way to inform others of their own accomplishments. However, people will also go out of their way to highlight their association with others who have been successful (Fink et al., 2002; Sloan 1989). This suggests that individuals, and likely organizations, not only want to associate themselves with others that are successful, but also want others to know that they are associating themselves with successful individuals and organizations.

Individual and organizational identification was acknowledged as a critical piece to the organizational behavior literature [see Tajfel and Turner (1985)]. In the sport management literature, organizational identification has been understudied using social identity theory. The present research adopted the organizational behavior approach of colleges and universities changing athletic associations through the restoration of individualistic logic to organizational identification. This tactic was identified by Ashforth and Mael (1989) as a "fruitful application to organizational behavior" (p. 20). The present research incorporated the individualistic approach (i.e., individual colleges and universities), set forth by Tajfel and Turner (1985) and Ashforth and Mael (1989), to organizational virtues of social identity theory progressed by Tajfel (1978, 1981), Tajfel and Turner (1985) and Turner (1975, 1982, 1984, 1985) with stronger purpose towards the organization. Tajfel and Turner (1985) suggested that individuals classified both themselves and other people into different social categories. These categories included religious affiliation, gender, age, and organizational membership. According to Ashforth and Mael (1989) and Turner (1985), categories are the basis of similar characteristics associated with the members of the group. From a higher education perspective, colleges and universities often categorize themselves with other institutions (e.g., public/private, religious affiliation, size or enrolment) to compete for state and federal funding (Liefner, 2003). Multiple identities played an important role for universities and their decision-making process surrounding movement within intercollegiate athletics.

According to Turner (1985) and reiterated by Tajfel and Turner (1979) there are three strategies (social creativity, social change, and social mobility) that members of a group can implement when they feel that their social identity is threatened. Social creativity strategies challenge to change the elements of group dynamics to create more favorable opportunities for in-group processes (Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish & Hodge, 1996; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social change strategies emphasize the production of actual changes being made proportionately to the status of the in-group and out-group dynamics. "Typically, they involve mobilizing members of the in-group to confront out-group members to change the status quo" (Jackson et al., 1996, p. 242). The present research focuses on social mobility defined as an organization leaving one

group to become associated with another group (Rao et al., 2003). Social mobility reviews the importance of movement from one group to another group. Inter-group movement is essential to understand as it may damage the status of remaining group members due to the visibility that comes with social mobility (Greve, 1995). As a result, the remaining group members may decide that it is in their best interest to move.

In addition to Washington's (2004-2005) research, one other study examined university movement. Weaver (2010) examined the impact of an institution's past on the decision made by the administrators at the University of North Carolina Greensboro and Elon University to move to NCAA Division I. Analyzing the history of both universities by gathering data from archival records, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, physical artifacts, and direct observation, the results suggested administrators at each school were unsatisfied with the university's past profile and hoped the reclassification would change constituents' perception of the university. "The move to Division I was beyond athletic desires, but rather an effort to improve the overall institutional profile" (Weaver, 2010, p. 137).

Research Question

Organizations can have multiple social identities. Some of these identities are more salient to an organization than others in terms of decisions to reposition an organization. "When peers of a traditional group join the insurgent group, existing members in the traditional camp are likely to infer that there is something wrong with their social group and, by implication, their own social identity" (Rao et al., 2003, p. 817-818). University movement between the NAIA and NCAA has been a frequent occurrence over the past 40 years. Certain identities that a university classifies itself into such as religious affiliation and geographic region could influence a university's decision to move to the NCAA from the NAIA. Thus, the present research seeks to address the question: *what effect does social identity have on a university's likelihood of moving from the NAIA to the NCAA?*

Methods

To investigate the effect that a university's various social identities have on the likelihood of NAIA schools joining the NCAA, the present research examined NAIA membership from 1968 to 2011. This time period is useful because it begins prior to 1973, the year when the NCAA created the three divisions (Division I, II, and III) that still exists today (Washington 2004-2005). In addition, the sample period provides an extensive period to examine university movement from the NAIA to the NCAA. NAIA membership for each year was directly obtained from the NAIA.[2] University identities such as location, private/public distinction, HBCU designation, women's college designation, and religious affiliation were collected from various university websites as well as IPEDS through the United States Department of Education. In the IPEDS database, each school has a unique identification code that we used to merge the IPEDS data with the membership roll received from the NAIA.

The unit of observation is a university-year. The year is in accordance to the IPEDS database, which is sorted by the survey year. The research team identified institutions that merged with other institutions, changed names, or closed ensure that no double counting occurred. In addition, international universities and US universities that were not listed in the

IPEDS database were not included in the final sample. The final data set includes 19,692 university-year observations between 1968 and 2011.

Colleges and universities that were members of the NAIA during the sample time period were included in the data set until one year after leaving the NAIA for the NCAA. After one year in the NCAA, an observation for the university is not present in the sample. The present research identified the university-year observation that a school left using a 1/0 dichotomous variable. The value of 1 indicates the university left the NAIA in the observed year, while 0 signifies that the university stayed in the NAIA in the observed year. This variable will serve as the dependent variable in the present research. Table 1 presents the summary statistics for some of the university identities. In the sample, 4.4% of university-year observations occur when the university is in its first year of NCAA membership.

Table 1 - *Summary Statistics*

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.
Joined NCAA	0.044	0.206
Women's College	0.018	0.134
Religious Affiliation	0.596	0.491
Private School	0.719	0.449
Historical Black College	0.085	0.279
n=19,692		

Model Specifications

Given a dichotomous dependent variable, discrete regression techniques such as probit, logit (Maddala, 1983), or a linear probability model (LPM) must be used. The difference between a logit and probit models is that a logistic regression has flatter tails on the cumulative distribution function than a probit regression (Maddala, 1983). For the present research, a logistic regression is used. The general logistic regression model is:

$$\text{Log}(P(t)/[1-P(t)]= a + Sb_ix_i + Sc_kx_k(t) + \mu_{it} \qquad (1)$$

where *P(t)* is the probability of moving to the NCAA, *b* is the set of coefficients that does not change over time, and *c* is a set of coefficients that do change over time. Results from the logistic regression model indicate if the independent variables are more or less likely to cause a change in the dependent variable. Previous sport research using a logistic regression model examined phenomenon such as the likelihood of receiving an invitation to the NCAA men's basketball tournament (Washington & Zajac, 2005), a university adopting a sports program (Washington & Ventresca, 2004), a professional sports team winning a game (Taylor & Trogdon, 2002), and a coach being dismissed from his/her job (Frick, Barros, & Prinz, 2010).

Independent Variables

      Washington (2004-2005) remarked that universities identified themselves into many groups. When universities within one of these identity groups leave to join another association, it may lead the observed university to reevaluate its role within the association. As a result, the present research incorporates the identities used in Washington's (2004-2005) research and added women's college designation.

      The first identity is the geographic location of the university. The eight regions that appear in the IPEDS data set define geographic region. Table 2 lists the eight IPEDS regions along with the number of observations from each region. The New England region comprises the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont. Approximately 4.5% of the sample comes from this region according to Table 2. Observations from the Mid-East region come from the states of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania as well as the District of Columbia. They comprise 7.3% of the sample observations. The Great Lakes region includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin and is approximately 16.85% of the university-year observations. The second largest group in terms of number of observations in the sample is universities from the Plains region. Universities from the states of Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota comprise this region under the IPEDS definition. The largest percentage of sample observations (30.09) comes from universities in the Southeast region, which are in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Approximately 10% of the observations are from the Southwest region. Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas are the states in the Southwest Region. The Rocky Mountains region includes the states of Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming. The smallest percentage of observations (3.6) is from the Rocky Mountains region. The final IPEDS region is the Far West, which includes the states of Alaska, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington.

Table 2 - *University Tabulations*

Religion	Number	% of sample	IPEDS Geographic region	Number	% of sample
Church of Christ	832	4.23	New England	883	4.48
Christian	910	4.62	Mid East	1,441	7.32
Episcopal	139	0.71	Great Lakes	3,318	16.85
Interdenominational	586	2.98	Plains	3,567	18.11
Lutheran	644	3.27	Southeast	5,925	30.09
Reformed Christian	40	0.20	Southwest	2,005	10.18
Baptist	1,789	9.08	Rocky Mountains	715	3.63
Brethren	261	1.33	Far West	1,838	9.33
Catholic	2,391	12.14	Size		
Mennonite	90	0.46	Not Classified by Carnegie	834	4.24
Methodist	1,801	9.15	Small or Very Small	13,246	67.27

Mormon	73	0.37	Medium	4,818	24.47
Nondenominational	441	2.24	Large or Very Large	794	4.03
Other	71	0.36			
Pentecostal	182	0.92			
Presbyterian	1,293	6.57			
Quaker	176	0.89			
Seventh Day	59	0.30			
Wesleyan	160	0.81			

For the purposes of the present research, seven of the eight IPEDS geographic regions are included in the regression model as the Far West region is removed due to collinearity with the other regions. The present research includes an indicator variable for each of the seven regions (e.g. New *England Region*) indicating whether the focal university is from that particular region. In addition, a count variable (*# of schools from university's region to NCAA*) is included with the number of universities from the observed university's geographic region that moved to the NCAA in that year. Finally, there is an interaction variable that combines the seven geographic indicator variables with the count variable of other universities in that region to the NCAA (e.g. *New England*Region School #*). A positive and significant parameter on this variable indicates that the more universities in an observed university's region move to the NCAA, the likelihood that the observed university will move to the NCAA in the observed year will increase.

The second identity is historical black college and university designation. Sports play a predominant role in African American culture according to Spreitzer and Snyder (1990). Spreitzer and Snyder's (1990) research indicated that there is a distinctive African American sports subculture. Extending their conclusion to higher education, historical black colleges and universities may possess a unique characteristic that can attract African American students to attend the school. With this characteristic, a move to the NCAA from the NAIA would allow the school to potentially gain exposure and increase their enrollment numbers. As a result, the present research includes an indicator variable *(HBCU)* signifying if the university is a historical black college or university. It takes the value of 1 if the university is an HBCU and 0 otherwise. From Table 1, 8.5% of sample observations are HBCUs. For each year, there is a separate count variable *(# HBCU to NCAA)* signifying the number of HBCUs that moved to the NCAA in that year. Finally, there is an interaction variable (*HBCU*# HBCU to NCAA*) interacting the HBCU indicator variable with the number of HBCUs that moved to the NCAA in that year.

The third social identity is religious affiliation. Comparatively, religious affiliated schools are similar to the business-format of franchising where schools receive a basket of "goods" such as approaches and procedures that are implemented (Garg, Rasheed, & Priem, 2005). Under this grouping, there are three variables. The first is an indicator variable (*Religious Affiliation*) equal to 1 if the university does have a religious affiliation, 0 for all other observations. Sixty percent of sample observations are affiliated with a religion according to Table 1. Since there are many religious affiliations, we attempted to aggregate the denominations to larger and generalized categories. There are nineteen different religious affiliations that we categorize as denominations. These are listed in Table 2. Roman Catholic institutions comprise the largest number of overall university-year observations at 12%. Methodist and Baptist affiliations each compose 9% of all the university-year observations. The second variable is a count variable equal *(# of Religious Affiliation to NCAA)* to the number of

universities from the focal university's religious affiliation category in Table 2 that moved to the NCAA in that year. Finally, there is an interaction term (*Religious Affil* # of Rel Affiliation to NCAA*) interacting the religious affiliation indicator variable with the count variable for the focal university.

Women's colleges are the fourth identity that the present research controls for in the regression model. This is an identity that Washington (2004-2005) did not examine in his study. However, the women's college designation is a key identity due to its similarity to the HBCU designation. These universities provide educational benefits to specific demographics. Thus, these schools may move to the NCAA as a collective. There are three variables pertaining to the women's college group. The first is an indicator variable (*Women's College*) denoting whether the focal university is a women's college. Notice in Table 1 that 1.8% of university-year observations during the sample period was women's colleges. The second is a count variable (*# of Women's College to NCAA*) equal to the number of women's colleges that move to the NCAA in that particular year. Finally, a variable (*Women's University*# of Women's to NCAA*) interacting the women's college indicator variable and the count variable for the number of women's colleges that moved to the NCAA in that year.

The final identity is the size classification variables developed from the Carnegie classification. The Carnegie classification has 18 different size classifications based upon two-year and four-year universities, public and private university, and whether the university is primarily and residential or commuter university. For the purposes of the present research, the classification data is aggregated to four categories---very small or small, medium, large or very large, and not classified by Carnegie. Even though the Carnegie classifications for each university-year observation could not be located, we assume that growth amongst all universities is relatively constant and not many universities move from a "small" classification to a "medium" classification for example. Notice from Table 2 that the majority of universities within the sample are small or very small universities. Intuitively this makes sense as most large universities were either NCAA members or joined the NCAA prior to 1968.

Similar to the geographic regions, the present research removes the large or very large category from the analysis due to collinearity with the other three size classifications. Comparable to the four other categories, there is an indicator variable indicating the Carnegie classification of the focal university (e.g. *Medium University*). There is a count variable *(# of schools from size to NCAA)* equal to the number of universities that joined the NCAA from the focal university's size classification during that year. Finally, there is an interaction variable interacting the indicator variable with the count variable for all three category present in the logistic regression equation (e.g. *Medium University *# of schools from size to NCAA*).

The final indicator variable is a count variable that is equal to the number of public institutions that move to the NCAA (*# Public Schools to NCAA*). This control variable is used to control for the movement of public schools to the NCAA since many HBCUs, women's colleges, and religious affiliated schools are private institutions.

Estimation Issues

There are two potential estimation issues that can affect the accuracy of the results. One potential concern is multicollinearity. Multicollinearity is generally a small sample problem (Gujarati, 2003), which was not an issue for the present research since the sample has over 19,000 observations. In addition, the correlation coefficients for the variables are below any

reasonable value that one might suspect multicollinearity except for the interaction terms with the main variables. However, the inclusion of the main variables is necessary to examine the interaction effects (Price & Wolfers, 2011). The second estimation issue deals with the standard errors. Since the data set composes many universities over time, some unobserved heterogeneity that is similar within each university's observations is present. As a result, the standard errors of the logistic regression model are clustered by university.

Results and Discussion

Table 3 presents the results from the logistic regression model predicting the likelihood that the focal university moves to the NCAA in a given year. Of particular interest is the significance of the interaction variable for each of the social identities outlined previously. For geographic identity, notice in Table 3 that schools from less populated geographic regions, New England and Rocky Mountain, are more likely to move to the NCAA to follow schools from that region that have already moved. This result is not surprising given that when faced with the decision of moving to the NCAA to compete with the schools from the same region, universities are likely to make the decision to move to the NCAA due to internal organizational factors such as higher travel costs.

Table 3- *Dependent variable is whether university moved to NCAA in observed year*

Logistic Regression Results				
Identity	Variables	Coef	Robust Stnd Error	p-value
Geography	New England Region	-0.0498	0.3393	0.883
	Mid East Region	0.6777	0.3013	0.025
	Great Lakes Region	-0.3440	0.2841	0.226
	Plains Region	-0.7731	0.3045	0.011
	Southeast Region	0.1056	0.2789	0.705
	Southwest Region	-0.3703	0.2905	0.202
	Rocky Mountain Region	-0.1560	0.3215	0.627
	# of schools from University's region to NCAA	0.3441	0.0542	<0.001
	New England*Region School #	0.2454	0.0912	0.007
	Mid East Region*Region School #	-0.1501	0.0667	0.024
	Great Lakes Region*Region School #	-0.0828	0.0615	0.178
	Plains Region*Region School #	0.0552	0.0693	0.426
	Southeast Region*Region School #	-0.2353	0.0563	<0.001
	Southwest Region*Region School #	-0.0300	0.0625	0.631
	Rocky Mountain Region*Region School #	0.2614	0.0808	0.001
HBCU	HBCU	-1.0827	0.2257	<0.001
	# HBCU to NCAA	-0.0760	0.0256	0.003
	HBCU*# HBCU to NCAA	0.4152	0.0566	<0.001
	Religious Affiliation	-0.8882	0.1022	<0.001
	# of Religious Affiliation to NCAA	0.2136	0.0591	<0.001

Religion	Religious Affil* # of Rel Affiliation to NCAA	0.1084	0.0636	0.089
Women	Women's College	-0.9827	0.3492	0.005
	# of Women's College to NCAA	-0.0224	0.0461	0.627
	Women's University*# of Women's to NCAA	1.0111	0.1974	<0.001
Size	Size not Classified by Carnegie	-0.5824	0.3612	0.107
	Small or very Small University	-0.5039	0.2527	0.046
	Medium University	-0.5240	0.2627	0.046
	# of schools from size to NCAA	0.3131	0.0639	<0.001
	Size not Classified by Carnegie*# of schools from size to NCAA	0.2909	0.1198	0.015
	Small or very Small University*# of schools from size to NCAA	-0.2948	0.0643	<0.001
	Medium University*# of schools from size to NCAA	-0.2268	0.0635	<0.001
	# Public Schools to NCAA	-0.0636	0.0123	<0.001
	Constant	-3.0254	0.3164	<0.001

For schools located in highly populated regions, the results on the likelihood of moving is different from those of less populated regions. Examining Table 3, the Southeast and Mid-East regions are less likely to move to the NCAA. These regions are the first and fifth most populous regions respectively. The other regions have no statistical significance on the logistic regression parameter. This could reflect that universities in this region do not feel the pressure to move given that there are many universities to still play within a close geographic area. Thus, the schools from the region that decide to move to the NCAA may be seeking not only the supposed tangible and intangible benefits of an initial move to the NCAA but also additional movement within the NCAA classification rankings similar to Elon University.

In Washington's (2004-2005) research, schools were more likely to move when other conference schools moved to the NCAA. The present research could not determine the conference membership throughout the sample period. However, by using a broader definition of geographical region, the IPEDS classification, it provides a better indication regarding the decision to move by NAIA schools. The reason is that by including a broader geographic region, one can attempt to control for the university's decision to join another conference in that geographic region rather than move to the NCAA. Even though conferences are generally arranged via geography, they may be too narrowly defined since schools could choose to move to a conference that is still relatively close to them rather than move to the NCAA.

The other social identities also play important roles in the decision making process for universities. Table 3 indicates that if the focal university is designated as an HBCU, it is more likely to move to the NCAA. Similar to Washington's (2004-2005) and Spreitzer and Snyder's (1990) research, the HBCU designation is a distinctive social identity and subgroup. Within this group, the results from Table 3 suggest that a HBCU will be more inclined to move to the NCAA to follow other HBCUs that move to the NCAA.

Examining religious institutions, the results in Table 3 show that religious identification does not significantly affect a university's decision to move to the NCAA. Put another way, the focal university is not more likely to move given that a number of similarly religious affiliated schools moved to the NCAA in a given year. The lack of significance is interesting considering that Washington (2004-2005) found a positive and significant increase. One of the reasons for

these conflicting results may be due to the difference in aggregating the religious denominations to several broad religious categories. However, given the results from the present research, this is important information for both the NCAA and NAIA. Religious affiliation does not matter in a university's overall strategic decision making to move athletic associations like it may matter for other strategic decisions such as funding and broad university policies.

Similar to HBCU's, the present research proposed that the women's college designation could also form a distinct social identity, which may affect the decision of these universities. Examining the interaction variable in Table 3, the present research finds a positive and significant result. This means that women's colleges are more likely to move based upon other women's colleges moving to the NCAA. Given the small number of women's universities in the sample, the result is consistent with the belief that women's colleges are a unique social identity and are more likely to move and make decisions as a unit.

The final identity is size defined by the Carnegie size classifications for universities. Notice from Table 3 that the results vary based on size classifications. For small and medium size schools, they are less likely to move when similar size schools move to the NCAA ($p<.001$). For schools that are not classified by Carnegie, they are more likely to move to the NCAA when similar non-classified schools move. Schools that are not classified by Carnegie may feel that the Carnegie classification is a symbol of status for the university. By moving to the NCAA, it might allow the university to be recognized by Carnegie and receive a ranking. If similar non-classified schools are moving, then the focal university does not want to risk falling behind and thus will be more likely to move to the NCAA.

Implications and Future Research

The individual identities that universities possess can be utilized to help define the organization within the environment and help frame a specific social identity. Similar to previously discussed sport related research on fan and team social identity (Fink, Trail & Anderson, 2002; Lock, Taylor, Funk & Darcy, 2012), organizations can have a uniqueness that is built around their ideals and characteristics (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996). Many of the schools transitioning from the NAIA to the NCAA maintain a characteristic set that is based on the ideals and characteristics stemming from university beliefs. These beliefs also allow these organizations to identify with similar organizations. These same identities that allow organizations to identify with similar organization may also cause social mobility, the movement of organizations from one group to another group. This movement of organizations between groups is present within higher education with the movement of universities from one athletic association to another. Specifically, Washington (2004-2005) showed that schools associated with a particular athletic conference and specific groups of universities such as historical black universities and universities tied to a religious affiliation. The present research builds on Washington's (2004-2005) research to further explain the likelihood that certain university identities have on the university movement to the NCAA from the NAIA.

The results from the present research indicate that different social identities have different effects for universities moving from the NAIA to the NCAA. Colleges and universities located in specific geographical regions, such as the New England and Rocky Mountain regions, are more likely to make a move due to the limited number of schools within those regions. Schools not classified by Carnegie consider the transition to NCAA in order to increase their exposure

and receive a ranking from Carnegie. Women's colleges will also consider making the transition to the NCAA in order to maintain the group setting of these specific schools. These results have implications for both athletic associations and individual schools.

For the NAIA, the results provide information regarding both the strength and weaknesses of the membership distribution. There are particular identities that the NAIA may focus on to not only recruit new schools but also it provides the resources necessary to maintain these schools. For example, the NAIA could look to recruit new members from the New England and Rocky Mountain regions in order to replace the members that have left over the sample period. As part of this recruitment, the NAIA may want to specifically examine ways in which being an NAIA member in lower populated region creates a competitive advantage not only for the athletic department, but also for the university. In addition, the NAIA may want to consult current members from other identity groups that are more likely to move to the NCAA to see if there are needs that the association could provide to help recruit new members to the association.

Implications of the present research for the NCAA suggest that a closer examination into the transition process from the NAIA to the NCAA may be necessary. The present research shows that many of the higher education institutions that have made the transition to the NCAA have undertaken a drastic change to their athletic departments over the past four decades. Although our results do not undertake specific outcomes of change from the NAIA to the NCAA, previous research has shown that each transition is unique and further analysis into this process is needed to alleviate complications due to new colleges and universities moving to the NCAA, such as compliance educational concerns in addition to other NCAA transition requirements (Smith, 2012). Previous research has also recognized that all administrators involved in the change process must fully understand the motivations for moving associations as the benefits for moving (e.g., branding and increase revenue opportunities) may not meet expectations (Smith, 2012).

There are many future avenues for research. The first is to further examine the motivations for schools moving from one association to another. Understanding the motivations and subsequent consequences of these decisions will provide researchers and practitioners with additional information regarding university movement. The second area of future research should examine failures in college movement. Failures occur in two areas. The first area is universities that apply for membership into the NCAA but are not accepted. The second area is universities that are accepted for membership but then move back. For example, West Virginia Tech (WVT) decided to apply for membership to the NCAA in 1994. After 12 years in the NCAA, WVT decided to move back to the NAIA citing the school wanted to regain some of its athletic glory it once had in the NAIA. In 2010, WVT applied to rejoin NCAA Division II citing the alumni support of returning WVT to its NCAA roots. The NCAA denied WVT's application (Dannelly, 2006).

The present research examined the likelihood of movement into the NCAA. However, schools have the option to move into NCAA Division III or NCAA Division II. Future research should examine if some social identities are more likely to cause universities to move into the Division II compared to Division III. If there are differences, that can provide additional information for both athletic associations. In addition, one could examine the mission and vision statements of university athletic departments to see if content within the mission statements would predict university movement and if universities adjust their mission and vision statements upon moving to the NCAA. Finally, the tangible and intangible benefits of moving should be

examined to provide universities a clearer view of the outcomes related to their strategic decisions. Certain tangible benefits include the number and strength of incoming freshman applications. Intangible benefits include an increase in status potentially measured by the *US News and World Report* Rankings.

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Notes

[1] http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/.

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