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The Five-Stage Process of Legitimacy Building Within a Sport Interest Association

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The present study outlines a five-stage legitimacy process model (i.e., conception to decline) for interest-associations over a prospective life cycle. Our stages suggest: 1) internal and external legitimacy are emphasized differently through an interest-association's life cycle; 2) internal and external legitimacy can be enhanced by specific strategic actions; and 3) overemphasis on external legitimacy can lead an interest-association toward decline. The National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) was selected and the historical method was employed to examine a variety of primary and secondary documents to help build the legitimacy process model. This work suggests the NAIA (1940-1973) sought internal and external legitimacy through various institutional strategies that established: 1) an early disconnection with the NCAA; 2) partnerships with small colleges, historically black institutions, and Canadian schools; 3) a re-conception of postseason play and expansion of services provided (i.e., sports); and 4) engagement with other amateur sport organizations.

Keywords: Historical Method, Interest-Association, Legitimacy, Life-Cycle

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Legitimacy, a central tenant of institutional theory, involves the assessment of an entity (i.e., product, process, or perception) within a socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions to determine if actions or behaviors are desirable and appropriate (Suchman, 1995; Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002). Within this point, organizations have to be different from other organizations in their institutional field or environment, but maintain enough similarity to be conferred as legitimate (Fisher, Kotha, & Lahiri, 2016; Suddaby, Bitektine, & Haack, 2017). Research on legitimacy primarily focused on understanding legitimacy as new ventures (e.g., Fisher et al., 2016; Navis & Glenn, 2010; Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002) and the repairing of legitimacy (Patriotta, Gond, & Schultz, 2011; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004). Other efforts center on successful organizations and their ability to generate or sustain material resources at specific moments in time or within small timeframes (e.g., Bitektine & Haack, 2015; Reast, Maon, & Lindgreen, 2013; Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002). Interestingly, there is a dearth of studies on legitimacy utilizing longitudinal or life cycle approaches since researchers "assumed that legitimacy is less of a concern once a venture becomes an established organization" (Fisher et al., 2016, p. 384). Yet, legitimacy attainment does not guarantee continuance (Barnett, 2018). Thus, many scholars called for more study on the legitimation process as something to manage (Bitektine & Haack, 2015; Drori & Honig, 2013; Fisher et al., 2016; Suddaby et al., 2017).

Research on interest associations (IAs), whose success is based on the collection of symbolic resources (e.g., external endorsement and members) over time, is even less common and an intellectually compelling context to study the legitimation process (Barnett, 2018; Galvin, 2002; Lawton, Rajwani, & Minto, 2018; Washington, Forman, Suddaby, & Ventresca, 2005). IAs are multi-member "organizations formally established to make claims for-to represent-important constituencies and interests in an organizational field" (Galvin, 2002, p. 673). They are unique because IAs are a special type of trade association that competes differently for resources than other commercial-focused organizations (Aldrich, 2018; Bitektine & Haack, 2015; Galvin, 2002). Social matching drives similarly situated organizations to join their resources through IAs to secure their shared goals (Drori & Honig, 2013; Lawton et al., 2018; Navis & Glenn, 2010). However, it appears growth and maturation may compel IAs to resolve member tension about improving resources while simultaneously meeting their diverse interests and the expectations of the public regarding the institutional field (Lawton et al., 2018). With respect to the production and securing of symbolic and material resources, we suggest: IAs evolve through a focus on managing legitimacy as an internal and external social evaluation.

To understand how internal and external legitimacy is established, maintained, and repaired by IAs in a larger institutional field, the work of Drori and Honig (2013) and Fisher et al. (2016) showed it may be best to examine their interaction over time. IAs often change significantly in an effort to demonstrate attract-ability, stability, and potential to serve broader interests focused on growth, procuring resources, and overcoming organizational boundaries in an institutional field (Aldrich, 2018; Lawton et al., 2018). Thus, Barnett (2018) and Spillman (2018) suggested future research should focus on understanding the specific contextual conditions that make associations successes or failures because studying finances (i.e., material) or membership (i.e., symbolic) numbers as standalone resources is insufficient.

With all this rationale in mind, the purpose of this study is to understand the stages of the IA legitimation process. The institution selected is intercollegiate athletics in the United States. Within intercollegiate athletics, the National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)

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and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) are two IAs focused on legitimization through symbolic (e.g., members) and material (e.g., financial) resources (Washington, 2004). We chose to review the historical case of the NAIA's life cycle (1940-1973) as a theoretical sample for legitimation because records show competition with the NCAA in the institutional field of college athletics gradually imposed changes on the NAIA after its initial conception in 1940 (Katz & Seifried, 2014; Washington, 2004). Katz and Seifried (2014) and Smith (2011a) separately argued the decline of the NAIA (i.e., loss of 196 members over the next 20 years) began in 1973, after its incredible growth story, due to the deterioration of legitimacy emerging from the NCAA's decision to reorganize into three separate divisions. A three-division NCAA addressed the needs of the nation's smallest schools, the previously controlled market of the NAIA ("Minutes," 1975). Yet, such decline compels us to ask two unanswered questions that historical research is qualified to answer: 1) How did the NAIA build its membership to rival that of the NCAA? 2) How did the NAIA manage its legitimacy over time before the 1973 decline?

The major contribution of the present research is the development of a five-stage legitimacy process model (i.e., conception to decline) for IAs over a prospective life cycle. Within, we identify internal responses to external legitimacy that Drori and Honig (2013) argued is underdeveloped inside the broader legitimacy literature. The central arguments in the present study are: 1) internal and external legitimacy are emphasized differently through an IA's life cycle; 2) internal and external legitimacy can be enhanced by specific strategic actions; and 3) overemphasis on external legitimacy will lead an IA toward decline. We develop each stage of this model using the historical research method to understand the NAIA's legitimation story.

Theoretical Framework

In a review of legitimacy literature, Suddaby et al. (2017) highlighted that organizational scholars positioned the construct as a product or property, process, and socio-cognitive perception experience. As a property, legitimacy emerges as a product emanating from the relationship between the organization and the external environment (Suchman, 1995; Suddaby et al., 2017; Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002). In essence, legitimacy is an "outcome of a degree of fit or congruence largely between the material manifestations of legitimacy in an organization (structure, products, and routines) and the normative expectations of the external environment" (Suddaby et al., 2017, p. 452). With respect to legitimacy as a process, Fisher et al. (2016) examined the result of interaction between various organizations operating in an institutional field. In contrast to property-center perspectives, process scholars suggest legitimacy is not "the outcome of congruence but, rather, is a product of how that congruence is achieved" (Suddaby et al., 2017, p. 452). Overall, the purposive action of individuals and organizations explain how internal stakeholders and external elements socially construct legitimacy at the macro level. Finally, as a perception, legitimacy scholars (e.g., Bitektine, 2011; Bitektine & Haack, 2015; Tost, 2011) suggested the phenomena occur through efforts to judge appropriateness "between the collective and the individual" (Suddaby et al., 2017, p. 451). Perception scholars relied heavily on "individual and collective cognition as the fundamental mechanism through which legitimacy is constructed" (Suddaby et al., 2017, p. 452).

At the organizational level, Suchman (1995) identified legitimacy as involving three sub-dimensions: (a) pragmatic, (b) moral, and (c) cognitive. Pragmatic legitimacy "rests on the self-interested calculations of an organization's most immediate audiences" (i.e., micro-environment) and involves the direct exchange between the organization and its interested constituents to

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assess their belief about whether the organization is practically working in their collective best interests or not (Suchman, 1995, p. 578). Suddaby et al. (2017) positioned moral legitimacy as the organization doing what society at-large views as the right way of doing business (i.e., macro-environment). Finally, Tost (2011) described cognitive legitimacy as legitimacy taken-for-granted by society (i.e., acceptance of organization is necessary) and emphasizing society over any formal evaluation. The existence of these legitimacy types provides the opportunity to view legitimacy as a process, product, and/or experience to manage.

In an attempt to address the challenge of understanding legitimacy, some scholars began to refine legitimacy as the result of external and internal interactions to determine who enjoys authority over legitimation decisions (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Drori & Honig, 2013; Suchman, 1995; Suddaby et al., 2017). Examining the interaction of internal and external legitimacy, Drori and Honig (2013) characterized internal legitimacy as the “agglomeration of individual-level strategies” through the acceptance or validation of its “participants, which acts as a tool that reinforces organizational practices and mobilizes organizational members around a common ethical, strategic or ideological vision” (p. 347). Within this study, reflexive thinking by key social actors initiate the establishment of a ‘bottom up’ and internal-focused governance structure able to identify the needs of core members. With respect to the membership, Lounsbury and Crumley (2007) characterized this group as generally motivated, heterogeneous, and “spatially dispersed…with varying kinds and levels of resources” (p. 994). Internal legitimacy calls for the evolution of internal practices regardless if a problem is apparent, but compels such operations emerge through shared ideological preferences (Drori & Honig, 2013). Furthermore, it regularly involves sense-giving practices used by leaders within an organization to establish the coherence and importance of a particular strategy with internal organizational stakeholders.

Importantly, internal legitimacy should not be perceived as the same as an organization’s social identity. 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). Internal legitimacy requires logic and is more responsive to changes in the environment (Drori & Honig, 2013; Suddaby et al., 2017). This concept explains how organizations can direct the actions, practices, and values individuals understand as beneficial to the firm. Thus, we feel members will depict a firm’s internal legitimacy from a pragmatic and moral orientation and less so from a cognitive one. Further, if an organization deviates from its core competencies, it risks alienating itself from the elements that make the firm successful and reputable.

External legitimacy is depicted as focusing on the merits of an organization and how well it connects with outside organizations (Drori & Honig, 2013). Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002) argued an organization can only become legitimate when it associates with other legitimate firms. In essence, external legitimacy points to a potential reliance on accreditation bodies, regulatory agencies, and/or partnerships with associations that establish behavioral and performance expectations for the institutional field. However, Drori and Honig (2013) noted the recognition of external legitimacy by stakeholders implies the firm has congruence with internal legitimacy. Thus, we feel when a firm loses its balance between internal and external legitimacy, an organization can face both crisis and conflict, which may lead to its decline/demise in a competitive institutional field. All together, these perspectives suggest an association between cognitive legitimacy and external legitimacy while the motivations associated with pragmatic and moral legitimacy lend themselves toward internal legitimacy (Tost, 2011).

In this study, the interest lies in determining how internal and external legitimacy of an IA emerge and interact over its life cycle within a larger institutional field. Thus, similar to

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Fisher et al. (2016), we incorporate organizational life cycle theory to suggest a legitimation process for an IA as product, process, and socio-cognitive perception experience. Within organizational life cycle theory, scholars assumed an organization experiences changing resource needs associated with the emergence of new audiences, members, laws, norms, and changes in the institutional field (Fisher et al. 2016). In essence, an organization changes over various stages of its life due to corresponding resource procurement challenges and opportunities.

Organizations are born uncertain about their future (Lawton et al., 2018). During their early conception and formation, organizations lack "tangible performance metrics (e.g., financial revenues, cash flows, and market share), and rely most heavily on symbolic affiliations and adherence to processes that are familiar and understandable" (Fisher et al., 2016, p. 391). Symbolic affiliation and efforts to work together for shared goals create legitimacy claims internally (Hallen, 2008). Later efforts to grow the organization shift governance goals of the organization from the smaller private interests to perception of the external public. Fischer and Pollack (2004) argued this shift in focus is "highly significant" and a "non-repeatable" event requiring new or modified goals, internal operations, and strategic behaviors (p. 464).

Subsequent growth and maturation are associated with economic goals, market reach, and potential compromise to satiate the diverse membership of a mature organization (Bhide, 2000). For IAs, we argue proof points are often used to recruit new resources for further growth. Proof points provide information about the health of an organization and offer evidence that the organization can overcome potential uncertainty and satisfy the interests of multiple stakeholders. Recently occurring proof points are frequently emphasized to secure a broader base of resources able to meet member expectations and market conditions (Fisher et al., 2016). The ability of the organization during growth and maturation to demonstrate they can capture significant resources determines their external legitimacy and provides them with a level of allowance by members to introduce new initiatives (Roberts & Barley, 2004). However, the health of organizational growth and allowance to introduce new initiatives depends on the balance shown between organizational efforts to meet multiple stakeholder expectations (e.g., members- large and small, staff and leadership, society at-large, and partners) and realize their goals (Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001). Furthermore, during growth and maturation, organizational life cycle theorists show public assessment is often connected to expectations associated within the institutional field (Boeker & Wiltbank, 2005). Importantly, comparison to some other organization(s) in the institutional field at a similar life cycle stage suggests the public assessment of an organization will change over time because of institutional field changes.

As previously noted, IAs are special voluntary trade associations charged with providing governance to its members in order to represent their institutionally defined shared interests (Galvin, 2002; Knoke, 1986). As such, IAs differs from commercial organizations in structure and interdependence with the environment (Galvin, 2002). IAs shape and define the appropriate practices of interaction for members and how members should represent themselves to others in the field (Evetts, 1995), allowing IAs to craft processes and procedures from a 'bottom up' view.

Our perspective of IAs legitimacy building emphasizes the importance of a 'bottom up' process and highlights various accompanying institutional strategies initially focused on internal legitimacy to establish the accepted and/or expected norm, particularly at the start of new venture. Later, our approach assumes an external legitimacy-focused managerial perspective that "emphasizes the ways in which organizations instrumentally manipulate and deploy evocative symbols in order to garner societal support" (Suchman, 1995, p. 572). We suggest the establishment of internal legitimacy begins through change agents (i.e., leaders and institutions)

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who provide careful and logical explanations (i.e., pragmatic) capable of adapting to the environment or organizational preferences early in the organization's life cycle. The creation of developing cultural practices and corresponding governance configurations/structures with respect to the organization allows entrenchment or conformance through internal moral legitimacy. Adoption is completed within the existing organizational structure, but later alteration of IAs requires committees to study issues and work on adopting new practices through pre-existing structures (i.e., ways of doing things). Still later in the IA's life cycle, we believe external cognitive legitimacy becomes the dominant focus in a maturing institutional field because membership can be changed in a relatively short period of time. As an example, we contend regulatory agencies and other IAs within an institutional field can establish standards to authenticate and compare legitimacy. Various studies support such a position by confirming charitable donations, interlocking directorships, and strategic alliances with prestigious partners are important sources of inter-organizational legitimacy (e.g., Washington, 2004; 2004-05) and why firms practice social mobility in an institutional field (Rao, Davis, & Ward, 2000).

Method

Multiple scholars (Seifried, Katz, & Tutka, 2017; Rowlinson, Hassard, & Decker, 2014; Walker, Seifried, & Soebbing, 2018) argued social scientists can work with historical researchers to better comprehend the impact of actors, agency, and events to develop organizational theory. However, to adequately make use of history, scholars must demonstrate their efforts to be objective and offer rich descriptions of place and the impact of events and actors on organizations (Booth, 2005; Rowlinson et al., 2014; Seifried, 2010, 2017). To meet these goals, the following steps were taken to mimic previous historical research conducted by Walker et al. (2018) and recommendations provided by Booth (2005) and Seifried (2010).

Step One required the pursuit and acquisition of primary and secondary documents from 1940 to 1973. A wide range of sources (see Table 1) were collected through the help of the NAIA and existing databases (e.g., Nexis Uni, HathiTrust Digital, Newspapers.com, and Google Scholar).[1] Primary documents used to ascertain the pursuit of organizational legitimacy by the NAIA included NAIA yearbooks, reports, letters or correspondence, and items from the NAIA News. Secondary sources embraced a variety of history books and academic articles. Newspaper publications such as The New York Times, Kansas City Star, Christian Science Monitor, and St. Petersburg Times served as both primary and secondary sources because in some instances the newspapers provided factual accounts (i.e., primary) while in other instances they provided interpretations (i.e., secondary). Media publications are viewed as a legitimate because they comment publicly on organizations and their practices as being with or against social norms (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). For instance, the media are frequently targeted and solicited by organizations as a strategy to assist the repairing, maintaining, or establishing of legitimacy (Boyle, 2001). Further, negative coverage may signal a lack of merit regarding the organization's actions toward its strategic objections (Drori & Honig, 2013) and/or being socially accepted and consistent with industry peers (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008).

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[1] The NAIA lost most of its primary records from a fire in 1943 and during a move of headquarters from California to Missouri in 1957 (Hoover; 1958; Land, 1977; Wilson, 2005).

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Table 1

Sources of Data, Range, and Type of Analysis

Data Type	Amount and Range	Use in Analysis (Sample)
Primary Data		
Organization Publications NCAA News	19 Articles: Range 1973-1996 (accessed NCAA News Archives)	Provide factual account (e.g., membership numbers)
NAIA News	39 Articles: Range 1953-1994 (accessed NAIA Archives)	Providing factual account (e.g., 1953 described plans to work with the AAHPER to bring “athletics and physical education back into mutual understanding and administration.”)
Organization Documents NAIA Meeting Minutes, Annual Meeting, Executive Committee, Council of Presidents, National Meeting, Advisory Committee	45 Meetings: Range: 1959-1996 (accessed NAIA Archives)	Provided factual account (e.g., Executive Committee voting record on the African-American/HBCU institutional membership)
NAIA Yearbooks	2: Dates 1957, 1979 (accessed via NAIA Archives)	Provide factual account (e.g., number of sports/championships)
NAIA Reports	12: Date Range: 1956-2011 (accessed via NAIA Archives)	Provide factual account (e.g., The 1965 NAIA annual financial report $31,500 gross income)
NAIA Letters of Correspondents	16: Date Range: 1939-1977 (accessed via NAIA Archives)	Providing factual account (e.g., invitational letters to Canadian schools to become members)
Newspaper Articles (e.g.,) New York Times, Kansas City Star, St. Petersburg Times, etc.	297 articles/ 58 different newspapers (accessed online)	Providing factual account (e.g., identify financial profits/loss)
Secondary Data		
History books	11: Date range 1981-2011	Providing interpretation (e.g., NAIA pressured the NCAA to penalize gambling during the 1950s)
Academic articles	20: Date range 1987-2014	Providing interpretation (e.g., decline of the NAIA due to NCAA reorganizing into three divisions).
School Websites	17 (accessed online)	Providing factual account (e.g., NAIA timeline of district system)
Theses & Dissertations	5: Date range 1958-2014 (accessed via library)	Providing interpretation (e.g., the NCAA primarily focused on supervising activities for large universities and football)
Newspaper Articles (e.g.,) Chronicle of Higher Education, Christian Science Monitor, Washington Afro-American, etc.	297 articles/ 58 different newspapers (accessed online)	Providing interpretation (e.g., Identify District 29’s official playoff as the NASC Tournament)

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Step Two involved source criticism to establish the credibility of sources both internally and externally to avoid the use of some data to favor a specific hypothesis (Booth, 2005; Seifried, 2010). Internally, we addressed the accuracy of the data collected and looked for gaps in explanations provided. Internal criticism also allowed us to consider the author intended audience and his/her reputation as an expert or non-expert based on their access to compelling resources and experience or reputation as a researcher able to generate legitimate conclusions (Seifried, 2010, 2017). External criticism involved examining how our sources collected their information and if that information appeared falsified (Seifried, 2010, 2017). In essence, we sought to establish our reliability and validity through asking: (a) who created the source; (b) his/her relationship to the information presented; (c) and how the information was collected (Donnelly & Norton, 2011). Additional checks for trustworthiness occurred through analyzing the temporal arrangement of events and seeking documents as close to the event(s) as possible (Booth, 2005). To support our source criticism, archivists' finding aids or document catalogs were utilized (Seifried, 2017). The recognition of archives is an important "paradigmatic […] disciplinary marker" because of the different types of sources archives hold (King, 2012, p. 13).

Step Three involved the implicit analyzing and interpreting of the evidence collected in order to establish a relationship between the NAIA membership history and those watershed moments, which focused on organizational legitimacy over its life cycle. The sequence of organizational behavior is important to study an association's life cycle (Rowlinson et al., 2014). Similar to historical research norms, we offer a detailed timeline of NAIA events to organize, compare, and contrast against as part of our triangulation efforts (Rowlinson et al., 2014; Seifried, 2010). It should be noted that research triangulation via the timeline helped our organization and deepen our understanding before presenting the five-stage legitimacy building model. Finally, our data triangulation process specifically sought out multiple sources to reduce the likelihood of dissonant data because without using various sources to understand the context of events differing information might not be excluded (Booth, 2005; Perlesz & Lindsay, 2003).

Results

Timeline of Events, Individuals, and Organizational Activities

The NAIA began as the National Association of Intercollegiate Basketball (NAIB) to support smaller colleges of the Midwestern United States frustrated by the Amateur Athletic Union's (AAU) effort to pit "college and amateur teams against one another to determine a national champion" (Land, 1977, p. 28) and the NCAA's lack of desire to organize a separate college championship "basketball tournament" (Hoover, 1958, p. 50). The NCAA primarily focused on supervising activities for larger football-playing universities and regularly ignored the interests of its smallest members (Forbes, 1955; Wilson, 2005). As a small association with strong internal and pragmatic legitimacy (i.e., shared institutional and philosophical ideals), the NAIB was initiated through a new venture, the National Intercollegiate Basketball Tournament (NIBT) in 1937. On a voluntary part-time basis, Emil S. Liston of Baker University was appointed as the first Executive Secretary of the NAIB in 1940 to lead the organization and NIBT's overall direction (Stooksbury, 2010; Wilson, 2005). To guide the organization, Baker helped develop the NAIB's Constitution, which noted the association was responsible for the "management and control" of college basketball to "establish uniformity in the game" and serve "as a clearing house for helpful information" on topics such as gambling (Hoover, 1958, p. 50).

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Gambling in College Basketball

In 1944, the University of Kansas basketball coach, Dr. Phog Allen, voiced his concerns that gambling could threaten the integrity of college sports. As an example, in a telegram to Ned Irish, the acting president of Madison Square Garden in New York, Allen stated:

"My desire is to awaken the college presidents of America to their responsibility in providing a source of power in fighting these professional gambling rodents…Only the college presidents can stop it by appointing an absolute czar such as baseball has in Judge [Kenesaw] Landis." ("Allen Furnishes Data," 1944, para. 5-6)

Shortly thereafter, five basketball players from Brooklyn College accepted $1,000 from bookmakers to throw a basketball game ("Scandal Brings Major Problem," 1945). Dr. Allen quickly assigned blame to athletic directors, coaches, and faculty representatives for their failure to protect college athletics from gambling ("No News to Allen," 1945). Again Allen argued:

"Intelligent people have known all along that big-time gamblers were getting to college basketball players in the East. Instead of facing the facts and acting, our national athletic bodies, to save face, have been meeting and denying that these conditions exist when every well-informed person knew better." ("No News to Allen," 1945, para. 3)

The NAIB Executive Committee took action by drawing up resolutions clarifying the association's stance against all organized gambling on sporting events by 1946 (Hoover, 1958). Furthermore, the NAIB hired Liston to be the full-time Executive Secretary (i.e., czar) through 1949 (Hoover, 1958). The NCAA similarly responded by condemning the presence of gambling in college basketball (Figone, 2012; Smith, 2011b). However, the NCAA repositioned much of the blame to the media and suggested for member schools to merely: (a) bar gamblers from contests; (b) discontinue the issuance of prediction charts; and (c) stop the publication of odds by newspapers (Stooksbury, 2010; Wilson 2005). The NCAA did not establish an organizational czar either to oversee gambling activity (Figone, 2012; Smith, 2011b). In contrast, Kansas City Star sports editor C.E. McBride promoted the NAIB (i.e., pragmatic and moral legitimacy) as more successful in avoiding gambling scandals that plagued the NCAA because of their leadership. Commenting specifically on Liston's emerging oversight, McBride (1945) wrote:

> "Kansas City (i.e., home to the NAIB and NIBT) long has been a thriving center of basketball and not yet have we had to cope with a betting scandal. …Mr. Emil S. Liston is your working head. He is as splendid a college coach and as fine a representative as you could have named. He stands for all that is good and sporting in college athletics and is firm against all else. As long as all of you are connected with the tournament rally around your leader and keep the good name of the game and all college sports ever in mind, there isn't likely to be any scandal attached." (para. 1-4)

Evidence of the NAIB's high sensitivity and willingness to confront the issue can also be seen in 1950 when Emporia State basketball coach Gus Fish began offering statistical services to NAIB schools about the likelihood of gambling on their campuses (Stooksbury, 2010). While this service provided valuable information, the NAIB was concerned that organized gamblers could use this information if it was improperly handled. Appropriately, the wire service itself was policed and used by NAIB to exclude the University of Nevada from the 1950 NIBT after it was found the school accepted $1,000 from Las Vegas gambler L.B. Binion to help pay for

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travel ("Nevada Dropped from NAIB List," 1950; Wilson, 2005). The NAIB membership supported such enforcement and served notice to schools that they should police the threat of gambling on their own campuses. Overall, the burgeoning pragmatic and moral legitimacy of the NAIB helped pressure the NCAA to penalize its members for gambling in the 1950s (Thelin, 1994). Furthermore, pragmatic and moral legitimacy helped improve cognitive legitimacy as more members sought to join the NAIB during its foundation development.

Basketball Tournaments and Olympic Trial Representation

With respect to the subsequent growth of membership and management of the NIBT, Liston and the Executive Committee returned the NIBT to a 32-team format in 1946 as travel restrictions were lifted following the conclusion of World War II (Hoover, 1958; E. S. Liston, personal communication, January 20, 1946; Stooksbury, 2010). To strengthen this change, and in an effort to support burgeoning external cognitive legitimacy pursuits, Liston and the NAIB promoted the subsequent 1947 NIBT to the local and national media as very competitive, a true championship full of stars, and an event free of invasive gambling. Specifically, Liston stressed the size of the NAIB tournament was greater than the NCAA (i.e., 32 to 8) and promoted that two of the top offensive players in the country were playing in the tournament (Stooksbury, 2010). The NAIB also marketed the 1947 tournament as including marquee teams like Arizona State, Louisiana Tech, and the University of Houston. The accumulated size and 'celebrity' status of the tournament field produced a record number of ticket sales, profits, and coverage by national papers ("A Bead on Basket", 1947; Stooksbury, 2010; Wilson, 2005). However, more importantly, in a letter to Pepperdine University basketball coach Al Duer, Liston mentioned the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) invited the NIBT winner to the qualifying playoff for the 1948 Olympic Games (Hoover, 1958; personal communication, August 3, 1947).

The NAIB's desire for the NIBT winner to represent the organization in the Olympic trials was significant step toward establishing its collective internal and external legitimacy (Hoover, 1958; "Kentucky, Baylor Win Olympic Trials," 1948; Stooksbury, 2010). Liston diligently worked on convincing the USOC to grant the NIBT champion a place in the USOC's amateur tournament (Stooksbury, 2010). The proposed tournament, scheduled for March 1948 in New York, included eight teams (i.e., two NCAA finalists, the NIT winner, NIBT winner, three AAU teams, and the YMCA champion) ("American Olympic Committee," 1947). From that event, the Olympic Committee would fill the 14-man Olympic roster with seven college players and seven independent team members ("Top Amateur Cage Teams," 1948). Notably, the NCAA protested and argued without consequence that it should be the only intercollegiate athletic association identified for consideration (Washington & Ventresca, 2008).

Integration and Historically Black Schools

On March 4, 1948, Liston received a letter from Louis G. Wilke, Chairman of the 1948 USOC Committee, stating a protest was filed to prohibit the NAIB tournament winner from competing in the Olympic qualifying tournament (Hoover, 1958). The protest, initiated by USOC member Harry D. Henshel, emerged when he was informed of schools boycotting the NAIB tournament because of the NAIB's unwritten rule to prohibit colored players from competing ("Olympic Committeeman Suggests U.S. Trials," 1948). Although the NAIB by-laws did not include any formal discriminatory provisions, tournament officials instituted a

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"gentleman's agreement" against colored-players participating in the NAIB. The first acknowledgement of the informal rule occurred in the 1946 tournament when Rosamond Wilson, a black forward from Morningside College (Iowa), was forced to stay on the bench as his team's manager (Katz & McLendon, 1988; Wilson, 2005). Pepperdine University basketball coach and 1947 President of the NAIB Al Duer urged Liston to formally abolish the discrimination policy shortly thereafter (Katz & McLendon, 1988; Wilson, 2005).

With Jackie Robinson's historic integration of Major League Baseball in 1947, the New York district of the NAIB was the first to take a moral stand (Stooksbury, 2010) and several other schools threatened to refrain from participation based on their lead ("Negro Ban Hurts NAIB Tourney," 1948). Specifically, Manhattan College of New York earned the right to represent the New York district at the 1948 NIBT, but initially declined their invitation ("Manhattan Quits over No-Negro," 1948). In a telegram to Liston, Manhattan College Athletic Director Brother Eusebuis expressed:

> "Manhattan College administration directs me to withdraw our consent to participate in the NAIB tournament unless rule 'colored players not eligible' appended to rule #2 is eliminated. Unless this action is officially published as a change… we cannot participate" (B. Eusebuis, personal communication, March 2, 1948).

In response, Liston informed The New York Times "our executive committee will discuss the situation here Saturday night at the regular meeting before the tournament starts" ("Olympic Committeeman Suggests U.S. Trials," 1948, para. 4). The Executive Committee voted to formally repeal any ban on colored players ("NAIB Tourney Lifts Ban," 1948). After the NAIB removed the restrictions on colored players, many historically black colleges sought representation in either the NAIB or the NCAA. Interestingly, the NCAA did not possess any specific regulations prohibiting black colleges from becoming members but none were members (Crowley, 2006). Thus, the NAIB formalized its moral legitimacy over the NCAA by altering the NAIB by-laws to allow colored-player participation and opportunities for membership.

In 1951, an official forum known as the National Athletic Steering Committee (NASC) was organized to create opportunities for all black colleges (Katz, 1990). The NASC's purpose was to study the problems of racial segregation and discrimination in intercollegiate athletics (Wilson, 2005). In order to combat these problems, the NASC sought to provide access to black colleges into either the NAIB or the NCAA national championships (Stooksbury, 2010). Katz (1990) suggested the NCAA was receptive but also hesitant because it had issues fitting black colleges into its membership. Black colleges were small and perceived to be playing sport differently (Katz, 1990; Oriard, 2001). More specifically, McLendon (1979) declared:

> "[The NCAA] had no championship apparatus which would accommodate black colleges. In fact, the organization argued that they had no way to include any 'small' colleges at all, as it arbitrarily regulated all black schools to small college status. Along with this, the NCAA voiced the fear fans may not accept or appreciate the kind of game you play…your coaches may not be competent enough." (p. 8)

While the NCAA dismissed historically black colleges as small, unqualified, and unmarketable (Oriard, 2001), the NAIB recognized the opportunity this group provided their association (i.e., internal moral and pragmatic, external cognitive legitimacy) for its growth

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initiative. For instance, on June 5, 1951, Central State College of Ohio applied for admission to the NAIB but Executive Secretary Al Duer responded cautiously to the school's application (Katz & McLendon, 1988; Wilson, 2005). At this point in time, desegregation had not yet occurred in the U.S., and Missouri, headquarters of the NAIB, still maintained separate-but-equal racial laws (Wilson, 2005). The complexity of inviting historically black institutions into the NAIB prompted further discussion within the Executive Committee (Katz & McLendon, 1988).

In January 1952, Duer met Mack Greene, Athletic Director of Central State, to inform him that his university had been accepted as a full member and would be eligible for the Ohio District playoffs (Wilson, 2005). On March 12, 1952, the Executive Committee approved all colleges for African-Americans that met the required standards to be eligible for full membership would be accepted ("Negro Schools In", 1952). In order to accommodate the black colleges, a new non-geographic based district-at-large (i.e., District 29) was established for all NASC members in the NAIB (Wilson, 2005). This new district turned the NASC basketball tournament into a district playoff with the winner earning a spot in the NIBT (Katz & McLendon, 1988).

Throughout 1952, 36 black institutions would join the NAIB as the first members of the new District 29 (Wilson, 2005). A year later, regional tournaments were established for black colleges and universities to aid their qualification for the 1953 Tournament ("First Round Cage Pairings," 1953). Representatives from the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (AAHPER) were also in attendance providing oversight and additional external legitimacy. According to the NAIA News ("News item," 1953), plans were initiated "to work out an affiliation of our two organizations which would be a great step toward bringing athletics and physical education back into mutual understanding and administration" (p. 6).

Football Playoff and Other Championships

Before the end of 1952, the aforementioned activities of the NAIB helped grow the interest association to over 400 members (i.e., cognitive legitimacy). Additional efforts to add sports, such as golf, track, and tennis and to work with the Helms Foundation to identify NAIB All-Americans and prospective Hall of Fame members prompted many new and old members to want to rebrand the IA (Helms Foundation, 1952; Hoover, 1958). At the 1952 convention, NAIB members agreed to rebrand as the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) for 1953 (Hoover, 1958; Stooksbury, 2010). The rebranding effort occurred despite Walter Byers suggestion that "the NCAA was the one governing body for all intercollegiate athletics" (Land, 1977, p 163). Notably, Byers also tried to get the AAU to join their position to prohibit the NAIA from representation or participation rights to USOC events (Duer, 1965).

By 1955, the membership count escalated to 437, but minutes from the 1956 Annual Meeting show many of the larger school delegates wanted to expand the NAIA's sports offerings to add football. Most delegates believed the addition of football would halt institutions leaving the NAIA for the NCAA (Hoover, 1958). According to Wilson (2005), the NAIA began publishing detailed statistics for football before voting to sponsor the sport. To differentiate itself from the NCAA and attract more potential members, the NAIA decided to become the first intercollegiate IA to organize a national football championship contest (Hoover, 1958). Capitalizing on the familiar brand of a 'bowl game', the delegates dubbed the first postseason event, occurring on December 22, 1956, in Little Rock, Arkansas as the Aluminum Bowl, ("Aluminum Bowl Game to be," 1956; Hoover, 1958).

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Many schools hoped to receive an invitation to the Aluminum Bowl from the NAIA selection committee made up of the standing NAIA President, immediate past president, current NAIA First Vice-President, and a representative from the Aluminum Bowl Association ("Westminster Seeking Bid," 1956; "Mighty Bears Push Toward," 1956). Following the media success produced by the Aluminum Bowl, several cities (e.g., Memphis, TN; Odessa, TX; Sacramento, CA; and St. Petersburg, FL) were considered for the second NAIA football championship ("NAIA Official Outlines Bowl Game," 1957; "Small College Bowl Will Not," 1957). Interestingly, the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and the NAIA agreed to change the name to the Holiday Bowl after holding a write-in contest (Hoover, 1958; "Latest Entry; Satellite Bowl," 1957). The inaugural Holiday Bowl was played in front of a crowd of 7,500 and a CBS nationally televised audience ("Pittsburgh 27-26 Victor," 1957). Continued prompts by NAIA members to expand the playoff to four teams ("NAIA Selects Playoff Teams," 1958) and later into two divisions ultimately created two separate playoffs. Duer offered support by stating:

> "This addition of a second division within the NAIA football championship program follows more than a year of detailed study by the NAIA Football Coaches' Association under the guidance of Past-President Hanley Painter, Football Coach at Lenoir Rhyne (N.C.)…this second championship will give all of our schools sponsoring intercollegiate football a chance to participate in a national football championship on a level in line with the philosophy of their own athletic program." ("NAIA Will Crown Football Champions," 1970, para. 2-3)

The Continued Repositioning of the NCAA and NAIA through 1973

During the 1950s, the NAIA was a thriving, mature organization with the addition of the new sports and the active engagement of its diverse membership. However, the legitimacy of the NAIA was under constant attack from the NCAA who felt "the crunch of the expanded NAIA" (Land, 1977, p. 31). For example, at the NCAA Convention in January 1956, the NCAA created the College Division for small schools to organize and manage championships in basketball, cross-country, golf, tennis, track and field, and wrestling (Katz & Seifried, 2014; Land, 1977). Duer attended the 1956 NCAA Convention and criticized the NCAA initiatives stating:

> "We feel that athletics throughout the nation will be hurt by this move. It's difficult for us to understand why the NCAA, after 15 years, suddenly becomes interested in the small colleges, particularly in the basketball tournament area. We are at a critical time now maintaining our athletic programs." ("NCAA to Split Tourney," 1956, para. 9)

Publicly, the NCAA did not view the addition of the College Division as an "act of war" but they did state they wanted to force institutions to choose either the NCAA or NAIA (Land, 1977; "NCAA Denies 'War' with NAIA," 1958). Still, Duer argued:

> "Everyone here knew for sure that the aim of this move of the NCAA was to put us out of business…Mr. [Walter] Byers [NCAA president] has put us Number 1 on his wanted list and makes no secret he is after our scalp." (Katz & McLendon, 1988, p. 26-27)

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Evidence of this position is strong as the NCAA allowed dual membership between them and the NAIA as a transition strategy to recruit new members. Additional escalation of their relationship occurred when the NCAA announced its intentions to host several championships simultaneously with the NAIA championship dates (Wilson, 2005). The NCAA College Division basketball tournament, beginning in 1957, was the first of the new rival's efforts. Many people believed this new tournament and division would eventually "kill off the NAIA tournament" ("Fans, Officials Satisfied with Present," 1956, para. 8), and a new college division composed of smaller schools recruited from the NAIA would damage the legitimacy of the NAIA.

In anticipation of the NCAA's decision to change its structure, the NAIA started a campaign to strengthen its membership, which grew to 465 colleges by 1956 ("NAIA Fighting against NCAA," 1956). Duer and the Executive Committee began sending brochures, newspaper clippings, and excerpts from various sportswriters and college officials criticizing the NCAA decision to reorganize ("NAIA Fighting against NCAA," 1956). In an effort to promote the cognitive and moral legitimacy of the NAIA as a mature IA, a special booklet was designed with a statement from Duer that said, "The reported prediction of the decrease of NAIA finds it in the healthiest [sic] position in its history" ("NAIA Fighting against NCAA," 1956, para. 7).

In 1957, the NAIA decided to staff a full-time Director of Publicity as well as additional office workers (Hoover, 1958). With the expansion into new sports, NAIA officials believed the organization was establishing itself as one of the premiere intercollegiate sports associations in the U.S. The expansion of NAIA Convention to one full week and The NAIA News as the official source of news for NAIA members (formerly the NAIB News in 1950), along with a publication schedule increase to quarterly issues occurred because of desires for an expanded presence (Hoover, 1958; Land, 1977). According to Land (1977, p. 35), the magazine had three purposes:

> (a) to present news of interest to the members; (b) serve as an organ for exchange of ideas for improvement of techniques; and (c) give constant interpretation and motivation to the philosophy, aims, and objectives of the NAIA (italics added).

As the commercialization of sport continued to advance the NAIA toward becoming "big-time" by the end of 1950s, the professionalism of amateur athletes emerged as another matter of great concern to manage and control against the NCAA (Land, 1977, p. 34). For example, in 1959, Dr. Ross Merrick (NAIA Executive Committee Member) and Duer attended meetings between the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) and the USOC to renew the representation of the NAIA on Olympic committees in which the NAIA sponsored championships (Land, 1977). The purpose of that meeting was to remove the prohibition of the NAIA from USOC Olympic trials because of the NAIA's amateurism policy (Land, 1977; Wilson, 2005). Previously, the NAIA decided if a player became a professional in one sport, he/she would still be considered an amateur in all other sports (Hoover, 1958). Yet, the USOC and NCAA adopted the 1953 AAU rule on professionalism which prevented professional athletes from regaining his/her amateur status until after a five-year waiting period ("Better Athletes is Olympic Aim," 1953; "NCAA Council Report Warns Tougher," 1959).

Putting its rival at odds with them, the NCAA challenged the U.S. Olympic Basketball Committee to prohibit the NAIA from participation (Land, 1977). Following an appeal by Duer, the Olympic Basketball Committee had two subsequent meetings to discuss if the NAIA had the right to participate in the basketball trials. The NAIA pledged to conform to the USOC amateur

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rule and was permitted to join the USOC Basketball Trials (Wilson, 2005). The NCAA continued its objection, arguing it should have small college representation since it created its own 'College Division'. Walter Byers went one step further and "withdrew from the meeting, declaring that if the NAIA was permitted to participate, the NCAA would withdraw its teams" (Duer, 1960a, p. 9). In a compromise to partially appease the NCAA, only an NAIA All-Star team was allowed to compete in the 1960 Olympic Trials.

Notably, the NAIA All-Star team upset The Ohio State University, the NCAA Tournament Champions (Land, 1977; Meakins, 1960). Upsetting Ohio State proved to be a valuable tool (i.e., external legitimacy) for the NAIA ("NAIA 4th in Olympic Cage Trials," 1960). For instance, Duer expressed:

> "I am sure you were all thrilled at the tremendous accomplishment in our All-Star team winning over Ohio State. You cannot image the shock and dismay on the faces of the NCAA leaders, nor the elation on the part of the AAU and armed services people in that we had proven our right to participate and supported their insistence upon our being allowed this privilege" (Land, 1977; A.O. Duer, personal communication, April 6, 1960).

The Olympic representation issue continued into December 1962, when the USOC conducted its quadrennial meeting in Washington, D.C. (Land, 1977). Duer was asked by the USOC to again supply evidence supporting the NAIA's right to membership (Wilson, 2005). The NCAA prompted the request again by continuing to insist no other collegiate association should have any representation on the Olympic committee (Axelson, 1964; Byers, 1962; Washington & Ventresca, 2008). The NAIA presented confirmation of its alignment with the AAU and re-emphasized established relationships with both the National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations (NFHS) and the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) (Duer, 1962; Wilson, 2005). Collectively, these IAs formed a strategic alliance (i.e., external legitimacy) named the National Alliance of Athletic Associations (NAAA), which aimed to better manage organized sports (Hoover, 1958). Within, the NAAA standardized rules for 11,000 schools on innovations such as substitution and uniformed officiating (Land, 1977).

The NAIA's relationship with the NAAA ultimately improved its position as an amateur sport organization and its subsequent voting power within the USOC from one to five ("NAIA Authorized to Name 3," 1964; "NAIA Refuses to Join NCAA," 1963). It also allowed the NAIA to name 37 representatives to various Olympic Games committees (Land, 1977). Lastly, it emboldened the NAIA Executive Committee to pass the following action: "If any conference with more than 50 percent [sic] membership in the NAIA pledges or sends a team to a conflicting event, all members of that conference will be immediately declared ineligible…in all NAIA events." (Minutes of Executive Committee meeting, 1963, p. 2). By 1963, about one-third of the 463 NAIA member schools maintained membership with the NCAA ("Small School Ruling Group Says," 1963). This action prompted NAIA institutions to choose an association and the interpretation of Article I, Section 7 of the NAIA by-laws to say that "[e]ach member institution of NAIA shall, by reason of its membership, be assumed to be in full support of the total program of NAIA" (NAIA, 1965, p. 3). This initiative emerged despite Duer's calls for the NAIA to focus back its roots (i.e., developing educational programs, fair competition, and championships for athletes) (Duer, 1960b; "All Must Help Enforce Rules," 1961).

To maintain and potentially increase the membership because of the growing threat from the NCAA, the NAIA created Unity Workshops in the 1960s to promote and facilitate unity

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between current and potential members (Land, 1977). Second, the NAIA engaged in redistricting to more closely assign schools into geographic zones, which coincidentally continued to enhance their integration position (Minutes, 1969). Third, The NAIA News published articles provided by Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and Lyndon B. Johnson supporting the NAIA's mission (Duer, 1963). Fourth, the NAIA began to consider several Canadian institutions as prospective members because the NAIA was interested in adding hockey to the championship schedule and believed Canadian schools possessed more similarities than differences with U.S. colleges (Wilson, 2005). At the 1967 Annual Meeting, the delegates ultimately decided that if any Canadian institution could meet the NAIA's criteria, it would be eligible for membership (Wilson, 2010). Expectedly, the Executive Committee extended invitations to 26 Canadian schools with the first admitted in 1967 (Land, 1977). Fifth, the NAIA was awarded full member status in the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame which provided them nomination privileges, space for NAIA memorabilia, and representation on policy and selection committees for the Hall of Fame ("NAIA Becomes Full Member," 1969). Overall, such tactics increased the total number of NAIA members to 565 by 1973 with a decreased percentage of dual members (i.e., peak membership) before the aforementioned 1973 NCAA reorganization and subsequent decline.

Discussion

This work focuses on patterns of actions that manage the institutional structure in order to defend particular practices and organizational forms as legitimate and desirable to both internal and external parties in order to infuse value with IAs. Legitimacy can be obtained for IAs through specific behaviors appealing to both internal and external stakeholders. We found the notion of external legitimacy requires some synergy with internal legitimacy, although classic institutional theory (e.g., Meyer & Rowan, 1991) has not acknowledged or emphasized this interaction. We suggest this interaction between internal and external legitimacy building exists and occurs across five stages within an IA's life cycle.

Through the development of a five-stage process (Table 2), we looked at the interaction between internal and external legitimacy building, paying special attention to pragmatic, moral, and cognitive organizational legitimacy. Within the membership history of the NAIA, many instances were present where the NAIA grew its membership through the use of various institutional strategies to differentiate itself from the NCAA (e.g., creation of first football playoff, embrace HBCUs and Canadian schools) while also attempting to be perceived as similar (e.g., Olympic representation, championship schedule, eligibility/amateurism) throughout its life cycle. Such an active effort to balance similarity against distinctiveness is necessary to help prompt interest in developing a membership and establishing procedures to regulate behavior for membership recruitment in the early stages of an IA. However, we propose if an IA's pursuit of external legitimacy exceeds and/or gradually decays internal legitimacy, that association will find difficulty in attempting to differentiate itself from others in a mature institutional field. In this instance, the NAIA's pursuit of external relationships, attempts to promote its activities, and efforts to expand its championship schedule highlights a focus on gaining external legitimacy and material resources. However, this eventually came at a cost as the NAIA began to reinforce the existence of the association over more specific member needs and could not demonstrate superior resources over another institutional or field-level competitor (i.e., NCAA).

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Table 2

Five-stage Process of Internal and External Legitimacy Presence over Organizational Life Cycle

Stage	Presence of Internal and External Legitimacy	Socio-Political Legitimacy Types	Activities in Field	Life Cycle of Interest Based Associations
1	Internal: Strong	Pragmatic	-Important presence of social incentives through innovative challenges -Initiate discussion of prospective actions and advantages for association -Creation of field leadership opportunities	Conception
	External: None			
2	Internal: Strong	Moral & Pragmatic	-Validations of earlier first mover advantages -Emerging governance structures -Formalization of beliefs congruent to the field -Election of leaders -Acceptance of external endorsement by others	Foundation Development
	External: Begins			
3	Internal: Strong	Moral & Pragmatic	-Securing of resources -Membership recruitment -Attention to diversity in recruiting -Formation of partnerships -Diversification of product and service offerings -Pursuit of external endorsement	Growth
	External: Grows	Cognitive		
4	Internal: Declines	Moral	-Organizational changes with respect to culture (non-local) -Adjustments of priorities and motivations -Acceptance of society-at-large -Role of media (internal and external) to pursue external endorsement -Institutional pluralism	Maturation
	External: Strong	Cognitive		
5	Internal: Weak		-Deterioration of internal legitimacy and overemphasis on external legitimacy -Interaction with larger interest association presents difficulty in positively differentiation - Interaction with larger interest association presents difficulty in maintaining enough similarity within the institution	Decline
	External: Strong	Cognitive		

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Presentation of the Model

Stage One of the five-stage process model on legitimacy for an IA suggests social incentives can prompt the conception of an IA when members of a social system enjoying similar backgrounds seek to survive in an institutional field. The search for legitimacy starts with efforts to form a collective that will engage in activities considered legitimate, and through efforts to pool resources organizations find they are unable to secure within another membership association or alone. New ventures (i.e., products or services) may accompany the conception stage of legitimacy for IA, but these activities must not use up all existing resources (Fisher et al., 2016). Further, they must exist through support of a headquarters that enhances the IA's organizational goals and pools potential resources (Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002). Internal legitimacy is the main uniting force to underpin the motivations to create an IA. Pragmatic legitimacy is pronounced during the conception of IA as members of a society examine the behavior of a larger organization to see if what they are doing is consistent with societal norms, assumptions, and beliefs regarding the correct way of conducting business (Suchman, 1995).

In the present study, the need for innovation pushed a small collection of unsatisfied institutions in the Midwest to move away from the NCAA, create the NIBT, and ultimately an IA capable of addressing their special needs. Headquartered in Kansas City, the NAIA's location served as a regional and pragmatic connecting point capable of initiating and organizing legitimacy because it helped provide a major basketball facility, business partners, and financing at little cost to the original members (Stooksbury, 2010; Wilson, 2005). The emphasis on location as a pragmatic legitimacy proof point is supported by Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002) who argued proximity helps provide important resources necessary for legitimacy formation.

Stage Two involves the initial recognition and pursuit of external legitimacy through strong internal moral and pragmatic legitimacy to build awareness of the IA in an institutional field. Stage Two asserts the validation of IA begin through specially selected or elected actors and activities to establish the organization as credible. Stage Two also requires the establishment of leadership positions focused on the future building of their IA (i.e., membership and establishing procedures to regulate member institutional behavior). Through this activity, internal legitimacy remains strong and is actively used as a tool to promote the IA.

During foundation development, it is critical that IA elect and utilize their leadership to balance distinctiveness against similarity and to avoid decline after conception. A key component of legitimacy research includes "the charisma of individual organizational leaders" and identifying them as the source of maintenance or dissolving of legitimacy (Suchman, 1995, p. 580). Within, Aldrich (2018) suggested the "leadership and staff of associations must craft a compelling story about an association's raison d'être, and then infuse the association's activities with meaning such that they can retain their members and recruit new ones" (p. 22). In our study, the election of leaders, establishment of a constitution, and creation/expansion of tournaments set the foundation to morally and pragmatically differentiate the NAIA from the NCAA.

Subsequent validations to address initial membership desires also conveyed the beginnings of external legitimacy onto the NAIA. For example, the NCAA's adoption of a postseason basketball tournament championship in 1939 following the 1937 NAIA model (i.e., mimetic isomorphism) and the external endorsement of the NAIA's handling of the gambling issue, from pragmatic and moral perspectives, began to confer the NAIA as a legitimate actor within the institutional field. Collectively, such endorsement enhanced the brand so that additional schools sought to join the IA, and other IAs (e.g., USOC) offered them formal

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recognition as a legitimate member of the institutional field. Fisher et al. (2016) emphasized the importance of such external endorsements at the beginning stages of a life cycle. Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002) also acknowledged positive press coverage and establishing networks are used for pragmatic legitimacy because they mitigate the "liability of newness" (p. 419).

In Stage Three, local validation must be accepted by other similarly situated actors (e.g., universities and colleges) in different locations as truth or fact. Thus, strategies attempting to establish external cognitive legitimacy are necessary to help attract resources (i.e., members) for IAs during the major growth-phase of its life cycle. We find selected institutional strategies focused on adopting the norms of society and their industry are necessary to satiate their viewpoint that the organization has taken a comfortable place among its peers. From an external evaluation perspective, Bitektine's (2011) proposal of cognitive legitimacy results in a category based judgment and functions as the selection of classes or organizations are based on previously known organizations.

Collectively, our study illustrates how the NAIA, by building considerable external legitimacy through efforts to foster association between the special interests of smaller colleges, remain responsive to changing social norms (e.g., Civil Rights movement and integration with men's basketball), and pioneer an organized national championship for football that the NCAA did not offer. The NAIA's procedures to correct its own by-laws and redress its lack of moral code with respect to integration of historically black institutions, the establishment of partnerships with the AAU, NFHS, NJCAA, and USOC, and the expansion of the championship schedule also acted to improve the name recognition of the NAIA and understanding that the association was organized to enhance the standing of its current and potential member institutions rather than its leaders. Expanding the NIBT to provide opportunities for integrated teams and later historically black institutions also, in our opinion, provides evidence of strong internal moral legitimacy, which led to greater cognitive legitimacy.

The rebranding into the NAIA serves as a unique type of Stage Three proof point we want to acknowledge because it demonstrates the interaction of both internal and external legitimacy. From an external perspective, Washington (2004) proposed "membership changes, while not the catalyst for the institutional change, are often good markers of the change; when the membership has changed, then the institution must have changed" (p. 409). Other notable proof points identified by Washington (2004) include changes to mission statements, leadership, and headquarter locations. The rebranded NAIA established an important niche within the intercollegiate athletics life cycle. Specifically, rebranding to the NAIA removed the previous basketball affiliated title and offered a name more inclusive and representative of a larger more diverse membership, none of which was possible without a joined commitment to change from internal stakeholders. The rebranding and continued growth of the NAIA also suggested the IA reached a necessary threshold. Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002) stated some researchers believe a legitimacy threshold exists where below a product or organization is illegitimate and unlikely to attract resources and above which become more desirable to obtain, remain with, or join.

In Stage Four, the pursuit of greater external legitimacy (i.e., society at-large) compels organizational changes for IA, with respect to the organizational culture. Specifically, an adjustment of priorities away from maintaining internal legitimacy and toward cognitive external legitimacy occurs because the goal of the IA at the maturation stage is primarily focused on how society at-large will accept them as legitimate. Fisher et al. (2016) proposed the search for short-term financial returns may come to dominate institutional investments at this stage. Accepting such changes would begin to affect the mission and/or established norms of IAs at this stage.

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Further, internal legitimacy begins to decline because the focus shifts to increase and/or maintain membership in the institutional field as it becomes more complex, competitive, and mature.

Such change in Stage Four is notably connected to institutional pluralism because "institutional conventions from the previous life cycle stage" shape "the gradual adoption of institutional conventions salient to the new stage" (Fisher et al. 2016, p. 396). However, the potential of institutional pluralism to create multiple organizational narratives and practices (e.g., Garud, Schildt, & Lant, 2014) aimed to satisfy the demands of various constituents can diminish previous achievements and impose a delegitimizing effect (Kraatz & Block, 2008). Thus, the adjustment of the rules by the NAIA to allow Canadian schools to become members of the NAIA and expanding the championship schedule to include hockey were strategies to meet challenges presented by the NCAA and not connected to the core foundations of the organization. Prospective eligibility and the growth of membership as a financial resource were the main priority and not the rallying around a common ethical, strategic, or ideological vision.

Importantly, we also highlight the active pursuit and strategic use of the media and how it plays a critical role in the increasing strength of external legitimacy. This belief is consistent with previous research emphasizing the media as an external influence responsible for reporting on activities as either against or with social norms (Boyle, 2001; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Fisher et al., 2016). In the present study, the promotion of the media and the creation of offices/personnel (e.g., NAIA media staff and full-time Director of Publicity) were an instrument for the connection between internal and external legitimacy. The NAIA sought to enhance external legitimacy from television networks (e.g., CBS), the national media, and expanded the NAIA News through the promotion of its Olympic participation, championship events, and various partnerships and social initiatives. Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002) suggested such activity (i.e., institutional strategy) should be considered 'idiosyncratic resources'.

Stage Five involves the deterioration of the membership and internal legitimacy as part of the decline phase through the continued pursuit of external legitimacy. Inevitable interactions with larger and better resourced IA (e.g., NCAA) in an institutional field prompt members to view their association as less distinct and incapable of addressing their evolving and maturing priorities. The decline of internal legitimacy (i.e., the acceptance of the individual-level strategies to reinforce individual members/schools over the association) raises the influence of others in the external environment, when one cannot distinguish between the activities of rival associations and access to material resources surface as the main lens to view legitimacy. In the present study, the NAIA could not differentiate itself from the NCAA after 1973 from an external perspective or provide evidence on how it was better situated to help member institutions remain legitimate or secure the material resources they needed to survive in a maturing institutional field.

Conclusion

The present study used the NAIA's history to outline a five-stage model examining the development of internal and external legitimacy from birth to decline for interest associations. This theoretical development on IA builds off existing research by Drori and Honig (2013) and should be perceived as applicable to a variety of contexts (e.g., banking, stock exchange, religion, political parties, etc.), competing for members beyond intercollegiate athletics. However, future research should examine IAs in different countries because IAs could differ due to different cultural norms and governing structures associated with "business associations, labor unions, professional associations, and citizen groups" (Aldrich, 2018, p. 23).

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Next, this work highlights how both internal and external legitimacy can be altered through collective-level validity and individual-level propriety as well as managing external and endogenous changes or contestations. Bitektine and Haack (2015) argued legitimacy judgments could readily change through the perceptions of various evaluators. Under conditions of stability, judgments of an organization's legitimacy are primarily focused on a macro-to-micro level with top-down influences, which reinforce validity and prohibit any conflicting viewpoints. When faced with elements of institutional change, validity is challenged by the presence of competing viewpoints, allowing micro level processes to potential reshape the social order.

The present work also emphasizes the NAIA's engagement in a special type of competitive membership strategy to establish legitimacy in the same institutional field as the NCAA. Regarding this point, we argue a competitive membership strategy should be a distinct and important component of the institutional strategy for other IAs. Further, future studies could look at the hiring and firing of leaders; the construction and/or renovation of facilities; and the decision to remain affiliated with other IAs or reclassify to a competing IA as some courses of action available to elevate and execute various competitive membership initiatives.

Finally, this work highlighted the dynamics of internal and external legitimacy and the outcomes for the IA as it pertains to members. We believe membership rules and norms can be used to delineate the exclusionary boundaries of institutional membership and the space that members can operate or utilize. It would be in the best interests of the IA to restrict admission initially to establish strong internal legitimacy and then expand (i.e., diversify) if and when cultural mechanisms are established that are not coercive or likely to impose mimetic pressures to comply with other industry standards. This action should help balance distinctiveness versus similarity in efforts to increase and maintain membership and membership behavior.

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