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### **Escape from 'Owlcatraz': An Interaction Ritual Case Study of the Stadium Naming Rights Agreement Between Florida Atlantic University and The GEO Group, Inc.**

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*In 2013, Florida Atlantic University and The GEO Group, Inc. entered into a naming rights agreement for the university's football facility, which the latter rescinded 42 days later. This agreement is unique relative to similar agreements within intercollegiate athletics in the United States for two reasons: the sponsoring entity's business model and the fact that the agreement failed. The online media coverage of the naming rights agreement was gathered and used to reconstruct key events through qualitative content analysis (Berg, 2007). Interaction ritual theory (Collins, 2004) was employed to examine these events and provide an explanation for the agreement's outcome. Findings advance theory regarding the power of definitive stakeholders (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997) to influence the outcome of a unique corporate partnership within intercollegiate athletics. Specifically, findings demonstrate that current university students acquired and expressed more power than any other affected stakeholder group, primarily through their ability to effectively mobilize and frame the issue within public discourse. This case study's findings may expand the ways in which the behavior of sport stakeholders may be analyzed in future scholarship, as well as inform practitioners who are engaged in the execution or examination of future naming rights agreements within intercollegiate athletics.*

*Keywords: stadium, naming rights, interaction, ritual, stakeholders, power, protest*

Corporate acquisitions of stadium naming rights are increasingly common at the intercollegiate athletic level and have become more frequent at that level since the late 1990s. Many of these agreements have been undertaken with little opposition from members of the general public and affected stakeholders until the following case. In 2013, Florida Atlantic University (FAU) and The GEO Group, Inc. (GEO) entered into a naming rights agreement for the university's football facility. The agreement between FAU and GEO is unique relative to similar agreements within intercollegiate athletics for two reasons: the sponsoring entity's business model and the fact that the agreement failed.

The online media coverage of the naming rights agreement was gathered and used to reconstruct the events surrounding it. These events were analyzed through interaction ritual theory (Collins, 2004) in an attempt to provide an explanation as to why the agreement was rescinded. This case study's findings advance theory regarding the power of definitive stakeholders (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997) to influence the outcome of a unique corporate partnership within intercollegiate athletics. Moreover, the findings offer corresponding insight as to the tactics that definitive stakeholders employed to influence the agreement's dissolution.

## Literature Review

Stadium naming rights have been defined as "a transaction in which money or consideration changes hands in order to secure the right to name a sports facility" (Thornburg, 2002, p. 2). The majority of this scholarship has examined the value of stadium naming rights agreements for the sponsoring organization (Becker-Olson, 2003; Clark, Cornwell, & Pruitt, 2002; Gerrard, Parent, & Slack, 2007; Popp, DeSchriver, McEvoy, & Diehl, 2016), consumer perceptions of the sponsoring organization (Chen & Zhang, 2012; Haan & Shank, 2004), or the legal aspects of such agreements (Carbot, 2009; Thornburg, 2002) within professional sports. In fewer instances, stadium naming rights agreements for intercollegiate athletic venues have been included in such analyses (Chen & Zhang, 2012; Delia, 2014; Popp et al., 2016).

The rationale for intercollegiate athletic programs to enter into naming rights agreements appears to be an outcome of two, interrelated issues: an increase in both overall athletic (i.e., deficit) spending and costs for newly constructed or renovated athletic venues (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015). To demonstrate this point, NCAA Division I 'Power Five' conference members (i.e., ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12, and SEC) increased their spending on athletic facilities by 89%, adjusted for inflation, from 2004 to 2014 (Hobson & Rich, 2015). Furthermore, a study of 87 athletic directors across 25 NCAA Division I conferences found that 99% of participants planned to invest at least \$500,000 in athletic facility improvements between 2015-2020 (AECOM & Ohio University, 2015). About 50% of those surveyed planned to invest at least \$25 million in athletic venues over the same timeframe (AECOM & Ohio University, 2015). Overall, generating revenue from venue naming rights agreements has become "an indispensable part of contemporary facility construction projects" for colleges and universities (Chen & Zhang, 2012, p. 120).

Naming rights acquisitions for football venues by for-profit entities specifically, however, appear to be relatively rare within intercollegiate athletics. For example, in 2013, the year in which the current case transpired, only 17 out of 124 NCAA Division I, Football Bowl

Subdivision (FBS) institutions (14%) had naming rights agreements in place for their football venues. Notably, six of those 17 venues' primary tenants were teams that played within the National Football League (NFL).

Interestingly, all of the naming rights agreements for venues whose primary tenants were NCAA Division I college football teams in 2013 each involved a corporate entity whose industry fits one of the categories in the following taxonomy: construction (including trades), energy, finance, food, and technology, or CEFFT. Institutions of higher education must, however, balance the need for naming rights-derived revenue with the implications of commercialization generally (Chen & Zhang, 2012) and the associations with the sponsoring entity relative to stakeholders' perceptions (Benford, 2007; Chen & Zhang, 2012; Covell, 2001; Gray, 1996).

### *Stakeholder Theory*

Originally conceptualized by Freeman (2010 [1984]), a stakeholder is "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (p. 46). Freeman argued that conventional business practices ignore potential challenges to the firm and its objectives from the internal or external environment. Addressing the wants, needs, and/or interests of these internal and external stakeholders is not only ethical, Freeman maintained, it can also allow the firm to efficiently and effectively engage in its operations and production with little threat from the environment while simultaneously building value for corresponding stakeholders. Doing so, he argued, may assist the firm in developing a competitive advantage within the marketplace. The type and extent of the value created for stakeholders may differ from stakeholder to stakeholder depending on his/her/their corresponding wants, needs, and/or interests.

Freeman's notion of managing for stakeholders represented a conceptual shift in the management process and has been used as the theoretical foundation for a great deal of managerial scholarship and application. To this point, Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) developed a useful typology based on qualities specific to different stakeholders. They argued that classes of stakeholders can be identified by their possession or perceived possession of one, two, or all three of the following qualities: power, legitimacy, and urgency. The permutations of these three attributes comprise seven stakeholder types, which can be grouped into one of three classes: latent, expectant, and definitive. Definitive stakeholders are the most salient and possess all three of the aforementioned qualifying attributes for stakeholders: power, legitimacy, and urgency. Their actions may have the most immediate influence on the firms' operations. The process of stakeholder salience is a dynamic one, as stakeholders can become more or less salient depending upon their ability to access or yield these attributes.

While sport scholars have highlighted the importance of stakeholders to studies of stadium naming rights and their consumptive outcomes within intercollegiate athletics, they have done so without segmenting those stakeholders, per Mitchell et al.'s (1997) definition (see Chen & Zhang, 2012; Popp et al., 2016). General categories of stakeholder groups within intercollegiate athletics may include student-athletes, coaches, faculty, administrators, students, alumni, spectators, community members, and others, such as media partners and sponsors. Any combination of those stakeholder groups could be classified according to Mitchell et al.'s typology instead of being loosely defined under the broader category of 'stakeholders'. Broadly categorizing stakeholders is problematic as the development and continued refinement of stakeholder segmentation is inherent to the effective management of stakeholders (Freeman,

Harrison, & Wicks, 2007). Correspondingly, both the identification and prioritization of various stakeholder groups are needed to effectively analyze the perceptions of intercollegiate athletics stakeholders towards the real or potential acquisitions of athletic venue naming rights.

Friedman and Mason (2004) offer useful precedent in this regard. They employed Mitchell et al.'s (1997) typology of stakeholder segmentation in their analysis of professional sport venues. Friedman and Mason (2004) asserted that, rather than being used in post hoc analysis, the typology has tremendous value "as a strategic management tool for identifying and analyzing constituent environments" that can aid sport managers in making effective decisions regarding their athletic venues (p. 250). Hutchinson and Bennett's (2007) work is also significant. Their investigation of stakeholder attitudes relative to a university's stated core values "made it clear that athletic department and university leadership were not actively considering the core values in decision-making processes" (Hutchinson & Bennett, 2007, p. 445). Overall, for both Friedman and Mason (2004) and Hutchinson and Bennett (2007), sport administrators' good-faith efforts to address the perceptions of definitive stakeholders early in a decision-making process is needed to ensure that the decision reflects those stakeholders' values in order to generate their support.

While stakeholder salience may increase or decrease during the course of the firm-stakeholder relationship (Mitchell et al., 1997), studies of stakeholders within facility and intercollegiate athletic contexts have exclusively focused on the nature of the firm-stakeholder relationship *in situ*. This analytical perspective does not provide insight as to how firm-stakeholder relationships become successful or unsuccessful. Rather, such a perspective implies that these relationships are either successful or unsuccessful, weak or strong. Scholars and practitioners alike would benefit from an understanding as to how firm-stakeholder relationships evolved in an attempt to reduce that evolution to accessible moments in time that can explain how those relationships ultimately turn out as they do. The current case provides a unique opportunity to examine this epistemological gap by arriving at an explanation for a particular firm-stakeholder relationship by tracing that relationship along a timeline of key events and accounting for the emotion involved within it. Such an explanation requires a theoretical framework to reduce the level of stakeholder analysis from the macro or meso levels to the micro level in order to arrive at 'the root cause' of firm-stakeholder dysfunction. The theoretical frame used for the present study, interaction ritual theory, is particularly useful for providing a micro- and temporally-oriented explanation of firm-stakeholder interaction and has implications for effective firm-stakeholder interaction and strategic partnerships within intercollegiate athletics.

## Theoretical Frame

### *Interaction Ritual Theory*

Interaction ritual (IR) theory (Collins, 2004) was used as the lens through which to examine the events of the naming rights agreement between FAU and GEO. The emotionally-oriented nature of the affected stakeholders' collective response to the naming rights agreement connects well with IR theory and its emphasis on emotions in contrast to other theoretical frameworks that emphasize rational approaches to interaction. Goffman (1967) first created the notion of 'interaction ritual', which Collins (2004) further refined and formed as the basis for his IR work. The broad scope of the word 'ritual'—itself a remnant of Durkheimian sociology—is intended to account for both the structure inherent to large scale, formal ceremony as well as the

structural elements common to everyday, interpersonal interactions. The use of ritual within these interactions, be they large or small, becomes “a mechanism of mutually focused emotion and attention producing a momentarily shared reality, which thereby generates solidarity and symbols of group membership” (Collins, 2004, p.7).

*Ritual ingredients and outcomes.* Every interaction generates different outcomes for those individuals who participate within them. The degree to which individuals are able to orient their attention toward whichever objects or activities are at the root of each interaction shapes these outcomes. Four ingredients are inherent to every successful IR. They are bodily co-presence, a barrier to outsiders, a mutual focus of attention, and a shared mood, all four of which must be present in order to produce ritual outcomes, which are social solidarity, the sacralization of symbols, the creation of emotional energy, and standards of morality (Figure 1).

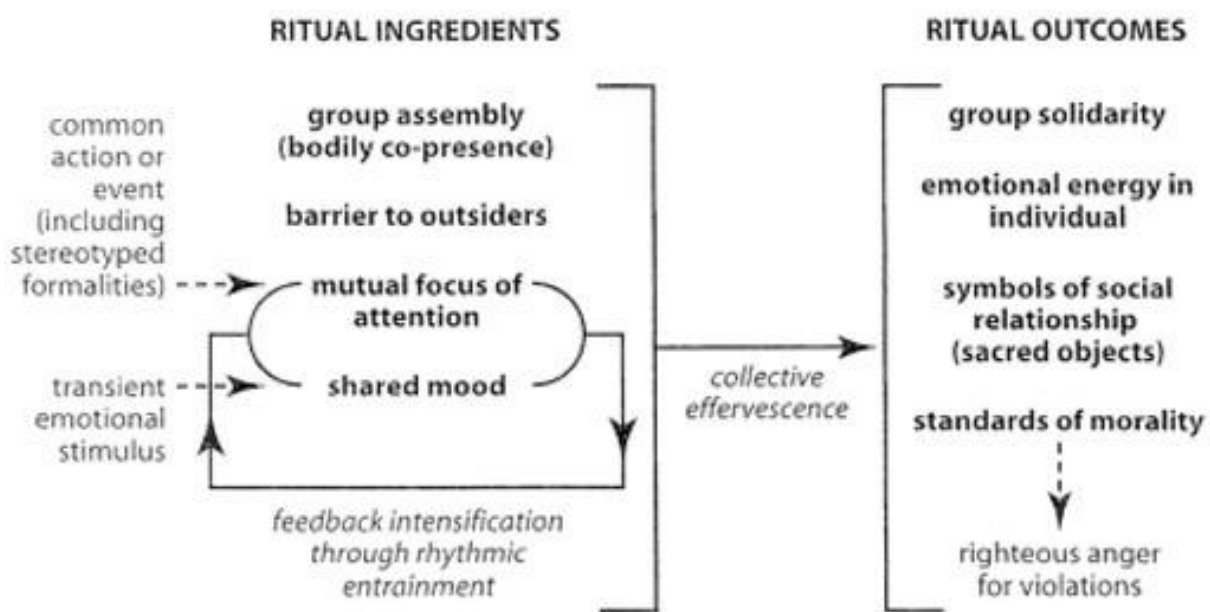


Figure 1. Interaction Ritual (IR) Theory Model (Collins, 2004)

Individuals develop feelings of group membership when the four ingredients are present in the IR. Social solidarity is expressed through symbols that emerge from the IR because symbols (e.g., words, ideas, objects, places, processes, or other persons) both represent the larger group and signify membership for individuals within that group to each other. The extent to which these symbols are infused with situational emotion as a consequence of the interaction greatly influences each interactant’s subsequent behavioral choices. Symbols develop a strong importance, a sacredness, that becomes inherent to them in future IRs.

Group members experience social solidarity as each interaction yields varying levels of emotional energy (EE) for its participants. EE “is carried across situations by symbols that have been charged up by emotional situations” (Collins, 2004, p. 107) and is the primary arousal mechanism that catalyzes behavior by connecting one’s experience in a particular interactional setting to his or her decision to engage in another subsequent interaction oriented toward the same symbol(s). ‘Face-to-face’ interactions have the greatest potential to yield group solidarity

and high levels of EE for those present because of the opportunity for physical symbols to emerge through the course of interaction.

Individuals present in IRs where all four ingredients are present also develop clear standards of morality. The emergence of high EE-yielding symbols as a consequence of individuals' participation in an IR enables the creation of "a sharp distinction between 'right' and 'wrong', insofar as these terms relate to the symbols at the root of their collective group experience" (Curry & Gordon, 2017, p. 256). IRs that involve large amounts of people, or produce particularly robust symbols, have the potential to yield a high level of collective emotion, or 'collective effervescence'. Collective effervescence establishes implicit norms and values for those present, which are rooted in the high level of EE that individuals attribute to the group's symbols. Individuals believe that they are moral when they act with the energy derived from the group's heightened experience. Ritual, in essence, is the foundation of a group's moral standards and sets in motion the expectations for individuals' appropriate behavior in future social situations.

All EE-seeking choices and behaviors create an interactional sequence with an IR point of origin, which Collins (2004) referred to as an 'interaction ritual chain'. Individuals engage with certain social persons and situations within the marketplace of potential interaction opportunities based on the EE they derive from their experiences in previous IRs, which creates these IR chains. Collins argued that forms of conflict, bureaucracy, social stratification, and other macrosociological processes are outcomes of face-to-face behavior whose origins can be located temporally along an IR chain. These large-scale, social processes are a function of the unequal distribution of EE in earlier interactions, as opposed to the unequal distribution of material resources. This conclusion has powerful implications for effective management and leadership practices within an organizational setting and underscores the value of IR theory as an articulation of the face-to-face mechanism inherent to firm-stakeholder interactions.

*D-Power and E-Power.* Two important aspects of IR theory as they relate to firm-stakeholder interaction are deference-power (D-Power) and efficacy-power (E-Power). These polar constructs have not yet been used in previous management-oriented analyses but are relevant to the current case because of the status differences present within it. University administrators hold positions of higher status in a university community than do students. With that status comes group members' expectations regarding how others should engage in, and respond to, interactions with them. The outcomes of IRs with such situational stratification can influence subsequent IR chains. While power may exist in a variety of contexts, D-Power and E-Power and their respective locations within IR chains are often present in those social occasions based in organizations or bureaucracies. The D-Power/E-Power dichotomy is thus a useful device for the interpretation of firm-stakeholder interaction broadly and fits the current case as an analytical construct well given the situational stratification inherent to it.

Generally speaking, D-Power refers to those IRs in which power appears to be zero-sum. An employer or supervisor gives orders and a subordinate obeys them. E-Power, in contrast, refers to those occasions in which power is distributed among those present in the interaction. While both D-Power and E-Power can exist in both the micro and macro realms, people will most likely experience E-Power as members of larger social groups. The larger collective is able to accomplish something it had not done previously as a consequence of the power distributed in E-Power-based interactions (Collins, 2004). D-Power, however, can be experienced in a variety of situations.

The use of titles in speech and the bowing or kneeling when in another's presence exemplify the deference rituals inherent to D-Power-based IRs. In these smaller IRs, symbols of formality are present in order to denote the respective status differences of those persons involved. This demarcation in status represents stratification-in-action. Large 'official' gatherings also exemplify D-Power-based IRs. These formal rituals contain pre-determined ritual ingredients and are typically scripted, if not rehearsed, in an effort to maximize ritual outcomes. Those of lower status may not be present in such gatherings, as their absence reinforces their status difference. Whether in small or large IRs, situational stratification leads to troublesome consequences for members of the subordinate social groups involved in them because, as Collins (2004) noted, "any society in which there is much inequality in D-Power will be one in which there are sharp differences in social identities, and a good deal of smoldering resentment and suppressed conflict" (p. 284).

Scholars have employed IR theory in their management-oriented analyses, although such research is sparse. Huggins, Murray, Kees, and Creyer (2007) argued, for example, that IR theory can help marketers understand how objects become important to consumers. They maintained that the emphasis on emotions within IR theory makes it a valuable conceptual tool for marketers since consumers' decisions are often dependent on emotions. Brown (2011) used IR theory in his analysis of consumer behavior toward the business of free trade coffee. He argued that IR chains are a better tool for explaining how ethical consumers mobilize than consumer culture or mass consumption theories. Brown noted that, among other benefits, IR theory facilitates a predictive model of consumer behavior that is rooted in the emotional motivations of those involved.

IR theory has been used by sport and recreation scholars as a framework through which to examine sport fans' engagement with each other and sport/recreation venues (see Cottingham, 2012; Curry & Gordon, 2017; Gordon, 2013). While the use of IR theory as a heuristic device in both management- and sport-oriented research may be in its infancy, the interplay between it and stakeholder management provides scholars with opportunities for deep analysis and fruitful application. It offers promise, as an example, for explaining how affected stakeholders might become more or less salient, per Mitchell et al.'s (1997) typology. Further, the value of IR theory in the present study is in its ability to articulate why affected stakeholders, primarily students, responded so viscerally to the naming rights agreement and how they were able to mobilize so quickly and effectively to force the organizations involved to nullify that agreement.

## Methodology

The FAU/GEO naming rights agreement is a deviant case (Seawright & Gerring, 2008) relative to the CEFFT taxonomy as GEO does not sell goods and/or services directly to consumers. Instead, GEO is a for-profit company that contracts with government entities to develop, and/or provide management for, correctional facilities and related programs around the world (Who we are, n.d.). The purchase of a stadium's naming-rights by a for-profit, 'prison' company is unprecedented and unique, which satisfies Stake's (1995) criteria for determining if a case is worth examining qualitatively for two reasons. First, GEO's business model is unlike any other for-profit entity that has attempted to secure naming rights for an intercollegiate athletics venue, if not any sport venue regardless of level, within the United States. Second, whereas previous naming rights agreements at the intercollegiate athletic level have lasted a pre-determined duration as outlined in those agreements, which is usually over the period of multiple

years, the FAU/GEO agreement lasted approximately 6 weeks. The brief duration of the FAU/GEO agreement culminated in GEO officials' decision to remove the company from the arrangement, presumably as a response to stakeholders' vocal opposition to it. The aim of this case study, then, is to understand why and how this outcome arose (Yin, 2014) by examining the evolution of the interaction between FAU and its various stakeholder groups after the announcement of the naming rights agreement.

This is a single, descriptive case study. Eisenhardt (1989) described the single case strategy as "an examination of the myriad of subtleties that influence a single organization" (p. 158). It allows scholars to "capture various nuances, patterns, and more latent elements" that other approaches may overlook (Berg, 2007, p. 284). Yin (2014) asserted that the descriptive approach should be used when one examines a unique phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred. Correspondingly, the phenomenon under investigation—both the naming rights agreement with such a unique corporate partner and the resulting dissolution of the agreement—is exceedingly rare. Thus, this case is also intrinsic (Stake, 1995); its findings may have limited transferability across the broader landscape of naming rights agreements.

This case is bound to the time frame from the date of the original agreement's announcement (Tuesday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013) to the date that GEO rescinded the agreement (Monday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013). The analysis of the events is also bound to the response of affected stakeholders from the moment of the original announcement to the announcement of the dissolution. Such a narrow focus for analysis is common in qualitative case studies (Berg, 2007). Case studies of organizations are also increasingly prevalent and an examination of a specific situation or event within or related to an organization can offer fruitful results (Berg, 2007).

The present case study involved qualitative content analysis to reconstruct the case's events, particularly through the acquisition of online news articles and videos (Berg, 2007). The research paradigm for the sociology of rituals, of which IR theory is a subset, includes historical analyses to explain the origins of important, contemporary symbols (Collins, 2004). Collins offered guidelines for unraveling contemporary symbols to ascertain the points at which they became significant through the IR theory framework. These guidelines are: judging the intensity of the symbolism involved, reconstructing the IRs from which the symbolism emerged, tracing the secondary circulation of relevant symbols, and examining the use of these symbols by group members when they are outside of group IRs (see Collins 2004, p. 97-99). These guidelines were followed in the current project so as to detail the case's events.

The use of IR theory is appropriate for the current case given its interpretive nature, as a descriptive case study requires researchers to establish a theoretical framework that should be followed throughout the data collection phase (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Berg, 2007). Qualitative analyses of online news articles *qua* primary documents can yield valuable findings for researchers, especially when online content is examined through an interactionist framework (Altheide & Schneider, 2013). Such analyses enable an understanding of individuals and/or their culture through the examination of relevant objects, symbols, and their corresponding meanings that define the social reality that individuals share.

The ritual analysis of online content is more effective for the current case than other content analysis methods because it enables researchers to account for the larger context in which the case occurred and within the timeframe to which it is bound. Moreover, it grants the researcher the opportunity to incorporate the understanding that the ecology of communication technologies that simultaneously present the data may have influenced the case's participants during the case itself; a reflexive position that can be incorporated into the interpretation of



acquired data and the subsequent collection of additional data. Thus, documents—online or otherwise—serve as effective “substitutes for records of activity the researcher could not observe directly” (Stake, 1995, p. 68).

Overall, 57 news articles and two video clips were obtained through three Google searches. The search began with one search term: “Florida Atlantic University + GEO Group”. The other two search terms (“Dr. Mary Jane Saunders” and “Stop Owlcatraz”) were used after the researcher noted both the frequency and centrality with which each term was referenced throughout the first Google search. In addition to the articles and videos, any additional media that may have been linked within this content was also analyzed and included in the aforementioned total. Additional content was not sought because the content within the first three searches reached saturation (Bowen, 2008; Mason, 2010; Sandelowski, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Examples of saturated content include the recirculation of quotes from interviewees and the re-telling of events, the latter of which was verbatim in some instances. The recirculation of content was frequent in this case and is common within the news industry, as stories were circulated from local news outlets to national journalistic organizations with a broader readership. Lastly, a timeline was created from these data that consisted of all the events that could be linked with dates, as well as quotes that were deemed significant through the perspective of interaction ritual theory (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

## **Brief History of Organizations Involved**

### *Florida Atlantic University*

Located in Boca Raton, Florida, Florida Atlantic University (FAU) was founded in 1961 (The university . . . at a glance, n.d.) and began matriculating students in the fall of 1964 (A new kind of university, n.d.). Currently, over 30,000 students are enrolled at all of FAU’s six campuses, over 70% of which—more than 21,000 students—attend school at the main campus in Boca Raton (Boca Raton, n.d.). Significant for the current case is the unanimous vote from the Board of Trustees on May 3, 2010 to elect Dr. Mary Jane Saunders the President of FAU (The Saunders Years, n.d.). The university experienced its largest year of enrollment during Saunders’ leadership, when over 30,000 students were enrolled in 2012-2013 (The Saunders Years).

During the 2012-2013 academic year, the university announced its naming rights agreement for the football stadium with GEO. Intercollegiate athletics began at FAU in 1969 (The Williams Years, n.d.). The university selected the owl as its mascot as an homage to the species of burrowing owl that is native to South Florida. The football program began in 2001 (The Catanese Years, n.d.) and entered the FBS in 2004 (FAU athletics history, n.d.). The university opened their current football stadium, called ‘FAU Stadium’, on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011. FAU Stadium cost approximately \$70 million to construct (Habib, 2013), at least \$45 million of which FAU borrowed (Reutter, n.d.). The stadium currently has a seating capacity of 29,495 (FAU Stadium, n.d.). The university webpages used to provide this historical outline did not mention the football stadium’s brief association with GEO in any way.

### *The GEO Group, Inc.*

GEO provides “complementary, turnkey solutions for numerous government partners worldwide across a spectrum of diversified correctional and community reentry services” (Who

we are, n.d., p.1). The company began in 1984 as Wackenhut Corrections Corporation (WCC) and much of WCC's early success procuring governmental contracts can be attributed to George C. Zoley (GEO Group history timeline, n.d.). Zoley, a two-time FAU alumnus, founded WCC (later GEO) and once served as the Chair of FAU's Board of Trustees (FAU receives \$6 million gift from The GEO Group, 2013). In 1992, WCC entered the international marketplace with the creation of a subsidiary in Australia and a cooperative enterprise in the United Kingdom (GEO Group history timeline). The firm secured the first contract for a privatized correctional facility in South Africa in 1999. In 2003, WCC changed its name to The GEO Group, Inc. (GEO Group history timeline).

During the course of its global expansion, GEO encountered numerous, serious, legal troubles. These legal troubles led to opposition from a variety of civil liberty, human rights, and immigrant rights organizations (Bishop, 2013). For example, GEO was a defendant in over 100 lawsuits involving human rights violations prior to the announcement of the naming rights agreement with FAU (Ramadan & Chandek, 2013). Of particular note, The Southern Poverty Law Center and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) National Prison Project filed a class-action lawsuit in 2011 on behalf of 13 inmates against GEO for the alleged brutal treatment of inmates within a juvenile correctional facility in Mississippi (Burnett, 2011). In that case, the juvenile inmates alleged that GEO employees encouraged inmate-on-inmate brutality, sometimes wagering on the results of such activities, as well as engaging in sexual abuse of inmates, and using excessive force upon them.

The Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice conducted an investigation of the Mississippi matter, which began in October 2010 and concluded in March 2012. In his letter to Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant, Assistant Attorney General Thomas E. Perez asserted that the state was "deliberately indifferent to the rights of young men confined at" the facility, which was exemplified through the lack of "constitutionally adequate care" involving sexual abuse and misconduct, excessive force, and gang activity amongst staff members (United States Department of Justice, 2012, p.1). The case was settled in 2012. At the conclusion of that year, GEO managed 96 facilities around the world, which totaled approximately 73,000 beds (2012 Annual Report, n.d.).

Since 2012, GEO has been embroiled in a variety of other legal issues, including an indictment for allegedly bribing the former Mississippi Department of Corrections Commissioner and his associates for at least \$10,000 a month (Amy, 2016) over an unknown period of time to successfully garner more than \$250 million in contracts (Gates, 2017). While the length of time of GEO's alleged bribery is currently uncertain, at least some of GEO's alleged bribes appear to have been committed during the same time period as the naming rights agreement with FAU. Furthermore, at the time of the naming rights agreement's announcement, GEO was the owner/operator of Broward Transitional Center, a 700-bed detention center in Boca Raton where undocumented immigrants, charged with minor offenses, were jailed for weeks, in some instances months, at a time. The Center, 12 miles from FAU's campus, had "become a symbol of the immigration debate in diverse South Florida" (Vint, 2013, p.1).

## **The Events of the Case**

The naming rights agreement lasted from February 19<sup>th</sup> thru April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 and FAU had searched for two years for a naming rights partner for their football stadium (Kirkham, 2013). While those 42 days contained a variety of events, 10 of them emerged in the media coverage as

particularly significant. The agreement between FAU and GEO was announced on Tuesday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013 after a 13-member Board of Trustees voted unanimously in favor of the agreement (Ramadan & Chandeck, 2013). The \$6 million gift to be paid over 12 years (\$500,000 annually) was the largest, one-time gift in the history of FAU athletics (FAU receives \$6 million gift from The GEO Group, 2013). President Saunders added that the “gift is a true representation of [GEO’s] incredible generosity to FAU and the community it serves” and highlighted that the donation was “especially meaningful” because GEO Chairman and CEO, George Zoley, is an FAU alumnus and former Board of Trustees Chair (FAU receives \$6 million gift from The GEO Group, 2013, p.1).

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the ‘Stop Owlcatraz Coalition’ was formed by virtue of a Facebook posting intended to facilitate a protest in opposition to the naming rights agreement. FAU Senior Britni Hiatt created the post, which ultimately led to the formation of the group of 20 students who comprised the Stop Owlcatraz Coalition. This same group also began an online petition in opposition to the agreement that day (Ramadan, 2013). A GEO spokesman and FAU alumnus, Abraham Cohen, made 14 changes in six hours to the company’s Wikipedia page in an apparent attempt to ‘whitewash’ its content as a response to the agreement’s emerging backlash, which was made most evident by the deletion of the page’s ‘Controversies’ section (Lava, 2013). Moreover, Cohen was accused of “not bother[ing] with making edits that appear neutral, the word ‘our’ was used 15 times, ‘we’ 10 times” (Vint, 2013, p.1).

The following evening (i.e., February 21<sup>st</sup>) comedian Stephen Colbert devoted approximately three minutes to satirizing the agreement between FAU and GEO on his television program, *The Colbert Report*. Among other comments, Colbert noted to his viewers that “one of the downsides to paying millions of dollars to have people pay attention to your company [is that] people start paying attention to your company” (Colbert, 2013). Colbert led all late-night talk programming at the 11:30pm time slot during the quarter in which this segment was televised, with an average of 1.11 million adults between 18 and 49 years of age watching his program each night (O’Connell, 2013).

Four days later, Monday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 40-60 individuals (precise numbers vary across news sources) staged a sit-in at President Saunders’ office, while another 100 students gathered elsewhere on campus. Attendees of the sit-in included members of a variety of student groups, such as Stop Owlcatraz Coalition, Students for Democratic Society, Be Aware Share and Act for Peace, as well as several non-student community activists. Attendees arrived at 11am. The receptionist informed them at that time that Saunders was unavailable so they waited for an hour, after which three students went into Saunders’ private office to discuss the matter with her. Saunders proposed a ‘Town Hall’-style meeting to the students during this time (Eng, 2013; Students protest the GEO Group’s stadium naming rights, 2013).

After speaking with the three students, Saunders stepped out of her private quarters to join the waiting attendees. She engaged in a conversation with those in attendance, which was facilitated by psychology professor and faculty associate to President Saunders, Kevin Lanning (Ant, 2013; Eng, 2013). Saunders informed attendees about the meeting, which would be held on Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup>. The dialogue from her conversation with the larger group was recorded and posted to YouTube (Students protest the GEO Group’s stadium naming rights, 2013)

Lanning told Saunders privately, who in turn shared with those present during the sit-in, that Lanning would resign if she did not attend the March 1<sup>st</sup> meeting. During the discussion, a group of students recited an editorial they wrote condemning the deal, which included the statement, “FAU students trust that our school stood for integrity, ethics, and honor. We

sincerely hope that our university will restore that faith” (Eng, 2013, p.1). Saunders revealed during the course of the discussion that she didn’t “know everything about this company” (Lantigua, 2013, p.1; Students protest the GEO Group’s stadium naming rights, 2013, p.1). That same day, a student protest leader told the *Palm Beach Post* that, “The Board of Trustees should have done due diligence . . . What [Saunders] said about GEO being ‘a wonderful company’ was outrageous” (Lantigua, 2013, p.1), referring to the President’s comments during the agreement’s announcement. Later, on Thursday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, the original petition that Stop Owlcatraz Coalition circulated online reached 10,000 signatures.

Approximately 250 students, faculty, and community members attended the March 1<sup>st</sup> meeting with President Saunders (Allen, 2013a). Attendees gathered in a meeting room at the football stadium, wherein Saunders stated that, “I think that the gift that was given was a gift given with love.” She continued, “It was from an alum. It was from a local company that we have dealings with. And it’s a company that wanted to give a philanthropic gift to an institution they love” (Allen, 2013a, p.1).

Several students were not inside the meeting room but were instead protesting outside of the stadium chanting, “Its not worth the price!” An FAU senior who was outside the stadium contrasted Saunders’ comments by asserting, “GEO didn’t give us a gift. We gave GEO a gift that they can use to lobby the government so that they can have more privatized facilities.” The student continued, “This goes directly against what the university stands for” (Allen, 2013a, p.1). Another student expressed a similar statement during the meeting when she declared that she enrolled at FAU because of the institution’s diversity, continuing, “And as a Mexican immigrant in this country, it really saddens me to know that my school, which I’m proud of, is tying allegiance to a group that affects my people” (Allen, 2013a, p.1).

Saunders reasserted the administration’s position during the meeting when she said, “I’ve been assured that the company runs very good facilities and that the company inherited some facilities that were poorly run. And some of the besmirching of the GEO name came from that” (Allen, 2013a, p.1). Saunders ultimately declared that the deal is “a closed book” that cannot be altered (Allen, 2013a, p.1). Overall, the meeting appeared to allay little of the students’ and other community members’ concerns. So, the Stop Owlcatraz Coalition and other opposition members continued to protest the agreement.

On Monday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 10 days after the Town Hall, the ACLU of Florida submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to the FAU administration for all records relating to the university’s naming rights agreement with GEO. Later on March 19<sup>th</sup>, four students addressed the Board of Trustees to express their opposition to the naming rights agreement (Reutter, n.d.). One of the members of Stop Owlcatraz Coalition who spoke with the Board asserted to the *University Press* that, “The Board of Trustees are businessmen. That’s all they are. They’re not FAU. We’re FAU” (Ramadan, 2013, p.1). A Stop Owlcatraz Coalition student member reflected on the group’s efforts when he stated that, “We . . . were able to bring a lot of people into this in a short amount of time and with the little amount of resources we have, we were able to get a lot done” (Ramadan, 2013, p.1). Another student reflected on the camaraderie that had been created through Stop Owlcatraz Coalition, “I remember we were all having dinner at one point after a protest and sharing food with each other and someone commented that several weeks ago we didn’t even know each other and now we’re sharing food off each others’ plates” (Ramadan, 2013, p.1). That same day, FAU’s Faculty Senate voted 25-9 in favor of a resolution to officially condemn the naming rights agreement (Gale, 2013).

In a show of solidarity for the naming rights agreement, a letter of support was submitted to the Boca Raton House of Representatives on Friday, March 29<sup>th</sup>. The letter contained signatures from the FAU student body President and Vice President, as well as from the Boca Raton House Speaker and House Treasurer (Ramadan & Chandeck, 2013). The signed letter in support of the agreement paled in comparison to those who opposed it. By the end of March, more than 60 civil rights, immigrant, student, and faith-based organizations sent a letter to President Saunders and the Board of Trustees calling for the agreement to be rescinded (Boroff, 2013).

In recognition of April Fools' Day (i.e., April 1<sup>st</sup>), members of the Stop Owlcatraz Coalition staged a protest in which they 'pretended' that the agreement had been nullified (Ramadan & Chandeck, 2013). That day was significant for both FAU and GEO as the first \$500,000 payment from GEO was due (Ramadan & Chandeck, 2013). At 6:30pm that evening, FAU administration released a statement announcing that GEO had rescinded the naming rights agreement. The original petition that Stop Owlcatraz Coalition circulated online on Tuesday, February 19<sup>th</sup> concluded with 60,000 signatures (Entin, 2013). An average of roughly 1,429 individuals signed the online petition each of the 42 days of the agreement's life.

Upon the conclusion of the agreement, George Zoley released a statement wherein he opined, "What was originally intended as a gesture of GEO's goodwill to financially assist the University's athletic scholarship program has surprisingly evolved into an ongoing distraction to both our organizations" (Kennedy, 2013, p.1). A student protester, in contrast, asserted, "This is a victory for FAU. This is a victory for students, faculty, staff, and alumni, everybody at FAU. The student power and the faculty power is stronger than a \$2 billion company and a university president" (Kennedy, 2013, p.1).

National Public Radio (NPR) reported two days later that President Saunders reflected on the agreement stating, "No, I think we just got caught up in a national discussion about the role of government, the role of privatization of government entities. And I think that's just what happened with this gift" (Allen, 2013b, p.1). She continued to state that, despite the online signatures of 60,000 people who petitioned to have the name removed from the stadium, the primary efforts of the protest could be attributed to a "core group of about twenty students" (Allen, 2013b, p.1). Though not explicit, Saunders appears to be referring to the members of the student-organized Stop Owlcatraz Coalition (Allen, 2013b; Ramadan & Chandeck, 2013).

## **Theoretical Frame Applied to the Case**

President Saunders' announcement of the naming rights agreement with GEO exemplified D-Power. The apparent lack of students in attendance during the press conference at which the deal was announced is evidence of this; their absence reaffirmed their subordinate status relative to university administrators. Thus, those who opposed the naming rights agreement became united in their attempts to secure E-Power from FAU administration, the latter of whom elected not to consult stakeholders outside of their own status group prior to the agreement. Two aspects of the quote attributed to FAU's President Saunders during the announcement of the agreement also exemplify D-Power. First, her proclamation that GEO's donation represented the firm's "generosity to FAU and the community it serves" is a deferential attempt to acknowledge GEO's previous philanthropic relationships with FAU community stakeholders without mentioning precisely which members of the community have been positively served by GEO and in what capacity. While the lack of specifics in the President's

statement may be considered common to the press conference IR, they were clearly empty words said merely for the sake of public relations ceremony as she later admitted during the sit-in, “I don’t know everything about this company” (Lantigua, 2013, p.1).

Second, President Saunders’ reference to GEO’s chairman, George Zoley, as both a two-time alumnus of the institution and former Chair of the Board of Trustees indicates a deeply ingrained IR among the university’s administrative elite, one that has enabled the agreement to be, as Saunders stated, “especially meaningful” (“FAU receives \$6 million gift from The GEO Group”, 2013, p.1). Given the lack of firm-stakeholder interaction in this matter as indicated by the President’s double-talk, affected stakeholders appeared to view the fate of a large university facility as a potential billboard for a private prison firm as being decided solely by institutional gatekeepers without additional input from other stakeholders. Thus, the agreement marks a clear divide between the elite of these two organizations and FAU’s stakeholders as evidenced by the language employed by President Saunders and the actions of affected stakeholders. As predicted through the IR theory model, the clear demarcation of D-Power is evidenced by the lack of firm-stakeholder interaction prior to the completion of the naming-rights agreement, the symbolic absence of students during the press conference IR, and the President’s expression of gratitude at the press conference IR toward GEO generally and Zoley specifically, all of which prompted members of various stakeholder groups, especially students, into action.

These stakeholders defined the situation very differently from the FAU administrators, Board of Trustees, and GEO executives who agreed to the sale of the stadium’s naming rights. Affected stakeholders were not given a voice prior to the agreement and were thus denied an opportunity to generate E-Power through the firm-stakeholder IR. They instead attempted to generate E-Power through the mobilization of their own voices and through other communicative channels, including the formation of a student opposition group, Stop Owlcatraz Coalition, a sit-in at President Saunders’ office, and the creation of a petition. In fact, the sit-in was the key IR in the stakeholder response to the announcement, as its ritual outcomes ultimately led to the agreement’s dissolution. Stakeholders’ attempts to secure E-Power from the FAU administration thus spawned the decisive IR chain that led to the agreement’s demise, as predicted through the IR theory model.

Understanding the ritual ingredients inherent to the sit-in is paramount to understanding the manner in which stakeholder opposition managed to influence the agreement’s dissolution. Fueled by stakeholders’ desire to seek E-Power and organized by Stop Owlcatraz Coalition, the elements of the sit-in at President Saunders’ office itself met Collins’ four conditions for a successful IR: bodily co-presence, barriers to outsiders, mutual focus of attention, and a shared mood. Bodily co-presence occurred when the 40-60 students and community members physically assembled within the President’s office in an attempt to have their collective voice heard regarding the naming rights agreement on Monday, February 25<sup>th</sup>. The sit-in was an attempt to access the organizational ‘backstage’ (Goffman, 1959) that was clearly marked as a sacred space between the two firms’ executives. In particular, the students’ presence in the President’s office was intended to personalize for her the names and faces of affected stakeholders and force her to grant them deferential access by virtue of the interactional formalities common in face-to-face interaction.

These stakeholders intended to force Saunders into providing them with E-Power by acknowledging that they exist through the ritualistic pleasantries inherent to conversation (i.e. they are a group), that they have a voice (i.e. they are either expectant or definitive stakeholders), and that she will respond to that voice (i.e. they are worthy of the proper deference accorded

such a group). The fact that these stakeholders were present in Saunders' office is significant; there was no place to which she could retreat and no other interactants could easily enter the space and syphon Saunders away. While Saunders did attempt to retreat to her private quarters within her larger office, she ultimately acquiesced to interacting with a select group of students when the fact that the large number of stakeholders would not leave became apparent to her.

Those stakeholders present at the sit-in mutually focused their attention on the issue at hand—the naming rights agreement—though from a different perspective than the President. Whereas Saunders appeared to view the stadium's new name as a mutually beneficial symbol from which she attributed value, primarily in the form of annual revenue, the students intended to reframe it as a symbol of corporate greed, *vis a vis* the alleged violation of human rights for profit, which did not reflect their collective identity. Thus, the sit-in was intended to orient Saunders' attention to the broad, negative implications of the agreement and to reframe the President's perspective toward The GEO Group name as it pertains to the stadium in an effort to convince her to rescind the agreement. Saunders recognized the high level of EE present and was successful in deflecting it to the Town Hall meeting, which was to be held four days later.

The stakeholders present during the sit-in were united in their anger towards the administration, primarily Saunders, for the naming rights agreement. Pursuant to IR theory, the mutual focus of attention and shared mood were reinforced during the sit-in, as one journalist (Ant, 2013) noted that those in attendance employed 'twinkle fingers' as they discussed the matter. 'Twinkle fingers' are often used by those involved in protests as a nonverbal means of demonstrating group consensus on a particular matter and has been most often associated with the Occupy Wall Street movement in the U.S. Its value in an IR is as a biofeedback mechanism that increases individual emotion in a group context, as those who engage in twinkle fingers become aware of their mutual focus on the act and the consensus that it represents, which heightens their shared mood. The sit-in was the catalyst in the local opposition to the naming rights agreement, as its ritual outcomes established an IR chain whose interactants continued to agitate FAU and GEO.

Collins' four ritual outcomes—group solidarity, EE, sacralization of symbols, and standards of morality—emerged as a consequence of the sit-in IR. Subsequent IRs emerged for stakeholders who were present at the sit-in, especially those within the Stop Owlcatraz Coalition. These IRs involved protest-related activities, which demonstrates the need to conduct similar IRs throughout the IR chain in order to sustain ritual outcomes, such as solidarity. Solidarity has been shown to serve as a more compelling inducement for participating in social movements and their constituent protests than material incentives (Snow & Soule, 2010). EE fueled the sit-in's participants to engage in more mundane activities characteristic of everyday life together, such as eating, which further exemplifies solidarity as a ritual outcome. These individuals did not know each other prior to the announcement of the naming rights agreement and the sit-in brought them closer together, as the aforementioned quote from a Stop Owlcatraz Coalition member about "sharing food off each others' plates" demonstrates (Ramadan, 2013, p.1).

Perhaps the most significant outcome from the sit-in was the sacralization of a particular symbol. The creative referent 'Owlcatraz' served as the key symbol around which local members of the opposition organized, but also appeared to galvanize support from members of other social justice organizations and approximately 60,000 petitioners overall. The name combines the team's athletic mascot and famous California penitentiary into a portmanteau. Loaded with symbolic emotion, the word effectively problematized the issue (Snow & Soule, 2010) in the broader discourse by elegantly translating the situation at hand for the public in

three syllables. Consequently, its use in a variety of media-related contexts, such as journalistic accounts of the matter, comedian Stephen Colbert's satirical segment, the online petition, and the primary student opposition group's name, appeared to engage a variety of individuals and social justice groups and mobilize them toward effective action through an emotionally-charged symbol around which to unite.

The standards of morality that emerged as a consequence of the sit-in were two-fold. The values of diversity and free speech were apparent, as were those that students linked to FAU as an educational institution. Conversely, the values that opposition members perceived GEO to represent, such as corporate greed, human exploitation, and opportunism, were deemed profane. This is most obviously exemplified by the protest that occurred outside of the Town Hall-style meeting, itself a consequence of the sit-in and thus part of its IR chain, where students chanted, "Its not worth the price!" (Allen, 2013a, p.1). The use of 'it' in the chant appears to refer to the students' perception of the university's integrity or set of values with which they also aligned themselves and that they believed the agreement with GEO had compromised. The ritual outcomes that emerged as a consequence of the sit-in ignited those who opposed the agreement to engage in a variety of activities that expressed their opposition to it while simultaneously reinforcing their membership within the larger collective. The result of this IR chain was the dissolution of the agreement.

## Conclusion

The peculiar nature of the FAU/GEO stadium naming rights case presents a rare opportunity to understand and assess the power that a university's definitive stakeholders possess and may ultimately express if not proactively and deferentially engaged. The current study makes four contributions to the extant literature. First, it demonstrates the value of IR theory to effectively explain stakeholder mobilization in a sport management context, particularly through the D-Power and E-Power constructs. IR theory allowed for a nuanced examination of definitive stakeholders' ability to collectively influence the outcome of a unique corporate partnership within intercollegiate athletics. The ritual ingredients and corresponding outcomes of the student-organized sit-in created an E-Power-derived IR chain that ultimately led to the dissolution of a controversial stadium naming rights agreement.

In examining sport through the IR theory lens previously, scholars have focused on moments of fan or participant engagement just prior to, during, or after competition. IR theory has the capacity to account for time and emotion in a variety of microsociological contexts. Both time and emotion have been unaccounted for in previous stakeholder analyses involving intercollegiate athletics, especially those involving sport facilities. The current case sets a precedent for IR theory's utility in examining stakeholder and/or (potential) consumer behavior well beyond the timing of athletic competition. IR theory has the capacity to offer temporally- and emotionally-derived insights into how stakeholders/consumers become more or less salient/engaged in different sport contexts.

Second, this case demonstrates that university athletic initiatives generally, and naming-rights agreements specifically, are highly susceptible to stakeholder framing and the corresponding mobilization of opposition movements in the digital age. GEO's purchase of the naming rights for FAU's football stadium and the inability of FAU's executive administration to effectively scan both the internal and external stakeholder environments prior to the agreement's



completion offer practical insights. If there was any doubt previously, this case affirms that intercollegiate athletic administrators should consider students to be a definitive stakeholder.

Students, even a relatively small number of them, possess the power, legitimacy, and urgency required to impact the university's operations. They may possess these qualities to a higher degree than faculty and should be afforded proactive deference in future naming rights agreements where the sponsoring entity does not appear to fit one of the permissible categories within the CEFFT taxonomy specifically, or categories of consumer goods and services generally. Such proactive, stakeholder engagement may minimize, if not negate, stakeholder opposition and corresponding public relations and financial fallout after the announcement of a stadium naming rights agreement. Consequently, institutional personnel must work to ensure that definitive stakeholders are afforded proper deference as they consider decisions that have the potential to be viewed as contradictory to stakeholders' perceived values of the institution.

Providing definitive stakeholders with opportunities to voice their concerns as they pertain to the university and its related activities—through informal and/or formal rituals—and the university administration's genuine consideration of those concerns in ways clear to these stakeholders, supplies them with heightened EE as manifested through E-Power. This heightened EE per E-Power distribution can establish social solidarity between members of the university and members of the affected stakeholder group(s), which, when stakeholders' wants and needs are met, can turn them into allies of the university and its athletic operations. Should university administrators choose not to afford stakeholders the opportunity to express their concerns as they relate to the university and its athletic operations, though, the result could yield negative consequences. Shunned stakeholders, when and for whatever reason the university rejects their IR, may choose to seek EE from other similarly situated stakeholders, such as the media, social justice organizations, or consumer advocacy groups, the combination of which can lead to negative publicity, litigation, and other detrimental consequences for the institution. EE, then, is clearly important to the establishment of effective IRs between the university and definitive stakeholders. Consequently, the IR interpretation of this case supports Friedman and Mason's (2004) assertion that Mitchell et al.'s (1997) stakeholder typology has tremendous value for sport administrators as a tool for effective stadium planning through proactive engagement with definitive stakeholders.

Third, the current work demonstrates the importance of ritual outcomes, particularly emotionally-charged symbols, to effectively mobilizing support in social change initiatives. The manner in which the FAU/GEO agreement ended demonstrates the value of such outcomes in the continuation of an E-Power-fueled IR chain relative to intercollegiate athletics. A small group of students, to paraphrase President Saunders (Allen, 2013b), used a symbol to orient the attention of local protestors, various social justice organizations, a television personality, and tens of thousands of petitioners by mobilizing their energy through collective action, particularly through their ability to effectively frame the issue for public discourse. The fact that these students named the group the 'Stop Owlcatraz Coalition' is a significant aspect of their success. It provides an example of group members' ability to reframe the stadium as an important symbol through the creative referent 'Owlcatraz'. The stadium's colloquial name change became a key group symbol that precipitated high levels of EE for members of the IR chain, which facilitated solidarity for group members and contributed to the group's resolve.

Fourth, the IR-based interpretation of this case supports Hutchinson and Bennett's (2007) findings that university administrators do not actively consider the university's core values in their decision-making, despite the strong degree to which stakeholders' perceptions of the

university are defined by those values. FAU officials' decision to align the university with GEO's brand for athletic purposes had implications for the perception of both brands by virtue of the values that definitive stakeholders attributed to each. An implicit finding of this case study is that students as stakeholders appear to have an emotional connection to their institution that is a salient part of their identity. The decision to introduce a corporation into the university community through the purchase of stadium naming rights is to introduce another party into the student-university IR, which, if not deferentially handled, has the potential to escalate into conflict as students fight to maintain control over their sacred symbols and, by extension, their collective identity. To have the football stadium named after The GEO Group was to have, in essence, the students' values congruent with The GEO Group, as well.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

As with all intrinsic case studies, the current examination may be limited in its application given its inherent uniqueness (Stake, 1995). Moreover, while media content can serve as a valuable tool in examining interaction in any context, researchers are always limited to the data that is presented in these accounts. Despite these broad limitations, scholars may examine stadium naming rights, IR theory, and stakeholder management in a variety of interrelated contexts with methods born from this study in future research.

Scholars may examine deviations to the CEFFT taxonomy of stadium naming rights agreements in other intercollegiate, as well as professional, sport contexts. Such analyses may use IR theory to examine the presence or absence of proactive engagement between the sport organization and definitive stakeholder groups. Hypotheses and positivistic instruments may be constructed using this study's findings to examine interaction between the sport organization and definitive stakeholder groups. The mutually successful result of such agreements between stakeholders and the sport organization may allow for a prescriptive approach to effective, proactive engagement between the parties.

Future research might attempt to measure E-Power in firm-stakeholder interaction within other sport management contexts. Locating the origin of E-Power, or lack thereof, in firm-stakeholder IRs within various forms of sport enterprise may be easier to accomplish than in more traditional business or organizational environments given the relatively brief temporal and public nature of many of these initiatives. The application of IR theory to stakeholder practice remains underdeveloped, yet is a potentially rich area of study. Future research in this area might involve an IR theory-based reinterpretation of Mitchell et al.'s (1997) stakeholder categories as they apply to firm-stakeholder interaction within sport management, as well as an interpretation of the discourse surrounding specific cases and events within the realm of sport business through the IR theory lens. Such research might employ IR theory to provide normative stakeholder classifications. This could assist practitioners in managing similar situations in the future by providing them with a useful taxonomy of stakeholder groups involved in sport governance and their corresponding business dealings.

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