



Athlete First, Student Second: The Thematic Emphasis of Power-5 Official Visits and Fostered Athletic Role Engulfment

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Extant literature establishes that National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Power-5 athletes are often engulfed in their athletic role. While athletic role engulfment originates at the youth sport level, societal glorification of NCAA Power-5 athletics differentiates college athletic role engulfment. College athletic role engulfment has been linked to several negative outcomes, most notably academic dysfunction. While the presence of athletic role engulfment among NCAA Power-5 athletes is recognized within sport management literature, previous research focuses on outcomes rather than sources of athletic role engulfment. Official recruiting visits provide NCAA athletics programs the opportunity to pay for prospective recruits to visit campus and are a significant factor to a recruits' enrollment decision. Utilizing public records requests to acquire official recruiting visit itineraries, the present study sought to examine the thematic emphasis of official recruiting visits in NCAA Power-5 athletics. Findings indicate that Power-5 official recruiting visits disproportionately emphasize athletic and social themes over an academic theme. Gender, conference, and sport-specific variables are also discussed as well as the role athletics' recruiters and coaches occupy in fostering athlete role engulfment among Power-5 athletes.

Keywords: recruiting, official visits, athletic role engulfment, NCAA, institutional logics

In college athletics, the ability to successfully recruit is paramount. An official recruiting visit is a pivotal component within the high stakes field of recruiting and serves as a significant factor in a recruit's enrollment decision (Anderson, 2012; Lawrence & Kaburakis, 2008; Letawsky et al., 2003). Accordingly, official visits are highly prioritized by college coaches and recruiters. Ice carvings, lavish dinners, and notorious revelry have been attributed to official recruiting visits (DiMengo, 2014; Jude, 2020), all with the intent of enticing recruits and influencing their enrollment decision. Corr et al. (2020) found that official recruiting visits serve to expose prospective college athletes to an athletic department's institutional logic and determine institutional fit. Accordingly, official recruiting visits occupy an important role within the recruiting process and are often a recruit's only opportunity to interact with institutional members (i.e., coaches, staff, players) within the institutional setting (i.e., a college campus). Official recruiting visits also provide coaches and recruiters the opportunity to communicate a program's dominant institutional logic and accepted organizational behaviors to prospective members (i.e., recruits).

Role engulfment occurs when a specific role becomes dominant over others (Biddle, 1979, 1986). While athletic role engulfment is nurtured by the societal importance placed on athletics participation (Adler & Adler, 1989, 1991; Miller & Kerr, 2003), collegiate athletes experience a unique form of athletic role engulfment due to the glorified status athletes occupy within the institutional setting of collegiate athletics (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991). As the athletic role becomes dominant, college athletes often abandon their academic role. Such academic role abandonment manifests in college athlete academic dysfunction (Corr et al., 2020; Kidd et al., 2018; Southall et al., 2015) and is indicative of the competing institutional logics present in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) athletics.

In accordance with previous research (Corr et al., 2020) and guided by role theory and institutional logics, this study examined the content and thematic emphasis of official recruiting visits in all sports competing in NCAA Power-5¹ athletics. While previous research has focused narrowly on the SEC (Corr et al., 2020), expanding broadly to the entirety of the Power-5 allowed for cross-conference comparisons and subsequent discussion on the unique logics within individual conferences. In addition, whereas previous studies have examined official visits within the context of their significance to a prospective recruit's enrollment decision (Seifried, 2007, 2009), limited literature exists relative the specific activities undertaken by recruits on official recruiting visits. While Lawrence et al. (2009) surveyed recruits in an attempt to identify specific components of official recruiting visits, no study to date has sought to codify thematic differences between the Power-5 official recruiting visit experiences of male and female recruits or sport classification (i.e., profit sports, non-revenue sports). Accordingly, utilizing Adler and Adler's (1989, 1991) framework identifying college athletes' unique roles – athletic, academic, and social – this study sought to extend the work of Corr et al. (2020) in examining the thematic emphasis and conference differentiations among Power-5 official visits and their relationship to athletic role engulfment. Accordingly, the following research questions were developed:

¹ NCAA Power-5 conferences consist of the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big Ten Conference (Big Ten), Big XII Conference (Big XII), Pac-12 Conference (Pac-12), and Southeastern Conference (SEC) and represent the highest level of competition within collegiate athletics in the United States.

- RQ 1: Are Power-5 official recruiting visits predominantly focused on an athletic, academic, or social theme?
- RQ 2: Are women's Power-5 official recruiting visits thematically similar to men's official recruiting visits?
- RQ 3: Are profit-sports² official recruiting visits thematically similar to those of non-revenue-sports³?
- RQ 4: Are Power-5 official recruiting visits thematically similar inter-conference?

Theoretical Frameworks

Athletic Role Engulfment

Within unique settings, individuals assume roles based on a contextual understanding of expected and acceptable behaviors, actions, and beliefs. The collection of an individual's roles composes their *role-set*, or the compilation of roles one assumes within their various personal and social interactions (Biddle, 1979, 1986, 2013). While one's identity is inextricably linked to their role-set, individual roles do not necessarily alter an individual's identity formation. Within group settings, existing members communicate acceptable behaviors and ideological beliefs to new members (Biddle, 1979, 1986, 2013; Eagly et al., 2000). Roles are, therefore, functions of modeled behavior; communicated learned behaviors, actions, and beliefs.

When a specific role within the role-set becomes dominant over others, an individual becomes engulfed in the role. Role engulfment coincides with role abandonment in which role(s) are abandoned in sake of the dominant role (Biddle, 1979, 1986, 2013). Accordingly, *athletic role engulfment* occurs when an athlete's athletic role becomes dominant over others (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991). Athletic role engulfment is especially prevalent among NCAA athletes where the glorified status placed on collegiate athletics participation in the United States stimulates athletic role engulfment (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991; Briggs, 1996; Butt & Molnar, 2009; Miller & Kerr, 2003). Adler and Adler (1989, 1991) found that college athletes occupy three unique roles to that of the traditional student body: athletic, academic, and social. These roles, both related and disparate, form the college athlete role-set.

While athletic role engulfment is positively correlated to improved athletic performance (Adler & Alder, 1991), subsequent academic role abandonment is related to athlete academic dysfunction and failure (Adler & Adler, 1985; Corr et al., 2020; Kidd et al., 2018; Southall et al., 2015). Abandonment of the academic role is, however, only one of the byproducts of athletic role engulfment. In addition to academic role abandonment, athletic role engulfment is positively correlated to alcohol and drug abuse (Leichliter et al., 1998; Martens et al., 2006), ignorance of serious injury (Nixon, 1992), difficulty in post-athletic transition (Kidd et al., 2018), and

² Profit-sports consisted of football and men's basketball, sports that have revenues that cover annual operating expenses and significantly contribute to the overall function of an athletic department (Corr et al., 2020).

³ Non-revenue sports consisted of all NCAA sports other than football and men's basketball, sports that typically generate less than \$100,000 of annual revenue and rely on subsidies to operate (Corr et al., 2020).

perception of body image (Steinfeldt et al., 2011). While overtly negative in many ways, extant research has found that athletics coaches and staff occupy a central component in fostering athletic role engulfment and may even value athletes' engulfment in their athletic role (Corr et al., 2020; Corr et al., 2022a).

As roles are communicated by existing members (Biddle, 1979, 1986, 2013) athletic recruits must learn expected and accepted actions, behaviors, and ideologies upon transitioning from high school to college. College athletic coaches and recruiters – engulfed in their roles themselves (Corr et al., 2022a) – communicate acceptable behaviors specific to their program and institutional cultures. The communication of this logic and culture often occurs during the recruiting process in which college coaches attempt to sell their program to prospective recruits. The strategic orientation of an official recruiting visit is fundamentally designed to communicate such logic and culture.

College campus visits are intended to foster an accurate expectation relative to the student experience (Lytle, 2012; Radcliffe & Bos, 2013). Accordingly, NCAA regulations postulate official recruiting visits mimic the college athlete experience (e.g., see NCAA, 2022a, Bylaws 13.6.6, 13.6.7.7.1). As college athletic coaches and recruiters organize and coordinate official recruiting visits, they dictate the created expectation of the college athlete experience among prospective recruits. Within this role, athletics stakeholders (e.g., coaches, recruiters) communicate what they believe recruits value and want to experience. Harrison (2008) found that official recruiting visits are conducted in a manner that illustrates the “fun” a prospective recruit will have upon enrollment:

When athletes (especially male) show up at the school, the program does everything it can to show the athlete how fun it would be to go to school there, i.e., greeted by beautiful women, surrounded by beautiful women and taken to parties with beautiful women. Nothing academic is shown to them. (p. 39)

Such strategic coordination of an official recruiting visit to feature “fun” activities serves as a catalyst to athletic role engulfment among prospective recruits.

Specifically regarding male prospective recruits, “hosts” have a significant impact on whether official recruiting visits are “fun.” As a senior athletic administrator in the SEC noted, “hostesses can be a real difference maker...these are college girls dealing with high school boys” (Benedict, 2014, p. 22). Such distinction between the role of “hosts” in men’s sports – specifically football and men’s basketball – compared to women’s sports is indicative of the varying expectations fostered within the athletics recruiting process. Accordingly, extant literature has established differing factors contributing to college choice among male and female prospective recruits (Finley & Fountain, 2008; Popp et al., 2011) as well as by sport (Huffman & Cooper, 2012; Letawsky et al., 2003). As the created expectation of the college experience is a contributing factor to academic success and social adjustment upon enrollment (Gamez-Vargas & Oliva, 2013; Ripple, 1983), components of official recruiting visits that marginalize academics and glorify athletics – and social status attained through athletics participation – may manifest in engulfment upon enrollment.

Institutional Logics

An institutional logic is formulated and adapted over time to produce a value system that informs institutional members as to acceptable behavior and organizational practices (Jepperson, 1991). Institutional logic(s) also serve to provide meaning to the institutional work performed by

institutional members (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). While institutions may consist of multiple *logics* (i.e., *logic multiplicity* [Besharov & Smith, 2014]), the pervading logic most likely to be taught to existing and new members is known as the *dominant institutional logic* (Nite et al., 2019; Southall et al., 2008) and serves to justify institutional actions and behaviors. Competing institutional logics develop within organizations when proposed value systems cease to align with practical applications and outcomes. Such competing logics cause friction within the institutional field and can incite critical commentary (Johansen & Waldorff, 2017). The presence of competing logics within the field of collegiate athletics has been well established as the principles of amateurism are often contradictory to the commercial enterprise of Power-5 athletics (Nite et al., 2019; Southall & Nagel, 2009; Southall et al., 2008). Former NCAA President Myles Brand codified these competing logics when he stated, “amateurism defines the participant, not the enterprise” (Brand, 2006, para. 35).

The NCAA positions itself as an organization dedicated to the academic success of college athletes (NCAA, 2022b) while operating as a multi-billion-dollar entity concerned with maximizing revenue streams. While maximizing revenue as an organization with reputable objectives does not necessarily constitute competing institutional logics, a shift in priorities to focus primarily on revenue generation at the sake, or under the guise, of virtuous objectives would establish a logic contrast. Southall and Nagel (2009) described the NCAA’s dominant institutional logic as “jock capitalism” in which revenue maximization is prioritized under the guise of amateurism. Evident by ongoing hypercommercialization in NCAA athletics (Corr et al., 2022b; Southall et al., 2014) and the growing disparities in collegiate athletic academic performance (Southall et al., 2015), a stark contrast exists within the NCAA as an operation (Nite et al., 2019).

College athletic recruiters emphasize the glorified status that NCAA athletes hold within both an institutional and societal setting to appeal to prospective recruits (Corr et al., 2020; Corr et al., 2022a). However, a primary – and often singular – emphasis on this glorified athletic status neglects significant components of college-life (e.g., academic performance) and may foster athletic role engulfment among collegiate athletes. Accordingly, this study sought to examine Power-5 official recruiting visit itineraries to determine their thematic emphasis as orchestrated by college athletic coaches and recruiters and discuss the relationship to athletic role engulfment.

Research Context

Among Power-5 institutions, successful recruiting is directly correlated to athletic success (i.e., winning; Caro, 2012). As athletic success is related to athletic department revenue generation (Brook, 2016; Grant et al., 2013; Sparvero & Warner, 2013), institutions allocate a significant amount of monetary resources to recruiting. In addition, head coaches’ job attainment and retention are often indicative of their ability to successfully recruit (Holmes, 2011; Maxcy, 2013). As such, coaches invest a significant amount of time in recruiting activities and athletic departments provide expansive recruiting budgets for coaches to utilize in recruiting prospective athletes (Sparvero & Warner, 2013; Treme & Burrus, 2016). During the 2017-2018 academic year, Power-5 athletic departments spent an average of \$1.53 million dollars on recruiting (Ching, 2018). Of that, an average of 72% (\$1.1 million) was dedicated to men’s sport recruiting. Given the significantly greater financial investment Power-5 athletic departments make in men’s sport recruiting, a gender and sport specific analysis of the thematic components of official recruiting visits may illustrate differentiation.

Official Recruiting Visits

Official visits are an integral component of the athletic recruiting process serving to inform many recruits college enrollment decision (Anderson, 2012; Lawrence & Kaburakis, 2008; Letawsky et al., 2003). Determining fit and comfort level are key factors for both recruits and coaches. Depending on the sport, beginning in either junior or senior year of high school institutions may host prospective recruits and up to four of their guests (e.g., family, coaches) on an official recruiting visit (NCAA, 2022a, 13.6). Prospective recruits are allotted five official visits but may not visit a school more than once (NCAA, 2022a, 13.6.2.1, 13.6.2.2.1.3). Corr et al. (2020) found that due in large part to the 48-hour time constraint, official visits are often planned down to the minute. Given this intricately planned schedule, coaches and recruiters often distribute a written itinerary to prospective recruits and their guests, as well as player-hosts.

The NCAA differentiates recruiting visits with the terms unpaid (i.e., an unofficial visit) and paid (i.e., an official visit). Accordingly, on an official recruiting visit institutions may provide transportation (NCAA, 2022a, 13.6.5), accommodations (NCAA, 2022a, 13.6.6), entertainment (NCAA, 2022a, 13.6.7), complimentary admissions to athletic events (NCAA, 2022a, 13.6.7.2), meals (NCAA, 2022a, 13.6.7.7), and distribute cash to enrolled athletes (i.e., player-hosts) to cover expenses related to hosting recruits (NCAA, 2022a, 13.6.7.5). Currently, the NCAA does not specify that an academic component is required as an element of an official recruiting visit. Within the bylaws outlining permissible “benefits” during official recruiting visits (e.g., lodging, meals, entertainment), the NCAA states that all “benefits” should be commensurate with that of a “regular student” at a given institution (NCAA, 2022a, 13.6.6; 13.6.7.7). It could be stated that the NCAA, ideally, seeks official recruiting visits be indicative of the lived experiences of traditional students. As athletic role engulfment is reflective of the glorified status of college athletes, this language regarding what official recruiting visits are ideologically designed to be (i.e., comparable to the experiences of regular students) is of specific interest.

Official recruiting visits typically feature academic, athletic, and social activities (Lawrence et al., 2009). Accordingly, prospective recruits tend to interact with an institutional member or structure (e.g., library, classroom) representing academics while on an official visit. While such interaction is noteworthy, Corr et al. (2020) found that prospective recruits in the SEC engaged more prevalently in athletic and social activities. Such athletic activities included uniform fitting, photo shoots, and meeting with members of the coaching staff while social activities included meals with prospective teammates and attending sporting events. Correspondingly, Lawrence et al. (2009) discovered prospective recruits engaged in athletic and social behaviors frequently while on an official visit identifying attending sporting events, parties, bars, and clubs as common social occurrences. As recruits are influenced by the perceived rewards of attendance at a specific institution (Seifried, 2009), deviant activities (e.g., sexual intercourse, alcohol consumption) covertly structured within social components of official recruiting visits may be strategic on behalf of athletic institutional members. Such deviancy found to be commonplace during official recruiting visits (Corr et al., 2020; Lawrence et al., 2009) is a direct indicator of the glorification of collegiate athletics participation and engulfment in an athletic role.

Given that college athletes assume unique roles – athletic, academic, and social (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991) – and college athletics staff members plan and organize official recruiting visits (Corr et al., 2020), this study sought to examine the content and structure of official visits among NCAA Power-5 conferences to determine their primary thematic emphasis as well as institutional differences.

Methodology

Official visit itineraries were chosen as the primary source of data due to their consistent use across NCAA sports and institutions. Official visit itineraries include a detailed hourly breakdown of the activities scheduled for a recruit and their guests during an official visit (Corr et al., 2020). NCAA regulations on official visits also provide stability to the data as all sports and athletic programs operate under the same NCAA regulations. Power-5 institutions were chosen as the sampling frame for this study. The Power-5 consists of 65 NCAA Division I athletic departments and represents the largest NCAA athletic programs in terms of popularity and revenue generation.

FOIA Requests

While somewhat unpredictable, the use of public records requests as a data collection method is widely accepted in many social science disciplines (Greenberg, 2016). Luscombe et al. (2017) noted that Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests are useful in securing information that is not readily available and may be difficult to gather. Given the insulated nature of NCAA members institutions (Corr et al., 2020; Southall & Weiler, 2014), FOIA requests are a valuable resource in compelling athletic departments to release documents, information, or records (Menaker et al., 2021). Accordingly, FOIA requests were filed with each public institution in the Power-5 ($n = 54$) requesting official visit itineraries from all sponsored sports during the 2018-2019 academic year. Extant literature identifying contrasting institutional logics pervasive in Power-5 athletics (Nite et al., 2019; Southall & Nagel, 2009) make the subdivision an increasingly significant research setting. While state residency requirements prevented the researchers from receiving itineraries for certain institutions (e.g., Arkansas, Tennessee), 33 universities (61%) responded and completed the FOIA request by providing official itineraries for some or all sports. All five Power-5 conference were represented with five institutions from the ACC, two from the Big XII, 11 from the Big Ten, six from the Pac-12, and nine from the SEC fulfilling the FOIA request.

Once received, itineraries were examined and coded by researchers trained in qualitative content analysis. Given the detail of official visit itineraries (Corr et al., 2020) and based off Adler and Adler's (1989; 1991) three unique college athlete roles, each individual activity was thematically coded as either an athletic activity, academic activity, or social activity. Additional variables included gender, date of visit, athletic conference, and sport revenue classification. Revenue classifications were codified as profit-sports and non-revenue sports (Corr et al., 2020). Profit-sports consisted of football and men's basketball and non-revenue sports consisted of all other NCAA sanctioned sports. Accommodations (e.g., hotel, dorm) were also examined using Google's hotel class-rating measure, recognized as an industry leading hotel review metric (Elliott, 2018).

Limitations of FOIA Data. While every state in United States has public record requests laws, many also have extensive processes or qualifications (e.g., residency requirements) that enable public universities to avoid complete disclosure of records (Luscombe et al., 2017; Menaker et al., 2021). Accordingly, of the 21 universities that did not fulfill the FOIA request, seven asserted residency requirements as justification. In addition, although the FOIA request explicitly stated that no personal identifiable information related to a recruit was necessary to the request, three universities cited the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as

justification for not fulfilling the request. Such findings are consistent with previous findings in which NCAA athletic departments utilize FERPA to deflect FOIA requests related to perceived sensitive information (Huml & Moorman, 2017). These aspects are illustrative of the unpredictability in filing FOIA requests and should be noted as institutional limitations to collecting data through the utilization of FOIA requests in the future.

Thematic Analysis

Itineraries were examined by the team of researchers, each of whom is trained in thematic and discourse analysis. Each activity was coded into a specific theme (i.e., axial coding) of athletic, academic, or social based on Adler and Adler's (1989, 1991) college athlete role-set. Each researcher coded activities within the itineraries into one of the three thematic areas. While most activities were explicitly one theme, some activities featured thematic ambiguity. Such ambiguity occurred during meals where an activity such as "dinner with the coaching staff" could theoretically be coded as athletic, academic, or social. In these few instances, researchers determined what the explicit purpose of the activity was (e.g., meals were determined to be social activities) and thematically coded each activity on an individual basis. Accordingly, the researchers intermittently compared notes to ensure intercoder reliability and consistency across coding schema for all itineraries. The emphasis placed on each theme was determined by the number of activities within each theme and the corresponding time allotted to each activity. As official visits are often planned down to the minute (Corr et al., 2020), determining the time allotted to each activity was both intuitive and valuable as a metric to determine thematic emphasis. Examples of coding schema for each theme can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Thematic Codes Examples

Code Example	Theme
Equipment Presentation with Head Football Equipment Manager [omitted]	Athletic
Meet with Staff to review Strength and Conditioning plan	Athletic
Watch Practice	Athletic
Business School advisory meeting	Academic
Attend History Class with [omitted] (if you feel like it)	Academic
Meet with Academics at [omitted]	Academic
Escape Room, then Free Time with Player-Host	Social
Horseback riding at [omitted] house	Social
Attend Football Game vs. [omitted]	Social

Note. Codes represent examples taken verbatim from itineraries. Bracketed items indicate names of individuals, universities, or facilities that have been removed to maintain anonymity.

Findings

A total of 428 itineraries from 33 institutions were analyzed to answer the research questions. The final dataset was imported into Rstudio 1.3.1093 for analysis. The primary categories of interest included planned activities for recruits (athletic, academic, and social

activities), sport classification (profit or non-revenue), and which Power-5 conference the recruit was visiting. The breakdown of recruiting visits analyzed can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Characteristics of Recruits

Category	Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Male	185	43.2%
	Female	243	56.8%
Sport classification	Profit	77	18.0%
	Non-Revenue	351	82.0%
Conference	ACC	38	8.9%
	Big Ten	120	28.0%
	Big XII	26	6.1%
	Pac-12	105	24.5%
	SEC	139	32.5%

Research Question 1

Are Power-5 official recruiting visits predominantly focused on an athletic, academic, or social theme? Each itinerary consisted of time allocated to each of the three primary categories (athletic, academic, and social themes). These time allocations were calculated in minutes. Instances in which the activity was unknown in relation to the three classifications were removed resulting in final means of ($M_{Athletic} = 303.7$, $M_{Academic} = 112.0$, $M_{Social} = 571.5$). The breakdown of the final results can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Time Allocated (in minutes) to Athletic, Academic, and Social Activities During Recruiting Visits

Category	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Athletic activities	408	303.7	166.7
Academic activities	363	112.0	77.7
Social activities	426	571.5	301.6

Results indicate that a heavy emphasis is placed on athletic and social activities with the largest share of time allocated to social activities. This may also explain why recruiting visits predominately occur later in the week and oftentimes coincide with the weekend during which athletic events take place and on-campus academic opportunities are unavailable. To further understand the breakdown of athletic, academic, and social activities planned for recruits, refer to Figure 1.

Percentage of Time Spent on Recruit Activities

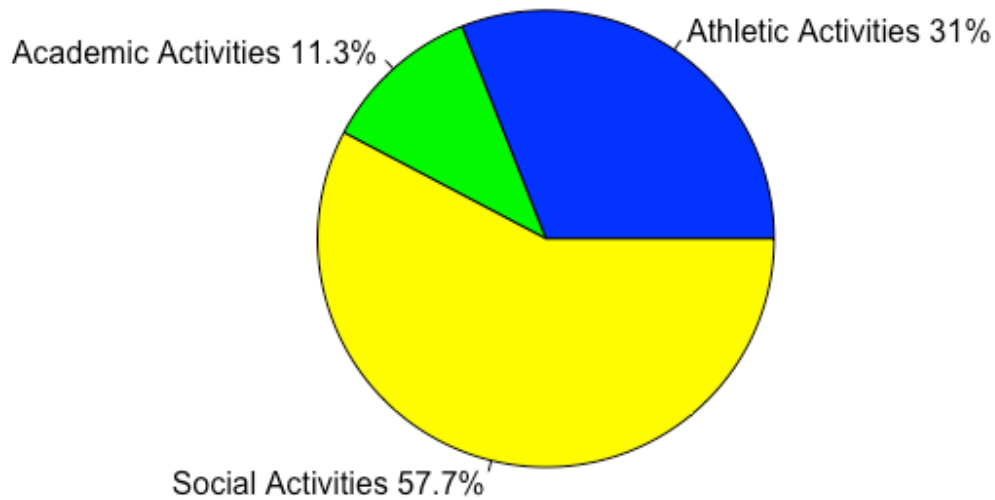


Figure 1.

Breakdown of Athletic, Academic, and Social Activities During Recruiting Visits

Research Question 2

Are women's Power-5 official recruiting visits thematically similar to men's official recruiting visits? In examining Research Question 2, the itineraries were broken down by gender. The previously created subsets of data which were scrubbed to remove unknown activities were again utilized to analyze the activities of male and female recruits during official visits to Power-5 schools. The measured variable remained as time allocated in minutes for the three themes in question. Results indicate that in relation to athletic activities, the breakdown by gender is nearly equivalent ($M_{\text{Male}} = 308.3$, $M_{\text{Female}} = 300.2$). The same can be said of time allocated to social activities ($M_{\text{Male}} = 561.2$, $M_{\text{Female}} = 579.4$). The difference based on gender is evident in the time allocated for academic activities where female recruits, on average, spent approximately a half hour longer than male recruits ($M_{\text{Male}} = 96.9$, $M_{\text{Female}} = 123.9$). The full results can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Time Allocated (in minutes) to Athletic, Academic, and Social Activities by Gender

Category	Gender	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Athletic activities	Male	177	308.3	153.5
	Female	231	300.2	176.5
Academic activities	Male	159	96.9	66.1
	Female	204	123.9	84.0
Social activities	Male	184	561.2	288.9
	Female	242	579.4	311.3

Based on the difference in time allocated to academic activities by gender, a *t*-test was run. The results were significant when examining the relationship between time allocated to academic activities when using gender as a factor, $t(361) = 3.42, p < .001$.

Research Question 3

Are profit-sports official recruiting visits thematically similar to those of non-revenue sports? The approach taken in Research Question 3 mimicked Research Question 2 but utilized the two-level factor variable of sport classification (i.e., profit or non-revenue). Results indicate the measure of time allocated for athletic activities ($M_{\text{Profit}} = 300.4, M_{\text{Nonrevenue}} = 304.5$) and academic activities ($M_{\text{Profit}} = 103.9, M_{\text{Nonrevenue}} = 114.0$) were similar while the time allocated for social activities were skewed towards the profit sports ($M_{\text{Profit}} = 654.8, M_{\text{Nonrevenue}} = 553.2$). The full results can be found in Table 5.

Table 5

Time Allocated (in minutes) to Athletic, Academic, and Social Activities by Sport Classification

Category	Sport classification	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Athletic activities	Profit	77	300.4	140.3
	Non-Revenue	331	304.5	172.5
Academic activities	Profit	71	103.9	71.8
	Non-Revenue	292	114.0	79.1
Social activities	Profit	77	654.8	273.1
	Non-Revenue	349	553.2	304.9

Profit-sport recruits had over 100 more minutes allocated to them than non-revenue sport recruits. Results from a *t*-test indicate a significant relationship between time allocated for social activities by sport classification, $t(122) = -2.89, p = .005$.

In addition to the results associated with athletic, academic, and social themes, the nature of accommodations provided to recruits during visits indicated that profit-sport recruits stay primarily in hotels while non-revenue sport recruits are more evenly split between dorm accommodations and hotel accommodations.

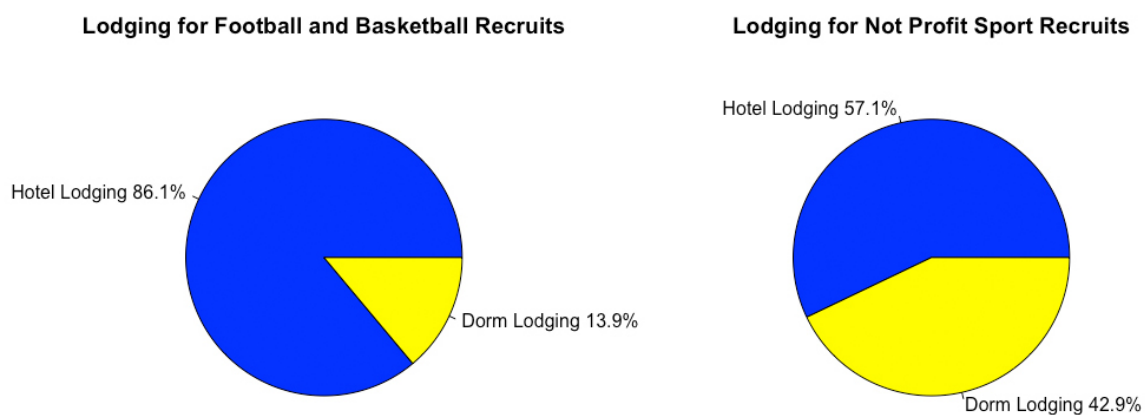


Figure 2.

Comparison of Accommodations for Profit-Sport Recruits and Non-Revenue Sport Recruits

Research Question 4

Are Power-5 official recruiting visits thematically similar inter-conference? For a full comparison of time allocated in minutes for athletic, academic, and social activities, conference comparisons were executed. The subsetted data utilized in Research Questions 2 and 3 were again used to develop comparisons. Results for the time allocated to athletic activities were similar between the conferences ($M_{ACC} = 274.8$, $M_{Big\ Ten} = 275.4$, $M_{Big\ XII} = 307.1$, $M_{Pac-12} = 316.0$, $M_{SEC} = 326.0$). Results for the time allocated to academic activities were also similar ($M_{ACC} = 114.3$, $M_{Big\ Ten} = 110.3$, $M_{Big\ XII} = 92.7$, $M_{Pac-12} = 125.7$, $M_{SEC} = 105.9$) as were the results for time allocated to social activities ($M_{ACC} = 542.8$, $M_{Big\ Ten} = 568.7$, $M_{Big\ XII} = 493.2$, $M_{Pac-12} = 589.9$, $M_{SEC} = 582.8$). The full results can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

Time Allocated (in minutes) to Athletic, Academic, and Social Activities by Conference

Category	Conference	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Athletic activities	ACC	37	274.8	146.6
	Big Ten	113	275.4	166.4
	Big XII	25	307.1	192.7
	Pac-12	101	316.0	163.8
	SEC	132	326.0	167.2
Academic activities	ACC	32	114.3	73.7
	Big Ten	107	110.3	69.3
	Big XII	21	92.7	74.7
	Pac-12	89	125.7	91.7
	SEC	114	105.9	74.6
Social activities	ACC	38	542.8	271.9
	Big Ten	120	568.7	314.2
	Big XII	26	493.2	249.1
	Pac-12	104	589.9	323.0
	SEC	138	582.8	291.5

To statistically analyze the differences that may exist in relation to time allocated to athletic, academic, and social activities between conferences, a MANOVA was conducted. Results indicate there are no statistically significant relationships between time allocated for the three core themes based on conference $F(4, 345) = 1.02$, $p = 0.423$.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that official recruiting visits among Power-5 conferences disproportionately emphasize the athletic and social roles unique to those of NCAA Power-5 athletes. As indicated by time allotted, athletic and social activities accounted for nearly 16 programmed hours of official visits analyzed in this study. Academic activities accounted for just under two hours of programmed activity ($M_{Academic} = 112$ minutes). Findings also illustrate a greater academic emphasis among official recruiting visits in women's sports than men's sports. Women's official recruiting visits consisted of over two hours of programmed academic activities, 22% more time than that of men's official visits. It is worth noting that the statistical

significant difference in time allotted to academic activities is due in part to the tendency for official recruiting visits to take place over the course of a weekend when traditional academic activities (e.g., classes, advising) are inactive (see Figure 3). Accordingly, interaction with pertinent academic personnel (e.g., faculty, academic advisors) may be difficult during official visits that take place over the course of a weekend. Such limited interaction with academic personnel during weekend official visits could be potentially mitigated through inclusive recompense (e.g., invitation to meals, sporting event attendance). In addition, institutionally mandated faculty athletics representatives (FARs) could serve as suitable conduits to stimulate academic interactions during official recruiting visits.

Official Visits - Days of the Week

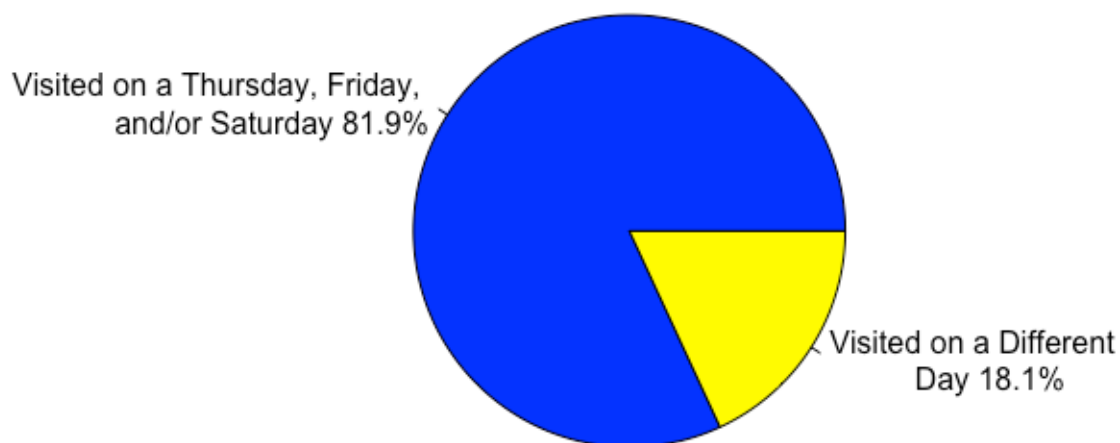


Figure 3.
Breakdown of Official Recruiting Visits by Days of the Week

Interestingly, the tendency for official recruiting visits to take place over the course of a weekend may illustrate the strategic recruiting value that college football provides to non-revenue sports. Of the official visit itineraries analyzed in this study, 82% occurred during a weekend. Accordingly, nearly every weekend itinerary that took place during the Fall featured attending a Saturday football game as part of the schedule. The use of Power-5 football to effectively recruit athletes in non-revenue sports further exemplifies the value that profit-sports hold within the institutional setting (i.e., revenue generation) but is also indicative of fostered athletic role engulfment among college athletes. Given the festival like environment around Power-5 football game day delivery (e.g., tailgating, pep rallies, fanaticism; Watterson, 2000), such overt value placed on football game attendance is indicative of the facade created by official recruiting visits (Corr et al., 2020).

Dincin Schneider (2012) recommends that prospective traditional students (i.e., non-athletes) visit college campuses on weekdays, not weekends. In addition, *College Board* states the following regarding when to visit a college campus as a prospective student:

Mondays through Thursdays are ideal for visits since campuses are generally in full swing. Visiting on a Friday may not be as practical, as students, faculty and staff might be busy with social activities starting Friday afternoon (n.d., para. 4).

Given that official recruiting visits typically occur over the course of a weekend, prospective college athletes experience a drastically different campus environment than normal. While previous research has argued that official recruiting visits take place during the weekend to minimize the amount of schoolwork prospective recruits miss (Corr et al., 2020, p. 267), we posit that Power-5 official recruiting visits are strategically scheduled to take place around, and in accordance with, college football games. As prospective traditional students are advised to visit a college campus during the week, such strategic coordination to ensure prospective athletes' official recruiting visits occur over the course of a weekend further exemplifies the glorification of the athletic and social roles and the depreciation of the academic role.

We contend that the statistically significant disproportionate emphasis on athletic and social themes during Power-5 official recruiting visits serves to foster athletic role engulfment among Power-5 athletes. Such assertion inherently links the nurturement of Power-5 athlete athletic role engulfment to institutional actors given that coaches and recruiters strategically organize and carry out official recruiting visits (i.e., institutional work). Given that official recruiting visits in men's sports and profit-sports emphasize athletic and social themes in a significant manner, the further formulation of athletic role engulfment among these specific groups is noteworthy. As male collegiate athletes are less likely to graduate than female athletes and profit-sport athletes (i.e., football, men's basketball) less likely than non-revenue athletes (Eckard, 2010; Rische, 2003), the statistically significant marginalization of an academic theme during official recruiting visits among these groups is compounded. Further examination of differentiations within the recruitment of male athletes and profit-sport athletes relative athletic role engulfment and the corresponding manifestations (e.g., academic failure, deviant social behaviors) would be theoretically valuable within the tenets of role theory, but also of practical importance for institutional members seeking to maximize the development of athletes within these groups.

Advancing previous findings (Corr et al., 2020), we theorize that Power-5 athlete athletic role engulfment may be the strategic and programmatic manifestation of the dominant Power-5 institutional logic prioritizing revenue generation and commercial formulation (Nite & Washington, 2017; Nite et al., 2019; Southall & Nagel, 2009). As a relationship between athletic team success (i.e., winning) and revenue generation exists – specifically among profit-sports – institutional actors may value athletic role engulfment given that it is positively correlated to improved athletic performance (Adler & Adler, 1991). Such athletic prioritization is illustrated among official recruiting visit itineraries analyzed in this study. In addition, the indifference shown towards academic activities may be the result of institutional actors' disinterest in academics entirely (Corr et al., 2022a).

While previous research illustrates the isomorphic nature of collegiate athletics, this study's findings also indicate that replication is occurring within individual Power-5 athletic departments in the manner they conduct official recruiting visits. This finding is perhaps unsurprising given that Power-5 coaches tend to work for multiple programs within the same conference during their careers (Levine, 2015), transferring institutional values and practices from program to program. The presence of inter-conference replication, as evidenced by the standardization of official visit itineraries, aligns with previous literature regarding organizational replication (Atwater et al., 2022; Corr et al., 2020). As less successful organizations seek to replicate successful organizations – and often do so through the *transfer of*

people (Baden-Fuller & Winter 2005) – athletic directors target coaches of successful (i.e., winning) programs for the purpose of replicating such success. Evidenced in this study's findings, official recruiting visit itineraries seemingly mimic one another across the Power-5 conferences in the thematic emphasis of athletic, academic, and social activities. Such messaging emphasizing athletic and social components serves to foster engulfment in the athletic role that is exacerbated by the status that athletes at Power-5 institutions enjoy on campus and in their communities.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that official recruiting visits feature a greater allocation of time to athletic and social activities than academic activities. The presence of these findings across all sports is indicative of the official recruiting visit's function relative to athletic role engulfment. Accordingly, as athletic stakeholders (e.g., coaches, recruiters) organize and coordinate official recruiting visits, we theorize they are integral in the development of athletic role engulfment among prospective recruits. Such position effectively situates institutional members of Power-5 athletic departments as catalysts for further athletic role engulfment among prospective recruits. While the societal glorification of athletics participation – specifically Power-5 athletics participation – is assuredly a component to athletic role engulfment among prospective Power-5 recruits, official recruiting visits are strategically oriented to emphasize athletics and social roles unique to collegiate athletes.

By developing an official visit experience that is “fun” (Harrison, 2008), coaches and recruiters may foster an expectation that inadequately prepares prospective recruits to be successful academically upon enrollment. Athletic stakeholders need understand the significant role they occupy in the creation of athletic, social, and academic expectations among Power-5 athletes. Emblematic of such role, coaches and recruiters should attempt to engage academic personnel during official recruiting visits. Such engagement could serve the dual-purpose of fostering a greater institutional relationship between academics and athletics while cultivating official visit activities that communicate a more accurate expectation of the collegiate experience to prospective recruits. As faculty have been found to be influential in shaping athletes' institutional perceptions (Barnhill et al., 2018; Weiss & Robinson, 2013), inclusive interaction and engagement with academic personnel strategically aligns with the recruiting objectives of athletic stakeholders.

Limitations & Future Research

While adequate steps were taken to ensure an impartial and reliable coding schema, an inherent limitation to the findings of this study is the potential for variation within the coding process itself. A coding schema of three themes (i.e., athletic, social, academic) may be overly broad given the unique nature of collegiate athletics recruiting and official recruiting visits. The ubiquitous presence of athletic stakeholders (e.g., coaches, recruiters, player hosts) blurs the distinction between themes when categorizing official recruiting visit activities. In addition, the use of FOIA requests as a data collection technique presents specific limitations that have been indicated previously.

Worth noting is the success of the Power-5 as an NCAA subdivision. As athletic role engulfment is positively correlated to improved athletic performance (Adler & Adler, 1991), the perceived athletics dominance of the Power-5 may be illustrated by the presence of athletic role engulfment among athletes, coaches, and administrators. As such, athletic role engulfment may

be demanded – or perceived to be demanded – at the Power-5 level in order maintain one's position as an athlete, coach, administrator, or even athletic department. Further research is needed to determine the effect of the presence of athletic role engulfment among stakeholders in the Power-5 with relation to athletic success and revenue generation as an NCAA subdivision. Qualitatively oriented studies would be valuable in providing greater context to the formulation and coordination of official recruiting visits. Such findings may be illustrative of the manifestation and presence of athletic role engulfment during official recruiting visits and within the recruiting process in general. In addition, examination of Power-5 and Group of 5 – as well as other NCAA divisions/subdivisions – athletic official visit itineraries would be valuable in comparing the pervasiveness of athletic role engulfment during official visits inter-division.

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